

JAWAHARLAL NEHRU:

A Communicator and Democratic Leader



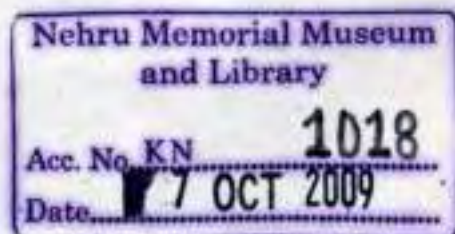
A.K. DAMODARAN

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FOREWORD

It gives me great pleasure to say a few words about this felicitous book, entitled *Jawaharlal Nehru: A Communicator and Democratic Leader*, crafted by Shri A.K. Damodaran, the distinguished diplomat and scholar. Shri Damodaran's numerous friends know him as a gifted diplomat, who has served his country with distinction for three decades and more. Yet his wide reading and deep understanding of history and literature are not so widely appreciated. This learned book will, however, earn him a place of honour among scholars of sensitivity and breadth of comprehension in India.

The book created by Shri Damodaran touches upon two themes. It is, first, a profound inquiry into the influences, Indian and Western, which shaped Jawaharlal Nehru's intellect. Secondly, it explores the manner in which Nehru communicated with an entire generation of the intelligentsia in the second quarter of the 20th century. Beyond this crucial audience, Nehru reached out to the people of India as a whole: giving substance and form to their aspirations; and holding out to them the vision of a modern society, firmly tethered to liberal values and democratic institutions.

As a portrait of Jawaharlal Nehru, illuminating, sympathetic yet critical in parts; also, as an exploration of the intellectual climate of the 1930s, the 1940s and the 1950s, Shri Damodaran's book is without a peer in the substantial corpus of scholarly writing available on the subject. Indeed, this book not only enriches our understanding of an eminent Indian, but it also throws a shaft of illuminating light upon the concerns of the intelligentsia, and upon popular mentalities, in the middle decades of the 20th century. I hope, therefore, that it gets the wide readership which it deserves.

Teen Murti House
New Delhi, 1 November 1996

RAVINDER KUMAR

PREFACE

When I was offered by the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library in 1986 the Chalapathi Rau Fellowship to do research on Jawaharlal Nehru as a communicator I was delighted. To the people of my generation who grew up in the thirties, Nehru was the first communicator to whom we responded with ease. It would be, therefore, a most interesting task to analyse the factors which made him one of the more interesting political communicators of the twentieth century.

And, so, I embarked on the job and over the months it possessed me. I had made a sort of informal contract with myself that I would limit my sources as far as possible to Nehru's own writings at the risk of sometimes eschewing even relevant contemporary comments. In my view this book was going to be the record of a conversation with a remarkable individual who had, over the decades, written and spoken a lot about the Indian national movement, Mahatma Gandhi, world history and the excitements and anguish of international relations.

Fairly soon, however, I discovered that there was going to be inevitably an exception to this self-denying ordinance. Gandhi was this exception. Very early in my work I discovered that I would be able to understand Jawaharlal Nehru better as revealed in his *Selected Works* if I went back to Gandhi's *Collected Works* of the same period. Jawaharlal Nehru became an increasingly confident and articulate political activist precisely at the time when Gandhi assumed the leadership of Congress after his return from South Africa and his study of the domestic situation in India. During most crisis points it became my habit to go back to Gandhi to understand Nehru better.

By any criterion the thirties were the period when Nehru matured as a communicator. The letters he wrote to his daughter led to

his self-confidence and self-discovery. Both *Glimpses of World History* and *An Autobiography* showed to the world that here was a new voice representing the anti-colonial approach. The years of imprisonment led to his literary achievements while the intervening periods of political activism led to his development as a master of the spoken word in English and in Hindustani.

After the thirties came the war years and again the long imprisonment which led to *The Discovery of India* and the superb Prison Diary. By the time I reached the end of the Ahmadnagar internment I realised that there was a certain intellectual coherence and emotional unity about this earlier part of Nehru's life which needed separate treatment. For one thing my fascination with the earlier years had led to a fairly lengthy manuscript on the long voyage to freedom. After Ahmadnagar would come the Cabinet Mission negotiations, the transfer of power and the 17 years of office. This was another game with different rules. I, therefore, decided to stop at this point. Gandhi also would be gone within three years and the splendid partnership was gathering to a close. Somewhere in one of his plays T.S. Eliot speaks about 'the torment of desire unsatisfied and the greater torment of desire satisfied'. I thought it would be only fair to Gandhi and Nehru to concentrate on the lesser torment.

Very early during my reading of the Nehru writings, I discovered that there was a great deal of effective and comfortable communication between the Congress leaders and, more specifically, between Gandhi and each one of the Congress leaders. Whether it was in 1929, 1931, 1937, 1940, or 1942, the relationship between the leader and his acolytes was fascinating. There was never ever total submission or surrender on the part of Gandhi's major disciples, Patel, Azad, Rajaji and, of course, more than anyone else, Nehru. Nehru's worries about Gandhi's political strategy and the priorities of his personal life never led to any questioning on his part of the inevitability of Gandhi's leadership in the struggle. All this was most clearly demonstrated during the months before the Quit India movement. At one level, therefore, this investigation takes us beyond mere communication to decision-making.

Nehru's relationship with his peers in the national leadership is important from one particular point of view. It is easy to apply the zero-sum game approach to this aspect of the national movement. You can't praise Nehru without blaming Patel or cannot admire Subhas Bose without depreciating Jawaharlal. These are examples of

post-Independence ideological positions being reflected back into an earlier period. These men had differences but there was a certain basic decency among them and there was also common affection and loyalty towards Gandhi.

For me personally living with Nehru for more than two years has been a unique experience. He was a 'good companion'. But there was always Gandhi also whose benignant presence irradiates, I hope, my understanding of Nehru.

There are many friends who have helped me in this pleasant course of self-education. Most of all I would like to record my deep sense of gratitude to the Late Shri G. Parthasarathi who was much more sensitive than I was in the beginning in the Nehru-Gandhi equation. Over the months we used to discuss many aspects of Nehru's development during the thirties and forties with each other. This book could not have been the same without his influence. I owe a special debt of gratitude, of course, to Prof. Ravinder Kumar, Director of the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library and its Deputy Director, Dr. Hari Dev Sharma for all their help during the years of research. Dr. Sharma, particularly, was kind enough to go through the manuscript of the present volume and with the help of Dr. N. Balakrishnan saw through the printing of the manuscript. Earlier, excellent editorial advice was given to me by Mr. Samuel Israel which I found extremely useful. More than anything else I would like to express my thanks to my professional colleague and friend Shri S.C. Bhardwaj, who typed the manuscript in all the stages of its development and prepared the final version for the press. Any errors of fact, analysis and deduction are, of course, my own responsibility.

New Delhi
November 1996

A.K. DAMODARAN

INTRODUCTION

Jawaharlal Nehru was at the centre of the Indian national struggle for about twenty years and it was during this period that his personality attracted the almost excessive loyalties of the Indian people, and the concerned interest of progressive "agitators" in the western world. Also in this period were established his links with political activists in Asian and African nationalism and European socialism. Through all of these 20 years his activities were shaped, limited and, in many ways, also enhanced by Mahatma Gandhi's leadership and principles, which he agreed to accept even while he was sceptical on details, and by his instinctive faith in Gandhi as the only plausible leader of the struggle in a colonial situation in which the institutions relied on by the rulers themselves had to be selectively used, as much as they had to be selectively abandoned, with a certain flourish.

The years of power after Gandhi's death and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel's passing presented qualitatively different challenges. In his attempt to regain for the people of India and Indian civilization a certain respectability after centuries of neglect, sentimental interest and worried contempt from ignorant quarters, the job of image projection had to be done; but in the nature of things in a poor society trying to become a little more viable, this had to be secondary only to the deeper problems of developmental effort, social reform and pressing external threats in the strategic and economic fields. The years of power from 1946 to 1964 have been analysed over and over again by distinguished and sincere scholars and angry but equally sincere polemicists. The turbulent debate over Nehru's positive and negative contributions to nation-building persisted throughout his stewardship of the government. A certain sentimental distortion was introduced into the total assessment by

the Chinese war, which was extremely important in Nehru's career and modern India's history, but by no means more than episodic in the general evolution of the new State as a coherent, semi-federal constitutional arrangement devised to meet many competing needs at a moment when many of them were still in emergent form and could not be precisely identified even by the most empathetic political activists.

The purpose of the present effort is not once again to go over these events, developments and controversies, they have been chronicled and discussed over and over again by distinguished senior members of the Nehru studies fraternity like S. Gopal, Michael Brecher, B.R. Nanda, B.N. Pande, Vincent Sheean, Dorothy Norman, John Gunther and several others. These, of course, were all extremely partial in their capacity to illuminate Nehru's thoughts and acts because all this had been done over and over again, with compulsive articulateness, sometimes verging on the narcissistic, by the great man himself. In fact, much meaningful study of Nehru can be usefully researched within the ambit of his own writings; there is in them a certain transparency, a certain anxiety to analyse oneself during the emotion of activity and not later, which provides, in relative terms, an almost unique documentary source for a statesman's growth, fulfilment and inevitable plateauing out, if not decline. Our purpose here is to strictly delimit the communicator in an evolving agitated, but only fitfully turbulent, society in a particular historical epoch. The stress will be on the dialogue with colleagues, superiors, the British bureaucracy and, increasingly important over the twenties, with the mass of the Indian people. There will be no attempt to relate these with the much wider study of decision-making in the Indian National Congress, except to analyze Nehru's successes and failures in explaining this decision-making, first to his immediate constituency, the Congress Party, next to the people at large, and, finally, the unconvinced and hostile minority groups among the Muslims, the Harijans and the beneficiaries of the Raj and the bureaucracy.

That would be a most interesting starting point for investigation; but to make it even more interesting, one can go back to the roots. The specific historical period in which Jawaharlal Nehru was born and grew up, the opportunity he had received of living in an exotic environment during his formative years, and his comparative privacy and political inactivity during the first 25 years of his life, have to be

analysed to fully appreciate the increase in tempo, as well as commitment to political action which came some time in the middle of the First World War.

One starting point, as useful as any, would be Nehru's schooling and university life in Edwardian England at what is generally conceded to be a major transition point in world history — in thought, in communication and in literature. While Jawaharlal Nehru was at Cambridge, major political developments connected with violent individual activity as well as organized group activity took place all over the world, beginning with the resurgent Labour movement in Britain growing up into a normal, mass-based political party, hoping for a share of power. This was also the period when capitalism went in for a fairly long process of self-criticism, both in the America of the Robber Baron and the British Empire, in its last angry expansionist phase, finding expression in the Tory-Labour-Liberal triangular debate — with the Russian Nihilists hovering on the sidelines. Formative influences in those days were not merely decadent values and practices, which Nehru rather guiltily admits to having sympathies with, but also major changes in the weight and capacity to act of new nations like Japan and the United States, and the ubiquitous phenomenon of Europe manifesting itself simultaneously in various stages of growth, rise, fulfilment and decline. There were the old dying empires of the past in Austro-Hungary, the Ottoman Empire and China; there were the powerful, still aggressive, West European empires at their peak of strength — Britain, France and the Netherlands. Russia and America appeared to belong to the outer circle, but events were happening in America which made it, under Theodore Roosevelt, a consciously marine expansionist power, and Japan and Germany, whose years of apprenticeship in the last quarter of the 19th century had made them confident of taking on the older 'effete' imperial systems. There was a mixed situation in Tsarist Russia where the expanded empire across two continents could not devise its own instruments for efficient administration, and where the slowness of reforms led to the first modern movements of anti-State individual and group terrorism.

Jawaharlal Nehru was, by no means, when at Cambridge, an over-excited observer of these political developments; but he was sensitive; he knew where he was being hurt, and his country was being hurt, and this surfaces in his references to the Russo-Japanese

War and other references in his autobiography. More clearly it comes through in the correspondence he had with his father about the dramatic developments at home in the first ten years of the century, when he was so far away from it all, and when a genuinely contemporary and universal mode of agitation by oppressed people had assumed a unique national character in divided Bengal.

The immediate environment in Cambridge and in London in those years was conducive to a habit of mind which tended to worry over these problems. As a successful but by no means over-obsessed natural scientist with a sense of vocation, he was quite aware of the great inventions and discoveries in the field of science. He was probably even more aware of the great communicators of the period in English writing, Bernard Shaw, H.G. Wells, and pamphleteers like Lionel Curtis and G. Lowes Dickinson ranged against the imperialists and conservatives like Hilaire Belloc and G.K. Chesterton. Just to the rear of these contemporary writers was the sad, wistful figure of Oscar Wilde, whose description of solitariness and poverty amidst London's plenty attracted him, as much as his unforgettable description of the loneliness of the convicted prisoner in his cell. All this comes through again and again in Nehru's writings.

It is important to note that, apart from the renewed interest in Wilde today because of his deviant character, he was also an unreconciled Irishman, a natural adversary of organized society and someone who admired and redefined socialism. In Jawaharlal Nehru's English style even as late as in the forties, one can see the influences of Walter Pater and Oscar Wilde. This does not necessarily imply an organic sympathy with decadent or escapist values; it shows only that quite a part of Nehru's personality, in his years of action and perceptive loud thinking — on the platform, in committee, with a stenographer before him — were lineally connected with those formative years at school and university in England. There is very little direct evidence that he was particularly interested in the great Cambridge intellectual movements of the time, but a continually absorbent mind with a refreshing capacity to keep receptive even after late middle age enabled the young Nehru take in much of this environment.

This is an important point which could bear further investigation — the purely intellectual, merely cerebral, influences on a young man of the cultural milieu in which he grows up. Some of it becomes a creative part of his growing personality; some of the dead wood

remains inert, lumps of matter in an essentially biochemical situation. This cannot be helped. More interesting evidence of a similar phenomenon can be seen in the mature personalities of great men like Gandhi, Lenin and Mao Zedong.

Here I do not mean the possibly much more relevant but, to me, fundamentally uninteresting problems of early childhood -- the Oedipus complex and the hundreds of problems of suppression and frustrations which Sigmund Freud has made us aware of. There is no doubt that Jawaharlal must have had his own share of these pleasant burdens. From the limited point of view of this study, however, it is the intellectual climate of the 15 years before the First World War which really is most useful in understanding some of the more prominent ideas of Jawaharlal Nehru in his years of political leadership, both before and after achievement of power.

II

It is somewhat of a truism to say that many old men, and old women too, react sometimes to contemporary challenges as they might have done to threats and challenges which they faced in their youth, despite the pressures of an environment transformed beyond all recognition by war, suffering and technology, in that order. Whether it is De Gaulle, Dwight D. Eisenhower, Konrad Adenauer or C.R. Attlee, the men who dominated the non-socialist world in the decades after the Second World War, the controlling intellectual preferences and emotional prejudices were the result of that long last age of innocence, the belief in ultimate progress, the conviction that more and more men and communities will become more and more civilized and enjoy a better life, if only the elect of the world would behave responsibly. This was the dream that was partially destroyed in the First World War, imperfectly revived for a moment only by Woodrow Wilson and the League of Nations, and cruelly destroyed during the total war of the forties, when millions more were annihilated outside the field of battle, in cold acts of genocide, than ever before. These traumatic experiences did have their effect on the leaders of the post-war period. Nothing can be understood of Nehru's or Eisenhower's attitude towards modern weapons and the modern weapon industry without reference to the physical dimensions of the two World Wars. In Eisenhower's case, it is the

direct physical experience of an immediate participant; in De Gaulle's case it was the more distorted vision of a frustrated freedom fighter, who suffered the agonies and humiliations of occupation, and whose contribution to liberation had necessarily to be marginal. In the case of Nehru it had meant worrying-away with an imperfect dialogue only with his friends in the Ahmadnagar Fort prison, during the action-packed major war years, when things were happening all around him, in the world and in India, which he could not influence in the slightest degree. These immediate experiences were, of course, important. All these men were sensitive, till the end to modern developments -- technological, political and social; but in many basic reactions they were children of the age of belief in progress. For junior contemporaries of Thomas Alva Edison, Guglielmo Marconi and, most of all, Albert Einstein, there was nothing odd about this belief in the ultimate perfectibility of the human mind.

There are problems about this generalization. Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini, who had grown into giant figures earlier, had simpler but more powerful minds and who ended up also so much earlier, represent another type of personality. They are useful to this analysis only in the fact that their very success as demagogues and mass inciters depended upon the slogans and the labels they learnt in their youth. But their sensibility is cruder than that of Nehru or, say, Attlee.

As far as the Nehru of the Cambridge and the London years was concerned, John Atkinson Hobson and Vladimir Lenin and their ideas concerning imperialism were still startlingly new. The rationalist approach to history as shown, for example, in *The Martyrdom of Man* by Winwoode Reed, was typical of the agonies and hopes of a generation which had succeeded that of the Victorian certainties of Alfred Tennyson and the equally comfortable ambiguities and self-questionings of Robert Browning. To a generalist, intelligent, common reader like Nehru, however, the most powerful influences of that period were, expectedly enough, Shaw and Wells and Bertrand Russell, and their writings. In a more specific fashion, the whole Fabian approach towards dismantling the imperial structure abroad and improving the social situation at home, in the metropolis of the Empire, was most attractive. This sensitive product of Harrow and Cambridge, observing the world from England during a reasonably quiet interlude in the evolution of

the Empire and the Empire's most treasured possession, India, with power alternating easily between the Liberals and the Tories, however, had his own feelings of anger and frustration which surfaced frequently enough in his correspondence with his father at home. But the young man who returned to India in 1912 was good material for political activity, though by no means already an activist in any sense. Many events had to take place during the next five years to convert him into a political agitator, many events and many individual contacts. Of the events, the War, and its impact on Indian society, was vital; of the personalities, Gandhi's overwhelming presence overshadowed many earlier influences like those of G.K. Gokhale, B.G. Tilak, the theosophical movement, Dr. Annie Besant, and the Home Rule League. A very thin strand in his thinking individualized his attitude and distinguished it from all others -- his continuing excitement about World Government and Socialism.

It is also important to place Jawaharlal Nehru in the tradition of the national movement, both intellectually and emotionally. Unlike some of the troubled and troubling personalities which sometimes appear in history, with very few plausible links with their immediate intellectual environment or cultural background, and then go on to make an enormous impact upon an almost inert society, Nehru is very much a product of his time. This is so in almost a global sense; in other words he was a fairly typical product of the 19th century European intellectual climate at its moment of transition into a much more disturbed period, when the earlier values suddenly became meaningless or disappeared overnight and many earlier institutions which had appeared to be durable in their strength, suddenly vanished in the cataclysm of the Great War.

This is, however, at best, only a partial way of looking at Nehru. Perhaps, it would be equally interesting to look at him in the tradition of the Indian national movement which had already produced, during the course of the previous century, some extremely distinguished and articulate leaders. Nehru was very conscious of this recent inheritance and one could even make out a case for seeing his intellectual journey as being an exploration of the distant past in India and in Asia, starting with the imperialist phase in the country's history, with which he was so familiar.

It is a fairly commonplace idea by now that the generation which preceded that of Nehru, which founded the Indian National Congress and guided its destinies in its first 30 years were men of

unusual ability. Men like Pherozeshah Mehta, Romesh Chunder Dutt and Surendra Nath Banerjee or Bipin Chandra Pal were extremely erudite and scholarly persons exploring the colonial situation in its political and economic aspects and, quite independently, attempting to restore the nation's self-respect through a certain useful but not entirely accurate assertion of India's distant past glory. There were many such gentlemen, liberal in attitude, by no means militant or rebellious in intent, but anxious to restore their country to a place of some significance in a strange and, on the whole, contemptuous community of nations. In this task of national justification, so to speak, and the search for a new identity based upon contemporary European parallels and extremely inspiring historical memories — an all pervasive mythology and a living cultural situation which served to link the various ethnic groups in the subcontinent — the political figure was inevitably overshadowed by great religious reformers like Dayanand Saraswati and Swami Vivekananda. Along with these distinguished leaders who were, in one way or another, participating in the changes brought about by the imperial power — responding to them, being irritated by them on occasions, but generally having a positive attitude towards the need for a total social change in the country — there were also the various beneficiary groups of the colonial period.

The leaders of the national movement came primarily from three groups: the religious and social reformers, the agitators within the system, and the militant revolutionaries who sought to destroy the system itself. Of these, the mainstream was represented by the mild mannered and infinitely patient politicians within the legislative structures that had been created by the British in a very gradual and evolutionary manner to meet popular demand and also, along with them, the administrative and professional classes which ran the country for the British, or as lieutenants of the British officials at various levels in the hierarchy and also in the "Native States." Jawaharlal Nehru, in his own individual situation, does personify a certain coexistence of all these attitudes. As a young man, he had had a certain superficial familiarity with theosophy and he never got over his early, exaggerated admiration for Vivekananda. His father, and the extended family of the Nehrus, had made the transition from the Mughal bureaucracy to the British with a certain grace, in spite of inevitable interruptions during a period of trouble in the late 19th century. Motilal Nehru distinguished himself as a legislator and, in

spite of his angry rejection of the offensive and condescending attitude of individual Englishmen, with whom he moved with apparent ease during the course of his professional work, was a beneficiary of the British judicial system transplanted on Indian soil. In other words, he was a representative Indian of the educated upper middle class, just as were almost every single leader of the national movement in all parties and in all parts of the country. There were many examples of bright young men rising from conditions of poverty to great personal prosperity among these, having careers parallel to the famous success stories in Europe and America. But, by the time they became important and began to have a slight influence on decision-making, they had become "collaborationists", though not in any pejorative sense. They were men who belonged to the foreign administration and attempted, with some success, to reconcile individual, familial and societal mores which were basically antithetical or, at best, unrelated to each other in any meaningful sense.

III

The major figures of the national movement, the impressive, larger than life leaders who preceded Nehru, shared this background with him. It is not necessary to single them out one by one, but the representative nature of Jawaharlal's personality can be best seen by comparing him with Dadabhoi Naoroji, Tilak, Gokhale and, of course, Gandhi himself. All these were extremely articulate individuals who made the painful personal discovery that things were not all right beneath the surface of the orderly British administration in India, which claimed to have replaced centuries of chaos and lawlessness. Each one of these four great men stands out for a certain individual quality which raised him above the multitude.

Naoroji was the first to use British methodology and statistics to analyse the reality of economic exploitation in the imperial connection, at a time when there was very little awareness of such economic and political problems within a society. In every sense of the term, he was a pioneer. The "Drain" theory, as elaborated by him even before the Indian National Congress was actually founded in 1885, was an important moment in the development of the economic

theory of imperialism. His participation in the activities of the "Sovereign" Parliament in London was also important, because it showed how, from the very beginning to the very end, there was a certain feeling of ease and even togetherness between the rulers and the ruled in the peculiar Indo-British situation. Even more relevant to the understanding of his time and place is the part played by Naoroji in educating his generation about the need for much deeper investigation of the economic and political problems in British India. In other words, in the rather limited possibilities of that period, he was a pioneer communicator, his audience being strictly limited to educated groups in both India and Britain.

Tilak represents an entirely different type of personality, a major agitational force in himself, a man who had a very clear perception of the need for organized struggle in the campaign for change. He was different from any of his seniors and also his contemporaries in the Congress because of his great achievements in journalism, and that, too, in "vernacular" journalism. This is important. Throughout the Indian national movement there was a certain link between the press and agitational or political protest. It is not possible to think of the former in the absence of the latter. The specific form in which the Indian national movement developed is a product of an authoritarian system of government which permitted a limited degree of freedom of expression. In such a system, Tilak and Gandhi were unusual as practising journalists and not merely as publicists who used the Press. Tilak had also several other aspects which were central to the Indian situation at the turn of the century. He represented the Hindu need for self-assertion and he was brilliantly successful in appealing to this need in his own part of the country. His activities and his philosophy were parallel to, and organically linked to the much better known movement in Bengal. But as a towering national leader he overshadowed the great Bengali patriots.

Gokhale, the third personality on our list, presents an extraordinary contrast to Tilak. In every sense he represents a throw-back to the Naoroji tradition. He functioned within the limits of the constitution; by sheer intellectual brilliance he impressed on the ruling classes in Britain and the élite in India the need for urgent reform. The manner in which he was able to utilize, to the full extent, existing institutions in education and in legislative activity was truly creative. He had his well-known feud with Tilak, but, in the longer perspective of history, one sees these two giants much more

than outstanding embodiments of "extremism" and "moderation" in collision. As someone had remarked of the relation between religion and science in ideal conditions, these men were "beautiful enemies" in the best sense of the term. Because of his moderation and his easy comfort with assemblies, delegations and committees, Gokhale was most notable for his belief in the importance of institutions in an organized society. He was himself a reasonably successful institution-builder at various levels in the India of his time. The Servants of India Society was, let us admit, only a minor development in the Indian national movement, but it represented values which transcended Gokhale's generation. In an inevitable sense it led on to Gandhi and his organizational activities.

The relationship between Gokhale and Gandhi is, of course, well-known. In every sense, but the formal and the liberal one, Gandhi was Gokhale's chosen heir in the Indian national movement, even though the relationship between the two men was not as simple as that between preceptor and disciple. Gandhi had infinite respect for his senior colleagues and his return to India was, in a sense, inspired by Gokhale; but the two men were essentially different personalities. What links them in retrospect is their sheer personal charisma and total commitment to the national cause. In every other respect they were different; their attitudes were different; their techniques were totally different and it is difficult to imagine an effective partnership between the two, had Gokhale survived.

While this is eminently true, it is a fact that, in spite of the differences, Gandhi and Gokhale were necessary to each other and, in retrospect, for the national movement. In an essentially related development, the same mutual need is true of Tilak and Gandhi. More interesting is the fact that Gandhi and Tilak were both grass roots activists, agitators of a type entirely different from Naoroji and Gokhale. It is here that the nexus between journalism, agitation and struggle comes in. Gandhi and Tilak were both practising journalists of the first order. Throughout his long career in South Africa and in India, Gandhi was a compulsive articulator of ideas and emotions — of dogma most of the time, but also doubts and dilemmas sometimes — through his articles in *Indian Opinion* in Durban, in *Young India* and, finally, in *Harijan*. It is impossible to think of Gandhi without his journalistic activities, just as it is impossible to think of Tilak without his *Kesari* in the background.

IV

It was, thus, a fairly rich and fertile tradition of publicity and communication in all the available fora which Jawaharlal Nehru inherited when he became a major participant in the national movement. There is nothing unusually new or exceptionally original about the need for a successful politician anywhere, in any society, to be an efficient communicator. The really interesting thing about Nehru as a communicator is that, among many articulate people, he stands out as an exceptional achiever in a rather crowded field. Among his own immediate contemporaries there were men like K.M. Munshi and Acharya Narendra Deva who were gifted communicators in their own way. There was the special case of C. Rajagopalachari who was a tremendously successful practitioner, particularly in Tamil. Nehru himself was happy using English as his medium even though, over the long years, he became quite adept in speech-making in Hindustani; but as a communicator of ideas, in his books, letters and speeches, his medium of communication was essentially English.

This is something which is distinctly true also of two of his very great near-contemporaries – Subhas Chandra Bose and M.N. Roy. Their personalities as well as their careers were totally different from Nehru's; but they, too, were extremely self-sufficient, confident and assured leaders of men and movements who spent all their lives in attempting to change political reality through communication, agitation and propaganda. In spite of his total commitment to Mahatma Gandhi's strategy of peaceful revolution, Jawaharlal Nehru had an individual and recognizably different attitude towards social change from that of his leader; as different as the more well-known and sometimes abrasive divergences projected by Roy and Bose. Roy was only two or three years older than Jawaharlal; Bose was almost a decade younger; but the three do represent a certain generational commonality which distinguishes them from men like Vallabhbhai Patel and Rajagopalachari who had a much greater intellectual subordination to the Gandhian approach. It is also a question of personality. All the three younger men were rebels of a sort, but so were the older colleagues of Gandhi; it was a common anger with the state of things as they were in colonial India that moved them and dragged them from different professions, various situations of affluence, comfort and ease, to the dilemmas and

uncertainties of the satyagraha movement. But Roy, Nehru and Bose had direct personal experience of developments abroad; Roy at greater depth than the other two, extending over more than 20 years. Nehru had his own late introduction to European revolutionary developments and their link with India's colonial problem; Bose spent a few extremely significant years in Europe in the thirties, equally affected by the interrelationship between the retreating empires of Europe and the new forces which were emerging to challenge them. Expectedly enough, with such divergent outlooks and interests in intellectual analysis, their conclusions also were different; and their careers diverged asymptotically over the decades.

V

It is not merely because of his position within the Indian national movement in relation to his great predecessors and contemporaries that Jawaharlal Nehru becomes interesting as a representative political figure, a communicator and an agitator who learnt his trade through long years of apprenticeship, and finally ended up by becoming the accepted instructor, so to speak, in democratic values and the scientific temper, to a whole nation. To appreciate this, mention of some analogues would be useful.

Chronology is a confusing thing. Early deaths sometimes make people appear to recede into the distant past. We tend to forget, for example, that Thomas Carlyle and John Keats were born in the same year, 1795. Keats died in 1821 while Carlyle lived 60 years longer. Quite properly, one is a young romantic and a contemporary of Napoleon Bonaparte, while the other is a late-Victorian sage. This is being mentioned only to recall two or three important facts about Nehru and his contemporaries. Hitler and Eliot were born around the same time as Jawaharlal. Hitler died when he was 56 after successfully destroying the old world and, fortunately for all of us, failing completely in reshaping it according to his desire. Nehru came to power after years of agonized and apparently hopeless battling against odds in his 58th year — two years after Hitler had died. Eliot had become the symbol of modern literature by the time he was 35.

These are interesting but not unusual parallels. In Germany itself, an apparently mediocre city administrator who was 13 years

older than Hitler lived on to become an extremely successful leader of West Germany for more than 15 years after the War. In purely chronological terms Konrad Adenauer was a sort of Carlyle to Hitler's Keats. In an earlier generation, Gandhi and Lenin were exact contemporaries. Lenin died when he was 55, after successfully completing a revolution in one major country and initiating a social and political process which continues to influence the shape of the world community. By the time he was 55, Gandhi already had tremendous achievements to his credit in two countries — South Africa and India; but he had to live more than 20 years more to complete his particular revolution.

Jawaharlal Nehru belongs to this league, but what makes him particularly interesting are two specific qualities which distinguished him from almost everybody else. Firstly, and most significantly, he was a late developer. He was never mediocre and dull but, before 1929, when he was 40, he was essentially a marginal figure. The next 10 years saw him flowering as a major political force in India, (and this distinguished him from all his immediate peers), as an extremely articulate and lucid chronicler of the past and commentator on the present. By the end of the thirties he had an extremely sharp, identifiable profile in the eyes of both the Indian elite and the Indian masses, as also among many concerned people in a troubled world, bothered by economic chaos and political confusion in almost all parts of the globe. The most vital aspect of this development was during these technically middle years, when Nehru continued to be sensitive to new ideas and excited by developments, which were quite different from the influences which had shaped his attitudes in the years before the First World War.

This is important. Nehru was not only a late developer, he was also a continuous developer. It is this which made him, in an odd manner, contemporary, in a rather charming manner, with two generations junior to him. Also, his compulsive need to talk about things, worry about things, and teach other people about his own minor discoveries and excitements in history and politics, his explorations into the less-frequented parts of modern thought, made him a sort of perpetual student. It is something deeper than youth or joy of life; there are many young people who are atrophied well before their time. It is a certain essentially educational quality which he shares with some of the great popularizers of ideas in history. It was in every sense a normal gradual process of self-discovery. He

began by writing short, simple letters to his daughter which formed a little book at the end of one term in prison. These letters were about ancient history or pre-history and this gave him the idea of embarking on a much longer enterprise about world history. All his major books, written as books, or rather, to put it more accurately, written as brief lessons or short chapters which evolved into continuous narratives, were the result of a long period of gestation in thinking and self-education over several years. In one sense, he was the product of his times. He was a junior contemporary of men like H.G. Wells, trying to repeat what they had done in their own language, from a definitely Indian, Indo-centric but anxiously non-chauvinist, point of view. The great popularizers of science, history and economics during the early years of the century connected with the Fabian Movement in Britain, the Rationalist Press Association and the Thinkers' Library with writers like Winwoode Reed, Ernest Haeckel, James Jeans, Arthur Eddington, C.E.M. Joad, G.D.H. Cole and also, of course, Bernard Shaw, form a sort of international milieu in which he felt completely at home.

The purely personal habits of self-discipline, orderliness and the need to occupy oneself usefully during the long, lonely years of imprisonment, compelled an engagement in literary work along with the daily chores, yoga, physical exercise and gardening. Thus, over the days, the months and the years, long books came to be written with a distinct individual flavour and an attractive enough style. The original audience was one single individual, his own very young daughter. But, by the time the first long book was published — *Glimpses of World History* — he was developing into a conscious communicator and educator, a "vulgariser" in the original, nicer sense of the term.

VI

In the 20th century world political scene, two men have a certain interesting similarity with Nehru in entirely different ways. Both were leaders of the English-speaking world, Franklin Roosevelt and Winston Churchill. Their development, their almost manipulative attitude towards public opinion, their success in moulding public attitudes at a difficult time against strong and deep-rooted popular beliefs, made them interesting leaders at a time, when the use of the

spoken and written word was undergoing a major transformation because of the invention of the radio. An examination of their failures as well as their successes in situations totally different from that of India would be helpful in understanding Nehru, just as the failures and successes of the earlier demagoguery of Hitler and Mussolini would help us understand a little better what precisely made Nehru so effective on such a continuous basis, over such a long time, in a developing society.

This requires a little more elaboration, because Roosevelt and Churchill, in spite of their great war-time partnership, had basically different careers. Roosevelt was, perhaps, the most successful among the democratic leaders of our century in persuading his countrymen to accept major economic and organizational reforms which affected their immediate lives. After his dazzling success as a political and economic reformer, he went on to repeat the same success in a much more subtle and tactful manner, by preparing his people for what he saw as the inevitable war with Germany and Japan. Both achievements were examples of successful persuasion. In Roosevelt's case, the method of persuasion was most effective in the use of the new medium of the radio or wireless, as people used to still sometimes call it. It is difficult to recapture now the impact of radio broadcasts to scattered populations during the thirties and during the war years. Roosevelt's Fireside Chats came, in the development of modern media, between the speech reported in print and the television address.

Churchill had an entirely different experience. He was, from his earliest youth, one of the most eloquent politicians in England. Long before the World War, when he was only in his thirties, he became known as a major public speaker, an orator almost in the grand tradition. He had a long and sad period of exile in the thirties, when he went against the stream in his own country. Ultimately, his people came round to accept him when he was almost an old man. During the war years he provided leadership and communicated enormous confidence at a time when every sane argument went against such confidence. As he himself said, all that he did was to voice the feelings of his people; he provided 'the shout'. Churchill had a certain fluency in writing which makes him nearer Nehru than Roosevelt. In fact, during the fallow years Churchill supported himself and his family by writing, just as during the long years of imprisonment, Jawaharlal discovered within himself a certain

intellectual authority and ability to write supple and lucid English prose, of which he had not been aware earlier.

However, these parallels are imperfect. Jawaharlal made magnificent use of the radio two or three times in his career, but his primary instrument of communication continued to be the direct physical utterance addressed to small or large audiences. Like Gandhi, he was not an over-fluent or facile speaker. He taught himself to speak, both in English and Hindustani, because of his urgent need to communicate. It was the age of small crowds in the villages and the larger crowds in the towns; it was the age of the microphone. In the twenties and thirties he became, like many others in the national movement, comfortable in communicating with ordinary men in a language which they would understand. But slowly, very gradually, he became interested in developing more difficult and subtler ideas, even when talking to the "illiterate masses" and, thus, by the early thirties he had established a continuous bond of affection and sympathy with the people of the country -- wherever he went, either in his native eastern UP or in far off Assam or Madras.

Speeches, both direct, and, later on, in printed form, remained, to the end, Jawaharlal's primary means of communication. This trait he shared with most of the leaders of the national struggle under Gandhi since the colonial environment permitted only limited expression to opposition views, both within the legislatures and outside. The climate in India was entirely different from that of almost every other colony in the European empires, except Ceylon. The existence of a fettered but lively press and a large reading public and a much larger and concerned non-reading public, made possible the task of political education and agitation in strictly non-revolutionary terms. This is, of course, quite different from the earlier traumatic experience in India of the first decade of the century, when nationalist terrorism was met with ruthless oppression, driving all political pamphleteering underground. Later, in the thirties, the Communist Party had the same experience. It is important to distinguish this specific translucent situation as far as free speech is involved. In most of the other colonies, like Indonesia or the African countries, there was very little comparable discussion of national problems extending to the ultimate question of severing links with the Empire.

One last point has to be emphasized. Quite apart from this

animated domestic situation, there is always, as a part of the Indian national struggle, the existence of a wider and diffused but very real external audience. This, of course, was mostly true of Gandhi and had recently been brought forcefully home to us in the slightly distorted images of the Attenborough film. Gandhi was, of course, a major phenomenon and he was always big news in the thirties and forties — in England, in the United States and in Europe. Much less dramatic was the slow recognition by the outside world of Jawaharlal Nehru as an essentially modern leader of a national movement in a backward country who spoke in a language which people could understand in the western nations. This particular impression has to be distinguished from the other more powerful, more sympathetic link with the so-called progressive groups in Europe and also in America. By the time of the Second World War, there was an awareness of Jawaharlal as a distinct political personality, with opinions and ideas different from that of Gandhi. The whole debate of fascism and appeasement had something to do with this. It was an essentially minor phenomenon in intrinsic terms, but it is necessary to understand it before one begins to appreciate Nehru's remarkable success, during his years of power, in talking to the people of the world on non-alignment in the most inclement political climate possible.

Apprenticeship Years

For about 13 years after his return from England at the end of his education, Jawaharlal Nehru was slowly, reluctantly, becoming prepared for a senior leadership role in the Indian national movement. It was not a planned or inevitable process, but had its origins in the circumstances surrounding his family life in Allahabad, at the centre of which was his relationship with his father, so affectionate and understanding, but with a certain tension which was bound to be there when points of view diverged rather widely. His own personal ambitions, or lack of them rather, were also a factor. During the first two or three years of his stay in India we get an impression of a happy enough, contented enough existence, increasingly drawn to the legal profession, but gently resisting the attempt of his father to make him more interested in it, both as an affluent profession as well as a commitment to a certain intellectual

discipline. When his father, for example, asked him to write a book on law, he was clear in his negative response. He could not see himself as a practising lawyer all his life, just as, earlier in England, when the question came up for discussion, he did not see himself as an ICS officer in the dispensation which obtained in British India in those days (on this latter point, father and son were of the same mind).

These were not uneventful years for the world and the country; the Great War had begun and India was involved. The political scene which had been dull for several years because of arguments between the "moderates" and the "extremists" began slowly to be enlivened by 1916 when Mrs Besant and Tilak became active in a specific response to discussions about India's future which took place both in India and in Britain. There is not much evidence of Nehru's active interest in all this, except that he was loyally supporting his father in all his activities, and also, in no uncertain terms, exhibiting his much greater sympathy with the "extremist" point of view than with the "moderates" position. Jawaharlal discusses this in his autobiography and the matter is really a simple one. There was the generation gap and there was also the fact that the previous decade in India had witnessed the emergence of a political trend stretching all the way from total, indeed effusive, collaboration with the foreign power to terrorist activities all over the country, not very frequent, but frequent enough to bother the liberal sections of nationalist opinion who wanted change, who were angry with the status quo in the British connection, but quite sceptical of individual militancy or clandestine activities. The tone of the discussion was very restrained; most of it at a cerebral level, but over the years Jawaharlal did succeed in persuading his father to distance himself to some extent from the "happy" liberals.

When he looked back upon this period, Jawaharlal attributed the change in rather personalized terms to the impact of Gandhi whose entirely original, confident and activist modes of political activity appealed to Motilal at a time when he had become increasingly frustrated with endless talking and palavering in the Congress sessions. Jawaharlal compares Motilal to the epicure and Gandhi to the saint and, looking back in 1934, feels that, after all, there was nothing inherently improbable in their getting together.

He was attracted by Gandhi as a man, and that no doubt was a factor which influenced him. Nothing could have made him a close associate of a person he disliked, for he was always strong in his likes and dislikes. But it was a strange combination – the saint, the stoic, the man of religion, one who went through life rejecting what it offers in the way of sensation and physical pleasure, and one who had been a bit of an epicure, who accepted life and welcomed and enjoyed its many sensations, and cared little for what may come in the hereafter. In the language of psychoanalysis it was a meeting of an introvert with an extrovert. Yet there were common bonds, common interests, which drew the two together and kept up, even when, in later years, their politics diverged, a close friendship between them.

Walter Pater, in one of his books, mentions how the saint and the epicure, starting from opposed points, travelling different paths, one with a religious temper, the other opposed to it, and yet both with an outlook which, in its stress and earnestness, is very unlike any lower development of temper, often understand each other better than either would understand the mere man of the world – and sometimes they actually touch.

This passage merits attention primarily because it is something of a contrived argument, the extrapolation into a fairly normal relationship of stresses and strains which really did not belong to the personalities of either Motilal Nehru or Gandhi. It becomes much easier to understand when one sees it as a subconscious attempt on Jawaharlal's part to externalize the conflict within his own personality between the prosperous, dilettante and the newly emerging strain of militancy, frustration and anger at the political situation in India. In his own personal and political development over the next five or six years, this conflict was expressed in the contrast between Gandhi's terrific, almost daemonic, narrow, all-consuming commitment to the ultimate cause and to the immediate method, to the larger designs as well as to many odd details, and his own much wider view of the world, which comprehended an interested, concerned awareness of physical and intellectual changes throughout the world – responding to them continually through books, through careful thinking and through worthwhile conversation with his peers wherever he could locate them.

This is rather important. There is no evidence at all that

throughout his career Nehru ever regretted the hours and days of intense self-discipline which he spent upon the spinning-wheel. That he was able to combine this practice with his varied intellectual interests, is something which contributed to making his personality as effective and as impressive as it turned out to be during his years of political authority and influence earlier, and later in the actual exercise of power. The enforced leisure of prison life and the availability of a selected number of books instead of large libraries made all this easier. But throughout his association with Gandhi, and later, Jawaharlal was able to retreat into himself and regain tranquility by complete commitment to some aspects of Gandhi's daily life, particularly spinning the *charkha*. Anyone who reads his immediate notes and jottings and retrospective writings can see that this part of Gandhi became a part of himself, without any conscious decriminalization.

It is really, therefore, his own personal, internal conflict he is talking about when he brings in the saint and the epicure here. The reliance on Walter Pater is important. There are other references in Nehru's writings to Pater, the most well-known being the rather smug and self-conscious analogy between the Mona Lisa and India in *The Discovery of India*. Pater was, in fact, one of the writers whose books he continued to borrow when he was in jail. Pater, Oscar Wilde and the earlier W.B. Yeats influenced the young student in Cambridge and slowly, unconsciously, Nehru discovered in himself potentialities as a writer with a certain pleasant familiarity with English prose. He found it slightly interesting, not more than that, to go back to these early excitements. At a much deeper level, of course, Cambridge and life in London during his student days in England, he had acquired a forward-looking, positivistic, optimistic attitude which proved to be more deep-rooted than the rather pleasant, attractive, flirtatious interest in turn-of-the-century literary fashions.

We have some documentary evidence available of the young Nehru's thinking about politics in general and about developments in India in his correspondence with his father. It is a fairly normal, expectedly indignant reaction to an essentially unjust political situation. It is clear that he entertained no extraordinary interest in politics either in England or in Europe or at home in India. One can see that he lived his own fairly contented life, reasonably at home with his English friends, but having genuinely vital links only with his

immediate relatives who happened to be also studying in England. He had a normal successful academic life with no dazzling achievement to his credit and no failure to give him an opportunity to rationalize personal frustration as group deprivation. The only really interesting thing about this period, from our limited point of view of studying Jawaharlal as a communicator of ideas and a political activist, is his happy and positive response to good speakers, articulate men, people who were able to speak easily and fluently, even when they had nothing much to speak about. We find him, for example, admiring Bernard Shaw as an able speaker; he is even impressed by a rather obscure but successful religious preacher, Father Bernard Vaughan. There are only fleeting references to visiting Indian politicians; a paper by Lajpat Rai impresses him. There is no evidence at all of his own desire to participate in the proceedings of the Indian Majlis. He was happy to be a very passive, formal participant.

This, however, is not true of his interest in current Indian politics. His correspondence with his father shows lively interest in the Surat Congress and the Great Debate between the Extremists and the Moderates. He agrees with his father about the inadequacy of the Morley-Minto Reforms. His concern is about immediate problems involving the Indian students in Cambridge. There was resistance on the part of the authorities to increase the quota of admissions to Cambridge. He does not, however, seem to have been in any way active about this. In fact, there was no evidence at all that there was any activity which he could join. Similarly he becomes interested in a proposal by the War Secretary, Richard Haldane, about recruitment to the newly formed Officer Training Corps. He was very anxious to join it, thus indicating the beginning of a life-long interest in the value of military discipline for young people and for himself personally. It did not come to anything because the British were evasive about admitting Indians. Of some interest, as an example of his assessment of politicians in general, is his comment on the former American President, Theodore Roosevelt, when he visited Cambridge: "No one could possibly mistake him for a quiet sort of individual".

In fact there is always this slight sensitivity to loudness in manners, in tone and in language, which never left him.

Among those who came to us were Bepin Chandra Pal, Lajpat Rai and G.K. Gokhale. We met Bepin Pal in one of our sitting-rooms. There were only a dozen of us present but he thundered at us as if he was addressing a mass meeting of ten thousand. The volume of noise was so terrific that I could hardly follow what he was saying. Lalaji spoke to us in a more reasonable way and I was impressed by his talk. I wrote to father that I preferred Lalaji's address to Bepin Pal's and this pleased him for he had no liking in those days for the firebrands of Bengal.

One can see that it is not only political attitudes which control reactions to individuals and views, but also a certain commonality of outlook or a shared personal culture or style. Motilal was a very persuasive and powerful correspondent and his son generally tended to go by his views, especially about his scepticism on the accepted demagogic or rhetorical style which was the required norm in political meetings in India.

About the traumatic developments in Indian politics in the first decade of the century, Jawaharlal Nehru, the university student, had very little immediate comment to offer. He was, as he recalls in his *Autobiography*, impressed by the Bengal movement and also by the defeat of Russia by Japan. One single comment of a negative nature on agrarian disturbances in the Punjab deserves note, merely because it shows how much a part of the slowly evolving political system in India he saw himself to be. "Really", he wrote, "these sorts of occurrences make one despair of ever seeing a free and united India in spite of one's enthusiasm for it. I do not blame Morley for all that he has done except for Lajpat Rai's deportation."

In fact, Jawaharlal has himself analysed with some wry detachment his own political attitude towards Indian developments in those days in his *Autobiography*. Very early in the book he talks about the "pure nationalism" which came to him through theosophy when he was a young lad of 13. Later, in England, he was certainly not anti-political. But the tenor of day-to-day life in the university did not occasion any serious discussion on political theory or the future of India as a part of the future of the planet.

My general attitude to life at the time was a vague kind of cyrenaicism, partly natural to youth, partly the influence of Oscar Wilde and Walter Pater. It is easy and gratifying to give a long

Greek name to the desire for a soft life and pleasant experiences. But there was something more in it than that for I was not particularly attracted to a soft life. Not having the religious temper and disliking the repressions of religion, it was natural for me to seek some other standard. I was superficial and did not go deep down into anything. And so the aesthetic side of life appealed to me, and the idea of going through life worthily, not indulging it in the vulgar way, but still making the most of it and living a full and many-sided life attracted me. I enjoyed life and I refused to see why I should consider it a thing of sin.

As was suggested above, it was really literary England which influenced this student of biological sciences more than anything else. There are other writers mentioned by him when discussing his intellectual interests during this period but they are mostly writers on psychology and sex. The great political philosophers apparently do not excite his immediate interest. That was to come later.

This late introduction to fundamental political concepts was in some ways characteristic of the late starter that Jawaharlal Nehru was in many things. It could have been a major disadvantage, but for his other, not unconnected quality of freshness of interest and liveliness of curiosity in all things throughout his life. It will be noticed that he refers to that particular quality in the passage just quoted. It is, however, very important and distinguishes Nehru from many other senior politicians not only in India but elsewhere. There are some outstanding intellectuals who have strayed into politics, like Woodrow Wilson, for example. Most of them, however, are strangers to the political game as Harold Laski was. Jawaharlal Nehru and, to a considerable extent, Krishna Menon, in his later years, had an intelligent concern with political ideas without being overtly intellectual.

I believe this is what led Nehru to become interested in socialism, not directly through the socialist "testaments" and manifestoes, but through Bertrand Russell and other popular writers particularly of history and economics. His excitement concerning Karl Marx and Marxism and the personality of Lenin is very real but he seems to have experienced it very much later in life than was usual — when the obtrusive political situation in Europe and also in colonial India made it necessary for him to understand it. And in understanding it, his need to reexpress to himself new ideas was a crucial factor. To a

great extent he achieved a certain clarity of outlook about the ambiguities of socialism in theory and practice almost at the time when these were being experienced in the Soviet Union and also in the leftist movements in Europe.

He was, thus, in those early years, neither a voluble writer nor a concerned political thinker. He was certainly not comfortable in public speaking. He talks about his general shyness in public speaking when he was in London in 1911. His first formal public speech in Hindi was made in 1916 and he was embarrassed by Tej Bahadur Sapru's effusive reaction.

There is very little evidence of the future graceful writer in these early years. One sentence written as long ago as 1908 about his feelings as a stranger in England seems to presage the future chronicler of the Indian experience: "In spite of the home-like feelings I am constantly reminded of the fact that I am a foreigner, an intruder."

This feeling of alienation is part of the whole Indo-British equation during the imperial epoch. Jawaharlal is amused at the manner in which the Cambridge Chancellor was studiously cold to the Maharaja of Bikaner and the Aga Khan in 1910. He notices that the Chancellor did not deign to stand up for the natives even though they were princes. He is aware of the Indian problem in the Transvaal in South Africa but does not seem to be as yet aware of Gandhi's role.

II

This was the background when, during the middle of the War, in 1916, almost immediately after his marriage, Jawaharlal became actively interested in the Indian national movement.

The period between 1915 and 1918 is seminal in the history of our freedom struggle. Gokhale dies and Gandhi promises himself that he will continue the great man's mission; they had both so much to do with each other on the South African question and, derivatively, on the bigger Indian problem. In actual practice, however, Gandhi found that he had to strike out on his own, after the one year of travelling through India and meeting the people of the country face-to-face which he had promised his mentor. This was also the period when the last major possible chance of forging

permanent Hindu-Muslim unity was won and lost in the Lucknow Pact. The return of Tilak to political activity and the total withdrawal of the older moderates into inactivity made it possible for Dr Annie Besant to be at the centre of the stage with the newly established Home Rule League.

It is an amply recorded story and there is no need to go over the details here, except to note that this was the period when, at the very beginning of his initiation into active nationalist politics, Jawaharlal came into contact with and was overwhelmed by Mahatma Gandhi's personality and his message, particularly the message of non-violence. The period between 1916 and 1926, when in an entirely different psychological situation, as a recognized major agitator of the younger generation, Nehru decided to take time off from political activity and went to Europe to find a cure for his wife's illness in 1926, is really the period of his initiation into politics. At the beginning of that period he was still not entirely persuaded that he should be totally committed to politics. The first three years before the end of the War gave him an opportunity to get himself involved in the dialogue with Britain on the future relationship with India and also, even more important, the related dialogue with the Muslims and M.A. Jinnah on an agreed nationalist position. By 1919, the situation had become simpler and had crystallized; Mahatma Gandhi had taken over.

The next four or five years find Jawaharlal becoming more and more committed to Gandhi's strategy of non-violence and satyagraha. What is interesting during this period is not what Nehru shares with Gandhi and his other senior colleagues, both in the Congress and the Khilafat Movement, but his own specifically individual experiences. These are important because there is a certain healthy, local, native, indigenous flavour about his political activity during this period which students of his life acquainted with the later internationalized phase are apt to forget.

Jawaharlal Nehru discovered during these years something of the reality of the Indian peasantry and also became familiar with details of the day-to-day living of his fellow-countrymen in the United Provinces, more particularly in two or three eastern districts very near to where he came from. His encounters with peasant activity in Partabgarh, Rae Bareilly and Faizabad in 1920 made him, for the first time, aware of the precious constituency which he had inherited, so to speak, from history. This was something which came to him with

all the excitement of a new revelation. The decency, the simplicity and the utter faith in the urban politician's ability to solve their problems exhibited by these simple men and women, who trekked many miles in search of a solution to their difficulties in the city of Allahabad, drew him, so to speak, into actual politics in India. Until then it was all, in the best sense of the term, theoretical and emotional. Now there was a feeling of physical immediacy.

During the next one year, this interest in the problems of the UP kisans became a major preoccupation of Nehru's political outlook. During these 12 months, there were some significant developments in his political evolution. For the first time, he was involved in a political "incident", when, in Rae Bareilly, some peasants were shot down by the police on the bank of a small river and he talked to a gathering on the opposite bank, trying to make the peasants understand the need for restraint. In almost a spiritual sense he now realized the inevitability, in Indian conditions, of Gandhi's creed of non-violence. About this incident, he wrote:

It is easy to blame the kisans. I would beg of their critics to transplant themselves from their armchairs for a while to the banks of the river Sai and imagine what I saw on the afternoon of the 7th January. Thousands of kisans were gathered there. The police and military were near them, armed and ready for all contingencies, and on the other side of the little river blood was being shed, the blood of their kith and kin, bone of their bone and flesh of their flesh. What must they have thought at the time? How behaved? Cowards would have run away. The rash and the violent would have lost their head and charged the police and the military. And who, according to the ethics of the modern world, would have blamed them if they had sought to rescue their brethren under fire? How would their critics have behaved?

I know not what they thought but I saw and marvelled at their demeanour. They behaved as brave men, calm and unruffled in the face of danger. I do not know how they felt but I know what my feelings were. For a moment my blood was up, non-violence was almost forgotten – but for a moment only. The thought of the great leader, who by God's goodness has been sent to lead us to victory, came to me, and I saw the kisans seated and standing near me, less excited, more peaceful than I was – and the moment of weakness passed. I spoke to them in all humility on

non-violence -- I, who needed the lesson more than they -- and they heeded me and peacefully dispersed. On the other side of the river, however, men lay dead and dying. It was a similar crowd with a similar object. Yet they poured their hearts' blood before they would disperse.

Another specifically personal experience of Jawaharlal's during this episode is his encounter with a rather odd individual, Baba Ramachandra, who had organized the peasant movement in the eastern districts of the UP. He had returned from Fiji and became popular throughout the peasantry in this region through the purely religious technique of recitations of Tulsi Ramayana. He was, thus, an entirely different phenomenon from either Nehru or Gandhi. He was an immensely successful, wholly contemporary, native phenomenon and used peasant rituals and beliefs to organize them. As Jawaharlal notes in his *Autobiography*.

These districts formed part of the kingdom of Ayodhya -- and the favourite book of the masses is Tulsidas's *Hindi Ramayana*. Many people knew hundreds of verses from this by heart. A recitation of this book and appropriate quotations from it was a favourite practice of Ramachandra. Having organised the peasantry to some extent he made all manner of promises to them, vague and nebulous but full of hope for them. He had no programme of any kind and when he had brought them to a pitch of excitement he tried to shift the responsibility to others. This led him to bring a number of peasants to Allahabad to interest people there in the movement.

Ramachandra continued to take a prominent part in the agrarian movement for another year and served two or three sentences in prison, but he turned out later to be a very irresponsible and unreliable person.

It was by talking to peasants, listening to them, understanding their problems and trying to explain to them the Congress programme and Gandhi's insistence on non-violence that Nehru developed his own personality as a political activist at the grassroots level. Because of his impulsive nature, he did commit mistakes which he regretted. There was, for example, the incident in Faizabad when peasants turned violent. Nehru went to them and -- by now the

empathy ~~between the aristocrat from Allahabad~~ and the kisan was almost total - addressed them and scolded them in characteristic fashion for violating the strict Gandhian principle of respect for other people's property:

The peasants of some villages went and looted the property of a taluqadar. It transpired subsequently that they had been incited to do so by the servants of another zamindar who had some kind of feud with the taluqadar. The poor ignorant peasants were actually told that it was the wish of Mahatma Gandhi that they should loot and they willingly agreed to carry out this behest, shouting "Mahatma Gandhi ki jai" in the process.

In his enthusiasm Jawaharlal called upon those who actually participated in looting to raise their hands.

And strange to say, there, in the presence of numerous police officials, about two dozen hands went up. That meant certain trouble for them.

When I spoke to many of them privately later and heard their artless story of how they had been misled, I felt very sorry for them and I began to regret having exposed these foolish and simple folk to long terms of imprisonment. But the people who suffered were not just two or three dozen. The chance was too good to be lost and full advantage was taken of the occasion to crush the agrarian movement in that district. Over a thousand arrests were made, and the district gaol was overcrowded, and the trial went on for the best part of a year. Many died in prison during the trial. Many others received long sentences and in later years, when I went to prison, I came across some of them, boys and young men, spending their youth in prison.

The Ramachandra episode is important because it was one of the very few occasions when traditional beliefs were utilized for political mobilization. The normal technique of the Congress was through political propaganda, study circles, circulars, all in contemporary style. The only concession to the peasant mind was in the fairly simple vocabulary in presentation, both in speeches and in the pamphlets. This was true of not only propaganda among kisans, but also about the more immediately significant urban political agitation

centering on more nationalist targets like Swaraj, repeal of the Rowlatt Act and protests against the Punjab wrongs.

It is, of course, easy to get confused about this, both for the masses and the political workers on the one side and the beleaguered bureaucrats on the other. Gandhi's frank interest in religion and his expression of political ideas in religious terms appeared to some bureaucrats, at least during the Non-cooperation movement, as being potentially conspiratorial in character. Jawaharlal learnt with some amusement that there were dark rumours in Allahabad about a proposed insurrection on a day of religious significance.

There was nothing in it, of course. It is being mentioned here only because of the rather exaggerated importance now being given by the younger historians of the Indian nationalist movement to such popular beliefs about Mahatma Gandhi's miraculous and supernatural powers, particularly in some parts of eastern UP, this time in Gorakhpur. This was very much of a minor exception in the mainstream politics in the country. Most of the activity was through public meetings and the content of the propaganda was pointedly rational.

III

The importance of these meetings in the UP and the kisan conferences Jawaharlal addressed in his evolution as a political leader was that, by the middle-fifties, he had become, in his own way, quite an expert in Congress organization and propaganda. A good example of his type of public speaking — easy, relaxed, educative and totally free of bombast — is his Presidential Address to the Bundelkhand Political Conference in June 1921. It is a fairly detailed analysis of the political and economic situation and, more specifically, the problems posed by Hindu-Muslim friction against the background of the Khilafat Movement. It is this style of patient elucidation of novel ideas to a very simple and trusting audience which characterized Jawaharlal Nehru's public speaking throughout his entire career. This particular speech is interesting because it precedes his long evolution as a political analyst and popularizer during the late twenties and early-thirties. One can see here the able interpreter of difficult ideas to an uninformed audience. The great

communicator is already here, for all practical purposes.

A superb example of a rational explanation of the inevitability of non-violence in the struggle for Swaraj in the conditions of the British Empire in India can be seen in the following passage:

The meaning of Swaraj is what I told you just now. I want that kind of Swaraj. In my opinion, only that is Swaraj. Our elders know this and the Congress is trying to get this kind of Swaraj. They have resolved to get this kind of Swaraj. You should know that there can be no real understanding between us and the British Government, between us and any other nation. In my opinion, we should continue the agitation of non-cooperation as long as we do not get Swaraj or do not become perfect masters of this country. The leaders of our country have indicated the way to Swaraj. You know that other countries had waged wars to get their independence, you also know that some nations had to unsheathe their swords to get their independence. They have killed others and have been killed by others to win the independence of their country. You also know men in this country who drew their swords for their country and their religion and have killed others and have been killed by others. They can be called neither wicked men nor cowards. Though it is possible that some men may say that they were not good, none can say that they were not brave. But the present condition of our country is such that the people have not even touched a sword for a long time. You have not as much as seen any weapon. You have become incapacitated. How can you fight and how can you get your independence? In these days men fight with guns. Even if you had swords, you could not have done anything; even if you could manipulate guns, you would not have been successful. In modern warfare, bombs are thrown from airships. If you have swords and guns they are useless. Thousands of you can be killed by one bomb. Therefore, we cannot fight with the English in any way. If I fight the English with a sword, then I think I would be defeated. Besides this, Mahatma Gandhi, who is our leader at this time, is of the opinion that we should not draw swords under any circumstances. He is of the opinion that we should always follow non-violence... There is no other course open to us. If we follow any other course the independence of our country would be very far from us. We should, therefore, keep away from the

sword and give up the intention of drawing it. The other course has been shown to us by our leaders and Congressmen. That is the course of non-cooperation.

Apart from making such speeches and addressing peasant gatherings, Jawaharlal was continuously involved in the organization of the UP Congress Committee. As such, he was one among the many functionaries all over India who were launching on the task of national mobilization with the help of straight propaganda, supported by the links established through Gandhi's constructive programme. Later on, this would lead to a central role for Nehru in the All-India Congress Committee, when he became its General Secretary, a position he held for several years.

It is during this period also that Nehru, as Chairman of the Allahabad Municipal Board, had his brief acquaintance with the problems of administration in the colonial environment. This is only a minor interlude in Nehru's political development — minor when compared to the much greater significance of Subhas Chandra Bose's association with the Calcutta Corporation in his personal evolution as a leader of the people.

Slowly Jawaharlal was perfecting the technique of propaganda in a difficult situation. One had to keep flagging spirits alive, minimize major defeats and generally cheer every one up in moments of dark gloom. One of the circulars sent out by the UP Congress Committee to its District Secretaries in 1922 is a good example of Nehru's adroit manipulation of fact and rhetoric in such matters:

We know we have enthusiasm and courage. Only one thing more is necessary to achieve success, organisation. Let us concentrate on organisation, on *panchayats* and village circles and *mohalla* centres, and each doing its allotted work regardless of searches and arrests. That work for the present must be *khaddar* work above everything else. With organisation our speedy success is assured. Some doubters and quibblers try to make out that we have failed to gain complete freedom by the end of 1921, but we did something which is only a little less. We demonstrated to India and to the world that we had shaken off the sloth and inertia of centuries; that we understood the value of freedom; that we could fight for it and above all that we could sacrifice for it. Is this a little achievement? What country has offered 23,000

or more of its loved ones for the jail as India did in the ever-memorable months of December and January? Today India is honoured and India is respected where yesterday we were treated as coolies and despised as slaves. We have gained a new status in the eyes of the world. That has been the achievement of a few months. Truly a wonderful record for which let us, in all humility, thank the Giver of all.

All Committees should concentrate their attention on the boycott of foreign cloth. Picketing can be started, but the condition of non-violence and non-intimidation should be always kept in view. If this cannot be done then picketing should not be indulged in.

It is interesting to see how much there is not only in the approach and the attitude, but the essential inner culture in these early statements of Nehru, of the controlling philosophy of his whole life. It was, in one word, a wholly open, responsive and understanding relationship between the leaders and the people. While this is true, it is also true that, even during these early years, the internal conflict between many personalities was always there in Jawaharlal Nehru, the individual. About his attitude towards the Englishmen, he says,

I cannot of course say that my feeling towards Englishmen as such is entirely impersonal. I hate the system but sometimes, in spite of myself, I cannot help feeling illwill towards a certain individual for some time at least, and sometimes the illwill is transferred to the English people as a whole. But the feeling is always momentary. I am really surprised at the general absence of illwill against the English.

Later on, in the same note he admits to his own weaknesses:

It is always difficult to differentiate between a man and his action. I can well believe that if an Englishman insulted me, I would flare up and hit him. But I think this would be weakness on my part. I have not enough control over myself. I am apt to lose my temper at the slightest provocation. I am occasionally very angry with Englishmen. But I have never experienced the desire to "expel" Englishmen as such. In spite of everything I am a great admirer of the English, and in many things I feel even

now that an Englishman can understand me better than the average Indian.

Jawaharlal is most comfortable throughout his long political commentary on his own actions and on world events when expatiating on such contradictions. Over the years this comfortable, even cosy acceptance of contradictory attitudes at the same moment, became an essential characteristic of his public policies. This was bound to invite not understanding but, more often, criticism and disbelief. This detached, cool, approach to political activity, intensely passionate where the reality of foreign exploitation and the uncomplaining fortitude of the Indian peasant were concerned, had a quality of generosity towards the other side which attracted him to the style of Gandhi and Gokhale – Gokhale more than Gandhi. This had more to do with form than content.

Jawaharlal was also more comfortable with the gentle, restrained, studiously tentative and analytical method of public speaking adopted by men like Gokhale and Gandhi rather than the great thundering orators of an earlier generation. In one of the mildly amusing passages in the *Autobiography*, Jawaharlal gives us a sharply etched vignette of Gokhale's shy, almost defenceless and vulnerable personality in contrast to the brash, insensitive attitude of some of the more popular Congress politicians of that period:

A characteristic incident occurred when Gokhale was leaving Bankipore. He was a member of the Public Services Commission at the time and, as such, was entitled to a first class railway compartment to himself. He was not well and crowds and uncongenial company upset him. He liked to be left alone by himself and, after the strain of the Congress session, he was looking forward to a quiet journey by train. He got his compartment but the rest of the train was crowded with delegates returning to Calcutta. After a little while, Bhupendra Nath Basu, who later became a member of the India Council, came up to Gokhale and casually asked him if he could travel in his compartment. Mr. Gokhale was a little taken aback as Mr. Basu was an aggressive talker, but naturally he agreed. A few minutes later Mr. Basu again came up to Gokhale and asked him he would mind if a friend of his also travelled in the same compartment. Mr. Gokhale again mildly agreed. A little before

the train left, Mr. Basu mentioned casually that both he and his friend would find it very uncomfortable to sleep in the upper berths, so would Gokhale mind occupying an upper berth so that the two lower berths might be taken by them? And that, I think, was the arrangement arrived at and poor Mr. Gokhale had to climb up and spend a bad night.

There are two entirely different things involved here: one, a sympathy between similar personalities and similar approaches towards politics when Nehru's own ideas about political activity were still unformed in the pre-Gandhian period, and an annoyance or even irritation with moderate or constitutionalist attitudes which could coexist with admiration for personal ability. Gokhale was a moderate but his style was sympathetic to Jawaharlal's. V.S. Srinivasa Sastri was in several respects an admired speaker and popularizer of ideas but Nehru was shocked at his attitude towards the *status quo* in India. There were several unresolved contradictions in Indian politics at that time and the son of Motilal Nehru, the increasingly committed social rebel, and the disciple of the new and exciting leader in Indian political activity, Gandhi, wrestled with all the competing approaches simultaneously. This was possible in the second decade of the century in India because of the generally inchoate nature of politics. By the end of the decade, Gandhi had crystallized attitudes against him or for him. Jawaharlal and, after him, with not too much difficulty Motilal Nehru had cast their lot entirely with Gandhi. The dilemmas of these years are best indicated by Nehru's contrary reactions to the Servants of India Society and its leader after Gokhale's death, Srinivasa Sastri:

I was attracted in those early years to Mr. Gokhale's Servants of India Society. I never thought of joining it, partly because its politics were too moderate for me, and partly because I had no intention then of giving up my profession. But I had a great admiration for the members of the society who had devoted themselves for a bare pittance to the country's service. Here at least, I thought, was straight and single-minded and continuous work even though this might not be on wholly right lines.

Mr. Srinivasa Sastri, however, gave me a great shock in a little matter quite unconnected with politics. He was addressing a students' meeting in Allahabad and he told them to be respectful

and obedient to their teachers and professors and to observe carefully all the rules and regulations laid down by constituted authority. All this goody-goody talk did not appeal to me much; it seemed very platitudinous and somewhat undesirable, with all its stress on authoritarianism. I thought that this was perhaps due to the semi-official atmosphere which was so prevalent in India. Mr. Sastri went on and called upon the boys to report each other's sins of omission and commission immediately to the authorities. In other words they were to spy on each other and play the part of informers. These hard words were not used by Mr. Sastri but their meaning seemed to me clear, and I listened aghast to this friendly counsel of a great leader. I had freshly returned from England and the lesson that had been most impressed upon my mind in school and college was never to betray a colleague. There was no greater sin against the canons of good form than to sneak and inform and thus get a companion into trouble. A sudden and complete reversal of this principle upset me and I felt that there was a great difference between Mr. Sastri's morality and the morality that had been taught to me.

THE YEARS OF PROMISE

It was during the decade between 1926 and 1936 that Jawaharlal Nehru "arrived" in India's national politics. At the beginning of this period he was by no means an unknown figure; along with Subhas Chandra Bose and J.M. Sen-Gupta, Satyamurti and some others he was recognized as a rather attractive member of the younger generation in the Congress leadership. That leadership itself was dominated by Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence as well as the temporarily frustrated programme of civil disobedience. Many of Gandhi's contemporaries and near seniors were leaving the stage one by one. Men like C.R. Das and Lajpat Rai passed away early during this period; Motilal Nehru was very much their contemporary, a happy enough convert to the Gandhian philosophy from the earlier, more conventional, legislative approach. Some of his greater achievements in the national movement, the Nehru Committee Report, the presidency of the Calcutta Congress and the preparation for a new round in the freedom struggle under Gandhi's leadership were yet to come. In 1931, however, he passed away and among the older contemporaries of Mahatma Gandhi, the large majority had become, in effect, slightly out of touch with the changing political situation in the country. Men like Tej Bahadur Sapru and M.R. Jayakar, M.M. Malaviya and Srinivasa Sastri played a significant role in the years to come but outside the Congress mainstream. M.A. Jinnah was very much an exception to this generalized picture of a retreating group, even though, in his scepticism on satyagraha and his masterful control over methods of political negotiation within the British system, he was much more sympathetic to the Liberals than to Gandhi or the angry young men in the Congress. Over the years, however, the emerging political situation in India gave him a new and major historical role to play,

that of the leader of the masses in one whole sector of Indian public life.

It was in such a transition period that younger men like Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose came to the front in the late twenties. There were two slightly older men with comparable charisma, Vallabhbhai Patel in Gujarat after the Bardoli Satyagraha and Rajagopalachari in the deep south. They were extremely powerful personalities, one gifted with an enormous talent for organization at the grass roots level and the other with an intellectual clarity rare in Indian politics at any time. Rajaji was also a supremely effective communicator in his own mode.

The field was, thus, clear for the emergence of younger people as leaders of the national movement and both Jawaharlal and Subhas were inevitable candidates. During the twenties both had demonstrated their ability to work actively on their own as loyal lieutenants of great leaders and, at the very end of the decade, had successfully projected a sharp dissenting profile within the national movement, because of their new, obstinate insistence on complete independence, instead of dominion status as the target in the national struggle. In the Madras Congress in 1927 and in the Calcutta Congress in 1928, these young activists dared to differ from Mahatma Gandhi but during the next five or six years, however, these serious differences, both in strategy and tactics, did not prevent Jawaharlal from persisting with his deep affection and solicitude for Gandhi's personality and his conviction that the epicentre of the national movement for the foreseeable future would continue to remain with Gandhi and his immediate programme of activities, however irrational and self-contradictory they would sometimes appear to his simpler rational mind. During this period Subhas Chandra Bose was mostly out of the country, in effective political exile and also for medical reasons. However, he continued to remain in the imagination of the Indian people as a dramatic, effective, extremely young leader who also had dared to differ from Gandhi.

These are all fairly well-known facts and have been recapitulated here only to project the background of Nehru's personal development as an extraordinarily effective propagandist and educator during a crucial period in the history of not only India but the world.

Nehru's concern with international affairs is again fairly familiar recent history, but it has to be recalled in our context because, to some extent, Jawaharlal Nehru was a most articulate commentator

upon this period of enormous change. The end of the post-war economic boom, the great depression, the changes in Germany which led to Hitler's rise, and the general turning away from hope and social reform to fear, 'safety first' theories and conservatism in the democracies, and other shifts in the external environment impinged on India's own national problem. The developments in East Asia which began with Japan's aggression on China made it also necessary for the people in our country to become aware of the nature of the threats to freedom in the external world. At the same time there were two major positive developments (however blurred the total picture might have been in either case) – the new planning experiment in Soviet Russia and President Roosevelt's New Deal in the United States. Both these significant but necessarily slow and undramatic programmes in major countries attracted as yet the attention of only concerned intellectuals and students of the world economy and politics in most countries.

It is here that the ideological orientation of Jawaharlal Nehru is of basic importance. He responded more sensitively than most other people in the country to these changes and attempted to formulate changes in the Indian national programme in response to them. There were, inevitably, differences not only of emphasis and language, but in the essence of policy on these matters, between himself and Gandhi on the one hand and the new, young, angry men of the Left and the Far Left on the other. As General Secretary and President of the Congress at various times, and as the affectionate and continuously questioning critic of Gandhi, Nehru, in these years, had occasion to reflect upon these changes on a continual basis. This was also affected, to a great extent, by some personal developments in his life. His wife's illness made it necessary for him to go to Europe for almost a year in 1926-27. This was at a time when the old Swaraj movement had petered out into complicated discussions on the future constitution of the country and the appointment of the Nehru Committee. It was one of these, in retrospect, inevitable, perhaps even necessary, interludes of inactivity in our national struggle. This gave Jawaharlal an opportunity to visit the Soviet Union and to establish contacts with representatives of the anti-imperialist struggle in various parts of the world when they met in Brussels. On his return to India there was a fairly intense period of political activity for the next four years. This was the time when the Nehru-Gandhi team, which was to dominate the Indian scene for

several years to come, became a reality in spite of major ideological differences. It is precisely during this period, also, that Jawaharlal had to redefine in his own mind the basic premises of India's future programme as a just society after independence and also the significance of the Indian national struggle as a part of a global fight against imperialism. Then came the mixed developments of the Salt Satyagraha, the Gandhi-Irwin Pact, the Round Table Conferences and enforced political inactivity because of yet another long-term imprisonment. This fairly long and apparently passive period in his life appears in retrospect to be the most significant and productive period in his political career, both as an ideologist and as an educator and communicator. Two of his three major books were written during this period and, by the time a new political situation had arisen in the country as a result of the Government of India Act, the truncated Federation and Provincial elections, Jawaharlal had become known to the world, not merely as a major figure in Indian politics next only to Gandhi, but also as an interpreter of India to the world and the world to India.

II

Jawaharlal's initiation into the larger anti-imperialist struggle came with his visit to Brussels to attend the Congress of Oppressed Nations in February 1927. The fact that the Indian National Congress decided to send him as a representative was primarily due to his own personal links with activists in Europe like Roger Baldwin, Henri Barbusse and, above all, Viren Chattopadhyaya, Sarojini Naidu's younger brother. There was no overwhelming motivation in the Congress leadership, specifically in Gandhi's attitude, to regard this as more than an essentially minor affair; and, in spite of the understandable fuss which has been made about it, in retrospect, it was a minor affair. This Congress was organized by the Left Wing groups of exiles in Europe from several colonial territories and there was a fairly obvious link between the activities of the Comintern and the conference. Jawaharlal went to the conference, made some extremely valuable contacts, gathered some fugitive impressions, and, also had, in the perspective of history, some memorable encounters with men like Ho Chi Minh.

Yet another detail has to be remembered to see the Brussels

Conference in perspective. Jawaharlal's journey to Europe at this time was essentially a personal, family errand, the first of several attempts to find a lasting cure for his ailing wife. The fact that the Swaraj movement had lost itself in the shallows of debate and indecision made it easier for him to go. The fortunate coincidence by which the Brussels Conference happened to take place while he was abroad was utilized with some smartness by the Indian nationalists as well as the organizers who were conscious of the fact that they had been able to persuade a major figure in the Indian national movement to participate in the conference.

All this is true, but the essential chemistry of Jawaharlal's interaction with the other nationalists from Asia, Africa and Latin America and his prompt and easy understanding of the problems involved in the anti-imperialist struggle, without being too much limited to the Marxist version of the story, was something entirely his own; and this led to a certain reorientation and reassessment on his part of the world situation, and the beginning of his attempt to make, first Mahatma Gandhi, then his senior colleagues and the Congress organization itself, conscious of the need for much greater interaction with nationalistic movements in other countries. Jawaharlal's report to the Congress on the conference has a surprisingly fresh flavour even today:

The Brussels Congress, regarded from any point of view, was an event of first class importance and it is likely to have far-reaching results....

For an Indian it was exceedingly interesting to meet the various types of humanity represented in the Congress. The Chinese were, most of them, very young and full of energy and enthusiasm. The traditional notion of the placid and tranquil Chinese received a rude shock and one was confronted with a group of persons, apparently not remarkably able but with a great deal of driving force, and a desire to fill the picture. China of course, owing to circumstances, did fill the picture but before the Congress was over people were rather tired of listening to Chinese orations, which were not remarkable for their lucidity. I suppose the Chinese representatives were the natural products of a revolution and I was led regretfully to wish that we in India might also develop some of this energy and driving force, at the expense if need be of some of our intellectuality.

The Indonesians, chiefly from Java, were even more interesting....

The negroes present varied from the inkiest black to every shade of brown. There were able men among them, full of eloquence and energy, but they all bore traces of the long martyrdom which their race had suffered, more perhaps than any other people, and there was a want of hope in the dark future which faces them. The Arabs from Syria and North Africa were very different -- typical fighting men, who understood independence and fighting for it and little else, and were wholly untainted with the slave mentality of more intellectual races.

The people from Latin America, dark as the northern Indian, were again a different and interesting type. Most of us, specially from Asia, were wholly ignorant of the problems of South America, and of how the rising imperialism of the United States, with its tremendous resources and its immunity from outside attack, is gradually taking a stranglehold of Central and South America. But we are not likely to remain ignorant much longer for the great problem of the near future will be American imperialism, even more than British imperialism. Or it may be, and all indications point to it, that the two will join together to create a powerful Anglo-Saxon bloc to dominate the world.

It was this bogey of the United States and the fear that they might not be able to stand up against them unaided, that drove them to seek for help from outside. So far the weakness of Latin America has been the want of unity. Each State quarrels with the other and often within the States there is also disunion, usually fomented by the United States. An interesting and instructive outcome of the Brussels Congress was the achievement of unity between the delegates of the various South American States. This unity was on paper only but it is probably the herald of a closer union of the States against their bullying neighbour of the North.

The South African Trade Union Congress of white workers sent a representative and so also did the Natal Native Council -- a negro organisation. In these days of race hatred in South Africa and the ill-treatment of Indians it was pleasing to hear the representative of the White workers giving expression to the most advanced opinions of the equality of races and of workers of all races. The negro and the white man jointly represented South

African workers and they worked together in the Congress.

Under the constitution as adopted, the organisations that sent delegates might be considered as constituent or affiliated bodies unless they do not desire this. The Indian Congress can thus for the present be considered as an associated body. It will be for the Working Committee to decide this question. Personally I hope that the committee will approve of the association. The advantages are great and the disadvantages inconsiderable. Among the advantages are the opportunities to keep in touch with many Asiatic and other countries with problems not dissimilar to ours, and the use of the League as a very efficient means of propaganda and publicity. There is no doubt that the League can and intends to carry on propaganda on a big scale....

The disadvantages, as far as I can see, might be the socialist character of the League and the possibility that Russian foreign policy might influence it. The socialist tendencies of the League are very marked although individual members who were not socialists were present. The whole basis of the League is that imperialism and capitalism go hand in hand and back up each other and neither of them will disappear till both are put down. An endeavour is therefore made to join the forces against imperialism and capitalism and by this coordination to strengthen the two....

The labour movements in the West are therefore developing along lines opposed to this narrow nationalism and to be called a nationalist is almost a term of reproach in labour circles. Almost to a man, the members of the labour organisations are socialists. The problem in oppressed countries is somewhat different and nationalism automatically and rightly takes precedence of all other sentiments. This is recognised even by socialists but they point out that in such countries nationalism might be given a broader basis more in consonance with the tendencies of the age; that it might derive its strength from and work specially for the masses, the peasants and the other workers. Personally, I agree with this contention because I accept in its fundamentals the socialist theory of the State. I do not know however how far the Indian Congress would be prepared to identify itself with socialism. I may point out however that the association of the Indian Congress with the League against Imperialism does not

mean the adoption by the Congress of a socialist programme. The Congress is and remains entirely free to work along such lines as it considers best suited for the country.

Even more interesting and with a certain permanent validity is Jawaharlal's exposition of the central role of India in British imperialism at the very end of his address to the Congress:

Now then, the study of past history of events in the past few years proves that British policy has been based largely on the question of holding India. After all, we here know a great deal of the British Empire. Try to conceive for a moment what it would have been by now if Britain did not hold India. There would have been no British Empire. What it will be in the future, if and when India becomes independent, I cannot say, but certainly the British Empire would cease to exist. Naturally, therefore, from their capitalist and imperialist points of view they wanted to do everything in their power to hold on to India. All their foreign policy has been largely shaped with this object in view because it is so important for Britain to hold India and control that vast territory. They must, therefore, keep a stranglehold on India. The result is that India has suffered and is suffering. But that is not all. On account of India a large number of other countries have suffered and are suffering. You have heard of the most recent example of British imperialism in regard to India – the sending of Indian troops to China. They were sent in spite of the fact that the National Congress of India expressed its strongest opposition. I must remind you that Indian troops, unhappily to my shame I confess it, have been utilised many times by the British in oppressing other people. I shall tell you the names of a number of countries where Indian troops have been utilised by the British for this purpose – in China they first went in 1840, in 1927 they are still going and they have been actively engaged there innumerable times during these 87 years. They have been to Egypt, to Abyssinia, in the Persian Gulf, to Mesopotamia, Arabia, Syria, Georgia, Tibet, Afghanistan and Burma. It is a fairly formidable list.

I want you to appreciate that the Indian problem is not a purely national problem, but that it affects a large number of other countries directly and the whole world indirectly, in the

sense that it directly affects the greatest and most powerful imperialism of our time. It is obvious that such a condition of affairs is intolerable for us in India. We cannot go on, not merely because freedom is good and slavery bad, but because it is a matter of life and death for us and our country. Not only that; it is equally intolerable for you. You cannot go on in this way. You who come from various countries, from the four corners of the earth, cannot put up with having these tremendous barriers to your own liberation. I do submit that the exploitation of India by the British is a barrier for other countries that are being oppressed and exploited (applause). It is an urgent necessity for you that we gain our freedom. The noble example of the Chinese nationalists has filled us with hope, and we earnestly want as soon as we can to be able to emulate them and follow in their footsteps (long applause). We desire the fullest freedom for our country, not only, of course, internally, but the freedom to develop such relations with our neighbours and other countries as we may desire. It is because we think that this International Congress affords us a chance of this cooperation that we welcome it and greet it.

As was only to be expected, Nehru's address to the Congress also dealt with some essentially local features connected with the temper of the times which, in today's hindsight, seem irrelevant. In the late twenties, a world war appeared to be not unlikely in the near future; no one foresaw the Great Depression of 1929. The anti-Bolshevik scare was at its height, especially in Britain. The Zinoviev letter had upset a British General Election only a few years earlier. The British General Strike in 1926 had frightened the Conservatives. In this rather tense atmosphere, Jawaharlal read, perhaps, more tactical possibilities into the situation for the anti-colonial movement than appear to be justified today. However, the important thing was that someone from within the mainstream of the national movement became interested in the links of Indian nationalism with not only the nationalist movements abroad in the colonies, but also the progress, against all odds, of Soviet Russia in an unfriendly world, and the fortunes of the working classes and the socialist parties in the powerful imperial states. This was necessarily a weaker, more dilute approach than the much more intense and carefully thought-out study of the situation in M.N. Roy's path-breaking analysis of the

early twenties, *India in Transition*. It was vaguer, quieter and less self-assured but it was, nevertheless, the small faint beginning of a major development in the thirties in our national struggle.

The visit of the Nehru family to Moscow for the 10th anniversary of the October Revolution in November 1927 was also a part of this whole process in the evolution of Jawaharlal Nehru's political outlook and the extension of the national consciousness to an international plane. Here again, the facts are well known. It was a short visit but it did give Nehru the idea that a great experiment was being attempted in that country. More importantly, his visit to the Soviet Union came at a moment when the post-Lenin power struggle had not assumed its uglier forms. The expulsion of Leon Trotsky was still in the future. M.N. Roy was in China and to the sympathetic eyes of the visitors from India, father and son, the socialist experiment, with its preparations for its first Five-Year Plan, and its brave attempt to forge various nationalities together appeared in the most attractive light.

Again, one should not exaggerate the significance of this episode. Jawaharlal did not return a converted Marxist. He was, however, now in a better position than most of his colleagues to understand the importance of economics in political experience and the need for integrating the peasant and working class struggles with the bourgeois-dominated national movement. There is no need to make taller claims. But it made all the difference in Jawaharlal's attitude towards the Meerut Conspiracy Case, Bhagat Singh and his colleagues, M.N. Roy and his anxious advocacy of human rights during the Karachi Congress and, later, the emergence of the socialist group within the Congress. In 1946, Roy wrote a characteristically bitter critique of Nehru in which he scorned the young acolyte's impressions of the Soviet Union which created such an impression among ignorant readers in India. He was from his own point of view quite justified. He had been one of the leading lights of the revolutionary group in Moscow, a man who had argued on equal terms with Lenin on fundamental questions of theory and strategy on the colonial question. He had every reason to be impatient with the disproportionate rewards which accrued over the years to Nehru from this brief encounter with the land of the Soviets. But what he naturally could not appreciate was that this was the only example of a mainstream Indian nationalist beginning to understand the complexities of world forces. There was something of a pioneering situa-

tion in all this. That it was not merely a forgotten episode but continued to be of significance for the Indian national movement during the thirties was integrally related to the conduct and the pronouncements of Nehru, the writer and the student. A full appreciation of the significance of the Brussels Conference, the visit to Moscow and the articles on Soviet Russia which Jawaharlal wrote after his return to India can be had only when we study Gandhi's reactions to these developments. He read the report on the conference with great understanding and sympathy. He, however, never concealed his view that, while these external activities of the Congress were useful, they were not vital. In his own estimate, the battle had really to be fought first within India, at all levels, and only later in Britain, in the specific colonial context. He could appreciate the importance of the type of propaganda about India and India's national movement which Nehru wanted to be done in various foreign countries. It was, however, essentially a secondary or tertiary activity, and there was always the hidden danger that scarce resources might be wasted on concerns of low priority.

During the next three or four years, these rather mildly expressed differences, or rather nuances, became clearer. It did not very much affect the actual course of action. The few people in most countries who took an interest in Indian nationalism in the early thirties were primarily impelled to do so by the innate force of Gandhi's personality and the drama of the weaponless battle against the most powerful state in the world, independent of any propaganda effort by the Congress. Gandhi's own priorities were clear. He saw his constituency abroad primarily in Britain. He did have extraordinarily influential friends outside the English-speaking world also, like Romain Rolland, but the multiplier effect of his unusual personality and his even more unusual mode of mass mobilization was achieved through the English and American publicists and journalists.

On one important aspect of links with other nations, Nehru and Gandhi disagreed politely. Nehru dismisses with some contempt the idea of the Congress having a representative in London; he talks about such activity being really useful in New York, in Paris and, if possible, somewhere in Asia. There is no documentary evidence of Gandhi's having commented on this assessment, but his extremely effective propaganda in the Labour Party, among ordinary English people, and in Lancashire during his visit to the Round Table Conference in 1931, shows that he was much more realistic and

practical than Jawaharlal was in his rather easy dismissal of Britain as a venue for nationalist propaganda.

This is important. Most of us go by stereotypes and the general impression is one of a Jawaharlal Nehru interested, in creating an impression abroad and a Gandhi rather exclusively involved in things back home. This is not so. Both were conscious of the external links of the movement. Gandhi's whole career had, in fact, made him much more sensitive to the lateral processes of anti-imperialism, anti-nationalism and anti-modernism also, in a world divided by imperial systems. Nehru was always open to external influences but, during this period, particularly when he and Subhas Chandra Bose were trying to convince the Congress of the need for substituting the demand for dominion status by one for complete independence, there was an emotional, if not intellectual, need to devalue the importance of propaganda in the "enemy country" — Britain.

This explains the fact that, during the years after the Simon Commission and before the Round Table Conference, Gandhi was much more effective in influencing "progressive" and "radical" groups in Britain to adopt a favourable attitude towards the Indian struggle for independence.

There is almost no record of Nehru's interest in the India League in Britain in those early years, when V.K. Krishna Menon was just beginning his activities and Bertrand Russell was its President. There is also no evidence that Nehru was directly concerned with the extremely important visit of the unofficial mission sent to India by the India League (as a sort of alternative to the Simon Commission) which came out with the important *Condition of India* report. This extraordinarily detailed document, published in England by the India League, with an introduction by its then President, Bertrand Russell, had been drafted by its Secretary, Krishna Menon. One reason for Nehru's lack of interaction with the mission was, of course, that he was in prison most of the time while it was in India, but there is no awareness of this particular development in his writings. It was later, in 1935, when Jawaharlal went to Europe again, in connection with the rapid deterioration in Kamala's health, that the threads are picked up again in the attempt initiated by Gandhi to make common cause with British friends of Indian freedom and the parallel, entirely separate, attempt by Jawaharlal Nehru to establish contacts with the League Against Imperialism in Europe and the World Peace Congress.

III

On the basic question of the further programme of the Congress after the long, sterile period of inaction since Chauri Chaura, Jawaharlal Nehru and his great mentor had profound differences. The issues included questions of ideology and organization, of strategy and tactics -- much more complicated than the simple difference of emphasis between complete independence and dominion status. These are well-known facts and need not be laboured further, except to note the highly civilized manner in which the two men discussed their differences both in personal encounters and in some evocative correspondence. Strangely enough this is just the period in which it became absolutely clear, not only to Gandhi's immediate colleagues, but also to the country at large, that the Mahatma regarded Jawaharlal Nehru as an individual uniquely fitted by his qualities and his character to lead the national struggle at that moment, if necessary, later, as the situation demanded. More precisely, the period between 1927 and 1929 is specially significant in the emergence of Jawaharlal as the most relevant younger leader in the Congress. This does not mean that there were no other young leaders whom Gandhi admired; Subhas Chandra Bose, of course, immediately comes to mind. Bose was, however, much too young at that time and his contact with Gandhi discontinuous, even though there were memorable interludes like his aggressive sponsorship of the complete independence resolution and his colourful and flamboyant captainship of the Congress volunteers at the Calcutta Session in 1928.

Apart from Subhas and J.M. Sen-Gupta, there were no impressive-enough individuals among the younger ranks on the political landscape in the late twenties. There were, however, other extremely important leaders whom Gandhi trusted and relied on from an earlier generation, men like Vallabhbhai Patel, Rajagopalachari and Dr. M.A. Ansari. All these, and Jawaharlal, were, of course, essentially junior personalities when compared to Motilal.

This point has to be discussed only to note the easy, relaxed manner in which the question of the next Congress presidentship was always discussed by Gandhi and his colleagues during those

years. Jawaharlal's name had been suggested from time to time since as early as in 1928, a few months after his return from his one-year stay in Europe and his rather activist role, along with Subhas, in the Madras Congress. There were frank and pleasant exchanges between Gandhi and Motilal on the question and it was generally agreed that Motilal himself should preside over the Calcutta Session in succession to Dr. Ansari. For the next, crucial, Lahore Session, Jawaharlal's name was finally selected only after Gandhi and Vallabhbhai Patel had ruled themselves out. Jawaharlal thus, in 1929, became the President of the Congress on a historic enough occasion and it is clear that this was seen by Gandhi himself and the ordinary Congress rank and file as a necessary transition from one generation to another, without any attendant ill-feeling or friction. The years he had already spent as Secretary of the Congress and the very active role he had assumed in the Madras and the Calcutta Congresses made all this seem natural.

In retrospect, all these seem to have been inevitable. The manner in which Jawaharlal grew to fill this larger-than-life position suddenly thrust upon him appears, with our knowledge of his career in the next decade, as almost preordained. There was a certain necessary exercise in image-building, in the exaggeration of the youth aspect (actually Jawaharlal was not the youngest ever President; younger men like Abul Kalam Azad had held the post before him) which was important at a time when the nation felt frustrated at the lack of success of the Swaraj Party programme in the Central Assembly and the humiliation of an all-white Simon Commission. There is no doubt, however, that Jawaharlal rose splendidly to the occasion; he was and was seen to be totally loyal to Gandhi and admired by Gandhi in full reciprocal measure, despite what was recognized to be a qualitative change in the programme of the Congress.

All this is familiar enough. The stirring prose of the Independence Pledge drafted by Gandhi himself was more than a mere political document. It was, truly, a moment in the conscience of political India. Jawaharlal's speech, modestly phrased and carefully argued, bringing new and foreign elements into the country's thinking, had its own importance. There was a feeling of tension in the country: the sands of time were running out. Many people in India felt, and hoped also, that things would never be the same again. The Editor of the *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, for instance, permits him-

self a certain unusual latitude in assessing the importance of the Lahore Congress and what went on before and after it. In his Preface to the 42nd volume covering four months he says:

The period covered in this volume (October 16, 1929 to February 28, 1930) represents a major turning point in the struggle for freedom, with Gandhiji firmly resuming active leadership of the movement after a lapse of nearly eight years and identifying himself with the demand of the radical school, headed by Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose, for complete independence as the country's goal. Gandhiji had opposed the demand when it was first voiced at the Madras session of the National Congress in December 1927 and opposed it again the following year at the Calcutta session, arguing that the word "swaraj" possessed a richer and more tangible connotation for the masses and included independence. But having been a party to the compromise resolution at the Calcutta Congress giving to the British Government a year's time within which to concede a Dominion Status constitution as envisaged in the Motilal Nehru Report of 1928, Gandhiji himself sponsored at the Lahore session in December 1929 a resolution proclaiming complete independence as the country's immediate goal and authorizing the launching of a civil disobedience movement to achieve it. "Organizations like men... must have a sense of honour and fulfil their promises" he said, explaining his stand to English friends. "The nation wants to feel its power more even than to have independence. Possession of such power is independence."

IV

The question the nation had to face at Lahore was how to follow up the brave 'ultimatum' of Calcutta about dominion status. Until the end of the year, i.e. a few days before the session, Gandhi had entertained some hope that the British Government would relent. His meeting with the viceroy on 23 December was non-productive since Lord Irwin was not able to give a specific assurance that the proposed Round Table Conference would meet "not to discuss when Dominion Status is to be established but to frame a scheme of Dominion Constitution for India". The Congress and Gandhi

proceeded to Lahore to act upon the Calcutta demand and passed a resolution, moved by Gandhi, proclaiming *purna swaraj*, complete independence, as the country's goal. The decision to take a national independence pledge followed and the text of the pledge was drafted by Gandhi himself.

Jawaharlal and Gandhi shared the limelight at Lahore. Both made important speeches there. Gandhi's several interventions in the AICC meeting demonstrated his return to total command of the nation and the organization. He spoke on foreign cloth boycott, the need for a compact AICC, and deplored the recent 'bomb outrage on the viceroy's train'. The great speech was on the *purna swaraj* resolution. It contains a splendid formulation on civil disobedience:

Civil disobedience is a thing which I swear by because I possibly cannot conceive India winning her freedom by criminal disobedience; and criminal disobedience means the bomb and the sword. I can conceive of freedom and independence being achieved by and on behalf of the starving millions scattered over the length and breadth of India, in the seven hundred thousand villages, by legitimate and peaceful means only. Disobedience to be absolutely effective has got to be always civil, that is always non-violent; and if you want that civil disobedience should come in the near future you will have to transform yourselves. You will then not have jugglery of thought; you will not then deceive yourselves and unconsciously it may be, deceive the nation also into the belief that the bomb and non-violence can run on parallel lines. In a place like India where the mightiest organization is pledged to [non-]violence, if you really believe in your own creed, that is to say, if you believe in yourself, if you believe in your nation, then it is civil disobedience that is wanted; and if it is civil disobedience that is wanted, then, you must observe the strictest discipline....

Jawaharlal's own presidential address is crisp and characteristically free of verbiage. The Indian problem is placed squarely in the global and colonial context. The major part of the speech dwells on the core issue of independence. He singles out the minorities, the Indian states and labour and the peasantry as the three major problem areas in India. It is in discussing the third issue that Jawaharlal comes nearest to proposing a new ideological vision for

the Congress. He bravely announces, "... I am a socialist and a republican and am no believer in kings and princes, or in the order which produces the modern kings of industry". In both industry and agriculture, Jawaharlal advocates the angry rejection of the existing system of ownership:

The question is not one merely of wages and charity doled out by an employer or landlord. Paternalism in industry or in the land is but a form of charity with all its sting and its utter incapacity to root out the evil. The new theory of trusteeship, which some advocate, is equally barren. For trusteeship means that the power for good or evil remains with the self-appointed trustee, and he may exercise it as he will. The sole trusteeship that can be fair is the trusteeship of the nation and not of one individual or a group. Many Englishmen honestly consider themselves the trustees for India, and yet to what a condition have they reduced our country!

These are harsh words indeed. Quite unaffected by this and other similar outbursts, Gandhi went on to develop his trusteeship theory as a major plank in his social agenda. There is no evidence that this provocative reference led to any angry exchanges. As a matter of fact, between Lahore and Gandhi's return from London in December 1931, the partnership between the Mahatma and his favourite disciple endured and flourished, though tensions and stresses continued all through. The correspondence between the two men was always friendly and courteous, but above all frank, unafraid to face the bitter truth. Reading these letters today, one cannot but be struck by the fundamental decency of the actors in this political and personal drama.

His difficulties with Gandhi were described and analysed in retrospect, with good humour and a certain puzzled detachment, by Nehru in his autobiography. What emerges is a picture of a creative, though, at the same time, difficult partnership between two strong wills and intellects.

By then, however, the relationship between Jawaharlal and his Bapu had gone far beyond political understanding. The personal bond which had been there from the beginning took on a new and deeper meaning after Motilal's death. Krishna Nehru's wedding was the occasion for an affectionate collaboration between the Nehru family and Bapu. Jawaharlal was, perhaps, fortunately for us, essen-

tially pre-Freudian in his self-analysis; and he was a compulsive self-analytical type. There was no lingering Oedipus complex in him, no resentful memories of his affectionate, proud and possessive father. When Motilal passed away, in the most gentle and natural way possible, Gandhi moved in to fill the void in the younger man's universe.

V

The Karachi Congress presided over by Sardar Patel, was most significant in Nehru's career. It was at this session that he succeeded, in the face of many doubts and suspicions, in pushing through a resolution on fundamental rights. The stress on economic freedom in the preamble of this resolution is as significant as the emphasis on the need for educating the masses in some basic political ideas: 'In order, therefore, that the masses may appreciate what Swaraj, as conceived by the Congress, will mean to them, it is desirable to state the position of the Congress in a manner easily understood by them.' Among the 20 rights listed are a living wage and the right to form unions for workers, prohibition of child labour, adult suffrage and protection of women workers.

This was a pioneering effort and there are 'demands' in the resolution which would be more appropriate in a manifesto than in a list of fundamental rights, e.g. the fixing of the upper salary for government servants at Rs.500 and several detailed references to taxation levels and rates. Religious neutrality is guaranteed, along with 'control of usury, direct or indirect'. There is really only one item which could cause misgivings in the old gentlemen in the Working Committee, the principle of 'control, by the State, of key industries and mineral sources.'

Apart from this resolution, Jawaharlal Nehru's only substantial intervention in the Karachi proceedings was on the recent execution of Bhagat Singh and the refusal to be diverted by that terrible tragedy from the straight and narrow path of non-violence. Moving the resolution, he expressed admiration for Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev, and Raj Guru, but disapproved of political violence:

— It would have been more appropriate if he who holds the reins of the Congress and represents the Congress in the real sense of

the term, and who has drafted the resolution, had moved it. He is the greatest apostle of nonviolence in the world. He would have come before you and praised through this resolution the brave lad who rightly deserves that honour.... Why is everyone thinking of Bhagat Singh today?.... Why is his picture adorning walls and why are buttons studded with it? There must be some reason for this. He was a clean fighter who faced his enemy in the open field. He was a young boy full of burning zeal for the country. He was like a spark which became a flame in a short time and spread from one end of the country to the other dispelling the prevailing darkness everywhere.... We have always rejected violent means and we shall continue to do so. The resolution says that in honouring Bhagat Singh and his companions for their brave deeds we have nothing to do with their methods.... I declare openly that only by the method of Mahatma Gandhi will we gain freedom and if we leave the path of nonviolence we shall not be free for years to come.... The way of violence is a dangerous way for our country. It will ruin the country and set brother against brother and, God forbid, they may start killing each other. That is why I insist that you should accept this resolution. If you approve of it, it means that you accept the way of noncooperation. I consider non-cooperation to be the noblest way to fight.... I also consider it below human dignity to say one thing now and act differently later. If we want our country to progress then we shall have to adopt open methods.

It was a brave effort to bridge the gap between the old leadership and angry, alienated, youth.

The Karachi Congress looms large in retrospect in the evolution of the national organization. Gandhi's two most important lieutenants, Nehru and Patel, functioned together in a creative partnership at a critical moment in the development of the movement. The commitment to non-violence was reaffirmed in no uncertain manner at a time of deep anguish and national desolation. The resolution on fundamental rights was the little spark which, Nehru and his young socialist friends like Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya hoped, would one day 'start a prairie fire'. There was a feeling of helplessness and anger at the death of the young freedom fighter; there was a mood of naïve confidence in this assertion of human values in all their plenitude in the India of their dreams.

A difficult and complex interlude was to follow in the evolution of the national movement. Gandhi's unique strategy of negotiation alternating with struggle would be practised with great scrupulousness. The Salt Satyagraha, the negotiations with the Viceroy, and the ultimately infructuous Round Table Conference marked one major stage in the ultimate evolution of the national movement. The immediate results appeared to be negative. The Empire had struck back with full force and all the leaders of the Civil Disobedience movement were in prison. There was a highly advertised return on the part of Britain to constitutional reform in the discussions in the British Parliament on the Government of India Act while there was a lull in the process of mass mobilization by the Congress.

A WRITER ARRIVES

One of the more fascinating things about Gandhi as the generalissimo of India's peculiar war of independence against a difficult but responsive, and uncompromising and rigid but, fortunately, pluralistic opponent, was the enormous patience and stamina he displayed during the long periods of passivity and inaction between dramatic phases of intense activity. He was quite clear in his own mind that the ineffectiveness of ultimatums and the failure of time-bound programmes to achieve independence would not really matter in the perspective of the country's history, if only during the dull sterile years in between the basic methodology of action was adhered to. This meant for him necessary retreats away from the Congress into primarily non-political areas of activity, which were essential features of his own personal quests for truth and also extremely important components of mass mobilization. These interludes were of two types — enforced confinement in prison and self-imposed isolation from political activism within the Congress. The second type of inactivity was usually punctuated by carefully calculated excursions into the political field on major issues. During the thirties, for example, the Harijan reservation question assumed great importance and was the subject of negotiation within the Indian political establishment and also with the British. A similar and parallel development took place also at the level of negotiations with the Muslim League and Jinnah personally on the one hand and with the British Government on the other.

These are fairly elementary and well-known facts, but what is interesting is the manner in which Gandhi was able to transfer his energies from dramatic activity to long patient campaigns for

apparently unattainable objectives -- objectives which appeared to his younger colleagues as essentially second-rank, low priority issues which, it seemed to them, would automatically solve themselves, once political independence was achieved. It is here that the khadi movement in the twenties, with its larger extended programme of constructive activity in the villages, based on the noble objective of Hind swaraj, and the Harijan movement of the thirties find their place. At one level, Gandhi found himself absorbed in his exciting discovery that the lowliest of the low in India needed assistance immediately, long before cerebral concepts like political freedom and economic justice occupied the centre of the stage. Gandhi could get away with this change of tactics, and the attendant confusion in the minds of his followers, only because of the specific objective situation between India and Britain; a situation which could not be replicated anywhere else. The British were committed to a certain programmed transition to full self-government; they were, however, in no hurry to part with power and the economic benefits of the colonial connection. They were also becoming divided among themselves on the question of India's future status. But there had been continuous constitutional and diplomatic activity in which the Round Table Conferences provided a watershed. Gandhi had over the last 35 years developed a certain ability to live with unresolved situations, first in his dealings with the White South Africans and, later, the British. This comfortable acceptance of what appeared to be a claustrophobic situation to younger people like Subhas and Jawaharlal, went along with his supreme faith in the value of various sub-political, social activities to mobilize the masses. This was what he valued most and thus he was able to immerse himself in it without frustration or impatience, aided as he was by two fundamental characteristics of his approach to personal and political problems: he found fulfilment in action without worrying too much about the ultimate results, and inevitable consequence of his understanding of the *Gita*; and, secondly, his detachment from, his lack of interest in the Congress organization as such when he chose to leave it to other people like Rajendra Prasad, Vallabhbhai Patel and Jawaharlal Nehru himself. He renewed his interest only when satyagraha movements were on. In a very interesting piece of advice to Jawaharlal about the relative importance of the presidentship of the Congress and the importance of mass mobilization, not necessarily connected with, even independent of the Congress, Gandhi told Jawaharlal that

the presidency of the Congress meant dull, routine work, a preoccupation with details, which could be done by anyone. As long as he was doing national work of supreme importance in mass mobilization in various fields, he could always return to supreme leadership in the Congress. The two men were most productive when circumstances conspired to make normal action impractical. Here, there was a sympathy between totally committed crusaders in the cause.

The really interesting thing about the Nehru-Gandhi connection is that, with his own entirely different personal circumstances and personal inclinations, Jawaharlal was able to utilize retrospectively, in superb fashion, within prison and outside, these long periods of enforced activity.

The years of apprenticeship were now over; Nehru was fluent enough in Hindustani to take the leadership role in organizing the UP peasantry. His connections with socialists and progressives, within the country and abroad, made it easier for him to engage in a continuous dialogue with the trade unions and peasant organizations. His, again very personal, emphasis on group discipline made him, as a member of the Congress secretariat, take more than ordinary interest in the Congress Seva Dal during the twenties and thirties. His image as the voice of India's youth made young people receptive to him and he could talk to them about even fairly conventional, but nevertheless effective political activity of the more orthodox, agit-propaganda type, completely divorced from Gandhi's magnificent zig-zag explorations of new areas whenever he felt there was no immediate joy in political activity.

All this involved a certain facility in verbal articulation in simple language, both in English and in Hindi, of the basic problems of imperialism, its global nature, its local effects in deprivation and suffering within India and its ultimate responsibility for even the internal difficulties within the national movement. This re-articulation, on a repeated basis, to hundreds of audiences made him reorganize his ideas with a certain simplicity. The very need to explore the foreign links of the Indian dilemma made it necessary for Nehru to go much deeper into the causes of the discontent in the country. This is important because, just like Gandhi, Jawaharlal also, during the years roughly between 1929 and 1935, utilized his enforced confinement in prison to brilliantly effective purpose. This is not all. Again, in an entirely personal manner, quite different from

the attitude or the methods of Gandhi, his personal encounters with the Indian people in the raw, and the world political community on a selective basis, led to the development of the young political worker into a reasonably mature and lucid analyst of contemporary politics and also history.

This is the background to the emergence of Jawaharlal Nehru, the writer, the lucid reinterpreter of routine historical facts, and new, but familiar enough, ideas on the political and social organization of society in the post-imperial period, and the importance of economic forces in history. This was what he accepted in fairly clear and uncomplicated terms as scientific socialism.

II

Some of the problems faced by the Indian national movement as led by Gandhi were discussed in some detail by Jawaharlal in a series of articles written in between two terms of imprisonment towards the end of 1933. They were published under the general title, *Whither India*.

In fact, in the evolution of Jawaharlal Nehru as a concerned student of international politics and the various national situations which led to the problems of that politics, this little pamphlet is absolutely central, more central even, than either *Glimpses of World History* or *An Autobiography*. It shows Nehru in all his strengths and weaknesses as a student of the rapidly changing world situation. There is an excitement in his approach to the Indian situation, as a part of Asian developments, which themselves merely constituted a more passive sector of major global changes. The main purpose of these articles was to put forward a fairly clear individual manifesto of political action based on socialism and an economic programme based on national planning. Its intention was also to gently distinguish his own position from both that of Mahatma Gandhi and mainstream Congressmen, and also that of the liberal groups in the country, which would flourish during the interludes of inaction between civil disobedience movements launched, and then withdrawn, by Gandhi. It is, in some ways, a dated piece and it is easy to pick holes in it today, because developments after the Second World War have made some of its comfortable assumptions about the dying nature of capitalism and the inevitable dawn of socialism

appear a little naïve.

This original essay attempts a very brief history of imperialism in Asia and in India and tries to distinguish between the proclaimed aims of the various factions and groups in the Congress like freedom, swaraj and independence. Very shrewdly Jawaharlal notes:

Egypt is "independent" and yet, as everybody knows, it is at present little better than an Indian state, an autocracy imposed upon an unwilling people and propped up by the British. Economically, Egypt is a colony of some of the European imperialist powers, notably the British. Ever since the World War there has been continuous conflict between Egyptian nationalism and the ruling authorities and this continues today. So in spite of a so-called "independence" Egypt is very far from even national freedom.

He does not mention here the anomalous nature of Indian membership of the League of Nations even though it was precisely during this period that he did make many acid remarks on other occasions about the futile and fatuous contributions of the puppet Indian delegations to the world body. Here, he was more interested in the economics of everyday life, a subject which was very much in the forefront of political analysis in the wake of the Great Depression. The following passage is interesting, both for its over-confidence and its tough resistance to familiar capitalist propaganda:

And yet it is well to remember that the world today has a surfeit of food and the other good things of life. Terrible want exists because the present system does not know how to distribute them. Repeated international conferences have failed to find a way out because they represented the interests of vested interests and dared not touch the system itself. They grope blindly in the dark in their stuffy rooms while the foundations of the house they built are being sapped by the advance of science and economic events. Everywhere thinkers have recognised the utter inadequacy of the existing system, though they have differed as to the remedies. Communists and socialists point with confidence to the way of socialism and they are an ever-growing power for they have science and logic on their side. In America a great stir was caused recently by the technocrats, a group of engineers who

want to do away with money itself and to substitute for it a unit of energy, an erg. In England the social credit theories of Major Douglas, according to which the whole production of the nation will be evenly distributed to the whole population — a kind of "dividends for all" — find increasing acceptance. Barter takes the place of trade both in the domestic and the international market.

It is a comfortable enough conclusion. There is no awareness of the subtleties of economic theory here. Jawaharlal would not have been exactly delighted to read this passage 20 years later when social credit was but a forgotten minor episode in the history of economic thought, its immortality ensured only because of Ezra Pound's exaggerated interest in Major Douglas and the crypto-fascist potentialities of the social credit approach. Jawaharlal saw this world economic malaise as the immediate cause of the global crisis. He saw an almost immediate danger of the collapse of capitalism in Europe and America and then proceeded to argue, as a fairly comfortable corollary, that it could not survive in Asia either. This rather jejune conclusion is followed by a highly perceptive passage of essential relevance to nationalism in the Indian context:

This is natural as a country under alien domination must inevitably think first in terms of nationalism. But the powerful economic forces working for change in the world today have influenced this nationalism to an ever-increasing extent and everywhere it is appearing in socialist garb. Gradually the nationalist struggle for political freedom is becoming a social struggle also for economic freedom. Independence and the socialist state become the objectives, with varying degrees of stress being laid on the two aspects of the problem. As political freedom is delayed, the other aspect assumes great importance, and it now seems probable, especially because of world conditions, that political and social emancipation will come together to some at least of the countries of Asia.

From this general Asian picture, Jawaharlal comes to India and, in a remarkably lucid passage, discredits the whole constitutional approach which had been imposed by the British and accepted by the Congress to no tangible purpose or benefit. The unreality of the constitutional approach is traced by him fundamentally to the

essence of the Indian problem being economic, in the exploitation of the masses:

The whole basis and urge of the national movement came from a desire for economic betterment, to throw off the burdens that crushed the masses and to end the exploitation of the Indian people. If these burdens continue and are actually added to, it does not require a powerful mind to realise that the fight must not only continue but grow more intense....

India's immediate goal can therefore only be considered in terms of the ending of exploitation of her people. Politically, it must mean independence and the severance of the British connection, which means imperialist dominion; economically and socially it must mean the ending of all special class privileges and vested interests. The whole world is struggling to this end; India can do no less, and in this way the Indian struggle for freedom lines up with the world struggle. Is our aim human welfare or the preservation of class privileges and the vested interests of pampered groups? The question must be answered clearly and unequivocally by each one of us. There is no room for quibbling when the fate of nations and millions of human beings is at stake. The day for palace intrigues and parlour politics and pacts and compromises passes when the masses enter politics. Their manners are not those of the drawing room; we never took the trouble to teach them any manners. Their school is the school of events and suffering is their teacher. They learn their politics from great movements which bring out the true nature of individuals and classes, and the civil disobedience movement has taught the Indian masses many a lesson which they will never forget.

Having thus set down his position four square behind a belligerent, anti-British, anti-constitutionalist programme, Jawaharlal ends by a wholly characteristic rhapsody on socialism and the total satisfaction which the search for socialism can bring to the genuine Indian nationalist:

Whither India? Surely to the great human goal of social and economic equality, to the ending of all exploitation of nation by nation and class by class, to national freedom within the

framework of an international cooperative socialist world federation. This is not such an empty idealist dream as some people imagine. It is within the range of the practical politics of today and the near future. We may not have it within our grasp but those with vision can see it emerging on the horizon. And even if there be delay in the realisation of our goal, what does it matter if our steps march in the right direction and our eyes look steadily in front. For in the pursuit itself of a mighty purpose there is joy and happiness and a measure of achievement. As Bernard Shaw has said: "This is the true joy in life, the being used for a purpose recognised by yourself as a mighty one; the being thoroughly worn out before you are thrown on the scrap heap; the being a force of nature, instead of a feverish, selfish little clod of ailments and grievances, complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy."

There is no doubt that this brief pamphlet, written and published during an uncomfortable inbetween period, marked an important point in the development of the political consciousness in Indian youth. It is good political controversy at its most effective – polite, ambiguous and even evasive when necessary – but hard-hitting when the target is safer than Gandhi, for example. It is very much representative of the time in which it was written, only a few months after Roosevelt and Hitler came on the world scene. Jawaharlal in still totally unconscious of the future implications of this double phenomenon which was going to make so much of difference to the world and to India. To that extent, it was not up-to-date, but in dragging popular attention away from legislative minutiae and stressing the essential relevance of economic problems and the importance of the interrelationship between all parts of the world in rapidly shrinking globe, he was totally in the right. His was essentially a lay approach; that of a political activist excited by his discovery of new economic and social explanations of a complex world. Hence his interpretations are necessarily flawed; but to a whole generation of young people, and particularly students in India, this new approach meant a possible way out of what appeared to be continuing stagnation and continuing reliance on obsolete instruments. To that extent it does represent an essential link between Jawaharlal's earlier campaign in Madras and Calcutta, along with Subhas Chandra Bose, for complete independence, his successful projection of the inde-

pendence pledge at the Lahore Congress and, later, the exposition of the socialist approach as a part of the Congress programme in the Lucknow and the Faizpur sessions over which he presided in 1936.

The importance of *Whither India* piece is both immediate and permanent. It created quite a furore and provoked Gandhi's well-known reaction to Jawaharlal's socialism. Later, however, it was published as a part of *Recent Essays and Writings* by Kitabistan about the same time as the *Autobiography* and played no small role in introducing several new generations of Indian students to the inevitability of socialism in the Indian context.

There is yet another aspect to this delightful piece of political pamphleteering, with its crescendo of an emotional conclusion taken from Bernard Shaw. In a fascinating manner Jawaharlal converges here, on a personal note, with Gandhi's own interpretation of the *Gita*, with its angry rejection of interest in the fruits of action and his acceptance of the basis of the human condition that "one step is enough for me" — one example, among many, of his discovery of seminal ideas in alien tradition. It is well-known that, during his later years, Jawaharlal did find strength and sustenance in the *Gita*, without seeing in it a dominant spiritual influence in his outlook on life. This self-perception, as a willing instrument used for a higher cause, is again repeated in the famous passages in the *Autobiography* on religion in the humanist sense.

The pamphlet, *Whither India*, provoked some criticism, mostly directed towards Jawaharlal's assumptions on socialism. Here, in his answers to these criticisms, there is a characteristic defensive passage on the Soviet model of socialism, the only one available at that time:

But socialism does not mean just a duplication of what has taken place in Soviet Russia. It may, and probably will, evolve on different lines in different countries. It must always be remembered that Czarist Russia was one of the worst places to try the socialist experiment because of her backward condition. An advanced industrial country like England or Germany would have been far more suitable and would have yielded swifter and richer results. It is easy enough to criticise Russia. In a vast country launched on a vast and unprecedented experiment there are bound to be innumerable lapses and even failure. But the point is that in Russia these lapses and failures are recognised and an

immediate effort is made to remedy them. In the capitalist countries, on the other hand, there is a helpless wringing of hands and a policy of waiting and seeing, for every avenue of growth and every effective remedy leads to a change of the system.

I do not admire all that has occurred in the Soviet Union but I do admire their objective and the vital urge that is driving them to it. I think also that in spite of many mistakes and failures the Soviets have an amazing amount of success to their credit.

My programme? The objective is political independence for India and a rapid social change to establish a socialist state. The method of action and exercising pressure is at present chiefly civil disobedience, and I invite you, Sir, and your readers to participate in this.

In this final exhortation to the editor and the readers of *The Pioneer*, Jawaharlal relates his general theory to the immediate "next step" in the political programme of the Congress, that is, return to the civil disobedience which had been launched in 1930.

III

Within a surprisingly short span of two or three years, Jawaharlal established himself as a highly competent, lucid and effective writer for popular audiences. In 1928, when he wrote articles on Soviet Russia (later published as his first book), some of the more acute observers in India recognized in him a facility of expression which was fresh and totally devoid of political jargon. It was, however, a very small affair. When we read today the voluminous correspondence, diaries and articles written specifically for a foreign audience on the Indian question during the late twenties, we can recognize the slow but sure emergence of a professional writer. Then there were the sharp, brilliant little pieces of eloquence associated with the trials, the Congress sessions and the other political occasions. All these were important in delineating a certain individual profile as a rare, thoughtful, and analytical political speaker and writer amidst the highly repetitive, grandiose political oratory of the day. Only Rajagopalachari among the other lieutenants of Gandhi was developing his own special style of simplification and communica-

tion. In his case, as in the case of Gandhi, there was a certain amiable reconciliation between the Indian vernacular, Gujarati or Tamil, in which they were most at ease, with a correct, straightforward English style, claiming to be good journalism and nothing more. Perhaps the greatest charm of these two masters of the popular style was their total absence of self-consciousness. In Jawaharlal, however, the personal element, the half sentimental, half ironical wry detachment, along with a certain romantic idealization of men and matters would always be breaking in, even when the writer was in total control.

By 1936, two of Jawaharlal's three major books had been published — *Glimpses of World History* and *An Autobiography*. The *Glimpses* was actually a continuation of a much smaller book published in 1929 consisting of a small number of letters written from prison to his daughter, Indira, about geology, archaeology, pre-history and the other aspects of the beginning of the world. This book did attract some attention but it was, on the whole, a fairly thin affair and merits attention today primarily as an example of the educationist, the teacher in Jawaharlal, the anxious rearticulator of the ideas and information he had obtained in his vast reading, in simple, straightforward prose, deliberately intended to attract and keep the attention of young readers.

The *Glimpses* came about without any huge design behind it, even though, when it was published, it ran into just a little less than thousand pages. In fact, it was not a long book but a collection of historical essays, placed in a reasonably logical sequence, covering events and processes in world history from earliest times to 1933, when Hitler had just appeared on the European scene and the world was still unaware of the awful portent of that single occurrence. This historical narrative was written in the form and style learnt by Jawaharlal during the writing of his earlier letters to his daughter. They were all written in prison, from several prisons, and also sometimes during moments of quiet in between prisons. They were not written for immediate posting to his daughter, but were kept aside for her, to be read when they met again; but the form helped. The absence of an elaborate reference library and, even more fortunately from his essentially amateur point of view, the absence of a research assistant or a team of researchers, made for a certain selectivity. A sensitive memory played the artist. This did lead to some omissions and gaps, but considering the circumstances in which they were

written, it is an astonishing achievement. There is no structure or design in the planning of the book except a certain decent belief in the advancement of civilization and the necessary improvement in the human condition. Its approach is Indocentric, very much so and that gives it a certain special quality among the several books of popularization of history, science and philosophy, written during that rather tremulous decade before the Second World War.

This is important. Jawaharlal's book has to be seen against the background of H.G. Wells and his three books of popularization in history, science and economics and also the later masterpieces of James Jeans and Arthur Eddington, and, of course, the masterly expositions of politics and popular philosophy and educational theory by Bertrand Russell in those days. It was a great period for popular writing, a period when major writers appreciated the need to be understood and felt that heady excitement of the ability to influence the ordinary reader in the mass. In England, the publishing firm, Gollancz, represented the interest in good quality popular writing. A major book which came out about the same time as Nehru's *Glimpses* was the *Outline of General Knowledge* published by Gollancz, attempting to summarize the latest achievements of science and philosophy in the modern world. Bernard Shaw's *The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism and Capitalism*, also belongs to this list. C.E.M. Joad and G.D.H. Cole were his natural successors.

It is not being claimed that Jawaharlal saw himself as a conscious peer among these distinguished intellectuals, taking time off from their very arcane pursuits to write popular literature. He saw himself essentially as a concerned, observant reader, whose deep unhappiness with the Indian situation made it necessary for him to see politics and society in the country today against the background of both remote and immediate history. This was the impulse. His affection for and his easy communication with his only child rendered the idea of recapitulating the history of the world in basic terms for her benefit an attractive idea. The book was written in comparatively short, but not too short, essays, about five pages each, the essential link being provided by chronology. However, the need for national, continental and global interrelationship was never forgotten. As the extremely interesting, carefully crafted table of synchronization of events in various parts of the world which he prepared for Indira's benefit shows, he did have a fairly clear picture of the location of

individuals and events, single episodes and, most of all, ideas, in the flow of history.

And so, in a rather pleasant, almost unconscious, unlaboured manner, the book wrote itself over the months, over the years. When he came out of prison in 1933, the large manuscript was ready and Jawaharlal was recognized as a serious writer by world standards and a major publicist in the Indian context. The two volumes of the original edition published in Allahabad had a modest enough reception, but it did serve to project Nehru as a 'heavy-weight' among Indian political figures.

IV

In the evolution of his career as a political leader and as a propagandist within India, *Glimpses* was not, perhaps, as important as the next book, the *Autobiography*, which gave Nehru an opportunity of repeating the earlier prison experience of writing chapters linked by chronology over a certain period of time. The later book, however, had a certain emotional thrust, imparted to it by the nationalist urge as well as by the need for introspection in mid-career. The *Autobiography* was published in 1936, immediately after Kamala's death, and it was not a mere accident that the first edition was published in London, not in India, even though the English edition was a best-seller in Indian terms within the country.

Though not primarily written for a foreign audience, the *Autobiography* is a deliberate attempt to project India's case for freedom. It was also an attempt to communicate the excitement and the uncertainties of the national movement under Gandhi's leadership. Its easy, comfortable style, at no moment solemn or pompous, but all the time worried about delineating the exact truth as the author saw it, attracted foreign intellectuals, particularly progressive left-wing intellectuals in Great Britain, the United States and Europe. The *Autobiography* has more structure and design than its predecessor, *Glimpses*, or its successor, *The Discovery of India*.

However, Jawaharlal was not a compulsive writer. His extraordinary abilities as a prose stylist matured slowly, under the pressure of necessity, the need to communicate, the absolute importance of advertising the Indian tragedy to those people abroad who might conceivably be of some use in helping the national cause. At the

same time it was also a book written by some one who liked modern literature, more particularly modern English literature, who was at ease with some of the most recent creative writing in England.

All this becomes easy to understand when one remembers the passion for self-discipline which dominated Jawaharlal all his life, with an intensity equal to that of Gandhi, demanding equally of himself, the last strenuous effort; but the priorities were different, the stresses were vitally disparate. It is this shared seriousness of purpose, this need to immerse oneself in work every second of the unforgiving minute, which unites these extraordinarily attractive but totally different personalities.

Both these major books have survived to this day as readable books, useful particularly to the young Indian student. The *Autobiography* has its own documentary importance in the evolution of the national struggle. It has strongly expressed ideas, sometimes highly exaggerated, sometimes ironically expressed, which read as freshly today as when it was first written. Some of the most poignant chapters are those which deal with the individual's attitude towards science and religion and the complex relationship between himself and his master. Some of the louder comments on the British, on the imperialist experience, and the inequities of the Moderates are a little tiresome; at times there is an almost compelling tendency to lapse into a romantic withdrawal from facts, a return to the mood of Cyrenaicism of the first decade of the century which Jawaharlal had absorbed during his university-days. All this, however, makes for a certain essential individual quality of freshness and charm.

This is, after all, his great achievement. There is no need for the anxious ranking of Jawaharlal, the writer, on the Indian literary scene or in the wider English-speaking world. He remains a recognizably individual writer, standing four-square in time and space, projecting confidently a certain personal integrity, a certain national self-confidence which was much deeper than the shallow dramatic need of the tragic hero "to cheer himself up", in T.S. Eliot's words.

Within India the book had much more of an urgent political impact on the youth and the professional middle classes, the journalists, the academicians and the younger political activists than any other comparable piece of writing. For one thing, it was up-to-date; it dealt with events which had just happened and gave the reader an insight into many of the happenings of which he was only aware in pieces and patches. Slowly but inevitably, a vague pattern

emerged from the book of one man's picture of India's future, a little more detailed than the emphasis on socialism and complete independence, and a living relationship with the similarly situated movements across the world, ideas which had by now become associated with Jawaharlal. The emphasis on socialism became much more pronounced. The impatience with compromise was also equally clear. All this meant that, for a whole generation of younger people, the boys and girls in their teens and the new apprentices in political activity in both the Congress and the Leftist groups, a new and contemporary near-ideology, not coherent enough to be called an ideology, but recognizable in its details as a series of beliefs and convictions, was available. As an introduction to a more activist view of politics, it could not have been bettered in the Indian situation.

For the external audience, the *Autobiography* communicated an entirely new picture of the Indian reality. This was, by no means, an unknown quantity in the world outside in those days. Gandhi had made India headline news for more than ten years. His personality, his Biblical simplicity, his humour and charm had got across to all parts of the world the message of India's search for freedom. His visit to Britain in 1931 was extremely important in this brilliant public relations effort. All this was fairly familiar, but the picture of Indian nationalism which Jawaharlal gave, supplemented it and enriched it strictly in contemporary terms. Throughout the book his overriding admiration for his leader was in evidence. There were, however, areas of Gandhi's activity which could not mean much to the average modern European or American. It is here that Jawaharlal made his specific personal contribution. He spoke to an audience worried about depression, unemployment, fascism, rearmament and the rise of Hitler in phrases full of concern which they themselves were beginning to feel. Here was no mere follower of other people's fashions in thought or opinion. He was as much a leader, as much a pioneer in many causes as the best of them — in simple terms, it was an interior dialogue between the converted. This new intellectual sympathy became more and more important during the late thirties and forties. Very slowly, a certain personal constituency was created for Jawaharlal within the intellectual establishment in Britain and in America. More important, among individual British bureaucrats in India also, there was a much greater appreciation of the new outlook among younger Congressmen. Earlier, comfortable rationalizations based on Bolshevism, un-Indian

ideas, etc., could no longer help. It became necessary for the new uncomfortable, rather tense, generation of expatriates who ruled India and who had been sustained in their day-to-day chores by a sense of mission, to come to terms with many of the uglier aspects of their presence in this foreign land. They could not simply wish it away by admiring Gandhi as a charming but bizarre freak. Neither could the march of the people in a slow, orderly movement towards ultimate self-government be as convincing as it had appeared earlier.

There are, of course, failures in communication too. The liberals in Indian politics who had been mercilessly excoriated by Jawaharlal on earlier occasions in rather simplified and shrill terms, found the style and tone of this representative of the new generation in India totally alien to their own outlook. On the whole, however, what the book succeeded most in communicating was a sense of intense personal involvement in the world outside, and, more narrowly, immediately, in the difficulties and problems of Indian society. What was going to be the most attractive single feature of Jawaharlal's personality through the next three decades, also came through in lucid words and expressions in this mid-career manifesto. He was never a dogmatist, never over-confident about his own position, always inclined to take back a step or two and reconsider his own earlier perceptions.

V

The preparations for the publication of the *Autobiography* in Europe synchronized with the terminal illness and death of Kamala. His wife had been ill so long and had displayed over the years such powers of resilience, pulling through many a difficult crisis, that it had been possible for Jawaharlal to immerse himself in a fairly active daily routine connected with renewing old contacts and making new ones for the purpose of furthering India's cause. When we read his correspondence of those last sad months, it is easy to be irritated with him for what appears to be an attempt to escape into politics from immediate personal anguish. But, to be fair to him, there was very little else he could do. He had been allowed to leave India by the British authorities on the implicit understanding that he would not use the excuse of his wife's illness to engage in active political campaigning abroad. All he could do was to renew extremely inter-

esting and useful contacts with people in anti-imperialist and anti-fascist circles on the Continent and in Britain. He found it possible to get away from his wife's bedside to London for a few days and this was important for arranging the publishing details. Here, V.K. Krishna Menon became a vital link.

Jawaharlal Nehru had already met and liked Krishna Menon, but it was only now that their relationship became intimate and their friendship continuous. It is about this time that the question of a permanent set-up in London to represent the Congress was seriously discussed and the decision was made in favour of Krishna Menon's India League. This in itself was not as important as the fact that Jawaharlal discovered in Krishna Menon an invaluable contact with the Labour Party, with many intellectual and media groups in London, and also with Leftist political activists throughout Europe. Earlier contacts with the anti-imperialist League had now become marginal, mostly owing to political developments. Key figures like Viren Chattopadhyaya had left Germany for the Soviet Union and there was no continuing institutional activity on oppressed nations or on anti-imperialism which made it useful or necessary for the Congress or Jawaharlal to reactivate these contacts.

The situation was, in fact, a little more complex. This was an interlude, a period of waiting, in retrospect, between the earlier theoretical activities against imperialism at a time when very little immediate action was called for, except in relation to the single question of the Japanese attack on China, and the very practical day-to-day campaigning that was to follow. Italy's invasion of Abyssinia was happening about this time and heralded a much more dangerous phase in international relations, inevitably leading to the Second World War. But these ominous portents were seen by Jawaharlal and his friends in Europe still as individual developments only. The pattern had yet to emerge in which Hitler's Germany was to play the central role.

In such a period of temporary inactivity before the Spanish developments crystallized the situation in a manner so clear that escapism was no longer possible, there was really no case for developing a general strategy on a global basis against imperialism, against fascism, against the Japanese militarist threat and against the new, frightening Nazi menace, in that ascending order. At the same time, there were the faint foreshadowings of a possible united reaction to these developments on the part of people everywhere, both in

the "imperialist democracies" at home and in the colonies, in the various weak, but already organized, nationalist movements, and, also in the united front experiment in France.

The existence of a smug, self-satisfied, conservative, national front government in Britain made it easier for Jawaharlal to go back to India with rather clear and sometimes exaggerated notions about a confrontation between the angels and the devils in the world arena. This meant that Italy, France, Britain and Germany, and Japan were all in the enemy camp, while the "people of the world" and, to some extent, the Soviet Union were with the Congress.

This was the conviction, not entirely jelled, with which Jawaharlal returned to India. It does not matter whether he was entirely correct or whether this particular explanation was rather facile. It was a very useful and necessary ideological component of the new nationalism in India of which Jawaharlal, till the Quit India Resolution in 1942, was the most powerful exponent. During this period there would be interesting, temporary but useful alliances with the Left and with Subhas Chandra Bose within the Congress. It was an extremely important ideological element of the Congress programme during this period and it was very important for the ultimate evolution of India's policy in those years that Jawaharlal was the President of the Congress, in 1936 and 1937 and, Subhas Chandra Bose in 1938. The ironies, contradictions and complexities of the Tripuri Congress in 1939, when Subhas broke with the Congress establishment, do not in any way diminish the relevance of the emergence of this activist, dynamic, leftist or socialist pressure group within the Congress during those years.

In all these developments the essential personal and political link between Jawaharlal and Gandhi was crucial and continued to be an enduring element, in spite of some mutual misunderstandings. Both these great communicators concentrated on things which primarily mattered to them in this vital period of transition; both accepted each other's priorities with some reluctance but with generosity for the other's point of view. This was very important in the perspective of history because, this mutual loyalty survived ideological difficulties not only in 1941-42, but also in the post-war period and the negotiations with the British in the two years before the final transfer of power and partition.

Doubts and Dilemmas

The seven years between the beginning of 1936, when Jawaharlal returned from Europe, bereaved and forlorn after the death of Kamala, and straightaway plunged into active politics as the new President of the Congress at Lucknow, and August 1942, when the Quit India Resolution was adopted in Bombay, in accordance with Mahatma Gandhi's extremely clear prescription for the country's problems in the midst of a world conflict which had come physically very near India, can be understood and analysed as a reasonably separate whole in the ongoing development of Jawaharlal Nehru's own personal career, as well as yet another stage in the Nation's complex mix of movements forward and backward in the struggle for total independence. The collective leadership in the Congress under Gandhi's detached, by no means faltering, control of both strategy and tactics, endures throughout this period as far as the three or four major mainstream central figures are concerned.

Jawaharlal Nehru himself, Vallabhbhai Patel, Rajendra Prasad, Abul Kalam Azad and a host of lesser leaders at the national and the provincial levels were all, throughout this period, united in a solidarity of understanding and disciplined obedience to the Mahatma's gradually shifting and evolving policies towards Britain, towards the disparate elements on the national scene like the other major parties – the Muslim League, the Hindu Mahasabha and the Liberals – and also the other actors in the Indian political drama like the "Native States", the Harijans and, finally, the newly emerging militant forces within the body politic inside and outside the Congress, who were all impatient with the pace of change and also not comfortable with many basic assumptions of the Congress ideology, specifically in economic matters, but nevertheless anxious to belong to the mainstream and to participate in the Gandhian leadership.

There were, however, problems. Two major personalities, Subhas Chandra Bose and Rajagopalachari, found it difficult to conform to the developing policies of the Congress towards Britain and the world outside during this tumultuous period of transition. Rajaji was ill at ease with the Congress and its policies, both in regard to the attitude towards Britain during the War and towards the Muslim League in working out post-independence arrangements. His appreciation of the situation arising out of the Lahore Resolution of

the Muslim League on Pakistan in 1940 made it impossible for him to support a policy of total confrontation with the government. His clear perception of the seriousness of the League's challenge and the need to meet it by a much clearer commitment on plural self-determination on the part of the Congress than the national party was willing to accept at that moment, distanced him from the mainstream Congress leadership. This led, in ideologically imprecise terms, to a withdrawal to the Right by Rajaji, and a certain sympathetic response to this withdrawal from the Liberal establishment and the older, more moderate groups in the nationalist mainstream, who were not too happy with Gandhi's inexorable march towards confrontation with the British rulers. Subhas Chandra Bose also found it impossible to stay within the Congress mainstream under Gandhi's leadership and after almost 18 months of tormented efforts to reach a *modus vivendi* during his presidentship of the organization, found it impossible to carry on according to Gandhi's ideas and prescribed tempo for change. He formed the Forward Bloc, much more bitter with Jawaharlal than with Gandhi, because of what he felt was Jawaharlal's unwillingness to support him at a crucial moment, even though they were so much nearer each other politically than either was with Gandhi or his comfortable and cosy colleagues of the Centre and Right. What followed was dramatic and, perhaps, inevitable, given Subhas's assessment in terms of ideology and the geopolitics of the "imperial democracies" and the Axis powers, his escape to Germany through Afghanistan and the Soviet Union, and his voyage to South-East Asia after Pearl Harbor. His personal and political pilgrimage finally culminated in the raising of the Indian National Army.

These were the two major non-conformist secessions from the mainstream Congress during this fateful period. Equally important were the final decisions to dissociate themselves from the Congress programme of struggle with Britain during the war by M.N. Roy personally and his small group, in 1939, and the Communist Party in 1941, after the attack on the Soviet Union by Germany, and to give unreserved support to Britain. They considered the new Peoples' War to be a global struggle against the supreme dangers of international fascism, a struggle in which the older adversary relationship with Britain on the question of national independence had to be given second place.

All these developments have to be recalled here because, in

Jawaharlal Nehru's evolving political attitudes in general and his highly articulate expression of views on the many twists and turns of the national and the global situation in these years, these dilemmas of ideology and tactics in the external and domestic programme to be adopted by the Congress were discussed and debated in great detail in speeches, statements, formal addresses and also agonized personal correspondence with Gandhi, Subhas Chandra Bose and other friends and colleagues.

In the years before the war, and during the one year of "phony war", the Jawaharlal credo had much more than merely personal significance, even though this personal significance was one of extraordinary power and increasing moral and intellectual authority among the young and also the more progressive elements among the not-so-young groups in the Congress. It was also an important symbolic position because of his central role in the political spectrum. His repeatedly articulated views on domestic issues represented a viable and essentially sane middle position at a time when there were so many tendencies towards polarization between the extreme Right and the extreme Left on the future "political economy" of free India.

Here, of course, the position was extremely confused because of Gandhi's own clear perception of priorities, his trusteeship theory, and, more important than anything else, his deep suspicions about "scientific socialism". But the Nehru-Gandhi differences were subtle, almost esoteric, when compared to the much larger differences in the Indian Press and in the ranks of the Indian bourgeoisie generally about the future set-up of the country. Jawaharlal, with his unusually sensitive appreciation of the strengths of national planning in the Soviet Union and its various failings as an experimental political system, was able to see both sides of the ideological question at a time when information was limited, hopes and ambitions unlimited. This made it easy for the Congress Socialist Party and, more specifically, its rigid communist element, to accept membership of the Congress for three or four years when Nehru and Bose were the presidents. It also meant that the Congress became in these pre-war years flexible enough ideologically to accept as a member someone with political convictions as strong as those of M.N. Roy when he was released from prison in 1936.

In relation to the other major domestic preoccupation of Indian politics in those days — the communal problem — Jawaharlal

represented the mainstream point of view primarily because he accepted Gandhi's approach and strategy, without any reservation. His contributions to the solving of this question were, on the whole marginal, in spite of the fact that his repeated articulation of the secularist ideal and his rejection of all religious revivalism in any form was of great propaganda significance for Indian youth. However, in retrospect, it has to be admitted that his self-righteous secularism, which projected itself as an angry alternative to the self-righteous communalism of the Muslim League and the Hindu Mahasabha was, in one sense, self-defeating. It is very difficult to be fair to Jawaharlal and to Gandhi on this issue. There are today so many facile afterthoughts, so many easy excursions into the might-have-beens, which are totally insensitive to the agonies and the dilemmas of the late thirties, dilemmas in which both Gandhi and Nehru, both Subhas and Sardar Patel, were equally involved. Jawaharlal's own position was not particularly extreme in any sense but he became the most effective exponent of the Congress position during these years, along with Maulana Azad since 1940, when the great Muslim nationalist took over the presidency of the Congress. All this meant that it fell to Jawaharlal to enunciate in memorable prose the superior relevance of secularism in any future constitutional set-up, with its corollary of scorn and indifference to the strength and importance of the communal forces in the country, particularly the Muslim League and the enigmatic but increasingly powerful personality of Jinnah.

It was not only in these domestic matters that Jawaharlal's symbolic position became more and more significant as the war drew near and the problem of resolving India's attitude towards it became immediate. As the complex global situation changed with the entry, first, of the Soviet Union, and then, Japan and the United States, into what had been originally just another European war within the capitalist-cum-colonial system, it became an intellectual challenge as well as a moral problem of large magnitude for Nehru to formulate dependent India's response to the struggle. He did it in very clear terms during those two years. But it must not be forgotten that his formulations of India's attitude towards the changing world scene made on several occasions beginning with the two presidential addresses at Lucknow and Faizpur in 1936 and ending with the 8 August speech in 1942, can be seen in retrospect to be essentially exercises in explanation and education only. The real

decisions which revised the Congress policies at critical moments were made by Mahatma Gandhi. There was, at no time, in anyone's mind, in India or abroad, any doubt or vagueness as to who called the shots in Indian politics. The important thing to note is that more than 20 years of acceptance and understanding of Gandhi's leadership and also the deep personal loyalties which now bound them, made it easy for Jawaharlal to accept his leader's shifts in strategy. This explains, to some extent, the apparent lack of difficulty with which the two larger than life figures of the Indian national movement at that time Vallabhbhai Patel and Jawaharlal Nehru apart from Gandhi himself, found it not only possible, but necessary, and, by no means unpleasant to subjugate their own political judgement and accept their leader's decision with all its implications.

There had been a third larger than life figure also, a younger leader of infinite charisma, resoluteness and clarity of purpose, not plagued by too much doubt, and much too impatient to coexist with an unresolved situation to obey. Subhas Chandra Bose tried to surrender his judgment to Gandhi as honestly and sincerely as he could, found it impossible and, in a historic decision, decided to opt out.

II

The two years after his return from Europe when he was Congress President, form an abundantly documented period in Jawaharlal's political life. At a time when a strenuous debate was being carried on at all levels about the new constitution and the provincial election, the federal structure, relations between the States and the future central arrangement, and the communal problem, the President of the Congress had occasion to comment in detail on all aspects of these problems. The two presidential addresses, at Lucknow in April 1936 and at Faizpur in December 1936, provided an opportunity to Jawaharlal to make considered and comprehensive statements on them. Major developments were taking place in Europe which made it necessary for him to hold forth, at great length, on the ideological issues involved in the acceptance or rejection of socialism. In fact, the Lucknow speech is particularly important because it gave Jawaharlal Nehru an opportunity to communicate to the whole country the need to see Indian

development against the changing world scene. At the same time, it is by no means uninterested in or bereft of analysis of and proposals concerning domestic political issues and the organizational problems of the Congress.

One of the problems which bothered Jawaharlal throughout this period was the constitution of the Congress Working Committee. He had always felt that the fairest method would be by election; but after toying with the idea for some time, he was forced to give it up as impracticable. However, he did see the need for a certain representative quality in the composition of the Working Committee, in preference to the homogeneity resulting from loyalty to Mahatma Gandhi's principles and opinions on current affairs, even though during these years Gandhi was ostentatiously keeping himself aloof, in the background. Jawaharlal was always sensitive to the need for broadening the mainstream of the Congress; he himself felt intellectually out of tune with the middle-stream, with its total acceptance of Gandhi's views, its amiable refusal to be interested in the working classes and the peasantry, and its very comfortable equation with the capitalists, whose financial support was essential for the survival of the Congress and who were, anyway, absolved of the sins of exploitation by the trusteeship theory. At the same time, he had a reasonably equable personal relationship with most of them and he recognized the need for utilizing the existing links between the Congress and the masses through the district, taluka, and town Congress committees and the constructive programme. His real problem was the increasingly old-fashioned and out-of-date thinking of most Congressmen and their lack of interest in social and political issues at home and in major international events. It was this awareness of the unrepresentative nature of the Congress leadership which made him nominate, at Gandhi's instance, three socialists as members of the Working Committee.

This official recognition of the relevance of the socialist group within the organization went along with a detailed discussion in both speeches of the merits of socialism, not merely in the abstract, but against the background of the Soviet experiment, with its achievements and its defects. Some of these passages today make somewhat sad reading – a little too trusting. What we now know about Stalin and his methods makes it difficult for us to go back in time and recall the enormous impact Soviet national planning had on oppressed people everywhere. The saving grace of Jawaharlal's

articulation is, of course, that he is not dogmatic or fundamentalist in his approach. He comes down clearly on the side of "scientific" socialism but he can see clearly some of the weaknesses of the system, one of those crucial areas in the development of modern political thought where Nehru can be left confidently to speak for himself:

Capitalism, in its difficulties, took to fascism with all its brutal suppression of what Western civilization had apparently stood for; it became, even in some of its homelands, what its imperialist counterpart had long been in the subject colonial countries. Fascism and imperialism thus stood out as the two faces of the now decaying capitalism, and though they varied in different countries according to national characteristics and economic and political conditions, they represented the same forces of reaction and supported each other, and at the same time came into conflict with each other, for such conflict was inherent in their very nature. Socialism in the West and the rising nationalism of the Eastern and other dependent countries opposed this combination of fascism and imperialism. Nationalism in the East, it must be remembered, was essentially different from the new and terribly narrow nationalism of fascist countries; the former was the historical urge to freedom, the latter the last refuge of reaction.

Thus we see the world divided up into two vast groups today — the imperialist and fascist on one side, the socialist and nationalist on the other. There is some overlapping of the two and the line between them is difficult to draw, for there is mutual conflict between the fascist and imperialist powers, and the nationalism of subject countries has sometimes a tendency to fascism. But the main division holds, and if we keep it in mind, it will be easier for us to understand world conditions and our own place in them.

Where do we stand, then, we who labour for a free India? Inevitably we take our stand with the progressive forces of the world which are ranged against fascism and imperialism. We have to deal with one imperialism in particular, the oldest and the most far-reaching of the modern world, but powerful as it is, it is but one aspect of world imperialism. And that is the final argument for Indian independence and for the severance of our

connection with the British Empire.

This is a clear enough depiction of the world scene as had been brilliantly analysed and developed by many socialist thinkers in Europe like John Strachey.

While all this is true, Jawaharlal was quite conscious of the basic internal class problem within the Congress, which depended for both leadership and ideas on the middle classes, but for power and energy on the masses. Here, in a characteristically honest mood of self-criticism, he appeals for a return to a more correct sense of values in which the communal problem, which he sees essentially as a middle-class proposition, should give place, in priority and importance, to the "economic problem affecting the masses".

It is from this dissatisfaction with the Congress attitude and the Congress organization that Jawaharlal reaches an essentially unrealistic and romantic conclusion, again typical of the "received wisdom" of those days about the state of affairs in the Soviet Union. He makes a highly positive assessment of the Soviet achievement in planning:

It is interesting to read in that monumental and impressive record, the Webbs' new book on Russia, how the whole Soviet structure is based on a wide and living democratic foundation. Russia is not supposed to be a democratic country after the Western pattern, and yet we find the essentials of democracy present in far greater degree amongst the masses there than anywhere else. The six hundred thousand towns and villages there have a vast democratic organisation, each with its own soviet, constantly discussing, debating, criticising, helping in the formulation of policy, electing representatives to higher committees. This organisation as citizens covers the entire population over 18 years of age. There is yet another vast organization of the people as producers, and a third, equally vast, as consumers. And thus scores of millions of men and women are constantly taking part in the discussion of public affairs, and actually in the administration of the country. There has been no such practical application of the democratic process in history.

All this is, of course, utterly beyond us, for it requires a change in the political and economic structure and much else before we can experiment that way. But we can profit by that

example still, and try in our own limited way to develop democracy in the lowest rungs of the Congress ladder and make the primary committee a living organization.

These are important passages because they show us the scope of Jawaharlal's interests and, at the same time, we can see some justification for the irritation and deep misgivings which some of these ideas aroused in his colleagues and also in Mahatma Gandhi. Earlier in 1934, Gandhi had written, in a very important letter to Vallabhbhai Patel, his half-amused, half-critical reactions to the new wave of socialism within the Congress as represented by Jawaharlal and his immediate circle.

Then there is the growing group of socialists. Jawaharlal is their undisputed leader. I know pretty well what he wants and stands for. He claims to examine everything in a scientific spirit. He is courage personified. He has many years of service in front of him. He has an indomitable faith in his mission. The socialist group represents his views more or less, though probably their mode of execution is not exactly his. That group is bound to grow in influence and importance. I have welcomed the group. Many of them are respected and self-sacrificing co-workers. With all this, I have fundamental differences with them on the programme published in their authorized pamphlets. But I would not, by reason of the moral pressure I may be able to exert, suppress the spread of the ideas propounded in their literature.

This had been quite some time before the speech quoted. By 1936, Jawaharlal had succeeded in putting the socialist ideal at the top of the Congress agenda. At the same time he was honest enough to notice some real problems in adopting the Soviet model. The Moscow trials of 1936 had just taken place and the anti-Communist crusaders were in full cry. Inaugurating the civil liberties conference in Madras on 9 October 1936, Jawaharlal had to face some awkward questions from the audience:

- (1) Can you tell us from your personal experience of Soviet Russia, whether there are civil liberty unions in Russia? If so, whether these unions tried to help Trotsky, Zinoviev and Kamenev who were exiled or shot after the farce of a

trial?

- (2) Is there any room for difference of views in a dictatorship like that of Stalin which you admire so much?
- (3) Do you admit that there is more civil liberty in India at present than in Russia?
- (4) If you make a speech in Moscow attacking communism in the manner in which you have been attacking British imperialism in Madras, do you hope to remain a free man as you are at present?

Jawaharlal's reply reads today as being completely honest and rather amused:

Now, friends, my discomfiture is complete. These questions assume that I am a fervent admirer of everything that happens in Russia, which, of course, I am not. In Russia, recently there was that trial. I do not know the circumstances, and I do not feel competent to pass any definite opinion. The news we get is usually coloured. I do not think I will be justified in expressing a definite opinion on a matter which I do not know thoroughly. This trial had a reaction on me. That I can say. I do not know if it was a farce or a trial. A well-known English barrister, Mr. Pritt, I think, was in Russia by chance at the time of the trial, and he has said that seldom did he see a fairer trial than that so far as legal formalities were concerned. As I said, the trial produced a bad impression on me. I am not a fervent admirer of the Stalin dictatorship. I admire the economic transformation of the land there, the development of its social life, its educational and cultural activities. To a large extent, I am an individualist. I feel that there is more room for the development of individualism in a socialistic state.... I do not presume to be a blind follower of any system. I am trying to propagate the ideas underlying the system of socialism. I cannot, however, shut my eyes to the defects found in the application of that system. But as I understand the socialistic system, I think it aims at the fullest democracy and the fullest civil liberty....

Now we talk in terms of fascist and socialist dictatorships. We put the two on the same footing without understanding either. The fascist dictatorship is based on the utter negation of democracy and the utter negation of the liberty of the individual.

It is not only so in actual fact, but also according to fascist theory and ideology. The socialist dictatorship believes and aims at the fullest democracy and civil liberty and ultimately it aims at a stage when there will be no necessity for the coercive authority of the state. No new system can come into being without a difficult transitional period in which a dictatorship is necessary. But this does not mean the dictatorship of an individual. It means the dictatorship of the proletariat, that is, of the 95 or 98 per cent of the people in contrast to the 2 or 5 per cent in the other system. As regards the last question, I think, perhaps, Russia would not have allowed me to carry on propaganda there and I would have suffered....

There is a certain anxious desire to believe here, an almost naive faith in the inevitable goodness of the socialist theory and practice. At the same time there is also an honest admission of possible defects in a system of which so little was known. On the whole, one can say that Nehru's contemporary response can stand up to the scrutiny of history even after 50 years.

III

The presidential address at the Faizpur Congress in the very last week of December 1936 is interesting both in itself and also because it shows how clearly, inevitably and confidently, Jawaharlal's ideological understanding and explanation of the unfolding world tragedy had become. During the nine months between Lucknow and Faizpur he had travelled throughout the country in his election campaigns and tried to understand the half-formed thoughts and the deep sufferings and expectations which the masses of India seemed to him to be harbouring on the eve of an expected change for the better. He saw it as his task to explain to himself, his special constituency in the educated middle classes, and also, with some trepidation and no little courage, to the ordinary people in village, city and small town, the connection between what was happening or not happening in India and the explosive developments abroad. This did not represent any dramatic change in outlook. It had been a slow process of self-education and sensitive response to huge changes, far beyond India's own volition, in the external environment. The unique

thing was that a man, recognized for his fundamental nationalism and his straightforward approach to things, found it necessary to talk about these things in meeting after meeting, in letter after letter, to newspapers outside India, and in articles, infrequent earlier, but more and more regular after the *National Herald* was founded towards the end of 1938. Apart from the wayside meetings, the innumerable street-corner addresses in the election campaign, and the longer, more serious, but essentially simple formulations to the vast audiences which gathered in the *maidans* all over the country, there were also a few structured, more organized speeches to specialist audiences like the trade unions, the students, the civil liberties unions and meetings arranged by provincial Congress committees for their own members. When we read them today, we are impressed with a certain quality of moral indignation which enlivens what could otherwise be repetitive recitals of events and the development, over all too familiar lines, of the case against fascism and imperialism and the case for national sovereignty and socialism.

The Faizpur speech is interesting against this larger background of continuous pronouncements over the previous four years. Jawaharlal talks about Spain, about Nazi Germany, about the specific connection between the Anglo-German Naval Treaty and its encouragement of Italy to attack Abyssinia. He talks about the British government's actions belying its words. After talking "in terms of the League and in defence of the collective security its actions belied its words and were meant to leave the field open to fascist aggression. Nazi Germany took step after step to humiliate the League and upset the European order, and the British 'National' Government followed meekly in its trail and gave it its whispered blessings.

There is an extremely effective passage on Spain and Jawaharlal wishes to "give some effective assistance to our comrades in Spain, something more than sympathy, however deeply felt. The call for help has come to us from those sorely stricken people and we cannot remain silent to that appeal. And yet I do not know what we can do in our helplessness when we are struggling ourselves against an imperialism that binds and crushes."

The next para in this remarkable document looks forward in its profound world consciousness to the very last days of his career as India's leader in the early sixties and, at the same time, harks back to the tentatively developing understanding of the global situation for

more than a decade now. He says that he would like to stress "this organic connection between world events, this action and interaction between one and the other". Developments in Europe and in the Far-East and the Arab struggle in Palestine are all mentioned and there is a very vivid picture of 'polarization' even though the word is not used:

Democracy and fascism, nationalism and imperialism, socialism and a decaying capitalism, combat each other in the world of ideas, and this conflict develops on the material plane and bayonets and bombs take the place of votes in the struggle for power.... The existing equilibrium having gone, giving place to no other, there is deterioration, reaction, and disaster. It is this disaster that faces us in the world today and war on a terrible scale is an ever-present possibility.... The middle groups fade out or, ghost-like, they flit about, unreal, disillusioned, self-tortured, ever-doubting. That has been the fate of the old liberalism everywhere, though in India perhaps those who call themselves liberals, and others who think in their way, have yet to come out of the fog of complacency that envelops them.

After these characteristic alarms and excursions into the ethereal world outside, Jawaharlal comes back to "the throbbing agony of India's masses, the call of their eyes for relief from the terrible burdens they carry. That is our problem; all others are secondary and merely lead up to it. To solve that problem we shall have to end the imperialistic control and exploitation of India."

The speech goes on to discuss in considerable detail the Government of India Act of 1935 and the whole question of federalism and the future role of the princely states. Here again, it must be remembered that Jawaharlal was strictly going beyond the terms of reference of the Congress which functioned only in British India. This was the period when the States People's Conference and the Civil Liberties Unions sought to extend the rather narrow political agendas of the Congress. Here, he was the unquestioned pioneer, the explorer of uncharted territory. He discusses in some detail the question of affiliating with the Congress "other organizations, of peasants, workers and others, which also aim at the freedom of the Indian people, and thus to make the Congress the widest possible joint front of all the anti-imperialist forces in the

country." The reconciliation in Jawaharlal's mind between the traditional nature of the National Congress which had its centre of gravity in the professional classes and which had celebrated its fiftieth anniversary only one year earlier, and the new, faint stirrings in the outer circles of exploitation, deprivation and sheer physical suffering in Indian Society is never complete. He would continue to be bothered with this throughout his political career. At that moment, when the future appeared to be much easier than it proved to be, he could bravely lay down high enough targets for both the country and for the Congress:

The real object before us is to build up a powerful joint front of all the anti-imperialist forces in the country. The Congress has indeed been in the past, and is today, such a united popular front, and inevitably the Congress must be the basis and pivot of united action. The active participation of the organised workers and peasants in such a front would add to its strength and must be welcomed. Cooperation between them and the Congress Organisation has been growing and has been a marked feature of the past year. This tendency must be encouraged. The most urgent and vital need of India today is this united national front of all forces and elements that are ranged against imperialism. Within the Congress itself most of these forces are represented, and in spite of their diversity and difference in outlook, they have cooperated and worked together for the common good. That is a healthy sign both of the vitality of our great movement and the unity that binds it together. The basis of it is anti-imperialism and independence. Its immediate demand is for a constituent assembly leading to a democratic state where political power has been transferred to the mass of the people. An inevitable consequence of this is the withdrawal of the alien army of occupation.

Apart from this remarkably percipient explanation of the "problem of India" within the world, the Faizpur address contains some remarkable personal touches which have some permanent significance and which also delineate Jawaharlal's specially sensitive charm and generosity in the most attractive light. There is a magnificent salute to Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan "who has come back to us after long internment and prison". In an unusual but

typical Nehruvian juxtaposition of personalities, the next paragraph welcomes back to the mainstream of India's national movement, perhaps, the most brilliant outsider to that movement:

I must also offer on your behalf warm welcome to one, who though young, is an old and well-tried soldier in India's fight for freedom. Comrade M.N. Roy has just come to us after a long and most distressing period in prison, but, though shaken up in body, he comes with fresh mind and heart, eager to take his part in that old struggle that knows no end till it ends in success.

This is important. Nehru had always been conscious of the intrinsic importance of Roy's personality, and recognized him as an intellectual heavy-weight. He had welcomed him in Karachi in 1931 immediately after his return from Russia. In the *Autobiography* he refers to him with great admiration. This particular partnership did not flourish in the years to come, but it was important that someone like Nehru was there in the centre of decision-making in the Congress to be receptive to novel and sometimes hostile ideas.

Another significant reference is to Krishna Menon whom Nehru had grown to understand and like during the previous one or two years. He is referred to as the official representative of the Congress in Brussels for the meeting of the World Peace Congress in September 1936. This was, it is necessary to recall, the period when there was a large peace movement all over Europe in which the British Labour Party played an important role and on which Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence had a pervasive, though diffused, influence. Later on, when war came nearer and nearer, its relevance was necessarily diminished and leaders like Stafford Cripps and Ellen Wilkinson adopted a clear pro-war stand because of the anti-fascist factor. It is interesting to see how Nehru protects the Congress and India's national position from any misunderstanding which could arise from this sympathy with the European Peace Movement:

... I trust that the Congress will associate itself fully with the permanent peace organisation that is being built up and assist with all its strength in this great task. In doing so we must make our own position perfectly clear. For us, and we think for the world, the problem of peace cannot be separated from

imperialism, and in order to remove the root causes of war, imperialism must go. We believe in the sanctity of treaties but we cannot consider ourselves bound by treaties in the making of which the people of India had no part, unless we accept them in due course. The problem of maintaining peace cannot be isolated by us, in our present condition, from war resistance. The Congress has already declared that we can be no parties to an imperialist war, and we will not allow the exploitation of India's manpower and resources for such a war. Any such attempt will be resisted by us.

There is a fourth, and easily the most important personal reference, this time to Subhas Chandra Bose who had been interned immediately after his return to India from Europe:

„Our Committee has been deprived of his counsel, and I have missed throughout the year this brave comrade on whom we all counted so much. Helplessly we watch this crushing of our men and women, but this helplessness in the present steels our resolve to end this intolerable condition of our people.

On the whole, it would not be an exaggeration to conclude that the Faizpur Session of the Congress did mark a moment of important transition, if not transformation in the outlook of the Congress and more dilutely in the organizational reach of the Congress. Jawaharlal refers to the philosophy behind the selection of an obscure village, instead of one of the great cities in the country as in earlier years, to hold the session. It was a recognition of the overriding importance of India's poor peasants, not only to the future set-up in the country but to the next stage in the national struggle:

But a vaster and more pressing problem is that of the peasantry, for India is essentially a land of the peasants. In recognition of this fact, and to bring the Congress nearer to the peasant masses, we are meeting here today at the village of Faizpur and not, as of old, in some great city.

The reform of the land system is tied up with the development of industry, both large-scale and cottage, in order to give work to our scores of millions of the unemployed and raise the pitiful standards of our people. That again is connected with so

many other things — education, housing, roads and transport, sanitation, medical relief, social services, etc. Industry cannot expand properly because of the economic and financial policy of the government.

And so one problem runs into another and all together form that vast complex that is India today. Are we going to solve this by petty tinkering and patchwork with all manner of vested interests obstructing us and preventing advance? Only a great planned system for the whole land and dealing with all these various national activities, coordinating them, making each serve the larger whole and the interests of the mass of our people, only such a planned system with a vision and courage to back it, can find a solution. But planned systems do not flourish under the shadow of monopolies and vested interests and imperialist exploitation. They require the air and soil of political and social freedom.

It is not only the peasantry but the other more organized, more powerful industrial working class which is also mentioned by Jawaharlal in connection with the strike in the Ambarnath Swedish Match Factory. There was also a great railway strike in progress. Jawaharlal, in effect, sends his distant greetings to these groups yet uninvolved in the political struggle: "The workers in our country have yet to gain elementary rights; they have yet to have an eight-hour day and unemployment insurance and a guaranteed living wage".

During the next six years before the Quit India movement, the Congress became definitely more representative of the Indian masses. At this moment, most of the future leaders of the Communist Party of India were still in the Congress. The Congress Socialists themselves formed a coherent and effective pressure group who looked to Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose to redirect the energy of the Congress towards socio-economic goals and away from the sins of "class collaborationism". Many ideological lines got blurred during the next five years because of the need to apportion priorities to the anti-imperialist struggle in India and the anti-fascist struggle in the world. It also became thoroughly mixed up with Subhas Chandra Bose's own personal difficulties with the Congress leadership and also with Mahatma Gandhi. Then there were the new dilemmas faced by the more conservative Congress leaders because of the experience of office acceptance and their

desire to extend this experience to the federal level even at the sacrifice of some basic goals. Jawaharlal continued to play a central as well as representative role during all these developments, an uncomfortable nationalist link between the Left and the Right. This he found possible only because of his overriding loyalty to Gandhi.

IV

Apart from these two Congress sessions, the great achievements of Nehru as a popular educator in this period were in the election campaign in 1936-37. This was an enormously successful exercise in popular communication, by any standard. According to Nehru's own records:

...The actual number of touring days prior to the elections was 130 and during this period about 50,000 miles were covered — about 26,000 miles by railway, 22,500 by road (chiefly by car) and 1,600 by air. The means of transport varied greatly. They included aeroplanes, railway (usually third class travelling, sometimes second class, and on two occasions special trains for short distances); motor cars (from a Rolls Royce to a fifteen year old Ford); motor lorry, horse carriage, tonga, *ekka*, bullock cart, bicycle, elephant, camel, horse, steamer, paddle-boat, canoe, and on foot.

...On a rough and conservative estimate, it can be said that ten million persons actually attended the meetings I addressed, and probably several million more were brought into some kind of touch with me during my journeying by road. These vast audiences usually had a large proportion of women.

There is no doubt that this campaign played a major role in projecting Jawaharlal Nehru's image as the national leader, second only to Mahatma Gandhi. Since Mahatma Gandhi was not in the active election business and since most of the other major leaders were limiting their activities to their own provinces, Nehru had to assume an inter-provincial role. At the same time, this continuous routine of hectic activity, punctuated by only brief interludes of rest, somehow suited his physical constitution as well as his mental attitude. The manner in which he maintained a strenuous and continuous schedule of daily activity during the lost years in prison was

clearly an important ingredient in all this. There was also his ability to empathize with crowds, an ability which, fortunately for him and for his listeners, did not in any way affect his careful, slow, thoughtful manner of speaking. This is important. Many mass orators depend on automatic speaking, a number of fairly familiar points of appeal to the audience based on exaggerated emotion, painful memories or inflated hopes of some cloud-cuckoo-land in the not too distant future. In India, over the years, demagogic oratory had assumed a certain life of its own; there was a premium on an elaborate artificial style and a certain type of arch humour at the expense of the foreigner who was ruling the country. Jawaharlal escaped these habitual weaknesses primarily because of his special educational background and conditioning which was rather exacting in logic and lucidity. Even more important was the fact that he was no natural orator. He never suffered from the fatal vice of fluency. Not only in India but also in most parts of the world his thoughtful, tentative, anxiously interested, patient method of describing a problem would have been unusual. In India, it was as effective as Gandhi's style of speaking, also quiet, also anxiously clear in its elucidation of the reasons behind the conclusion. Both men avoided shrillness of tone and loudness of voice; both men also felt comfortable everywhere in India: Gandhi, during his long travels throughout the country for the khadi programme in the twenties and for the Harijan cause in the thirties, established a link with the Indian masses which no other leader has been able to achieve before or since. Jawaharlal's whirlwind tours were effective in their own way, but one must never forget that he was building upon the tremendous achievement of Gandhi in making the people feel that they belonged to the Congress, and that the Congress belonged to them as their own special organization, however poor and deprived they were. There is no doubt that the manner in which Jawaharlal explained the global situation, the inequities of imperialism, the irrelevance in his view of the communal problem as represented by Jinnah and the Muslim League, and the supreme need, over all other things, to concentrate upon the termination of the British connection, was effective in getting across to ordinary people all over the country and ABC of Indian politics at that particular moment. There is also a fairly conscious allocation of priorities in which some of Gandhi's priorities were consciously rejected. The Harijan uplift campaign and the constructive programme were not seen to be substitutes for

the basic struggle. There was a great deal of talk about the need to link the Congress with the peasantry and the workers in India and with similar political movements against foreign rule all over the world. The latest developments on the international scene like those in Abyssinia and Spain, the Japanese attack on China, and the appeasement of the dictatorships by Britain, were all seen as necessary parts of a large drama in which the Indian peasant, the Indian worker and the Indian student had a certain useful role to play, however far-fetched and romantic an idea it appeared to be at that moment.

There were, of course, some problems in Jawaharlal's attitude. Campaigning for a Congress victory in the elections, Nehru himself had very little immediate interest in the results of that victory, that is, the acceptance of office at the provincial level. As things turned out, in spite of his reservations and his scepticism, he was, perhaps, the most influential single personal factor in the Congress victory in several provinces. He was, in his speech-making, much more obsessed with the need to fight the Federation, the need for a constituent assembly and the refusal to accept the princely states on their terms as members of the future set-up.

A good example of the type of election campaign in which Nehru made all the difference would be the Bobbili election in the Madras Presidency which was fought between the interim Prime Minister of Madras, the Raja of Bobbili, and V.V. Giri, the future President of India, and then a very well-known labour leader, a typical 'man of the masses'. Jawaharlal was able to appeal powerfully to the people's indignation in such a situation. The pattern of the defeat of the Raja of Bobbili was repeated in many other constituencies in an election which was, in retrospect, a real watershed in Indian politics.

Apart from the easy condemnation of the evils of foreign rule and the reasonably non-controversial discussion of world developments, these speeches were most meaty in their angry rejection of communalism, particularly Muslim communalism, and also the more feeble challenge of Hindu communalism. Here, the debate became interesting in the United Provinces, Bihar and Bengal and it is here that many of the contemporary critics of Jawaharlal Nehru have, in retrospect, found him mistaken in his appreciation of the realities of the Indian situation. It is difficult to be entirely certain about details of developments during this seminal period in the country's history. It is not necessary to go into the minutiae of the decisions made by

the Congress leadership and Nehru personally on the attitude to be taken towards the Muslim League. It is so easy to attribute 'effects' to 'causes' on the basis of simple chronology, on the basis of our knowledge of events which happened later. Our analysis here is really concerned with the projection of policy rather than the formulation of the policy. As far as the projection of the policy of secularism and the superior relevance of social justice and economic equity to sectarian divisions in our society was concerned, there is no doubt that Jawaharlal was, perhaps, much more dogmatic than objective reality allowed. After all, we must remember that Nehru was only one, and by no means the most important individual on the Congress side. There was always Gandhi to whom Nehru had to defer and to report. All the major leaders of the Congress, including persons of the stature of Patel and Rajendra Prasad, had arrived at a certain consensus about the essential insignificance of the Muslim League, based on their conviction that it was a British-inspired organization. To single out Jawaharlal as guilty of political myopia would be unfair.

Granting this, however, it is a fact that he was a little more certain of his position, a little more confident about the value of the Congress mass contact movement among the Muslims, particularly in the UP, than later events justified. In the case of Bengal, he was not able to appreciate the advice of the local Congress leaders, particularly the Bose brothers, that it was necessary to adopt a much less controversial approach in that province, so that full advantage could be taken of the militant politics of Fazlul Huq and the Krishak Praja Party.

It is difficult to be entirely fair to Jawaharlal on this, and quite a great deal has been written in the seventies and eighties to suggest that he bears a certain personal responsibility for the sharp edge of the anti-communal policies of the Congress. In the long perspective of history there appears to be very little which could have been done to avert the Partition of India. Without going into such deeper problems, however, three things can be noted. First, major Muslim leaders within the Congress at that time, like Maulana Azad, the Khan brothers, Asaf Ali and Rafi Ahmad Kidwai, seem to have been spiritually, if not physically, absent from serious decision-making on this aspect of Congress policy. Secondly, Jawaharlal's enormous faith in the superior relevance of scientific socialism was reinforced in a rather pleasant and personal manner by the fact that most younger

Muslim nationalists were also socialists or communists. He had a common vocabulary with men like Z.A. Ahmad, Yusuf Meherally, Mian Iftikharuddin and others. Thirdly, and this is rather unfortunate, there was a personality problem between Jawaharlal and Jinnah. The following exchange between the two in April 1938 brings this out as no explanation can. Jawaharlal writes:

I regret that you think that I write in an arrogant and militant spirit and as if I considered the Congress as the sovereign power. I am painfully conscious of the fact that the Congress is not a sovereign power and that it is limited and circumscribed in a hundred ways and further that it may have to go through the wilderness many a time again before it achieves its objective. You have referred to my obsession with the international situation and the sense of impending catastrophe that possesses me.

Jinnah had his own point of view:

It seems to me that you cannot even accurately interpret my letter ... you are thinking in terms entirely divorced from realities which face us in India. I can only express my great regret at your turning and twisting what I wrote to you and putting entirely a wrong complexion upon the position I have placed before you at your request....

It has been necessary to go in some details into the subject matter as well as the form and style of Jawaharlal's public speeches, articles and addresses during these crucial years because he had now become the most effective communicator of the Congress creed and programme to the people of India and to the world outside. There is no doubt that the late thirties were the years in which he began to be accepted by the Indian masses as the embodiment of pure nationalism and a certain unfettered sincerity. In a chronologically unjustified fashion (he was in his late forties by now), he seemed to embody the aspirations of India's youth, sharing this glamorous position, to some extent, with Subhas Chandra Bose and, later, Jayaprakash Narayan. They were not regarded, in any way, as rivals to Gandhi who was seen to be above such questions. Among the three, however, Jawaharlal had the unique advantage of an international image also, because of his special links with the dramatic

developments in the world outside. These links went back to his earlier connections with the League against Imperialism and its Brussels Conference. These older connections had, however, become rather dated because of the long interruptions in communication owing to periods of imprisonment in the early thirties and the effective dissolution of the League against Imperialism because of the internal problems of the Comintern.

These rather narrow international contacts had however been replaced in the middle thirties by the much wider connection with the anti-fascist movement all over the world in which Jawaharlal took such a lively and continuous interest and whose activists in Europe and America recognized in him a distinguished sympathizer in a rather remote and unlikely place. In these developments, the personal relationship with Krishna Menon, which had now become an important facet of Nehru's activities, played a central role. Through Krishna Menon, Jawaharlal kept in touch with major figures in the British Communist Party and some distinguished members of the informal extreme left groupings within the Labour Party. Among these people were attractive Left-wing politicians like James Maxton, H.N. Brailsford and Stafford Cripps. There is no special evidence to connect the new leader of the Labour Party, Major Clement Attlee, with the Congress. He was, however, known to be an expert on India because of his membership of the Simon Commission. At the same time, there does not seem to be any evidence of any conscious alienation between the official Labour Party and Jawaharlal who was, in the nature of things, much more in touch with the fringe figures through Krishna Menon. Also connected with this continuing interest in Left-wing literature — he was unhappy that the British Government had prohibited the import of Left Book Club publications into India — was the commencement of a long and very friendly relationship with Kingsley Martin, Editor of the *New Statesman*, and with Harold Laski, Krishna Menon's admired teacher, and through him the London School of Economics. This last link is significant. It was precisely during this period that a large number of young Indian students gravitated towards London in search of higher education and a career and found themselves "proselytized" into Marxism in the London School of Economics environment and its almost overpowering anti-fascist atmosphere. It is these young men and women who provided the agit-prop group in the India League. They also came under the overwhelming intellec-

tual influence of Rajani Palme Dutt who was completing his major book on India and who provided an essential link between the nationalist and the socialist ideologies within the expatriate community in London.

Krishna Menon was also in touch with important publishing firms in England who were sympathetic to the cause of nationalism in India and socialism everywhere. Of these firms, Gollancz was the most important. There was Allen and Unwin, traditionally interested in Indian books and also the newly formed Pelican Books section of the Penguin Series of which Krishna Menon was the General Editor for a brief period.

Beginning as a concerned and informed reader of everything available in popular literature on history, modern science and political analysis, Jawaharlal had been always careful in placing direct orders with major booksellers in London to be in touch with them. It can be said without exaggeration that there was a greater inquisitiveness in him about the world outside than anyone else in India of his generation, and even most younger people who also were excited over rapid changes all over the place. It was this slow but continuous process of interaction, as a passive recipient of ideas in the beginning and as an active articulator of the same ideas in his first two books, that led to the almost inevitable publication of his later books abroad; Krishna Menon, of course, providing the essential personal link.

By 1936, Jawaharlal had his own rather narrow but influential constituency in Britain. This was in no way comparable in size or intensity to the much greater charismatic influence of Gandhi which had been a major part of the world outlook everywhere for almost two decades. Jawaharlal had no Romain Rolland to act as his delighted interpreter. There was definitely a difference in magnitude as well as the geographical limits of his influence. At the same time, Indian nationalism had become an accepted part of the world consciousness in that troubled decade, along with the troubles in China, the problems of Egypt and the role of the Wafd Party, and the Moroccan national movement.

To complete the picture, we have to briefly look at the other, larger part of the Anglo-Saxon world across the Atlantic. By the middle thirties, the United States had become, from the communications angle, a much more exciting place to be active in than Britain or continental Europe, which was anyway, most of it, an increasingly

"darkening plain" because of fascism, national socialism and Soviet communism. The Americans had already been fascinated by Gandhi and played a major role in projecting him as a unique political as well as philosophical activist with an extraordinarily attractive personal image. Great American reporters like Louis Fischer, Edgar Snow, Drew Middleton, Vincent Sheean, Margaret Bourke-White and John Gunther became fascinated by India and provided a running commentary on the peculiar process of struggle-cum-negotiation between the British and the Indians during the thirties, conducted within the specified political limits -- a process seen as charmingly different from the horrors of invasion, civil war and angry racialism which had begun to spread over the world. The situation was, thus, in many ways, much more healthy and encouraging in the United States than in Britain. The negative stereotypes continued in the tabloid press and in the cinema, but the Katherine Mayo approach was *passé*. Here, the contribution of men like J.T. Sunderland was crucial. It is they who led the fight for publicizing Indian nationalism in America.

The situation in the United States, was, of course, in some ways, easier than in Britain because of the absence of any official discouragement of nationalist propaganda. From the beginning of the century there had always been a trickle of Indian nationalists who passed through the United States, onwards to Canada, Germany and back to India. The Ghadar Party and the activities of Indian immigrants in Canada and California were, however, ancient history by the late thirties and a new approach was necessary to intervene in the essentially internal European debate within the United States. It was for this purpose that Jawaharlal had always given priority to an office of the Congress in New York over an office in London. He was, however, obviously out of touch with the real situation. The pro-Indian lobby in the United States did not justify such a venture. The American Indian League was founded a little later but it was never destined to play anything more than a marginal role.

There were, however, specific features in the United States political scene which were responsive to Indian developments. There were, in America, some powerful and vociferous anti-British groups, mainly deriving their inspiration from Irish nationalism, but also having links with the influential German ethnic groups in the States. It was these groups and newspapers like the *Chicago Tribune* under Colonel McCormick which helped spread Indian nationalist

propaganda. The extent and effect of these activities should not be exaggerated. It was a time when American public opinion was rapidly becoming interested in the world outside under the pressure of circumstance and the carefully modulated, patient, educational drive of Roosevelt in these and other things. Here, however, India came fairly low in the list after Abyssinia, the Spanish Civil War and Nazi revanchism. Even in Asia, India was much less exciting as a scene of dramatic political activity than China. This was only natural because of the special interest of the United States Government, business groups, academic institutions, and the American Press in China after the turn of the century. The Chinese leader, Chiang Kai-shek, and his wife, Madam Chiang Kai-shek, with her very specific American conditioning, were hot favourites in the US press even before Japanese aggression made them attractive symbols of patriotism. And this interest was not limited to the official government of the Kuomintang. The Long March of the Chinese Communist Party under Mao Zedong and the establishment of Soviet Communities in Yenan had become extraordinarily familiar to most American intellectuals through Edgar Snow's *Red Star Over China*. There was no comparable single publication on India in Britain or America, even though one can sensibly argue that there was no need for such a path-breaking book when there was almost continuous interaction between India and the world outside. Edgar Snow's masterpiece had all the excitement of the first beam of light into a very dark chamber. But it was something more than that. It became, along with other major publications of the late thirties on Spain, the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany, an incredibly powerful factor in opinion formation. In America, Edgar Snow merely continued the work of other friends and lovers of China and Chinese culture in all its aspects. There was, for instance, the all pervasive influence of the intellectuals around Peking University and Dr. Hu Shih. Perhaps, the novels of Pearl Buck, the Nobel-prize-winning and essentially middlebrow writer, are more genuine symbols of American interests in China than anything else.

It is against this general picture of interest and lack of interest that Jawaharlal's own personal contribution to winning friends and influencing people in America should be assessed. His simple, straightforward writing, his courageous and lucid attempts to face the dilemmas of nationalism and socialism in the Indian context and, more than anything else, his reconciliation of the ideological dif-

ficulties implicit in his total acceptance of Gandhi's charismatic leadership, came through to the American public in a most effective manner. The American editions of *An Autobiography (Towards Freedom in the USA)* and the collection of his articles, *Unity of India*, played a major part in acquainting important people with the urgency of the Indian question.

V

In discussing the public image of a major political personality like Jawaharlal there is always the temptation to exaggerate the individual's contribution and overlook the enormous political and economic forces in an age in which the most powerful individual plays only a part. The years before the war were full of sound and fury, signifying a lot in most parts of the world. There were, however, degrees of conscious participation in the unfolding world tragedy in the various continents. North America's interest, for example, was still detached, though concerned. There were huge continents and regions, Latin America, Africa and several parts of Asia, where the tradition of passive acceptance of external power was all-powerful – China fighting against Japan, Japan flexing its muscles for continental adventures, and, in the same degree and magnitude, the ongoing national struggle in India under Gandhi's leadership – these were the areas outside Europe most affected by the changing global situation. In a slightly lower degree, there was excitement in the Middle East and particularly in the Mediterranean, an agitation to which Italy's imperialist adventures contributed a great deal.

Much more important than the political and strategic upheavals in mid-Europe and elsewhere was the force of the new communications media. It was the age of the newspaper, the individual orator, the demagogue, the cadre-based political party, both of the Right and the Left and, slowly, inevitably, the radio. It is in this general world context that one has to place major personalities like Gandhi, Nehru and Mao Zedong. Their success in electrifying large masses of people, their ability to communicate new and difficult ideas in a simple and acceptable form, without necessarily vulgarizing them, was the basis of their political achievement. Here, Jawaharlal Nehru has got a special individual niche in India along with the other active organizers, agitators and educators like Subhas Chandra Bose, Rajagopalachari and Vallabhbhai Patel. All of them came after

Gandhi, learnt from his "mild and magnificent eye" and, with the help of the Congress organization, tried to explain to the people the supreme importance of nationalism. Each had his own separate style and separate order of priorities. It is Jawaharlal's order of priorities which we have been discussing till now. They are important but they are, by no means, exclusive; but that special mix of international awareness, sensitiveness to economic inequity and an attitude of rather lordly and condescending scorn towards communalism was special to him.

That does not, of course, explain everything. By 1938, Jawaharlal had a certain unassailable position in India's public life which was universally admitted to be second only to Gandhi's. The British rulers acknowledged this even though they were, at that time, uncomfortable with him. The foreign journalist, the concerned student of international affairs abroad, and progressives everywhere, felt a certain special sympathy with him, a sympathy in which the Western aspects of his personality were involved. Jawaharlal himself realized the important position he had come to occupy in India's national life. There are rather comfortable and smug allusions to his own national image in the *Autobiography*. The enormous success of the election campaign made him quite conscious of his importance in the national movement even though he never, for a single moment, thought of himself as an alternative to Gandhi. There is one little sentence towards the end of his Faizpur address where he seems to dwell in some agony over the prospect of the nation losing Gandhi. This was a natural enough reaction at a time when there was very little hope in the convolutions of the national movement. There was total inactivity in the older Swaraj movement; the politics of electioneering and office acceptance had made most Congressmen even more pro status quo and anti-agitation than before. Gandhi was withdrawing himself into his private self, even though he was available for consultation. It was the younger people, the Leftists, the Socialists, the men around Nehru himself, Subhas and Jayaprakash, and also, in a separate coherent group, the newly forming communist groups all over the country, which represented impatience, anger and indignation and the desire to continue the struggle in a more visible manner, so that the interest of the masses would be sustained and the danger of their relapse into their traditional attitude of inert acquiescence averted. Jawaharlal was high enough in public esteem to demand attention on his own;

throughout these years, he also had a certain representative quality.

The election campaigns at home and the new celebrity status abroad did make some difference to Jawaharlal who could be vain when he was not careful. The most attractive thing about his personality throughout the long decades, when he was at the centre of things in India, was that he could always, even in the middle of the maelstrom, take a step or two backwards and look at himself with a certain detached, wry amusement. In this connection the well-known episode of his anonymous article about himself, 'The Rashtrapati', published in *The Modern Review* is unique. It speaks about the dangers to democracy from Jawaharlal's dictatorial tendency, the risk of the Caesar in him triumphing over the Tribune. It is an extremely well-written, enjoyable piece, an honest self-appraisal with just the right degree of exaggeration, to make it implausible to a certain degree, and so, in an indirect manner, flattering to the subject of the analysis. The fact that such a piece could be written by a Congressman was, itself, unusual. As a tribe, they were a serious, solemn group of people. The Rajasis, the Kripalanis and the Nehrus were in a minority, even though the greatest of them all, Mahatma Gandhi, bubbled over with puckish good humour and good sense. In any study of Jawaharlal Nehru as a self-critic, as a serious student of the Indian political situation and as a sensitive investigator into totalitarian tendencies everywhere, this little piece is important. It is also important because in one extremely charming and recent quotation from W.H. Auden, Jawaharlal brings out the essential charm as well as enigma of his personality which attracted people even when he was in his most difficult, withdrawn, uncommunicative moods:

Private faces in public places
Are better and nicer
Than public faces in private places

The ever present threat of possible alienation within the family, within the party caucus, within the prison room and, later, within the Cabinet is always there, as with all public figures, and Jawaharlal knew that he could not escape it. But his very awareness of the fact made him much more human and understanding as a leader than major political figures in most countries. In other words, his awareness of the danger of the public face in a private place is important; but even more important is his awareness of the rarity, charm and

the quintessence of the democratic style of leadership implied in the phrase, "private face in a public place". Nehru was very conscious of his special, semi-magnetic relationship with the groups of people he addressed. Of him it could never be said, as it was said of Hitler, that he was capable of addressing a single woman as if she were a large crowd. Jawaharlal, without any artifice or conscious play-acting, spoke informally, chattily, in personal language, to vast audiences, sharing with them his own hopes, his diffidence about their hopes, and his passionate desire not to let them down.

All in all, the Jawaharlal of the late thirties was one of the most successful examples of the effective communicators in the open or semi-open society. The conditions in India, at the end of a chequered record of constitutional changes, civil disobedience and political agitation at the grassroots level, had led to the growth of a fairly large and active machine for political propaganda, centering primarily on the Press. From Tilak onwards, Indian nationalist leaders have been adept at successfully utilizing the permitted news media in a colonial situation. Gandhi was the master manipulator of this Press. His own journals, *Young India* and *Harijan*, were important; but more important were his various interviews with statesmen and press conferences, especially for foreign journalists. Jawaharlal continued the tradition and enhanced it. The great election campaigns, the whirlwind tours round the whole country were his own special mode of propaganda. They were skilfully adopted to the technological capacity of communications at that time. Ideas, repeated a hundred times in speeches, got across to their separate audiences; summarized and transmitted by wire and news despatch, they had a second life in the confirmation of public opinion. In a curious manner, Jawaharlal's election tours had a partial similarity with the election campaigns of the presidential candidate in the United States, the "whistle stop" speeches on the railroad, the street-corner gatherings, the addresses within closed doors to separate groups of the professional classes, white-collar and blue-collar workers. In that sense, Jawaharlal had a certain affinity to the great political campaigners of his period in other democratic societies, men like Franklin Roosevelt, Lloyd George and Aneurin Bevan.

There is one modern medium which was completely outside the purview of Jawaharlal's scope of activity at that time. The wireless, as it used to be called then, had already proved itself to be a powerful instrument of conditioning the popular mind in many parts of the

world, particularly in the totalitarian countries, but also in Britain and America. This was the period of Mussolini's over-ambitious programme of influencing the Arab masses through sustained propaganda by distributing wireless sets all over the place. This was also the period of the heady success of Dr. Goebbels and his belief that, by sheer repetition, a lie could be transformed into a truth. It was also the period when Franklin Roosevelt was able to engage in a continuous dialogue with his people through his fireside chats on the radio. It was the beginning of the great Electronic Revolution.

Jawaharlal, Gandhi and the other Congress leaders were not able, in the very nature of things, to exploit this new medium. The British Government controlled all broadcasting and there was no question of the Opposition, constitutional or otherwise, using it. Jawaharlal is, from the point of view of the radio, a very late arrival – in fact only after his assumption of office as Head of the Interim Government in 1946. Not that he was not aware of the enormous impact of the spoken word in conveying certain nuances across the continent. In an amusing anecdote, John Gunther speaks about Jawaharlal's first probable broadcast being a few sentences spoken in 1938 to introduce a report by Gunther himself on the Indian situation. By 1942, he was quite aware of the necessity of exploiting the voice-broadcast for political purposes. He was scheduled to make a speech to the American people on the Quit India proposal on the morning of 9 August 1942, but he was arrested before it could be recorded.

The period of Jawaharlal's presidentship of the Congress and his phrenetic activity throughout the country at a time of global change, marks perhaps the peak of his performance as a democratic educator. It was also a period of growing dilemmas and uncertainty. At the same time, there was a certain subtle imbalance between his obsession with the global developments and his very conscious helplessness in national matters. The next four years would see a certain restoration of the balance, in that the world became, in fact, as dangerous and as oppressively present, as he had expected it to be, and so many others had refused to believe. Also, this was the period when there was a certain return to action, effective or ineffective, on the national scene under a revived Mahatma Gandhi, with a more urgent programme of agitation and struggle against the British Government.

REACHING OUT TO THE WORLD

The Second World War was a period of all-consuming activity for many nations and individuals. There was fulfilment, frustration and disappointment, ultimate glory in victory or the sad disappearance into nothingness at the end of a strenuous pursuit of world conquest. All the great powers were immediately involved in it — Germany, Japan, the Soviet Union, the United States, Britain, France and Italy — and along several smaller countries in Europe, Asia and North Africa experienced total involvement in the global tragedy. All of them, with the exception of the United States, suffered catastrophic disasters due to enemy occupation or aerial bombardment. This was not equally true of the colonies of the great metropolitan empires and the neutral countries in Europe like Sweden and Switzerland. These were physically distant from the experience of war, but their economics, their precise attitudes towards the belligerent nations and their political institutions were all affected to greater or lesser degree. Neutrality had a distinctive individual meaning for Turkey or Spain, for Sweden or Switzerland. All had to make compromises to survive in an era of chaos and disintegration.

The large colonial territories in Africa and Southern and Western Asia were officially involved in the war effort, contributed men to the imperial armies and were affected in economic terms. The tempo of life in these countries quickened as the war progressed; there were also indirect, technological and industrial benefits. The area of the European empire in East and South-east Asia, on the other hand, became the scene of war and devastation with the Japanese conquest. Their negative experience of European inability to protect them and the Japanese incapacity to provide good government strengthened their anti-colonialism.

It is in this world situation that we have to situate India, the

Indian National Congress, Gandhi and Nehru, and the Indian Left. It is one of the great ironies of history that some of the men who had been most sensitive to the menace of totalitarianism, who had sounded the earliest warnings about Hitler and Mussolini and who had spared no effort in rousing the awareness of their peoples to these dangers, were totally immobilized and isolated by forced inactivity and imprisonment. As a society, India did have a great deal to do with the war; young men were recruited into the army; war-effort industries were energized. The physical war, however, came only up to the border and did not affect the people. In other words, what India experienced was something of a partial war, not the total war which had become terribly normal since 1940. But the leaders of the Congress and, indeed, all the major political parties, including those who wanted to collaborate with the British war-effort without any reservations, were forced to play a minor, subsidiary and unsatisfactory role. This irony was true of even parties like the Radical Democrats under M.N. Roy and the Communists, after Germany's attack on the Soviet Union transformed an imperialist war, in their eyes, into a people's war. As far as the Congress was concerned, however, the position was much simpler. From the very beginning, Jawaharlal Nehru, particularly, and Gandhi along with him, made it clear that they would have no part of a war which had been declared without consulting them. This resulted, we can say with the advantage of hindsight, inevitably in the individual satyagraha of 1940 and the Quit India Resolution of 1942. It meant, in effect, more than four years in prison during the war years for Jawaharlal Nehru and about two years for Mahatma Gandhi.

These are well-known facts but have to be recapitulated to underline the great wastage or, at best, underutilization of human resources — intellectual, physical and emotional — involved in the refusal of the British to share power with the Congress and the other national parties when war was declared. If India had been a happy, satisfied, partner in the war against fascism and Japanese militarism, there would have been major material consequences of which only one would have been the negative one most dreaded by Mr Churchill, the end of the British Empire on Indian soil. All the other results would have been positive, in the energization of the Indian masses, in the stepping up of the war-effort and the much greater part that would have been played by a larger and more effective and better equipped Indian Army in the Asian war theatre. But all this

was not to be. From the narrow point of view of national interest, this national opportunity which was missed also meant, in effect, a retreat into physical isolation and solitude for the national leadership for three precious, world-changing years. For Jawaharlal Nehru, with his obsessive interest in world developments even when there were no big changes to attract attention, but only nuances which fascinated his analytical mind, this meant, in a much greater degree than during the earlier terms of imprisonment, deep unhappiness and some frustration. There was no occasion at all for most of this time, for the exercise of his, by now well known, gift as a letter writer. The conditions of confinement in Ahmadnagar precluded all correspondence except with immediate family members.

However, there were interludes of activity in the two years before the war and the first year between the declaration of war and Nehru's imprisonment during the individual satyagraha movement which gave him opportunities to discuss in detail extremely sophisticated differences of approach to the next stage of the national movement. This period, therefore, is unusually rewarding for our study of Nehru as a communicator. At the same time, it is also a vital time of change, when Gandhi came back to the centre of things and, in spite of very real differences on details and priorities, Jawaharlal accepted his leadership with total commitment. At a time when there were fissures in the Congress because of Rajagopalachari's policy and the differences between Nehru and Patel, and the problems created by the confrontation with the Muslim League after the resignation of the Congress ministries, Nehru found in his loyalty to Gandhi reliable focal point at a moment of great disorder, both in his own mind and the external environment.

These problems, which were all associated with the need to reconcile opposition to global fascism with the immediately relevant opposition to the physically present British Empire within the country, became "critical" after the failure of the Cripps Mission and the Gandhi decision to embark upon the Quit India campaign. The difficulties of choice facing Nehru and others of his persuasion, with their agonized need to participate in the anti-fascist war, became greater when Gandhi faced them with the very clear option of launching a civil disobedience movement in the midst of the war or waiting until the war was won. The obduracy of the British and Churchill personally, and the obvious helplessness of the Americans and the Chinese, the only two countries who tried to help, made the

decision easier but, by no means, tolerable. As Jawaharlal used to say later, long after all these problems had receded into history, this was the one occasion when Gandhi demanded from him total unquestioning obedience. Very willingly, he surrendered his freedom of action to his leader.

Then came the long imprisonment in Ahmadnagar fort and the escape from isolation into thinking, reading, very little conversation and some writing. Ultimately it led to *The Discovery of India*.

The end of the war and the negotiations which led to the formation of the Interim Government, and later to the transfer of power and the tragedy of partition, are crucially important in any study of Nehru, the policy-maker. In the more narrow role of communicator it is less important because, by then, Jawaharlal, his personality, his essentially decent, democratic culture, and his secular socialist mix of views and opinions, had become a part of the national outlook. It was no longer necessary for him to repeat what was so obvious. He had also the supreme advantage of being in the shadow of one of the greatest of men at a moment of astonishing creativity in ideas as well as action.

After the transfer of power would come the years of office for Jawaharlal Nehru, the years of policy-making and responses to world changes and successful attempts to intervene in a tough external environment from an essentially weak position. He was at the beginning of nation-building, with many advantages but major unsuspected dangers lurking at every corner. The way he tackled them, successfully in most cases but with inevitable failure in some, is different in quality from the way he tackled the challenges he faced as a leader of a national movement engaged in the task of educating his own people and the world about the need for a free India.

II

All this was to come much later. In 1937, Jawaharlal Nehru was President of the Indian National Congress. The provincial elections under the new Constitution had been contested; after a great deal of convoluted negotiations among themselves and with the British, the Congress decided to accept office. Jawaharlal was ostentatiously uninterested in what he thought was an unjustified compromise even

though he was as conscious as anyone else of the great impact which had been made on the masses throughout the country by the electoral campaign. The impact of the Congress failure to win in four provinces was, to some degree, mitigated by the fact that the Muslim League had failed miserably in the Muslim-majority provinces. This encouraged a certain rigidity of approach in the Congress leadership. At the same time, this was the period when Maulana Abul Kalam Azad became a central figure in the Congress leadership and an active negotiator at the highest level on all national questions. Subhas Chandra Bose as President of the Congress succeeded Jawaharlal and the two began with a reasonable rapport with each other, even though there were problems between the AICC and the Bengal Congress and some personal irritations between Jawaharlal and Sarat Chandra Bose. Many students of the period have seen a fundamental error in the refusal of the Congress in those years to establish some sort of working partnership or a compromise with the Muslim League, primarily based on ministerial coalitions in Bengal, the United Provinces and, if possible, Assam and Sind. It was very difficult for the Congress to give up its bottom-line position that the Congress had a certain nationally representative character. It would not have been possible for it to concede to the Muslim League the exclusive right to represent the Muslims. The great success achieved by nationalist Muslims in the NWFP and Sind made any concession to the League's demand out of the question.

In this rather complex domestic situation, Jawaharlal quite properly sought refuge in seeking a solution in strengthening the Congress organization at grass roots level. This was a fundamental question. He had always been interested in genuine democracy in the Congress; corruption in the enrolment of members, bogus membership and rigged organizational elections bothered him. In UP at least, he had tried his best to keep the record clean. As the leading continuous functionary at the Congress headquarters along with colleagues like Acharya J.B. Kripalani and junior comrades like Rammanohar Lohia, Jawaharlal had tried his best to insist upon inner-party democracy despite the peculiar conditions which then obtained in India, with leaders going in and out of jail at odd times, "dictators" being appointed temporarily to conduct civil disobedience, and all the links being broken for months because of government action. In such situations, the only remaining links were usually those related to the constructive work programme. The men who were associated

with that programme were good and committed, totally bound by the Gandhian ideal but not very much interested in domestic or national politics, and certainly not bothered with foreign affairs.

One of the consequences of this situation, Jawaharlal discovered during his period of presidentialhip, was the weakness of the relationship of the Congress organization with the Muslim masses, so he initiated the Muslim mass contact programme with a flourish. When the elections were over and office was accepted against his own better feelings, he thought that what the Congress needed was greater interest in the Muslims, more involved participation in their specific problems as Muslims, and not a policy of retreat from them, as unprofitable material for propaganda or mobilization. There was, thus, in Jawaharlal's mind, and the programme which he tried to initiate, particularly in the UP, a certain assertive, even angry refusal to accept the Muslim League, the Harijan leaders like Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, the Sanatanis, or the Hindu Mahasabha as serious factors in the Indian polity. As against them, he saw the future in the younger men in the Congress, his own followers among the students and in the UP peasant organizations, in the CSP, individual Communists and the large following which Subhas Chandra Bose had by then attracted. In his view, if these could coalesce into a coherent group which could convince Gandhi of its relevance and its good faith, the whole programme of the Congress could become really mass-oriented.

For the immediate future, however, he felt very much out of it all, and the events in Europe were so pressing, so urgent, that he felt it necessary for him, both for his own sake and for publicizing the case for Indian nationalism abroad, to go to Europe. He had returned from Europe only 18 months earlier and the face of Europe had changed during those 18 months while he himself had become much more well-known as a genuinely progressive figure in Indian politics. There was also a very strong negative incentive. He was uninterested in but reconciled to the experiment of office acceptance. He himself, like the other senior figures at the national level in the Congress, with the exception of Rajaji and G.B. Pant, had refused to accept office in the provincial scheme of things. Subhas Chandra Bose was the new Congress President and there was no pressing need for Jawaharlal's physical presence in India.

For about six months in 1938, Jawaharlal was in Europe. There he had various personal contacts, as has been discussed earlier. This

time, however, there was a certain institutional aspect to his European trip. He was the official representative of the Congress, authorized by the Congress President and the Working Committee, to speak and write on behalf of the Congress and to negotiate, if necessary, with various parties like the British Labour Party, for instance. There was, on the whole, an understanding between Subhas Chandra Bose, the new Congress President, and Nehru, even though temperamental differences would sometimes crop up. Subhas had complained earlier, while he had been in Europe, that there was an insufficiency of guidance or instructions from the headquarters in India. Jawaharlal did not accept this, but when he came in his turn to represent the Congress in Europe and Subhas was President, he found that letters asking for instructions remained unanswered. There was also a certain impatience on Nehru's part with the lack of coordination between the AICC in Allahabad and Subhas Chandra Bose in Bengal. These were, however, manageable differences which can be explained as inevitable developments in any opposition group anywhere. It is doubtful whether the most detailed researches can bring out any new facts about them: there will always be partisan reconstructions of the events. What is essential to note is that, at the general level, the two younger leaders of the national movement had an effective and pleasant working relationship based on similar attitudes on the need for a much more energetic policy for the Congress. This is what had really brought them together ten years earlier in Madras and this continued to be a relevant factor even now. Jawaharlal's presence in Europe during this crisis period had a new substantial quality about, which it lacked during the earlier trips in 1926-27 and 1935-36. One of his achievements during his stewardship of the Congress headquarters in Allahabad was the establishment of the Foreign Affairs Department to which he attached a great deal of importance. He believed that it had two specific functions, apart from the general one of studying and investigating developments all over the world. Firstly, it was required of the unit to keep in touch with official and unofficial representatives and sympathisers of the Congress in foreign capitals, supply them with informative material, including a regular bulletin on national developments, so that they could carry on propaganda on behalf of the Congress effectively. Secondly, the Foreign Affairs Department had to take an immediate interest in a major foreign policy field which came within the authority of the British Government in India,

that is, questions relating to overseas Indians.

Throughout its history, the Congress had been interested in expatriate Indian communities. Gandhi was, of course, the great expatriate who returned home. The problems of indentured labour worried many Congress leaders, and senior liberal statesmen, like Srinivasa Sastri, were very much involved in ameliorative work for Indian communities, particularly those in East and South Africa within the British Government's colonial territories. C.F. Andrews, an honorary Indian, if ever there was one, was a most ardent crusader for the rights of the 'coolie' in the Empire. There were other aspects of India's external relations in which the New Delhi Government had a certain voice, mostly relating to commerce and finance. In these matters, Congress was certainly not interested, even though it did react with force when individual enactments of the Delhi government or the imperial authority in Britain appeared to be insufficiently conscious of the interests of the Indian producer or consumer. These economic matters, however, did not form the subject matter of the day-to-day activities of the Congress Foreign Affairs Department. It was interested primarily in political developments in Asia and Europe and the British Empire outside India. It was particularly interested in problems concerning Indian nationals. Jawaharlal had placed Dr. Rammanohar Lohia in charge of the department but other young leftist intellectuals like Dr. Z.A. Ahmad, were also involved.

The existence of this department was, therefore, useful as a reporting point for Jawaharlal. It would be an exaggeration to describe it as an entirely new development. Even Jawaharlal's report in 1927 on the Brussels Conference had been officially studied by the Congress Working Committee and by Gandhi. There had always been, in the Congress resolutions, an expression of a great deal of interest in foreign affairs. Most of these resolutions had been drafted by Jawaharlal.

The fact that there was such a department in the AICC office also meant that organizations like the India League in Britain, which was now functioning energetically under Krishna Menon, had the official authority to transact business on behalf of the Congress under instructions from the president and the Working Committee through this section. During the period when he was in Europe, these minor institutional developments did matter to some extent, even though what was much more significant was the manner in

which Jawaharlal was able to immerse himself in the world crisis at a time of dramatic change and to communicate his sense of its importance for India to the Congress and its leaders at home. This process was strengthened by an entirely separate event. The *National Herald* was founded in Lucknow about this time and Jawaharlal was totally identified with it. It was, in every sense, his paper and he used it for expressing his views on all important matters. Many of his most significant articles on the world crisis, written during this time, were published in the newspaper.

III

The 1938 visit to Europe was by any standard a quantum jump in Jawaharlal's evolution as an international figure and also as a communicator in a two-way fashion – explaining India to the world outside and explaining the complicated world outside to people at home. There were also, curiously enough, experiences during this visit which honed his skills as a negotiator and decision-maker on future political arrangements in India and the termination of the British connection. He left Bombay in June and returned only in November. His programme was strenuous enough to meet his demands on himself and his friends. The central part of the visit was the meetings in London and Paris and the visit to Spain, all meticulously arranged by V.K. Krishna Menon. It was a very busy schedule and there is no doubt that Jawaharlal enjoyed every minute of it. Apart from public addresses to formal conferences and speeches to smaller audiences, there were several meetings with distinguished individuals and opinion-makers in all the countries he visited. Here again, perhaps, the most important discussions were in London with the members of the Opposition Labour Party.

When the visit began, the political situation in Europe was already darkening. The *anschluss* of Germany with Austria had just been carried out by Hitler without a whisper of protest from any of the great democracies. The war in Spain had reached a dangerous phase, but the Republicans were still in a very strong position and Barcelona was at that time the symbol of Republican resistance. At the same time, the intervention by Germany and Italy was tilting the scales against the Madrid Government and there was a certain element of desperation in their ranks. The International Brigade had

already been formed and was fighting in Spain, and throughout Europe, there was both organized and unorganized sympathy of not only the leftists but many young people for the Republican cause. Jawaharlal walked into this situation and was able to react sensitively to the feelings and aspirations of one people caught in the global maelstrom, at a moment of historic change. He was, of course, already prepared to respond to this and both his immediate reaction to the situation on the ground, his speeches about it in France and England and also his reports about the Spanish crisis to the people at home were important elements in preparing opinion in India for the developments which were to follow during the next one year ending, ultimately, in the Second World War. After returning from Spain and after a hectic programme in London, Jawaharlal proceeded to Central Europe, spending a great deal of time in Hungary and in Czechoslovakia. In Budapest, he had an unplanned extension of his stay because of Indira's illness. It was not, however, time wasted because, from the comparatively unaffected capital of Hungary and later from Prague, he was able to appreciate the strength and determination of Hitler's Germany in its programme for the conquest of Europe.

The visit to Prague was memorable. He was in the 'golden city' at a time of impending doom. He saw at first hand the terrible deception practised upon the Czech people by the Western powers. The Munich Agreement came down to his worst expectations and he wrote a memorable letter to the *Manchester Guardian* about it. The fact that he visited only these two cities in Central Europe was no accident. He had been given indications that he would be welcome for an official visit to Germany even before he had left India. He had decided not to have any truck with the Nazis in the same clear forthright manner in which he had refused to have any meetings with Mussolini when he passed through Rome in 1936. He did spend two days in Munich *en route*, but refused to have any meetings with officials.

By the time the visit to Czechoslovakia took place and developments in Europe assumed a dramatic character with an almost eve-of-war atmosphere petering out into the Munich Agreement and cosy satisfaction all around, Jawaharlal had a regular medium for expressing his views. While he was in Europe, the *National Herald* began publication from Lucknow. It was his own pet project and he was very proud of it and the necessity of writing for this paper a con-

tinuous commentary on the quickly shifting political scene in Europe was an opportunity which he avidly exploited. For the next two or three years the *National Herald* would be his major medium of printed communication. Now, from Europe, it was, by an extraordinarily fortunate accident, an opportunity for Jawaharlal to think aloud on international problems for the benefit of the people at home. Apart from these articles, he wrote detailed and long letters to the Working Committee, to Subhas Chandra Bose, the Congress President, with copies to Gandhi. These were all careful re-annunciations of his position on the rival 'repulsions' of imperialism and fascism and the need for India to have independence much sooner than earlier planned. The coming world crisis should not be used as an occasion for escaping the national responsibility, but to pursue the aim of separation from Britain and a completely independent foreign policy at a time when the choices before the nation were supremely important.

In Spain, Jawaharlal went to the battle-front along with Krishna Menon and had lengthy conversations with General Lister and other military leaders. He was able to convey to the Spanish leadership the sympathy of the Indian people at this moment of trial. He was also able to meet La Passionara, the woman activist in the Republican ranks, who had already attracted world-wide attention because of her courage and heroism. He came back impressed with the actual as well as the symbolic importance of the International Brigade. He saw in the Spanish War (and was very definite in saying so in his speeches in London and Paris) an example of the organic nature of the world conflict. A typically Nehruvian, slightly exaggerated analysis of the link between various types of imperialism can be seen in his very important speech to the Left Book Club Rally in London which had been organized by Victor Gollancz on 6 July 1938:

Now I want to put before you one fact which is an interesting one and which makes us think furiously. If advantage is not taken of a particular situation, we get into tremendous difficulties. You know of the tragedy in Spain. You remember in the early days of this revolt, Moroccan troops were brought over to Spain by Franco. An extraordinary thing, that Franco, representing a peculiar type of fascism and militarism, should take advantage of Moroccan people to suppress the Republic of Spain. But why did that happen? Why was it allowed to happen? The Republic of

Spain, if it functioned properly, should have taken earliest steps to deal with its colonial problem. For various reasons it did not do so and has suffered for it. Its enemies took advantage of this....

So if you want to solve this problem, you must look at it from this broader anti-imperialist aspect and think about this lining up of forces you see in the world today. You see fascism so obviously attempting to advance on the one side, and the forces opposed to it trying to counter it. But the forces opposed to fascism will always be ineffective unless they are also opposed to imperialism.

This Left Book Club meeting was the occasion for one of the three or four major speeches which Jawaharlal made in London during this visit. The topic of the lecture was, "On India Today", and the stated purpose for the gathering was a collection for the Congress Medical Mission to China. Both Krishna Menon and Jawaharlal were anxious to tap all the progressive resources in England for this rather courageous act of international solidarity which was Jawaharlal's brain-child. Another important speech was at the conference on "Peace and Empire". Jawaharlal presided over this conference which had been held on the invitation of the India League and the London Federation of Peace Councils. Jawaharlal began pertinently enough by remarking:

...Peace and Empire — a curious combination of words and ideas fundamentally opposed to each other, and yet I think it was a happy idea to put them together in this way, and to convene this conference. I do not suppose we can have peace in this world unless we do away with imperialist ideas. Therefore the essence of the problem of peace is the problem of empire.

The speech is a comprehensive analysis of imperialism in all parts of the world, particularly in Asia and Africa as linked with the central European crisis:

We come, therefore, to this, that we have to base any policy that we evolve on true foundations, and to root out the real evil. The problem of central Europe, Czechoslovakia, Spain, China and many other problems, we realize, ought to be brought together and considered as a whole.

He did not forget the inert part of the colonial world:

We think of India, China and other countries but we are too often apt to forget Africa and the people of India want you to keep them in mind. After all, though the people of India would welcome the help and sympathy of all progressive people, they are today perhaps strong enough to fight their own battle, whilst that may not be true of some of the peoples of Africa. Therefore, the people of Africa deserve our special consideration.

IV

In his approach to an analysis of the developing world crisis, Jawaharlal was always inclined to be eclectic; some of his critics at home would have called him promiscuous in his interests. It was, however, not by any means a mere rhetorical device; his sense of history and his enormous respect for facts and new ideas made him much more aware of problems all over the world than most other observers, including professional journalists. A good example of this is the passage on the problem of Palestine and the Arabs and the Jews which he talks about in this 'Peace and Empire' speech. It is a remarkable sensitive excursus into almost alien territory, something outside his usual area of interest. But it is fair enough assertion of the solidarity between Indian nationalism and the cause of the Arabs in Palestine, without in any way being indifferent to the terrible tragedy which was facing the Jews in Europe:

May I also remind you of another problem about which perhaps we do not think in this connection so often, but which is very much before us these days, the problem of Palestine? This is a peculiar problem and we are apt to think of it too much in terms of conflict between the Arabs and the Jews. May I remind you to begin with that right through 2,000 years there has never been any real conflict between the Arabs and the Jews in Palestine? It is a problem which has recently arisen, since the war. It is fundamentally a problem created by British imperialism in Palestine, and unless you keep that in mind, you will not solve it. Nor is it likely to be solved by British imperialism.

It is true that this has become at the present moment rather a

difficult problem because of the passions it has roused. What then is really the problem in Palestine?

The Jews are there, and every one of us has the greatest sympathy for the Jews, especially today, when they are being persecuted and bounded out of various countries of Europe. Although the Jews have erred in many ways, they have done a considerable service to the country since they came into Palestine. But you must remember that Palestine has been essentially an Arab country and this movement is basically a national struggle for the independence of the Arabs. It is not an Arab-Jew problem. It is essentially a struggle for independence. It is not a religious problem. Perhaps you know that both Arab Muslims and Christians are completely united in this struggle. Perhaps you know that the old Jews, resident in Palestine before the war, have taken very little part in this struggle, because they have been closely associated with their Arab neighbours. It is quite understandable that the Arab people should resist any attempts to deprive them of their country. Any people would. An Irishman, Scotsman or Englishman would do the same. It is a question of not wanting to be pushed out of one's country and the desire for freedom and independence.

So that the Arab people started this movement for the independence of their country, but British imperialism played its hand so cleverly that the conflict became the conflict between Arabs and Jews, and the British Government cast itself in the role of umpire.

The problem of the Arabs had, in fact, been very much in Jawaharlal's mind ever since the beginning of his voyage to Europe from Bombay. He had always been interested in Egypt and during the previous ten years had successfully developed useful links with the Wafd Party. This was, of course, nothing new. Egyptian and Indian nationalisms had always found the need to reinforce each other. In 1931, Nahas Pasha was prevented from meeting Gandhi on his way to London. On this occasion Nahas Pasha himself came to Port Said and arranged for Jawaharlal to go with him to Cairo to meet Egyptian nationalists. He had lengthy conversations with them and they discussed the different developments in Egypt with its nominal independence, the King being totally controlled by the British, and the Indian situation which was confusing to outsiders

because of the recent acceptance of office in the provinces by the Congress. Jawaharlal was very frank in his analysis of Wafd weaknesses:

I put it to Nahas Pasha that such tactics had always to be faced by a nationalist or a social movement struggling for freedom. Every device and method of oppression was employed by imperialism and reactionary cliques and vested interests. Unless the movement itself had sufficient strength, it could not cope with such tactics. Strength only could come from organised mass support. It therefore seemed to me that the Wafd did not have this organised mass support, for otherwise it would not weaken so rapidly because of palace intrigues. He admitted that there was some truth in this although the Wafd was still very popular with the masses. The Wafd leaders had thought that with their treaty with Britain, the independence struggle had practically ended in their success, and they had thrown themselves enthusiastically into the task of preaching Anglo-Egyptian friendship. As a government, they became absorbed in the work of the government and neglected their organisation and agitational work. This ultimately weakened the Wafd and when the time for a trial of strength came, they were unable to rise to the occasion. They had been over-confident, too full of faith in the *bona fides* of the British Government, not in sufficient touch with the masses.

As a matter of fact it is quite clear that the Wafd Party, while it was in power, did little or nothing for the peasantry....

There is an unconscious groping towards self appraisal here, a critical look backwards on the track record of the Congress: "The Wafd would not have been much affected by this if it had a powerful organisation behind it. But it had neglected this and thought of itself more as a government." This was just the new psychological malaise the Congress had now to face.

V

The developments in Czechoslovakia towards the end of the summer represented the other major foreign policy preoccupation of Jawaharlal during this visit. He was profoundly disturbed by the fact

that the British Government had not stood up to the dictators in support of a small democratic state which they had themselves helped to create on the basis of the principle of national self-determination after the First World War. His speeches and statements during the Munich crisis have a certain refreshing quality of total sincerity about them. The famous letter to the *Manchester Guardian* dated 8 September 1938 is, perhaps, as good an example as any of Jawaharlal, the propagandist on behalf of persecuted people everywhere. It is also a policy-oriented document in its inevitable conclusion that the British Government as constituted at that time could not be depended upon to support the right causes and, therefore, it would be absurd to expect real India or the Indian people to accept its policy decisions:

As an Indian, intensely interested in Indian independence and world peace, I have followed recent developments in Czechoslovakia and Spain with anxious interest. For some years past the Indian National Congress has criticised and dissociated itself from British foreign policy, which has seemed to us consistently reactionary and anti-democratic, and an encouragement to fascist and Nazi aggression. Manchuria, Palestine, Abyssinia, Spain agitated the people of India. In Manchuria the foundations were laid for encouraging triumphant aggression, all covenants and rules of international law were ignored, and the League of Nations sabotaged. With all our sympathy and goodwill for the Jews in their distress in the face of fierce and inhuman persecution in Europe, we considered the struggle in Palestine as essentially a national struggle for freedom which was suppressed by violence by British imperialism in order to control the route to India. In Abyssinia there was a gross betrayal of a brave people. In Spain little was left undone in order to harass the republic and encourage the insurgents. Having decided that the Spanish Government should lose, or was going to lose, the British Government tried in a variety of ways to hasten the desired end – and even insult, injury and gross humiliation by the insurgents were endured....

I had thought that nothing that this government did could surprise me (unless it suddenly turned progressive and worked for peace). But I was mistaken. Recent developments in Czechoslovakia and the way the British Government, directly and

through its mediators, has balked and threatened the Czech Government at every turn has produced a feeling of nausea in me, and I have wondered exceedingly how any Englishman with any trace of liberal instincts or decency could tolerate this....

Recently, I spent some time in Czechoslovakia and came in contact with numerous people, both Czech and German. I returned full of admiration for the admirable temper of the Czech people and the democratic Germans who, in face of grave danger and unexampled bullying, kept calm and cheerful, eager to do everything to preserve peace, and yet fully determined to keep their independence. As events have shown they are prepared to go to extraordinary length to satisfy every minority claim and preserve peace but everybody knows that the question at issue is not a minority one. If it was the love of minority rights that moved people why do we not hear of the German minority in Italy or the minority in Poland? The question is one of power politics and the Nazi desire to break up the Czecho-Soviet alliance, to put an end to the democratic state in central Europe, to reach the Rumanian oil fields and wheat, and thus to dominate Europe....

All our sympathies are with Czechoslovakia. If war comes, the British people, in spite of their pro-fascist government, will inevitably be dragged into war....

The people of India have no intention of submitting to any foreign decision on war. They alone can decide and certainly they will not accept the dictates of the British Government which they distrust utterly. India would willingly throw her entire weight on the side of democracy and freedom but we heard these words often enough twenty years ago and more. Only free and democratic countries can help in freedom and democracy elsewhere. If Britain is on the side of democracy then its first task is to eliminate empire from India. That is the sequence of events in Indian eyes and to that sequence the people of India will adhere.

This classic formulation was going to be relevant in all the policy responses of Jawaharlal Nehru and his group in the Congress during the next four years.

VI

The bitter disillusionment with British policy, both in India and in Europe, reflected in the letter to the *Manchester Guardian*, did not prevent Jawaharlal from having useful conversations with important policy-makers in Britain, particularly of the Labour Party. As far as the Press was concerned, he did not interact at all with the old gentlemen in London who reflected the Tory government's point of view, the editors of *The Times* and the *The Observer*. His really useful dialogues were with senior leaders of the British Labour Party. In a momentous encounter he discussed in some detail all possible versions of a future constitutional arrangement between Britain and India; Attlee, the leader of the Party, was, of course, there along with Stafford Cripps, Professor Harold Laski, Hugh Dalton, Herbert Morrison, and Nye Bevan. This discussion led to the production of an informal document which envisaged a constituent assembly elected on universal suffrage from the existing communal constituencies. Only those princely states which accepted universal suffrage would be represented. The discussions were thorough and went into details about the successor state on public debt, financial burdens in the shape of pensions and other charges. This conversation, and the friendly amiable negotiations, which were later discussed by the Labour Party executive and accepted without too many changes are of a more than merely episodic interest, even though the coming of the war in 1939 rendered the Labour Party's ability to influence events minimal.

It should be remembered that, when these discussions took place in 1938, both Nehru and the Labour leaders were expecting a general election in Britain in 1940. This background of a possible general election gives these proposals a more than ordinary interest. They were clearly not merely theoretical or attempts to meet a rather nice visitor's point of view without any real commitment. Jawaharlal's report to the Congress Working Committee was not in any way euphoric, but he did say that he found the Labour response in 1938 far more forthcoming than in 1936: 'I might mention that the attitude of these Labour leaders was very different this time from what it was two and a half years ago. These leaders, it must be remembered, include all the moderate and most cautious of the Labour group.'

It would be fair to infer that this particular negotiation-cum-

conversation was to prove of seminal importance in the Indo-British relationship. In 1945, when the war was over and the Labour Party came into power in an unexpected political change, these earlier discussions and the generally positive views held by Attlee himself and his colleagues like Cripps, Dalton and Bevan would be important in the negotiations leading to the transfer of power.

Even though Jawaharlal did not regard his visit to Britain this time as a lobbying mission, he did have an interesting talk with Linlithgow who happened to be in London on leave from India. This conversation was long, frank and friendly. Nehru reported on it:

We discussed many subjects – international affairs, British foreign policy, Spain, communism (that is, the economic policy underlying it), Russia, America, Japan, Spain, the land question in India, cooperative farming, the reclamation of alkaline soils by utilizing molasses, industrial development in India, the effect of adult suffrage on a people, the pushing on of social services, etc. We talked of provincial autonomy as it had worked and the inherent difficulties underlying it.

In fact the conversation did not turn out to be exactly productive as is clear from Jawaharlal's report:

...We hardly touched upon the Hindu-Muslim problem or on federation. And then we discussed the future of India and her relations with the British. Linlithgow put me the straight question if we would agree to a status like that of the British dominions. My answer to this question was not a brief one.

This long reply, one gets the impression, did not lead to any greater understanding between two essentially different approaches, not only to the British policy in India, but to the much larger question of Britain's responsibilities in a changing world. One gets the impression from Nehru's own report to the Working Committee of Jawaharlal lecturing to a rather tired and uninterested Viceroy:

Lord Linlithgow seemed rather oppressed at the difficulty and complexity of the problem. He said that even if he agreed with me that the Government of India Act had to be scrapped and a constituent assembly summoned, what could he do except to

resign and lead a small bank of people in England advocating this. He could not get the British Government to agree to it. I pointed out that the realities of the situation demanded far-reaching action and, so far as I could make out, most British men of affairs were trying to face these realities. There was no other way out. Not to take it was to add to the difficulties and make a friendly settlement further off than ever. And then there was the danger of world crisis.

So we talked of many matters. As I was leaving, Lord Linlithgow said that a wide gap separated us and we would look at each other across it.

After fifty years, one gets the feeling that the responsibility for this communication gap was mutual.

VII

This visit to Europe and to London particularly was the last Jawaharlal made in an essentially non-official capacity. All the later visits, after the war, were made as a part of the on-going negotiations for the transfer of power and, still later, as Prime Minister of India. This last non-official mission was qualitatively different in nature, its aim being to influence both public opinion and important individual leaders of all sections in British public life. Nehru was not inclined to be too optimistic in such matters and his final assessment in his report to the Congress was restrained but not in any way discouraging.

I have given a longer report of my conversation with Linlithgow than I intended, both because of its intrinsic importance and because it indicates the official and restrained reaction to what I said. The reaction of others, who were non-officials, both Conservatives and Liberals, was more favourable to India. As for the Labourites and leftists generally, they went much further still. They accepted my contentions almost in their entirety and were convinced that India had the whip hand if only we would use it. They were interested in India for selfish reasons also, as they hoped that pressure from India might influence British foreign policy, which they detested, and help in changing it.

Before he returned to India Jawaharlal had an opportunity for expressing his views in a rather frank and forthright manner in an article in the *Labour Monthly*. The article is of importance primarily as an attempt to explain to a socialist audience the evolution of the Congress from a small elitist group into a mass organization. In this connection, Gandhi's role is projected as being crucial:

Mr. Gandhi's contribution to the Congress, his essential contribution about 20 years ago, was to bring the peasantry into the Congress. The whole centre of gravity of the Congress changed. More and more we began to go to the peasants first of all as persons who thought that they had nothing to learn from the peasants, but to teach them and tell them what to do. But inevitably we found that we had much to learn. We became interested in the peasant problem, which was no part of the nationalist movement. It might almost be said that we wanted to use the peasants in the cause of nationalism. We had started thinking in terms of developing strength to meet British imperialism, but unless the masses supported the cause of nationalism we had no effective strength. Inevitably, therefore, we had to go to the peasants. We organised them on nationalist lines, but the peasant question became more and more an important one to consider. Indeed the peasant, when he heard us talk in terms of Swaraj or freedom or independence, interpreted it in terms of getting rid of his own burdens....

The peculiar position of Gandhi and his relationship with the Left and the Right in India is sought to be explained by Nehru to his rather doctrinaire readers:

It should be remembered that the terms 'left' and 'right' are somewhat loosely used in India and have not the same significance as in the West. Thus a person may be very 'left' or advanced in a political and nationalist sense and yet 'right' in a social sense....

Apart from these sections, there is Mr. Gandhi who occupies a peculiar position. He does not belong to the right wing, although they always seek his support, as only if they can get it does the right wing count in the Congress. There is no doubt that Mr. Gandhi has changed the whole Congress, the whole

nationalist movement in India. He has given it tremendous mass backing and tremendous mass strength. He has awakened people in India to an extraordinary extent and awakened them more or less in a revolutionary direction. He has adopted revolutionary methods, but he also attaches the greatest importance to passive and nonviolent methods. He obstructs anything which he fears will lead to violence, but apart from that his tendency has always been towards the 'left'. Whatever views may be held about him, there is no doubt that he is a tremendous power in India today. His popularity among the Indian people is no less than it ever was, except among certain 'leftist' elements.

After clearly defining Gandhi's central position in the national movement for the foreseeable future, Nehru gently dissociates himself from the mainstream Congress position of office acceptance:

Generally speaking, then, both the peasantry and the workers have gained something in standards, but, what is more important, they have gained considerably in strength and are more prepared to enter into big disputes. On the other hand, psychologically speaking, the Congress and the Congress ministers have become less revolutionary, sitting as ministers and carrying on the day to day work in cooperation with British officials. The two processes work simultaneously, the masses becoming more aggressive and more revolutionary-minded and the leaders less so. But ultimately what will count is the masses and their problems.

That, then, is the position in India today. There are internal conflicts developing inside the Congress, but, at the same time, there is a strong desire to prevent a split....

While he was in Europe Jawaharlal was also very much concerned with a marginal problem, marginal that is from the point of view of India, but terribly important and with tragic implications for his European friends. The exodus of Jewish intellectuals and professional people from Austria and Germany had begun and Jawaharlal saw some possibilities in attracting some of them to India. It was a characteristic enough reaction, emotional in origin but essentially practical in its purpose. He wrote about this to the Congress, and more particularly to his friends in the UP. It did not lead to much, but a small number of refugee doctors and other

professionals were persuaded to come to India. It is not the number that came which matters but the light which Jawaharlal's reaction casts upon his individual response to the European tragedy, so different from that of many of his dear friends and colleagues within the Congress. Equally individual was his aborted plan of going back to India from Europe through Turkey and the Middle East because he was becoming more and more fascinated by the intra-Asian experience, both in the distant past and during the European colonial period. He made rather elaborate plans for an overland journey back to India but the rapidly worsening international situation made the idea impractical.

THE AMERICAN AUDIENCE

His visit to Europe led to a much greater interest on Jawaharlal Nehru's part in the possibilities of influencing the American public on the Indian question. Here again, Krishna Menon played an important role. Nehru himself did not seriously think of going to America but he did arrange for sending Krishna Menon to New York to attend the World Youth Congress. More important, his assessment of the role of Franklin Roosevelt as a positive factor in the unfolding world drama became more and more marked. The important thing is that it is in small throwaway phrases that his admiration for Roosevelt comes through. There is no detailed analysis of his achievements or attitudes; it is a friendly enough parenthesis in a world outlook limited to Europe, Asia, India and Britain. At the very end of a long article published in four issues of the *National Herald* in 1938, a few months after his return from Europe, on "England's Dilemmas" he ends a bitter denunciation of the British and the French politicians in the post-Manich period with this compliment: "Is it from these people that democracy will seek inspiration or hope for deliverance? How petty they all look before a great democratic figure like Roosevelt."

This new awareness of the importance of the United States and the need for having a dialogue with the Americans was reflected in the two articles Jawaharlal wrote, one in the magazine, *Asia* in January 1939, and the other, a much more important one, for the *Atlantic Monthly* in April 1940. In his *Asia* piece, Jawaharlal defines and explains Indian nationalism and its origin in the colonial situation; he then goes on to concede that nationalism had become a narrowing creed in the international context at that particular moment. To an American readership it really meant aggressive nationalism in Germany and in Italy. In a remarkable passage Nehru

admits this and then goes on to say that Indian nationalism had transcended the earlier parochial limits of its imagination:

India has been no exception to this rule, and often, in the intensity of the struggle, she has forgotten the world and thought only in terms of herself. But as strength came to her, and confidence born of success, she began to look beyond her frontiers. The increasing interest she has taken in the problems of the world is a measure of the growth of her nationalist movement. Perhaps nothing is so surprising in India today as this anxious interest in foreign affairs and the realisation that her own struggle for freedom is a part of the world struggle. And this interest is by no means confined to the intelligentsia but goes deep down to the worker, the petty shopkeeper and even, to a small extent, to the peasant. The invasion of Manchuria by Japan caused a wave of sympathy for China, and Japan which had so far been popular with Indians began to be disliked. The rape of Abyssinia by Italy was deeply felt and resented. The tragic events of central Europe produced a profound impression. But most of all India felt, almost as a personal sorrow, the revolt against the republic of Spain and the invasion of China, with all their attendant horrors. Thousands of demonstrations were held in favour of Spain and China, and out of our poverty we extended our helping hand to them in the shape of food and medical missions.

Jawaharlal goes on to explain the essential dilemma of Britain in her Indian policies to his American audience:

That is the dilemma of Britain today. There are only two courses open to her in regard to India. The natural and the logical course is to recognise what must be and adapt herself gracefully to it. This means the immediate recognition of India's right to self-determination on the basis of complete freedom and the drawing up of India's constitution by a constituent assembly consisting of her elected representatives. Such a decision, and immediate steps taken to implement it, would immediately bring about a psychological change and the old atmosphere of conflict and hostility would give place to a spirit of cooperation.

He tries to reassure his American readers that, in spite of the continuing insensitivity, ignorance of world developments and a totally unimaginative handling of Indian problems on the part of Britain, the Indian nationalist leadership is anxious to be fair both towards England and the cause of freedom in the world:

...Time runs fast in this age of dictators, and events follow one another with a startling rapidity. At any moment, the edifice of 'appeasement', which Chamberlain has built up so laboriously even at the cost of what nations and individuals held most dear, might collapse and bring catastrophes. What of India then? ...That is the question that often worries British statesmen. For it will matter a great deal what India does. India will make a difference.

It is not as if India was waiting for a chance to profit by England's difficulty. Even during the Czechoslovakian crisis Mr. Gandhi made it clear that we do not blackmail or bargain. But it is manifestly absurd to imagine that India would in any way help a government which was not only keeping her in subjection, but was also following a foreign policy which she detests and abhors. It is equally out of the question that we should forget our objective of independence and suspend our struggle simply because England was in difficulties. We shall pursue our path, and it seems inevitable that this will bring us into conflict with the British Government, for we shall resist anything that is imposed upon us against our will.

The audiences change but the general burden of the song is the same: India's anxious, desperately urgent desire to participate in the global struggle against dictatorship and totalitarianism and her equally strong determination to play this participatory role only as a self-respecting, self-governing nation.

The American people had, in the second half of the thirties, become involved emotionally in the world outside. A superb democratic leader was leading them, step by step, half unconsciously, away from their traditional isolationism. The world outside, however, meant for most Americans, first, the great mother civilizations of Europe, now in travail; second, the new menace of Bolshevism from Russia; and, third, the Japanese threat to China in the Western Pacific. The rest of the world, they believed, either

colonies ruled by distant European powers or fledgling ex-colonies, was tranquil and undisturbed, marking time while history passed them by.

India did not actively engage the attention of many Americans even when there were near, more insistent events. The scratches on the American mind made by India, her dependence, her uncomfortable poverty were scratches only – vague impressions composed of disparate elements ranging from the grotesque to the mysterious and the sublime through Hollywood and Katharine Mayo to the charisma of a single political and spiritual leader.

Very few Indian politicians had found it useful or necessary to go to America to further the cause of Indian freedom through the well-known medium of the arranged lecture tour. There had been only one astonishing exception to this usual lack of interest. The great Vithalbhair Patel spent the summer of 1933 lecturing in the big cities and the small towns of the USA, carefully explaining India's case. This was, surprisingly enough, only the second major propaganda exercise by any Indian public figure of stature in several decades; the first being when Vivekananda created a powerful impression on a very limited audience in the 1890s. Political activists from India in the USA were in the first 15 years of the century, essentially militant organizers of the Indian community and transnational revolutionaries like M.N. Roy and Har Dayal who fought the British Government from foreign territory whenever and wherever it was possible. The undoubted impact of the Ghadar Party was local.

The visit of Vithalbhair Patel in 1933 appears, in retrospect, to have been heroic in concept and reach. He met men of all levels, interacted with the media and impressed his American audience by the credibility of a self-governing, self-respecting Indian people. His return to Europe was immediately followed by the controversy generated by the bitter joint statement made by him and Subhas Chandra Bose angrily rejecting the Gandhian approach after the Mahatma's latest withdrawal of civil disobedience. A few days later, the old leader was dead and his remarkable achievement in political propaganda in virgin territory became a non-event.

That was in 1933. In the years between 1933 and 1938 the world had become a smaller place. The USA had recognized the Soviet Union and, in a decade of great achievement for American journalism, had been made aware of new problems and new challenges in a distant but formidable country by correspondents,

like Walter Duranty, Eugene Lyons and Alexander Werth. The domestic revolution launched by Roosevelt had made the American people more confident, less inward-looking and more inclined to take interest in the world outside. The cinema and the film documentary had brought about a media revolution. In this new environment, Mahatma Gandhi, with his astonishing power to relate to all types of individuals, created a dramatic impact on the ordinary American. Gandhi made India news.

Jawaharlal Nehru was vaguely familiar with all this. There is really no evidence that either he or Mahatma Gandhi thought it necessary to interrupt their work in India to do political propaganda of secondary importance in this powerful new nation, even though there are some desultory references to the subject in the correspondence of both men. Outside India, Britain was all important to Gandhi. To Nehru, Britain was sterile territory; attitudes there were frozen, the responses devastatingly expected ones. Only a minor sector of the Labour movement promised some rewards for hard work. In Europe, however, Jawaharlal Nehru thought he had more responsive audiences, potentially, more effective collaborators.

America came later, much later in the priorities of the Indian nationalist. There is, however, no doubt that by the middle thirties the American audience began to loom a little larger in Nehru's eyes and this was, to a great extent, the result of the very effective work done by brilliant American journalists who had been visiting India during these years. They had been originally attracted by the personality of Gandhi but became more and more fascinated by the unique nature of the Indo-British dialogue as manifested in the constitutional experiments. Nehru's visit to Spain had made Jawaharlal conscious of the strength and effectiveness of the American newspapers. Authors like Ernest Hemingway and Upton Sinclair had become identified with the Republican cause there and it was against this background that Jawaharlal wrote his important article for the *Atlantic Monthly* in early 1940, well after the war had broken out and the Congress ministries had resigned, leading to a new confrontation between India and Britain. This long article is a bitter denunciation of the British refusal to consult India before war was declared on India's behalf. Entitled, "India's demand and England's answer", it is an elaborate and closely reasoned defence of the decision of the Congress not to cooperate with Britain's war effort:

As India has grown in strength and self-reliance and approached the gates of freedom, she has thought of herself more and more as a part of a larger order, and has considered her own problem as a part of the world problem. In recent years there has been the greatest interest and even anxiety in India in regard to happenings in Manchuria, Abyssinia, Spain, Palestine and Central Europe. Indians have begun to develop an international outlook, and though they have been passionately attached to Indian independence, they have viewed it not in isolation but in terms of cooperation in a world order....

...With the growth of the Nazi power, the Congress condemned fascism and Nazism and disapproved of their theory and practice. We approved of collective security to check aggression, and noticed that British policy, in spite of occasional declarations to the contrary, was deliberately sabotaging this idea on which the League of Nations had been based and was often encouraging aggression. Munich came as a terrible shock and the so-called non-intervention and betrayal of Spain was a tragedy which affected us deeply.

These events gave shape to the external policy of the National Congress. While on the one hand we disapproved of fascism and Nazism, we dissociated ourselves entirely from British foreign policy and made it clear again that we could be no parties to a war imposed upon us and for imperialist ends. Any such imposition would be opposed and resisted....

The article also contains a lengthy discussion of the 'minority' problem in India. This was necessary because British propaganda had been effective in projecting the Hindu-Muslim question as the largest single obstacle to constitutional advance in India. In a rather sad passage, Jawaharlal regrets that the Congress' offer to join the war effort was not accepted by London:

It was a brave offer made on behalf of India to England for a declaration of war aims and Indian independence. If that had been accepted in the spirit in which it was made, there would have been an end to generations of conflict and struggle between the two countries, and for the first time we would have had willing cooperation between equals. If England had accepted it, she

would have startled the world and proved that she really stood for democracy and freedom. She would have gained a greater victory than any she can possibly achieve on the battlefield, and the moral backing of the world would have been with her.

This rather effective piece of propaganda on behalf of the Congress position in a rather confused moment of history ends with a brilliant piece of defensive eloquence:

In our struggle for freedom we have adhered to peaceful methods and have conceived of political action in moral terms, though we may have failed often enough in acting up to that conception. We have had misfortunes enough in the world, but if even this war is to be carried on in the old imperialist way with no higher aims, if it results in no essential difference to the world or to human freedom, if it does not end the root causes of war and human degradation, then that will be tragedy indeed. India would gladly work to prevent this tragedy. It was in this spirit that we invited the British Government to state their aims. It is in this spirit also that we shall try to continue, even though our path leads to conflict with England. We would ill serve the cause we cherish by submitting to that very evil of imperialism against which we have struggled for so long.

II

These articles, written for American readership, were a part of Jawaharlal's continuing effort to educate the world on the developing Indian situation. These and some other pieces written for exclusively domestic consumption during these years were collected and published in America in 1941 under the title, *The Unity of India*. Krishna Menon was the active sponsor of this publication and contributed a foreword to it. It came out in America about the same time as the American edition of Jawaharlal's autobiography, *Toward Freedom*. In the fairly uneventful story of the propaganda effort by the Indian nationalist movement in America, these articles and books by Jawaharlal played an important role. They were effective not merely because of their sober, reasoned, style, but also because of the general image which the personality of the writer had

come to acquire in the outside world by this time. Jawaharlal Nehru had come to be seen as an unusually upright and frank politician at a time when the species as a whole appeared to be uniformly nasty and brutish. In an age of dictators, appeasers and collaborationists, Jawaharlal stood out as a straightforward human being whose interest in politics was directly related to his interest in the freedom of man, both as individual and in the group.

Perhaps the most powerful projection of this image to the outside world was John Gunther's well-known sketch of Jawaharlal in his monumental work, *Inside Asia*. Liberal and progressive Americans could not but respond sympathetically when they were told by as seasoned and respected observer of men and events as John Gunther that Nehru:

...is a man with a modern mind, a man of reason, a devout — if this is the proper adjective — rationalist. And in India! — the continent of caste and holy cattle, of religious fanaticism in an extreme degree — India, which is a sort of cesspool of rival faiths, but in which faith, any faith, is a paramount desideratum, Nehru the agnostic, Nehru the modern man, faces the colossal medievalism of India. He fights the British, but he fights the entrenched ritualism of his own people too. His position — in reverse — is roughly that of an American politician, say, who dared to come out *against* radios and two-car garages. His struggle is that of a twentieth-century mind trying to make a revolution of material that goes back beyond the middle ages.

Gunther is particularly impressed by the unique relationship between the master and the disciple in Indian politics:

Nehru, strictly speaking, is not the leader of the Left in Congress. There are many others much more to the left than he is. He is not, oddly enough, even a member of the Congress Socialist party, a sort of autonomous block within Congress. This — another Indian paradox — is partly because the organized and official socialists fear that his identification with them might embarrass his leadership of Congress as a whole. Jawaharlal holds an approximate left center position, just as Mr. Gandhi is right center. There are many Congressmen to the right of Gandhi.

...Nehru likewise differs basically from Gandhi in that he cannot follow his leader all the way on non-violence. He admits the political value of non-violence, but he says frankly that non-violence *alone* cannot carry India to the final goal.

But what a beautifully warm and compelling picture he draws of Gandhi, what a waterfall of tribute his pages are! He talks of his tremendous debt to Gandhi, his "amazing and almost irresistible charm and subtle power over people," his capacity to make "heroes out of clay," his "inexhaustible reservoir of spiritual power." He defends him vigorously against the socialists who call him a reactionary. "Reactionary or revolutionary, he has changed the face of India, given pride and character to a cringing and demoralized people, built up strength and consciousness in the masses, and made the Indian problem a world problem."

This apparently secondary propaganda effort in a country which was still not involved in the world conflict assumed great importance during the coming months and years. When the Atlantic Charter was signed and Roosevelt's interest in India became obvious, Churchill and the British establishment were hurt and angry. Nothing immediately tangible came out of this American interest but it was an extremely invaluable investment in the not too distant future.

THE SOCIALIST PATH, ASIA'S 'SLUMBERING GIANT' AND OVERSEAS INDIANS

It was not only as a valuable target area for propagating the Indian nationalist point of view that the United States appealed to Jawaharlal Nehru. For the previous three or four years he had become more and more disillusioned with the democracies of Western Europe, especially the old imperial powers among them. He was perhaps inclined to take his own rhetoric rather too seriously in these matters and his justified rejection of the appeasement policy of France and Britain led him to undervalue their position in the hierarchy of nations. Events in the early forties were to prove that, while there was much merit in his analysis, it underestimated the stamina and strength Britain could display at a time of overwhelming national disaster. What is interesting to note is that, even among the aggressive Axis powers, Jawaharlal did not find any strong enough candidate for a dominant role in the shape of things to come.

It is against this rather comfortably dismissive rejection of Europe and Japan, that one should understand his sincere but definitely exaggerated evaluation of the weight of the United States and also the Soviet Union in the coming world. Of these two countries, the United States was the more relevant for India's immediate purpose. As an open society for which the Indian National Congress, Gandhi and Nehru had a certain relevance in its own terms, there was, in the USA, scope for suggestion, persuasion, and straightforward propaganda. The Soviet Union had no importance for India from this point of view since it was a closed society, about which Jawaharlal had generally positive but mixed feelings.

The Soviet Union's importance for India was not in the capacity

of a potential sympathizer with the aims of Indian nationalism which had to be persuaded to actively undertake this role, but in its capacity of patron, inspirer and senior partner in a world-wide network of relationships with left wing groups all over the globe, particularly in Europe, China and in India itself. The fact that Nehru was a sympathetic observer of Soviet developments and the unrelated fact that, next only to Gandhi, he was the most influential opinion-maker in the Congress, made his attitude towards the Soviet Union something of more than purely personal interest.

All this is brought out in the rather interesting assessment of the Soviet Union and the United States made by Jawaharlal in a rather important article on the Soviet Union published in the *National Herald* in May 1939, 'The Wooing of Russia'. It is a deliberate propagandist effort running straight against the mainstream Western propaganda line devaluing the Soviet Union's capacity to influence world events as against the new formidable giants of Nazi Germany and Japan, with Mussolini's Italy trailing a little behind. He wrote:

For Soviet Russia today is the most powerful country in the Eurasian continent. She is powerful not only because of a great army and vast air force but because of her enormous resources and the strength of the socialist structure she has built up. Hitler's Germany with all her armed might has feet of clay and no sustaining strength for war or peace. She is old already and requires frequent tonics to keep her going. The tonics have come to her through each fresh aggression and through the goodwill of England and France. Her resources are limited, her money power strained to the utmost. France, with her fine army, counts but she has already taken a back seat among the powers. England, with her great empire, where is she today? She has great resources but great weaknesses also; the days of her pride and domination are past.

Where would England be today, or France, or the other countries of western and northern and south-eastern Europe, were it not for Soviet Russia? It is a strange thought that the only effective bulwark against Nazi aggression in Europe is the Soviet. Without Soviet help most of the other countries might even collapse without a struggle. Without that help England's guarantee to Poland or Rumania means little.

There are only two powers in the world today which count in

the ultimate analysis -- the United States of America and the Soviet Union. The United States are almost unapproachable and their resources are enormous. The Soviet Union is not so favourably situated geographically but is yet almost unbeatable. All other powers are of the second rank compared to these two and have to rely on alliances for their protection. And as time passes the disparity will increase.

And so Soviet Russia, with all her communism, is wooed by those who hated her, and the gods laugh.

The gods did laugh but not exactly in the manner in which Jawaharlal rather facetiously anticipated. The Nazi-Soviet Pact three months later was to give an unexpected twist to the European confrontation. Jawaharlal was obviously a victim of wishful thinking in his assessment of Hitler's Germany having "feet of clay and no sustaining strength for war or peace". But while many of the details in his assessment as a contemporary observer with a limited access to sources of information can be faulted, the basic analysis is eminently a balanced one not only as an editorial comment written primarily for its topical interest, but as an analysis that retained its basic validity throughout the war years and in the post-war decades until even today, when all nations, including India, have to fashion their responses according to the actual and expected behaviour of these two countries.

Jawaharlal's overwhelming interest in the world outside was becoming less and less escapist and more and more relevant to India's domestic problems merely because of the tremendous transformation of the global environment in that fateful year of decision, 1939. However, his interest in the world outside was not limited to the great nations of the world, the success stories, the mastodons in the global jungle. He had always had a special sympathy for failures and lost causes. At about this time he wrote this splendidly rhetorical piece about the great powers, he was also writing a sad little letter to President Benes of Czechoslovakia, both man and country -- the supreme symbols of defeat at that moment in history. It is a helpful and at the same time helpless letter from a weak country to a defeated nation:

Mr. Ladislav Urban, your Consul in Bombay, has suggested to me that I should write to you and explain India's attitude towards

a possible war in Europe. I gladly do so. Our general policy has inevitably been an anti-imperialist one and has centred round the independence of India.... We felt that any true solution of the problems of peace and democracy must be based on an elimination of both fascism and imperialism....

During the Czechoslovakian crisis last year, our sympathies were entirely with the Czechs and it was very painful for us to see how dismemberment was forced on the country by British and French policy....

May I add that I retain the most lively and pleasant memories of your beautiful country and I share in your sorrow at the tragedy that has befallen her? I have confidence, however, that she will pass through the valley of the shadow and become again a free, progressive and democratic country.

II

In the rather narrow and sometimes personal international discussions on India's role in a changing world during these years, there was a certain inevitable sympathy with other similarly situated countries like Czechoslovakia and China and their leaders, countries which had been victims of flagrant aggression by the Axis powers. These countries were, naturally, inclined to be rather charitable in attributing the best of all possible motivations to the democracies. But they were also, much more capable of understanding the dilemmas faced by Indian nationalism. Nationalist China and Chiang Kai-shek personally were to attempt to play a mediatory role between Britain and India during the coming years.

The fact that the Congress had by now a rather active China policy was mainly due to Jawaharlal's efforts. During 1938 and 1939, he had done his best to sensitize the Indian people and the Congress organization to the need for some concrete demonstration of India's solidarity with China as a victim of aggression. The idea of sending a medical unit to China was taken up by the Congress and Jawaharlal pursued it with vigour. It was during his visit to Europe that he discussed with Dr. Madan Atal, the future leader of the Indian team, the details of the project. He wanted a distinguished younger Congressman like Dr. Rammanohar Lohia to lead the mission to

China. As things turned out, no politician joined the team which consisted only of young Indian doctors with medical supplies.

The unit was in position in north-west China where Mao Zedong's Eighth Route Army had settled in Yen-an after the Long March. There was, thus, a new, concrete relationship between the two countries by the middle of 1939, a relationship which was not limited to the KMT government under Chiang Kai-shek which was, by now, functioning from Chungking, but also extended to the KMT's United Front partners in the anti-Japanese struggle, the Communists. More relevant than these details was the fact that the Congress accepted a certain institutional responsibility for giving aid to China in her hour of trial.

It was against this background that the rather important visit of Jawaharlal Nehru himself to China in August and September 1939 took place. Its intrinsic value was limited but it was very important for the raising of mutual awareness in both countries. Apart from being a high profile public relations exercise, it was also important in bilateral diplomacy, because Jawaharlal was able to meet and present the Indian point of view to both the President and the Prime Minister of China while listening to their appreciation of the Asian situation. More important, he was able to take part in a highly visible manner in the Chinese experience of Japanese aggression, including actual air raids on Chungking while he was in the city. The drama of this visit was heightened by the declaration of war by Britain and France against Germany on the Polish issue on 2 September, which interrupted his visit to China. He had to return home earlier than planned. He could not visit Yen-an. He, however, had an important meeting with a senior communist general, Yeh Chin-ying, who was destined to play an important role in Sino-Indian relations after the war.

More important than the fact that this visit took place and that it was Jawaharlal Nehru who made it, was the fact that it produced concrete results. It was a meeting of minds between two weak parties but the individuals involved were fated to play vital roles in future events. Equally important was the continuing and effective performance of the Congress Medical Mission in China. At a time when it was so easy to feel frustrated and helpless, both at home and abroad, the fact that the Indian National Congress was able to send such a unit to a foreign country did something to boost morale at home. It was also a uniquely successful exercise in promoting inter-

national understanding.

III

During the air journeys to and back from China, Jawaharlal also was able to visit Burma. This country had been very much in his mind ever since he heard about the rather nasty anti-Indian riots in Rangoon, while he was in Europe. A few years earlier, he had had a most enjoyable visit to this neighbouring state, united, as well as divided by the exploitative imperial economy. He was able to meet Burmese nationalist comrades during his visit to Rangoon and also do his little bit in restoring amicable relations between the two communities. It was a useful enough exercise for him personally and also for the relationship between India and Burma which had become increasingly more tenuous and distant after the constitutional changes in 1935 that led to the separation of Burma from India.

It was not only in Burma that the perennial question of the overseas Indians attracted the attention of the Congress, Mahatma Gandhi himself and Jawaharlal Nehru. As has been noted earlier, the Foreign Affairs Department of the Congress had been originally established with the purpose of looking after the interests of Indian communities abroad — in South Africa, Malaya, Burma and Ceylon. That was the immediate tangible purpose of this new organizational unit, a sort of alternative diplomatic effort, to strengthen and supplement the efforts of the British Indian Government in looking after the interests of Indian communities in these countries.

Both Ceylon, as it was then called, and South Africa became important in 1939. Gandhi was sensitive to these developments and this was an area in which he and his principal lieutenant collaborated to great effect. Jawaharlal was asked to go to Ceylon, as the representative of the Congress, to deal with some unhappy developments in that country. The Ceylon Government had proposed some measures adversely affecting Indian labourers working in Ceylon and Gandhi himself had drafted resolutions for the All-India Congress Committee on this subject, as also on the even more unpleasant new attitude of the South African Government towards Indian settlers which had crystallized since 1938, when the National Party was formed with a clear apartheid programme. The South African Government itself had not accepted all the implications of apartheid but it was moving in that direction in

response to Dr. Malan's activities, i.e. towards a virtual rejection of the agreements between Gandhi and Smuts in 1914.

There is no need for us to go into the details of this mission beyond saying that Nehru was able to establish the semblance of a dialogue with the senior Sinhalese leader, Baron Jayatilleke. Jawaharlal also met representatives of the Indian workers and made it clear, absolutely clear, in his public pronouncements, that India would not forget her sons abroad. In fact, on the eve of his journey to Ceylon he had said:

I am going to Ceylon at a time when great problems face the Congress Organisation and the international situation continues to hover over the brink of war. I feel I must carry out the directions of the A.I.C.C. My being sent to Ceylon is proof of the importance attached by the Congress to the status and conditions of Indians abroad. This question refers not only to Ceylon but to South and East Africa and elsewhere and it is of paramount importance as the honour of India is involved in it.

Every Indian abroad carries a bit of India with him and he has a right to look to his motherland for help and protection in case of need. Today we may not be in a position to give that help fully or to protect him as we should. But we recognise our obligation and will give full effect in times to come. Meanwhile, I earnestly hope that my visit to Ceylon will bear fruit and will result in an amicable settlement of the problems.

Later during the visit he enunciated in very clear terms the special relationship between India and Ceylon as neighbouring countries as well as the supreme importance of self-respect for the Indian people both at home and abroad:

As an Indian, I find it difficult to think of Ceylon as a foreign country. Whatever happens to the two, we cannot be anything but sister countries....

India wants to do away with the imperialist notion of capturing and exploiting another country. If Indians have any interests abroad it should be based on the goodwill and cooperation of the people of that country. I am proud of being an Indian and will not tolerate a single hair of an Indian to be touched by any other. I do not want Indians to go to a place where they are not wanted.

But where they can go, they should go with the goodwill of the whole people. Indians, wherever they are, should not suffer indignities from anyone. Things, as they are, are in a bad way in the world, especially as regards Indians. This angers me and irritates me. I will sooner see Indians crushed to atoms rather than suffer degradation and dishonour.

The contacts of Ceylon and India are very close and have existed over thousands of years. Even if anyone tries by thoughtlessness to disturb this condition, the weight of thousands of years will overwhelm them in times to come. We should take particular care to avoid the growth of suspicions which might create a barrier between us. In times to come, I hope friendliness will mark our relationship and we may march hand in hand towards a common goal.

He was quite frank in his public expression of disappointment with his conversations with the Ceylonese politicians:

...During our discussions, while I was thinking in terms of major issues, I fear the ministers of the Ceylon Government had only small things in mind. It is not right to talk in terms of a fight. A spirit of hostility once created may not be easily eradicated, particularly if it goes on spreading among the masses. That is why I am anxious that amicable relations should continue to prevail among the peoples of the two countries.

It is despicable when Indians outside India assume a sort of patronising attitude towards the natives of the countries where they had gone and talk of sympathising with their aspirations and laying too much emphasis on their own services to those countries. Such talk always reminds me of the behaviour of Englishmen in India. Ceylon is a small country to whom continued friendship with India is essential. In her own interests it would be better for her to be friends with India. Indians can never misbehave so long as they conform to the ideals of the Congress. I would ask Indians to always uphold the honour of our motherland and above all of the Congress.

Here there is definitely a veiled warning. This does not of course mean that Jawaharlal was insensitive to genuine Ceylonese misgivings:

In Ceylon in recent times a new mass consciousness has risen, though economically and politically she is backward. The Ceylonese people feel that it is far easier to deal with the Indian interests and leave the imperialist exploitation, the major exploitation, to continue. British vested interests in many countries have begun to look on India as a rival in many fields and it is to their advantage to divert the agitation against us in Burma or Ceylon. Ninety nine per cent of the shops in Colombo are run by Indians and if the Ceylonese wonder at this large number of Indians in their own country, Indians should learn to appreciate their position.

It is impossible for India and Ceylon to be anything but connected. It is inevitable that we should march together. I am entirely opposed to India exploiting in any manner not only Ceylon but any other country, for that matter. Nobody need, however, imagine that Ceylon's economic interests would at all be served well by the expulsion of Indians. If Indians should seek special privileges they might well agitate for them and get them too; but then they would have paid a tremendous price before they have these; they would have lost the confidence and sympathy of the people of the country. They cannot flourish in such circumstances.

I cannot conceive of Ceylon without India, but if I say that, some might think I am imposing my will on Ceylon. I do not want to appear to do that. I know ultimately Ceylon is bound to pull with India and form part of that federation which will be an Indian federation. But whether she becomes part of it or not, Indian interests in Ceylon can only function on the basis of goodwill of the Ceylonese.

Apart from public statements and speeches there were detailed negotiations between Jawaharlal and the Ceylonese ministers about the future status of the Indian workers who had been affected by the new measures aimed at retrenching and repatriating large groups among them. These proposals turned out to be of only historical interest because the overriding importance of the war effort for the British made it necessary for the Government in Colombo to soft-pedal these anti-Indian measures.

Jawaharlal's visit to Ceylon is also of interest because it shows how easily Jawaharlal was able to cooperate with British Indian

civil servants in Ceylon and also the then member of the Executive Council in India, Sir Jagdish Prasad, on these matters. To a very limited extent, he was, under Gandhi's directions, continuing the diplomatic efforts of men like Srinivasa Sastri in South Africa.

IV

Apart from Ceylon, the Congress had reason to be most worried about the South African question. Here, inevitably, Mahatma Gandhi was not only the expert but the unquestioned fountain-head of policy in the Congress. As mentioned earlier, he drafted the resolution for the All-India Congress Committee meeting in June 1939. He also very clearly distinguished between the narrower, smaller problem of the rights of the Indian community in South Africa and the larger issue of the rights of the large majority of the native African population. Men like Jawaharlal and Dr. Rammanohar Lohia were anxious that the Congress should express its solidarity with black Africans much more strongly than hitherto, but Gandhi felt that this would be unrealistic because of India's total inability to really help them. What India had to do was to concentrate upon the problems of the Indian minority, in other words, to continue Gandhi's earlier struggle. Some gains had then been made and, hopefully, thought to be consolidated. After 25 years, these achievements were now being questioned and sought to be undone by the South African Government. In a very important interview with the Rev. S.S. Tema, an African Christian delegate to the World Christian Conference in Tambaram, one of the very few recorded meetings he had with the representatives of black majority in South Africa, Gandhi carefully distinguished between the larger African struggle, in which India could be only a concerned spectator, and the struggle of the people of Indian origin, in which India could play a direct diplomatic role through New Delhi and London.

Jawaharlal had his reservations about this careful distinction. His own contacts with black leaders, both from the United States and from Africa, had made him see the Indian national movement as a part of a bigger struggle of all the exploited people of the world against all the exploiting imperialisms and minority governments. While he was quite conscious of the special achievements of Indian communities abroad and the resentment this tended to arouse, he

never lost sight of the larger question of the basic exploitation of the local people by the foreign occupying power, British, French or Italian.

It was in these grey areas of the relationship of India, as an entity, and the Indians as a people, and the Indian National Congress as an organization, with foreign countries and Indian communities in those foreign countries, that Jawaharlal's anxiety to reassert the oneness of the anti-colonial and anti-imperialist movements was so important. Somehow, albeit in a rather vague and inchoate manner, he was able to impress upon the angry Indian nationalist mind, at a moment of humiliation and crisis, the need to remember the larger world outside.

OFFICE ACCEPTANCE: THE POLITICS OF COMPROMISE

The years before the war were significant in the evolution of India's political system; many new institutions were tried out, found partially useful and also irrelevant in some respects. The experience of office acceptance by the Congress and the other parties as the first step in the implementation of the new constitution imposed by Britain, was, in the perspective of history, destined to be more important than was realized at that time, at least by angry critics like the Communists and the Congress Socialists. Provincial autonomy in practice did mean a tremendous boost to the morale of the ordinary people everywhere and there was no doubt that valuable work was done in the fields of education, poverty alleviation, prohibition and rural development within the very rigid limits provided for by the Government of India Act. For most people in the country it was a more satisfactory situation than the one that prevailed over the previous five or six years when, after the drama and excitements of mass civil disobedience, begun with the Dandi March, there had been a long period of complicated political debates, discussions and disagreements between the Congress and the Muslim League, between the Congress and the Harijan leadership, and between the Indian political parties and fairly uninterested and uninvolved imperial representatives like Willingdon and Linlithgow.

As we have seen Jawaharlal was in prison most of the time during this earlier period and also went abroad twice, bringing India to the notice of the world at a time when the Western world was preoccupied with the threat posed by the new dictatorships. As we have noticed, Gandhi had himself launched this process of advertising the Indian national movement during his visit to London to attend the Round Table Conference in 1931. Like Jawaharlal Nehru,

Subhas Chandra Bose was also abroad most of the time when he was not in prison at home. He also did his best to make the general public and special interest groups in Europe aware of the Indian problem, earlier with the friendly guidance of Vithalbhai Patel and later on his own, with the assistance of some partisan followers in London. These attempts at making the world aware of India's struggle had necessarily to be insinuated into the very active, almost hectic, political dialogues which were occupying newspaper columns, the pages of major political journals and the discussions of political activists in Europe and America, about a succession of tragic developments beginning with Japan's attack on China and climaxing with the annexation of Czechoslovakia by Nazi Germany in 1939.

All this we have discussed in some detail primarily from the point of view of one significant individual, Jawaharlal Nehru. But it was the general problem and the absence of concrete developments on the ground in India which had something to do with all this febrile discussion. For Gandhi personally, there was, of course, no such difficulty, no need to escape from the reality. He could always make a period empty, at one level, of political developments at home dense with thoughts and deeds about the immediate needs, experiences and prospects of the Indian people. It was thus that the Harijan problem and the revival of the constructive programme seemed to him to be still at the centre of things. This almost ruthless refusal to be persuaded by normal standards of assessing the importance of events in the nation's life kept him, morally and intellectually, at full peak at a time when Jawaharlal and Subhas Chandra Bose, and many other friendly and unfriendly critics, began to despair of his returning to serious action-oriented politics. It is also typical of Gandhi that, throughout this period, totally unaffected by the ebb and flow of political activity within the Congress, he went on seeking, unfortunately without success, some solution to the one intractable domestic problem of the Indian polity, the minorities problem, which the British were continuing to project as the basis of their reluctance to part with power, and which, unfortunately, was something very real and difficult to wish away.

During this apparently fallow period, Gandhi also continued to wrestle with agonizing problems in his personal life, problems in which, to be fair to him, most of the Indian people, including men like Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose, were fundamentally uninterested, even though these would supply the

basis for fascinated research at home and abroad, for years to come, to professional psychologists and thinly disguised voyeurs alike.

This complex situation in which, a very rich and continually evolving personal experience kept Gandhi at the centre of things, even when nothing much seemed to be happening, was best demonstrated in the manner in which he dominated the Congress during these and subsequent years of ideological conflict and organizational friction. By the time the elections were held and the stage set for provincial autonomy, it was clear that Gandhi was making the final decision after all the varying points of view were expressed by the leftists, the rightists, the centrists and the meek followers of their great saint.

The decision to introduce the quasi-federal system in the provinces without power at the centre, and without the expression of willingness by the Indian States to come in even at a later date was, thus, something of an incomplete affair. But to the limited electorate of about 30 million people all over the country, this had meant genuine participation in the making of some decisions, at least, which would affect their daily lives. To the more than 300 million other Indians, who did not have the franchise, it also meant an entirely new experience of indirect responsibility for at least a small part of their future agenda. The short period of minority rule in the Congress-majority provinces was also an important and, in retrospect, necessary experiment. The Congress leadership under Gandhi argued that they were willing to accept responsibility even though it was partial, limited, and ultimately derogatory, only after ensuring non-interference in day-to-day administration by the British governors. The final compromise achieved, like many agreements in the history of the Indo-British connection during the Gandhi epoch, was something of a solution by an evasion of the literal text. Formal assurances of non-interference were not given but there was an informal understanding which, if violated, the two sides knew, would lead to the resignation of the ministries.

During this period between October 1937 and October 1939, when the Congress ministries resigned office, the whole country had an experience of a fairly autonomous self-government at a rather high level in a very big country. It was important enough, at a very fragile moment in global politics, to give the impression to many observers outside India that here at least was a new area of tranquillity at a time when kingdoms, republics and democratic

institutions were tumbling like ninepins all over Europe. The British claim made in foreign countries that India had been launched on a fairly smooth and reasonably fast process of institutional development on sound democratic lines, which could lead to dominion status fairly soon, was accepted with some relief, though with suspicion, by even radical and socialist critics in Britain and Europe. In India itself, the communists and the socialists saw these developments as unhappy and discouraging. They did not see anything at all positive in what they considered to be a surrender to the might and obstinacy of a declining imperial authority. These people were sincerely affronted by the manner in which the two great satyagraha campaigns of Gandhi had finally led to the shoals and shallows of liberal reformism. These criticisms did lead them leave the Congress. During these two exciting years, Subhas Chandra Bose and Jawaharlal Nehru were also unhappy with the apparent acceptance by the Congress leadership of this quieter, easier programme.

While this is true, there was not a single moment, as far as Jawaharlal Nehru was concerned, when he did not fully accept the ultimate decisions made by the Congress Working Committee under the instructions of Gandhi. He was unhappy about it. He debated with himself about it in public and in his dialogues with the very young and the very militant. He stressed the need for seeing the experiment of office acceptance as only one part of a much larger programme. However, he did not accept the policy of total rejection suggested by the communists and the increasingly unhappy, unreconciled, alienated attitude of Subhas Chandra Bose. This is not psychologically difficult to understand — this difference between Nehru and Bose at this critical moment. The fact that earlier attempts at understanding with the Muslim leadership in Bengal, which Bose and his colleagues in the Bengal Congress had wanted, did not come to anything, is crucial. This led a major constituent of the Indian National Congress, with one of the three charismatic figures in the country at its head, to feel totally alienated and helpless in opposition to the Muslim majority ministry in Calcutta. Politics in Bengal at this time continued to have the essential flavour of an extra-parliamentary Opposition. Gandhi and Nehru were all involved, of course, in the agitation about the detenus and the Holwell Monument but they were also involved in other activities which were more 'normal', so to speak. In such a situation, Subhas

Chandra Bose and his followers in Bengal, his admirers in the Socialist Party and his fellow-travellers only in the Communist Party, felt a degree of intense dissatisfaction with the official Congress programme of ministry formation, local administration and getting down to the nitty-gritty of self-government at the provincial level.

It is important to recapitulate these developments in rather rough detail because this was the period when Gandhi made up his mind to reject the Bose alternative to his own programme and Jawaharlal, after a fairly well-advertised period of discontent and unhappiness with both the points of view, decided to cast his lot with total commitment to Gandhi's position. Subhas Chandra Bose's reaction was predictably bitter: 'He has never in his own life had the courage to do anything in opposition to the Mahatma. Thus, Nehru began to drift along, trying to please both the Right and the Left.'

The differences between the major groups in the Congress towards the Government of India Act and its implementation, first at the provincial level and later in New Delhi, were the top priority items in the national debate in the country for more than three years. Looking back today at those doubts and worries, we are able to say, with some confidence, that the adversary positions were not as clearly demarcated as the cheer leaders on either side thought they were. The overarching leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, with his long memories of reasonably successful interludes of cooperation and compromise, made it easy enough, even for those who were convinced that office acceptance, after the elections to the provincial assemblies, would be tantamount to the disappearance of the Congress as a militant organization, to accept the decision with reluctance and misgivings. Too much rhetoric had coloured earlier easier judgements on the collaborationist, loyalist parties during the years of diarchy and, even with more reckless abandon, against the British-organized bureaucracy which ran the country, to change abruptly to a new posture of reconciliation and effective cooperation on a day-to-day basis with the British and the Indian bureaucrats at the higher levels and, most important, with the governor of the province.

About the sharing of power at the centre there was much less immediate difficulty. The unwillingness of the princely states to come into the federation and the clearly unsolved and increasingly bitter Hindu-Muslim problem made serious discussion of power sharing in New Delhi unrealistic.

On the whole, it would not be unfair to sum up Jawaharlal's position as being an angry and worried rejection of office acceptance by the Congress because of its possible effect on the nationalist ethos in the country and the tempo of the revolutionary movement. He was also concerned about the impact the new, prosperous situation would have on the Congress organization, its leading groups and personnel, and the connected mass organizations. Between 1936 and 1937, he had several opportunities of redefining his attitude towards the whole question of office acceptance. At the Lucknow Congress, Jawaharlal was his usually self-assured, morally indignant best as a critic of reformism:

Coming to the question itself, I feel that the difference is between the two viewpoints, one of the reformist and the other of the revolutionary. If we wish the country to advance towards independence, if we wish the country not to be disillusioned, then we must think many times before we take any steps which increase this reformist mentality. Any idea of acceptance of office tends to reformism. It is absurd to compare with Mr de Valera. Those conditions don't exist here. I do feel that those in favour of acceptance of office are honestly supporting their attitude, but it will lead inevitably to reformism.

At the same time he was careful not to foreclose all options. He went on to say that a 'postponement of the issue' was preferable to any decision in favour of reformism. 'Still it has its dangers. A postponement of the question means hesitancy and indecision and we have to decide this question as we think best.'

The Congress election manifesto of August 1936, prepared midway during Jawaharlal's presidentship of the Congress, was drafted in much sharper terms:

Adhering to this policy and objective, but in view of the present situation and in order to prevent the operation of forces calculated to strengthen alien domination and exploitation, the Congress decides to contest seats in the coming elections for the provincial legislatures. But the purpose of sending Congressmen to the legislatures under the new Act is not to cooperate in any way with the Act but to combat it and seek to end it. It is to carry out, in so far as is possible, the Congress

policy of rejection of the Act, and to resist British imperialism in its attempts to strengthen its hold on India and its exploitation of the Indian people. In the opinion of the Congress, activity in the legislatures should be such as to help in the work outside, in the strengthening of the people, and in the development of the sanctions which are essential to freedom.

In the Faizpur Congress at the end of the year Jawaharlal was still clear that Congress response to office acceptance should be totally negative:

It seems to me that the only logical consequence of the Congress policy, as defined in our resolutions and in the election manifesto, is to have nothing to do with office and ministry. Any deviation from this would mean a reversal of that policy. It would inevitably mean a kind of partnership with British imperialism in the exploitation of the Indian people, an acquiescence, even though under protest and subject to reservations, in the basic ideas underlying the Act, an association to some extent with British imperialism in the hateful task of the repression of our advanced elements. Office acceptance on any other basis is hardly possible, and if it is possible, it will lead almost immediately to deadlock and conflict. That deadlock and impasse does not frighten us; we welcome it. But then we must think in terms of deadlocks and not in terms of carrying on with the office.

From this rejection of provincial autonomy he went on to imagine 'a powerful joint united front of all the anti-imperialist forces in the country' which would make an immediate demand for a Constituent Assembly leading to 'a democratic state where political power has been transferred to the mass of the people. An inevitable consequence of this is withdrawal of the alien army of occupation.'

It is not necessary in this examination of Jawaharlal's concerned dialogue with the Congress rank and file and the Indian people at large about the various policy options facing the Congress on vital domestic issues, to trace the gradual change in the attitude of the Congress towards office acceptance. The final accommodation reached between the British Government and the Congress was based on the tacit agreement of New Delhi not to insist upon the

Governor's special powers. It was also, to a great extent, due to the feeling of the leadership in most provinces where substantial majorities had been returned to the legislature, that it should be possible to work the Constitution, gain experience in administration, provide some immediate and tangible benefits to the poorer sections of the population, and, hopefully, try to keep the crusading spirit alive at the grassroots level by revitalizing the Congress organization. This was the approach of the larger group in the Congress led by the majority of the Working Committee, and best represented by leaders like Rajendra Prasad and Rajagopalachari. The unsatisfied minority accepted the position primarily because Gandhi wanted them to do so. There was also another implicit element in their analysis of the situation. While the government was being run by the Congress or other majority political parties in provinces like the Punjab and Bengal, it should be possible to find new avenues and outlets for agitational activity in the adjacent princely states which had been politically inert and also concentrate on civil liberties and the trade union and kisan movements in all the provinces.

After a few months of the actual working of the Congress ministries, Jawaharlal slowly veered round to the view that it had not been, after all, an entirely bad idea to accept office:

My personal view was against office acceptance and so with your permission I want to give my views on the new experiment after it has been worked for the last few months. In my opinion, office acceptance has benefited us. The country is pulsating with a new life and new vision. As Congress President I go about in different parts of the country, and as such have ample opportunities of seeing and feeling how the kisans, peasants, labourers and traders are feeling as a result of the new experiment. Wherever Congress governments have been established, people are heaving a sigh of relief. But we have to see how far we have advanced towards our real objective or whether some weaknesses have entered into our scheme of things. As regards the work of the Congress ministers, my own idea is that they have done a lot of good. In doing a lot of little good things they might forget the bigger objective. Good work is good in itself and interests us. But sometimes it also diverts our attention from the really big issues. I do not say that this has been the case. But there is always the danger.

It is interesting to compare this with Subhas Chandra Bose's reaction to the experience of office acceptance, as articulated in his presidential address at Haripura in February 1938:

Opposing or resisting the provincial part of the constitution will be hardly possible now, since the Congress Party has accepted office in seven out of eleven provinces. All that could be done would be to strengthen and consolidate the Congress as a result of it. I am one of those who were not in favour of taking office – not because there was something inherently wrong in doing so, not because no good could come out of that policy, but because it was apprehended that the evil effects of office-acceptance would outweigh the good. Today I can only hope that my forebodings were unfounded.

How can we strengthen and consolidate the Congress while our ministers are in office? The first thing to do is to change the composition and character of the bureaucracy. If this is not done, the Congress Party may come to grief....

Secondly, the Congress Ministers in the different provinces should, while they are in office, introduce schemes of reconstruction in the spheres of education, health, prohibition, prison reform, irrigation, industry, land-reform, workers' welfare, etc....

Interestingly enough, Subhas Bose saw, as an integral part of this ambiguous experiment, the dominant role of the Working Committee in laying down and implementing policy:

'This Committee,' he said, 'in my judgement, is not merely the directing brain of the national army of fighters for freedom. It is also the shadow cabinet of independent India and it should function accordingly.' Is there a hint of sarcasm here?

All these points are important because, on the dilemmas of office acceptance, one can see that the two younger leaders were very much on the same wavelength. There were differences in approach, in premises and in the assessment of the weight and usefulness of other models for the Indian situation. For instance, Jawaharlal had also, on several occasions, expressed his dissatisfaction with the Working Committee as it was constituted and the need for it to function more effectively. But when Subhas went on to refer to the situation in Ireland and the leadership of de Valera as relevant examples, Jawaharlal's reaction was, as we have noticed earlier,

skeptical. He was always uncomfortable about parallels in dissimilar situations. Also, he was not an ardent admirer of the Irish leader.

During the two years of the working of provincial autonomy by the Congress, there were necessarily many interesting and contradictory developments and Jawaharlal's reactions both as expressed politely in public and more bluntly in private correspondence with his colleagues were at the best of times uncomfortable. Each provincial government produced its own problems and, as the member of the Working Committee most immediately concerned with the United Provinces, he was, of course, actively engaged in keeping the spirit of militancy alive without unduly embarrassing the Congress governments or, the non-Congress governments. His approach was a carefully balanced rather gentle one which continued when, later, provincial autonomy had been established in the whole of British India with the formation Congress governments in the Frontier Province and Assam.

In the United Provinces, Jawaharlal Nehru was primarily concerned with relations with the Muslim masses, the Muslim League, and also with Choudhry Khaliquzzaman personally. This phase has been much discussed by historians during recent years, a general suggestion being made that Nehru personally was responsible for scuttling the idea of a possible coalition with the Muslim League which had fought against the Muslim landlords in the United Provinces on a progressive platform. It is not necessary to go into details here but the evidence is mixed. It is clear that he, like many other self-righteous socialist activists of his way of thinking, underestimated the need to make coalitions and compromises with moderate political groups in the country at a time when the Congress itself was making a major compromise with the occupying power. This does not, however, mean that Jawaharlal had any exclusive responsibility for negotiations in this regard; certainly not at the national level, where Gandhi and Subhas Bose after he became president, were equally involved. Jinnah had infructuous discussions with all the three. At the provincial level, however, Jawaharlal's responsibility was greater, but even here he shared it with Govind Ballabh Pant, Mohan Lal Saxena and Rafi Ahmad Kidwai. A confusing and, at that time, very noisy factor in the Hindu-Muslim equation was the Shia-Sunni dispute with which Nehru was exclusively occupied for many weeks and months. The existence of internal factions within the Muslim community and the

rather exaggerated support to the Congress by some of these groups made the idea of cooperation with the League less attractive than it might have been.

It was, in fact, on the Shia-Sunni dispute that Jawaharlal was most unhappy with the performance of the Congress ministry. He felt that, at the critical moment, both the Prime Minister and his colleagues, stale and weary with the burdens of office, had failed to understand the developing crisis. Of greater significance was the manner in which Nehru encouraged and also, at the same time, tried to keep within reasonable limits the militant kisan movement in the United Provinces, led by the Congress Socialists and Acharya Narendra Deva personally. Here, there were some semi-comical misunderstandings. Nehru thought the kisans were marching to Lucknow to embarrass the government. They were, in fact, doing so to pledge their support. Nehru realized this mistake and reformulated his response. This is a rather important episode and his statement correcting his earlier impression and redefining the responsibility of the masses in a situation where the actual administration was in Indian hands, has a certain relevance even today:

Some days ago I issued a statement about the proposed kisan demonstration before the Council Chamber in Lucknow. I learn that in response to my request this demonstration has been abandoned by the organisers. I am very grateful to them for this and at the same time I must apologise to them for certain statements of mine which were based on ignorance. I have subsequently discovered that this demonstration was decided upon early in April at a kisan workers conference held in Lucknow under the distinguished presidentship of Acharya Narendra Deva. At that time no announcement had been made on behalf of the Provincial Congress for the celebration of a kisan day on April 17th. It was rightly felt that the kisans should give organised expression to their general approval of the agrarian proposals of the U.P. Government. In view of the attempts being made by some groups hostile to the kisans to organise opposition to these proposals, it is obviously desirable and important that the kisans should have their voice heard effectively and repeatedly. After all, it is the good of these millions of peasants that must be the final criterion.

Kisan meetings and demonstrations, to enable them to follow developments and to bring the weight of their opinion to bear on them, are thus to be encouraged, and I trust that the Congress organisation will keep alert in this matter. But I still think that demonstrations before the council chamber should only take place on rare and very special occasions and should not otherwise be encouraged. The principal question in the U.P. during the next few months is agrarian reform, and I hope that all of us, whatever our other differences might be, will cooperate fully in this long overdue endeavour to ease the burden on the peasantry.

In his earlier statement denouncing the proposed march, he had said:

To demonstrate peacefully is the right which we must protect, but to demonstrate so as to interfere frequently with the work of the assembly seems to me highly improper. Those who encourage this set a bad example, which all kinds of people will follow to public detriment. To ask kisans to march long distances and gather before the council chamber at frequent intervals is no service to kisans. It is grossly unfair to them. It is far better for them to demonstrate in their local areas and to give expression to their wishes there.

A few months later, in January 1938, Jawaharlal had a genuinely satisfying occasion to reiterate his undying faith in the strength and vitality of the Indian peasant. The exploited peasants of a remote, unknown taluka in the Almora district, Askote, decided to march to Lucknow to protest against their exploitation by the Rajwar, as the local zamindar was called. Nehru describes their action:

Echoes of the noncooperation movement reached Askote and gradually the peasants began to wake up and agitate against many of the illegal dues. They were crushed by the *rajwar* family repeatedly, and the agitation subsided for a while, but only to rise again. In 1938, the Congress government sent two committees to inquire and lengthy reports were presented by these committees. The people waited patiently hoping that some relief would come to them at last. They had heard of some of the recommendations

made in these reports and did not know that the wheels of government move terribly slowly. Instead of relief coming there was some fresh aggression on behalf of the *rajwar* and then they lost patience.

They decided to march to Lucknow, and five hundred of them started on the long trail. A mild sensation was created; the whole district knew about it, and the peasantry followed the march with interest. Efforts were made to stop them by promises and assurances, but they continued till they reached the plains at Pilibhit. There, in response to a personal appeal from the Prime Minister, they stopped and sent a small deputation to interview him in Lucknow. They returned with the Prime Minister's word that he would set right their grievances. They are waiting for the fulfilment of that promise.

This Askote march has its lessons for us if we care to learn them. The Congress organisation in Almora was inactive and did little for the Askote people, government was slow-moving, and so these backward peasants, totally ignorant of politics and demonstrations, took the initiative into their own hands and decided to present their case personally to the big people at the top. By taking this step they succeeded more than they had done by years of patient petitioning. Their political education has begun and their progress is likely to be rapid.

There were serious difficulties with the Bombay government and its dubious trade union legislation. In the Bombay Trade Dispute Bill, K.M. Munshi, who was the Home Minister, attempted to restrict the legal rights of the workers to strike. This made Jawaharlal very unhappy. The fact that Bombay was within the bailiwick of Vallabhbhai Patel within the Working Committee, made his reaction restrained in public, but he was uncomfortable. Nearer home, within his own jurisdiction of responsibility, a peculiar circular was issued by the Chief Secretary in the United Provinces on communalist forces. After laying down the law about possible illegal activity by communal organizations, volunteers, etc. the circular went on, in a dangerous extension of the original purpose, to include communist groups also. This made Jawaharlal indignant. The reference in the circular to the promotion of class struggle as illegal activity irritated him. There were other problems about the

Communist Party, again, in Bombay, Jawaharlal was shocked at a report in the press about a statement in the Bombay Assembly by the Government that they had not recommended the removal of the ban on the Communist Party as the Party 'stood for violence'. In a sharp letter to the Prime Minister, B.G. Kher, Jawaharlal wrote:

...I read this report with considerable surprise. To say that the Communist Party stands for violence is far from correct. But quite apart from this, it seems to me that the Bombay Government's answer is in direct contravention of the Congress policy in regard to such matters. So far as I remember, Congress members in the central assembly have asked for the removal of the ban. At the ministers' conference held last year in Bombay, it was agreed that this attempt should be made. In the Working Committee also this has been pressed, and numerous leading Congressmen have expressed themselves strongly on this subject. I should like to know, therefore, whether the answer of the Bombay Government reflects its own particular policy, which is different from the policy of the other Congress governments and Congress policy, or whether it has some further justification. The matter raises vital issues and before I speak or write about it in public I should like to have your views on the subject. For me the policy laid down by the Bombay Government is totally indefensible and is opposed to the general Congress policy of civil liberties.

He does not, however, seem to have made a public issue of it.

There were also differences with Rajaji in Madras and his handling of problems. This has been the subject of detailed scrutiny by biographers and historians. And we are here interested only in the overt manifestations, if any, of these differences. As one can see, Jawaharlal had his misgivings about the rather large commitment of Rajaji and his colleagues to cooperation with the British. This came out into the open during the AICC and Working Committee meetings at Calcutta in October 1937, when there had been criticism of Rajaji's attitude to certain matters of provincial administration. Jawaharlal had said that certain policies adopted by the Madras Government were contrary to the ideals of the Congress. Rajaji promptly wrote to Nehru terming this criticism as most unthinking and unfair. In his conciliatory reply Jawaharlal tries to

make a distinction between private unhappiness and public criticism:

I am very sorry that you feel that I have not treated you fairly. I do not know if this refers to my conduct in Calcutta or to what I have written to you recently. Howsoever we might differ in any matter, we have no business to be unfair to each other, and it pains me to think that you think me guilty of this offence. It is possible, of course, that one cannot be wholly fair in matters on which one has a definite opinion, but I tried hard in Calcutta and afterwards not to allow my personal opinion to colour my conduct. Even in the expression of my views I tried to be as non-committal as I could, though in my own mind there was not much doubt. I have been distressed by many things that have taken place recently but I have kept the distress to myself or, at any rate, have not expressed it in public. Consistently I have tried to create an atmosphere of friendliness towards the Congress ministries. For this I have been sufficiently criticised by the Congress and others. In Bengal and the Punjab I am referred to as a person with two faces and two voices — one for the Bengal and the Punjab ministries and the other for the Congress ministries.

As for what happened in Calcutta, I do not know how far you think me responsible for it. I do not see myself how I could have forcibly suppressed the views of many of the members of the AICC.

THE SAINT AND THE MILITANT: IDEOLOGY AND LOYALTY

The three years before the war, when Jawaharlal Nehru was, first, the President of the Congress, and then, during the presidentship of Subhas Chandra Bose, a very active member of the High Command with direct responsibility for the newly formed Committee for National Planning, are important in the evolution of the Indian national movement. The central development was, of course, the acceptance of office. Slowly, the Congress leadership including Gandhi had come to face the fact that there were parts of India where the national organization did not command the allegiance of the people. In the Punjab, the Unionist Party, which was frankly collaborationist, was able to form a ministry, defying two all-India organizations, the Congress and the Muslim League. In Bengal, there was a more complicated situation with that maverick Muslim politician, Fazlul Huq, whose politics had definite 'progressive' and populist features and who was always willing to have a dialogue on his own terms with both the Congress and the Muslim League. Ultimately, he was able to form a viable-enough government which excluded the Congress. There was one interesting contrast in the situations of these two provinces with non-Congress majorities. In the Punjab, the Congress was weak and on the defensive while in the city of Calcutta and also in many parts of Bengal the Congress was powerfully organized. One of the country's three most charismatic leaders came from Bengal.

While this was the position in two provinces, the Congress in office had also to face problems in some provinces where it had a comfortable majority. Some of these have been discussed in the paragraphs above, but it was during Jawaharlal's tenure as President

of the Congress, when the party organization was a well-oiled and effective machine under the overall control of Patel and able provincial leaders like Pant, Harekrushna Mahtab, Rajaji and Rajan Babu, that there were difficulties in Bombay with K.F. Nariman, and in the Central Provinces with Dr. N.B. Khare. There is no need to go into these details here but, during the period when he was at the head of the Congress, Jawaharlal was able to face up to these organizational problems without too much difficulty, primarily because of a certain mutual loyalty between himself and Gandhi. The supreme reality of the Indian situation in those years was, of course, the fact that it was Gandhi and no one else who made the final decision on all matters of policy and, even personnel. There were, throughout these three years of anxious search for some way out of the stalled negotiations on the transfer of power at the centre, many occasions when Jawaharlal and Gandhi started on very different premises and came to opposite conclusions, but there was not a single moment when Jawaharlal seriously thought of making a break with the organization or with this leader; this was the fundamental difference between Subhas and Jawaharlal in those fateful years.

A second point which has to be remembered is that it was precisely during this period that, as discussed earlier in detail, dramatic developments abroad provided intellectual and emotional fulfilment, almost therapy, for Nehru's discomfort and unease at many things which were happening at home, over which he had not much control. These concern details of Congress organization, the relationship between the Congress and other mass organizations, the exact role or non-role the Congress should have in the princely states and the further growth of the Congress either as a united front of many groups ranging from the far-Left to the conservative Right, or a much more narrow command system organization with a vague ideology, united by a simple enough loyalty to the Mahatma.

It was a very interesting period in India's political history and Jawaharlal had occasion to discuss it amply in private correspondence with his colleagues in India, with his leftist fellow-traveller friends abroad, particularly Krishna Menon, and also, quite frankly but courteously, to write about them in a few significant articles. When today we read these public and private comments of this major participant in those old controversies, one is continually impressed by the essential frankness, sincerity and openness, the

total absence of deviousness of the men involved. This is true not only of Jawaharlal but also of the others who violently differed from him sometimes, like Bose, Gandhi and Rajaji. The extent of the differences, the acerbity which sometimes marked the private exchanges, was never revealed in public. There was no question at any time of fundamental differences being glossed over. This is true both of Jawaharlal's own differences with his colleagues during his presidency and, later, Subhas Bose's much more serious break with Gandhi and the Working Committee after Tripuri.

Perhaps the most revealing single analysis by Jawaharlal about the future course which the Congress should adopt as a mass organization was in an article he wrote for the *Bombay Chronicle* in July 1937, almost at the mid-point of his tenure as Congress President. It deals primarily with the exact links which the Congress should have with the new and increasingly vocal mass organizations representing the peasants and the workers. It should be recalled that this was the period when pioneers like N.G. Ranga and A.K. Gopalan started peasant movements at the grass roots level. This was also the period when the first generation of trade union workers in the textile mills in Bombay, Ahmedabad, Kanpur and Calcutta, and the railway workers all over India, began to organize and learn the art of tough bargaining. We have already noticed how, in the new situation created by the Congress acceptance of office, some of the new ministers tended instinctively to side with the owners and the capitalists and how Jawaharlal resented this. In this article, 'The Congress and Labour and Peasant Organizations', the discussion is mostly about the emerging dual role of the Congress. It was, primarily, the mass organization of the country, representing all groups. It had also a certain newly perceived obligation to protect the interests of the minority groups, particularly the deprived sections of society. The United Front concept, which had become popular after the Leon Blum Government in France, appealed to him. At the same time, he did recognize the need for separate identities, both organizationally and also locally. The flags, for example, had to be different. He noticed that there were already problems of hostility and alienation on both sides. In those provinces where the kisan and mazdoor organizations were powerful, they were not averse to forcing a confrontation with the Congress if they felt that they had sufficient local influence. Jawaharlal assessed these new developments as being unhealthy and tending to diminish the

total effectiveness of the anti-imperial movement. Some left-wing groups tried to tease the Congress by holding their own meetings at the same time as the Congress political conferences in the provinces, trying to attract the crowds away from the parent organization.

While all this is true, it should be remembered that during these years these questions were still theoretical. All the major socialist groups, including the legal wing of the Communist Party, and M.N. Roy, swore fealty to the Congress. It was within the Congress as a platform that the real struggle always took place between moderate office holders who were all for the status quo, who were even happy to flirt with the Rai Bahadurs because they had influence and could produce results and the young militants who watched with suspicion the ease with which the national organization was settling down into comfortable habits of adjustment with the foreign authorities. All this would disappear by 1939, when Subhas Bose would leave the Congress and form the Forward Bloc. A few months later, the Communists would take a more stridently anti-Congress line during the 'imperialist war' interlude. The Congress Socialists themselves would be ill at ease, not only with Gandhi and Patel, but also with Nehru; this was shown in the election in which Pattabhi was defeated by Bose. While they were uncomfortable with some of Nehru's individual responses as not being wholehearted enough, on many ideological points concerning the future shape of the Indian economy and world developments, they were very much nearer to Jawaharlal than any other politician in the country.

Apart from this theoretical problem of the future agenda of the Congress, Jawaharlal's interest in these years was primarily devoted to strengthening the Congress organization in the United Provinces. It is here that one comes across again and again his frustration and disappointment with the failure of the Congress in most parts of the country to work out effective, corruption-free organizational arrangements. He was most unhappy at the manner in which bogus membership was carefully exploited for ensuring the continuance of the same leaders in office over several years and decades. He pointed out to his colleagues that in the United Provinces they were very particular about the limit of the tenure of office of the president of the party and other important members of the PCC.

In the nature of things, there is very little in Jawaharlal's public comments about the other parts of India as far as the Congress organization is concerned. He had direct responsibility within the

Congress organization only for a limited territory. The other provinces were under the control of men like Patel and Rajendra Prasad who were efficient and effective and about whom Jawaharlal had very few complaints. It is when we come to the weaker provinces from the Congress point of view, that his attitude becomes interesting. Here, whenever he went to these provinces, he stressed the absolute importance of mass contact. In fact, one could say that the one repeated slogan in all his speeches during these years was the need to widen mass contact; firstly, among the Muslims and other religious groups, who were as yet uninvolved in political activity, and who preferred to cooperate with the British government to avoid trouble, and, also, the parallel need to establish living links with the new hyper-active peasants and workers' organizations which were springing up all over the country. These were the different patterns in his thinking and strategy. He made it clear that by mass contact he did not merely mean the Muslim constituency but also the Hindus, and also the Christians and the Sikhs. Even when the ministries were functioning, Jawaharlal thought that these mass contacts should not only be kept alive but further activated. As Congress President, he issued several useful circulars to Provincial Committees on the need for propaganda on domestic issues like the need for a constituent assembly at the centre and agrarian reforms. He was insistent and repetitive about the training of volunteers, without which Congress organizations would be flabby and ineffectual. There was no clear picture of a cadre-based party in his mind, but it must be remembered, to his credit, that from the early twenties, when he first became the General Secretary of the Congress, it was he who took the greatest interest in the Congress Seva Dal.

The visits he made to the North-West Frontier Province and Assam in 1937, while he was Congress President, were important. In the Frontier Province, where a Congress government had just been formed, he was romantically impressed by the achievements of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, and the near total dominance of the Khudai Khidmatgars, as irrefutable evidence of the unity of India. When he returned to Allahabad, there was a significant interview with Rammanohar Lohia which was published in the *Congress Socialist*. Lohia asked him, rather shrewdly, whether the contrasting picture Jawaharlal had drawn between the quiet dignity of the Frontier Muslims and the hysteria of the communalist Muslim League was quite so legitimate, adding that, while there was such a thing as the

essential unity of India which hurdles over the many divergences of race and religion, the Frontier people could be a distinct cultural unity, separate from the rest of India. Nehru's reaction was clear. He felt that, while he was in the Frontier Province, he was intensely conscious of the unity of India. With characteristic honesty he went on to temper this statement by admitting that 'it may be that this was due to a certain subjective state, but I think this had an objective foundation also.'

The primary purpose of the visit had been to understand better the relationship between the Frontier people and the Waziri tribes in the no man's land across the border, and Nehru's attitude was one of confident, untroubled, anti-imperialist militancy against the British forward policy. This was a comparatively easy target of criticism because of the notorious bombing of the tribes which had become standard practice for several years now. As far as the Congress organization was concerned, Jawaharlal underestimated the difficulties because of the absence of the Muslim League in the Frontier Province and the great influence of the Congress under the Khan Brothers. The rest of the Lohia interview deals mostly with the tribal question. The whole episode is important if only because it is an example of how, in these infrequent excursions to the outer marches of the country, even as sensitive an observer as Jawaharlal Nehru could see what he wished to see.

The other major visit to hitherto unknown territory was to Assam, also in 1937, as Congress President. Here, he was much more at ease, because the Congress was fairly well-organized even though the mass contact programme was still at an embryonic stage. In a perceptive remark, Jawaharlal noted that 'all those people who may be slightly cut off from the Congress influence, such as Muslims, the hill tribes and the depressed classes', should be more intensely cultivated. With his usual meticulous care for propriety, Jawaharlal instructed the local party chief, Bisnuram Medhi, to combine the membership campaign with an ambitious mass contact programme. He noted with wry humour that, in one district, the District Congress Committee was itself a primary body and consisted of 60 members only. 'This was absurd', he remarked.

In Assam, Jawaharlal's primary interest was not in the Congress organization which was in a healthy enough, if only nascent, state. He was more concerned with the major problem of immigration into Assam from the neighbouring provinces and the desirability of

continuing or abolishing the legal curbs on immigration by the 'line system'. This was an ingenious British attempt to solve the problem of unrestricted immigration from Bengal by restricting entry beyond a certain 'inner line'. 'The present line system', Nehru wrote, 'appears to me obviously a transitional affair which cannot be continued as such for long. To remove it suddenly and leave the field open to unrestricted immigration would result in all manner of entanglements'. The next several decades showed that this worried prognostication was uncomfortably correct. All the problems which independent India has faced in Assam were already extant in seminal form in the decade before the Second World War. For instance, there was complete agreement between the Assam authorities and the Sylhet population that the Muslim majority district should join Bengal so that Assam would emerge as a better integrated province. Jawaharlal is sympathetic in his response but thought that the problem could wait. His articulation of a complex problem which was going to be repeated so often in the coming decades in the sub-continent is so sensible and realistic as to deserve study even today:

The future of the Surma valley is a living question in Assam and the Assamese are keenly desirous that Sylhet should be transferred to the administrative province of Bengal, so as to leave them an area which is linguistically more homogeneous. The people of Sylhet, I found, were equally in favour of this change and, on the face of it, the desire is reasonable. Sylhet is not only linguistically Bengali, but its economy is more allied to that of Bengal than of Assam proper. There is the permanent settlement there, as in Bengal, while in Assam peasant proprietors, with a varying assessment, are usually to be found.

The Congress has all along laid stress on a linguistic division of provinces. This corresponds with cultural areas, and it is far easier for the people of such an area to develop educationally and otherwise on the basis of their mother tongue. Indeed, the Surma valley has long formed part of the Congress province of Bengal. Thus it is clear that, so far as the Congress is concerned, there is no doubt as to what the future of Sylhet should be -- it should go to Bengal. I feel, however, that we have to face today far more important and vital problems, and the next few years are pregnant with the possibilities of vast changes. Therefore, we should not spend our energy too much on trying to bring about

the small changes, which, however desirable, do not affect the main issue. We should certainly press for these relatively minor changes, but always looking at them in the proper perspective and not losing ourselves in them. When the big changes come, as come they must, the other will follow rapidly.

During his brief sojourn in Assam, Jawaharlal became aware in some detail of the tribal problem. He could not go to the tribal areas but many representatives met him and his response was gentle and understanding. Of special interest, both for immediate publicity and also for its historic importance, was the warm and emotional manner in which he told the Indian people about the young Rani of the Nagas, Gaidinliu. She was still a rather obscure figure and it was Jawaharlal who first drew the attention of the country and the world to her. He heard about her from the Nagas from the surrounding hills who came to visit him with greetings and gifts in Sylhet. Six years earlier, Gaidinliu who belonged to the priestly class and was about nineteen, 'raised the banner of independence and called her people to rally round it' when 'news of Gandhi and the Congress reached her in her hill abode and found an echo in her heart'. She was captured and sentenced to transportation for life. Nehru's tribute is an eloquent one. Nehru's telling of her story, despite its pathos, has all the charm and delicacy of a fairy tale, and the same promise of a happy ending despite seemingly endless trials and tribulations:

...What torment and suppression of spirit they have brought to her, who in the pride of her youth dared to challenge an empire! She can roam no more in the hill country through the forest glades, or sing in the fresh crisp air of the mountains. This wild young thing sits cabined in darkness, with a few yards, may be, of space in the daytime, eating her fiery heart out in desolation and confinement. And India does not even know of this brave child of her hills, with the free spirit of the mountains in her. But her own people remember their Gaidinliu Rani and think of her with love and pride. And a day will come when India also will remember her and cherish her, and bring her out of her prison cell.

This reaction is absolutely typical of Jawaharlal – the sensitive and, at the same time, practical political activist. He always knew,

without deliberate effort, the type of story, theme, incident or anecdote which would appeal to the large masses of his countrymen. In this visceral reaction he showed himself to be a decent and a chivalrous human being, as well as a consummate politician, who knows how to appeal to the right response.

Eight years later, in 1945, within a week after his release, he greeted Aruna Asaf Ali who was still leading an underground existence in the Quit India movement. Jawaharlal was the only national leader who had the imagination and the prompt sensitivity to do so. These are the basic personal characteristics which distinguish him from so many of his equally sincere, equally involved, but less imaginative colleagues.

As evidence of Jawaharlal's political sensibility these two incidents are of deep significance.

II

The two years after Jawaharlal's term as Congress President were ones of office acceptance at home and a worsening international situation abroad. We have noticed that, during this period, Nehru seemed to find it more congenial to travel abroad and report home about the world situation and to continue the task of explaining to an indifferent and preoccupied world the urgency of the Indian question than to deal with the tight-rope walking of the Congress ministries. Nevertheless, at home, it was not an entirely empty schedule. While he was in India, he continued to worry very much about the Congress organization, the new weaknesses which had emerged since the acceptance of office, the now more explicit divergence between the moderates and the left-wing militants within the organization and, at the same time, more than anything else, the adversary relationship which soon developed between the new Congress President, Subhas Chandra Bose, and the Working Committee which, with the exception of two or three individuals, including Nehru, saw in the young and energetic new chief of the party a threat, not only to their settled ways of thinking, but also to their rather comfortable and relaxed strategy of opposing the British Government on a fairly limited agenda. Jawaharlal was very much involved in this and the triangular relationship between Gandhi, Bose and Nehru has been the subject of fairly detailed studies which

have led to conclusions not necessarily always objective but influenced by predilections and sympathies one way or the other. It would not be profitable to go over well-trodden ground in what is an essentially a study of the public formulations by the actors in the drama and the consequences of those public formulations on each other and on the Congress Party. Today we have access to all the correspondence between the three leaders, exhibiting sometimes understanding, and sometimes total alienation between Jawaharlal and Subhas, and also between Subhas and Gandhi. At the same time, these men were great enough to see these differences in perspective and to realize instinctively the need for ensuring the political survival, at least, of the others for the good of the country. That would be the bottom-line approach. In fact, in most cases, they were more than generous and understanding of each other. The public statements were also remarkably free of rancour, even when there was grave provocation.

The essence of Nehru's problems with Subhas as President of the Congress, was his increasing dissatisfaction with Subhas's method of running the Congress by remote control from Calcutta and neglecting day-to-day activities. It was this which finally led Jawaharlal to conclude that a second term for Subhas Bose was not desirable. He did not make or have to make an effort to advertise his worries because, on entirely different grounds, Vallabhbhai and others in the Working Committee, loyal to Gandhi, were more and more convinced that Subhas Bose would have to go on 'ideological' grounds. At the time, many were slightly uncomfortable with Jawaharlal's obvious reluctance to go the whole way with Subhas, in spite of the very clear convergence between the two younger men on the attitude towards the British after office acceptance, and on the need to combat statusquoism within the party. As usual, Jawaharlal was circumspect in his statements when the well-known drama unfolded itself. His actions, however, were clear. He made public his desire that Maulana Azad should succeed Subhas. He did not, however, take any part at all in the public wrangling before the elections, when Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya was put up for election by the Working Committee, with Gandhi's blessings, against Subhas. Bose's victory was won with the support of many younger leftist elements who would normally have sided with Nehru with equal enthusiasm. The post-election imbroglio embarrassed Nehru, particularly Gandhi's gallant admission of the defeat as a personal one for him,

since he had backed Pattabhi.

In the inevitable disagreement between the majority of the Working Committee and the Congress President after Tripuri, Jawaharlal's sympathies were necessarily divided. Earlier, in 1937, when he had been President, there had been a memorable conflictual situation also between the Working Committee and himself. There were threats of resignation by both sides. Gandhi had patched things up, but not before frankly telling Jawaharlal to be more considerate to his senior colleagues: 'They have chafed under your rebukes and majesterial manner and your arrogance, of what has appeared to them your infallibility and superior norms. They feel that you have treated them with scant courtesy.' His tenure of office had thus never been free of these well-advertised problems with the old guard. At the same time, he was not happy with Subhas Bose's way of doing things and there were increasingly serious divergences in their attitudes towards many aspects of policy, particularly in the external field. All this made Nehru adopt an individual line. Vallabhbhai Patel and his colleagues resigned in a group. Nehru did not join them but submitted his resignation separately. All this is of fascinating interest in the study of the national movement and its major leaders on the eve of war. As far as Nehru is concerned, it is an occasion when he could not immediately be too candid. This invited censure and suspicion from both sides. However, Jawaharlal did make a very clear attempt to explain, in ample terms, his own dilemmas even when the crisis was on. Subhas Bose was lying ill and Gandhi had decided to embark on a fast during the Rajkot crisis. Jawaharlal issued a statement on the fast on 22 February 1939, a separate statement on the reelection of Subhas Bose, and followed it up with a series of articles in the *National Herald* under the title, 'Where are we?'. In these writings, he was at pains to emphasize the dominant role played by Gandhi in the national movement:

...I have been and am a convinced socialist and a believer in democracy and have at the same time accepted whole-heartedly the peaceful technique of nonviolent action which Gandhiji has practised so successfully during the past twenty years. I am convinced that strength can only come to us from the masses, but that strength, either for struggle or for the great work of building a new world, must be a disciplined and orderly strength.

Jawaharlal made it clear that, even when he felt himself a square peg in a round hole in the Congress, he refrained from resigning because he was 'convinced that in the dynamic and critical times, we live in, we must present a united front and subordinate our individual opinions where these tended to impair that front.' About Subhas Bose's methods of work as President, he expressed, for the first time in public, his grave misgivings. No details were given. 'It pains me', he wrote, 'to see that in the very heart of our organisation new methods are being introduced which can only lead to local conflicts spreading to higher planes.' He had been unhappy about the Congress President's statements about his colleagues in the Working Committee which had 'no basis'. If the statements were true, the guilty should have been punished; if, on the other hand, the statements had been exaggerated, an unconditional withdrawal would be in order. Subhas Bose had not responded. Finally, in an interesting reference, he hinted at the ideological chasm between the two men:

I further suggested to Subhas Babu that in view of the vague and unjustified use of the words, left and right, it was desirable for him to define exactly in writing, to help consideration and discussion, what policy he advocated both in national and international affairs. I had found myself in disagreement with his views in some important matters and I felt that clarification was necessary. Unfortunately no such clarification has taken place and his sudden and regrettable illness has prevented us from discussing these matters with him.

The *National Herald* articles continued the theme but it had a specific retrospective flavour in style and content. The Gandhi-Bose controversy was sought to be comprehended against the background of the much older ideological confusion within the Congress:

These two broad divisions must not be confused with right and left. There are rightists and leftists in both groups, and there is no doubt that some of our best fighting elements are in the Gandhian group. If the Congress is looked upon from the right and left point of view, it might be said that there is a small rightist fringe, a left minority, and a huge intermediate group or groups which approximate to left-centre. The Gandhian group would be considered to belong to this intermediate left-centre

group. Politically the Congress is overwhelmingly left; socially it has leftist leanings, but is predominantly centre. In matters affecting the peasantry it is pro-peasant.

After making this rough and ready analysis, Jawaharlal made it absolutely clear that he himself had opted to be on the side of Gandhi in Indian politics. This was, it can be seen, the most important single factor which made him refuse to go along with Subhas Bose in his confrontation with the Mahatma. As a description of the importance of Gandhi to the national movement, to the Indian masses, to the Congress, to the Socialist Party and to himself as his admirer and lieutenant, it cannot be bettered:

In trying to analyse the various elements in the Congress, the dominating position of Gandhiji must always be remembered. He dominates to some extent the Congress, but far more so he dominates the masses. He does not easily fall in any group and is much bigger than the so-called Gandhian group. Sometimes he is the single-minded revolutionary going like the arrow to his goal and shaking up millions in the process. At other times he is static, or seemingly so, counselling others to prudence. His continuing ill health has brought a complicating factor in the situation. He cannot take full part in national affairs and is out of touch with many developments; and yet he cannot help taking part in them and giving a lead because of his own inner urge to do so and the demand of the people. It makes little difference whether he is formally connected with the Congress or not. The Congress of today is of his making, and he is essentially of it. In any event, the commanding position he has in the country has nothing to do with any office, and he will retain that dominating place in the hearts of the people so long as he lives, and afterwards. In any policy that might be framed he cannot be ignored. In any national struggle his full association and guidance are essential. India cannot do without him.

That is one of the basic factors of the situation. The conscious and thinking leftists in the country recognise it and, whatever their ideological or temperamental differences with him, have tried to avoid anything approaching a split. Their attempt has been to leave the Congress under its present leadership, which means under Gandhiji's guidance, and at the same time to push it

as far as they could move to the left, to radicalize it, and to spread their own ideology.

If this is so during more or less normal periods, still more is Gandhi's guidance necessary when crisis approaches. A split, or anything like it, at such a critical period when all our united strength is necessary would disable us and make us ineffective.

There is no doubt that here there were serious differences between Bose and Nehru about Gandhi. Subhas had always found it difficult to accept Gandhi's quick changes of tactics. As early as 1933, he was frustrated and angry when he was abroad at Gandhi's relinquishment of Civil Disobedience. He persuaded the ailing Vithalbbai Patel to issue a joint statement with himself in Vienna. Five years later, he was inclined to be much more impatient than Jawaharlal. He was willing to take the plunge by cutting off all connections, by burning his boats and founding the Forward Bloc outside the Congress. He felt throughout this episode that Jawaharlal had not been supportive enough at a difficult moment. He also felt that an excellent chance had been missed for replacing completely the existing leadership within the Congress. 'The Congress Socialist Party had the historic opportunity to throw up an alternative leadership in place of the Gandhian leadership which had monopolized the political scene since 1920. This development would have been easier if Jawaharlal Nehru who has given moral support to the Party had openly joined it,' he wrote. Later he was even more bitter: 'He has never, in his own life, led the Congress to do anything in opposition to the Mahatma. Thus Nehru began to drift away to please both the Right and Left.' Later on, when the Forward Bloc was formed and the battlelines were drawn, the position became clearer. What is important to note here, for our purpose, is not so much the rightness or wrongness of the attitudes taken, but the fact that these were discussed frankly and without inhibition, even when the drama was being enacted. This was, of course, a feature characteristic of the times; the style was moderate, and shrill personal attacks were avoided. This was true, of course, of all of the actors; an eloquent commentary on the refusal to be vituperative for its own sake is provided by the remarkable notoriety which one, single sharp reference by Rajaji to the 'leaky boat' acquired in a very little time.

Jawaharlal's own equation with Gandhi was full of stresses and strains during this uneasy period. However, even when there were

differences of opinion, both men made it clear that each needed, trusted, loved and depended on the other. This can be documented by various references like the remarkable tribute paid by Jawaharlal which we have just quoted. On Gandhi's part, he did not spare any occasion to praise Jawaharlal for his virtues. When, immediately after the acceptance of office, he drafted a pledge for the Congress to be read on 1 August 1938, Jawaharlal referred to Khadi as being 'the livery of India's freedom', Gandhi's reaction was ecstatic. He said that as long 'as the English language would be spoken in India, Jawaharlal's phrase would be remembered'. There were many such occasions and, more important, there was a continual sympathy between the two men which easily bridged tactical differences. This was true even when such a major problem cropped up, like the Rajkot issue.

III

Quite apart from the problems regarding ideology, the attitude towards the Congress ministries in office and the developments in connection with Subhas Chandra Bose's resignation and leaving the Congress, there was one other problem on which Jawaharlal and Gandhi had serious differences. This concerned the Congress attitude towards the princely states. Traditionally and legally, the Congress had carefully avoided taking any part in the domestic affairs of the states. Individual subjects of these states responded to Gandhi's call, used to come over to British India and take part in Civil Disobedience. When the Government of India Act was passed in 1935 and the question of a federation at the centre became important, the attitude of the 'native states' became crucial. In fact, during the years between 1935 and 1938, the two great domestic debates on the Indian scene were on relations between the Congress and the Muslim masses and, later, the Muslim League on the one hand, and the attempt to persuade the princes to accede to the federation along with the provinces. In the Haripura Congress, a resolution was passed expressing interest in developments in the states. At the same time, quite independently, as a part of the national movement, organizations had sprung up in almost all the states, demanding responsible government. The National Conference in Kashmir and the Praja Mandals in several states were all actively encouraged by

the Congress leadership and particularly by Jawaharlal Nehru to continue this campaign.

Both, when he was Congress President, and later, Jawaharlal began to take an increasingly involved interest in matters concerning the states. This was not to the liking of Gandhi, who favoured a policy of literal non-interference, as a part of the general diplomatic attempt to persuade the rajas and maharajas to join the Congress in sharing power at the centre also. Things came to a head when Gandhi was indignant, and expressed his indignation in no uncertain terms in an article in the *Harjan*, when the AICC, in Jawaharlal Nehru's presence, passed an angry resolution attacking the Mysore administration for violating civil liberties. Gandhi did not criticize Nehru personally, but he called the resolution *ultra vires* and amounting to a breach of a traditional policy of non-interference.

Jawaharlal naturally was upset and, while admitting that the resolution was badly drafted, did not accept Gandhi's assessment. Gandhi was his usual courteous self in his response; he made Mahadev Desai write to Jawaharlal saying that nothing personal had been intended in Gandhi's article. In fact, throughout this period, Jawaharlal politely went his own way, persisting with his strategy of activating the inert political system within the native states. During the next months, there were problems in Travancore, Bhopal, Kashmir and several other states. The All-India States' People's Conference was formed and Jawaharlal was absolutely clear in his mind that the resolution passed at Haripura on the situation in the 'native states', had made it incumbent on the Congress, not merely to be interested but to intervene in the domestic politics of the states if there was persecution. In a speech which he made in Bombay on 18 November 1938 on the new awakening in the Indian states, he said:

It is foolish for the rulers of Hyderabad, Travancore and Rajkot to believe that they can, with the aid of a handful of men, crush popular movements for freedom. These movements are but a ripple of a mighty wave which under the dominating influence of Gandhiji has engulfed the whole country. I do hope that the rulers would see the wisdom of progressing with the rest of India.

The struggle in the Indian states is not against any individual but against the system that does not allow them to grow.

It is time that all the shackles binding the people are

shattered. The map of the world is being re-drawn and I want the states' people to decide their own fate now.

We want freedom for India as a whole and not for a section only. As there has been an awakening among the people of British India through the instrumentality of the Indian National Congress, there should be such an awakening among the people of the Indian states also so that the fight against imperialism and autocracy may go on all over the country at the same time. Our fight is not against any individual but against autocracy and oppression itself. Some rulers of the native states may be good people, but when they get power in their hands, they become inhuman.

Gradually, but inevitably, Jawaharlal was developing an organized approach to working out a strategy towards the Indian states in general. New activists, inspired by the Congress, were coming to him for advice and guidance and slowly an all-India organization came into being, the States' People's Conference. An important landmark in the growth of these necessarily dispersed movements in various states came with Nehru's presidential address at the All-India States' People's Conference in Ludhiana on 15 February 1939. This is as important a political document as his better known presidential addresses to the three Congress sessions during this period. In it, he discussed the whole controversy between the interventionists and non-interventionists and claimed that the 'integrity and unity of India was an essential part of the independence we worked for'.

In his address, Jawaharlal had taken particular interest in the unrest in four individual states, Hyderabad, Travancore, Jaipur and Rajkot.

Among these, the Rajkot episode was of special importance because, by an extraordinary chain of events which need not be discussed in detail here, Gandhi became totally involved in it. He thought he had received the agreement of the ruler and his Dewan to a compromise solution in the struggle between the people which had been led by Vallabhbhai Patel and the local government. Kasturba Gandhi had taken part in the struggle and had been arrested. To Gandhi, Rajkot represented his earliest memories, and even more important, his cultural roots. His father had been Dewan in Rajkot and there was definitely a highly personal element in the

unfolding of the drama. The whole thing ended in an anticlimax because the Thakore and his Dewan, Virawala, went back on their earlier agreement, which itself had been obtained by Gandhi by bringing the Viceroy into the picture. Later, in a moment of frank self-chastisement, Gandhi said that he had had no business to go beyond the ruler himself for a solution. He decided to go on a fast.

Suddenly, by an ironic twist of events, a rather unimportant princely state in India became the centre of Gandhi's activity and India's political attention. It was one of those occasions where the divide between the sublime and the ridiculous was wafer thin. Nothing came of the whole episode, except that, to Gandhi, it was yet another major conflict within his own self, which happened to have political implications. The obvious contradiction between his attitude towards Mysore, earlier, and Rajkot, later, was forgotten. Jawaharlal was deeply unhappy at these developments. He thought that the Rajkot issue, the satyagraha, and the highly publicized self-excoriation, tended to divert peoples' minds from more important things. He, however, limited his public comments to puzzled and unhappy expressions of opinion. In his private correspondence, however, he did express to Gandhi his sense of deep puzzlement and frustration.

IV

The strategy of the Indian National Congress in the mobilization of the nascent responsible Government movement in various 'native states' had, in fact, been influenced by the quickly changing scenario in British India after the provincial elections on the one hand, and the ripples of agitational politics in many individual states adjacent to these provinces. It became necessary for the Provincial Congress Committees as well as the central organization to respond in some credible fashion. Between 1937 and 1939, the tactics adopted by the mass organizations in various states -- the National Conference in Jammu and Kashmir, the Arya-Samaj-dominated civil rights movement in Hyderabad, and the State Congress agitation in Travancore against the increasingly tough policy pursued by the dewan, Sir C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar -- all these were sought to be given a national character by the formation of the All India States' People's Conference under the direct guidance and detailed control of

Jawaharlal Nehru and a number of activist leaders in the major states. The glaring contrast between the exercise of power in the British Indian provinces and the continuity of autocratic rule by the maharajas was directly linked with the failure of the attempt by the Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, to persuade the states to join the Federation under the 1935 Act. These negotiations in Delhi between the viceroy and the Chamber of Princes, with well-advertised comments by articulate rulers and their administrators from Jamnagar, Bhopal and Bikaner, and K.M. Panikkar, C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar, Shanmukham Chetty and Mirza Ismail, speaking for Jaipur, Travancore and Mysore respectively, dragged on for several months in 1937 and 1938. The princes were holding out for some assurance from the British Government that the Viceroy would underwrite their individual autonomy, endorse their residuary authority as hereditary monarchs and, in effect, insulate them from Congress-instigated agitation. While these negotiations dragged on at their sedate pace, the Haripura Session of the Congress in February 1938 was coaxed into having a second look at the traditional policy of non-interference in states' politics. Both Subhas Bose and Jawaharlal were responsive; the demands of the delegates from the princely states were increasingly insistent. The new opportunities presented by the Congress ministries in the provinces to the states movements, both as agitational centres and sanctuaries across the border, were too good to be ignored. This was to be dramatically demonstrated in the Travancore State Congress agitation when the centre of gravity of the movement shifted to Malabar in the Madras Province and the tolerant atmosphere of neighbouring Cochin. The Haripura resolution legitimized the various agitations in individual states for responsible government as part of the country's larger fight for freedom. The ground rules were precise. These smaller skirmishes were for strictly local aims. The agenda was limited to the campaign for responsible government only. But at the emotional level, the new wave of unrest, the demand for more representative institutions in those states where no institutions were permitted, and for full responsible government with popular ministries in those states which had had the experience of 'advisory' legislatures – all led to a new Pan-Indian consciousness in which the Congress and Gandhi, personally, were seen as immediately relevant, central factors.

Gandhi who, in Jawaharlal's oft-quoted phrase, had 'his finger on

the pulse of the Indian people' began to respond to the new atmosphere in the states. The differences between the Gandhian moderates on the one hand, and the militant wing led by the Congress Socialists, Subhas and Jawaharlal, on the other, on the attitude towards states politics, became blurred. In the pages of the *Harizan*, Gandhi began to discuss with concern the gap between the civil rights situation in many states and that in the British Indian Provinces. This was in direct response to the changing situation on the ground. In a friendly, almost solicitous tone, Gandhi invited the rulers of the 'native states' to recognize the newly articulated demands of their subjects as legitimate. He was scrupulously careful in attributing this 'new wave' not so much to the influence of the Congress as to 'the time spirit':

...There is no half-way house between total extinction of the States and the Princes making their people responsible for the administration of their States and themselves becoming trustees for the people, taking an earned commission for their labours.

...And if the Princes believe that the good of the people is also their good, they would gratefully seek and accept the Congress assistance.

The Jawahar approach was more ideological, rooted in a concept of the common presence of imperialism all over Asia and Africa, and also throughout the territory of the empire in India. He was inclined to be impatient with the legal boundaries between British and Princely India. These divergences of approach were becoming unreal in the new political climate. The day-to-day involvement of individual Congressmen in states politics, and states activists in the larger national movement made these distinctions relatively unimportant.

There was also a curious subjective element here. Jawaharlal was emotionally involved in Kashmir. However, the absence of major princely states in the United Provinces made his interest in the problem doctrinaire rather than practical, national rather than provincial. Jinnah, a senior Congressman, was involved in the Jaipur struggle for responsible government. The huge density of medium-sized and very small states in Gujarat made leaders like Vallabhbhai take interest in the struggle as advisors and guides, and

later, in Rajkot, as direct participants. Subhas Bose, and Rajendra Prasad were, in the nature of things, almost totally uninvolved because of the very tenuous links between their provinces and the states.

Gandhi was a very special case, as the Rajkot developments demonstrated. He grew up in Porbandar and Rajkot. He had nostalgic memories of life there. He belonged to a family which had benefitted from the princely connection. The movement in Rajkot in 1938, which had originated in a domestic development, assumed a larger national character with Vallabhbhai's assumption of leadership with Gandhi's complete approval. By then he had, in his mind, travelled far from his earlier mood of annoyance with the Congress 'meddling' in states politics.

The purpose of this movement and others which erupted at almost the same time in various other states was the same: it was limited to the demand for responsible government. On this, also, there was very little difference now between the Nehru militants and the Gandhi moderates. The Congress policy had been defined by Nehru in a speech at Ajmer as early as September 1937:

A very curious idea has gained currency that the Congress is indifferent towards the problems of the Indian states. I declare emphatically that the Congress stands for the independence of the whole of India and cannot tolerate that one portion of this country should remain under subjection while another portion is free. The Congress is really a great organisation whose importance has come to be realised even by foreign countries. The Congress is, however, not prepared to initiate a struggle at this juncture in any part of India, but it gives full sympathy and support to the cause of the states' subjects. If they have strength enough to carry on an agitation, the Congress is prepared to help them. It is becoming impossible for the Indian states to exist as they are.

More than a year later, in his presidential address to the All-India States' People's Conference in Ludhiana in February 1939, Jawaharlal developed the theme that freedom was indivisible in India. He noticed the change in the Congress attitude and the actual situation in the States:

Many people have in past years criticised the attitude of the National Congress towards the states, and heated argument has taken place about intervention and non-intervention. That criticism and argument have perished with the yesterday that has gone and are meaningless today. Yet it is worthwhile to consider briefly the development of Congress policy in regard to the states. I have not always approved of all the expressions of this policy or liked the emphasis on certain aspects of the problem. But I am convinced that this fundamental policy was the correct one under the circumstances, and, indeed, subsequent events have justified it completely. A policy aiming at vital change or revolution must keep in touch with reality and the conditions that prevail. As these conditions change, that policy changes. Brave words and gestures or strongly-worded resolutions, out of touch with objective conditions, do not bring about that pregnant atmosphere out of which revolutionary change is born. Nor can that condition be created artificially or mass movements launched unless the masses themselves are ready and prepared. The Congress realised this and knew of the unpreparedness of the people in the states; it husbanded its energy in the struggle outside, well realising that this was the most effective method of influencing the states' people and making them ready for their own struggle.

The Haripura resolution was a landmark in the evolution of Congress policy, and it enunciated this in clear language. The integrity and unity of India was an essential part of the independence we worked for, and the same full measure of political, social and economic freedom was to come to the states as to the rest of India. There could be no compromise on this, and the Congress declared afresh in favour of full responsible government and the guarantee of civil liberty in the states. Further, it declared to be its right and privilege to work for the attainment of these objectives in the states. There was no question of non-intervention; the Congress, as representing the will of the Indian people, recognises no bars which limit its freedom of activity in any matter pertaining to India and her people. It is its right and privilege and its duty to intervene in any such matter whenever the interests of India demand it. Not to do so would be to deny its own function and to betray the cause which it seeks to represent.

But it is for the Congress and the people of India to

determine when and where they will intervene and what policy they must pursue, so that their intervention might be effective and fruitful of results. The limitation, if any, is of its own making, or is caused by external circumstances which it is wise enough to recognise. No outside authority can limit the function of the Congress, just as no power or authority can set bounds to the aspirations or advancement of the Indian people.

Against the background of the recent developments in Rajkot, Jawaharlal used this forum to drive home the fact that the Congress was united in its policy towards the states:

Gandhiji has repeatedly warned the British Government and its agents in India of the far-reaching consequences of this conflict. It is manifestly impossible for the conflict to be confined to particular states and for the Congress, at the same time, to carry on provincial administrations involving a measure of cooperation with the British authorities. If there is this major conflict then its effects will spread to the remotest corners of India, and the question will no longer be a limited one of this state or that, but of the complete elimination of British power.

What is the nature of the conflict today? This must be clearly understood. It varies slightly from state to state, but the demand everywhere is for full responsible government. Yet the conflict is not at present to enforce that demand, but to establish the right of organising people for that demand. When this right is denied and civil liberties are crushed, no way is left open to the people to carry on what are called constitutional methods of agitation.

This was realistic enough appreciation of the situation on the ground.

It is against this background that the sudden intrusion of Rajkot into the national movement, because of Gandhi's personal and obsessive interest, should be assessed. This was a major event in the pilgrimage of the Mahatma towards greater, more precise, self-realization. As such it has been over-discussed from all points of view. For our limited purpose here, only Jawaharlal's personal reaction to Gandhi's Rajkot involvement is of interest. Here we find embarrassment, acute unhappiness and increasing skepticism about the details of Gandhi's leadership of the national movement. But

most of these worries are expressed in confidential correspondence only. In public, Nehru limited himself to expression of perturbation. He also deliberately refrained from overt interest in what appeared to him to be a minor problem — one among the several problems in the States — all of which together should not be, in his view, permitted to distract the attention of the nation and the national organization from more important issues concerning global war and peace and their links with India's campaign for freedom.

He was restrained and helpful in his immediate reactions to the Rajkot debacle which was projected as a great moral victory in the Indian national press. Primarily he was concerned about Gandhi, more specifically the larger question of his personal role in the Indian national movement. On 25 April 1939, Jawaharlal Nehru commented in an editorial in the *National Herald*:

At this critical moment when all our united strength is required to meet the new peril, it grieves us to find national energy being frittered away in mutual conflict. It saddens us especially to read the poignant statement which has just been issued by Mahatma Gandhi about Rajkot. That is not the way Gandhiji has functioned when danger threatens India; that is not the way, we feel sure, he will function. India needs him, India relies upon him, India calls to him. He must answer the call.

This was his own anguished response to Gandhi's personal agony, frustration amounting to near helplessness, as expressed in his statement of the day before: 'Rajkot seems to have robbed me of my youth. I never knew that I was old. Now I am weighed down by the knowledge of decrepitude. I never knew what it was to lose hope. But it seems to have been cremated in Rajkot. My 'Ahimsa' has been put to a test such as it has never been subjected to before.'

On 3 June, in a press conference in Bombay, Nehru answered a question about Gandhi's Rajkot fast: 'Gandhiji's action in regard to Rajkot is not immediately comprehensible. A fast would be, of course, always coercive. But I am not against coercion.'

This is as far as he could or would go in public. In private he defended himself against Subhas's charge that he had done nothing to arrange a meeting between Gandhi and himself at Dhanbad when Gandhi was 'wasting' his time in Delhi waiting for Sir Maurice Gwyer's award: 'I might add that, so far as I am concerned, I did not

like at all the idea of Gandhiji staying on in Delhi waiting for Gwyer's award. Nor did I fancy his fast or the reference to Gwyer. I did not think a lot of the terms of settlement which terminated Gandhiji's fast. I expressed my pleasure at his ending his fast and no more.'

Subhas Bose shared Nehru's unhappiness at the 'intrusion' of Rajkot into what they thought to be the more relevant issue, but he was also generous and prudent about the whole episode in public. In private, there was a useful exchange of views between Gandhi and Subhas who wrote to Gandhi on 31 March:

Pardon me for saying that the way you have been recently conducting the States' people's struggle does not appeal to me. You risked your precious and valuable life for Rajkot and, while fighting for the Rajkot people, you suspended the struggle in all other States. Why should you do so? There are six hundred and odd States in India and, among them, Rajkot is a tiny one. It would not be an exaggeration to call the Rajkot struggle a flea-bite. Why should we not fight simultaneously all over the country and have a comprehensive plan for the purpose? This is what millions of your countrymen think, though out of personal reverence for you, they may not say so openly.

In conclusion, I may say that many people like myself cannot enthuse over the terms of the Rajkot settlement.

Gandhi replied on 2 April: 'I am glad you have mentioned the little Rajkot affair. It brings into prominent relief the different angles from which we look at things. I have nothing to repent of in the steps I have taken in connection with it. I feel that it has great national importance. I have not stopped civil disobedience in the other states for the sake of Rajkot. But Rajkot opened my eyes; it showed me the way.'

This minor, personal, aspect of a major episode is important in more ways than one. It demonstrates clearly the central position of Gandhi in the national movement, in spite of the doubts and worries of many of his lieutenants and admirers. It also shows that the Bose-Nehru-Gandhi triangle had a certain genuine stability, in spite of the large differences between them, which endured even in moments of total alienation because of the magnanimity and innate decency of the *dramatis personae*.

Even here, however, there are nuances. Bose was more bitter towards Nehru than towards Gandhi. Nehru found it easier to forgive Gandhi than Bose and, when it came to the crunch, there was no question as to where Gandhi's own slight preference lay.

About the differences between himself and Subhas, Gandhi spoke at a private meeting of the Gandhi Seva Sangh on 5 May 1939, in the midst of the Rajkot crisis:

... Subhas Babu thinks that we are ready for the struggle. This is a great and fundamental difference of opinion. We differ in our ideas of the resources needed for the struggle. My conception of Satyagraha is not his. Is this difference of opinion not fundamental? I cannot give out all these things to the Press right now, because it would not do any good. I shall write about it when the time comes.

About Jawaharlal Nehru and himself, he said at the same meeting:

There are certainly differences between Jawaharlal and me. But they are not significant. Without him I feel myself a cripple. He also feels more or less the same way. Our hearts are one. This intimate relationship between us has not started with politics. It is very much older and deeper. We shall leave it at that.

V

One of the positive achievements of the uneasy partnership between Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose during his tenure as President of the Congress was the constitution of the National Planning Committee with the former as President and K.T. Shah as Secretary. Throughout 1939 the Committee continued to work in a fairly organized fashion, collecting material from the various provincial ministries, coordinating the activities of various sub-committees and reporting back to the AICC. It was a useful exercise both as a data-collecting set-up and also as an ambitious, detailed look into the future of Indian society after independence. Jawaharlal saw the primary terms of reference of the committee in the resolutions of the Karachi Congress. The speed and obvious 'success' in collectivization of agriculture and in rapid industrializa-

tion which the Soviet Union represented during the thirties, were models for any poor, large country learning to better its economic situation. The models were, however, not exclusively socialist or Soviet in Jawaharlal's own mind, either in conversations with his colleagues, or in discussion in the Indian press. It must be remembered that the ideas of national planning, selective state intervention, and the need for controlling free enterprise had other alternative experiences to learn from, both as positive and negative models, during the period between the wars. The agenda of the corporate State in Fascist Italy appeared to have some relevance in a country with millions of unemployed youth, rapidly becoming unemployable, with the wrong skills and wrong attitudes. There were also sympathetic references to the youth mobilization programme in Nazi Germany. But what seems to have attracted Jawaharlal Nehru more was the large state enterprises in Roosevelt's New Deal programme. The Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) never ceased to have a fascination for him. These were at the theoretical level, on the intellectual plane. The Fabian alternative had been brilliantly popularized during the thirties and Jawaharlal was impressed by these attractive alternatives to 'jungle' capitalism at home and exploitative imperialism abroad.

In Nehru's speeches on planning, science always 'breaks in'. Scientific socialism, national planning and economic organization on the basis of rational allocation of resources and the equitable distribution of the social product according to some yet vague notions of social justice, were the ideas which Nehru, Bose, Shah and company succeeded in popularizing in the last two years before War came and the new Congress programme of satyagraha put these ideas on the back burner.

An important individual link between science and planning in the Indian mind in those days was Dr. Meghnad Saha who influenced both the younger leaders of the Congress. This interesting interface was a rather pale reflection in a rather narrow, professional field, of the much more meaningful relationship between the political establishment — Gandhi, Nehru, Bose *et al.* — and Rabindranath Tagore, for example, and also academic figures like S. Radhakrishnan.

In Jawaharlal's own personality, the predilection for the scientific attitude towards all aspects of life inevitably developed into an interest in socialism and planning. This came out most clearly in his message to the Silver Jubilee Session of the Indian Science Congress

held at Calcutta in January 1938, Jawaharlal was very much impressed by Lord Rutherford's presidential address which had been drafted by the great scientist before his death:

I have read therefore with interest and appreciation Lord Rutherford's remarks on the role of science in national life and the need of training and maintaining research workers. And then I wondered how far all this was possible under our present scheme of things. Something could be done no doubt even now, but how little that is to what might and should be done. Lord Rutherford tells us of the need for national planning. I believe that without such planning little that is worth while can be done. But can this be done under present conditions, both political and social? At every step vested interests prevent planning and ordered development and all our energy and enthusiasm is wasted because of this obstruction. Can we plan on a limited scale for limited objectives? We may do so in some measure, but immediately we come up against new problems and our plans go awry. Life is one organic whole and it cannot be separated into watertight compartments. The Mississippi Valley Committee, writing in their Letter of Transmittal to the federal administration of public works, U.S.A., refer to this planning business: "Planning for the use and control of water is planning for most of the basic functions of the life of a nation. We cannot plan for water unless we also reconsider the relevant problems of the land. We cannot plan for water and land unless we plan for the whole people. It is of little use to control rivers unless we also master the conditions which make for the security and freedom of human life."

And so we are driven to think of these basic conditions of human life, of the social system, the economic structure. If science is the dominating factor in modern life, then the social system and economic structure must fit in with science or it is doomed. Only then can we plan effectively and extensively.

Here we have, in essence, a statement on the link between applied science and planning which had inevitably emerged in different countries, irrespective of ideology, during that fateful decade before the Second World War first interrupted and, later accelerated, the process of applying scientific inventions to

agriculture and industry and scientific principles to national planning. The Beveridge Plan in Britain, it should not be forgotten, was precisely the result of wartime planning for the post-war society.

Jawaharlal's interest in modern science and its achievements had much deeper roots in his background, education and training. His presidential address to the Annual Meeting of the Academy of Sciences in Allahabad in March 1938 is replete with premonitory evidence of his passionate belief in the importance of the scientific temper in the Indian context, the need for much greater attention to pure and applied science in India and, equally important, the application of scientific principles in the categorization of frontiers and needs, in the chaos that was the Indian economy:

...But the most vital and hopeful of the changes that it has brought about has been the development of the scientific outlook in man. It is true that even today vast numbers of people still live mentally in the pre-scientific age, and that most of us, even when we talk glibly of science, betray it in our thought and actions. Even scientists, learned in their particular subjects, often forget to apply the scientific method outside that charmed sphere. And yet it is the scientific method alone that offers hope to mankind and an ending of the agony of the world. This world is racked by fierce conflicts and they are analysed and called by many names. But essentially the major conflict is between the method of science and the methods opposed to science.

...science cannot accept the closing of the windows of the mind, by whatever pleasant name this might be called; it cannot encourage blind faith in someone else's faith. Science therefore must be prepared not only to look up to the heavens and seek to bring them under its control, but also to look down, unafraid, into the pit to hell. To seek to avoid either is not the way of science. The true scientist is the sage unattached to life and the fruits of action, ever seeking truth wheresoever this quest might lead him. To tie himself to a fixed anchorage, from which there is no moving, is to give up that search and to become static in a dynamic world.

It was this scientific credo which respected but did not accept the religious approach of faith and submission to the unknown which

always influenced Jawaharlal's approach to science and religion. Here one can see, in an embryonic form, the long campaign, agitation and propaganda both, which Nehru carried on in the country as Prime Minister, in favour of the scientific, rational approach, and against superstition and outmoded social practices in society, in the family and at the national level, in determining basic political premises.

Later in the same seminal speech, Jawaharlal took up the theme of national planning and the absolute necessity of associating scientists with all the problems of optimal utilization of all resources, land and minerals, agriculture and industry. He drew the attention of a Congress resolution passed immediately after the formation of ministries in the provinces while he was president:

The Working Committee recommends to the Congress ministries the appointment of a committee of experts to consider urgent and vital problems, the solution of which is necessary to any scheme of national reconstruction and social planning. Such solution will require extensive surveys and the collection of data, as well as a clearly defined social objective. Many of these problems cannot be dealt with effectively on a provincial basis and the interests of adjoining provinces are inter-linked. Comprehensive river surveys are necessary for the formulation of a policy to prevent disastrous floods, to utilize the water for purposes of irrigation, to consider the problem of soil erosion, to eradicate malaria, and for the development of hydro-electric and other schemes. For this purpose the whole river valleys will have to be surveyed and investigated and large-scale state planning resorted to. The development and control of industries require also joint and coordinated action on the part of several provinces. The Working Committee advises, therefore, that, to begin with, an inter-provincial committee of experts be appointed to consider the general nature of the problems to be faced, and to suggest how, and in what order, these should be tackled. The expert committee may suggest the formation of special committee or boards to consider each such problem separately and to advise the provincial governments concerned as to the joint action to be undertaken.

It is in this rational, scientific, organized manner that the National Planning Committee carried out its work in 1938 and 1939. The Committee had been formally set up by Subhas Bose, in his capacity as President of the Congress, with Jawaharlal as Chairman.

Most of the work of the Committee was, necessarily, in the nature of coordination of various such committees as were constituted immediately and interaction with those provincial governments which were prepared to cooperate. Both Nehru and Bose did their best to make the country plan-conscious. In a speech to the students of the Delhi University, for instance, Jawaharlal Nehru said:

Industrialisation is essential to the progress of the country, but national planning does not mean industrialisation alone. On the other hand, it embraces the entire national life. There is yet another aspect of the problem. The opening of new factories would not usher in the millennium till the purchasing capacity of the masses, which is very low at the moment, is appreciably raised. That brings us face to face with the problems of currency, exchange and prices.

The National Planning Committee has issued a questionnaire which is by no means complete. You should study it in order to understand the implications of national planning. There are manifold difficulties that are likely to frustrate any attempt at national planning....

Science is a great force in the present age. You should imbibe the spirit of science and think on scientific lines. The impartial spirit of science has to be brought to bear on all the details that confront us in our daily avocations. We must insist on cultivation of a spirit of efficiency in everything that we are called upon to undertake. Those who neglect their ordinary tasks are slovenly in everyday work and never do anything big in life.

Here we see Nehru's preoccupation with science, industry, and also, his emphasis on efficiency and self-discipline in the individual worker.

A draft national plan was prepared early in 1939 by K.T. Shah and the various sub-committees. In a speech to the Indian Merchants Chamber in June 1939, Nehru explained the work of the

Planning Committee:

...It is sometimes asked what this planning committee has done during the last six months. All that we did in December was to issue a questionnaire. All that we have done now is to consider briefly some of the answers to the questionnaire and to decide a few other points, viz., the general line of action and the type of planning, etc. A large number of sub-committees have been appointed for investigation. We must give some time to those sub-committees to submit their reports because it is not an easy work for them, and most of the members of those sub-committees are not wholly unemployed; they are busy men and it would take time for their reports to come. When their reports come, we have to consider them afresh and then arrive at some conclusion. It is possible of course that all this might be hastened a little, but I think it is unreasonable to expect a committee of this type to produce a ready-made scheme in the course of a few weeks or a few months. It is really a vast problem.

...Planning is not merely a question to decide what industry is required here or what industry is required there. The question embraces almost every possible economic aspect and not only that but many other activities in India and ultimately every aspect of national life. Now that we have the planning committee we have to devise a plan embracing all aspects of national life, i.e., economic, political, social, cultural and spiritual. All these aspects will have to be looked into. To attempt all this may be somewhat beyond us because we have not even got the requisite data for studying these various aspects of the question. But the point is that planning does involve some consideration of all these aspects, i.e., entering into various details, investigation of all possible data, etc. We may find that development on one side may not fit in with the development on some other side.

These brave words must have sounded utopian to the hard-headed businessmen who heard them; the important thing to notice is that here we have the first beginning of a real dialogue on this most important matter with important people on the part of the national organization.

As a matter of policy as well as from a sense of modest achieve-

ment only, in a rather esoteric field distant from the immediate problem of India and the coming world conflict, the committee did not advertise its activities in that first probation year. Jawaharlal Nehru's statement to the press in June 1939 was suitably tentative:

...The committee cannot, and does not intend to, formulate a full and detailed scheme of national planning within the short time at its disposal. That will require far more detailed information and surveys than we possess today. That will be the work of a more permanent planning committee which the state may establish at a later stage. But even for that more detailed work, a preliminary survey of the entire problem is essential. This survey, broad in outline as it must necessarily be, has to take into consideration all aspects of the problem.

...This planning will require not only the cooperation of the government, but also the cooperation and intelligent appreciation of the general public. It must, if it is to succeed, have the goodwill of the national movement which represents the most vital urge of the country. It must therefore fall in line with the general principles laid down by the Congress.

THE COMING OF WAR: NEW CHALLENGES

For the Indian national movement, the great world drama of war and destruction, defeat and victory, represented a period of forced inactivity, many frustrations and also, for interludes only, a feeling that effective action was still possible. This was most true of the Congress mainstream represented by Gandhi and Nehru and the Working Committee, as distinguished from the Communists and the Socialists on the one hand, and the Liberals on the other. This mainstream view had a clear perception of rights and wrongs in the new world conflict. They did not want to have any truck with axis powers including Japan. About the attitude to adopt towards the 'imperial democracies', however, there was a wide range of divergent approaches. Some in the Congress wanted so much to help the British war effort, that they would have been satisfied with a patch-up compromise. This would not be an insincere or unpatriotic position in black and white terms; in the case of people like Rajagopalachari and Satyamurti, there was a feeling that the unresolved and increasingly intractable communal problem was making British withdrawal a complex issue. Gandhi himself started with an attitude of almost complete support to the British reminiscent of his responses during the First World War. The individual profile of his policy throughout the war was influenced by his total commitment to non-violence. His earlier dilemmas were in fact about the content of cooperation, not with cooperation itself. This changed over the months, with British obduracy. The large majority of the Working Committee shared with him a certain psychological preparedness to help the allies. Their difference with Gandhi was that, to them, non-violence was not a dominant creed but only the preferred policy. Jawaharlal did not feel himself in total agreement either with Gandhi or his colleagues in the Working Committee. He had a much

greater, deeper commitment to the anti-fascist crusade. He, however, had no difficulties at all in sharing Gandhi's insistence on Swaraj even in a moment of world crisis. Other groups in the Indian political community like M.N. Roy's followers and other former-Congressmen-turned Liberals, decided to cast their lot with the British war effort in spite of their misgivings. Congress Socialists like Jayaprakash felt that these ideological dilemmas should not inhibit a confrontationist policy towards the British who had refused to agree to the modest proposals of the Congress. This point of view was most clearly represented by Subhas Chandra Bose and the Forward Bloc; in fact, the later decision, to make a fundamental choice in priorities and seek the assistance of the enemy countries to fight the British, was implicit in Netaji's public attitudes before he escaped from India in early 1941.

The Indian experience of the six-year-old global conflict can be roughly divided into three phases; during the first period after the declaration of war, the refusal of the British to accede to the Congress demand of a declaration of war aims, and the resignation of the Congress ministries, led to prolonged and infructuous negotiations, which finally resulted in the limited Individual Satyagraha movement launched by Gandhi. During this period, Jawaharlal was extremely clear in his mind that joining the British war effort would be self-defeating unless there was transfer of real power immediately and the promise of a juridical change after the war. It was a period of great difficulties in decision-making and much greater problems in negotiations within the Congress, with the British, and also with the Muslim League. They provided remarkable opportunities for the communicator in Nehru to project significant nuances in policies. Throughout this period he had a comfortable conviction that Gandhi was back in charge in the national movement, whatever might be his formal association with the Congress as an organization; these are years of great understanding between the two men. In spite of serious differences on individual issues, both Gandhi and Nehru were absolutely clear in their refusal to cooperate with the British on their terms, as well as on their decision to fight the enemies of the British, if it became necessary, with the same seriousness of purpose. This phase is analytically interesting because of the manner in which Nehru was able to project a rather complex ideological position to the students, to the Congress rank and file, and most of all to the peasants in the United Provinces. These were also the years when

the Pakistan Resolution had been passed and the Congress and Jawaharlal attempted to react to an entirely new situation. All this created problems of communication; however, the more important problems in those years were not of communication as much as of decision-making, when the choice was not easy.

There were two long interludes of prison life for Jawaharlal during the war years, between October 1940 and December 1941 and between August 1942 and May 1945. This meant, in effect, that for four years out of the six, Nehru, like most of his colleagues, was living in isolation. From the people of India and from the world there was, of course, no question of communication. Only Gandhi managed to break through this curtain of silence in the dramatic interlude of his fast in February 1943. For Jawaharlal these years were, from one point of view, intensely frustrating. That he did not allow this experience to embitter him was characteristic of the man. Earlier terms of imprisonment had conditioned him to a certain healthy and even productive attitude. Communication which was so necessary to him, assumed the form of serious writing with a certain permanent value rather than instant reactions to developments outside one's control, or the articulation of a decision which one has been compelled to make.

Between those two periods of forced silence, Jawaharlal was very active for about eight months. Pearl Harbour, Japan's entry into the war and the swift sweep across South-east Asia and the Pacific transformed India's security situation. Jawaharlal reacted to these events with great sensitivity. Without the slightest taint of malice he noticed the ineffectiveness of the British imperial system to defend its own ward nations and this reinforced his earlier conviction that there was no alternative in India to genuine self-government, even under the shadow of imminent invasion. This is an extremely important period in the study of Nehru as a political thinker and a decision-maker; as a communicator also, this has some fascinating aspects. The Cripps Mission, the negotiations which did not lead anywhere, the sad feeling of helplessness afterwards, and, later, the new excitement about the Quit India campaign provided Jawaharlal Nehru with opportunities for clear-headed analysis of the objective situation. Within the conditions of wartime censorship, he was able to communicate to the people of India something of the seriousness of the confrontation between the national movement and the British Government, as well as the strictly limited framework within which that opposition should

be organized. At the same time, Nehru's position on international issues in general and the anti-British relationship, in particular, had become so clear that interested outside observers, particularly from the United States, were able to have some real understanding of the processes at work in wartime India. In all this, however, the most important single dominant reality was the strength, continuity and gentle understanding in the partnership between Gandhi and Jawaharlal. This is at the centre of the situation. Even more important is the realization by Jawaharlal Nehru himself, his colleagues in the Congress and the country at large, that the generalissimo was back in full command. This is supremely important and the final decision on the Quit India Resolution was entirely derived from Gandhi's own personal assessment of the Indian political climate, as well as Jawaharlal's sophisticated understanding of the overwhelming importance of the freedom question at a moment of dramatic change in the power configuration on the globe.

There were, thus, two intensely packed short periods of political activity, agitation and propaganda by the Congress during that unique era of conflict and change; there were also lengthy periods of enforced solitude with immediate communication limited to a few friends and colleagues only. They were, however, immensely useful years to Jawaharlal Nehru who was as receptive and fresh in his responses as ever in his fifties. The last, isolated type of confinement helped him to look again into his personal background and, more interesting to himself, the evolution of India as a part of world civilization. Also, quite distinctly, he was becoming more and more conscious of the strands that link even the most isolated events and individuals in an organic world community.

II

Jawaharlal was in China when war broke out on 2 September 1939. He immediately cut short his tour and returned to India on 9 September, hoping to take part in the discussions of the Congress Working Committee. He refrained from making any off-the-cuff statements about the new situation. In Rangoon, however, he did say something rather percipient in view of later developments; he had no illusion that the war would be of a short duration:

The European war is the result of outworn economic systems which had survived the shock of the last war. At the end of the present war, I visualize new economic systems and principles, to which many states will subscribe in common. Contrary to prevalent opinion, I believe that the present war might last for a long period as new methods of attack and new psychological factors are involved.

The resolution passed by the Working Committee after his return on 14 September was essentially based on Jawaharlal's draft. It was a friendly enough document, holding out the hand of cooperation to the British authorities in the new situation, but also making it clear that India would not be able to participate in the war without some reality of freedom. The fundamental opposition of the Congress to the Nazi ideology was recalled. The Committee noted that the 'interests of Indian democracy do not conflict with the interests of British democracy or the world democracy'. In a passage analysing the global crisis which was 'not of Europe only but of humanity' the resolution stated that the crisis would not be finally resolved till a new equilibrium was established:

...That equilibrium can only be based on the ending of the domination and exploitation of one country by another, and on a reorganization of economic relations on a juster basis for the common good of all.

India is the crux of the problem, for India has been the outstanding example of modern imperialism, and no refashioning of the world can succeed which ignores this vital problem. With her vast resources she must play an important part in any scheme of world reorganisation. But she can only do so as a free nation whose energies have been released to work for this great end. Freedom today is indivisible, and every attempt to retain imperialist domination in any part of the world will lead inevitably to fresh disaster.

The resolution invited the British Government to declare their war aims in unequivocal terms and made it clear that they were willing to wait patiently 'for the full elucidation of the issues at stake, the real objective aimed at and the position of India in the present and in the future'. To check the horror of war, the Working Committee

promised to give their cooperation: 'But it will be infinite tragedy if even this terrible war is carried on in the spirit of imperialism and for the purpose of retaining this structure which is itself the cause of war and human degradation.'

During the next 12 months some major, indeed, historical resolutions were to be passed by the Working Committee and endorsed by the All India Congress Committee. It is interesting to note that most of them were drafted by Jawaharlal and approved only with minor changes, mostly from the drafting point of view, to eliminate surplusage and tighten up the language. Two resolutions, however, of great importance were drafted by Gandhi himself, the Ramgarh Session resolution of March 1940, and the final September Resolution announcing the decision of the Congress to withdraw its offer of cooperation in view of the negative answer from the British authorities in August which led to the Individual Satyagraha campaign. This tacit division of responsibilities was due to a fundamental divergence between the two men. From the very beginning, Gandhi was convinced that this great international conflict could be resolved only by the non-violent method. Quite consistently, and totally oblivious of the reactions of the ordinary people in India and elsewhere, and also from the responsible leaders of the invaded countries, he insisted that the method of non-violent struggle by an organized people with the highest standards of discipline and self-control would make victory hollow for the invader. This made it natural for him to draft those resolutions in which non-violent action was contemplated as the immediate response of the Congress to the British policy. In between were long interludes when there was hope that the British would respond to the Congress promise of cooperation, because of the credibility of the record and policies of the Congress, particularly Jawaharlal Nehru himself, as anti-fascists, and also because of the changing fortunes of War in the summer of 1940, when the phoney war abruptly ended and Hitler's armies swept through Europe. The important resolutions of the Congress during these interludes with which Gandhi could not be associated because they envisaged India's participation in the War, if some political demands were conceded, were invariably drafted by Jawaharlal. Even the Poona offer of June, which went far beyond what Nehru wanted in its placatory attitude, was drafted by him. These resolutions and the statements he made during the Congress sessions, the articles he wrote for the *National Herald*, and

various interviews to other newspapers, gave Jawaharlal Nehru several opportunities to redefine India's consistent policy that the issue of political freedom remained central to any future agenda. The war had changed many things but had not changed this.

Even more important, perhaps, in retrospect, were the speeches he used to make in his own beloved constituency, the villages of the UP, whenever an opportunity came, explaining to the *kisans* the importance of the war in their lives and in their personal prospects, on their personal problems as well as the much larger issue of the country's freedom, at a time when official censorship was becoming stringent. These careful lessons in simple language on the troubles which beset the world were remarkable examples in successful communication. As a result of his clear, straightforward rejection of any compromise with the enemies of the British, as well as the British themselves, he was able to put across a sharply defined policy approach. When complex events took place, which could not be explained with the data available to an observer in India, Jawaharlal was honest in the expression of his concern but reticent in his criticism. This was made clear in his reaction to the Nazi-Soviet Pact of August 1939. In his speech at Allahabad on 20 September, Nehru saw this startling development against the long background of appeasement of Hitler by the democracies and their overriding hatred of the Soviet Union:

The Russo-German Pact is a non-aggression pact. Russia has made such non-aggression pacts with other powers also, but the way in which these pacts came into existence is not beyond suspicion. This pact is a very clever move and assures Hitler of safety from attack on one frontier. One thing clear is that this pact has brought about war even though, perhaps, ultimately it may not have been avoided.

Unlike many others both in the communist parties and among the sympathisers to whom the pact had come as a nasty shock, Jawaharlal was more able to understand Soviet motivations. He was not equally clear about the reasons behind the Soviet decision to attack Poland:

As for the Russian invasion of Poland, the situation is not clear. It may be that the invasion was really undertaken because

of the danger of Germany becoming too strong. No one can say clearly at present what it means. We will know about it by and by.

As an immediate reaction to a surprising development, this is not too bad. The invasion of the Baltic Republics about the same time does not seem to have attracted Nehru's attention. Immediately after the first war resolution was passed by the Congress, Nehru wrote a series of editorials in the *National Herald* which traversed familiar ground. These pieces are most interesting for the serious and detailed attention given to the recruitment, training, and equipment of a genuine national army for fighting the war, and also the development of industries to supply war needs. He also envisaged a large-scale organization for civil defence on a militia basis. 'All this can only be done by a popular government', he wrote.

In a rather charmingly Nehruvian and totally irrelevant excursion into fantasy, he talks about the imposition of national plans, world plans and planning, as the only method of economic organization which the war would bring about:

As the war progresses and consumes more and more commodities, planned production and distribution will be organised all over the world, and gradually a world planned economy will appear. The capitalist system will recede into the background and it may be that international control of industry will take its place. India, as an important producer, must have a say in any such control.

It is easy enough to feel superior to such blithe forecasts today, with the many advantages of hindsight, but Nehru did have a serious and committed approach to planning long before war came and, as we have noted earlier, his belief in the usefulness of planning in peacetime was reinforced by the experience of compulsory planning in the market economies during wartime because of scarcity of resources and an unavoidable rearrangement of priorities.

These important articles ended on the usual hopeful note:

Finally, India must speak as a free nation at the peace conference.

We have endeavoured to indicate what the war and peace aims of those who speak for democracy should be, and, in

particular, how they should be applied to India. The list is not exhaustive, but it is a solid foundation to build upon, and an incentive for the great effort needed. We have not touched upon the problem of a reorganisation of the world after the war, though we think some such reorganisation essential and inevitable.

Will the statesmen and peoples of the world, and especially of the warring countries, be wise and far-seeing enough, to follow the path we have pointed out? We do not know. But here in India let us forget our differences, our leftism and rightism, and think of these vital problems which face us and insistently demand solution. The world is pregnant with possibilities. It has no pity at any time for the weak or the ineffective or the disunited. Today when nations fight desperately for survival, only those who are far-seeing and disciplined and united in action will play a role in history that is being made.

This was written for the Indian audience. A few days later, he explained the Indian position after the war came to Britain and the world, in an important cable to the *News Chronicle* in London. After explaining India's principal reaction against the Nazi aggression, he went on to speak about democracy and the need for Indian freedom in this fight for democracy:

...the Congress has invited the British Government to state its war and peace aims clearly and in particular how these apply to the imperialist order and to India. India can take no part in defending imperialism but she will join in a struggle for freedom.

The first step must therefore be a declaration of India's full freedom. This has to be followed by its application now in so far as is possible in order to give the people effective control of the governance of India and the prosecution of war on India's behalf.

... Her invitation to the British Government is not only on her behalf but for all those in the world who believe in peace and freedom and democracy. It will be tragedy for all of us if the deep significance of this gesture is not appreciated and full response not made to it. Such a response will hearten people all over the world and will be a greater blow to Nazism than a victory on the battlefield.

III

About the same time, in a rather remarkable personal letter written to the Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, Nehru attempted to explain the problems faced by the Congress as an organization in the country, and particularly in his own large, turbulent and populous province, on the specific question of disciplining and restraining wild and unrestrained speeches by Congress workers, and, sometimes, leaders. This is an important document. Dr. S. Gopal, Jawaharlal Nehru's biographer, notes that this was, perhaps, the only communication ever written on a personal basis by Nehru to any Viceroy during the national movement. It was written at the instance of Gandhi, to whom Linlithgow seems to have complained about 'wild' speeches by Congressmen in eastern U.P. Shibbanlal Saksena was singled out for mention.

The subject matter of these speeches was not indicated for obvious reasons. It is, however, clear that some of these speeches, perhaps, went beyond opposition to Britain, to some expressions of hope for victories in the conflict by the other side. Nehru explains the genuine democratic principles which guided him in organizing the Congress in his own province. In a large province, 'probably the most wide awake in the political sense', with about 70,000 members of local committees, this meant hectic activity and innumerable public meetings were all the time being held. An immediate provocation for these meetings was the Tenancy Bill which was one of the proud achievements of the Congress ministry. Thousands of speeches were made, Jawaharlal argues, and only a few would deserve the complaints made by the Viceroy to Gandhi. He then went on to remark quite frankly that the reports received by the government from its secret agents and informers were not always reliable. He assured the Viceroy that something was being done to prevent the recurrence of such wild outbursts:

...There is a tendency to exaggerate or dramatise ordinary occurrences and to attach undue importance to them or to the words of excitable youths. Still I think there is a core of truth in what has been reported and, so far as I know, the U.P. Government is fully alive to the situation and is prepared to take action whenever any overt act takes place. In the nature of things it is reluctant to take action on hearsay. I understand that action has

been taken in some instances.

After making this reluctant concession, with an attempt to justify the Congress record, Nehru goes on in his best, honest, fashion to admit that 'during the first few days of September, a number of very undesirable speeches were delivered in U.P. The sudden coming of war upset the balance of many people and unloosened their tongues. As soon as the attention of the leadership of the Congress was drawn to these speeches, immediate action was taken by the provincial Congress leadership to stop the development'.

This is the earlier, substantive, part of a very important communication on a rather minor episode. It reveals the scrupulous anxiety of the writer to do the right thing and to ensure that nothing wrong is done by anyone in the Congress at a time of stress.

Jawaharlal was not, however, satisfied with this. He ended the letter on a serious note trying to establish some sort of civilized communication with the British ruler of India on a personal level when the world was changing every day:

This letter, written in the train to Wardha, has grown long. But I want to add a few words to it and to tell you how much I desire that the long conflict of India and England should be ended and that they should cooperate together. I have felt that this war, with all its horrors, has brought this opportunity to our respective countries and it would be sad and tragic if we are unable to take advantage of it. None of us, in India or England, dare remain in the old grooves or think in terms of past conditions. But events are moving so fast that sometimes I fear that they will overtake our slow moving minds. There are all the elements of a Greek tragedy in the world situation today and we seem to be pushed along inevitably to a predestined end. You told me that I moved too much in the air. Probably you are right. But it is often possible to get a better view of the lie of the land from the heights than from the valleys. And I have wandered sufficiently on the solid earth of India and mixed with the people who labour there to think of India in earthly terms.

May I say how much I appreciate your friendly courtesy to me? It was a pleasure to meet you for a second time, and whenever chance offers an opportunity for this again, I shall avail myself of it. But whether we meet or, as you once said, look at

each other from a distance over a gulf that has not been bridged, we shall do so, I earnestly trust, with no trace of unfriendliness, and realising the difficulties which encompass us and which compel us to pursue different paths.

S. Gopal comments: 'The two paragraphs justify full quotation for they mark the only occasion at any time from the Amritsar tragedy in April 1919 till Lord Mountbatten's arrival in India in March 1947 when Jawaharlal broke through to a human level in his dealings with British officials.'

Unfortunately, Linlithgow, an estimable individual of strictly limited imagination, was not capable of responding to such a gentle and delicate overture. In retrospect, it seems to have been a non-communication.

IV

During the early months of 1940 the peculiar feeling of 'non-action' which affected Europe and the world outside profoundly influenced India also. The cessation of military activity after the occupation of Poland by Germany and the Soviet Union, and the annexation of the Baltic states by the latter, was interrupted only by the Soviet-Finnish War which was seen as isolated from the confrontation between the Axis powers and the Western democracies. It cut across the newly created loyalties between Berlin and Moscow. This feeling of artificial tranquillity, in a period of stress among the frontline states, naturally spread to distant nations only technically participating in the conflict, like India. The reaction of the Congress under Gandhi to the war situation can be best understood against this rather unreal atmosphere. There was no war; therefore, there was no urgent call to stand up and be counted. At the same time, there was continuing obduracy on the part of the British Government in London and the Viceroy in New Delhi; since the resignation of the Congress ministries, feelings of alienation were dominant. In this situation, it was Gandhi, whose position was clear and determined, who fully dominated Congress policies. He was slowly moving towards the idea of civil disobedience if the Congress demands were not conceded; this, however, would have to await his own total personal satisfaction that the organization was ready and

individual Congressmen disciplined enough. At the same time he was also certain in his own mind that this was not an attempt to intervene negatively in the British Government's war effort. He saw the two activities as entirely different. His business was to press ahead with India's demand, refusing to take into account the arguments put forward by totally committed anti-fascists, like M.N. Roy, that the time had come to forget smaller differences and to help the Allies. He was also equally clear in his refusal to be hustled into a mass civil disobedience movement.

It is necessary to attempt to define Gandhi's remarkably consistent strategy through the period before the Quit India Resolution. Jawaharlal, on the whole, understood Gandhi's approach and there was no single moment when he questioned the right of the General of the national movement to chalk out the strategy. Later, during the year, differences in nuance developed between Gandhi and Jawaharlal, but they were not more difficult and complex than the differences between Rajaji and Gandhi or Rajaji and Vallabhbhai Patel and also between Rajaji and Nehru himself. These were, however, never permitted to impinge upon trust in each other's good faith. All these changes were produced by the change in the war situation in Europe from April onwards, when the German blitzkrieg swept through Europe and made the days of the phoney war appear like a forgotten dream.

The Ramgarh Session of the Congress in March 1940 gave expression to the frustration and anger of the Congress at not being consulted before the war was declared. This session was most notable for the return of Gandhi to the centre of the stage. In his editorial article in the *National Herald*, Jawaharlal noticed that the resolution which had already been passed by the Working Committee had left no question unanswered:

...There will no doubt be much argument and debate, but this resolution will in all probability be passed by a huge majority. It is well that it should be so passed for it clarifies our position and says exactly what we stand for. There is no room left for controversy about certain vital points. The war in Europe is, so far as we are concerned, an imperialist war between rival empires, each trying to gain the mastery and strengthen and extend its imperialist power. All the talk about democracy and freedom is just the stuff out of which poor deluded mortals seek escape in

fantasy from the ugly reality of life.

That puts the position clearly enough. The resolution was exclusively the result of Gandhi's draftsmanship; it was, however, perfectly in tune with the earlier resolution passed by the UP Provincial Congress Committee on 16 February 1940. This had been drafted by Jawaharlal:

The Committee is of opinion that, even apart from the urgent question of Indian freedom, the people of India can support in no way a war which is patently imperialistic and which is carried on by an imperialist government, and any further attempts to entangle India in this war must be prevented. Particularly in view of possible developments in the war situation, it is essential that the people of India must remain fully prepared to resist British imperialist policy.

In the Congress session itself, perhaps, Jawaharlal's greatest contribution was his translation of Maulana Azad's great presidential address into effective English prose. His own speech at the session was forthright in its rejection of compromise:

The war is a war between two imperialisms. We do not want the victory of Nazism with its unjust and repressive rule. Neither do we want a further strengthening of British imperialism.

It has become clear now that a struggle is inevitable, but how and when will have to be decided for us by our leaders and Mahatma Gandhi. We should be ready for everything. There should be unity and discipline so that we may create a favourable atmosphere for the struggle.

He, however, went on to caution against the 'misguided enthusiasm of a few people to go head on for any objective':

... Such enthusiasts are counter-revolutionaries and rebels. Our object should be to get the entire army moving and not a few headstrong people who can be described as adventurers. They are no better than terrorists. These people are not led by reason but by cheap sentiment. India is renowned for her high level of intellect. I regret that attempts are being made to solve national

problem by mere shouting and bluster.

This formulation was in complete accord with Gandhi's own very clear exposition of his satyagraha strategy. In unambiguous language he told the rank and file Congressmen that he would not tolerate any indiscipline or any disarray in the ranks during the forthcoming struggle. His return to the active leadership of the Congress, he made it clear, was not the result of a compromise with his own principles. He would have the next round of the national struggle in a form and at a pace which he would decide himself, after studying the situation on the ground within the country and within the Congress organization:

Satyagraha is the path of truth at all costs. If you are not prepared to follow this path please leave me alone. You can pronounce me worthless and I shall not resent it. If I do not make this clear here and now, I shall be ruined and along with me the country. Truth and ahimsa are the essence of satyagraha, and the charkha is their symbol. Just as the General of any army insists that his soldiers should wear a particular uniform, I as your General must insist on your taking to the charkha which will be your uniform. Without full faith in truth, non-violence and the charkha, you cannot be my soldiers. And I repeat again that if you do not believe in this, you must leave me alone and you can try your own methods.

The Ramgarh Congress was, thus, a major landmark in the transformation of the general sense of alienation in the Congress into the will to fight. This was going to be the controlling influence in Indian politics for the next 18 months, even though there were interruptions and problems.

V

The first problem was created by the Muslim League resolution in Lahore on a separate state. This brought about mixed reactions within the Congress leadership, Jawaharlal and the majority feeling that by adopting such an absurd and unrealistic course, the League had made any serious discussion impossible. The proper response

would be to go ahead with the idea of a constituent assembly on a democratic franchise, in the confidence that the League would be marginalized. Rajaji felt equally strongly that this was a much more serious and immediately relevant issue and the Congress would have to face it.

Close on the heels of this major domestic development came the new stage of the war in Europe with the invasion of the Netherlands, Belgium, Denmark and Norway. The replacement of Chamberlain by Churchill as Prime Minister in England with Labour participation in a coalition government, coincided with the next terrible phase in the war, with the defeat and occupation of France and the withdrawal of the British forces from Dunkirk.

These cataclysmic changes affected Jawaharlal much more than anyone else in the Congress, but he was clear in his mind that his sympathy with the victims of Nazism should not be allowed to divert the nation from its primary task of opposing British imperialism. Some of his finest journalism was done during these weeks. The fall of France, in particular, affected him as very few events in a foreign country had done. In a celebrated editorial, 'Quatorze Juillet', he quoted from a very dear personal friend in France who had assured him that 'the crutch of France increases in face of adversity'.

Jawaharlal goes on to comment in bitter terms:

But the France of Petain and Laval did no such thing, and has now forsworn all that the old France stood for. But there is another France, there must be one, for the heritage of a thousand years does not vanish in a night. That other France will rise again and assert the invincible spirit of freedom which made her great. Again we shall hear the stirring strains of the Marseillaise, the song of the Revolution; again she will celebrate the fall of the old Bastille and the new Bastilles that have arisen. Again she will have her *Fete Nationale* on the Fourteenth of July.

And so today, on this great anniversary, let us pay homage to the France of the Revolution, the breaker of the Bastille and of all the bonds that hold the human body and spirit captive.

These words were not written for an external audience; there was no diplomatic sales talk involved here. But observers in India from other countries, particularly the United States, would have read these reactions and formed their own conclusions. Here was no

mindless hatred of the allies or the slightest element of sympathy for the victor nation, Germany, in this anxious pursuit of India's own national objective in the deafening tumult.

CONFRONTATION WITHIN LIMITS: INDIVIDUAL SATYAGRAHA

The European crisis brought before Jawaharlal the dilemmas of anti-fascism with overwhelming immediacy. It would not have been an easy decision, during that historical moment of global change, to refuse to be stampeded by the genuine tragedy of Europe, and the qualitative change brought about in the World War by the German occupation of most of Europe. There is some evidence of clarity of outlook here; also a certain mature ideological integrity. Jawaharlal had personal problems also at this moment related to the European situation; his daughter had been for several months in Switzerland and communications had not been interrupted during the phoney war. In fact, things had been so relaxed earlier in the year that, at one moment, Jawaharlal had even contemplated a visit to Europe and the United States. All this had changed now. Indira had to leave Switzerland and fly across war-ravaged Europe to the comparative safety of Britain *en route* to India. In the event, this particular personal problem was resolved without too much tension, but it is important to note the essential ideological as well as personal loneliness of Jawaharlal's situation at this moment. His speeches to various Congress sessions, both at the AICC level and in the UPCC, enable us to monitor what was constant and what was changing in his reactions to the world crisis. For instance, in his speech to the UPCC Conference on 19 May 1940, in the midst of the new crisis, a few days after Churchill took over in London, he attempted to explain his moral dilemmas: 'It seems to me improper to strike at a person when he is surrounded by peril and difficulty. That is not the way of satyagraha nor is it good tactic.'

This juxtaposition of the satyagraha strategy which he completely

accepted from Gandhi and an almost pre-ideological discomfort at hitting a man when he is down is typical; to complete the Nehru outlook during these difficult months we have, of course, to add the difficult choice between fighting imperialism and fighting fascism.

In the same speech Jawaharlal also expressed his impatience with the angry militants in the Congress who wanted immediate action. At this time, when in the orthodox Marxist assessment the war was of the comfortably 'imperialist' variety, it was possible for leftists of all types, ranging from the Communists to the Socialists to taunt the Congress high command with passivity and irresolution. Jawaharlal's reply to them is important:

There is a lot of talk of struggle. Struggle is indeed surrounding us all over the world. In India we live in the midst of a struggle against British imperialism. That struggle will inevitably grow and develop into satyagraha. There can never be an end to our struggle till India is independent. But a struggle or any kind of fight requires leadership and generalship as Macaulay had once said. Bad generals have sometimes won victories but nobody has ever known a debating society to win a battle. Let us, therefore, if we are serious, develop a mentality of struggle and discipline and not imagine that we can have the struggle in the manner of a debate.

Here, we have Jawaharlal speaking in the accents of Gandhi, the General. Explaining to Krishna Menon in London the problems faced by the Congress leadership at a time of total change, Jawaharlal wrote:

The position is that while it is considered improper just at this particular moment of crisis in the war to launch civil disobedience the question of satyagraha has by no means been put off. I think myself that we should wait for a while, which need not be very long, and prepare rather than plunge in at this stage.

Gandhiji has at no time thought in terms of a small body of men deciding anything about India. He sticks completely to his old position, that is a recognition of Indian independence and a full-blooded constituent assembly. It is only on the basis of this that he is prepared to talk. But as is his way, he always says that he is prepared to discuss the matter with anybody.

Krishna Menon in London was on the whole sympathetic to the non-responsive position. Dilemmas both for him and Nehru would come after the German invasion of the Soviet Union. At this moment, the real division within the Congress leadership was represented by decent, simple people like Rajendra Prasad and Satyamurti who were emotionally affected by the perils which faced Europe. They were anxious to help and were prepared to join the war effort on fairly minimalist terms. Jawaharlal was unhappy with Rajen Babu's public reaction even though he was polite about it. As he explained to Krishna Menon, 'Gandhiji, Vallabhbhai and many others of their groups were put out by Rajen Babu's statement.' A still more excited reaction came from Asaf Ali, which also represented the desire of the 'liberal' wing in the Congress to make up with England at all costs.

The really interesting thing about Jawaharlal's role in the Congress during these months is the manner in which he went on explaining the Congress policy, on an almost daily basis, during his visits to cities and towns in UP and also other parts of India. He made several speeches in Lahore, for instance, explaining the rights and wrongs of the Congress decision not to change their position on non-cooperation merely because the situation on the ground had changed. What was necessary was a change in the mind and in the policy of the rulers in London:

I will be sorry if the French civilisation and culture which has played such a great part perishes. But I cannot persuade myself to help in the war in order to strengthen the hold of British imperialism on India. I do not wish to take advantage of the present difficulties of the British.

In these speeches, he was also very careful to keep the morale of the people high:

The status and position of India has grown very high, and even the most ignorant in the countries outside know at least of two names in India, one that of Mahatma Gandhi and the other that of the Congress. The pity of it is that Indians themselves have forgotten their own country. Because of the increased importance and status of India in world opinion Congress can no longer remain a body of protesting people. The Congress voice

has not grown dim, but on the other hand it has become more stern.

Satyagraha has no relation to the war. It will be started when considered opportune by Mahatma Gandhi. But we will not choose to strike simply because the British Government is in great difficulties. I think it will not only be not very honourable but the world opinion will also stand against India.

At this time there was really no difference between Jawaharlal and Gandhi who had recently written, 'I fear that any step towards direct action is bound to cause embarrassment. If I start now, the whole purpose of civil disobedience will be defeated.... We do not seek our independence out of Britain's ruin.' Jawaharlal, asked to comment on this, said:

...It does not mean that he has given up the idea of civil disobedience for the duration of the war or for a long period. That will depend on other circumstances. It means, as far as I can understand, that during the present intense phase of the conflict when great changes are taking place from day to day he would like to hold his hand and watch developments. This intense phase is not likely to last a long time. It may lead to some conclusion or to some kind of equilibrium in war itself. Civil disobedience could be aimed at British imperialism exploiting India for its own purposes. At the present moment British imperialism itself is in an exceedingly bad way and no one can say how long it will survive.

There was an uneasy interlude when, under the influence of Rajaji and with the compliance of Vallabhbhai and Jawaharlal, the Congress decided to defink itself at least temporarily from Gandhi's rigid position on satyagraha and make overtures to the British Government, hoping for some response which would make cooperation possible.

The story began with the Working Committee meeting in Wardha on 21 June 1940, which Gandhi attended. The Resolution was drafted by Jawaharlal. The operative sentences were:

...The problems which were distant are now near at hand and may soon demand solution. The problem of the achievement

of national freedom has now to be considered along with the allied one, its maintenance and the defence of the country against possible external aggression and internal disorder.

...The Committee have deliberated over the problem that has thus arisen and have come to the conclusion that they are unable to go the full length with Gandhiji. But they recognise that he should be free to pursue his great ideal in his own way and therefore absolve him from responsibility for the programme and activity which the Congress has to pursue under the conditions at present prevailing in India and the world in regard to external aggression and internal disorder.

In Jawaharlal's earlier draft there was a characteristically sensitive reference to Gandhi which seems to have got lost in the process of revision:

The Working Committee have deliberated over this vital question at length, and they owe it to the public to take them into their confidence and to place before them their viewpoint with clarity. This is necessary all the more because in this matter of the application of non-violence to external aggression and internal disorder, they have the misfortune not to be wholly in agreement with Mahatma Gandhi, whose leadership and advice it has been their high privilege to have for the past twenty years. That leadership and advice will, they are convinced, still be theirs and India's in the trials ahead. But Gandhiji's firm faith in the efficacy of non-violence, under all circumstances, does not permit him to tolerate any deviation from it and he desires to have complete freedom for himself, and without any commitment to the Congress, to pursue a policy of active non-violence in the pursuit of the goal which he shares with the Congress and with vast numbers of people in India.

Jawaharlal explained it all in a press statement in Bombay a few days later:

The Working Committee's resolution makes it clear that in spite of war developments the Ramgarh resolution stands, as indeed it must. Our policy and action must be fashioned accordingly. The Committee are now concerned above all with what is

going to happen in India and want the people to prepare for it. They have little interest in declarations made by a foreign authority.

I trust that the people of the country will also think in these terms and rally round the Congress at this supreme moment, for it is the Congress only which might be able to control the situation as it develops from day to day. No other organisation can possibly do so.

The difference between Gandhiji's approach and that of the Working Committee must be understood and the people must not think that there is a break between him and the Congress. The Congress of the past twenty years is his creation and child and nothing can break this bond. I am sure that his guidance and wise counsel will always be available to the Congress.

Even as regards non-violence the Congress has not gone back on any of its professions and it holds to them strictly. But new problems raised new issues which necessitated the further extension of this principle or the recognition that under present circumstances it was hardly possible to do so. Gandhiji, with the flame of his cherished ideal burning brightly before him, could not tolerate any deviation from non-violence, even in cases of external aggression or internal disorder. He could not reject the logic of his own argument.

The most interesting point about this is how tenaciously Jawaharlal, the least probable among Gandhi's colleagues, understands and articulates his views so much better than the others.

Gandhi himself explained, in an important article in the *Harjan*, his differences with the Working Committee. There was no ill will, no misunderstanding. He said he was 'both happy and unhappy over the result. Happy because I have been able to bear the strain of the break and have been given the strength to stand alone. Unhappy because my word seemed to lose the power to carry with me those whom it was my proud privilege to carry all these many years which seem like yesterday.' At the very end of the article Gandhi wrote: 'PS After the foregoing was written and typed, I saw Jawaharlal's statement. His love for and confidence in me peep out of every sentence referring to me. The foregoing does not need any amendment. It is better for the reader to have both the independent reactions. Good must come out of this separation.'

Two weeks later, in New Delhi, on 7 July, the Working Committee again met and passed a resolution stating that Britain should immediately make an unequivocal declaration according complete independence to India. If such a declaration was followed by the formation of a national government 'it was to enable the Congress to throw in its full weight in the efforts for the effective organisation of the defence of the country.'

This particular resolution had not been drafted by Jawaharlal. The first draft was prepared by Rajaji. In his gloss on the resolution made in the form of a press statement, Jawaharlal returned to the question of a constituent assembly and in a most interesting aside said, '... Meanwhile provisional arrangements have to be made to carry on the government under popular control. This is all the more necessary at critical times like the present when empires are tottering and an old age is passing away.' This remark was made 18 months before Pearl Harbour. When the British Empire in South-east Asia collapsed like a house of cards before the Japanese onslaught, Jawaharlal would return again and again to the need for organising civil defence as well as popular resistance if necessary against a foreign invader. The Delhi Resolution was later ratified by the AICC at its meeting in Poona on 28 July; this has gone down in history as the famous Poona Offer associated with Rajaji's name. Jawaharlal made one of his memorable statements before the AICC. He attempted to explain to himself and to his audience the problem he faced in going along with this responsivist approach. He admitted his share in the responsibility for the resolution, saying, 'The difficulties in our way lay not in the Resolution itself but in the possible implications of it, which might lead us astray.' The three weeks which had passed since the resolution, without any response from the British authorities, seemed to make it clear 'that only one course of action is left open to us. Yet it may well be that we should put the seal of this Committee's approval on the Working Committee's decision, and then, soon enough, choose our path.'

He went on to express his personal conviction that:

... our full freedom will not come without struggle and travail and sorrow. In this world of war and conflict, we may not escape the price of freedom. To expect otherwise is to delude oneself. That future will ultimately depend on the strength of the Indian people and on the organised power of the Congress. To increase that

organised strength, therefore, all our energies must be directed. We must think of the immediate future and grasp whatever opportunity that offers itself to advance our cause.

Here again is a most interesting return to Gandhi's approach, which always concentrated on the immediate future and rejected distant aims as not only impractical but diversionary. There is no element of rhetoric or wishful thinking here, but a most attractive empathy between the disciple and the master, which transcended variations in vocabulary as well as ideas. Lest there be any misunderstanding of Jawaharlal's position in a moment of indecision within the Congress, he comes out with a bravura passage:

I do not want to blaze a trail and leave it to the future to achieve the fruits of it. I want to achieve those fruits now and today, if I see a possibility for doing so. I want to think in terms of power in the immediate future. This has restrained me. The other members of the Working Committee and I have the responsibility for guiding the affairs of the Congress and I feel that the time has now come when we should think in terms of achieving things and not merely in terms of speeches or shouting from platforms.

It may be that the dancing star of independence may emerge out of chaos, but it may also be that nothing but black clouds may emerge. So it may be wise not to create chaos at certain times.

This statement in Poona also contains a remarkable declaration of faith in the Congress as an organization and the intrinsic quality of the collective leadership which supported Gandhi:

I want the Congress to become as powerful an organisation as it could be. I want it to remain the same well-knit, united organisation it has been. I want the wise leadership of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, I want the great captaincy of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. I want the brilliant talents of Rajaji. I want every one of you, comrades, who are the leaders of your provinces and districts.

So I say, we should marshal our forces and not allow any split. We cannot escape a struggle, and, therefore, the fundamental

thing is to get ready for it mentally, psychologically and otherwise.

II

At this most critical moment in the history of the country, there were various nuances of perception among the leaders of the Congress, and also among political activists outside the organization. It is instructive to go back to these freely expressed differences, just to appreciate the remarkable openness which had become the basis of political activity in the Gandhian phase of the national movement. All this made it possible for a wide variety of views to be sharply expressed, ranging from the fully collaborationist to angry rebellious responses. Jawaharlal was sensitive to this whole range; his Marxist background made him realize the links between fascism and imperialism; his general acquaintance with history helped him to understand the specific, unique character of the new European totalitarians. His schooling under Gandhi had made him instinctively supportive of the fundamentalist satyagraha strategy when the adversary was totally unwilling to compromise. All this had to be explained in suitably simple terms to the people of India and this he did in a series of speeches in Bombay and the United Provinces between the August offer and his arrest in October. Since, in his own mind, there was no blurring of the confrontationist posture for the Indian people and the Congress, even while the August offer was pending, there was a certain continuity in these speeches which concentrated on the need for the people to organize themselves in uncertain times, and the essential importance of self-discipline and group discipline, when known institutional frameworks might disappear in the cataclysm of war.

At the same time, Jawaharlal did in one or two important pieces of writing explain to the world outside, particularly America, the rationale behind the Congress policy. The article, 'The Parting of the Ways', written in August 1940 and published in the magazine, *Aria*, in November, after he was arrested, is a good example of the successful elucidation of a complex situation to a distant audience:

In the mind and heart of India there was a conflict. There was an intense dislike of fascism and Nazism and no desire to see them win. If India could but be convinced that this war was being

fought for a new world order, for real freedom, than indeed India would throw all her weight and strength into it. But imperialism and we were old acquaintances, very old, with many generations of contact. We knew each other, suspected each other, and disliked each other thoroughly.... It was no easy matter for us to get over these tremendous hurdles, or remove the complexes that had grown up. Yet we said we would do it, but we could not even attempt it unless a great psychological shock was given to the people, a pleasant shock, which would suddenly change the air of India and get rid of fears and complexes. That pleasant shock could only come by an unequivocal declaration of independence and immediate steps to give effect to the popular will in the carrying on of the administration.

The Viceroy and the British Government have said a final 'No' to us and to India.

... But this declaration of the British Government means the final breaking of such slender bonds as held our minds together, it means the ending of all hope that we shall ever march together. I am sorry; for in spite of my hostility to British imperialism and all imperialisms, I have loved much that was England, and I should have liked to keep the silken bonds of the spirit between India and England. Those bonds can only exist in freedom.

After enunciating the problem in the simplest possible manner, Jawaharlal went to some trouble to explain why it was not possible to accept the new British argument about minorities in the Viceroy's rejection of the August offer. The crucial portion in the Viceroy's statement was as follows:

It goes without saying that they (the British Government) could not contemplate the transfer of their present responsibilities for the peace and welfare of India to any system of government whose authority is directly denied by large and powerful elements in India's national life. Nor could they be parties to the coercion of such elements into submission to such a government.

It is easy to trace this to the Lahore Resolution of the Muslim League. This was going to be the constant, negative factor which would bedevil the negotiations about the transfer of power, until the

bitter end and partition in 1947. Jawaharlal's reply to this argument is that the British Government is comfortably resigned to having no far-reaching or political changes in the country, 'for some group is bound to object to them. There are Indian reactionary groups that will play that role. Even if no Indian group objects, British vested interests will do so. This means that the status quo will largely remain to the great advantage of British imperialism. This is the way to perpetuate the present order, to make India safe for British vested interests.' He goes on with an elaborate discussion of the sectarian problem in the Indian situation:

So far as the Muslims in India are concerned, they are only technically a minority. They are vast in numbers and powerful in other ways, and it is patent that they cannot be coerced against their will.... If the two cannot agree as organised groups, it will be unfortunate for India, and no one can say what the consequence will be

Let us be clear about it. This communal question is essentially one of protection of vested interests, and religion has always been a useful stalking horse for this purpose.

Jawaharlal then goes on to recount India's remarkable record as a civilization tolerant of foreign religions.

The most dramatic result of the Viceroy's rejection of the Poona Offer was the return of the Congress without any reservations to the Gandhian path. It is a well-known story. The Working Committee met in Wardha and discussed a resolution drafted originally by Gandhi himself; later, the AICC in Bombay resolved to request Gandhi to resume the leadership of the Congress and prepare for civil disobedience. Gandhi decided that both the circumstances in Europe and the state of discipline in the Congress organization indicated that mass civil disobedience would be immature. The individual satyagraha programme was launched. In his letter to the Viceroy dated 6 September 1940 just before the AICC met in Bombay, Gandhi explained why it had become necessary for him to choose the confrontationist approach:

... I do not at all mind the Congress wandering in the wilderness. Nor should I at present engage in a fight with the Government over their policy if it were based on grounds which could be

understood by the plain man. But I must not be a helpless witness to the extinction of a great organization which I have held under curb on the ground of refusal to embarrass H.M.G. at the present critical juncture. I must not have it said of me that for a false morality I allowed the Congress to be crushed without a struggle. It is this thought that is gnawing at me.

The resolution itself, as passed on 15 September, requested Gandhi to take over the leadership of the struggle which had been forced upon the organization:

The All-India Congress Committee cannot submit to a policy which is a denial of India's natural right to freedom, which suppresses the free expression of public opinion and which could lead to the degradation of her people and their continued enslavement. By following this policy the British Government have created an intolerable situation, and are imposing upon the Congress a struggle for the preservation of the honour and the elementary rights of the people. The Congress is pledged under Gandhiji's leadership to non-violence for the vindication of India's freedom. At this grave crisis in the movement for national freedom, the All-India Congress Committee, therefore, requests him to guide the Congress in the action that should be taken. The Delhi resolution, confirmed by the A.I.C.C. at Poona, which prevented him from so doing, no longer applies. It has lapsed.

This part of the resolution is something which represented a return to all that Jawaharlal had stood for during these difficult months. In all his public speeches between Ramgarh and Poona, and after, Jawaharlal had stressed the need for a constituent assembly immediately and an effective transfer of power; he had shown a polite lack of interest in the details of defence organization, etc.

This historic resolution drafted by Gandhi and accepted by a divided Congress, under the unifying force of the brusque rejection by the British, marked the closing of an uncomfortable chapter.

The text of the resolution itself has some interesting aspects, illuminating the partnership between the Mahatma and Jawaharlal. The last para of the text went out of its way to re-express in clear terms the Congress theory of non-violence. It should have been expected in the normal course of things to have been the handiwork

of Gandhi, but it was not so. Jawaharlal drafted this paragraph. Gandhi's charming explanation of how all this came about reads as fresh today as when it was revealed in the AICC meeting at Bombay on 15 September 1940:

Let me now say something about how the resolution was drafted. Up to now I have been drafting Congress resolutions. However we now have a very able man to do the drafting. So the wording of the resolution is mine but it has been touched up by Jawaharlal. I am not such a master of English as Jawaharlal is. So I asked him to improve my draft. I must say that the exposition of non-violence in the resolution is Jawaharlal's. I had wanted to omit it. Jawaharlal had also agreed. But Maulana Sahab did not permit it. In saying all this I wish to emphasize that the resolution is wholly mine. The resolution says: 'We have no ill will against the British. We want friendship of all.' I am profoundly hurt even if a single English child dies. The thought of St Paul's Cathedral being damaged hurts me as much as it would hurt me to see the temple of Kashi Vishwanath or the Jama Masjid damaged.

We have here a remarkable expression of Gandhi's personal philosophy which had dominated Indian politics, and also his easy, productive, comfortable partnership with both Jawaharlal Nehru and Maulana Azad.

The next month was devoted by Jawaharlal to what could only be described as a sustained campaign against cooperation with the war effort. This was also the period when some powerful articles were written in the *National Herald*. One famous piece entitled 'On the Verge' concluded with an uncharacteristically loud peroration with a quotation re-employed to great effect:

We do not know what the future will bring to us, to our country, and to the world. It does not much matter what happens to us as individuals. We shall pass out anyhow sooner or later. But it does matter very much what happens to India, for if India lives and is free, we all live, and if India goes down, then who lives amongst us?

But India will live and live in freedom, for she has not survived through the ages to go down today before insolent might. And there will be no peace in India and no peace between

India and Britain till the proud imperialism of England is ended and India is free and independent.

In a recent debate in the British House of Commons (I think it was on the eve of the fall of Mr. Chamberlain's Government during the debate on Norway) Mr. Amery ended his speech by quoting some words of that great Englishman, Cromwell. Mr. Amery was addressing Mr. Chamberlain's Government. I address a larger audience — the British Government certainly, the British financiers who shape policy in India, the British ruling class, viceroys, governors and all who hang on to them. So, in the words of Cromwell, I say:

You have sat too long here for any good you have been doing. Depart, I say, and let us have done with you. In the name of God, go.

This article was followed by the series of speeches which led to his arrest even before he formally offered individual satyagraha. These speeches were all made in Gorakhpur and dealt with subjects as wide apart as the air bombing of cities, the need for solidarity with China and the fundamental grass roots problems of the kisans. There were also repeated references to non-violence and the need for discipline and total obedience to the leader of the struggle. A typical passage in one of the speeches shows his method:

We fight only in one way — by the nonviolent method taught by Mahatma Gandhi. When we resolved to start satyagraha we elected Mahatma Gandhi as our commander. Mahatmaji was already our leader, but this time we again elected him as our leader. A meeting was convened and it was passed by a great majority. We want to establish a panchayati raj in this country, but in a fight it is essential to be guided by one man. Therefore, we have elected Mahatma Gandhi as our commander, and asked him how to start the fight. Mahatma Gandhi expressed his desire to see the Viceroy again. He told him (the Viceroy) that if he went on differing with him (Mahatma Gandhi) we would offer opposition. He said this to the Viceroy plainly and the latter told him that he would not listen to him. So we must be ready.

It is not known when and what orders Mahatma Gandhi will give. I will now be going to Ballia and Ghazipur. Thereafter I am

going to Wardha where Mahatma Gandhi resides. There will be a sitting of our Committee. Mahatmaji will tell us what we should do. However long Swaraj may take it will be for your benefit. You should now be prepared and remain careful. I have, therefore, come from Allahabad to deliver this message to you. This fight is not going to end in a few days. It will be a long fight. We have resolved to remove the poverty of the kisans somehow or other. It is most likely that we may all lose our lives in this fight, but the people will be benefited by it.

It is an interesting passage not only for the content but for the short, crisp sentences, the simplicity of the style, the urgency of the mood.

It was on 16 October 1940 that Gandhi formally announced the rather quiet, deliberately slow type of civil disobedience, which he had decided to adopt this time. Vinoba Bhave would be the first individual satyagrahi and Jawaharlal, the second. Explaining to the impatient people in his own province why Gandhi had decided to adopt such a deliberately slow tempo, Jawaharlal said:

... I would have you remember that it has been the Congress way to start big movements in a small and sure way. Events themselves are pushing all of us forward and at any time they may come to us in overwhelming measure. Each one of us therefore must do his allotted task in a spirit of perfect discipline and keep ready for all emergencies whenever they might arise. Instructions issued by Gandhiji should be carefully observed and implicitly followed. The Congress and we have to face our greatest trial in the future that is unfolding before us. Let us all be ready for it in a spirit of confidence and without fretting and impatience.

The British Government, however, was not willing to permit Gandhi to dictate the course of events. They decided to take pre-emptive action and Jawaharlal and many other leaders were arrested without waiting for a formal violation of the law.

III

Jawaharlal's arrest and his trial in Gorakhpur galvanized the whole country and there was a remarkable expression of mass indignation by students all over the country.

There is no doubt that the British Government sensed in the Nehru style of agitational propaganda a much greater menace than the carefully controlled individual disobedience movement which Gandhi had envisaged. Jawaharlal himself seemed to have made no conscious decision to go beyond the framework of the struggle. He was just being himself, making speeches all over the place, explaining the new policy and asking the people to be prepared for worse things.

While all this was happening on the public front, Jawaharlal was also occupied in writing a brilliant epilogue to his autobiography for the American edition. It is a remarkable summing up of events as well as moods and successfully communicates the alienation, frustration, unhappiness and, finally, the disgust of the genuine liberal anti-fascist with the policies of the British Government. It gives a detailed account of the Congress responses to the War, including the latest one, the Poona offer. As an example of Jawaharlal's objectivity, the reference to Rajaji and his last attempt to persuade the British to share power is unmatched:

During the last few weeks, the Congress, at the instance of C. Rajagopalachari, made yet another offer to Britain. Rajagopalachari is said to belong to the Right in the Congress. His brilliant intellect, selfless character, and penetrating powers of analysis have been a tremendous asset to our cause. He was the Prime Minister of Madras during the functioning of the Congress Government there. Eager to avoid conflict, he put forward a proposal which was hesitatingly accepted by some of his colleagues. This proposal was the acknowledgement of India's independence by Britain and the immediate formation at the centre of a provisional national government, which would be responsible to the present Central Assembly. If this was done, this government would take charge of defence and thus help in the war effort.

... But imperialism thinks otherwise and imagines that it can continue to function and to coerce people to do its will. Even when danger threatens, it is not prepared to get this very substantial help, if this involves a giving up of political and economic control over India.... So the Viceroy gave reply on behalf of the British Government and rejected the Congress proposal.

Jawaharlal concludes in his response:

The All India Congress Committee withdrew the previous offer made by it and decided in favour of civil disobedience. Mr. Gandhi was appointed as the leader of this movement. As I write this we stand on the verge of this new adventure.

In a brilliant exposition of the Gandhian and the non Gandhian approaches within the Congress, Nehru said:

Most of us look upon this question from a political point of view, though all of us are ardently desirous of ending wars and ensuring peace. Mr. Gandhi, as an apostle of nonviolence, and many others who agree with him, are opposed to all wars. For him it is also a matter of conscience not to participate in this or any war. For others the reason is mainly a political one – the denial of the right of India to decide for herself in regard to the war, and the denial of freedom to her. Both avenues of approach lead to the same conclusion. Though the immediate issue is the war issue in India, the real question remains, and must remain, the independence of India.

At the very end, there is a characteristic return in this beautiful piece, written under tremendous pressure at a moment of frantic activity, to the idyllic charms of Kashmir:

But sometimes there is an escape for a while at least from this world. Three months ago I went back to Kashmir after an absence of twenty-three years. I was only there for twelve days, but these days were filled with beauty, and I drank in the loveliness of that land of enchantment. I wandered about the glorious valley and the higher mountains and climbed a glacier, and forgot for a while the pain and torment of soul which are the lot of humanity today. Life seemed to be worthwhile.

IV

This comprehensive review of what had happened in India and the world in his own life during the five years since the *Autobiography* was published in 1935, was written during short intervals between hectic periods of intense political campaigning in the United Provinces, after Jawaharlal Nehru's return from Wardha. Just one day after penning this retrospective assessment and attempt to explain to the American people the rationale behind the latest phase of the satyagraha campaign, Jawaharlal returned to the other challenges of communication in the Indian villages. His next speech on 18 October 1940 was in the Partabgarh district. This meeting seemed to have created a very vivid impression on his mind – a sort of recreation of all his innumerable talks, speeches and addresses to ordinary people in India.

Jawaharlal always used to talk about his coming back with uplifted spirits from his encounters with the Indian people his frustrations temporarily forgotten. This was true of his meetings with students all over the country and addresses in Hindi in all those parts of India where Hindustani was spoken. In other parts of India, where competent interpreters were available, he felt happy enough, but there must have been a lack of that personal chemistry linking the solitary seeker of certainty and the anxious masses crowding around him. But it was in his own beloved United Provinces, and even more so in the eastern districts where wealth and exploitation, poverty and cruelty were so clamorous in their insistence for recognition, that he felt totally at one with the crowd. It was, therefore, only appropriate that, during this crucial week or two, between the decision to launch civil disobedience and his own arrest, he went back to Gorakhpur. In another self-conscious assessment of his impact upon the people of the country and their ability to educate him, not in information but in sensibility, Jawaharlal sent to the *National Herald* an anonymous despatch on his own tour of some of the Oudh districts. There is vanity in this report and there is a certain, not entirely unattractive smugness. But the total effect is endearing. The impressive and overbearing size of the crowd, the impressive disciplined calm they displayed when listening to Jawaharlal, was described in this nominally objective and cool correspondent's report:

Jawaharlal Nehru spoke for just an hour and there was perfect silence throughout. Right at the beginning he had asked them not to interrupt his speech by slogans and they carried out his instructions to the letter and held themselves in leash, although their excitement was apparent. Occasionally a quiver of appreciation at something said ran through that mighty gathering.

This was a political gathering, but it was something much more. Jawaharlal Nehru spoke in a serious vein and with feeling. He was evidently moved. There was a sense of vast issues, of great decisions, of the call which might come to anyone at any moment. The multitude of listeners seemed to be in tune with the speaker and seemed to rise above themselves for the moment. There was a hush and a solemnity, which pervaded the atmosphere.

Here is a remarkably evocative attempt by the leader to communicate to his audience the excitement of impending events at a dramatic hour, and the ineluctable relevance of themselves, the people who really matter in this vast country, to these apparently remote developments in the cities of India, in the Council chambers, and far away in London:

...They were poor still, and overburdened with care and sorrow, but they had got rid of the fear that oppressed them and the hopelessness that enveloped their lives from birth to death. That was a mighty change, which had brought them nearer to Swaraj. And now they stood on the threshold of the future, a future which would mean a changed world and a new India. What this new India would be, he could not say. That would depend on their stout hearts and strong arms. Fate, destiny, Karma! We were not going to be their slaves, but we would bend them to our will and build India after the picture in our own hearts.

Then he came to the point. The War had made a choice necessary for India and Gandhi had made that choice on behalf of the Indian people:

... He spoke of Swaraj, panchayati raj and what this was; of the mighty revolution that was taking place all over the world; of

the war in Europe and how India was dragged into it; of the satyagraha started at Gandhiji's instance by Vinoba Bhave; of the next step that would follow; of the vast responsibility of each one of us at this tremendous crisis. Be ready and disciplined! Organise yourself, hold to nonviolence, put an end to all internal squabbles and differences and face the future with unity, strength and confidence.

The report ends with a typical poetic flourish:

...Right through that mighty gathering he marched, none moving or touching his feet, as they had done when he came. Only their hands were folded in a silent salute and their faces were alight with a new experience. The stars were shining brightly as Nehru motored away to Bara Banki and that multitude of human beings dispersed, filled all the roads, and marched towards their villages.

This is a complete encapsulation of the mood of the people of India at a moment of great stress, and the impact upon them and the reflection in their minds of an unusual individual, as rather fondly and a little romantically understood by himself. It is directly related to the earlier article published in the *Modern Review* on the 'Rashtrapati'. This remarkable piece of effective and deliberately emotional prose must have been written immediately after his return from one of the meetings. The decision to have it published anonymously was obviously his own. But the style was so individual and distinguishable that there was no serious attempt at concealment. It remains, therefore, at the very least, an important document in the evolution of Jawaharlal's communication with the people and himself. As such, it looks forward to the equally self-conscious and effective testament which he wrote much later as his final communication to his countrymen.

V

Jawaharlal's eighth term of imprisonment came not as a result of his own individual satyagraha, even though he had been designated by Gandhi as the second candidate after Vinoba Bhave. His speeches in eastern UP were considered so inflammatory in content and in style,

that the British Government decided to try him on charges of sedition. His trial took place in camera in Gorakhpur and he was sentenced to the unexpectedly lengthy term of imprisonment for four years. His speech in defence was smuggled out of jail and circulated throughout the country, providing an opportunity for students in all the universities to organize protest campaigns. In the restricted conditions of wartime legislation, the Nehru arrest was an important event which was followed by the arrest of almost all the other senior leaders, except Gandhi. Jawaharlal's statement to the court contained a famous sentence which became the currency of militancy throughout the Congress rank and file for the coming weeks:

I stand before you, Sir, as an individual being tried for certain offences against the state. You are a symbol of that state. But I am also something more than an individual. I too am a symbol at the present moment, a symbol of Indian nationalism, resolved to break away from the British Empire and achieve the independence of India. It is not me that you are seeking to judge and condemn, but rather the hundreds of millions of the people of India, and that is a large task even for a proud Empire. Perhaps it may be that though I am standing before you on my trial, it is the British Empire itself that is on its trial before the bar of the world.

This carefully drafted statement put the Indian case against Britain succinctly.

I am convinced that the large majority of the people of England are weary of empire, and hunger for a real new order. But we have to deal not with them but with their government and we have no doubt in our minds as to what that government aims at. With that we have nothing in common and we shall resist it to the uttermost. We have therefore decided to be no parties to this imposed war and to declare this to the world. This war has led already to widespread destruction and will lead to even greater horror and misery. With those who suffer we sympathise deeply and in all sincerity. But unless the war has a revolutionary aim of ending the present order and substituting something based on freedom and cooperation, it will lead to a continuation

of wars and violence and uttermost destruction.

That is why we must dissociate ourselves from this war and advise our people to do likewise and not help in any way with money or men. That is our bounden duty.

The very last para of the statement brings Jawaharlal back to his total commitment in a personal way to the poor peasants of eastern United Provinces. He had already written about them earlier. Now he returns to the subject:

I should like to add that I am happy to be tried in Gorakhpur. The peasantry of Gorakhpur are the poorest and the most long-suffering in my province. They are the products of a hundred and fifty years of British rule and the sight of their poverty and misery is the final condemnation of the authority that has dealt with them these many years. I am glad that it was my visit to Gorakhpur district and my attempt to serve its people, that has led to this trial.

For the next one year Jawaharlal was effectively cut off from contacts with the outside world, except through infrequent interviews and some desultory correspondence. Among these letters there are two or three which are examples of careful communication, the most significant being the long letter dated 22 June 1941 to Eleanor Rathbone, the British Member of Parliament, who had published a letter full of moral indignation against her Indian friends who had refused to cooperate with Britain in her hour of trial. The letter evoked much interest in India, primarily because Rabindranath Tagore shot off an angry terse communication from his sickbed in reply to Miss Rathbone. At a time when almost the whole national leadership was in prison, Tagore's reply represented the feelings of the whole country.

Tagore, in fact, begins his reply by saying that he was forced to write it because Jawaharlal was imprisoned:

I have been deeply pained at Miss Rathbone's open letter to Indians. I do not know who Miss Rathbone is, but I take it that she represents the mentality of the average 'well-intentioned' Britisher. Her letter is mainly addressed to Jawaharlal and I have no doubt that if that noble fighter of freedom's battle had not

been gagged behind prison bars by Miss Rathbone's countrymen, he would have made a fitting and spirited reply to her gratuitous sermon. His enforced silence makes it necessary for me to voice my protest even from my sick-bed.

The lady has ill-served the cause of her people by addressing so indiscreet, indeed impertinent, a challenge to our conscience. She is scandalized at our ingratitude -- that having 'drunk deeply at the wells of English thought' we should still have some thought left for our poor country's interests.

Perhaps, the most famous sentence in Tagore's letter which went round the whole country was:

I look around and see famished bodies crying for bread. I have seen women in villages dig up mud for a few drops of drinking water; for wells are even more scarce in Indian villages than schools.

It was, in every sense, Tagore's last pronouncement on behalf of the Indian people. Two months later, he was dead.

Gandhi was asked by *The Hindu* correspondent whether he had any comment on the lady's annoyance with India and the Indians. His reply was brief: 'After Tagore's reply, should I say anything, nothing?'

Jawaharlal's own reply, written in jail and not published at the time because of the censorship, is only interesting because it attempts to scrutinize the record of the British Empire in India over the previous three decades. It also contains a careful attempt to distinguish between non-violence and pacifism, the most significant part of this attempt at communication which failed, but which remains memorable because it represents an honest effort to see Indian actions from the British point of view and also to re-examine our position in the light of this critical assessment. All the dilemmas and anguish of a conflict between loyalties have been brought out in this honest enough self-appraisal. It is also an attempt to establish some minimum communication across a rather wide gulf, attempting to derive support from shared values:

The Committee is convinced that the decision of the Ramgarh Congress that satyagraha is inevitable and should be

prepared for, must be acted upon in its entirety and nothing has happened which should be allowed to vary it. The new turn in world events makes it all the more imperative that India's independence should be secured and that the Indian people should determine the form to be given to this. The Committee deprecates all attempts to confuse this fundamental issue by raising other questions of cooperation with Britain in defence. India will defend herself when she is free against all who seek to deprive her of this freedom; she cannot defend an empire which holds her in its grip and comes in the way of her freedom.

There is one more letter written during this prison term which has some memorable thoughts. Colonel Josiah Wedgwood, an old friend of India and Jawaharlal, had sent some books to Nehru in prison, including an anthology, *Forever Freedom*, which delighted Jawaharlal. In his letter he had made a reference to the possible chaotic consequences of the Gandhi-Nehru line in India. "You represent 5000 years of authoritarianism," he had written, "the Viceroy 500 years of aristocracy and Amery just philosophy like myself. Ought one to teach anarchy? Is it too dangerous to teach it to the blind? This is only to show one prisoner that he is not forgotten and much loved even by the 'enemy'."

Jawaharlal's reply is written in the same pleasant bantering tone, quite different from the angry, sharp impatience in the reply to Miss Rathbone:

I hate anarchy of all kinds, of the mind, the body, and the social organism. I dislike a mess, and my own predilection is entirely in favour of order. And yet there are worse states than that of anarchy and disorder, and in this mad world of ours, the choice often lies between evils.... Life is a perpetual risk, a gamble, and you have yourself repeatedly condemned the 'safety first' attitude.

There is yet another exciting passage in this letter sent across the seas during wartime, to a real companion in mind, trying to explain his own relationship and that of his fellow activists with the millions of India:

...We, who are of India, have changed also, though it is always difficult to measure and weigh the texture of our minds and spirit. Thought-riddled, we have sought to understand this world of ours; we have tried also to understand India. We have undertaken many a voyage in time and space, as well as geographically in the present, for the discovery of India. We have looked into millions of eyes and endeavoured to find out what lay behind them. It has been an amazing quest, full of adventure, full of hope-filling new discoveries, though sometimes evil and its brood have shown their ugly heads. It is this strange and powerful mixture of the past, the present and the future to be that is India today. Not an easy problem; no, certainly not. No worthwhile problem is easy of solution today. But utterly incapable of solutions except in one direction -- that of full-blooded freedom.

UNCERTAIN WORLD -- *LARKHARATI DUNIYA*

In the first week of December 1941, the British Government decided to release most of the political prisoners who had been jailed in the Individual Satyagraha. On 3 December, Jawaharlal found himself once again a free citizen. The Government of India's communique announcing this had expressed confidence 'in the determination of all responsible opinion in India to support the war effort until victory is secured'. The release order covered all whose offences had been 'formal or symbolic in character'. It was also separately mentioned that even though their offences had not been symbolic but involved criminal offences and a sentence after trial, Azad and Jawaharlal would also be released.

Looking back to that dramatic week it does appear a very unusual coincidence that this decision by Churchill's Cabinet was taken only four days before Pearl Harbour. To that extent, the British Government does deserve some credit for anticipating new complexities in the conflict. With Japan and the United States as the new participants on opposing sides in the War, a new dimension was added to the conflict and both Gandhi and Nehru had to react to these changes, respond to friendly advice from abroad to adopt a more sympathetic attitude towards Britain and her allies, and to explain to the people, particularly Congressmen, the essential fact that nothing had happened which could really justify a revision of the earlier policy of non-cooperation with the war effort.

This was arguably the most difficult moral and intellectual challenge faced by the Congress since Gandhi had first mobilized the Indian masses in the atmosphere of frustration and disillusion that followed the First World War. It was not made easier by the fact that Jawaharlal and Gandhi had different priorities at this critical moment. These difficulties were not limited to the two senior

leaders. Gandhi was firm in his rejection of all war, all violence, even in the face of an impending invasion by the Japanese. This position had been, as we know, already rejected by the Congress. Most Congress leaders believed that, while Gandhi's leadership and the supremacy of non-violence continued to be the two pivots around which the national movement could meaningfully revolve within war-time conditions, it was possible to make compromises with this ideal in joining the war effort against fascism and Japanese aggression, if only there was a concrete, tangible step forward in the movement towards full independence. This would mean a formal change of status as well as a genuine abdication of power by the British.

There were within the Congress, apart from C.R., leaders who wanted some formula by which the crisis could be resolved by co-operation with the British. Asaf Ali was a typical case. Leaders like Rajen Babu and Vallabhbhai saw themselves as the custodians of Gandhian principles in the Working Committee. Azad and Nehru were nearer to each other than to anybody else in their willingness to respond to any genuine British offer, along with a determination not to be fobbed off with empty promises and no real, immediate transfer of power under the pleas of communal disunity and the status of the princely states. Jawaharlal himself had also, throughout this difficult period, a deep conviction in the relevance of non-violence even in the new conditions produced by the proximity of war, serial bombing, threatened occupation by enemy troops and withdrawal by the British. This anxious self-questioning about the relative merits and demerits of pacifism, passive resistance and organized underground opposition to occupying troops distinguish the Nehruvian approach to the new situation.

These were the problems which were going to occupy the Indian national leadership during the next nine months, till the Quit India resolution was passed in August 1942. This is, perhaps, the densest period, most agitated, worried and most tentative in moral terms, during the whole history of the national movement. As such, it requires a more detailed study than any preceding stage in the evolution of the struggle. In the middle of this short interlude between imprisonments, as far as Jawaharlal was concerned, was the Cripps Mission and its failure. Throughout this period both Gandhi and Jawaharlal were very conscious of the need to explain to the now particularly important American public and, if possible, the US Government, the rationale behind the Congress insistence on an

immediate transfer of power. Both men were also aware of the British audience – Jawaharlal a little more than Gandhi, because of his continuous links with friendly groups in London through Krishna Menon and also directly. The wartime situation had brought some of the most distinguished American journalists to India and this also provided a new channel of communication to the West.

There had been one major development during Jawaharlal's imprisonment on which, in the circumstances, he could comment only after his release. The German attack on the Soviet Union, the rapid sweep of the *Wehrmacht* across the plains of Russia and Ukraine in the first two months, and the slow grinding down of that advance into what promised to be a lengthy war, had taken place while Nehru was isolated from the world. The changes in the policies of the communists and the socialist policies which were most immediately reflected in the students' movement in India, had already begun to take shape. The sympathisers of the Communist Party were convinced that this new development meant a transformation of the imperialist into a people's war. The Socialists were sympathetic to Russia as the victims of Nazi aggression, but would not accept the inference that, from the Indian point of view, the ideological character of the War had changed. At the other extreme, muted as it had to be under wartime conditions, was the sympathy for Japan and Germany as possible saviours of India from the hated British. This was a rather large minority which was encouraged by the emergence of Subhas Chandra Bose and the Indian National Army on the distant horizon. Netaji had escaped from India in January 1941 and had been able to reach Berlin through Afghanistan and the Soviet Union well before the Nazi-Soviet conflict erupted. His broadcasts to India began to be heard by the end of the year, and many nationalists were in genuine sympathy with his brave attempt to seek foreign allies at a time when the domestic movement launched by Gandhi and supported by the Congress seemed to have petered out.

It is a very mixed-up period and most sensitive individuals were aware of these conflicting loyalties. There were two basic realities which held the leadership and the movement together. Firstly, there was a genuine conviction amongst most people in India that there was no alternative to Gandhi and his leadership. This was a dominant factor influencing decision-making within the Congress and also for Jawaharlal personally. Secondly, there was a reciprocal

feeling of obligation during the worst of times, during moments of confrontation or even alienation on the part of Gandhi, that howsoever unhappy and dissatisfied he was with his failure to discipline a whole people or even the much smaller number of Congressmen in the technique of non-violence, he could not, without being untrue to himself, withdraw from ultimate responsibility.

This was, of course, not a new situation. Throughout the previous 20 years, these dilemmas had been faced, evaded sometimes, circumvented when necessary and, ultimately, overcome by a return to acceptance by the Congress of Gandhi's leadership on his terms. During the War, however, these concessions began to be mutual, not unilateral.

For a man like Jawaharlal, with his anxieties about China and Russia, and his compulsive desire to help in one way or another these two victims of aggression, with each of whom he had such deeply rooted ideological sympathies, this was a trying period indeed. However, both in public and in private, he was loyal, understanding and affectionate towards Gandhi. There were, however, strains as would be revealed in his private diaries written during his last term of confinement in Ahmadnagar Fort.

II

Jawaharlal's first statement to the press after release was made in Lucknow on 5 December 1941. It is a short and predictable enough document with the inevitable references to '... this world of infinite suffering, where violence and hatred and the spirit of destruction seem to reign supreme'. He saw very little hope in the Indian situation. 'In this India, where foreign and authoritarian rule oppresses and strangles us ... the call for action in the interest of a free India and a free world comes insistently to our ears'. His instinctive reaction now, as it had been earlier, was to link the Indian problem with the world problem. He goes on to speak about the heroic courage of 'other peoples struggling for their freedom'. The people of China, after four-and-a-half years of terrible struggle, and the people of Soviet Russia, 'pouring their heart's blood and destroying their own mighty achievements so that freedom may live', are, mentioned with admiration. There is, however, a very clear perception of the particular nature of the Indian struggle even in the

midst of this universal conflict. 'Our conditions are different, our ways of struggle are not the same. Yet there is the same call for sacrifice and discipline and iron determination.' There is an important expression of opinion here which was going to be of immediate relevance after the occupation of Burma by Japan in the first two months of the new year. It probably went unnoticed at that time. This was the salute given to Stalin and his colleagues for the scorched earth policy.

This was before Pearl Harbour. His second public statement after release from prison was made on 8 December 'in Lucknow University, a few hours after the Japanese attack and the American entry into the War. He begins by reiterating his unhesitating sympathies with Russia, China, America and England, in that order. He goes on to say immediately, lest there be any misunderstanding, that 'in spite of my sympathy for the group, there is no question of my giving help to Britain. How can I fight for a thing, freedom, which is denied to me?' He limits himself to merely mentioning the latest developments in the Far East where 'a new curtain has been rung down and no one knows what will follow. The war might even spread to India.'

One day later, Jawaharlal gave an extensive interview to the press where he reaffirmed his assessment that the progressive forces of the world were aligned with the group represented by Russia, Britain, America and China. At the same time he went on to say that the group had within itself 'strongly entrenched reactionary forces as evidenced by the treatment accorded to India'.

The dilemmas of the next eight months are already foreshadowed here. About Gandhi's leadership, he has no reservation: 'Mahatma Gandhi's leadership has been brilliant; he has stood firm as a rock on certain fundamental principles and has not allowed himself to be diverted by various smaller happenings.' Nehru admits that there are 'minor developments' which deserve criticism. But 'looking at the scene as a whole, the Mahatma's leadership has not only been straight and sound but brilliant'. About non-violence, Nehru repeats his difficulty in accepting all the implications of the doctrine; at the same time, he expresses his view that this is 'an ideal worth striving for with all our might'. At a deeper level, he goes on to notice that 'even this world war has demonstrated the utter folly of continued application of violence to the settlement of any problem'. In a characteristic relapse into practical politics, he goes on to observe

that violence can be 'effectively used by three or four big powers; the others may be hangers on. By themselves, they are completely incapable of thinking in terms of violence.' About the applicability of non-violence in international affairs, Jawaharlal permits himself to imagine a world based on complete disarmament. The alternative would be 'more or less complete destruction'. There is also a rather charming expression of a view, obviously influenced by H.G. Wells, that general disarmament should be 'accompanied by an international air force which might be used for police purposes'. Considering the technology of the day, it was really a leap of the imagination. Even here, Jawaharlal is quick to see the dangers of global control by a few. 'It is essential that this should not be under the control of a few great powers who can thus impose their will upon others. National freedom for each nation is essential before any such step can be taken.'

Three years before the UN Charter was adopted, Nehru is unconsciously facing up to the dilemmas between the Security Council and the General Assembly. This important press conference is also memorable for his personal tribute to Gandhi's Satyagraha movement. He sees its value in its impact on both Congressmen and the Indian people outside the Congress who have been strengthened by it during the previous 22 years. India itself has gained tremendously by it. 'Further, it has put forward before the world a method of peaceful struggle which, though it may fall into errors owing to human frailty, is undoubtedly a great evolution in the world of thought as well as action.' Three specific and concrete achievements are claimed for the satyagraha technique in the Indian situation: firstly, the maintenance of the 'self-respect and dignity of India' and the prevention of 'demoralization which a passive submission to foreign authority brings in'; secondly, 'certain success in impressing the world with India's demand'; finally, satyagraha seemed to Jawaharlal to emphasise 'the value of the peaceful technique of struggle while inhuman war goes on in a great part of the world'.

This was Nehru's reaction to the changed situation brought about by the release of political prisoners within India and the dramatic extension of the world conflict to Asia and the entry of America into the War because of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour. On the same day he made a statement to the British newspaper, *Daily Herald*, in which he tried to explain the nuances of India's reaction to

the changes which had taken place in the world since he had been jailed in November 1940. About Britain, he said that the people of India saw on the British side 'a combination' of imperialist and democratic forces with the former completely controlling Indian policy... Their [Indians'] very anti-fascist outlook made them rebel against the fascist and authoritarian nature of the Government of India.' About the Soviet Union's involvement in the War, he had this to say: '...The spread of the war to the Soviet Union widened and intensified their sympathy for the progressive forces, but did not affect their reaction to the British Government's policy in India, for that was based on other causes.' Perhaps the most touching passage in this interview was the expression of the Indian people's distress '...that at this supreme moment in the world's history, India was not playing a more active and effective part. We shared the agony of the world. Yet we felt that, even so, we were playing a not unworthy part, by drawing attention to certain essential aspects of freedom without which a military victory would be valueless and would lead to even greater tragedies.'

On the dilemma between non-violence and co-operation with Britain's war effort in India, if real power was transferred to the Indian people, Jawaharlal said: 'Mahatma Gandhi is a full believer in non-violence. Most of us are not pacifists, but this war itself has convinced us of the futility of armed states trying to destroy each other as well as civilization periodically by war. The system which gives rise to this must go.' He used this interview to reassure the British people that the entry of Japan into the War, which made it worldwide, 'is of vast interest to us, but will not make us panicky'.

This interview was followed by a long message to the *Newer Chronicle* in which he expressed his appreciation 'of the warm sympathy for India's cause on the part of many friends in England'. He is at pains to emphasize the need for: 'a complete change of scene and a pleasant psychological shock accompanied by the conviction that the old order has completely gone.... It is the present that counts.... Only the independence of India has any real meaning for us....' Jawaharlal ended by expressing 'our solidarity with the peoples of China and the Soviet Union who represent many ideals that we value and who have given a magnificent demonstration of their invincible courage and spirit of sacrifice. The masses in India would not react to recent developments in the war situation unless the basic effect of the Indo-British relationship is converted into

recognition of Indian independence and co-operation between free nations.'

The celerity with which Nehru reacted to the expansion of the European war to Russia and later to America and the Far East was very much in keeping with his long involvement with the external world. Gandhi's reactions were also predictable. About the release of prisoners and the Government of India's communique, he was clear that 'it did not evoke a single responsive or appreciative chord' in his mind. He repeated that 'all the freedom that India enjoys is the freedom of a slave and not the freedom of an equal, which is otherwise known as complete independence'. His rejection of the government's gesture was an angry one: 'Mr. Amery's pronouncements do not soothe the festering soul but are like sprinkling chillies on it.' He repeated his total commitment to non-violence and carefully noted that it was for the Congress President, the Working Committee and the AICC to determine the future policy of the Congress. 'I am but a humble instrument of service in conducting the Civil Disobedience,' he wrote. There was no doubt that Gandhi was an angry and disillusioned man. The refusal to release all those 'detained without trial or imprisoned because they hold the freedom of their country dearer than personal liberty' appeared to him to be strange. 'There is surely something utterly wrong somewhere,' he said.

Through the next eight months the nation was to see the growing conviction on Gandhi's part that a point of no return had been reached. This made the Quit India Resolution the inevitable next step.

At the same time, the very clear order of priorities in Gandhi's mind between domestic and international affairs, could not have demonstrated in clear terms in this period of great change and dramatic events. Two days after Pearl Harbour, Gandhi made an important statement to the press about Abdul Ghaffar Khan who had been holding little camps for non-violence training of Khudai Khidmatgars:

In the midst of the human conflagration which envelops the world powers who believe in the strength of their arms, little knowing what in reality they are fighting for, it is healthy and uplifting to contemplate what a man like Badshah Khan... is doing for the cause of peace and for qualifying himself for

taking an effective part by non-violent means in the freedom movement.

But even to Badshah Khan, Gandhi could not be less than undemanding: 'He has undying faith in non-violence, though he has not worked out all its implications.'

About world developments after Japan's attack on Pearl Harbour and America's entry into the War, Gandhi was much less concerned. His formal reaction came, in fact, a week later, on 20 December. It was, to be charitable, confused and rather uninvolved. About the entry of America in the War, he said it was not possible for him to join the chorus of current opinion; he could not welcome this entry of America; he would have preferred America to remain as an arbitrator and mediator between the warring nations: 'By her territorial vastness, amazing energy, unrivalled financial status and owing to the composite character of her people she is the one country which could have saved the world from the unthinkable butchery that is going on.' Gandhi goes on to say that he did not know whether America could have avoided the entry. This is an astonishing statement, ten days after Japan made the decision for the Americans. This delayed, obviously sincere, and essentially sympathetic view of America's role in the world, is important. It shows the limitations of Gandhi's outlook as well as his tremendous self-confidence. To complete the picture, one has to recall that the three or four days after Pearl Harbour had been devoted by Gandhi in writing out a wholly new agenda for Congress workers on the constructive programme. It was detailed and was carefully drafted with an eye on the world conflict which had now come so near India's frontiers. He finished the draft in Bardoli when the Congress resolution on the War was finalized.

In some ways this was a non-event. The programme was not published at that time either in the *Harijan* or elsewhere, but it shows the exact priorities in Gandhi's mind. He was interested in 'here and now', not so much in 'far off things', which also had their own place, but which did not crowd themselves upon him as they did all the time on Jawaharlal.

III

Both Gandhi and Nehru had been at one in their immediate rejection of the government's new policy concerning political prisoners. From their different points of view they proceeded to reactivate the Congress, redefine a new national strategy and carry on the dialogue with the British Government in the new situation created by the extension of the War into Asia. The Bardoli Resolution of the Congress, based on Jawaharlal's draft and accepted by Gandhi, was an important step in this evolving process. Careful and detailed textual analysis of the original draft and the final version, as accepted by the majority of the Working Committee who went along with Gandhi, both in his total commitment to non-violence and also in his rather casual attitude towards changes in the global strategic equation, would be of permanent historical interest. For our purposes, however, it would be sufficient to have a look at the two or three passages in Jawaharlal's original draft which were omitted in the final consensus document. The first passage left out refers to world-wide disarmament and the freedom of India, envisaged as a part of the larger freedom for all peoples and nations. The realists in the party had obviously no time or use for such flights into idealism. More significant was the omission of the following sensitive passage about the Soviet Union and China:

...While the Committee have no quarrel with the peoples of any of the warring nations and view with deep dismay their efforts at mutual destruction, they must express their condemnation of the unprovoked and unannounced aggression of Nazi Germany against the Soviet Union. The Committee have not endorsed in the past all the policies pursued by the Soviet Union but they have recognized that the Union stood for certain human, cultural and economic values which are of great importance to the growth and progress of humanity. They have watched with great interest the progress of this great experiment in human civilization and they consider that it would be a tragedy if the cataclysm of war involved the destruction of this endeavour and achievement. They have admired the astonishing self-sacrifice and heroic courage of the Soviet people in defence of their freedom and send to them their warm sympathy. The Committee also send their greetings to the Chinese people who, through four and a half years of

devastating war and suffering, have never flinched and have set an example of unparalleled heroism.

Some marginal significance can also be read into one passage in the final draft which was not there in the original version, where it stated that a subject India cannot 'offer voluntary or willing help to an arrogant imperialism which is indistinguishable from fascist authoritarianism'. This is taken from the second draft prepared by Jawaharlal after discussion in the AICC and survived in the third and final version. It is a departure from the careful distinction in Jawaharlal's mind between fascism and imperialism. The refusal of the British to respond to Indian overtures, and the failure of the Empire to protect its territories in Asia against the Japanese invaders in the first three months of the new year, confirmed Jawaharlal's judgment that there was really very little to distinguish imperialism in action in India and fascism abroad.

The Bardoli Resolution was immediately followed by instructions by the Congress Working Committee to its branches which go into some details concerning reorganizing the country's economy in response to the war situation. The agenda is based upon Gandhi's constructive programme which was seen to be of 'particular importance at this juncture':

...It is meant not only to bring about unity among various groups, to remove disabilities which keep sections of the community backward and depressed, to promote self-reliance and the cooperative spirit among the people, to increase production and have fairer distribution but also furnish the best opportunity and means of contacts with the people and service to them which are necessary for winning their confidence.

This important document was drafted by Jawaharlal with the entire background of Congress work at grass roots level during the previous twenty years in mind. It is an attempt to use the partial success of popular mobilization achieved by the Congress to meet new contingencies which could include bombing, activities of anti-social elements and even actual invasion. This was going to be the major topic of his many speeches during the next six months. Apart from the constructive programme itself, the Congress response would revolve around the organization of civic volunteers both in

urban and rural areas. 'Such organization should be formed on the basis of strict non-violence and it should always be remembered that the Congress adheres to this principles,' he cautioned. In a remarkable example of tolerance, the instructions specifically permit the volunteers to 'cooperate with other organizations working for similar ends'. There is no doubt that in Jawaharlal's mind such a liberal permission would have included not merely other popular groups but also government-sponsored outfits like the ARP (Air Raid Protection) set-up. Among other topics in which Congressmen were asked to take an interest was the development of village industries on the Chinese model, because 'big scale industries' had suffered because of the War and transport had become difficult because of military requirements. Very tentatively, the Congress was moving towards an effective response towards wartime conditions. In the last resort when there was an actual physical emergency, Congressmen were specifically instructed to cooperate, 'when instructions are issued to the public by the authorities for the preservation of life and property and the maintenance of public order'. The Congressmen were asked to carry out 'such instructions unless they are contrary to the Congress directions'.

This is an example of the highest common factor approach, attempted and realized by the 15 members of the Working Committee and Gandhi, at a time of widely varying responses to the War. Many of these topics would be repeated again and again by Jawaharlal in his speeches – in Kanpur, to the trade union workers; in Wardha, after the AICC approved the Bardoli Resolution and, later, in Allahabad and in Calcutta, when he had occasion to address students.

These instructions were published in the newspapers and also in the *Harijan*. In this published version, the last paragraph in the original letter of instructions was left out: 'The Committee do not contemplate any invasion of India in the near future, but in the event of any such attempt, Congressmen can on no account submit to it or cooperate with it even if the consequences of such non-cooperation be death.'

The majority in the Working Committee and Gandhi himself must have thought that this imaginative exercise was unnecessary and would only create problems for the Congress in its dialogue with the Viceroy. It might also have appeared as a rather superfluous commitment in advance of actual developments.

The Bardoli Resolution was adopted two weeks later in mid-January 1942 in Wardha. The speeches made by both Jawaharlal Nehru and Gandhi during this meeting are important. In Jawaharlal's speech, he was at pains to respond to Gandhi's reference in a letter to the Congress President that 'there were schools of thought in the Working Committee', a minority view 'believing in non-participation on the ground of non-violence, pure and simple; a second position believing that the Congress should not carry non-violence to the point of refusing association in the war under any circumstances, and a third group which had reasons as strong as the decisive reason of non-violence guiding the minority.'

Jawaharlal's reply is pleasant, good humoured but firm in his refusal to take Gandhi's complaint too seriously:

...Recently frequent references have been made to the differences and 'groups' in the Working Committee and with one of the alleged groups my name has also been associated. I may tell you in confidence that there are not three but fifteen groups. Each individual member of the Working Committee forms a group and such differences are necessary for progress. There are differences between me and Rajaji. He has been emphasising other points of the resolution. I am, however, proud to move the resolution which will be seconded by Rajagopalachari.

This meeting can, in retrospect, be seen as of historical importance because Gandhi, in his lengthy speech, discussed the existence of different viewpoints, the position of Jawaharlal personally, and, in a celebrated passage, reiterated his conviction that Jawaharlal was his heir. It is an important enough assessment of the divisions within the Congress and the relationship between himself and Jawaharlal to deserve full quotation:

Do not please go away with the idea that there is a rift in the Congress lute. As Maulana Sahab has said, the Working Committee has functioned like members of a happy family. Somebody suggested that Pandit Jawaharlal and I were estranged. This is baseless. Jawaharlal has been resisting me ever since he fell into my net. You cannot divide water by repeatedly striking it with a stick. It is just as difficult to divide us. I have always said that not

Rajaji, nor Sardar Vallabhbhai, but Jawaharlal will be my successor. He says whatever is uppermost in his mind, but he always does what I want. When I am gone he will do what I am doing now. Then he will speak my language too. After all he was born in this land. Every day he learns some new things. He fights with me because I am there. Whom will he fight when I am gone? And who will suffer his fighting? Ultimately, he will have to speak my language. Even if this does not happen, I would at least die with this faith....

Maulana Saheb has not properly described how this resolution was framed. This is not the resolution as drafted by Jawaharlal. His draft has been materially amended. Rajaji also had a hand in revising it. People have an erroneous impression about Jawaharlal that he never budes from his views. Today at least he cannot get that certificate. He argues vehemently, but when the time for action arrives, he can make considerable compromises. This resolution is a product of a general consensus. The views of all the members of the Working Committee are reflected in this resolution. Like *khichri* it contains pulses, rice, salt, chilli and spices. Maulana Saheb has already explained the different points of view within the Working Committee. We have many groups amongst us. One is represented by Jawaharlal. His opposition to participation in the war effort is almost as strong as mine, though his reasons are different. He will not concede that he has retraced his steps in consenting to this resolution. But he himself will agree that the Rajaji group can take a different view of this resolution. The original draft had left no room for Rajaji and his followers to function. Rajaji would like to participate in the war effort if the Government accepted the conditions laid down by the Congress. So he has opened a tiny window for himself. Through this window Rajaji will try to pull Jawahar towards him and Jawahar will pull in the opposite direction. It is no longer open to the Government and the Congress critics to say that the Congress has banged the door against negotiation on the doctrinaire ground of non-violence.

IV

The interval between the AICC meeting in Wardha and the Cripps Mission was eventful. During these three months, Jawaharlal had occasion to address many audiences on the rapidly changing war situation and India's response to it. Of particular interest in these speeches is his constant interest in Russia and China. In one of the earliest speeches made in Allahabad after his release, on 14 December 1941, he had this to say about the Soviet Union:

You must have heard about Russia and might have heard adverse reports about its internal affairs. We know that in India, Russia is discussed in and out of Congress circles. I have disliked many things in Russia and have frankly expressed my views about them. Twenty-four or twenty-five years ago a new order was introduced in Russia. They had to face great hardships and to resort to violence but they placed the proletariat on a high pedestal. They committed thousands of mistakes; still they presented a new picture before the world and established the rule of the masses.

So these are the two things you have to bear in mind. The path shown to Indians by the satyagraha movement gave them much encouragement and made them capable and strong. But we cannot introduce in India the Soviet system of government. You might be able to introduce minor changes on the Russian model but you cannot copy Russia. Like India Russia was also illiterate but you can hardly find any illiterate there today. They have improved the condition of the peasantry enormously. They have developed their industries and hundreds of factories are working there. So you see that they made great strides in advancing their civilization and have presented a new picture before the world. This gave tremendous strength to the masses.

... Many countries were invaded in the present war but the invasion of Russia was the most surprising one. A fierce attack was launched in which fifty lakhs of troops participated simultaneously over a long front of thousands of miles, and German armies marched ahead. In the annals of world history we do not read of such a big battle being waged anywhere as was waged by Germany against Russia. I do not want that the new order which Russia has evolved should crumble to pieces.

It is this which makes the matter complicated. On the one hand the attitude of the British Government fills us with indignation and our only reaction to such an attitude can be one of opposition and rebellion against their system of government, but on the other hand we are anxious to avoid anything that might inflict any harm on our friends, China and Russia. There are also certain parties in England which sponsor the cause of India's freedom and there are certain countries in the world which are anxious to see India free such as America and others. So the question arises in the hearts of Indians as to what policy should be adopted.

Here we have Jawaharlal's continuing worries about how to respond sympathetically, effectively, in an involved fashion, to the new situation created by the participation of the Soviet Union and the United States in the War. The earlier situation during the period of the individual satyagraha had fundamentally changed because of these new developments even though there was, even here, a thin line of continuity because of his sympathy with the people of France prostrate under the Nazi heel and the people of England going through the Battle of Britain, in the months after Dunkirk in 1940, with determination, courage and stamina in a unique situation. These concerns were to inform all his speeches and his articles during these eight months between prison terms.

He was very clear in his rejection of many things in the Soviet model even in this hour of great sympathy and concern. In a private communication to Hajrah Begum, wife of Z.A. Ahmad, the UP communist leader, with whom he always had a certain special relationship, he confessed:

— All of us can at best try to see the light and follow it, though often enough this is a business of groping in semi-darkness. Nothing could have been more magnificent than the Soviet's splendid defence. Yet I believe that the old order in the Soviet will undergo considerable modification just as the old order in other countries must inevitably change. I do not think that the basic economic policy of the Soviet will change but I do think that the political approach and orientation will be greatly influenced, as it is being influenced, by Britain and America. That influence will of course be mutual. The old communist tactic is hardly

likely to survive this war.

You are perfectly right in not considering me as a kind of secondary Lenin. Of course I am not.

He was being too optimistic. It would require forty years of experimentation, improvisation, the Khrushchev Reforms and its slow decline during his successors to finally fulfil Jawaharlal's hopes, during the Gorbachev Revolution twenty years after his own death and, more than four decades after this brave expression of faith.

The dilemmas produced by China and Russia were never evaded by Jawaharlal in those difficult times. In his speech to the Trade Union Congress in Kanpur, in February 1942, he tackles this problem:

... People argue that I have been inconsistent and have changed my attitude by not giving help to China and Russia. This appears to be an absurd allegation because Russia and China are not fighting for the freedom of others. They are fighting for their own freedom, honour and safety. So long as India does not attain freedom, to help Russia in this war is to strengthen the chain of our own slavery. You may very well say that we should help the British because Britain, China and Russia are united and so this war is ours. But what we have learnt so far, we cannot forget. Whosoever attacks us, we will face him. United we should face him who oppresses us. We have learnt to fight and to face and until we achieve freedom we will continue to do so. Let the British go to hell!

If even Germany or Japan comes, united we shall face them also. We have no grudge against Germany. But we dislike her ways and her dictatorship. I feel very much offended if anyone advises that we should help the British because the conditions would worsen if Japan or Germany come here. Has it become our lot to remain slaves of someone or the other – slaves of Japan and Germany if not of the British?

Jawaharlal's admiration for Russia in its moment of peril was, perhaps, most ardently expressed in his speech to the Friends of the Soviet Union Conference in Lucknow in February:

... Germany concentrated her full force against Russia. There is no instance in history where any country invaded another country with such a huge force. The attack was made during the night without any warning. Russians resisted the attack. They were defeated several times. They had to fall back on many occasions. In spite of all adversities they have put up a splendid resistance which is unique in history. Uptil now no other country has been able to resist a formidable enemy for so long. Any other country subjected to such a huge attack, and defeated in so many battles, would have surrendered. But the Russians who were forced to retreat 500 miles are now advancing forward. They have extraordinary strength. They draw their strength from their socio-economic and political structure.

It is a remarkably percipient speech. Among the achievements attributed to the Soviet Union is the manner in which the Russian Revolution solved the question of 'a large number of diverse communities which differ with each other in every respect except that before the Revolution they were all slaves. We can learn a lot from the manner in which the Russian Revolution solved this question.'

The conclusion of this speech looks forward to the future 'common bond' between India, China and Russia. He was mentioning this in connection with the visit of General and Madame Chiang Kai-shek which had just taken place. In a passage full of ironic undertones he developed the theme of this hopeful triangular relationship:

In a statement published in the papers today, Chiang Kai-shek has said, the relationship existing between India and ourselves is several thousand years old, our common boundary is 2,500 miles long, but a major war has never been fought between these two countries for the last thousand years. This is a fact worthy of our consideration. The reason seems to be that these two countries always wanted peace and wanted to preserve their respective cultures. Now we see that this bond is again becoming strong and I visualize that China, Russia and India will shortly become closely interconnected.

It is easy enough to poke gentle fun and, sometimes not so gently, at these romantic musings. They were romantic but they were

also based on a very clear perception of the geographical and political realities of the Eurasian landmass.

By the middle of February 1942, physical developments connected with the War brought a new urgency to the problems of India's political future. The ease with which Malaysia and Burma were overrun, and the Japanese bombing of some coastal cities, made it necessary for Jawaharlal to develop, in some detail, his ideas of how to face a possible enemy occupation. In many speeches made at this time he developed the idea of guerilla resistance if possible and also a scorched-earth policy in the Soviet manner. These ideas did not find favour with Gandhi who continued to see no distinction between the old devil and the new. More important, however, than these differences about a hypothetical situation was the total unity of mind in the two men about the link between non-violence practised as a discipline, the constructive programme used as an instrument for the economics of defence in war conditions and also for political mobilization, and the utter futility of cooperation with the British in the absence of a real change in the political reality. During the latter part of February and early March, stories began to come in about the evacuation of refugees from Burma. These naturally formed a major topic in Jawaharlal's speeches. He was particularly concerned about racial discrimination in organizing the trek back to India.

Another problem which concerned Jawaharlal during this time was that of food supplies. This is important because, as we now know, it was the failures of government organization which led to the terrible Bengal famine in 1943. The UP Congress Committee studied the question in some detail, made some specific recommendations and Jawaharlal thought it important enough to write about it in the *National Herald*. Very briefly, the emphasis in wartime conditions would be on local production, almost a system of village autarchy, to get over the difficulty of transport and the dislocation of supplies. Apart from the increased production of food crops which should be done even at the cost of commercial crops, it was suggested that more vegetables and fruits should be cultivated.

It must be remembered that this was in line with the general effort of the government as a part of its war front activities. In line with the distinction made in all policy pronouncements between non-cooperation and non-embarrassment, the Congress was willing to cooperate with the authorities in increasing self-reliance. That was the only way the country could prepare for more austere conditions

during the next stage in the War.

Self-sufficiency and self-protection were the key concepts in Jawaharlal's mind, for a country during wartime, either as a target of air raids or under enemy occupation; this was the lesson which he learnt from reading about Britain and China. The idea was to have small units of 50 houses each. The Congress programme also attempted to involve the khadi *bhandars* and the constructive programme workers in this process.

This careful planning for a contingency which never materialized had more than transient historical interest. It singles out UP as one of the more efficient Congress provincial organizations; it also gives some indication of Jawaharlal's strenuous interest in detail in matters of administrative organization, a trait which has usually been ignored or underrated.

Jawaharlal had occasion to address both British and American audiences during this troubled period. We have mentioned earlier that, immediately after his release, he had sent a cable to the *New York Chronicle* making it clear that India would 'never accept any position in an Empire by whatever name it is called', he stated proudly:

... India is a great nation and a mother country which has influenced in the past vast sections of the human race in Asia; she is not a colony or offshoot of another nation growing to nationhood. She wants to live in peace and friendship with all nations in the world, but she is inevitably drawn to her neighbours with whom she has had thousands of years of cultural contact, more especially to China and Burma in the East and Iran and other countries of Western Asia.

He was quite conscious of the value of his rather limited constituency in London. In a telegram to Krishna Menon he made clear that the prisoners' release made no difference to Indo-British relations; however, he desired to express 'solidarity with peoples of China and Soviet Union in the magnificent struggle for freedom'. He wanted Menon to convey his good wishes to the American, Soviet and Chinese Ambassadors in London. During the next several months there were going to be problems of communication for India and Jawaharlal. Many old friends thought that India was letting them, and also herself, down by not adopting an attitude of total support to the allies at a time when the Soviet Union and America

had both joined the War and made it more respectable according to contemporary liberal notions of ideology. Edward Thompson, for example, had requested the Congress to change its policy with regard to the War. Jawaharlal had no difficulties in turning down this advice: 'Dr. Thompson advises us to ignore the British Government and go ahead. This sounds very brave but it is not clear what it means in terms of the present. As far as I can see a country cannot go ahead in the way it desires so long as that country is bound hand and foot by an authoritarian government. Full freedom is essential for it to function effectively.'

Jawaharlal had a brush with H.G. Wells also. The English writer had reacted adversely to Jawaharlal's demand in his *News Chronicle* article for immediate self-government. He asserted that what Nehru and the Congress demanded was in effect the handing over of the administration of all India to 'a small minority of political amateurs representing at the most extravagant not one in 400 Indians'. He also warned that there was, in India, a multiplicity of beliefs, languages and social cultures, 'and if the string of the bundle, the old British Raj, is cut, the bundle will immediately fall to pieces'.

Jawaharlal was hard-hitting in his reply:

... Eminent thinker and historian that he is, sometimes I have a feeling when reading some of his writings that he has gone back to the realms of romance.

Whenever he writes about India, he gives me this impression, for his knowledge of the past and present in India, of Indian history and culture seems to be singularly limited and derived chiefly from travellers' tales or the romantic effusions of some of his own countrymen. He does himself less than justice when he allows his cultured, far-seeing mind to deal with the vital problems affecting hundreds of millions of human beings after the manner of the Blimps and Pukka sahibs, whom he so dislikes....

I am not aware of ever having demanded that the administration of India should be handed over to a small minority of political amateurs. I have demanded that the constitution and future destiny of India should be settled by a constituent assembly, elected by the people of India on the basis of adult suffrage. I shall be glad if Mr. Wells will tell me what other democratic way

there is of settling these questions. As for our being amateurs, possibly he is right. But is he so very satisfied with the experts who control his destinies and ours? Even if we forget past history, recent events have not led us to associate much intelligence or competence with them. The average British expert in India is usually considered to be a monument of ignorance and incompetence.

— In any event, the British Raj is disappearing, whether Mr. Wells's countrymen like it or not, and nothing in the world can keep it functioning much longer. It has been a bad dream for us, but after all it is just a page in our long story and we are turning over the page. May I suggest to Mr. Wells to acquaint himself a little more with Indian history and cultural achievements?

This is an interesting exchange because the two men were intelligent communicators, very sensitive interpreters of history when they were in top form. Jawaharlal had learnt a lot from the popular writings of H.G. Wells; after all, the old man had been the model to all writers everywhere in the early years of the 20th century for effective popularization without vulgarization of history, economics and science. Jawaharlal himself expressed his gratification at the celebrated tribute of Wells to Ashoka. These testimonials from the West were few and far between.

We have already seen that the visit of Chiang Kai-shek to India in February was the occasion for some useful diplomatic and public relations activity by Jawaharlal. After many doubts and difficulties, mainly because of the protocol problems created by their British hosts, the Chinese visitors were able to meet Gandhi and have a long conversation with him. Jawaharlal himself had lengthy conversations with the Chinese leader in New Delhi. In his comments afterwards he reiterated the Congress policy of complete sympathy and support to China:

... As regards actual help, the Congress can only make a gesture of aid, as it had done when a medical unit was sent out some time ago. More, the Congress, as it is constituted, cannot do.

People in India can function for any such cause only through an Indian agency and under Indian control. The present ways open to them do not allow their collaborating with the Chinese

but only with the British people in India, and thereby they can indirectly and distantly collaborate with the Chinese. There can be no direct collaboration.

Indian sympathy for China took shape long before the recent war situation developed....

The Congress reply to the Chinese appeal is, 'we shall very gladly help you but our hands are tied'.

He also took the occasion to impress upon the Indian people the relevance of the Chinese model in keeping the economy going in wartime conditions.

Summing up the visit a few weeks later, Jawaharlal reflected:

...During the last decade almost unconsciously we have been drawn towards each other and now the visit of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek and Madame Chiang has quickened the process.

This visit came strangely and unexpectedly, but the new bonds between China and India will remain. The Generalissimo expressed repeatedly his wish that cultural and other contacts between the two countries should be developed....

...We had in our midst the very symbols of China and they came to us bringing goodwill for India and her people, and their ardent desire for closer bonds with our country. They brought China very near to us and their presence itself was an inspiration. Rock-like they had stood in the midst of peril and disaster and never flinched, and out of misfortune itself they had plucked the fine flower of youth and hope and strength. The Generalissimo was the symbol of China's freedom and unity and the determination which never wavers; the radiant lady who came with him and who was his partner in life's journey showed us how graciously womanhood can face even the storm of war when the cause of freedom beckons. Together with millions of their countrymen and countrywomen they had played the game of life and death and thrown themselves in that brave adventure which had transformed China and astonished the world.

And so the dream came very near to me and took shape, and I saw the future filled with hope because China and India were friends and comrades in the great adventure of man.

This was in the form of an interview to *The Hindu*. He also made a broadcast to China on China Day, 7 March.

The visit of Chiang Kai-shek was a serious diplomatic move by two members of the wartime alliance, China and the United States, to influence the Congress 'in the right direction'. This did not work, but as a public relations exercise it was a great success. To Jawaharlal, it was a moving personal experience because of his special admiration for the Chinese civilization and the conduct of the Chinese people when faced with aggression. In his speeches at this time, he was careful to link China and Russia as the two major victims of aggression. We have noticed this already. The visit of the Chinese leader gave Jawaharlal an opportunity of sending back to the American leadership some idea of the impatience and frustration of the Indian people. He was also able to use this visit to put paid to any hopes which might have been entertained in Washington about a sudden change of heart in the Congress leadership as a result of the new proximity of the War.

A more important and considered effort, at articulating for the benefit of the world outside the dilemmas of Indian nationalism at this turning point in history, was Jawaharlal's article published in *Fortune* magazine in March 1942. This was written at the specific request of the editor. It refers to Britain's total lack of interest in developing an indigenous industrial structure in India. Jawaharlal is quite aware of the concerns and interests of his American readers. He informs them that attempts by an Indian industrialist to develop an automobile industry, aeroplane manufacture and shipbuilding, 'the very industries most required in wartime', were successfully obstructed. He talks about the work of the National Planning Committee and the manner in which its work was hindered by the government, even though its reports would have been particularly valuable in wartime.

Jawaharlal made the following specific suggestions to his American readers about a possible programme which could lead to India's happy association with the war effort:

I would suggest that the leaders of America and Britain declare: First, that every country is entitled to full freedom and to shape its own destiny, subject only to certain international requirements and their adjustment by international cooperation. Second, that this applies fully to countries at present within

the British Empire, and that India's independence is recognized as well as her right to frame her own constitution through an assembly of her elected representatives, who will also consider her future relations with Britain and other countries. Third, that all races and peoples must be treated as equal and allowed equal opportunities of growth and development. Individuals and races may and do differ, and some are culturally or intellectually more mature than others. But the door of advancement must be open to all; indeed those that are immature should receive help and encouragement. Nothing has alienated people more from the Nazis than their racial theories and the brutal application of these theories. But a similar doctrine and its application are in constant evidence in subject countries.

Such a declaration clearly means the ending of imperialism everywhere with all its dominating position and special privileges. That will be a greater blow to Nazism and fascism than any military triumph....

But the declaration, however good, is not enough, for no one believes in promises or is prepared to wait for the hereafter. Its translation into present immediate practice will be the acid test.... A provisional National Government could be formed and all real power transferred to it. This may be done even within the present structure, but it must be clearly understood that this structure will then be an unimportant covering for something that is entirely different. This National Government will not be responsible to the British Government or the Viceroy but to the people, though of course it will seek to cooperate with the British Government and its agents.

This *Fortune* article is one of Jawaharlal Nehru's finest efforts in communicating across a deep political divide, at a moment of so many rival interests for the audience. It gives in an encapsulated form the long story of India's attempt to rediscover herself in an insensitive, hostile, or merely uncomprehending world. It is infused with a certain confidence that the educated public and the policy-makers in the United States would be a little more willing to understand our special susceptibilities, once they were reasonably well-informed about Indian history and the growing irrelevance of the British presence in the country. There is necessarily a great deal of immediate politics in it; there is bitterness at the manner in which,

by decisions taken far away, India, 'the classic land of modern imperialist control, must continue under British tutelage' even though Syria and Korea had been promised freedom after the War. There is a firm rejection of the Nazi racial theories and the brutal application of these theories. However, it is also noted that: 'A similar doctrine and its application are in constant evidence in subject countries.'

This article was probably written in February and published in the March issue of the *Fortune*. About the same time, Jawaharlal had occasion to address his Indian audience in Hindi. A new edition of *Larkharati Duniya*, translations of his recent essays and writings, was published in March 1942. The new preface he wrote for this book gave him an opportunity for reiterating the transitional nature of the times through which his country and people were passing. The sudden collapse of great empires was a drama in which Indians had been condemned to be mere spectators. Now there is no room for spectators anywhere, he warned, 'and those who want to escape they cannot go anywhere. Where to escape and for what? Our work lies here and now.' He tells his readers that there is no reason at all for complaining in this crisis. 'We raised the slogans of revolution and *inquilab* -- that revolution has come to us now.... How should we welcome it? By courage, bravery and unity... let us increase our stature and become big men, and then take up the big issues and solve them.'

THE FAILURE OF A MISSION

The visit of Sir Stafford Cripps (March-April 1942) with what the British Cabinet considered to be far-reaching proposals for an immediate sharing of power at the centre and a certain promise of total independence at the end of the War ended in disappointment and failure. The essential problem was the unwillingness of the Churchill government to give up any control over defence matters during the War. Some compromise suggestions were proposed in which the Indian Member or Minister for Defence would delegate to the British Commander-in-Chief all effective powers while hostilities continued. On the Indian side, the Congress President, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, and Jawaharlal Nehru were anxious to find a *modus vivendi*. The euphoric statements made by Cripps immediately after his arrival made them feel that there was some promise of real change in the British attitude. This was confirmed by the progress of the negotiations; however, suddenly, Cripps seemed to go back on his earlier commitments and put forward a maximum negotiating position in which no real authority would be handed over to the Indian members of the Cabinet in defence, except derisory trivialities like the running of military canteens. It was fairly clear even then, and it has now been confirmed by archival evidence, that Cripps was never a free agent and that some of the undertakings he made were found to be too weak and generous by the Viceroy in India and by Churchill in London.

The sad story of this mission has been discussed threadbare over the years. What interests us here is only one aspect of the sorry business: the manner in which the Congress and Jawaharlal were able to explain to the people of India and to sympathetic foreign observers, both in Britain and in America, why it was not possible for India to accept these proposals. The essence of the Indian position, as

expressed by Nehru, was that this particular change would, in no way, strengthen the capacity of the Congress, as the country's national organization, to mobilize the people of India against the enemy at the gates. It was, thus, primarily a practical objection. Nehru, however, never forgot the deeper ideological significance of the episode. In spite of the known and reasonably well-advertised differences between fascism and the older imperialisms, he went on pointing out to his audiences, at home and abroad, that there was really no other option for India but to non-cooperate with Britain in her war effort.

While this was true, in the weeks which followed, the failure of the Cripps Mission, the differences in emphasis between Gandhi and his group in the Working Committee on the one hand, and Jawaharlal and Azad and some of the Socialists on the other, about the attitude to be taken towards Japan, in particular, were becoming clear. Rajaji and his friends were much more committed to some type of participation in the war effort immediately by making concessions both to the communal parties in India and the British Government.

It was a genuine and sincere clash of views. History would not be able to endorse totally the position of any of these three groups. But among these points of view, the most rational and reasonably sensitive approach still seems to be that of the middle liners like Jawaharlal and Azad. Evidence for these varying attitudes can be found in the writings of Gandhi in the *Harjan*, his casual remarks, his expression of interest or lack of interest in some matters on the one hand and in the speeches by Jawaharlal and Rajaji on the other. Perhaps the most clear demonstration of the differences as well as the convergences can be seen in the manner in which the original draft prepared by Gandhi for the Working Committee resolution rejecting the proposals was revised during the course of the discussions in the famous Allahabad meeting at the end of April. There were many other earlier clues to the state of mind of the parties. The Muslim League, the Hindu Mahasabha and the Princes were all deliberately non-cooperative actors on the scene. The implicit recognition of the right of secession by provinces contained in the proposals, along with the studied vagueness about the status of the princely states, made the future, post-war set-up unattractive to the Congress. It was precisely here that Rajagopalachari had something tangible and concrete to offer.

The original negative response of the Congress to the proposals came as early as 2 April 1942, when the Working Committee passed a resolution stressing the inadequacies of the future arrangements. The proposals were considered vague and incomplete about the future; also 'there would appear to be no vital changes in the present structure contemplated'. Here the resolution drafted by Jawaharlal emphasized the need for a real transfer of authority in defence: 'It has been made clear that the defence of India will in any event remain under British control. At any time defence is a vital subject; during wartime it is all important and covers almost every sphere of life and administration; to take away defence from this sphere of responsibility at this stage is to reduce that responsibility to a farce and a nullity....'

The next ten days before the final departure of Sir Stafford Cripps, admitting failure, are most interesting, in retrospect, for the manner in which the United States intervened in the discussion. Colonel Louis Johnson had been sent by President Roosevelt as his personal representative to Delhi. This was a necessary consequence of war developments. At the same time, it was also the expectation, both in Washington and in political circles in Delhi, that the American diplomat would try to help in any dialogue which would take place between the Viceroy and the Indian political parties.

Such an intervention did take place even though it was ultimately infructuous because both the Viceroy and Churchill made it clear to President Roosevelt that they would not tolerate any attempt to influence them in the matter. For the Indian public, however, it was a new experience, this presence of friendly foreigners representing a powerful allied nation assuming an active role in India's dialogue with the British Government. In the American press, however, the manner in which Cripps travelled to India and came out with these proposals was projected as a generous gesture; there was a tendency to put the blame on the Congress. The reality of the wartime alliance was overwhelming; Roosevelt had earlier, two years ago, given in to Churchill's protestations about the Atlantic Charter being made applicable to India. Now also, there was no question in the American mind about permitting this 'detail' to disturb the understanding between the President and the 'Formal Naval Person' (FNP).

The American papers had expressed nervousness at the stories circulating in New Delhi that the Congress and Jawaharlal personally had appealed to Johnson for assistance during the talks.

There was well-orchestrated scepticism in the American press about Roosevelt's ability to smooth relations between India and Britain, even if such an effort was proper. Jawaharlal replied to these criticisms with some promptness. He rejected, with his usual bluntness the 'patronising advice' which had appeared in the American press. He also made it clear that 'we are not used to patronage from any country or people and we do not shape our policy on the basis of superior homilies or threats'. Having said this, however, Jawaharlal dwelt on the positive side of the problem:

...I want to make it clear that we have issued no appeals to anybody or asked for anyone's intervention. For my part I admire President Roosevelt and consider that he has been shouldering a very great burden worthily. I think he will inevitably play a great part in the future. But we have not asked for his intervention in our problems for we realise that the burden is ours and we must shoulder it....

Colonel Louis Johnson has taken a friendly interest in our problem of today and we are grateful to him for it. But it will be unfair to him and unfair to us to imagine that the burden of any decision or of intervention is cast upon him.

Colonel Johnson did play an important role in the actual process of the negotiations. At one point he came up with an alternative formula on the defence question which appeared to satisfy Jawaharlal: 'The approach you have made in the draft you gave me this morning seems to us a more healthy one. With some alterations that we suggest, it might be made the basis of further discussions.' The letter concludes with the hope that 'the independent status of India will be recognized by the United Nations. Whenever this is done, it will greatly help our common cause and strengthen our bonds with each other.'

Nothing, of course, came of this attempt by the Americans and Jawaharlal to salvage the proposals. The Cabinet in London thought that Cripps had exceeded his brief in going even as far as he did.

Once it was clear that the mission had been aborted, Jawaharlal took the earliest opportunity of writing directly to President Roosevelt explaining the background of the failure. In this communication he structured his whole argument on the proposition

'that an opportunity should be given to us to organize a real national and popular resistance to the aggressor and invader'. That was the maximum position. If that was not possible, Jawaharlal explained to Roosevelt, 'the least that we consider essential was the formation of a truly national Government today with power and responsibility to organize resistance on a popular basis. Unfortunately even that was not considered feasible or desirable by the British Government.' He went on to express his great distress at the turn the negotiations had taken:

...I only wish to say how anxious and eager we were, and still are, to do our utmost for the defence of India and to associate ourselves with the larger causes of freedom and democracy. To us it is a tragedy that we cannot do so in the way and in the measure we would like to. We would have liked to stake everything in the defence of our country, to fight with all the strength and vitality that we possess, to count no cost and no sacrifice as too great for repelling the invader and securing freedom and independence for our country.

The letter ends on a positive enough note:

...But whatever the difficulties we shall face them with all our courage and will to resist. Though the way of our choice may be closed to us, and we are unable to associate ourselves with the activities of the British authorities in India, still we shall do our utmost not to submit to Japanese or any other aggression and invasion. We, who have struggled for so long for freedom and against an old aggression, would prefer to perish rather than submit to a new invader.

Written as it was, in a moment of bitterness and anger, the letter shows a remarkable steadfastness on the ideological position. This letter to the leader of Britain's most important wartime ally, possesses a little more significance than its diplomatic purpose. There seems to be in Jawaharlal's mind a need to articulate to himself and to sympathetic listeners the need for steadfast loyalty to older principles when many people in India were slowly reconciling themselves to the idea of accommodation with Japan. One personal letter to Stafford Cripps written in the middle of the negotiations on

April 7 gives the same signal:

I have just received your note and I appreciate all you say in it as well as the urgency of the problem. I have been full of this problem all these days and overburdened with all its implications. I have not given up hope that some light may come to us yet, if not today or tomorrow, then soon after. But I am convinced that it is beyond my power, even if I so wished, to get any considerable number of people to agree to the present offer. That is a tragedy for all of us. Yet the tragedy need not be anything final. You speak too much in terms of finality.

Whatever qualities and capacity I may possess will be devoted to meeting the situation that has arisen and in resisting such wrong tendencies as are taking shape in the country.

Here, within the limits of decorum, Jawaharlal is reaching out to Sir Stafford who is himself in a beleaguered position in a moment of crisis; he has still not given up hope that something after all might come out of the mission. Even if it is a total failure, there is an assurance that things will not be permitted to go out of hand.

Gandhi was also, in his own inimitable style, kind to Sir Stafford Cripps after the failure of his mission. In his *Harijan* article, he regretted that Cripps had not 'conferred with his radical friends in India and secured their approbation before undertaking his very difficult mission'. This is a typical tongue-in-cheek reference to Jawaharlal and his leftist friends whom the old man always found it a little difficult to take too seriously. Having said this, Gandhi settles down to the core problem. As long as Hindus and Muslims could not present a common front, there was no progress possible: 'Why blame the British for our own limitations? Attainment of independence is an impossibility till we have solved the communal tangle. We may not blind ourselves to the naked fact.'

Earlier, immediately after Cripps had arrived in India and his proposals leaked to the press, most probably by some Indian member of the Viceroy's Executive Council, Gandhi's reaction had been a little more frank, almost visceral. He was dismissive of the vagueness of the proposal.

Jawaharlal had to explain the Cripps fiasco to his Chinese friends also. To Dr. Chien, a distinguished political scientist, he summarized the position tersely:

...The question now, even more than before, is not one of finding some formula satisfactory to the two parties concerned, but of real and full transfer of power. It is patent that the present British Government is not going to do this. It is also patent that unless this is done the Indian Congress is going to keep far away from it. Meanwhile as the situation changes rapidly, much may happen. We are trying to follow a programme of self-sufficiency and self-protection, quite apart from the governmental programme and activity.

II

The overwhelming concern of Jawaharlal during these weeks, directly connected with the unexpected collapse of the British forces in South-east Asia, was the need to strengthen India's defence capabilities. This comes through in his letters to President Roosevelt and to his Chinese friends. As far as Britain was concerned, Nehru was at pains to convince his friends, both through press statements and in messages through Krishna Menon, that the Congress decision to reject the proposals had been welcomed by most Indians. He went on stressing the need for a true national government to organize genuine resistance against aggression.

It did not take the Congress too much time to reframe its strategy after the failure of the Cripps Mission. The Working Committee met at the end of April in Allahabad to discuss the situation. The intervening period was spent by Jawaharlal in a characteristic personal effort to understand what was happening at the grass roots level in the eastern parts of the country where there was a remote possibility of invasion by the Japanese.

The Assam tour in mid-April provided Jawaharlal with such an opportunity. The immediate provocation had been the problems which arose during the evacuation of the refugees from Burma: the worst was over and things were improving. The airlifts from Myitkyina had begun and, as the resolution passed by the AICC (drafted by Jawaharlal after his return) noted, Indians could now avail themselves of the safer land route. The conditions in the base camps were, however, still unsatisfactory and the worst sufferers were Indians.

Why did Jawaharlal take time off at this time to visit Bengal,

Manipur and Assam? In a speech in Calcutta, he attempted to give the answer:

Why have I come here to Bengal? I have come here to meet you and speak to you about these matters, but certainly I cannot give you the best advice. I have not come here with the idea that by my visit to Manipur, I would be able to solve the evacuation problem. But my visit shall draw a little more attention to this problem.

This was a rather mundane reason. He goes on to speak about his unrest, disquiet and the need for action which prompted the visit:

I came to Calcutta on my way to Manipur and Assam for a very simple reason that I am a restless soul and I find it very difficult to sit down anywhere. My mind is perturbed and agitated at our helplessness. I want to make this country hum with activity, to create a tremendous unity of resistance to anybody who dares come to our fair land. An army may surrender but a people who are determined do not surrender whatever happens. I want to convert India into an armed camp of people who would not surrender, whatever might happen to the army. That is a kind of thing which the military do not understand. They know how to fight but they surrender against heavy odds. But when people fight they cannot surrender, they cannot have other fronts, they cannot go away from their own hearths and homes, but they have got to live and die there. Are you ready to go to Iran or Balochistan? No. We have to live and die here whatever happens and thus the whole outlook of defence becomes different.

It is a war to the death, to the end, without any surrender. This is what I want to do. But I cannot do it. That is why I fret and fume and I roam about.

This need to be physically active, to mix with the people, to receive from the ordinary man something of his basic hopes, fears and, also, faith in difficult times, and to give him back in return, a certain feeling of national solidarity at a moment of imminent peril, was Jawaharlal's distinguishing characteristic throughout his career. Later, in 1946, when the Calcutta killings began he would rush to Calcutta to calm the communal frenzy. Over the decades, the people

of India learnt to expect this type of response from him. There was drama here, a certain histrionic impulse and the need to demonstrate fellow-feeling, but it was not all play-acting: the inner compulsions were genuine.

The tour itself took him back to a part of India which he knew only vaguely: his earlier visit in 1939 had left behind romantic memories:

I was happy to be back in Assam with its noble river and its fascinating forests and lovely scenery, and, above all, its sturdy people, who always impress me as those who have strength and do not easily falter. I am attracted also to the tribal folk and wish that I could be of greater service to them. As I travelled, my mind went frequently to that brave young woman Gaidinliu, styled the Rani, who has lain in jail now for twelve long years, and still lies there. In prison, caged and confined, she has grown from girlhood to womanhood, an emblem of her own simple people.

Assam has always impressed me with its great potential strength and resources, undeveloped so far by man, or rather by those who wield authority. It is a wealthy land with its minerals and forest and untilled areas; only the people are poor.

Not a very original response: earlier also he had been fascinated by the distant, elusive figure of Gaidinliu.

The main purpose of the visit was to assess the evacuee problem for the Congress and for himself: he had no pretensions to prescribing an instant solution. He saw his own effort a supplementary to the detailed inquiry carried out by Hriday Nath Kunzru who had visited Assam on behalf of the official Central Standing Evacuation Committee. Like Kunzru, he noticed several examples of racial discrimination, particularly on the Burma side:

...On the Burma side, conditions are still bad. The main route so far has been through Manipur and nearly one thousand people are coming through this daily. Along this route, as is well known, there was the scandal of the 'White Road' and the 'Black Road'. The 'White Road' is probably a misnomer as many people whose complexions were very dark indeed were permitted to go along it, provided they had trousers on — those insignia of European civilization. One instance was brought to my notice when a

gentleman in trousers was allowed to travel by bus, but when his wife appeared in a sari, he got into difficulties. Recently Indians, even in dhotis and pyjamas or saris, have been allowed to travel along the 'White Road', but there are still certain restrictions limiting their numbers.

Jawaharlal was particularly enthused by the sense of unity and the feeling of relief which the evacuees showed when they finally reached Indian soil:

... Among the large number of evacuees I met, whether they came by road or air, there were two dominant feelings: a feeling of relief that they were at last out of the hell they had been living in for some months past, and a feeling of great resentment at the racial discrimination, especially on the Burma side of the road. They had suffered much, had lost almost everything they possessed, had been ill-treated by petty officialdom, and yet one and all experienced a feeling of enormous relief at being back in India. There were people there whose original homes were in all parts of India... and yet on their return to Indian soil, they all felt that they had come back to the homeland. It was a significant demonstration of the unity of India.

Apart from studying the conditions in the refugee camps, Jawaharlal had occasion to address public meetings in Calcutta and a few Assamese towns. These gave him an opportunity for firmly discouraging any pro-Japanese sentiments in the general populace at a time when the stock of the British Government was low:

The Congress hates aggression by Japan or Germany. The Congress wanted power to fight invaders but the Government refused to part with power. The result was that Stafford Cripps's mission failed. It is humiliating to sit idle when India is being invaded. Hard times are ahead. All should put their shoulders to the wheel -- men, women and students. To talk of the War as a people's war is meaningless. The Congress wanted to make it a people's war but the British Government refused.

Assam's position is peculiar. The hill tribes should be treated kindly and the villages should be organised for self-defence and communal harmony should be maintained.

In a press interview at Gauhati Jawaharlal was more specific: he dissociated himself from Subhas, without questioning his sincerity:

Hitler and Japan must go to hell. I shall fight them to the end and this is my policy. I shall also fight Mr Subhas Bose and his party along with Japan if he comes to India. Mr Bose acted very wrongly though in good faith. Hitler and Japan represent the reactionary forces and their victory means victory of the reactionary forces in the world.

If a Japanese army invades Assam the attitude of the people should be one of 'no surrender and no submission'. The people should put obstacles and difficulties in the way of the aggressor. The Japanese gave independence to none and nobody gives it to others. God helps those who help themselves and we shall get independence when we will.

If a National Government functions then and then only guerilla warfare is possible. Guerilla warfare requires much training, equipment and coordination of the armed forces of the state. An invading army cannot overrun the entire country.

In Calcutta, earlier, on his way to Assam, Nehru tries to distinguish between the Congress policy of non-belligerency from neutrality:

Although India is a subject country, she had declared, long before this war, that her sympathies lay with what Russia and China stood for. The Congress definitely considered the forces represented by Hitler and Japan as dark forces, which if victorious would lead to a permanent slavery of India.

The Indian situation must be reviewed along with the international situation. The attitude of the Congress in this war is one of non-belligerency and not exactly of neutrality. I am sure that mass opposition can be organised by the state. I cannot possibly say what exact steps are to be taken by the people on the approach of an invading army. It is not a noble outlook to welcome an aggressor and I warn Congressmen and the people against the deceptive language of the aggressors and conquerors.

We must try to embarrass the enemy in every possible way.

The Nehru position had by now crystallized: to the British Govern-

ment in India, non-cooperation softened by non-embarrassment because of global loyalties; to a possible Japanese invasion, total opposition with a policy of deliberate obstruction. Slowly, his mind was getting used to the idea of guerilla warfare and a scorched-earth policy in such a contingency. These views were to cause difficulties with Gandhi.

Jawaharlal's trip to the eastern part of the country was prompted by his increasing concern about the physical threat to India. The failure of the Cripps Mission was a major setback but it was only an episode in a very difficult and prolonged struggle where the enemies were not always easily identifiable. For the British he had no longer any residuary sympathy after the manner in which Cripps had let him down, or more probably Cripps had been let down by his Prime Minister in London and the Viceroy in Delhi. This did not, however, in any way affect his sympathy for China and Russia, in that order; the Chinese experience of foreign aggression had been to him physically real and no amount of rationalization could make the prospect of Japanese involvement in Indian affairs desirable. His deep-rooted opposition to European totalitarianism also was unaffected by the failure of this latest attempt at reaching a civilized compromise, by which the British could part with power in India without giving up their military stakes in the region. The Soviet Union in Europe was very much of a sympathetic actor in this tragic drama and Jawaharlal missed no opportunity during the next five months for praising the heroism of the Soviet people in facing up to the blitzkrieg. The United States was also, throughout this period, a major factor in Jawaharlal's assessment of the situation, and one of the more interesting aspects of this, perhaps the densest and most dramatic period in India's national struggle, is the manner in which Jawaharlal tried to involve the Americans in the dialogue with Britain through Roosevelt's representatives in India.

Psychologically, therefore, in spite of his bitterness and sense of alienation from an old personal friend, Jawaharlal was still thinking in terms of preparing an agenda for the Congress and the people during military occupation within the country, and a simultaneous effort towards arriving at some sort of reasonable compromise with the United Nations through American good offices.

III

These ideas and attitudes of Jawaharlal, while being interesting in themselves, had, in addition, some relevance for an understanding of the gradual evolution of the midsummer nightmare which culminated in the Quit India Resolution. They are interesting and significant, but peripheral. What was central and vital was the total change of the mind -- the anger, indignation, overwhelming passion even, which moved Gandhi. The very history of the nation was shaped by the decisions made by the Mahatma at that time. When we study the documents, the records of conversations, the interviews and note the inevitable sliding towards disaster during these four months, we can see that, almost from the very beginning, and certainly after the Cripps Mission and the Allahabad resolution at the end of April 1942, there was really no doubt that Gandhi had decided to take charge and Rajaji decided to part company with him. Vallabhbhai and his trusted group of old-time supporters were willing to go along with the great man without question, without any agonised misgivings about unintentionally helping the external enemy, Japan. Only Maulana Azad and Jawaharlal Nehru continued to have doubts for quite some time, but there was never a single moment during the whole drama when either of them seriously thought of breaking away from Gandhi's leadership, or the Congress, as Rajaji had done.

In this situation, Jawaharlal's specific contribution was threefold. Firstly, he understood, after some questioning, the 'passion of Mahatma Gandhi', and explained it to the people of India through articles and speeches, and also to foreign journalists. In this, his own role was marginal when compared with that of Gandhi himself, who was then at the peak of his form as a communicator. This was the period when Gandhi had that celebrated 'one week' with Louis Fischer. This was also the period when other foreign journalists like Preston Grover and Edgar Snow came to him and went back with a clear idea of the old man's determination to ask for immediate withdrawal by the British. It was Gandhi's feeling that action was immediately necessary and this feeling spread through the country like an electric impulse. Jawaharlal was only one of the many competent interpreters of the great man's thoughts.

Secondly, throughout this period, Jawaharlal went on articulating and rearticulating the need for total opposition to a possible

Japanese invasion. His contribution here was vital. Gandhi had no serious differences with him on basic principles, but he had problems about Jawaharlal's willingness to make compromises with violence if the enemy was already within the gates. Against this, was Jawaharlal's anxiety to make clear to Gandhi and to the people, the need for an absolutely clear distinction between the old and the new adversaries.

The third, and perhaps the most interesting, aspect of Jawaharlal's activity during this period was the manner in which he concentrated upon his American contacts and also his Chinese friends to persuade Chiang Kai-shek and Roosevelt to influence Churchill. Like no one else in the Congress, he was aware of the possibilities, and was always willing to give priority to his ongoing dialogue with the two Americans in India, Johnson and Berry.

On the question of the possible use of violence in wartime conditions, Gandhi and Jawaharlal had real differences; but when the immediate threat receded in midsummer and the political problem became more acute, it became easier for the two men to reach an understanding, so that, by the middle of July, Jawaharlal had totally accepted Gandhi's unequivocal decision to go ahead with a mass Civil Disobedience movement. This was a repetition, during one dramatic moment, of several earlier experiences when, after 'fretting and fuming', the younger man ultimately accepted his leader's decisions and also his foibles with a certain grace and humour; reciprocally, Gandhi continued to have total faith in Jawaharlal, in spite of these basic differences in the assessment of the global situation and its impact on the regional conflict. It was very much a case of mutual influence, mutual persuasion, argument, a little bit of alienation, sometimes a temporary lack of communication even, all ending up pleasantly enough on a note of limited agreement on theory and a total acceptance by the disciple of the master's will.

Almost immediately after Jawaharlal's return from the eastern provinces came the Working Committee and AICC meetings in Allahabad. This was seen by the Indian people and the Congress as a great occasion because the national organization would have to give its considered response to the failure of the Cripps Mission. Gandhi did not attend the Committee meeting. He had other preoccupations but it was also his way of expressing his unhappiness with the general tendency among Congressmen to make compromises concerning non-violence. He was increasingly attracted by the need for a new,

major political act in which the Indian people, under his leadership, would respond effectively to this great political and military crisis. He prepared his own draft for the resolution and sent it to Allahabad through Mirabehn. Some inkling of his process of thinking can be seen in a letter to Vallabhbhai Patel: 'Jawaharlal now seems to have completely abandoned ahimsa. You should go on doing what you can. Restrain the people if you can. His speech reported today seems terrible. I intend to write to him.'

It is not very clear which speech of Jawaharlal's attracted Gandhi's annoyance. Most likely it was the one in Delhi on 7 April which contained the following angry outbursts:

The bombing of Indian coastal cities should not frighten you. You should not be content with playing the role of mere spectators when big and mighty events are taking place. We cannot reconcile ourselves to foreign domination. We cannot be mere spectators of the game of the Japanese troops fighting the British, Chinese and American troops on our sacred soil. Some people say 'Jawaharlal is a fool. He is unnecessarily antagonising the Japanese and the Germans. The Japanese will wreak vengeance on him when they come to this country. It is wiser for him to keep silent, if he cannot actually speak well of the Japanese.' I want to tell those people who give me this advice that Jawaharlal is not the man who will keep quiet when he ought to speak. On the other hand, I can only reject such advice, which is essentially based on fear, with contempt.

...I think it is my duty to oppose and fight them. I am not prepared to accept the idea that I should be a spectator to all this and do nothing.

...India is now facing a trial. We must organise ourselves for every contingency. Nobody should run away in panic. It would be a great misfortune if we fell victim to any aggression without a fight.

Mighty empires have fallen in recent months. It will not be strange if India shares the same fate, but we will have the satisfaction of fighting for our cherished ideal and will have firmly laid the foundation of India's freedom.

There was another problem. In some speeches Jawaharlal had, about this time, developed the theme of guerilla warfare against a possible Japanese invasion. A questioner to the *Harjan* asked Gandhi how he liked 'the idea of your legal heir advocating guerilla warfare against the Japanese'. Gandhi's reply is at its charming best:

...I had said that he was not my 'legal heir' but that he was virtually my heir. That means that he will take my place when I am gone. He has never accepted my method in its entirety. He has frankly criticised it, and yet he has faithfully carried out the Congress policy largely influenced, when it was not solely directed, by me. Those like Sardar Vallabhbhai who have followed me without question cannot be called heirs. And everybody admits that Jawaharlal has the drive that no one else has in the same measure. And have I not said also that when I am gone he will shed the differences he often declares he has with me? I am sorry he has developed a fancy for guerilla warfare. But I have no doubt that it will be a nine days' wonder. It will take no effect. It is foreign to the Indian soil. Twenty-two years' incessant preaching and practice of non-violence, however imperfect it has been, could not be suddenly obliterated by the mere wish of Jawaharlal and Rajaji, powerful though their influence is. I am, therefore, not perturbed by the 'apostasy' either of Jawaharlal or Rajaji. They will return to non-violence with renewed zest, strengthened by the failure of their effort. Neither goes to violence for his belief in it. They do so because they think probably that India must have a course of violence before coming to non-violence.

There is all the familiar gentle irony, not sharp enough to deteriorate into sarcasm but teetering on the verge of it.

To return to the Allahabad meetings, the language of Gandhi's draft was mildly amended by Rajendra Prasad who produced a second draft to meet points made by critics within the Working Committee. They were, however, not satisfied and Jawaharlal produced his own draft which tried to incorporate Gandhi's ideas, but left out some sentences which could have been misinterpreted as being soft on the Japanese. This third draft was again discussed threadbare. The final official version more or less followed Jawaharlal's wording.

Our real interest in these debates is the manner in which the conflicting points of view were reconciled after lengthy and sometimes acrimonious discussion. We know about these discussions thanks to the summary record of the debate kept by the Assistant Secretary of the AICC which was seized by the government in a raid and later published as part of an anti-Congress pamphlet in early August, in an attempt to tarnish Gandhi's image on the eve of the Bombay AICC meeting. Both Gandhi and Jawaharlal had time enough to comment on this public relations exercise by the authorities and both with justification claimed that the summary record was unfair to the complicated nature of the discussion. Sentences were torn out of context and nuances overlooked in a brief record.

From our limited point of view, it is sufficient to locate two or three passages in Gandhi's original draft which did not survive in the final version:

Japan's quarrel is not with India. She is warring against the British Empire. India's participation in the war has not been with the consent of the representatives of the Indian people. It was purely a British act. If India were freed her first step would probably be to negotiate with Japan.

The Committee desires to assure the Japanese Government and people that India bears no enmity either towards Japan or towards any other nation. India only desires freedom from all alien domination. But in this fight for freedom the Committee is of opinion that India while welcoming universal sympathy does not stand in need of foreign military aid. India will attain her freedom through her nonviolent strength and will retain it likewise. Therefore the Committee hopes that Japan will not have any designs on India. But if Japan attacks India and Britain makes no response to its appeal the Committee would expect all those who look to Congress for guidance to offer complete non-violent noncooperation to the Japanese forces and not render any assistance to them. It is no part of the duty of those who are attacked to render any assistance to the attacker. It is their duty to offer complete noncooperation....

It is necessary for the Committee to make a clear declaration in regard to the scorched earth policy. If, in spite of our non-violent resistance, any part of the country falls into Japanese

hands we may not destroy our crops, water-supply, & c., if only because it will be our endeavour to regain them. The destruction of war material is another matter and may under certain circumstances be a military necessity. But it can never be the Congress policy to destroy what belongs to or is of use to the masses.

Whilst noncooperation against the Japanese forces will necessarily be limited to a comparatively small number and must succeed if it is complete and genuine, the true building up of Swaraj consists in the millions of India wholeheartedly working the constructive programme.

These ideas are retained in the final draft in the following sentences:

...While India has no quarrel with the people of any country she has repeatedly declared her antipathy to Nazism and Fascism as to imperialism. If India were free she would have determined her own policy and might have kept out of the War, though her sympathies would, in any event, have been with the victims of aggression....

The Committee repudiates the idea that freedom can come to India through interference or invasion by any foreign nation, whatever the professions of that nation may be. In case an invasion takes place, it must be resisted. Such resistance can only take the form of nonviolent noncooperation as the British Government has prevented the organisation of national defence by the people in any other way. The Committee would therefore expect the people of India to offer complete nonviolent noncooperation to the invading forces and not to render any assistance to them. We may not bend the knee to the aggressor nor obey any of his orders. We may not look to him for favours nor fall to his bribes. If he wishes to take possession of our homes and our fields we will refuse to give them up even if we have to die in the effort to resist them. In places wherein the British and the invading forces are fighting our noncooperation will be fruitless and unnecessary. Not to put any obstacle in the way of British forces will often be the only way of demonstrating our noncooperation with the invader. Judging from their attitude the British Government do not need any help from us beyond our non-interference. The success of such a policy of non-

cooperation and nonviolent resistance to the invader will largely depend on the intensive working out of the Congress constructive programme and more especially the programme of self-sufficiency and self-protection in all parts of the country.

The essence of Gandhi's anxiety to mobilize the masses against the foreign invader through non-cooperation, without the destruction of property, and, through a revitalized constructive programme, is retained in the final draft. References to Japan and the Japanese which are carefully neutral -- because to Gandhi there was no difference between the British occupying India and the Japanese threatening to invade India -- have been left out. The discussions of the Committee which were published by the government provided some insights. Jawaharlal explains why he is unhappy with Gandhi's draft:

The whole background of the draft is one which will inevitably make the world think that we are passively lining up with the Axis powers. The British are asked to withdraw. After the withdrawal we are to negotiate with Japan and possibly come to some terms with her. These terms may include a large measure of civil control by us, a certain measure of military control by them, passage of armies through India, &c.

Achyut Patwardhan has difficulties with Jawaharlal's formulation in spite of his basic sympathy with it:

...If we do not take decisions Jawaharlalji's attitude will lead to abject and unconditional cooperation with British machinery which must collapse.... Jawaharlalji's statements after the negotiations broke down distressed me. The trend of thought it disclosed lands us in a position which obliges us to offer unconditional cooperation to the British. Our cooperation with the British is an invitation to Japan.

There were moments when the division between the two groups appeared irreconcilable. Vallabhbhai Patel's comment is clear enough:

I see that there are two distinct opinions in the Committee.

We have ever since the outbreak of War tried to pull together. But it may not be possible on this occasion. Gandhiji has taken a definite stand. If his background is unsuitable to some members of the Committee there is the other background which is unsuitable to us....

I have placed myself in the hands of Gandhiji. I feel that he is instinctively right, [in] the lead he gives in all critical situations.

...It is time the door is finally closed after the repeated insults heaped upon us. I agree with the draft before us. If there is any pro-fascist hint in the draft let it be removed.

The compromise which was reached appeared to have satisfied everybody except Rajagopalachari. His own alternative resolution to the AICC concentrated on the communal problem. He suggested that the 'Congress should acknowledge the Muslim League's claim for separation and on this basis invite the league for consultations aimed at securing the installation of a national Government to meet the emergency.' The next stage would be Rajaji's break with the Congress and the almost inevitable move towards the July Resolution which would formally demand British departure from India.

Before we close our account of this episode, it would be useful to examine what Jawaharlal and Gandhi had to say about this resolution when confronted with the government's leak in August. Jawaharlal noted that detailed minutes of the Committee meeting were not usually kept; the notes were brief and disjointed. None of the participants had a chance of seeing these notes or refuting them. More important, 'in our discussions Mahatma Gandhi was not present. We had to consider every aspect of the question fully and to weigh the implications of words and phrases in the draft resolutions. If Gandhi had been there, much of this discussion might have been avoided as he could have explained to us his attitude more fully.'

Jawaharlal went on to explain in some detail Gandhi's attitude on some of these problems as it emerged during his subsequent statements:

...when the question of British withdrawal from India was considered, I pointed out that if the armed forces were suddenly withdrawn, the Japanese might well advance and invade the

country without hindrance. This obvious difficulty was removed when Gandhiji later explained that British and other armed forces might remain to prevent aggression.

In regard to the statement that Gandhiji expected an Axis victory, an important qualification has been omitted. What he has repeatedly said and what I have referred to is his belief that unless Britain changes her whole policy in regard to India and her colonial possessions, she is heading for disaster. He has further stated that if a suitable change in this policy was made and the War really became one for freedom for all peoples, then victory would assuredly come to the United Nations.

The references to negotiations with Japan are also incorrect and entirely torn from their context. Gandhiji always sends notice to his adversary before coming into conflict. He would thus have called upon Japan not only to keep away from India, but to withdraw from China, etc. In any event, he was determined to resist every aggressor in India and he advised our people to do so even to the point of death.

Gandhi commented upon the government document in a detailed interview to *The Bombay Chronicle*. It is of more than passing interest.

Q. The whole inference of Pandit Nehru's statements in the documents is that your belief is that Japan and Germany will win the war. Does that represent your considered opinion?

A. You have been good enough to show me Panditji's statement on the document issued by the Government. After his full and frank explanation I hardly think I need answer your questions. I wholly agree with the opinion expressed by him.

That, however, is his own reaction to the draft resolution sent to the Working Committee.

As the language of that draft shows, it had many i's to be dotted and t's to be crossed. It was sent through Mirabehn to whom I had explained the implications of the draft and I said to her or to the friends of the Working Committee who happened to be in Sevagram to whom I had explained the draft, that there was an omission, deliberate, from my draft as to the foreign policy of the Congress and, therefore, any reference to China and Russia.

For as I had said to them, I derived my inspiration and knowledge from Panditji about foreign matters of which he had been a deep student. Therefore, I said that he could fill in that part in the resolution.

Gandhi again could not resist, later in the statement, teasing his dear colleague:

The suppressed races of the earth will never see the fine distinction that Panditji and following him I can see and make between Fascism and imperialism. The difference, if any, discerned by the man in the street will be not of kind but only of degree, and therefore I have pleaded and shall plead even as I am fighting with all the earnestness I command that Britain will shed that taint, and that her great ally America will make her do so, and then be sure of victory, no matter how prolonged the struggle and what cost it requires.

The Allahabad resolution was the last chance which the country had of sorting out the differences between the Congress and the British Government in India.

THE ZERO HOUR: QUIT INDIA

Jawaharlal's brief interventions in the AICC Session in Allahabad are useful pointers to his personal commitment to an ideologically acceptable solution of the Indian problem:

...We have to bear in mind the awful aspect of the world picture.... People sometimes may imagine that I wander away in international matters a little too much, but we have to consider the picture in its entirety.... It is not a simple question of India versus England.... We want one side to win and Britain happens to be on that side.... Our aim should be to face all aggression. Passivity would be dangerous. A Russian defeat would be a great disaster not only for India, but for everybody.

The special place the Soviet Union had in his world-view was repeatedly emphasized in several speeches he made about this time; he was always willing to send an encouraging message to the new Friends of the Soviet Union groups, for instance:

People might differ on many matters, political or economic; but few can withhold admiration from the Soviet Union for its human and cultural achievements. It would be a tragedy if their achievements ended in the storm of War. Therefore, it is right that people holding different opinions on other subjects should meet together on a common platform to pay tribute to the Soviet Union for the great human advances it has made.

This attitude towards the Soviet Union did not affect his disagreement with the communists on the people's war thesis; here again, however, he was generous and understanding. Asked in a

press interview whether the War was a people's war or an imperialist war, Jawaharlal Nehru replied: 'It is neither a people's war nor an imperialist war. In one respect it is people's war for Russia, China and England. For the Indians it is not a war of the people.'

The other major theme which seems to recur in his writing and speaking at this time was his total rejection of the Pakistan idea. His speech in the AICC meeting opposing Rajaji's resolution advocating a Congress-League agreement followed by a National Government to meet the emergency, is not one of his more rational performances. He repeats again and again that the idea of Pakistan is 'becoming intolerable', 'must hurt any one who has grown up and worked in India'. He went so far as to say that 'I can have no compromise. But I want the British Government to assist me in opposing the idea of Pakistan. So far as I am concerned, I am damned forever.... I stand on the platform of Indian independence.'

There is great indignation here and near incoherence. There is also a certain heady, if unconscious, feeling of ultimate irresponsibility.

The responsible decisions were already being made, all by himself, in the loneliness of the 'heart's affections', by the Mahatma. By the middle of May, Gandhi had let Britain and India know his considered opinion, that the British would have to give up power in India, in a formal manner, before the Indian people could effectually face the war crisis. The 'Letter to Every Briton' was the first clear indication of his new thinking. There was really no withdrawal from this position in the coming weeks. The trail which finally led to 9 August 1942 had already been laid.

It was precisely at this time that Jawaharlal was persisting with his efforts to persuade London through Washington to be a little more responsive. May, June and July 1942 were eventful months in Indian politics because of the civil disobedience agenda, the final parting between the Congress and Rajaji, the decision by Jawaharlal to cast his lot entirely with Gandhi in his new programme and the attempts by the national leadership to rouse the people to the need for political action. The climax came in the mid-July resolution of the Working Committee asking Britain to quit India.

There was very little public expression of differences between Jawaharlal and Azad, the Congress President, on the one hand, and the other leaders on the other during this period. By the beginning of June, their misgivings had been allayed and they were converted

to Gandhi's concrete, time-bound programme of mass civil disobedience. The real interest in Jawaharlal's activities during this period centres on his persistence in the American connection and his obvious success in infecting Gandhi with his optimism about the eventual success of his efforts. This was the period when Gandhi had his week with Louis Fischer, which led to the American's understanding the rationale behind the Mahatma's profound antagonism to the idea of any cooperation with the British Government. This was also the period when a possible visit to the US by Jawaharlal was seriously discussed and given up as of lesser priority when the crisis was building up in India. The letter from Gandhi to Roosevelt, sent through Louis Fischer, dated 1 July was drafted by Jawaharlal. This has to be read along with Jawaharlal's separate, carefully drafted 'Note on the Indian Background', written as early as 11 May, for the confidential information of Colonel Louis Johnson, to have some idea of the essential commonality of views between the two men who mattered most in the decision to launch the Quit India struggle.

The Note on the Indian Background recapitulates developments in India since the commencement of War, the main argument centring on the balance between nationalism and internationalism in the Indian outlook. Here Jawaharlal is extrapolating to the national conscience his own personal agonies and self-questionings:

The strongest sentiment in India is inevitably nationalism and the desire for freedom and this is felt by people differing among themselves on other matters. One of its manifestations is anti-British feeling — not affecting individuals but the system. Gradually, however, as the nationalist movement has grown in power and has widened its outlook, it has developed an international approach to Indian and world problems. During the last ten years or more it has condemned repeatedly fascist and Nazi aggressions. It was strongly opposed to Japanese aggression in Manchuria and later in other parts of China, to the Italian conquest of Ethiopia, to fascism in Spain, to Munich, etc. Popular sentiment was thus trained by tens of thousands of meetings to become anti-fascist, anti-Nazi, and anti-Japanese so far as China was concerned. With China there was deep sympathy.

But all this internationalism was to some extent superficial, the basic sentiment being nationalism. So long as the two did not

come into conflict with each other, there was no difficulty. But if there appeared to be a conflict, nationalism came out on top and a feeling of isolationism became dominant.

This is an honest enough assessment of the peripheral nature of the world outlook: the essence is the nationalist urge and Gandhi embodies it.

There is a brilliant section on the Allahabad resolutions: it is a brave attempt at persuading the skeptical American leadership, with an angry British partner questioning even their right to be interested, let alone intervene, in this purely 'domestic affair':

The main resolution deals with two points: our complete inability to cooperate with Britain because we are unable to cooperate with any country as slaves and subject people. The other point deals with non-violent resistance to an invader. This latter point has led to the criticism that we are practically inviting the Japanese or, at any rate, throwing up the sponge. This is based on an entire misapprehension. The Congress is not addressing the armed forces but the common people. So far as the armed forces are concerned, they are to carry on the War as best as they can. There will be no hindrance placed in their way, no embarrassment of any kind.... Having failed in achieving this change, which could only come through a popular National Government, we cannot offer any effective direct help to the armed forces. Possibly an attempt to do so would produce conflict with the Governmental apparatus, as the people are not at all trusted by it. So the army, air force, etc., continue their armed resistance in their own way. Production also is not interfered with; in fact it is encouraged.

Then we address the people, who are totally unarmed and unused to arms. We cannot arm them if we wanted to and every attempt to do so would mean conflict with the government. Even guerrilla activity is out of the question for them unless they have arms, have been trained, and are organized by a National Government. No people anywhere could do much in these circumstances, except possibly sporadic outbursts.

It is here that nonviolent resistance comes in, for the Indian people have been practising this with considerable success for over twenty years....

It is well known that Gandhi stands for nonviolence in all circumstances. But repeatedly the National Congress has declared that it cannot accept this or commit itself to it in case of danger from external invasion or internal disorder. Whenever this matter has been discussed with British representatives, and recently with Stafford Cripps, it was taken for granted that the National Congress would undertake and advise armed defence.

The note concludes on a conciliatory, reassuring note. A positive response to the Congress demand would not in any way jeopardize the United Nations' war effort in Indian territory.

To recognize India's right to independence is not in any way to rule out its joining a federation or even the British Commonwealth. It is not to place it in a superior position to that of the British Dominions, who are supposed to have that right, even though they may not exercise it. That recognition coming, *inter alia*, from the British Dominions themselves, would enhance the Dominions' prestige, not lower it.

The right being recognised, it cannot lead to a sudden and overnight change in the whole administration. Careful thought will have to be given to what should be done in the present, so as, on the one hand, to form a real National Government and give the people a sensation of freedom and a desire to defend it, and, on the other hand, not to upset any present arrangement and thus injuriously affect the conduct of the War. Indeed the objective must be to defend India to the uttermost and to direct all the national energy in this direction -- towards the armed forces, both trained armies and citizen armies, and production and industrial growth.

Even here, at this late stage, Jawaharlal holds out some hope for a meaningful dialogue to work out the next step:

Possibly the time is not ripe for such a declaration and for these changes, or, at any rate, people's minds are not ready for them. And yet the sands of time run out. There can be little doubt that the ultimate solution of the Indian problem can only be on this basis, and on no other, subject to the consequences of this War. With such a declaration those elements in India which

may be termed pro-Japanese will not count, nor those who wish to remain passive.

The communication ends on a wistful note. The next two months would be crucial and Washington's response could make all the difference. In the meantime, there is a final reassurance that many people in India would oppose a Japanese invasion:

The next few weeks may witness major happenings in India which will produce their reactions on people's minds both in India, England and elsewhere. The situation may change. It may become easier to approach this problem then; or possibly more difficult. In any event there are very many people in India who are committed to oppose and resist the Japanese, whatever the consequences.

II

All available evidence indicates that Jawaharlal had no sense of imminent drama at this time, no serious intentions about a mass movement. Gandhi's views were slowly crystallizing, but, as in all his previous movements, the door was always open. Jawaharlal felt the situation easy enough to give him a short interlude of peace and tranquillity between bouts of political agitation. He went off in mid-May for a holiday in Kulu with the Roerichs. There is no evidence of this in his writings, but this brief fortnight in the Himalayas was not merely a familiar enough response to the gnawing impulse to get away from it all; it was also a useful exercise in nostalgia with an emigre Russian of patriotic connections, who felt keenly the agony of his motherland, even if he did not fully share Jawaharlal's personal sense of desolation at the peril which confronted world 'progressive forces' and socialism in one country. Immediately after his return from holiday, Jawaharlal had a meeting with James Berry, Secretary to Louis Johnson, in New Delhi. It was Berry who conveyed to Jawaharlal a report that Gandhi was planning to launch mass civil disobedience in the near future. He was anxious to know Nehru's reaction, which was predictably noncommittal. However, he agreed with Berry that the result of such a programme might be 'very serious indeed'. This information was important enough to make him change his plans and proceed to Wardha to learn Gandhi's

position, instead of going to Allahabad, as he had originally planned. As a result of this conversation, Jawaharlal Nehru also sent a note to Louis Johnson the same day, through Berry. The following extracts explain themselves:

On my return after ten days absence in the mountains, I find considerable deterioration in the situation and events seem to be marching towards internal crisis. The Government of India's attitude and policies as well as London pronouncements on India exceedingly irritating to Indians. Gandhi's recent writings betray great bitterness and do something to put an end to the intolerable situation in which Indians are treated contemptuously as pawns. He feels unable to remain passive spectator and demands British withdrawal from India. In effect this means recognition of Indian independence. While Congress demand is same, it is uncertain what attitude Congress will take up in regard to any new action suggested by Gandhi. But Gandhi by himself can powerfully affect mass opinion and any step he may take will have far-reaching consequences, though it may be limited in scope and area to begin with.... While there is widespread sympathy with this nationalist approach there is also among many an apprehension that this may have adverse reactions on international and war situations. No clear programme outlined so far or decisions taken, but Gandhi appears resolved to persevere. Congress executive will meet soon to consider situation. I am much perturbed at some of these developments and am proceeding immediately to Wardha to see Gandhi for personal talks to clarify situation.

In Wardha he said in a public statement that 'the vague reports about his going to America in the near future' surprised him and added:

...None can prophesy about the distant future. But the problem of India must essentially be solved in India; for in the world constituted as it is today no problem can be isolated from other problems and opinions. The opinions of other countries count in any larger reorientation of the world. All I can say is that for the present, as far as I can see, there is no question of my leaving India.

Jawaharlal's conversations with Gandhi on 28 May helped him in understanding the Mahatma's new approach. He seems to have come away with the impression that the point of no return had not yet been reached. His report to Azad from Lucknow dated 30 May merely states that 'the visit to Gandhi and now the meeting of our Provincial Congress Committee, have helped me to understand the present situation. I told Gandhi that I had come to listen to him and not to talk much, as I wanted to have time to think over what he said.'

Things had, however, advanced much further than Jawaharlal realized. On 31 May, Gandhi made a categorical declaration:

I have waited and waited, until the country should develop the nonviolent strength necessary to throw off the foreign yoke. But my attitude now has undergone a change. I feel that I cannot afford to wait. If I continue to wait, I might have to wait till doomsday. For the preparation that I have prayed for and worked for may never come, and in the meantime I may be enveloped and overwhelmed by the flaws that threaten all of us. That is why I have decided that even at certain risks, which are obviously involved, I must ask the people to resist slavery.

This was really a declaration of war by the man of peace. Jawaharlal still did not realize the full implications of this statement and wrote to the American diplomat, Berry, on 3 June explaining and defending the attitude of the Congress and Gandhi personally. He told him that he was going to have further consultations with Gandhi; he had also had occasion to feel the pulse of the public at an important meeting of the Congressmen in 'our province'. He reassured Berry that Gandhi was deliberate and not impetuous in his attitude:

Gandhi has no desire to precipitate matters or to embarrass the present war effort. He is also firm in his decision that Japanese aggression in India must be resisted. He warmly repudiated the suggestion that his recent writings encouraged the Japanese. But he was definite that recognition of India's independence is essential now from every point of view including that of defence and no problem can be solved except on that basis.

...Rajagopalachari is likely to make no difference except to stiffen the Congress attitude which is one of extreme resentment against the British policy.... Gandhi does not intend starting any big movement unless he is forced to do so by the British policy. He feels he cannot remain passive spectator of what is happening and any risks are preferable to submission to repression of the people and consequent spiritual degradation. While both Gandhi and Congress declared inability to associate themselves with British war effort in present circumstances, there is no intention of impending military operation in any way.

At the end of the letter Jawaharlal returns to his main purpose in keeping up this correspondence which was of so much importance to him. He wants the message to be conveyed to American interests:

...Gandhi is also anxious that American opinion should not misunderstand him. He has emphasized Indian independence as this is the only way both for India and for the progressive nations to utilize India's great resources in the cause of world freedom.

But he cannot submit to treatment of India as a chattel by others. This treatment demonstrates that Britain is determined to obstruct Indian and Asiatic freedom. The larger cause demands a completely new outlook towards Asiatic nations and as evidence of this recognition of India's independence.

III

The American link was not only alive but electric by now. While Jawaharlal was thus carrying on his dialogue with the diplomats, Gandhi was having a very rich conversation with Louis Fischer. This was one of the most powerful publicity efforts by the great man in his career. This led to Fischer's book, *A Week with Gandhi*. Jawaharlal was also in the picture. He wrote to Azad that he had an engagement with an American friend in Wardha. 'This American is already there waiting for me.' After his detailed discussions with Gandhi for five days, Jawaharlal prepared a confidential note for his colleagues which registers almost total agreement with the Mahatma's new decision. He is in fact explaining the Quit India decision to his colleagues. Some extracts would illustrate this:

The demand for the withdrawal of British rule from India means in effect the acknowledgement of India's independence and then consultations on this basis between representatives of India and England for the transfer of power and for a mutual adjustment of relations between the two countries, especially in view of the War that is going on.

The demand does not mean the withdrawal of Britishers as such or even the British army, which in view of the War may be treated as an allied army engaged in the common defence of India. But it does mean full transfer of political power to Indian representatives, and a treaty or arrangement for the joint defence of India. This would apply equally to American forces in India which may be treated as an allied army also....

We cannot on any account entertain the idea of doing anything to facilitate the Japanese invasion of India or Japanese aggression in China. Such an invasion must be resisted by Indians. At present owing to British rule and the methods practised by it, there is intense and widespread resentment all over India and, as a consequence, a certain feeling of satisfaction at British defeats and Japanese victories. This is leading to a state of passive acceptance of a Japanese invasion when it comes. It saps the people's will and power to resist such an invasion when it comes. This is dangerous and harmful to India, develops a servile and submissive state of mind, and makes her an easy prey to an invader. To change this mentality and make it vital and resentful of any invasion or of submission, it is essential for Indians to have and secure independence, which they must defend....

In the event (which is not only likely but almost certain) of Britain not agreeing to Indian independence, the *status quo* cannot be tolerated and something must be done to change it. That is some kind of a direct action movement should be started. But before this is done the public mind must be well prepared for it, and in initiating or carrying on that movement every care should be taken that it does not directly or indirectly aid the Japanese or any other invader of India. Apart from this, the movement should be envisaged as a mass movement and there should be as few restrictions as possible on the people who wish

to join it. Nor should any untoward incidents lead to its suspension or withdrawal. The movement must aim at independence and be carried on till this is achieved.

By now the whole country was slowly geared to becoming familiar with Gandhi's new programme. Side by side there was, because of Jawaharlal's peculiar sensitivity in such matters, a last-minute attempt to influence the British through the Chinese and the Americans. Gandhi sent a letter to Chiang Kai-shek which was drafted by Jawaharlal. The Americans in Delhi were kept in the picture about this new epistolary effort. Jawaharlal tells Mr. Berry that the letter 'gives expression to Mr. Gandhi's personal views but there is little doubt that he represents, in his basic approach, the vast majority of the country.' He makes it clear that there is no question at all of the Congress disagreeing with Gandhi: 'The Congress has yet to consider Gandhi's proposal formally. But the latest decisions of the Congress are clear enough and approximate very closely to Mr. Gandhi's present position.' Jawaharlal then goes on to give expression to his own anguish at this decision which had been forced upon the country by British obduracy:

It has been my earnest desire that India should cooperate to the fullest extent with China and America. Asia, or any other large part of the world, dominated by fascism or Nazism is an intolerable thought to me, and I should like India to do her utmost to combat this. But the blindness and obstinacy of the British Government have created a situation of extreme gravity in India and I do not see wisdom dawning upon them in the near future. It would appear that they are determined to bring about a conflict with the Congress and nationalist elements in India.

The letter to Chiang Kai-shek is a good example of the expertise in communication which the two major leaders of the national movement had developed over the decades. Gandhi begins by referring to his earlier contacts with the Chinese people in South Africa and Mauritius and reminds the Chinese leaders of India's commitment to Chinese success in the War:

I have thus felt greatly attracted towards your great country and, in common with my countrymen, our sympathy has gone out

to you in your terrible struggle. Our mutual friend Jawaharlal Nehru, whose love of China is only excelled if at all by his love of his own country, has kept us in intimate touch with the developments of the Chinese struggle.

Because of this feeling I have towards China and my earnest desire that our two great countries should come closer to one another and cooperate to their mutual advantage, I am anxious to explain to you that my appeal to the British power to withdraw from India is not meant in any shape or form to weaken India's defence against the Japanese or embarrass you in your struggle.

In the latter part of the letter it is made clear that if the British response was positive the allied powers could keep 'their armed forces in India and use the country as a base for operations against the threatened Japanese attack.' Gandhi proposed to publish this letter in the *Harijan*. He wanted this to be a major factor in the attempt at persuading the partners of Great Britain in the United Nations. However, Chiang Kai-shek requested that the letter should not be published. He was afraid his tactful efforts would be compromised.

In the middle of June, Jawaharlal, in a major press interview, supported Gandhi's decision in an unequivocal fashion. Speaking about his talks with Gandhi, Jawaharlal explained to the people the background of the latest tactical move. He spoke about his gratification at realizing that they were very near each other in spite of 'different approaches and occasional differences of opinion'; in the fundamentals that mattered there was agreement. Then came a passage which recaptures the element of total empathy in a moment of crisis between these two men of such different personalities; such varying backgrounds and total dissimilar intellectual and emotional interests:

...As I talked to Mahatma Gandhi and tried to follow his argument, I saw a passion in his eyes and also heard it in his words; and I knew that that passion was the passion of India — the passion that is moving vast numbers of Indians today. In a much smaller measure, I too have experienced that passion and I know what it means. Before that mighty urge of the people petty arguments and controversies become small and without much meaning. This is the fundamental aspect of the Indian problem today,

and if we lose sight of it and become involved in the smaller aspects of the question, over which we may or may not differ, then we err grievously. What the future will bring to us or to the world, I do not know. But I do know that the situation in India is becoming intolerable to many who feel that they cannot carry on as impassive spectators of the deeds of others.

When Mahatma Gandhi says to the British 'Withdraw', he says something which every self-respecting Indian feels. I have ventured to say that previously in a cruder language when I said 'get out'.

This was addressed to the people of India and represents a qualitative change in the evolution of the political crisis. A few days later, Jawaharlal returns to the attack in his diplomatic effort with the Americans. He wrote to Berry on 23 June:

I can quite understand that some of Mr. Gandhi's recent statements have been misunderstood in the United States. Perhaps his later statements have helped to clear up this misunderstanding. One thing is certain: Mr. Gandhi wants to do everything in his power to prevent a Japanese invasion and occupation of India. He wants to rouse up the people of the country to resist and not to submit. He has been oppressed by the fact that British policy in India is producing just the opposite results and antagonising the people so much that they are developing a mood which prefers any change, however bad, to the existing state of affairs. This is a dangerous and harmful tendency which he wishes to combat.

Jawaharlal wants the Americans to understand that the importance of India's independence at this particular moment is directly connected with the Allied cause: 'Indian independence therefore becomes of paramount importance today for purposes of Indian defence in cooperation with the Allied forces, as well as for helping China. It is only in this context of today's problem that it has to be considered.' He goes on to tell the American diplomat that the Congress leadership was keenly aware of the need for sustaining public morale:

For those of us who have to shoulder a measure of responsibility, it is not enough to function as individuals, although that has also to be done. We must get others to act and generally to influence public opinion in the right direction. I have been endeavouring to do this. On no account do I want India to be submissive to any aggression. I want active and continuous resistance to it.

The letter to President Roosevelt dated 1 July, sent through Louis Fischer, was also drafted by Jawaharlal. Here again, we have some personal touches at the beginning. The references to Thoreau and Emerson, which would appear clichés today, had, at the time this letter was written, all the freshness of the new discovery of an old connection which only Gandhi had known. He reassures Roosevelt about his own affection for Britain:

...Of Great Britain I need say nothing beyond mentioning that in spite of my intense dislike of British rule, I have numerous personal friends in England whom I love as dearly as my own people. I had my legal education there. I have therefore nothing but good wishes for your country and Great Britain. You will therefore accept my word that my present proposal, that the British should unreservedly and without reference to the wishes of the people of India immediately withdraw their rule, is prompted by the friendliest intention.

The letter also contains a repetition of the advance commitment in the letter to Chiang Kai-shek that the Allies could keep their troops in India after the acceptance of Gandhi's demand. He goes so far as to say that this would make 'my proposal foolproof'.

One passage in the letter has the recognizably Gandhian spirit, the spirit which even in moments of diplomacy cannot afford not to speak the truth as perceived by the speaker:

...I venture to think that the Allied declaration that the Allies are fighting to make the world safe for freedom of the individual and for democracy sounds hollow, so long as India and, for that matter, Africa are exploited by Great Britain, and America has the Negro problem in her own home. But in order to avoid all complications, in my proposal I have confined myself only to

India. If India becomes free, the rest must follow, if it does not happen simultaneously.

This formulation has also a touch of the Nehru in it, his permanent indignation with trans-continental colonialism.

IV

The Quit India Resolution itself was discussed and passed by the Congress Working Committee in the second week of July. Earlier, in an article in the *National Herald*, Jawaharlal explained the demand in the appropriate context of a non-confidence resolution against the Churchill Government in the House of Commons. We get some idea of the controlled indignation which moved men like Gandhi and Nehru in the concluding sentences of this article:

...We want a civilised relationship between man and man and nation and nation.

So Empire must go, not only because it is evil but because it is a hindrance to victory of the progressive forces in the world. That is why the cry of 'Quit India' becomes a vital, urgent and essential cry for victory. Only when this is done will there be a real will to win among the Indian people as well as among the people of England and other Allied countries. Only then will all strength and energy seize the people of India and be translated into effective action.

Before the July meeting, Jawaharlal made his usual trip to eastern UP. In a speech in Gorakhpur he explained to the people the new situation and its basic concepts in simple language:

Mahatma Gandhi is about to launch a satyagraha movement or is contemplating some other move to wrest independence, and you should keep yourself in readiness. None can foretell what would happen after the War. My view is that we cannot protect the country while we remain in bondage. This is why Mahatma Gandhi wants the British Government to withdraw and leave the defence of the country in the hands of Indians. We have waited for long and we could have waited for a year or two more, but

owing to the war we can wait no longer. We cannot see India changing masters from time to time. It can spell disaster for her. Therefore, it becomes imperative for us to free India and then fight the Japanese or any other invader with arms or without arms.

This is an interesting, perhaps, *ex post facto* rationalization of the general's decision by his loyal lieutenant.

The communal problem refused to go away during these weeks in spite of Jawaharlal's rather cavalier attitude towards the whole issue. However, in a speech in Nagpur a few days before the Congress session, he stressed the need to seek an understanding with the communal parties but added that:

Unfortunately Mr. Jinnah's whole attention is given to the British Government. He wants the British Government to do everything for him. The same attitude is being adopted by the Hindu Mahasabha. For the sake of our own freedom and for the good of the world we should decide what we should do now. In a world where revolutionary changes are taking place, Indians cannot remain aloof. I want India to rise from its slumber even if ten to fifteen lakhs of people have to die. We must be ready for big sacrifices.

This is a concise and self-sufficient explanation of the impossibility of an agreement between the Congress and the Muslim League. It goes deeper than mere questions of mutual perception. There was, according to Jawaharlal, a fundamental difference in the attitudes towards the presence of the Empire.

V

Those tense, expectant weeks before the Quit India resolution in August 1942 belonged exclusively to Gandhi. All other figures on the national scene, including Nehru and Patel, and not excluding Jinnah, appear in their essentially supporting or non-supporting roles. Gandhi is always at the centre of the stage, the supreme decision-maker about the action to be taken and the tactician who chose the time and method of the struggle. Only Rajagopalachari in the

country and Subhas Bose outside had a plausible alternative. Jawaharlal was totally opposed to both these lines of action – effective cooperation with the British, with the Axis powers in the adversary role, or collaboration with Japan and her allies with Britain and her allies in the opposite camp. His great contribution during this period was his total surrender to Gandhi, after initial hesitation and doubts, and a reasonably successful effort to interpret and rearticulate his leader's prophetic pronouncements in a vocabulary acceptable, not so much to the Indian audience – who were, most of them, happy and relieved to know that the old man was back and in charge – but to the Americans, the Chinese and the British. In doing so, he was helped by the total trust between himself and his master. Both the Wardha Working Committee resolution of July and the later AICC resolution of August, formulating the new demand for immediate British withdrawal, were the joint work of the two men. A comparison of the original Gandhi version and the final adopted draft prepared by Jawaharlal after discussions in the Working Committee show the strengths and weaknesses of Nehru the communicator when compared to Gandhi. The Mahatma is much more precise, tense, immediately action-oriented: there is a burning urgency in the first draft: the demand is bold, the call for struggle is unambiguous:

...The abortive Cripps proposals showed in the clearest possible manner that there was no change in the British attitude towards India and that the British hold on India was in no way to be relaxed. It has also been observed that the ill will against the British is rapidly increasing and people openly wish success to the Japanese arms. The Congress would like to avoid the experience of Singapore, Malaya and Burma and turn ill will into goodwill and make India a willing partner in their trial and troubles. This is possible only if India feels the glow of freedom from foreign domination.

The Congress is convinced that the only cure for this intolerable state of affairs is that the British rule in India should end forthwith.... When the British power is withdrawn the present unreality will give place to reality and the prince and the peasant will stand on a par, the present political parties formed chiefly with an eye to the attention of the British power will probably be dissolved. For the first time in India's history realisation will

come home that princes, jagirdars, zamindars, propertied and monied classes derive their wealth and property from the workers in the fields or factories to whom alone all power and authority must belong. In making the proposal for withdrawal the Congress has no desire whatsoever to embarrass Great Britain or the Allied powers in their prosecution of the War. The proposed withdrawal therefore should not in any way be interpreted as an invitation to Japan or the other members of the Axis to attack India and thus immediately to suffocate China. Nor does the Congress intend to jeopardise the defensive capacity of the Allied powers. Therefore the Congress would be reconciled, if the Allies regard it to be necessary to the presence, at their own expense, of their troops in India in order to ward off Japanese or other aggression and to protect and help China.

The operative part of the resolution is also forthright:

...The struggle this time would have to resolve itself into a mass movement on the widest scale possible involving voluntary strikes, voluntary noncooperation on the part of all those who are in government employ or in departments connected with government in any shape or form and it may involve also non-payment of land revenue and taxes.

A comparison of Gandhi's draft with the final draft resolution shows that an element of tentativeness has been brought in: there is also greater awareness of the world situation. What is lost, of course, is the fire and sheer verbal excitement of Gandhi's near-Biblical prose. It was, at the same time, an agreed draft, fully approved by Gandhi:

I have read the resolution. I note that you have tried to include some of my points. I do not desire any modification. But I do desire that, as far as possible, all of us should interpret the appeal in the same way. It will not be good if we speak in different voices.

This was important to Gandhi. He went on to demand the resignation of Maulana Azad as president because of his obvious discomfort at Gandhi's headlong rush into the unknown, his insistent demand

for a struggle:

...I find that the two of us have drifted apart. I do not understand him nor does he understand me. We are drifting apart on the Hindu-Muslim question as well as on other questions. I have also a suspicion that Maulana Sahab does not entirely approve of the proposed action. No one is at fault. We have to face the facts. Therefore I suggest that the Maulana should relinquish Presidentship but remain in the Committee, the Committee should elect an interim President and all should proceed unitedly. This great struggle cannot be conducted properly without unity and without a President who comes forth with a hundred per cent cooperation.

About Jawaharlal he had no such problem:

I stick to the hundred per cent support I gave you in what you said about yourself. I have thought over the matter a great deal and still feel that your capacity for service will increase if you withdraw. And to that extent you will find satisfaction.

The idea seemed to have been that Jawaharlal Nehru would, like Gandhi himself, withdraw from the Committee's formal membership but 'attend occasionally as I do or Acharya Narendra Deva does'.

This is important. By this time Jawaharlal had fully accepted Gandhi's decision to have a struggle. The modalities had to be worked out. But on the attitude towards Britain, on the need for mass mobilization and an immediate change in the political institutions, there was no difference. Both men were also comfortably agreed on the secondary nature of the communal problem which would be sorted out 'within two days', as Jawaharlal told Berry, after the British decision, through conversations with Jinnah. The revised draft of the July resolution shows greater concern for Allied susceptibilities: it also softens the terms of the demand for withdrawal. It is a weaker, less organized, diluted version of Gandhi's original draft. The improvement is in the far more categorical repudiation of the Japanese connection:

... The Congress is anxious to avoid the experience of Singapore, Malaya and Burma and desires to build up resistance

to any aggression on or invasion of India by the Japanese or any foreign power.

The Congress would change the present ill will against Britain into goodwill and make India a willing partner in a joint enterprise of securing freedom for the nations and peoples of the world and in the trials and tribulations which accompany it. This is only possible if India feels the glow of freedom.

The demand for the immediate ending of British rule is omitted in this context. Later also, the reference to the post-independence socio-economic situation is milder and vaguer:

...The present political parties, formed chiefly with a view to attract the attention of and influence the British power, will then probably cease to function. For the first time in India's history the realization will come home that princes, jagirdars, zamindars, and propertied and monied classes derive their wealth and property from the workers in the fields and factories and elsewhere, to whom all power and authority must belong. On the withdrawal of British rule in India, responsible and representative men and women of the country will come together to form a provisional government....

Jawaharlal Nehru's anxiety to make the policy of non-embarrassment and support to China and Allied powers more explicit is evident in the final version:

In making the proposal for the withdrawal of the British rule from India, the Congress has no desire whatsoever to embarrass Great Britain or the Allied powers in their prosecution of the War, or in any way to encourage aggression on India or increase pressure on China by the Japanese or any other power associated with the Axis group. Nor does the Congress intend to jeopardise the defensive capacity of the Allied powers. The Congress is therefore agreeable to the stationing of the armed forces of the Allies in India in order to ward off and resist Japanese or other aggression and to protect and help China.

Even the decision to resort to a mass struggle in the last resort is couched in what can only be described as evasive language:

...The Congress would plead with the British power to accept the very reasonable and just proposal herein made, not only in the interest of India but also that of Britain and of the cause of freedom to which the United Nations proclaim their adherence.

Should however this appeal fail, the Congress cannot view without the gravest apprehension the continuation of the present state of affairs, involving a progressive deterioration in the situation and weakening of India's will and power to resist aggression. The Congress will then be reluctantly compelled to utilize all the non-violent strength it might have gathered since 1920, when it adopted nonviolence as part of its policy for the vindication of the political rights and liberty. Such a widespread struggle would inevitably be under the leadership of Gandhiji. As the issues raised are of the most vital and far-reaching importance to the people of India as well as to the peoples of the United Nations, the Working Committee refers them to the All-India Congress Committee for final decision. For this purpose the A.I.C.C. will meet at Wardha on 28th inst.

Gandhi's mention of concrete measures like strikes and non-payment of taxes has been left out.

During the next three weeks, Jawaharlal had very little to contribute in making the country aware of the coming crisis. He made some good speeches in Delhi and Meerut, gave a considered reply to Sir Stafford Cripps when the latter cited non-violence 'as an insuperable barrier to prevent freedom in India' and, in various press statements, continued to make reassuring noises about Britain's allies. He was also vehement in his moral justification of the decision to start a movement and the timing of the struggle. On 31 July he made two interesting statements:

The present decision was not taken in a huff, but we came to the conclusion, following a close analysis of the current world politics and the method of the British Government in fighting the War...

We have been waiting for long all these years. Congress was on the point of starting satyagraha in 1940, but at the fall of France, we desisted from starting the movement, because we did not want to embarrass Britain during her moment of peril. We wanted to face the peril ourselves as far as possible. We wanted

to prevent Japanese aggression upon India and keep our spirit alive. We could not throw our weight with the British Government, because the British policy was so deep-rooted that we could do nothing about it.

The second noteworthy statement, was, a vital contribution to his persistent effort to persuade and influence the Americans through his diplomatic contacts. He tried to convey through the American diplomat, J.L. Berry, the absolutely final nature of the 'Quit India' threat. Berry reported to his seniors in Washington:

...The Indian people he said are now intensely anti-British and cannot trust any promise of the British Government. The underwriting of such a British promise by United Nations or by President Roosevelt might do some good in helping to reassure Indian people but 'it is not enough'.

Jawaharlal was also definite in his assessment that the communal problem was manageable:

I inquired whether Nehru was absolutely convinced that Jinnah and Congress could come to terms immediately upon withdrawal of British power. His answer was a categorical affirmative. He repeated the well-known argument that there can be no settlement between League and Congress as long as British are here to keep them apart and outbid either party. He claimed that once full responsibility is entrusted to Indian leaders, with no third party from whom they may expect bargains, they will reach an honourable settlement at once. Nehru stated that Congress and League were on verge of a settlement just prior to visit of Cripps. But Cripps's proposal showed that British were prepared to grant Pakistan so that, from Jinnah's point of view, further negotiation with Congress was without purpose.

During this period Jawaharlal tried to send conciliatory signals through V.K. Krishna Menon to India's British friends also. Menon was nervous and unhappy after the July resolution: the timing of the resolution when Hitler's armies were nearing Stalingrad, and Stalin was urgently asking for a second front, appeared to British observers to be, to say the least, unfortunate. Nehru tries to explain by cable:

...Appreciate fully the extreme gravity situation of Russia and China and necessity for second front. Earnestly desire to give every help but the very gravity of the situation demands complete reversal of policy in India to enable us to give people's enthusiastic support which is impossible under present conditions. Otherwise progressive deterioration and desperation. I am convinced with acknowledgement of independence of India now, avenue then can be opened for negotiations of mutual arrangements and transfer of power and defence and active resistance on widest scale. Present demand essentially based on desire to offer effective resistance to Japan to prevent repetition of Burma tragedy and help China and Russia in this grave crisis. No doubt about free India's role in War.

It was a time full of contradictions. While the Congress under Gandhi was gearing itself for the 'final struggle', Jawaharlal was seriously approving the idea of a friendship delegation from India to the Soviet Union, even though he himself would not be able to participate. He wanted Menon to go:

Proposed delegation to Russia has my full approval but I am personally unable to leave country now. Repeated requests to Government of India for facilities of delegation remain unanswered. Possibly developing situation nationally, internationally, may create further difficulties. Would welcome your joining delegation.

The need to keep the links with China, Russia and the United States was never far from Nehru's thinking. In this he was consistent.

To one critic of the proposed action, Sampurnanand, Jawaharlal was fully sympathetic. It is a piece revealing of his innermost thinking — this doubts and dilemmas, even at this late hour. The letter was written on 28 July, only a week before the Bombay meeting:

Every aspect of the question that you have mentioned has troubled me and made me think furiously during the past two months or, to be more exact, nine weeks. I have been worried and distracted beyond measure. Yet gradually I have come to the conclusion that there is no other way out. I am convinced that passivity is fatal now. Our soldiers will largely surrender to the

Japanese, our people will submit to them. There is only one chance of changing this and that is by some action now. The risk is there. I hate anarchy and chaos but somehow in my bones I feel some terrible shake-up is necessary for our country.... If there was a real approach from U.S.A. and China we should certainly consider it. But so far there is none. Meanwhile Cripps talks poisonously. What is one to do with this crowd?

Do come to Bombay. It is no good for any of us to sulk or keep away. We must help each other as we will have to face the consequences. So you must come.

In his speech in Allahabad on 1 August he returned to the theme of helping China and fighting Japan:

I want to make it clear that there is no intention to help Japan or to injure China.

We will fight against Japan in every possible way, with nonviolence and with arms. By making it a people's war. By raising a people's army. By increasing production and industrialisation. By making it our primary consuming passion. By fighting like Russia and China. No price would be too big to pay to achieve our success against the aggressor.

He also chose this occasion in his hometown to identify himself totally with Gandhi's call:

My mind is quite clear that our decision is correct. I can say this with all the authority and dignity of a member of the Working Committee. My mind is at rest. I can clearly see the path before us. We can tread it fearlessly and bravely. It would be like plunging in a storm in the ocean. I will do it with confidence and I invite you to do it. The world is in a state of turmoil. The storm is approaching us and if we try to escape it, it will follow us and get at us.

Gandhi's 'Quit India' slogan correctly represents our thoughts and sentiments. Passivity on our part at this moment and hour of peril would be suicidal. It will break down all our will to resistance. It will destroy and emasculate us. Our step is not

merely for the love of independence but to protect ourselves, to strengthen our will to resistance, to give a fresh orientation to the War, to fight and to help China and Russia; it is an immediate and pressing necessity with us.

These were brave words and do have the ring of conviction. But they sound rather contrived and almost derisory in an emotional sense when compared to Gandhi's great writings in the *Harijan* at this time. A single example will suffice:

...So far as I am concerned I have no doubt about the righteousness of my step.... It is not open to them to say that we must smother our consciences and say or do nothing because there is war. That is why I have made up my mind that it would be a good thing if a million people were shot in a brave and non-violent rebellion against British rule. It may be that it may take us years before we can evolve order out of chaos. But we can then face the world, we cannot face the world today. Avowedly the different nations are fighting for their liberty. Germany, Japan, Russia, China are pouring their blood and money like water. What is *our* record?

I do not feel flattered when Subhas Babu says I am right. I am not right in the sense he means. For there he is attributing pro-Japanese feeling to me. If I were to discover that by some strange miscalculation I had not realized the fact that I was helping the entry of the Japanese in this country, I should not hesitate to retrace my steps. As regards the Japanese, I am certain that we should lay down our lives in order to resist them as we would to resist the British.

But it won't be the work of human hands. It will be the work of a Force – incalculable and invisible – which works, often upsetting all our calculations. I rely implicitly on it. Otherwise I should go mad in face of all this torrent of what I must call irritating criticism. They do not know my agony. I cannot express it except perhaps by dying.

I do not mind honest, strong, healthy criticism. All the manufactured criticism that I find being made today is sheer tomfoolery, meant to overawe me and demoralize the Congress ranks. It is a foul game. They do not know the fire that is raging

in my breast. I have no false notions of prestige; no personal considerations would make me take a step that I know is sure to plunge the country into a conflagration.

The reference to Subhas Bose and his programme is not accidental. In another place, at about the same time, Gandhi equates, albeit unconsciously, but with almost mathematical accuracy, the desire for accommodation with not merely different, but mutually adversary partners, which his two great junior colleagues offered to entertain at this moment of global collision. He asks some pertinent questions in the *Harijan* of 17 July:

Whatever may be the terms of the 'treaty', if the Anglo American military machine is allowed to operate for the 'defence' of India, can Indians play any but a minor and subordinate role in the defence of this country?

Supposing the British, not from any moral motive but only to gain a political and strategical advantage for the time being, agree to a 'treaty' under which they are allowed to maintain and increase their military forces in India, how can they be dislodged afterwards if they prefer to remain in possession?

Is not the position postulated in the preceding question comparable to the position that would arise if, for instance, Subhas Babu made a treaty with Germany and Japan under which India would be declared 'independent' and the Axis forces would enter India to drive the British out?

VI

In the great climax in the AICC meeting at Bombay, Gandhi was at the centre of the national stage. It was his speeches, his famous assertion, '*Karengē ya marengē*', which electrified the nation. Both Nehru and Patel made powerful, reasoned speeches in support, but the nation and the world listened to Gandhi. At this moment he was supreme communicator, the prophet honoured in his country.

The resolution itself was the handiwork of Jawaharlal and reads well enough today. It is a closely argued, moderately phrased, firm announcement of the Congress demand that the Empire should withdraw from Indian territory with immediate effect.

There are four drafts available of this single most important pronouncement of the Congress in its long history. They were all drafted by Jawaharlal Nehru. In fact the differences between the succeeding versions, modified by discussion, are few and far between. Its real interest, when we return to it today, is its obsessive, almost angrily utopian preoccupation with the world system after the War. Jawaharlal Nehru is clearly determined to place India's freedom and India's future in the context of a post-war arrangement based on order and civilized conduct and promising 'perpetual peace' of almost a Kantian flavour.

The freedom of India must be the symbol of and prelude to this freedom of all other Asiatic nations under foreign domination. Burma, Malaya, Indo-China, the Dutch Indies, Iran and Iraq must also attain their complete freedom. It must be clearly understood that such of these countries as are under Japanese control now must not subsequently be placed under the rule or control of any other colonial power.

While the AICC must primarily be concerned with the independence and defence of India in this hour of danger, the Committee is of opinion that the future peace, security and ordered progress of the world demand a World Federation of free nations, and on no other basis can the problems of the modern world be solved. Such a World Federation would ensure the freedom of its constituent nations, the prevention of aggression and exploitation by one nation over another, the protection of national minorities, the advancement of all backward areas and peoples and the pooling of the world's resources for the common good of all. On the establishment of such a World Federation disarmament would be practicable in all countries; national armies, navies and air forces would no longer be necessary, and a world federal defence force would keep the world peace and prevent aggression.

An independent India would gladly join such a World Federation and cooperate on an equal basis with other countries in the solution of international problems.

Such a Federation should be open to all nations who agree with its fundamental principles. In view of the War, however, the Federation must inevitably, to begin with, be confined to the United Nations. Such a step taken now will have a most powerful

effect on the War, on the peoples of the Axis countries, and on the peace to come.

The Committee regretfully realises, however, that despite the tragic and overwhelming lessons of the War and perils that overhang the world, the governments of few countries are yet prepared to take this inevitable step towards World Federation. The reactions of the British Government and the misguided criticism of the foreign press also make it clear that even the obvious demand for India's independence is resisted, though this has been made essentially to meet the present peril and to enable India to defend herself and help China and Russia in their hour of need.

It does read like a preamble to an anti-colonial improvement on the U.N. Charter which was drafted when Jawaharlal was in jail. The resolution is carefully topical in its reference to the latest war situation:

The Committee has viewed with dismay the deterioration of the situation on the Russian and Chinese fronts and conveys to the Russian and Chinese peoples its high appreciation of their heroism in defence of their freedom.

The centrality of India in the imperial structure which the British were using the war to preserve is referred to in familiar phrasology:

...The possession of empire, instead of adding to the strength of the ruling power, has become a burden and a curse. India, the classic land of modern imperialism, has become the crux of the question, for by the freedom of India will Britain and the United Nations be judged and the people of Asia and Africa be filled with hope and enthusiasm.

The demand for withdrawal is balanced with a promise of cooperation after the withdrawal. It also contains a coherent enough picture of a truly federal constitution:

The A.L.C.C., therefore, repeats with all emphasis the demand for the withdrawal of the British power from India. On the declaration of India's independence, a provisional govern-

ment will be formed and free India will become an ally of the United Nations, sharing with them in the trials and tribulations of the joint enterprise of the struggle for freedom. The provisional government can only be formed by the cooperation of the principal parties and groups in the country. It will thus be a composite government representative of all important sections of the people of India. Its primary functions must be to defend India and resist aggression with all the armed as well as the nonviolent forces at its command, together with its Allied powers and to promote the well-being and progress of the workers in the fields and factories and elsewhere to whom essentially all power and authority must belong. The provisional government will evolve a scheme for a constituent assembly which will prepare a constitution for the government of India acceptable to all sections of the people. The constitution, according to the Congress view, should be a federal one. With the largest measure of autonomy for the federating units and with the residuary powers vesting in these units, the future relations between India and the Allied Nations will be adjusted by representatives of all these free countries conferring together for their mutual advantage and for their cooperation in the common task of resisting aggression.

The reference to the residuary powers of the units is pure, undiluted Nehruvian idealism. At the very end, comes the call for action, again phrased in reasonable, even moderate terms:

The A.I.C.C. would yet again, at this last moment, in the interest of world freedom, renew this appeal to Britain and the United Nations. But the Committee feels that it is no longer justified in holding the nation back from endeavouring to assert its will against an imperialist and authoritarian government which dominates over it and prevents it from functioning in its own interest and in the interest of humanity. The Committee resolves, therefore, to sanction, for the vindication of India's inalienable right to freedom and independence, the starting of a mass struggle on nonviolent lines on the widest possible scale, so that the country might utilize all the nonviolent strength it has gathered during the last twenty-two years of peaceful struggle. Such a struggle must inevitably be under the leadership of Gandhiji and the Committee requests him to take the lead and

guide the nation in the steps to be taken.

Again, an anxiously democratic conclusion, clearly precluding, in advance, the arrogation of state power by the Congress, as an organization.

The text of the resolution is, there is no doubt, the product of detailed discussion. The basic thrust is Gandhi's conviction that a mass movement was necessary. The formulations of strategic issues are evidently the work of Jawaharlal. It is a memorable document, careful and detailed in its emphasis on permanent problems and challenges at a moment of crisis and confrontation.

The random notes scribbled by Jawaharlal Nehru during the Congress Working Committee meeting, discussing the Quit India resolution on 6 August 1942, contain some expected references to the condition of the world and also some uncharacteristic words of almost mystic import. One of these phrases is 'Zero Hour of the World'; it did appear to most people in India at the time, after more than a month of detailed discussion in the press about Gandhi's intended civil disobedience movement to compel the British to quit India, that the climax was imminent; it was certainly zero hour for India, but not for the world.

PROBLEMS WITHIN A PEER GROUP -- AHMADNAGAR FORT

The Ahmadnagar internment for just a little less than three years was for Jawaharlal Nehru a novel experience in some ways. For many weeks the Working Committee members who had been whisked away from Bombay on the morning of 9 August 1942 were totally out of touch with the world outside; it was not like the earlier terms of imprisonment, when friends and families of the prisoners had been permitted periodical interviews, and a certain amount of correspondence with the world outside was allowed. There were no interviews at all during this period, but letters to near relatives were permitted after a few weeks, even though the most innocent references to even distantly political developments were inked out by the censor. The feeling of isolation was complete because of the denial of access to newspapers also in the first few weeks.

Even though they were all senior members of the national movement, members of the Working Committee and two special invitees, the group was heterogeneous in personality and background. They were twelve of them -- Maulana Azad, Vallabhbhai Patel, Govind Ballabh Pant, Dr. Syed Mahmud, J.B. Kripalani, Shankarrao Deo, Prafulla Ghosh, Pattabhi Sitaramayya, Asaf Ali, Narendra Deva, Harekrishna Mahtab, and Jawaharlal. In one of Nehru's entries in the journal which he kept with some regularity for most of the internment, he notices that this representative group had a charming multilingual quality about it. Among the modern Indian languages, Hindi and Urdu, Gujarati and Marathi, Bengali and Oriya, Tamil and Telugu, Sindhi and also 'a little Punjabi' were available for communication. 'Then, of course, English and a smattering of French and German.' There were some outstanding scholars in the classical languages also in that group, Maulana

Azad with his total command over Arabic and Persian, and Acharya Narendra Deva completely at ease in Sanskrit and Pali. A 'formidable list, yet we are no dwellers in Babel'. And so, quite a number of them tried to spend their time usefully in learning from each other; Jawaharlal himself looked forward to reading *Shakuntala* in the original and a little modern Persian from the Maulana: '...an ideal teacher except that he is too erudite. Meanwhile, the Maulana, out of the vast stores accumulated in his mind, throws out a few Urdu verses at me every few days, and sometimes even an Arabic or Persian couplet, which I transcribe painfully.'

The heterogeneity was much more marked in the political sense. Among the twelve, Vallabhbhai, Kripalani, Deo, Ghosh, Sitaramayya and Harekrishna Mahtab were of settled 'Gandhian' convictions. Nehru, Azad and Pant were, perhaps, nearest each other, with Narendra Deva, a sympathetic colleague, but from what little evidence we have from Nehru's journals, no marked group proclivities. Asaf Ali and Syed Mahmud were, by background and temperament, drawn towards Nehru but their political 'moderation' made any meaningful dialogue difficult. Things were happening outside; first the turbulence of the moment, the mass arrests, the peasant revolts and the horrors of Chimur in Maharashtra. There were individual martyrs like Hemu Kalani in Karachi, and the newspapers, which they finally received as the back numbers in a bunch after more than a month, carried news stories conveying, under censorship conditions, the anger and distress of a whole people against the arrest of their leader and, also the 'leonine violence', the phrase coined by Gandhi himself, of the British Government. Outside India, the huge military confrontation in Southern Russia near Stalingrad was developing into an ultimate frenzy. Before the end of the year, Stalingrad had been relieved and the Russians were able to turn the tide without any assistance from a second front. In Asia and the Pacific, the Japanese sweep outwards continued, including the occupation of the Andamans. The Japanese army was, by the end of the year, near India's eastern frontier and there were realistic expectations in all parts of the country that an invasion was imminent.

While all this was happening outside, the small group of prisoners in Ahmadnagar Fort had to learn to live with each other and to survive without any opportunity to communicate with the world outside, let alone influence it. This particular term of group

imprisonment produced some good literature, the most distinguished being Maulana Azad's great masterpiece, *The Tarjuman al-Qur'an*. Others, like Pattabhi, also recorded their feelings. For our purpose, Jawaharlal's journal is a sufficient source for an understanding of his own thinking and his relations with his companions. In a manner, this particular Prison Diary, along with the letters to his sister and daughter, provide an honest enough record of the preoccupations of the Congress leadership in Ahmadnagar and Jawaharlal in particular. Little details show how he was able to stick to his familiar programme of self-discipline and regularity. With a little bit of gardening, physical exercise, spinning sometimes, though much less frequently than during earlier terms, and reading, reading, and reading. Books were read and sent out and more books brought in again; some old books were sampled and there is a courageous enough attempt to keep oneself up-to-date in changing times.

There is very little mention of most of his fellow companions in the journal. The few 'events' which took place, concerned Azad, Asaf Ali and Syed Mahmud, the most interesting, from the point of view of political analysis as well as personal chemistry, being the equation with Azad. Most of them are sick men, bravely carrying out their daily regimes with a certain amount of stoicism, schooling themselves not to make too many demands upon each other and only on rare occasions permitting claustrophobia to take over. Asaf Ali and Syed Mahmud were very near to Jawaharlal in personal friendship, shared memories and a certain cultural eclecticism characteristic of elite groups, both Hindu and Muslim in Uttar Pradesh, Delhi and Bihar. However, these lovable companions were also sick men, inclined to be unhappy and lonely and obviously unable to respond satisfactorily enough to Jawaharlal's demanding attitudes. With Pant and Patel, also sick men, there seems to have been a more equable connection. Here there is mutual respect and understanding, slightly more distant in the case of Vallabhbhai. There was also a reasonably stable relationship with Narendra Deva, for whom Jawaharlal had great respect; relations were comfortable enough but he was, however, ailing most of the time and one of the major disappointments of this journal is the absence of a record of any meaningful interaction with this most attractive and gentle, and, at the same time, most gifted member of this disparate team. The other members of the group including even Kripalani, with whom

Jawaharlal had such a long and friendly association, merge into each other in Jawaharlal's diary and appear only as angry Gandhians, eager to take offence at the slightest hint of *lese-majeste* to their infallible leader.

The real problem for both Jawaharlal and his colleagues was that the action lay outside the prison. Things were happening all over the place, in India and in many other countries — world-shaking events in which they had no part to play. It required great confidence and a certain arrogant self-sufficiency to keep sane and be intellectually alive at a time when it was easy to regard oneself as redundant. Almost the whole of the Working Committee, except Rajen Babu, (who had been arrested and interned in Bihar), was in Ahmadnagar, but there was no uncertainty or questioning at any moment during this long period of enforced inactivity that the decisions, if any, about the future programme of the Congress, about a possible dialogue with the Viceroy and the British Government, lay with Gandhi in Poona. There are two or three episodic, ultimately ineffectual, discussions of possible action. Maulana Azad was very keen to devise some means of activating a dialogue with the government, without flouting the authority of Gandhi but using, to the extent possible, the competence of the Working Committee. This did not come to anything. The Gandhians were sharply opposed to any initiative which would detract from the supreme authority of the Mahatma. Jawaharlal and Pant, on an important occasion, were willing to consider some sort of action by the Working Committee; they were, however, not enamoured of Maulana Azad's specific plan of withdrawing the August Resolution and returning to the Allahabad programme. This would have meant, in effect, giving up the mass civil disobedience programme. After lengthy discussions and a certain amount of mutual recrimination and natural misunderstandings, the idea was given up. In fact, the only serious communication which went out of Ahmadnagar to the world outside on a matter of substantive importance was Maulana Azad's letter as President of the Congress to the Viceroy dated 13 February 1943, immediately after Gandhi's fast was announced, and the correspondence between himself and the Viceroy was released to the press. This interesting document was drafted by Jawaharlal:

Ordinarily, we would refrain from saying anything while we are kept in detention, cut off completely from our people and the

outside world. Even our place of detention is supposed to be a secret which may not be mentioned or whispered to anyone. Our sources of information here are strictly limited and consist only of some newspapers which, under existing rules and ordinances, publish only censored news and are prohibited from giving publicity to many kinds of news which are of vital importance to us and the Indian people. In these circumstances it is obviously improper for us to give expression to any views in regard to events with which we are so ill-acquainted, especially when the only method of doing so, open to us, is to address the Government of India.

We have, therefore, avoided any such expression of views and have refrained from addressing you or any member of the Government of India, even though at times the most fantastic charges have been made against us and the organization we have the honour to represent. These charges have now been made even more explicitly and in an aggravated form in the course of your recent letters to Mahatma Gandhi. ...we cannot ignore the fact that the head of the present Government of India has made these charges. I am venturing, therefore, to write to you.

I would suggest to you to consider what the result in India might have been if the Congress had deliberately instigated and encouraged violence and sabotage. Surely the Congress is widespread enough and influential enough to have produced a situation a hundred times worse than anything that has so far happened.

In the summer of 1940, when France fell and England was facing dire peril, the Congress, which had previously been thinking in terms of direct action, deliberately avoided this, in spite of a strong demand for it. It did so entirely because it did not want to take advantage of a critical international situation or to encourage Nazi aggression in any way. Nothing could have been easier than for the Congress, during these critical days, to produce a situation of the utmost embarrassment to the Government.

In relative terms, this is a communication of strictly minor significance. The central dialogue throughout the weeks and years of the Quit India Movement and its aftermath continued to be between the Aga Khan Palace in Poona and New Delhi. This was a richly

productive period in Mahatma Gandhi's political activity as the leader of the nation.

Gandhi certainly had no occasion during these months to feel that he was outside the scheme of things like his less fortunate colleagues in Ahmadnagar. He was at the centre of the political negotiation, whatever little there was of it. Two personal tragedies, of enormous impact on even his strong and tranquil temperament, struck during the Poona internment — the deaths of Mahadev Desai at the very beginning and Kasturba later. He had a group of people around him with whom he could discuss things, a sort of mini-ashram in restricted conditions. He was continuously preoccupied with the next stage in the movement. The great fast in February 1943 was, without any qualification, the most important single political act of his career. It had been preceded by an uninterrupted dialogue through letters with the Viceroy himself and, on matters of detail, with Sir Richard Tottenham, the Additional Secretary in the Home Department in New Delhi.

The action was, therefore, in Poona and not in Ahmadnagar. Except for the single communication sent by Azad after Gandhi's fast had begun, the members of the Working Committee did not feel it necessary or correct to intervene in the political dialogue. This single letter from Azad has a certain wistful charm about it because it did not lead to anything. The inevitable Nehru touch in the communication can be seen in the reference to the August Resolution and its international concerns:

It is curious that in a fairly lengthy correspondence, and in various official statements, nothing is said about the merits of the resolution passed by the A.I.C.C., which dealt with the national and international situation and made it clear that a free India would not only resist invasion to the utmost, but would throw all her resources into the world struggle for freedom and align herself with the United Nations. This was made perfectly clear in the resolution itself; it was further emphasized by me, speaking as President, and by many other speakers. It must be known to you that ever since the early beginnings of fascist, Japanese and Nazi aggressions in Africa, Asia and Europe, the Congress has consistently condemned them. No organization in India or elsewhere has been so clear and emphatic on this subject.... It was made clear, and I emphasized this on that occasion, that an acid

test of the change was this defence of India and strengthening of the United Nations.

II

It is necessary to appreciate the fundamental difference between the psychological situations of Gandhi in command in Poona and his colleagues, helpless and condemned to inaction for the duration of the War. Jawaharlal himself responded to the situation with his usual resilience. He read a great deal, wrote several letters and a prison diary and gradually moved towards the writing of his new book, *The Discovery of India*. That, however, came much later, in April 1944. All this time, however, there was inevitably a feeling of resentment primarily against the British Government, most of all against Cripps and his colleagues in the Labour Party in the British Government, at the exclusion of India and the Congress from the great world drama. Churchill himself, peculiarly enough, escapes this feeling of resentment. He is described in complimentary terms in the journal as 'an honourable enemy. He is implacable but he obviously has fine qualities apart from the question of India or the East. One knows where he is. But what is one to do with the humbugs of the British Labour Party? — weak, ineffective, pedestrian and singularly ignorant. Stafford Cripps? a total failure....'

This resentment at being excluded from effective participation in what he considered to be a truly revolutionary war comes through clearly in his complaints against Gandhi himself. These are few and far between in a diary almost 600 pages long, but they are important for understanding the relationship between Jawaharlal and his great leader, whom he admired so much but, in Ben Johnson's phrase, only 'this side idolatry'.

While this is true and there is no question at any moment of his questioning Gandhi's passion, sincerity and purposeful movement forward at his own pace and in his own direction, we can now say that there were serious problems of political judgement involved in which any one side was not necessarily always right. This is not the occasion to go into the rights and wrongs of the ultimate decision taken by Gandhi to launch the movement almost immediately after the frustration of the Cripps Mission. It was consistent with his own personal philosophy, his assessment of the world situation, his dis-

illusionment with the British response and his urgent desire to do something to mobilize the people of India and to keep their flame of nationalism and their feeling of self-respect alive. As we have seen, Jawaharlal and Azad fell in line with Gandhi's final decision.

During the three years of confinement, the members of the Working Committee had occasion to discuss these things only on two or three occasions. Whenever these discussions took place, the communication gap between the Gandhite group, on the one hand, and Nehru and Azad, on the other, was the one permanent uncomfortable reality. These discussions centred on the action, if any, to be taken by the Working Committee in support of Gandhi or on their own. Nehru did not always agree with Azad, who emerges from the pages of Jawaharlal's prison diary as a man with a very clear mind of his own, who harboured his own feelings of unhappiness about the manner in which the August movement came about. When Gandhi was fasting in February 1943, Azad wanted to write to the Viceroy. They were not certain whether a letter would be, in itself, a compromise with what the Congress considered to be an act of total injustice. Finally, as we have noted, a letter did go, an official communication from the Working Committee to the Viceroy. Here, Nehru is more comfortable with Vallabhbhai and Pant than with Azad, even though he was with the Congress President in his general assessment of the immediate past.

Jawaharlal's own difficulties lay in a certain willingness, not very admirable, to attribute a tendency to compromise to Gandhi when there was none. On one occasion, he learnt from the press about some correspondence between Gandhi and the Government and jumped to the conclusion that he was making overtures as a preliminary to a compromise. These letters were all, as became clear very soon, important substantive communications between the leader of the national movement and the foreign power.

It is possible to sympathize with Nehru and his companions in Ahmadnagar. Reacting to a rumour of a possible Japanese invasion, Nehru's comment is tart:

...What are we to do about it, sitting here in Ahmadnagar Fort? Precious little anyway. What of Gandhiji? Would he make any move? Doubtful. The only move he or anyone else could take would be to write to the Viceroy. Such a letter would inevitably contain strong criticism of the Govt., reaffirmation of non-

cooperation with the present Govt., as well as opposition to any Japanese or other invasion. The Viceroy would probably sit on it. Maulana thought on these lines and discussed the matter with me. We could do very little anyway but he felt that to remain completely passive and not do anything at all was definitely bad.

This was in the last week of 1942. Six weeks later came the drama and excitement of Gandhi's fast. A few weeks before the news broke, on 26 January 1943, Independence Day, a time for retrospection, he remembers Gandhi with affection and a certain anxious expectancy that he might still do something:

I thought of Bapu — so obvious and yet the man of mystery. What was he thinking or preparing to do. As the leader and the person responsible for all recent developments in the Congress, he can hardly remain a pensive spectator, as many of us might. What a big man he is in spite of everything, and whatever the future may hold, it has been a rare privilege to work with him.

The fast itself, as we have noted, led to the one single communication sent by the Congress as an organization to the Viceroy — a letter drafted by Jawaharlal and signed by Azad. This was the only action which the Working Committee members agreed on taking throughout this long interregnum.

The next big change in the political situation in the country was the release of Gandhi in May 1944. From then onwards, there was action on the ground, initiatives by Rajagopalachari, discussions with Jinnah, statements by Sarojini Naidu, optimistic attempts by Bhulabhai Desai to tackle the communal tangle and the brave efforts of moderate leaders outside the mainstream to help. This was also the time when the famous economic programme known as *A Plan for the Economic Development of India* was published by J.R.D. Tata, G.D. Birla and others with its time-bound programme of industrialization for India, a highly competent apolitical document which impressed Jawaharlal. The War was going on relentlessly, the tide having by now, turned against the Axis powers. The reactions of Jawaharlal to all these developments can only be speculated upon because both his diary and his letters to sisters and daughter deal with non-political issues, personal tragedies, the good news of life like the birth of a child, and sad unexpected surprises like the death

of Ranjit Pandit.

The absence of any reference to the War in the letters can be understood because of the censorship problem. However, the total silence in the Diary is intriguing. It is clear to the reader of the Diary that Jawaharlal was imposing upon himself both physical and intellectual discipline; he wanted to be selective in his interests. He read a lot and he used spinning as a therapeutic measure. When he got tired of this, his thoughts went back to a book about India which he had started during an earlier term of imprisonment. This gave him a certain purpose in his activities and, for five to six months, he was pleasantly occupied. *The Discovery of India* was written, discussed with only one or two of his companions, and finally revised with the help of one or two others. The book itself, however, did not take more than a quarter of his total term of imprisonment to complete. It was an empty enough period and he had occasion to ask himself questions about the effect of imprisonment on the human personality and the problems of communication which all people have. These were problems which had always bothered him, but in this unprecedented situation when there were no interviews, not a single encounter with a woman or a child for more than two years, there was enough time to undertake a certain careful self-analysis and sometimes self-criticism.

These are not exactly new themes in Jawaharlal's writings. He had always been interested in the scope and limitations of human communication. Now there were problems in his immediate family circle, between his daughter and his sisters for instance, and between the sisters, which made him think deeply about the need for tolerance and understanding. His letters to Indira reflect a great deal of civilized common sense. There had been some trouble between niece and aunt, and the father's advice develops from the personal problem to a general self-assessment. He was careful about not saying or writing anything which would diminish the self-respect and self-confidence of his daughter. He wanted her to make up her own mind, even if her conclusions were totally opposed to his own:

As I have said above, this is a very trivial matter and hardly deserves a moment's thought. But I have doled out to you good advice so that you may apply it, if you approve of it, to other circumstances and other people also. And that includes me! I have a way of throwing out suggestions as they come into my mind. Do

not attach too much importance to them. Consider them, certainly and then do what you think best.

He then goes on to express his own personal discomfort at the common run of social life, with all its inanities:

I do not know what a normal person is, but whatever normality may be I do not fit in with it, and as I grow older I fit in less and less with it. That of course does not mean that I am very peculiar. But I grow less suited to the normal domestic and social life in India. I enjoy it in bits and with some people I enjoy it more than with others. Nevertheless a distaste for it grows in me and I do not see why I should waste my time in inane activities and in meeting third-rate people. Obviously this background is not a normal one and it is hardly a social one, in a narrow sense of the word.

This is the easier part. Jawaharlal is at his best in advising his sisters and his daughter. He is also very good in handling sympathetic individual companions, even when they are difficult, like Syed Mahmud. His old friend from the Cambridge days had many problems, and Jawaharlal is intimately involved in trying to solve them. He even gives himself the task of reading newspapers aloud to his room-mate and companion, doing full justice to the long perorations of Winston Churchill. He is terribly upset at Syed Mahmud's letter to the government appealing for help. He is, however generous in his considered judgement, just as, it should be noted, Gandhi was when he learnt about Mahmud's lapse. With Asaf Ali and Narendra Deva he has equable enough relations. With Maulana Azad there is a much richer, denser, equation, full of meaningful exchanges of ideas. Jawaharlal is at his best in analysing Azad's character and personality, examining with interest the differences in temperament between himself and his friend. Almost at the beginning of his stay in Ahmadnagar he talks at some length about the problems of living together in such forced proximity. It is Azad alone, among his companions, who really interests him:

I have lived alone in prison or with a few companions – also with a crowd, though that was long ago. The present experience is however a novel one. The type of companions is different. This

has its obvious advantages, but also some disadvantages. One has to adapt oneself more to the others. It is interesting and pleasing to see how each one of us makes a deliberate effort to do so. We rub each other the wrong way occasionally but it is surprising how well, on the whole, we have got on during these past months.

...Maulana is in many ways an astonishing person. His fund of knowledge is truly vast. His mind is keen as a razor's edge and his commonsense strong. He and I are in some ways -- in outlook, approach on life &c. -- as the poles apart. Yet I get on very well with him and there are very few persons whose opinion & advice on public or private matters I would value more. He is difficult to get into, and has a thick superficial covering which conceals the inner contents. Glimpses of the inner person surprise one continually. He is a curious combination of the old & the new, perfectly familiar with the new world, in so far as one can be so through books, his background is still eighteenth century or thereabouts....

Compared to him, how small most other prominent men look. Jinnah, who has made good in his own way, is just an uncultured, untaught politician, with a politician's flair and instinct, and nothing more.

Perhaps it is a certain vital energy, the force of life that must out, that Maulana lacks....

It is passion that he lacks. He is too intellectual, too cultured, to be carried away. Life must become rather a tame affair without passion.

The throw away phrase about Jinnah is significant. Jawaharlal is annoyed with Sarojini Naidu for praising Jinnah's incorruptibility. One of the mysteries of the last tragic phase in the national movement is the manner in which Jinnah and Nehru came to dislike each other. Jawaharlal's whole attitude towards Pakistan, the communal problem and Rajaji's persistence in trying to devise a formula, was one of angry antagonism. Here, in fairness to him, Maulana Azad was completely with him. The differences between Azad and Nehru during the discussions on the political programme had nothing to do with the communal problem or the Pakistan question. He was at one

with Vallabhbhai and Pant, for example, in being sceptical of Azad's hopes in reopening some type of a dialogue with the government. They were very clear that any such move would be misinterpreted by the government and lead to demoralization in the Congress ranks.

III

There were other problems of communications, as Nehru and Azad discovered during a series of stocktaking sessions the Working Committee had in March 1945, a few months before their release. The end of the War was near and the possibility of political action became real. It was, therefore, a rather important discussion. The Gandhian group, particularly Vallabhbhai and Kripalani, reacted with anger and bitterness towards what they thought to be the Maulana's criticism of Gandhi's policy just before and after the Allahabad meeting in April-May 1942.

It is not necessary to go into the details of this crucial episode which has already been discussed earlier in these pages. Both Azad and Nehru seemed to have been anxious to call into question Gandhi's strategy during those crucial months:

In the course of my talk I referred to the W.C. & A.I.C.C. meetings in April-May 1942 in Allahabad. I said how much upset I had been by the draft of the resolution sent by Bapu through Miraben. I had considered it wrong and injurious.

—I was trying to explain as calmly and objectively as possible the effect on my mind of various incidents, so that I could understand myself and show to others the changes I underwent in the course of those months preceding August 1942.

After I had finished that narrative, I added that though Bapu's approach during those months (as seen in his articles in *Harijan* &c.) was, to my thinking, wrong and confusing, I have no doubt that he was representing the mind of thinking and unthinking India then.... In fact I looked upon the scene as the development of powerful elemental forces which were proceeding by their own momentum, as it were, to some inevitable end. Later Bapu himself varied his attitude and approach though holding fast and passionately to the main line of action. In fact this

variation of his brought him much nearer my own viewpoint and removed some of the obstacles in my path. Some, not all, for the final difficulty of large-scale action just then remained, with all its far-reaching consequences. When, however, I saw that this was inevitable, that Bapu's mind was fixed and determined, then further argument was not useful, I had to make my choice. There was no difficulty about that choice. It was inconceivable to me to remain aloof from such a movement. Facts as well as all the urges of my own nature were too strong for me. Having so decided, then it followed that whatever action was to be taken must be whole-hearted.

This statement is of major documentary importance in any assessment of the Gandhi-Nehru relationship. Almost a decade later, Jawaharlal told Dorothy Norman that this was the one occasion when he deliberately surrendered his judgment to Gandhi's, even when he was not sure that his leader was right.

The discussion became acrimonious in spite of what Nehru and Azad thought to be a mature and moderate analysis. Patel reacted angrily:

After I had finished, Vallabhbhai spoke. His tone was full of suppressed anger, pain and bitterness. He said that he had long suspected that Maulana and others had felt the way they had spoken about events prior to August 1942. Because of this he (or 'they' meaning those who thought with him) had avoided speaking on this subject during these last 2 1/2 years. Now unfortunately the initiative had been taken by Maulana. He wanted to avoid an argument but he wished to say with all emphasis that he did not agree with Maulana's analysis and he was firmly convinced that the attitude and steps taken by Bapu had been correct and inevitable. Any other course would have meant the gradual annihilation of the Congress with all its evil effects on the country.

...He resented this attempt to show that he and his colleagues had not only been wrong but also that what they proposed then was dangerous for the country. They had put up with much they did not like, they had swallowed many a bitter pill, and now to be referred to and run down in this way was most objectionable. Further, he added, that because of references to guerrilla warfare

in a speech in Assam in April 1942, he had sent his resignation from the W.C. to the Maulana.

Gandhi also had, it would be recalled, reacted with annoyance to Jawaharlal's speeches in Assam advocating guerrilla war tactics in the event of a Japanese invasion. Jawaharlal's reaction is uncomfortable, uncomprehending:

I was amazed at this outburst – both at the words used and the bitter tone that accompanied them: I had not intended to, nor, to my knowledge, had I used any language that might hurt. I was thinking, all the time I was speaking, in terms of self-analysis and trying to give an objective account of happenings. Obviously there had been a conflict of views, as there often is. It was all past now, done with, and a part of history. Why should we get excited over it?

This particular interchange is of some genuine psychological interest because these two men, Vallabhbhai and Jawaharlal, really admired each other and got on reasonably well together; yet, there was always a yawning chasm of beliefs and perceptions. With this was also connected the resentment of men like Kripalani and Patel of what they thought to be Jawaharlal's 'superior' attitude about international affairs.

IV

A prison journal is a medium for expressing one's innermost feelings; there is a certain need to exaggerate because of the lack of an immediate audience. Self-communion over the months can have a certain heady influence. Jawaharlal was, however, a highly civilized and discreet person. There was nothing of the Boswell or the Pepys in him. He also did not have the great genius Gandhi had for extensive self-examination in public. The rather detailed analysis he had given here about his discomfort with Gandhi's policy decisions in 1942 had been expressed with bitter, almost uncharitable, frankness in an entry in his Diary, a few months earlier. Gandhi had written to the Viceroy immediately after his release in May 1944, reiterating his faith in the August Resolution and Jawaharlal had reacted to it with

great relief and even happiness:

The papers yesterday contained Gandhiji's correspondence with Wavell -- part of it -- Feb-March 1944 -- also Bapu's parting shot at Linlithgow. Evidently he has written frequently to the Govt. of India since his arrest.

What effect did this produce on me? Mixed reactions, I suppose and the more I think of it the more mixed they get. For thought leads me beyond the correspondence itself to the basic problem and all that has happened during these past years....

Well, my immediate reaction was one of relief and satisfaction -- Bapu's letters were characteristic of him and, though long and occasionally involved, good. They make us realise how his mind has been functioning....

Time has no turning -- nor has history. And the Indo-British relationship has got to bear that burden of history which cannot be forgotten.

This was relaxed enough. But a few weeks later he has angry second thoughts. On 5 August 1944, he writes:

Three weeks since I wrote last in this journal. Three weeks of growing perturbation and mental distress. I wrote then that I was not put out at all by various developments and the two proposals Bapu had made, though I disagreed with much that he had said and the manner of saying and doing. Well, I take all that back. I am very much put out, angered and out of temper. The floods of statements, interviews, correspondence &c that have emanated from Bapu, and the very frequent utterances of Rajagopalachari, have overwhelmed me and others and I feel stifled and unable to breathe normally. For the first time in these two years I have a sensation of blankness and sinking of heart. Today I have been writing to Indu my usual Saturday letter. I found some difficulty in doing so and could hardly finish my sentences.

Jinnah with his insolence has contributed to this, and so the debate in the House of Commons and the general attitude of the British press -- But after all that is to be expected. It is Bapu's response to all this that ^{has} ~~is~~ me over.

My mind goes back: the conflicts in the Working Committee in 1936-37 — that revealing incident after the Calcutta A.I.C.C. in 1937 (Oct. ?) when Bapu completely lost control over himself over the Mysore resolution and cursed us as mischief-makers — the Rajkot incident when he fasted and then made a mess of everything — that 'inner voice' business — my attempts at resignation from the Congress presidentship and later the W.C. — Tripuri and after — the Calcutta A.I.C.C. again when I got out of the W.C. — September 1939 when the war began and I reverted to the W.C. — the War Sub-Committee of which I was chairman which never functioned! — the conflicts over nonviolence — the breaks with Bapu and subsequent reconciliations — Ramgarh Congress and after — Individual C.D. — Bardoli — December 1941 — the Chiangs' visit and Bapu's reaction to them — Stafford Cripps — the Allahabad A.I.C.C. April-May 1942 — another of Bapu's amazing series of articles in *Harjan* — the passion which seemed to envelop him — and so on to August 8, 1942.

And now? All these explanations without end and toning down of everything — this grovelling before the Viceroys & Jinnah — This may be the satyagraha technique. If so, I fear I do not fit in at all — It does not even possess the saving grace of dignity — Tall talk and then excuses & explanations and humility.

What I may do outside after our release, I do not know. But I feel that I must break with this woolly thinking and undignified action — which really means breaking with Gandhi. I have at present no desire even to go to him on release and discuss matters with him — What do such discussions lead to? I suppose I shall see him anyhow...

As for Rajagopalachari — is there a more dangerous person in all India?

It would be unfair to both Gandhi and to Nehru to regard this obvious outburst as a considered judgment. It is, however, a fair enough list of the problems which Nehru, Azad and the socialist members in the Working Committee had with Gandhi's new strategy in June and July.

The reference to Rajaji is uncharacteristically extreme. Rajaji in his role of honest broker between Gandhi and Jinnah seems to arouse the worst responses in Jawaharlal. He is usually generous to him for his incisive intellect, and for his essentially civilized

personality. Here, however, he has made up his mind about Pakistan and sees Rajaji as an uncomfortable boulder of reason and realism in the path of his rather comfortable programme of quick withdrawal of the British, leaving behind the Congress and the League to sort out the problem.

V

The Ahmadnagar stay was, on the whole, much more normal, pleasant and reasonably placid than the above selective account shows. Anyone who has been in prison knows that confinement does not bring out the best in people even though there are noble, patriotic ideals at the back of one's mind. Jawaharlal was consistently understanding and helpful about the physical ailments of most of his friends, more specially Prafulla Ghosh, Asaf Ali, Narendra Deva and Vallabhbhai, and Pant, most of all. He himself was aggressively healthy and rather smug about it. But there is no evidence that this, by itself, provoked any annoyance among his frailer companions. He could be the epitome of tact in such social traps. He was, one can see, a friendly enough and helpful fellow prisoner; he had also a unique relationship of companion, disciple and friendly critic with Azad.

This was within the jail itself. Outside the walls of the prison there were very few opportunities for communication except, of course, to near relatives. The letters to both Indira and Krishna Hutheesing are full of intense personal interest, but are not particularly useful for understanding the communicator in Jawaharlal Nehru, as far as the outside world was concerned. In this regard there are two small episodes which deserve some attention.

The new Viceroy, Lord Wavell, passed on a letter from Edward Thompson, who was very sick in London, along with his new book. Wavell wrote a personal letter to Nehru and also sent his own anthology of English poetry, *Other Men's Flowers*. Jawaharlal was, as we know, opposed, in principle, to corresponding with the Viceroy. He, however, wrote a letter to the Bombay Secretariat asking them to thank the Viceroy. Later, when the tragic news of the death of Thompson's son was sent by Wavell, he sent a direct reply to the Viceroy. In this letter he ventured to compliment the anthologist on his good taste:

Other Men's Flowers has brought to me many old favourites and reminded me of others that I had almost forgotten. It has also introduced me to a number of poems that were new to me. The book would have been welcome at any time and at any place, but it has been doubly so here.

He also sent a letter to Thompson, one of the nicest letters he ever wrote, expressing his admiration for the heroic death of Frank Thompson as a member of a partisan group in Bulgaria.

You write with a father's pride and a father's sorrow, and you have reason for both, but many others will share that pride and sorrow. I have thought that if I had a son I would like him to die in some such way before life had stained him and added burdens which are sometimes heavier than death itself. It would be a grievous blow, but somehow a splendid death gives a deeper meaning to life and I am a little weary of the dull and meaningless round of life's normal activities.

...In this barren desert the oases of friendship and understanding are few but very precious, and more and more I have come to realise how much they mean to me and to others. The books that you have sent me have been my companions here and your occasional messages have brought you near to me. Often I have felt that physical companionship is only just one way, and not always the closest, of meeting together. We can overcome the lack of it and understand each other even more sometimes from a distance.

You are ill and I am here and perhaps we may not meet again. And yet I do not know, for I have grown used to the unexpected happening. Whether we meet or not, I shall often think of you with affection and treasure the memory of our friendship. And so, whatever happens, may it be well with you.

It is in these distant encounters, so intimate, affectionate, and empathetic with men and women of other races and climes but a similar political outlook, a shared commitment to certain values that Jawaharlal comes out best. He can be difficult, taciturn and uncommunicative at times even to his dearest and nearest. But even

when he is most depressed, alienated or lonely, there is this willingness to reach out to companions of the spirit everywhere.

IV

The Discovery of India is an interesting book for several reasons, some purely literary, some personal and some political: most of all, however, it remains an example of Jawaharlal's urge to communicate, educate and persuade. It is many fragments in one, put together during a period of great unease and discomfort with the developing situation in the world outside. It is difficult to disagree with S. Gopal's restrained judgment that it has not the freshness of the autobiography. The several separate themes discussed with such fluency and elegance are not really fused into a whole: there was an element of a controlling passion in the *Autobiography* which gave it a form quite independent of the chronological support which gives a certain continuity and coherence to the most indis disciplined exercises in literary retrospection. Here also there is a dominant motive, the quest for a meaning, an essential truth which would justify to himself the excitement he felt in the idea of an Indian nation state, free and autonomous in a crowded, but not necessarily, hostile world, representing the institutional embodiment of an individual civilization which continued to flourish and had promise of further growth after years of stagnation. This search for a national personality is important in the book, but it is only a part of it, not even necessarily, the most valuable part. The title, the publishing history and the larger than life role played by the author subsequently in the Indian political scene have tended to give a disproportionate importance to the discovery angle.

Today, forty years after it was written, the book remains a readable, pleasant, effort at communicating not one idea only, but many thoughts, feelings and impressions, in which the history of the Indian people has to coexist with Jawaharlal's personal experiences – the changing world during the War, and the last, confused stage of the national movement. It is not a major work. Unlike his other two books, most of it is now dated. To be really useful to the modern reader, the historical chapters will have to be supplemented with footnotes and appendices to give some idea of the state of contemporary knowledge and analysis in the various disciplines lightly discussed in the core chapters of the book. The evolution of Indian

thought, the development of science and technology, the interrelation between crafts and skills and major arithmetical and algebraical discoveries in the Indian situation, the impact of Europe on India – all these, and many other things need revaluation, not merely revision. *The Discovery of India* is a modest, readable, competent effort at historiography by a practising politician with a gift for communication, a sensitivity to English prose. It is not the last word on Indian history. This has to be remembered now, with generosity to the great man, with appreciation for his sincerity and his achievement. Television serials, fortunately, have a tendency to be self-sufficient. As a mere peg on which to hang the scrolls of creative artistry in another medium, the book is more than adequate, but to regard it as the final pronouncement on various economic, ethnic, linguistic and philosophical problems which continue to interest and disturb us concerning country's past, would be unfair to Nehru and to ourselves. It would reduce what is still a living, organic piece of writing to the sympathetic reader, to a mere artifact, a relic in a shrine.

The truly historical portion, is, in fact, contained in a little more than half of the book, chapters three to seven. The eighth and ninth chapters deal with India after Gandhi came on the scene and discuss events and processes familiar to Jawaharlal in his own lifetime. This is the central part of the book. At the very beginning are two personal narrations; and attempt to take off from where the autobiography ended and carry it on for a few months only – after Kamla Nehru's death, till Jawaharlal's return to India in mid 1936. Towards the end are two entirely different chapters, the first on the background to the Quit India Resolution, a quick recapitulation of the ups and downs of the movement under Gandhi's leadership, the tension and frustrations of that difficult period between the Cripps Mission and the August arrests. The last chapter stands by itself as a brief narration of events in India and abroad during the period of internment in Ahmadnagar, followed by an investigation of India's probable place in a world transformed by war. There is an attempt here to draw the threads together from the earlier chapters on science, religion and philosophy and to link them with the immediate future. Whatever architectonic quality the book has, in its final version, has to be recognized in this rather impressive conclusion to what Dr. Gopal calls a 'jumble' of a book.

The middle parts dealing with Indian culture and civilization read

well even today. They are, however, based on secondary or even tertiary sources. There are lengthy quotations from recognized authorities, as Gopal notes, much lengthier than in previous books. There is a lack of vigour and discipline in the more purplish passages; the chapter on Ashoka in *Glimpses* is superior. The quotations from H.G. Wells are the same as in the original book. As he himself wryly admits, he has a certain weakness for the foreign certificate.

All these weaknesses can be understood and forgiven when one begins to realize that this is, after all, a book written for young people, students, the uninformed reader who could do with a little knowledge informed with the minimum of prejudice. In this sense, it is genetically linked with *Glimpses*. It is not so much popularization of a difficult subject as education and persuasion. The Indian child is taught about his country's role in events, ideas and movements of peoples, in time and space: at the end of it all the reader's self-respect is enhanced.

V

It is as a primer on history, then, that the central part of *The Discovery* should be judged. It is important in itself, but more important is the timing of the book on the eve of independence, and the authorship which conferred on it a certain respectability. In essence it is an intelligent reader's guide written for other readers. Like *Glimpses*, it has the flavor of the twenties and thirties, not only in the themes and the thrust of the argument, but, most of all in the motivation of the writer. As we have noted earlier, Jawaharlal is quite consciously one of the popularizers of that great period of popularization in which Shaw, Wells, Joad, and Cole were the pioneers. There was another breed of brilliant educators in the same generation, scientists like Jeans, Eddington, Julian Huxley and, later, the great, massive tomes on the whole range of knowledge by Lancelot Hogben. This was the period of Victor Gollancz and Allen Lane and his Penguins in British publishing: the Left Book Club, John Strachey, Ralph Fox and Christopher Caudwell brought Marxism to the worker and the young student. Jawaharlal was a product of the great period of intelligent, informal, popular writing. This demanded ease of style, a capacity to simplify without vulgariza-

tion and a certain missionary fervour. In Nehru's case, there was also a need to communicate, as much from a need to persuade and convert, as from a compulsive urge to get out of the tedium of internment. He was not in the profession of letters. He wrote, and wrote extraordinarily well, when the long years of confinement began to pall. It should be noted that the book was written during the second half of his stay in Ahmadnagar, written at feverish speed, in five to six months, the catalytic impulse coming from the earlier embryonic attempt at a sequel to the *Autobiography* he had begun in the previous term of imprisonment. He procured a copy of the original manuscript from Anand Bhavan. The first two chapters in *The Discovery* are based on that earlier effort. The earlier months too were not unproductive as we have noted: there was the Prison Diary, long enough by itself to form a whole book, and there were the letters to his daughter and to his sisters. It, however, needed the accumulated canvas of more than 18 months to get him started on the new manuscript. While he was writing the book the nationalist movement was energized again after Gandhi's release. Nehru seeks solace and relief in the distant past and tries to understand for himself the enigma of his great leader and his wholly unpredictable strategies.

There are other, obvious influences on Jawaharlal Nehru, the popularizer. Radhakrishnan on Indian philosophy and Rabindranath Tagore on the Indo-British connection, give him intellectual support. He finds a kindred soul in Vivekananda, in spite of his distance from politics: the travelling salesman of ideas 'thundering from Cape Comorin in the Southern tip of India to the Himalayas' appeals to him for obvious reasons. He had also, often enough during his political career, but most of all during the election campaigns, travelled throughout India and revelled in the affectionate response of the crowd everywhere. It is clear that he sees himself quite consciously as belonging in the same group as the great teachers and also, persuaders, in the best sense, of modern India. Gandhi, of course, is at the center of all this. The coming of Gandhi into the national movement, the decisive nature of his agenda for mass mobilization by individual example, and the happy tension between the leader and the followers – all this is described with authority. Here Jawaharlal the writer is at his predictable best:

It is not surprising that this astonishingly vital man, full of self-confidence and an unusual kind of power, standing for equality and freedom for each individual, but measuring all this in terms of the poorest, fascinated the masses of India and attracted them like a magnet. He seemed to them to link up the past with the future and to make the dismal present appear just as a stepping-stone to that future of life and hope....

Congress was dominated by Gandhi and yet it was a peculiar domination, for the Congress was an active, rebellious, many-sided organization, full of variety of opinion, and not easily led this way or that. Often Gandhi toned down his position to meet the wishes of others, sometimes he accepted even an adverse decision. On some vital matters for him, he was adamant, and on more than one occasion there came a break between him and the Congress. But always he was the symbol of India's independence and militant nationalism, the unyielding opponent of all those who sought to enslave her, and it was as such a symbol that people gathered to him and accepted his lead, even though they disagreed with him on other matters.

Jawaharlal's prose acquires a rare poetic quality when he talks about Gandhi. It was always so. Here, however, there is an honest attempt to see him whole, to place him in the Indian scenario, to understand his centrality in the scheme of things, his superior relevance even when he was most idiosyncratic. In his perplexity about the Mahatma's wayward ways which always led to effective action, and, also, almost always, ended in self-criticism and frustration, Jawaharlal went to a most unlikely source, the British strategic thinker, Liddell Hart, who developed a theory of 'the strategy of the indirect approach' as the most influential factor in human history. Nehru quotes copiously from Liddell Hart:

History bears witness to the vital part that the "prophets" have played in human progress -- which is evidence of the ultimate practical value of expressing unreservedly the truth as one sees it. Yet it also becomes clear that the acceptances and spreading of that vision has always depended on another class of men -- "leaders" who had to be philosophical strategists, striking a compromise between truth and men's receptivity to it....

...Is there a practical way of combining progress towards the

attainment of truth with progress towards its acceptance? A possible solution of the problem is suggested by reflection on strategic principles.... Avoid a frontal attack on a long established position; instead seek to turn it by a flank movement, so that a more penetrable side is exposed to the thrust of truth. But, in any such indirect approach, take care not to diverge from the truth – for nothing is more fatal to its real advancement than to lapse into untruth.

The 'frequent struggle in Gandhi's mind which had led often to many seeming contradictions' is understood by Nehru a little better through a military thinker's prism.

VI

The writing in *The Discovery* is vivid and the controlling passion visible in the penultimate chapter dealing with the immediate past. This is a synoptic review of the Congress policies during the time when Jawaharlal himself began to be a factor in the movement. The preoccupation with foreign policy is projected at the very beginning of the chapter: the Congress approach to War and the various stages of the confrontation are described with great moderation and without rancour. The bitterness in the *Prison Diary* is not permitted to seep into this public chronicle. At the same time, the 'frustration', 'tension', and the final challenge in the Quit India Resolution are chronicled with great fidelity. At the time it was published, in 1946, it was a necessary piece of retrospective self-assessment by the leading Congressman, and also a delineation of the contradictions within the leadership of the organization and between himself and Gandhi. It is interesting because of its essential honesty: when we read the diaries today and compare the querulous private musings and the restrained public style, one sees very few discrepancies. There is the civilized need for decorum and discretion. Immediate conclusions are eschewed and bitter phrases avoided. The essential puzzlement, the deep unhappiness, a feeling of almost hurt, during the ten weeks between April and July, is conveyed. It is, by any standard, a superb piece of 'immediate history'. There is nothing slick or clever about it. The honest differences between Gandhi and his colleagues like Azad and Nehru are conveyed with great understanding. Three passages

will indicate the quality of that superb chapter:

These were obvious difficulties and we discussed them at length with Gandhiji without converting each other. The difficulties were there and risks and perils seemed to follow any course of action or inaction. It became a question of balancing them and choosing the lesser evil. Our mutual discussion led to a clarification of much that had been vague and cloudy, and to Gandhiji's appreciation of many international factors to which his attention was drawn. His subsequent writing underwent a change and he himself emphasized these international considerations and looked at India's problem in a wider perspective.... Passionately desirous of India's freedom as he was, India was to him something more than his loved homeland; it was the symbol of all the colonial and exploited peoples of the world, the acid test whereby any world policy must be judged. If India remained unfree then also the other colonial countries and subject races would continue in their present enslaved condition and the war would have been fought in vain. It was essential to change the moral basis of the war....

Many of the theoretical and other differences that had often separated some of us from Gandhiji disappeared, but still that major difficulty remained -- any action on our part must interfere with the war effort. Gandhiji, to our surprise, still clung to the belief that a settlement with the British Government was possible, and he said he would try his utmost to achieve it. And so, though he talked a great deal about action, he did not define it or indicate what he intended to do.

Towards the end, Jawaharlal gives with loving detail, the details of the Quit India Resolution, with special emphasis on the wider, global reach of Indian nationalism:

Some of us were disturbed and upset by this new development, for action was futile unless it was effective action, and any such effective action must necessarily come in the way of the war effort at a time when India herself stood in peril of invasion. Gandhiji's general approach also seemed to ignore important international considerations and appeared to be based on a narrow view of nationalism. During the three years of war we had

deliberately followed a policy of non-embarrassment, and such action as we had indulged in had been in the nature of symbolic protest.

VII

The last chapter of *The Discovery of India* looks forward to the future. It is a programme for action after independence as well as a description of the country passing through the ordeal of famine and political inertness. The titles of the sub-chapters speak for themselves: India's Sickness: Famine; India's Dynamic Capacity; India's Growth Arrested; Religion, Philosophy and Science; The Importance of the National Idea; India: Partition or Strong National State or Centre of Supra-National State?

These are important in themselves: they represent a deliberate turning back on the dismal past and a lively interest in the shape of things to come. It records the concerns and anxieties of a responsible mind at a time of change. There is a courageous attempt to picture the post-war world with the help of the concepts in H.J. Mackinder's writings on geopolitics as refurbished by Nicholas Spykman of the United States. The two great states of the future, the US and the USSR, based, one on sea power and the other on a vast land mass, evoke his curiosity. Where would freedom and empire come into this? At the very end of this enquiry into the nature of the human condition, Jawaharlal sees the Indian problem as only part of the wider issue of humanity. Science and religion, politics and economics and the importance of the individual in society are discussed: the evidence of Einstein and John Stuart Mill, Confucius and Lao Tzu, and Tagore (always Tagore), Aristotle, the ancient philosopher and James Jeans, the modern scientist, is marshalled. It is a good testament of faith, as well as scepticism. It is Nehru at his best.

Finally, the book has an enchanting epilogue which attempts, only with mixed success, to give shape and form to this lavish, generous, outpouring of ideas, hopes and memories.

Memories are important. S. Gopal, in his biography, approvingly quotes D.D. Kosambi's review of *The Discovery of India*, in which the Marxist historian is, quite correctly, dismissive of Jawaharlal

Nehru's ideas of the many races of India as making little sense: 'We are an old race, or rather an odd mixture of many races, and our racial memories go back to the dawn of history.' Gopal describes this effusion as 'just one of many meaningless sentences of which Jawaharlal himself would later have been ashamed'. Vague and romantic, yes, but certainly not meaningless if one remembers that this was written for a popular audience. To expect hard logic and an array of facts in what is an impressionist account for a popular audience is, perhaps, unfair. The point is, however, well taken.

Perhaps there is a simpler explanation for this lapse into the obvious. Walter De La Mare was one of his favourite poets and his lines,

Very old are we men,
Through how many centuries
Roves back the rose?

might have suggested this Jung-and-soda-water conclusion. In its place, in this book, it does not seem very odd at all.

Many of the ideas and phrases, in this last bit of 'discovery', are, it must be admitted, equally romantic, verging on the much too sentimental. The description of India is Pateresque in its cadences, as we have remarked earlier when discussing the influence of the turn of the century writers on his thinking and style.

...Overwhelmed again and again, her spirit was never conquered, and to-day when she appears to be the plaything of a proud conqueror, she remains unsubdued and unconquered. About her there is the elusive quality of a legend of long ago; some enchantment seems to have held her mind. She is a myth and an idea, a dream and a vision, and yet very real and present and pervasive. There are terrifying glimpses of dark corridors which seem to lead back to primeval night, but also there is the fullness and warmth of the day about her. Shameful and repellent she is occasionally perverse and obstinate, sometimes even a little hysteric, this lady with a past. But she is very lovable, and none of her children can forget her wherever they go or whatever strange fate befalls them....

...We may, for the present, have to suffer the enforced subjection to an alien yoke and to carry the grievous burdens that

this involves, but the day of our liberation cannot be distant. We are citizens of no mean country and we are proud of the land of our birth, of our people, our culture and traditions.

The postscript, written six months later, is most significant for the reference to the atom bomb and the Indian National Army:

The War ended and the atom bomb became the symbol of the new age. The use of this bomb and the tortuous ways of power politics brought further disillusion.

No detailed comment here, nothing of the obsession which was to be his alone, among statesman, in the fifties.

The INA is seen as a sort of reassurance against the probability of partition:

The story of the Indian National Army, formed in Burma and Malaya during war years, spread suddenly throughout the country and evoked an astonishing enthusiasm.... They became also the symbol of unity among the various religious groups in India, for Hindu and Moslem and Sikh and Christian were all represented in that army. They had solved the communal problem amongst themselves, and so why should we not do so?

The last sentences are obstinately topical, here and now, in December 1945:

We are on the eve of general elections in India and these elections absorb attention. But the elections will be over soon – and then? The coming year is likely to be one of storm and trouble, of conflict and turmoil. There is going to be no peace in India or elsewhere except on the basis of freedom.

When the book was published in 1946, this quote should remind us, it was a serious effort at propaganda, both in India and abroad, a final salvo in the cause of the country's independence. Its elevation to the status of a quasi-scripture came later. Jawaharlal would have been embarrassed.

'ONLY CONNECT'

On his release from imprisonment in May 1945, Jawaharlal came out into a world which was changing almost week by week. After three years of forced passivity -- the discomforts of compulsory intimacy with decent and friendly colleagues, but not companions of one's choice -- there was the usual return to hyperactivity. This was a familiar enough experience for him but neither he, nor anyone else, for that matter, knew at that moment that there was going to be no return to the endless rounds of agitation, propaganda and compulsory silence which had been his lot for more than 25 years. There would be no going back to the earlier uncertain, almost non-participatory, agitational role in which he would be playing the part of a loyal lieutenant, the happy interpreter and the angry activist, leaving the ultimate decision-making to his leader. Within a few weeks of his release, the face of the world, Britain and the Indo-British equation changed.

Jawaharlal's release almost synchronized with the end of the War in Europe. Churchill's decision to have an immediate post-war election transformed the British-Indian relationship and led to an unexpected denouement. The Labour Party returned to power and the attitude of the new Attlee Government towards the Indian question was qualitatively different from that of its predecessor. Within a few weeks after the British election, there came another major event -- the use of the nuclear weapon by the United States against Japan in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The World War ended and, in a tragic accident, Subhas Chandra Bose died at Taipei Airport.

From then onwards it was going to be a story of negotiations only, about the actual manner of transfer of power from Britain to India. The arrival of the British Cabinet Mission in early 1946 and

the protracted negotiations in Simla, even though they were ultimately unsuccessful, marked the beginning of a new type of dialogue in which the actors were different and the need for a quick solution compelling. In all these negotiations, Nehru, Azad and Patel actively participated as members of the Congress team along with Gandhi. Earlier, during the Cripps Mission, Azad and Nehru had been the principal negotiators, with Gandhi exercising only effective remote control most of the time. Now at Simla there were many other actors also within the Congress ranging from Patel and Nehru to Bhulabhai Desai. As on other previous occasions, the Muslim League and the other parties also took part as principal negotiators with the difference that, for the first time, the negotiations took the character of genuinely multilateral discussions. It was a large diplomatic exercise in which the parties, individual leaders, the media and the people took part. In retrospect, it was a sad and tragic episode, the last faint chance the nation and the people had for adopting some type of a united state structure.

The Cabinet Mission failed like the Cripps Mission earlier and the inevitable movement towards a divided India began. Gradually, almost invisibly, Gandhi began to detach himself from the goings-on in the corridors of power and returned to the villages and the *mohallas* where a new turbulence was beginning which would engulf the people of India before institutional propriety returned. Azad, Jawaharlal and Patel became totally involved in the business of the transfer of power and the protracted negotiations which accompanied it.

Life was never going to be the same for Jawaharlal Nehru or his companions. From now onwards there would be no time for Jawaharlal Nehru or his colleagues for hopeful, activist, angry commentaries on living, comfortably indignant, precisely because of the absence of immediate commitment to action. There were new challenges, much more exacting than ever before encountered by these men, all well past middle age. Communication was going to be important for Jawaharlal Nehru throughout the rest of his life, as an administrator, as a political leader and as a party chief; even more important than these new tasks which faced him during the months of the transfer of power and the 17 years of office, was the role of foreign policy administrator and international statesman. In all these activities, communication was crucial, but it was a different type of communication from that he had been accustomed to. There was a

certain continuity with the past in the election campaigns, in the innumerable speeches of popularization, on planning, foreign policy choices, non-alignment, the scientific temper and the need for a socialist approach to economic arrangements within the country; continuity with the earlier nationalist agitator and fledgling world activist, both in theme and in language. The key to the understanding of Jawaharlal Nehru's many successes and some unmistakable failures as a major statesman, leading an important country during a crucial transitional period in world politics, lies in the conditioning and experiences of the long years before independence.

A study of this conditioning and experiences was the task undertaken in this book, but it has turned out to have more intrinsic interest than the preliminary study of the preparations for a great career. It can be argued that great men like Nehru are as interesting during the search for power and performance as in the years of achievement. It would not be possible to understand Nehru in office without knowing something about the angry agitator of the thirties whom many of his colleagues saw as an ineffectual angel excited by remote considerations and with no demonstrated ability to cope with immediate problems. As we have seen in our study, he did face many problems of decision-making and he devised his own solutions; more important, throughout his career he had, from his own inner resources, developed a certain capacity for escaping from present failure and inaction into political speculation, economic analysis and the rediscovery of the past, in a reasonably well-informed, sensitive manner, without any pretensions to professional expertise. These qualities would all make Nehru, in his years of power, as attractive an individual as he had been during the years of agitation to the ordinary people of India in the mass, and to individual observers abroad, with whom he interacted with such ease. The last two decades of his life would be filled with frantic activity from hour to hour, in which there would no more opportunities for withdrawal into the things of the mind. Years of discipline enabled him to sustain an almost superhuman routine and he has left behind an enormous amount of archival material in the form of speeches in Parliament and outside, informal talks and official addresses, letters to colleagues within India, party documents when necessary, and a vast number of official minutes and notes. He was one of the last versatile, completely educated statesmen who could not function in a sane manner without falling back on his own personal talent and

equipment. This is not to belittle the leaders of the next generation. Things have become more normal today; life has also become more complex. Jawaharlal thought out his own speeches and his minutes and spoke or wrote them only as a subsidiary consequence. Political leaders and statesmen in our time and age have to depend on institutional inputs and staff assistance; otherwise their decision-making might suffer, their priorities might go awry. It is not so much that Jawaharlal was superior but that he was different in training and temperament, not only from his contemporaries in India, at least most of them, and from most machine-made politicians, party bosses and anonymous functionaries in organized states. As a charismatic figure, his natural parallels would be men like Sukarno or Castro; the second a more plausible figure both because of his durability and his consistency. Both these men, however, have had very limited literary talents. Among the developed states, perhaps Churchill has a certain similarity with Nehru, much more powerful and effective by any standard, as a leader whose achievements and failures were larger than life; he had also the unique experience of being thrown into the centre of drama at the right moment. It is in their need for self-expression and for recapitulating the past, to help themselves to understand the present, that there is something in common between Churchill and Nehru. A comparison of *A History of the English-speaking Peoples* and *The Discovery of India* would be rewarding in a minor fashion.

There are other leaders, near contemporary with Jawaharlal, like Roosevelt, with whom he has a great deal in common, both in political vision and the ability to communicate with his constituency. Then there are the stranger types, Mussolini and Hitler, who were thrown up by other environments and who created their own distorted systems which have nothing at all in common with Jawaharlal, except the large impression they made upon the popular mind. The great Marxist leaders of the twentieth century, Mao and Lenin, can be compared with both Gandhi and Nehru without any necessary conclusions about their personal calibre or place in history. Both created revolutions like Gandhi; both were successful communicators in a prophetic sense, like Gandhi. They were also political revolutionaries who were able to change society according to their ideas; here they were analogies of Jawaharlal. The ability of the administrator to communicate is second in importance only to that indefinable quality of leadership which we see in the choice

between difficult options in a complex situation. Both Mao and Lenin had the need to reexpress to themselves and to their constituency their political agenda in a vocabulary which was intelligible in Marxist terms. Throughout his years as Prime Minister, Jawaharlal had also to keep on propagating his ideas, explaining his policies, defining them in the vocabulary which he had inherited and developed from the national movement and Mahatma Gandhi, on the one hand, and from 'socialistic' philosophies of the first half of the 20th century, on the other.

During his years of power, Nehru was a happy decision-maker; there is no evidence that he recoiled from reaching difficult decisions as has been charged by many of his critics. There is also no doubt that, during the first four years of office, this decision-making was effectively shared with Vallabhbhai Patel.

All these and other aspects of Nehru's complex career in government have been studied in great detail by several distinguished students of the man, the politics of India and contemporary history. We are only at the beginning of the researches into the achievements and failures of the Nehru period in India. A quarter of a century has already lapsed since he passed from the scene; much archival material is still not available to all scholars, and efforts to place him within the Indian tradition and in the contemporary global environment can be considered to have only just begun, because his relevance to India and its future is demonstrably as real as that of his great teacher. In fact, as we have seen in our study of the career of Nehru before power beckoned to him and to the Congress, the partnership between these two men was not one of convenience but one of sympathy, understanding and genuine affection which could forgive, without a conscious feeling of generosity what each perceived to be failings in the other.

Our study in this volume has to come to an end with the years of imprisonment and struggle. Any investigation of the great successes of the future, the performance of the politician in office, the achievements of the administrator, would be incomplete without understanding Jawaharlal Nehru's need to communicate and his undoubted rapport at all levels with different types of audience; but it would be subsidiary to the more important study of his policies, his decisions, his compromises and his great successes. Till 1945, it is much easier, even aesthetically preferable, to concentrate upon the student, the author, the analyst, the communicator. Almost all the

time, he knew, subconsciously, that the decision was elsewhere, with the Mahatma. Sometimes, when we look back upon these years, we cannot escape the feeling that not only Nehru but Patel and Azad, and all the rest of us, down to the smallest, anonymous satyagrahi in the village, were happily riding piggyback on a titan's shoulders. Gestures, aims, amendments, temporary expressions of dissent were all possible, but the current and the flow owed their thrust entirely to one man's passion. Those major political leaders who opted out of this movement were significant individually; history did not give them an opportunity to provide an alternative agenda. These were men like V.D. Savarkar, M.N. Roy or even Mohammad Ali Jinnah who was as much a beneficiary of the Gandhian revolution as any loyal Congressman.

This is the reason why this study of Nehru, primarily as a communicator, has to end here. This does not mean, of course, that during these great years of hope and expectation there were no problems of decision-making. Many times during his lieutenancy in the national movement, Jawaharlal had to make hard choices and he made them. We have also seen how he was able to communicate the reason for these decisions in a more or less successful manner, both to his friends in India and abroad and to the ordinary Congressmen.

It is, then as a great communicator in the special conditions of the British Empire in India, with its institutions, with its reasonably free press and its limited but real rule of law regime that the contribution of Jawaharlal to the freedom movement has been analysed in these pages. As a communicator, he had many aspects – a writer, a journalist and an historian, and a persuasive speaker, by no means an orator, interacting with small and large groups, diverse audiences, and vast crowds in the cities and villages of India. He was also a participant in committee meetings, in negotiations behind closed doors between old friends, disagreeing without rancour. There were also problems of non-communication as is inevitable in the life of anyone as talented and sensitive as he was.

II

The primary medium of communication for the political activist during the days of the British Raj was the daily newspaper or the weekly magazine. The great leaders in the pre-Gandhian generation

in the national movement owed almost all their influence to the dissemination of their speeches by the nationalist press or by articles in their personally edited papers like Tilak's *Kesari*. These articles, like their speeches, were picked up by the provincial English press, and, also the few vernacular newspapers of the times and slowly, across the months and years, a clear profile of the leader and his distinctive opinions got across to the intelligentsia in the cities and towns, and, also through the village schoolmaster and the pandit to a much wider constituency in the rural areas. Speeches were also important in a time of comparative scarcity of newsworthy items at home: men like Lajpat Rai, Bipin Chandra Pal and Surendra Nath Banerjee tended to be oratorical in style and this appealed to a generation conditioned by Gladstone and John Bright in English. Gokhale, a rather shy and timid man, became an immensely successful communicator both in India, and from India to England, because of the sheer power of his intellect and his detailed, closely reasoned speeches in the legislatures and on public occasions were the first lessons in political awareness to the new intelligentsia in the early years of the century. Tilak was a more emotional writer and speaker and the audience was wider, apart, of course, from the religious undertones in his interpretation of Indian nationalism.

Gandhi developed the journalistic medium in political propaganda to a fine art: his successful forays into personal journalism with his personal crusading motivation and in the colonial situation in South Africa convinced him that there was no feasible alternative to the weekly comment on political and social matters, interspersed with personal correspondence on all types of problems, social, political and economic, with his readers. These items were picked up and achieved a much wider publicity in the country's newspapers. His superb talents as a writer and negotiator across apparently unbridgeable political divides depended to a great deal on carefully timed publicity. The great sheaves of letters with Willingdon and Linlithgow on the eve of his historic decisions to go on fasts can be seen in retrospect as not merely attempts at a dialogue between two partners, but a quite conscious articulation of the Indian point of view for a world audience. Gandhi's personal tours of the country, his deliberate and successful agenda of reaching out to the *Duridrananyana* everywhere, his speeches on great occasions like the Ahmedabad Trial or the Quit India session of the AICC, were the central, most effective messages he got across to the

Indian people. In his case, the words and the image, the photo of the austere saint and the gentle exposition on a patient and repetitive basis of the current political manifesto at the moment – Harijan relief, Dominion Status, the Communal Award or the British withdrawal – were fused into a powerful unity, and, even for the sceptical outsider, there was a certain *darsan*-like element in his charisma. He had also a purely literary quality in him, an ability to write memorable prose both in English and Gujarati and an equal ability to utter serious thoughts in an easy and familiar, basic Hindustani.

Many other leaders of Gandhi's generation shared these capabilities, though none used them to such effect and with such total authority in a steady constituency over four decades. The collected works of the great man running to a hundred volumes, and ranging from the most profound to the trivial realities of our earthly existence, represent an incredible achievement – in thinking, articulation, and sheer, canny, showmanship. Rajaji was a great writer in Tamil and an effective educator in English: generations of Indian children have benefited by his popular volumes. M.N. Roy in the Soviet Union and Palme Dutt in England, as we have noted earlier, carried on the tradition of fundamental research and precise writing begun by Dadabhai Naoroji and Romesh Chandra Dutt, with a more demanding methodology and intellectual discipline. Outside the political stream, both Tagore (the English Tagore) and Radhakrishnan were immensely effective thinkers and communicators in the world outside who continued the unfinished tasks of Vivekananda in the realm of national awareness, in not only spiritual, but also political and cultural matters, and developed a wholly successful style of elegance and grace in popular education which influenced at least three generations of Indians.

It is in this line of remarkable achievers that Jawaharlal Nehru has his own special place in the annals of popular politics in modern India. He is as good as most of them, with the single, indubitable exception of Gandhi. He is, however, always, very much himself, in the manner of his communication and the content of his 'ideology'. He was, we have seen in the earlier chapters, most successful in the large, public meetings, in the town square, the village *maidan*, or in the university quadrangle. These speeches became important political weapons during election campaigns: on other, not so portentous occasions, they were exercises in the dissemination of new political

ideas even when they had to be, in the very nature of the political struggle, vituperative attacks on the foreign power in India and the bureaucracy, both Indian and foreign, which represented that power. He started with halting Hindustani in the early twenties; by the time he came to the end of his long term of office as Prime Minister, he had become supremely competent in explaining the intricacies of non-alignment, the horrors of the nuclear weapon and the competing attractions of the public and the private sectors in the country's economy in elegant Hindi with no conscious avoidance of Urdu words or any need to depend on an English vocabulary even on technical matters.

It is in these meetings with the Indian people — in Eastern UP most of all, but everywhere, from Kerala to the North-West Frontier — that Jawaharlal also made the greatest impact on the popular imagination. Other cultures at entirely different stages of technical development have witnessed the relevance of the street-corner speech and the whistle-stop campaigns in electoral politics. In India it continues to be the most effective single factor. Both Indira Gandhi and her son have converted election campaigns into mass propaganda efforts by themselves and, also — this is a post-Nehru development — because of simple technological developments — as occasions for amplification through the electronic media. In the United States the speaker and audience interaction continues to be effective in the campaign trail, even though the line between the physical audience and the nationwide television audience is getting blurred. Gorbachev, in the Soviet Union, has been specially successful in exploiting the potentialities of television in projecting the intimate ambience of a meeting with irritated citizens and angry housewives on the factory floor or in the village common on to a national scale.

All this was still in the future. When Jawaharlal Nehru and, earlier, Gandhi were operating, it was the printed media which multiplied the audience. In Jawaharlal's case, we have today the opportunity of eavesdropping on him during his many angry fulminations against Britain and her war effort in India through the courtesy of the reasonably faithful intelligence department reporters. These speeches were censored and had only a certain local, limited, impact. But they are as carefully argued, as detailed in the assessment of the policies of the great powers, as sensitive to the difficult moral choices in a moment of world crisis, as the deliberate, restrained

articles written for publication in the *National Herald*.

The other significant medium of the spoken word, the radio, was still in its infancy. Both Gandhi and Nehru made use of the radio whenever possible, but, even in his years of Prime Ministership the radio was not a prime communication medium. There was that great, anguished, immediate response to Gandhi's assassination which, it would be difficult to match, not only in India but in most countries. There were also great state occasions transmitted by the radio. Gandhi had used the recording devices very effectively, a few times. In the thirties Nehru had broadcast to both the US and to China on one or two occasions. However, in that great age of the 'wireless', when Roosevelt in his fireside chats and Churchill in his wartime speeches were able to influence people and win many friends, the opportunities for opposition groups in a colonial situation to use this medium for propaganda purposes were limited.

This is why, in the totality of Jawaharlal's achievement as a communicator, it is the written word which is central. It is in his books, his articles, and his carefully drafted speeches on major topics, that Jawaharlal comes through again and again, as a competent educator and a friendly interlocutor. He wrote for many audiences: the most challenging were the pieces – about a dozen in all during the fifteen years before World War II and during the first years of the War – written in foreign or international journals. These were of great use to the country's cause, helping to flesh out for the informed and concerned reader in other countries the bare essentials of nationalism within the country, with India's relevance to the global issues of an economic or even strategic nature. He tried to speak to many groups: the international, 'progressive', the leftist reader was the most sympathetic in his view. He was, however, catholic in his contacts: major US journals like *Fortune* and *Foreign Affairs* published his pieces. In the Continent also, he had his special avenues of publicity. In the crucial metropolitan constituency, Britain, the *Manchester Guardian* was, perhaps, the most important medium. His memorable comment on the Munich crisis would not have been welcome anywhere else. Then there was the left-wing *Tribune* in England and corresponding publications like the *Nation* and *New Republic* in the States.

These writings for the foreign audience explaining the Indian dilemma during a global crisis, are, perhaps, the quintessential Nehru, in his most characteristic mode. Here he played a unique

role; his achievements in communication were crucial in the eight months before August 1942, particularly for the American reader. They were also immensely valuable during the late thirties. These attempts at interpreting, explaining, supplementing and developing the Indian nationalist cause and the Mahatma's special policy in the national scene were not intended to achieve instant conversions; they were modest efforts at explaining the dilemmas of the Indian nationalist in a time of grave moral uncertainty. In one sense, they represent Jawaharlal Nehru at his best, both as a lucid writer and a persuasive advocate of unpopular causes. These articles foreshadow the principles which controlled his diplomatic behavior in his relations with foreign statesmen in later years, when he was Prime Minister. In 1957, in one of his letters to the State Chief Ministers he explains the technique he used in talking to foreign statesmen and ordinary people, men and women, with strong opinions and prejudices:

I have referred to the 'cold war' above. If I may say so, the approach I endeavoured to make, was the very opposite to this. The 'cold war' is based not only on hatred and violence, but also on a continuous denunciation, on picking out the faults of others and assuming virtue in oneself. I tried to reverse this process even where I differed radically from those that I addressed. I spoke of their virtues and their good points, and made reference to our own failings. Thus, what I said found a warm spot in the minds of those who heard me. I did not convert them, and they did not convert me, in any basic way, but we influenced each other greatly. It struck me how much more powerful was this approach, which was a feeble echo of what Gandhiji had taught us, how the approach of hatred led to an unceasing round of hatred, with no escape from it, how the opposite approach immediately led to relaxation and had a soothing influence.

There is an essential continuity here. These articles, written for the foreign audience, were an essential preparation for Nehru's motivations in later years, when communicating to not necessarily sympathetic strangers the rationale behind India's policies in domestic planning as well as on international issues. This masterly credo of the persuader, the gentle admonisher and 'moderator', during heated Cold War debates, was foreshadowed in his personal

contacts as much as in his articles and set speeches. His success in putting across a rather strange, novel, minority point of view in intimate, private conversations with the foreign journalist, particularly the new breed of political commentator like John Gunther, Edgar Snow and Louis Fischer, was important in itself in the total publicity effort of Indian nationalism: it also provided a valuable support to Gandhi's publicity efforts in England and America through lengthy interviews and through his special personal style, exaggerated in a manner characteristic of the period, of a piece with Walt Disney and Mickey Mouse, with Charlie Chaplin and the Little Man taking on the whole world with casual ease and unruffled dignity – a source of good, clean fun and serious political sermonizing in the same moment. As we have noted, Nehru had neither the capabilities nor the conscious desire to compete with the prophet or the charismatic leader of the deprived and the downtrodden. But he knew where he was right, or where his information and understanding was of superior relevance. He interacted with the world at large through personal conversations with political leaders of the Left in Britain, representatives of nationalist movements in the colonies and in America, and fellow activists in all parts of the world. Perhaps his most effective and interesting achievements in this role of persuading sceptical decision makers in foreign states came during the War, when Roosevelt and Chiang Kai-shek were receptive to his views. His conversations with the American diplomats, Berry and Johnson, in New Delhi during the Cripps Mission and in the sad, unproductive interlude before the Quit India resolution a few months later, were his personal contribution to advertising the Indian case. Here he was not merely Gandhi's lieutenant. He shows a personal, self-sufficient role as a strictly contemporary participant in the world problem, with an angrily, obstinately, Indian perspective, or bias even.

These exercises in establishing and maintaining contact with influential, even powerful, foreigners in high places were, after all, of only limited value in changing the course of events. At home, as we have tried to show through this volume, Nehru was a most effective articulator of the concerns of the Indian peasant and the worker to the Indian intelligentsia and also to the Viceroy and his bureaucracy. Here he was carrying on the tradition of his great predecessors like Tilak and Gokhale; he was also, in a strictly subordinate role, supporting the expanding of the great Gandhian message, along with

many others, most notably, Rajen Babu and Sardar Patel.

Jawaharlal Nehru was not a great journalist-politician in the sense Tilak and Gandhi were. He was, however, from the beginning, quite conscious of the importance of the newspaper as a medium in Indian conditions. Early in his career he had helped his father and his friends in launching *The Independent*. That paper did not really take off. He had, always, a close relationship with *The Leader* in Allahabad and *The Bombay Chronicle*. With *The Hindu* he had a special understanding, dating from the middle twenties when A. Rangaswami Iyengar was running the Congress office. His first mini-book on *Soviet Russia* was based on articles in *The Hindu* and other newspapers. But it was when the *National Herald* was founded that Jawaharlal had a paper totally identified with himself. Some of his best writings appeared in its columns. The introspective analysis of the Subhas Bose controversy and the problems with Gandhi in 1938 which appeared under the general title, 'Where are We?' was useful when it appeared; today, it is most important for understanding a difficult period in the history of the Congress and the personal careers of Gandhi, Bose and Nehru himself. The *National Herald* was also Jawaharlal's instrument for talking to the Indian people and the Government in India about the deepening European crisis. He used the paper to ventilate the problems of overseas Indians, as also developments in China. In the three years between its launching in 1938 and the time when it suspended publication during the War, this paper was a vehicle for Jawaharlal's views and comments. He also contributed some good reporting off and on. He was intimately associated with its management, its administrative problems and its editorial policy. Yet, looking back after five decades, the newspaper does not give any conclusive evidence about Jawaharlal Nehru's potentialities as a newspaper editor. He is an excellent journalist when the mood beckons: he *is* the paper or, what there was of it. But there is no inevitable, memorable identification between the man and the medium, as there was in the case of Gandhi and *Young India* or the *Harijan*. He became a more regular and, therefore, a more influential commentator after the paper was founded. One or two of his lesser books are based on his writings in the *Herald*. But, somehow, one has the suspicion that, while he was comfortable in the world of newspaper management, he was really interested in the press as only one form of communication, certainly the most immediately consequential. It was, however, in his writings, more

serious, carefully worked out lengthier speeches and in his books that the later Nehru, the man who really began to express himself with an eye to posterity after he had turned forty, that his really substantial achievement has to be recognized.

III

The emergence of Jawaharlal Nehru as a writer in English on political and economic problems was, we have seen, a major factor in the attempts of the national movement in this country to reach out to a wider audience. The publication of the *Autobiography* was, perhaps, the major landmark in his unhurried, not over-ambitious journey towards professional success and recognition. Earlier, in the twenties and early thirties, Jawaharlal had become well-known enough in India as a fluent and persuasive advocate of the non-conformist, left-wing position within the Congress. His two small books, the little pamphlet on Soviet Russia and the collection of his letters to his daughter on ancient history had marked him out as someone with more than pedestrian abilities in the art of popularization. *Glimpses of World History*, a major work in its own right, came out in the form of a second, larger and more ambitious collection of letters, on the subsequent evolution of human societies in all parts of the globe. The book was well-received but its immediate reception did in no way indicate the future, durable recognition it would receive both in India and outside as a companion piece to historical popularizations by H.G. Wells and Will Durant and other popular works brought out at about the same time by Bernard Shaw, G.D.H. Cole and C.E.M. Joad. There was no conscious attempt by the literary critic or the historical scholar to place him among the well-known popular writers. He was seen as a pleasant surprise, an extraordinarily articulate representative of the colonial world with an organized mind, an unusual baggage of information and belief, carried lightly, and, most important, gifted with a smooth, unfussy, fluent style which could be read without any unseemly jerks and halts. The great Lahore speech of 1929 and the powerful rhythms of the original independence pledge were helpful in marking him out as a vivid and effective cheer leader of popular causes.

The country and the reading public in the nation were thus prepared for a good book when the *Autobiography* was published.

The quality of the writing, the impression it gave, continually, of a concerned mind always arguing with itself, always capable of being seduced by the beauties of Nature or the attractions of literature, never shying away from hard questioning of saints and slogans, without in the slightest degree being alienated, and, perhaps, most of all, the coherence and artistic completeness of the writing, an inner logic and no overwhelming passion on every page — these were surprises. In India, the young and the not-so-young, student, bureaucrat and the professional classes empathized with the man even when they were suspicious about his views, his enthusiasms and his particular, narrow interests. The image of both Nehru and the Congress improved at least for that particular generation. It was 'modern' for one thing: it was intensely personal: it was firmly rooted in a healthy, indignant nationalism. Its few irritations, exaggerated negative responses to the Indian bureaucracy of the empire, and the moderates in the political organizations, were never uncharitable or petulant. Without those references, the writing would have been colourless. Jawaharlal was never an enthusiastic polemicist: he was much happier in the careful assessment of alternative possibilities in a single situation.

The *Autobiography* was also fortunate in the timing of its publication. Kamala's death and the long terms of imprisonment earlier personalized the national cause and made a sympathetic response easier both for the foreign and the Indian reader. The Congress presidentship for two years which followed and the hectic political activity which took him to all parts of the country, marked his ascent to the highest level in the national leadership, immediately after Gandhi, and, in the popular imagination, coequal with Vallabhbhai Patel and Subhas Chandra Bose. The *Autobiography*, with its clear delineation of a civilized alternative to both liberalism and the Gandhian ideology in economics, and its acceptance of the Marxist interpretation of the linked phenomena of capitalism, imperialism, and the colonial experience in India, was, in fact, a first, charming, if vague, introduction to left politics and its excitements for many young activists in the country. Greeted with astonished delight by both liberals and socialists, it established Jawaharlal Nehru as a major political figure of the contemporary world.

Here some rough parallels are in order. The two dictators of the Continent, Hitler and Mussolini, had also written voluminous, loud, angry, autobiographies. Both Churchill and Lloyd George had

written their own lengthy chronicles of their part in the history of the times. In India, Gandhi's terse, powerfully written recounting of his early experiments and experiences had electrified the country. There was thus no lack of competition – writing autobiographies, more as political tracts and apologies for one point of view than personal narrations was fashionable. Jawaharlal's book had a certain individual charm and freshness which was unique to him. Even when he was in the midst of the sombre, indignant analysis of the inequities of the British Government in India and the other colonies, a note of cheerfulness would break in. He would be diverted by some 'touch of nature', or odd, farcical occurrence. All this made him readable. Since he did not consciously set out to write a great masterpiece, the success of his efforts came as a pleasant surprise. The welcome accorded to the book in the United States when it was published during the first years of the War exhilarated him. There is no doubt that, by then, Jawaharlal's friends, admirers and representatives abroad, like Menon, Pearl Buck and her husband, James Walsh, and John Gunther realized the unique capacity Jawaharlal Nehru had of communicating to strangers and hostile observers.

The other books written by Jawaharlal Nehru have enormous documentary, historical or autobiographical value. They never fall below a certain level in clarity of thought, ideological conviction or attractive simplicity of language. However, as we have had occasion to note before, collections of articles like *The Unity of India* were mostly significant for their contemporary impact. They represented good reportage and pamphleteering by a major participant in the political process: they had a certain ripple effect, particularly within the intelligentsia in India. Only careful, exacting, fastidious anthologies will succeed in separating the pieces of permanent value, poetic beauty or ideological appositeness, from the merely successful attempts at agit-propaganda. Of their contemporary utility as instruments of education there can hardly be any doubt: only Gandhi himself, Rajaji and M.N. Roy can compare with him, superior to him in this detail or that. The overall impression of an effortless dialogue initiated by an interested and concerned interlocutor is his own.

Both *Glimpses* and *The Discovery* have their own significant and special place in the awakening of modern India to its place in time and space. Both are examples of easy, comfortable, communication in efficient twentieth century English. There are very few idiosyncrasies of style or perspective. There are unavoidable

imprecisions and blurred designs in the weaving together of large historical processes and the movement of ideas across continents and from generation to generation: to the uninitiated reader, in search of popular history without tears, the two books have a certain permanent usefulness. In creating a certain psychological environment in 'young India' in the thirties and forties, these books compete, on equal terms, with Gandhi's superb and unmatched conversation with his countrymen over several decades. *Glimpses* is the better of the two books: it seems to have been written with greater relaxation, in shorter separate pieces, than *The Discovery*. This last book has, however, its points. It contains delightful echoes of the *Autobiography*: it has, also some seminal ideas on world politics, including some masterful insights into the future power pattern. For many young Indians today, by an odd quirk of chance, this third, and on a rigorous examination, the least satisfying of his books, has come to mean Jawaharlal Nehru the writer. This is not a matter of historical judgement or literary evaluation but one minor aspect of the general poverty of our educational literature.

One of the more charming traits of Jawaharlal is his eye for the apt quotation, the felicitous reference to some past event or mood, the striking phrase. Most of his quotes are from the heroes of English literature of his youth – De La Mare, Matthew Arnold, Walter Pater and Oscar Wilde: the Americans also influenced him as seen in the interest in Edwin Markham's *The Man with the Hoe* and, of course, Robert Frost. Over the years, he kept up his interest in reading and culling 'other men's flowers', as we have seen from his happy response to Lord Wavell's anthology. T.S. Eliot, W.H. Auden and Roy Campbell – as disparate a trio as any, excited his interest as well as Beaumont and Fletcher, from another age.

It is really the late Victorians, the Edwardians, the 'decadents', who seem most accurately to answer his need for literary support. Here, sometimes, there is a certain predictability about the choice of the passage and the use made of it, a sentimental, overtly self-conscious approach. This is also in line with an exaggerated, feminine, perception of the Indian identity. The well-known passage about India, the eternal enchantress, seductress and mother, based on Pater's purple passage is a good example of this tendency to lapse into exaggerated emotion at best, or empty, sonorous writing at its worst.

Jawaharlal himself was a master of the argument, the logical

exposition, the coherent description in an easy, continuous, almost anonymous, flowing, style. The striking phrase was not his forte; he was basically uninterested in the crafts and skills of the Wordsmith. He has not left behind any memorable phrase, like Gandhi's immortal words about satanic governments, *Karenge ya marenge*, or Quit India, or even Subhas Bose's 'Delhi Chalo' or 'Jai Hind'. These are all flashes of verbal genius, fusing a grand national idea at its most powerful into a taut, two or three word phrase. Perhaps his most memorable single phrase is 'tryst with destiny', a superb example of creative amendment with friendly support from a colleague. Franklin Roosevelt had mentioned his nation's 'rendezvous with destiny' in his famous, first, 'New Deal' inaugural address. Nehru borrowed it unconsciously using the word 'date', simple, homespun modern English for 'rendezvous', when he drafted the speech which was to usher a new state into autonomous existence. Consulted on this, as on many other fine points of phrase or diction, Sir Girja Shankar Bajpai, so the story goes, thought 'date' a little too colloquial for such an exalted occasion and amended it to 'tryst'. And so, one of Jawaharlal's few dramatic phrases was born. The concept of non-alignment was very much his own creative contribution. He did play around with the ideas of absence of alignment, freedom from alliances, refusal to join this or that bloc, non-involvement in alliances, non-belligerency and non-embarrassment during the time of World War II and the early years of the Cold War. Slowly he moved towards the phrase which remains essentially identified with him: however, it is difficult to locate the precise phrase in a single speech by him in those early years, before the term had become common currency in the international marketplace.

This lack of interest in fashioning the *mot juste* was as much due to an aversion to the easier techniques of oratory as to any specific literary limitation. Jawaharlal never saw himself as a prophet, a thundering orator, a magnetic personality moving huge audiences and great nations by appeals to emotion couched in a pithy aphorism or a witty sally at another's expense. He had his sense of humour: he could be smug and vain with the best of the political animals: he was, however, as we have seen again and again in these pages, at his best and most sympathetic when he was in a wry or self-deprecatory mood.

Over the years, this easy, reflective, genuinely conversational

style became a part of his being. After he became Prime Minister, world leader and respected elder statesman, this desire, compulsive and essentially subjective, to meet other minds continued to be the dominant thrust of his character. The audiences in India were multiple: ordinary men and women – out in the maidan in the gathering twilight, waiting to have his *darshan*, learning from him in their shrewd, affectionate way, all the things he loved to talk about – planning and poverty, Gandhi's greatness and India's future, and also, inevitably, the problems of war and peace, the atom bomb and non-violence: they were his original constituency. A second one was the younger Indians who had grown up to revere him as they had grown up, conditioned to revering their elders, and to whom he tried to communicate his own mix of irreverence and healthy curiosity, the belief in decent democratic conduct and the scientific temper. The big, set audiences in the large conferences brought out the organized scholar in him, a political thinker who never avoided the 'fundamental brain work' which is the basis of not only great poetry but all excellence, in thought, word or action. This was the method and style he was most comfortable with, in his addresses to foreign conferences and also the United Nations, the US Congress, and the Bandung and Belgrade gatherings.

These later successes, which have become a part of the country's tradition and achievement, were all lineally connected with his long years of activity as a political communicator in colonial conditions, protected as well as limited by the special variation of the rule of law regime developed by the British in their colonies, more especially so in India. The essence of future change was the dialogue, the conversation, the ability to persuade: 'only connect', the phrase which inspired E.M. Forster's explorations into human relations, was the dominant motivation.

IV

As Prime Minister, in later years, Jawaharlal would also have occasion and the need to exercise this facility for making contact with other people in several fora: Cabinet meetings, Congress sessions, and in smaller gatherings of his colleagues and other decision-makers. The minutes he wrote, the reports he rendered to his friends on political problems, and the unique series of letters he

wrote to the Chief Ministers are all examples of this anxiety to tell other people of his concerns and, in the process, refine his own ideas.

The charismatic political leader of the fifties was, quite consciously, behaving in the manner and performing in the style developed over decades of an extraordinarily successful popular leadership, free of the taints of populism or demagoguery. Till the very end, a thoughtful, inquisitive, tentative, exploratory attitude marked his speeches and even, off the cuff remarks. When anger or irritation upset his balance, he could be as foolish as the wisest of men on their off days. He had his off days, as his critics will never let us forget: the unhappy assertion that 'we will throw them out' and the earlier, very sane, remark of 'a place where no grass grows'. There were failures in communication in his political career with colleagues, even Gandhi himself: with Subhas, most of the time, there was only a dialogue of the deaf. With Vallabhbhai also, there was respect, friendliness, sympathy, but no essential understanding. He seems to have been at his best in personal communications with the members of his immediate family, his sisters and his daughter most of all. With his wife Kamala, in the nature of things, letters could only be an unreliable, episodic, non-representative mode of contact, even though the accident of lengthy imprisonment made him an evocative letter writer and, as we have noticed earlier, a successful diarist who used the record as expression and therapy. There are a few letters in his correspondence with family members which betray alienation, aloofness, an inability to establish contact. One letter written to Kamala, while she was in Vienna, a few months before her death, when she was clutching at many modes of pseudo-activity to escape from the horrible present, the sick room, the nursing and the hopelessness of it all, reads today, fifty years later, as uncharacteristically insensitive, pedantic, pedagogic and unpleasantly humourless. Such aberrations are, fortunately, rare; they are the epistolary counterparts of his deep, black moods of withdrawal into himself, which both friends and strangers noted on the odd occasion in his later years. The well-known non-dialogue with Pablo Neruda is one such example.

Perhaps he was in his peak form, both in his conversations and in his letters, in limited, friendly, exchanges with foreign friends, both men and women who shared his views and obviously approved of him. The Gunthers, John and Frances, William Walsh and his wife

Pearl Buck, Roger Baldwin and Edward Thompson, brought out the best in him: the unique mixture of narrow theosophy, Edwardian optimism and Fabian economics, with Marx's vision of history which went into his thinking and philosophy, had a great deal to do with this.

Jawaharlal was always a sympathetic and responsive correspondent with younger people. He had a certain resilience of mind which made him comfortable with women — a guarded, careful, near-platonic, pleasantly flirtatious relationship: this can be seen in his letters to such different people as Bharati Sarabhai, Padmaja Naidu and Frances Gunther. There was probably an element of all this in his correspondence with Lady Mountbatten in the later years. The need to communicate and the security arising from a certain freedom from mutual obligation led to attractive penmanship. A minor anthology could be produced from his works, suitably entitled 'In praise of younger women'.

All this is however peripheral. His greatest efforts at communication were in his angry, anguished, totally loyal letters to his master. Both men were fearless and honest: they respected each other and the passage of years did nothing to dispel their earliest admiration for each other. Of equal psychological interest is the voluminous correspondence with his daughter. When she was a very young woman, remote and forlorn, in foreign lands, it is he who provides her sustenance and the will to survive. In later years, it is a more balanced equation. There are the usual occasions of alienation, misunderstanding and the inevitable sad, episodes of 'public faces in private places'. Most of the time, however, there is a finely honed partnership between equally sensitive persons interested in the same things.

As a communicator, then Jawaharlal comes through, at the end of this examination of the first 56 years of his life, the years of hope, the years of unexcited but diligent preparation for the great tasks ahead, as an unusually interesting 'achiever'. He had many hard decisions to make during these years. We have noted how he analysed, with some detachment, his own responses during crisis occasions as in 1939, when Subhas broke with Gandhi. He was certainly no Hamlet of the popular interpretation, the prince who avoids commitment. As Gunther noticed later, to his surprise, he had the will to power. He could be decisive. He could also be prudent and discreet when valour or dramatic heroism would have

been inadvisable. When he became Prime Minister and undisputed leader of the country after Sardar Patel's death, he made many decisions, some unpleasant, going against his own grain. Most of the time he was able to communicate his reasons for the ultimate decision. This was perhaps his most important personal trait, this desire and ability to explain, expound, without rhetoric, without the obvious tricks of the demagogue. On some critical occasions his ability to communicate let him down. Perhaps the long, tortuous development of the China crisis was one of them: his slow, gradual, distancing of himself from his natural constituency, the Left in India, was another. There are significant flaws: on the whole, however, it is as much as a communicator as a planner and a policy maker that Jawaharlal impresses himself upon anyone who is prepared to approach him with affection, regard, and some deliberate detachment.

AFTERWORD

When I accepted the task of studying Jawaharlal Nehru primarily as a communicator and a sensitive democratic leader, the idea was that I should concentrate upon his ability to inform and persuade large audiences as well as small powerful groups through his writings, letters, articles and speeches. It was my intention in the beginning to study the man and his achievements throughout his long career. A few months after I became involved with the work, I realized that the years before the achievement of independence, the period of the national movement, formed an integral whole by itself and would provide material for a self-sufficient study. The years between 1927 and 1945 were the years when Jawaharlal developed into a significant figure in Indian politics. During this period, a clearly recognizable profile emerged of a man with a clear economic agenda at home, and a deep conviction that the Indian National Movement was a part of a global development, which would affect it, and which it could influence by its own inner strength. During these years, as Gandhi's principal lieutenant, he learnt to go back to the people for sustenance and faith, between long terms of imprisonment and visits abroad. Gradually, an almost symbiotic relationship developed between Indian youth and Nehru. This was not exclusive in any fashion and could coexist with loyalty to Gandhi, admiration for other charismatic leaders like Subhas Chandra Bose, and also a deep commitment on the part of many individuals to a definite political philosophy—Marxism, or scientific socialism as he preferred to label it.

By the middle of the thirties, the world situation deteriorated sharply and Jawaharlal's sensitive responses to changes abroad and the manner in which he thought India should react to these changes became a part of the conditioning of a whole generation. To a

certain extent, he became for many young people more than a person, more than a gentle and sensitive leader even, almost a 'climate of opinion'.

I belong to that generation. We grew up reading him, arguing about him and angrily agreeing or disagreeing with him. In the background, for most of us, there was a shadowy figure only of the Mahatma. We did not pretend to understand him even though we all felt his overwhelming presence. Jawaharlal was someone whom we could understand and disagree with, usefully.

And so, gradually, my investigation of Jawaharlal's qualities as a political leader and an effective persuader during the pre-war years became more and more detailed. The intellectual excitements of confrontation between fascism and socialism, the dilemmas of office acceptance in India, and the unresolved communal problem, all have a permanent relevance, or so it seemed to me, for the years since independence. The many near miss situations during the war years, when some sort of limited transfer of power appeared to be possible but was never realized, provided occasions for studying the motivations of all actors in the national scene in a moment of crisis as well as their mutual relationships. At the centre of it all was the tension and balance between the two most impressive figures of the struggle — Gandhi and Nehru. Particularly during the difficult months of 1942, this splendid partnership, between unlike friends, assumed near dramatic proportions; neither partner had, at any time, however, any serious idea of withdrawal or alienation.

Both from the personal and the political point of view, therefore, it seemed to me that this study would be most rewarding if it did not venture beyond the years of struggle towards the period of negotiation with the British for the transfer of power and the long years in office after independence. I decided, therefore, to concentrate upon Jawaharlal Nehru, the political activist of the twenties and thirties, and the increasingly plausible leader of the youth in the country. These were the years of agitational propaganda, crusading zeal and the heady excitement of a future revolution. It would be more satisfying, it seemed to me, to stop there and not to mix the challenges of the political activist and the campaigner with the more complex challenges of the future, dealing with the reconstruction of an ancient society according to modern recipes.

In the history of India, the last 19 years of Nehru's life, the years which come after the period of this study, would be of fundamental

importance. The agenda he laid down, the policies he pursued, the effectiveness with which he dealt with his own ideas, all these would provide the basis for independent India's future developments. A separate study would be necessary for that period of Nehru as a communicator; the skills and sensibilities he developed over the years before independence would come in useful during his work as an administrator, educator of the masses, and world statesman, representing a weak country in conversation with strong powers with needs and interests of their own. Such a study would also take into account how far his insistence on seeing the other point of view in politics, and his belief in the absolute necessity of a genuine dialogue with an adversary, could be traced directly to his long period of tutelage under Gandhi. These convictions were part of a much more comprehensive democratic culture which transcended his Gandhian loyalties and his pre-independence experience. The task of preparing a Constitution for the country and creating conventions governing democratic behaviour within the structure of the Constitution provided him with challenges such as he had never faced during the years of preparation. The game and the rules were different. As we know, under his leadership, many problems solved, many challenges met and perils surmounted. Any satisfactory explanation of Jawaharlal's successes and failures as Prime Minister of India would, ultimately, have to be based on a study of his long period of preparation in the forefront of the national movement and in immediate proximity to Mahatma Gandhi. To that extent, this study of the years of hope seems to be complete in itself.

The tragedy of partition, the sudden death of his beloved leader, and the violence in villages and cities which marred what had been so romantically, so expectantly, looked forward to all these years — these would inevitably lead to weariness of soul. These new challenges produced their own response in Jawaharlal's essentially resilient character. We know how he managed to triumph over these disasters and lived to labour long and mightily in the cause of, first, restoring confidence and, later, a certain genuine vitality to a tired and deeply unhappy society.

These later achievements have become a part of the nation's history, both the performance and the failure. One generation can do only so much in the face, of an exponential rate of change in a global environment; in a situation in which a young nation state, with underdeveloped resources and distorted traditions, cannot even hope

to intervene in a meaningful manner. Jawaharlal and his colleagues achieved a great deal in that first heroic period: in the face of ideological confusion and economic discontent, they laboured more fully to render the nation more organized, more autonomous; and, help it acquire a sharp, recognizable profile.

These years of power provide release for Jawaharlal's unutilized faculties for planning, administration and preparation for the future. They also revealed the weaknesses in his personality, his anxiety to see a pattern — where there was none, his impatience with details, his desire to delegate power and authority without the complementary ability to create a communication system within the Congress which could monitor and send warning signals to the very top, and not merely transmit to the local party units, and the rank and file, crude and exaggerated versions of sophisticated policy decisions from the "High Command". Most of all, there was a certain inability to communicate with his younger colleagues in the political mainstream, a certain non-meeting of minds on the essential things of intelligence and sensibility, which make life meaningful for a human being. This led to problems of non-communication for this anxious communicator; more seriously, there were some consequent flaws in the decision-making process, in the Cabinet, in the government and in the party.

Twenty-five years after his death, the magnitude of Jawaharlal's total achievement is big enough to subsume these shortcomings. The desire of the man to leave behind a legacy of "democratic co-existence" within the nation state is perhaps the most attractive single trait he displayed during the years of power. His many institutional achievements will be always with us; the Constitution he helped to draft and the legislative and executive parts of that Constitution which he guided with sensitivity and imagination, as also the concept of planning as an inescapable obligation of the rulers to the ruled in an unequal, deprived society, just stirring into action after decades of exploitation and, worse still isolation and inertness untouched by the time spirit.

The long years of waiting and hope which preceded independence, office, exercise of authority, choice of options, successes and failures are significant by themselves. There was always a streak of Jawaharlal, a sneaking admiration for the tragic hero, the flawed achiever. Matthew Arnold was his favourite Victorian and the glamour of failure, of great promise cut off before its prime, was

always there to console him during the long years of disappointment, when a lost cause, a denied compromise seemed infinitely more attractive than adjustment with reality. Those years taught him the usefulness of introspection, the escape from the tedium of daily life into the sunset landscape, the glacier and the valley in the Himalayas and, also, the quiet hum of the spinning-wheel helping him to organize his thoughts, his information, the surprises which made the past so exciting a prelude to the present. This historical sense on the one hand, the attitude of scientific analysis on the other, continued to enliven his thinking throughout his life. Also a certain necessary dissatisfaction with the merely rational, starting at first with poetry, in life, with the mysteries of the life of the individual, the person, and the race. A certain mood of content and acceptance, after doubts and inner turmoil, marks his best writing not only for the distant reader but for his own family, friends and himself in his diary. Here, in this desire for the tranquil spirit, to be one with Shakespeare's "man who is not passion's slave", to achieve the state of the *sthitaprajna*, Jawaharlal and Gandhi are good companions in the pilgrimage of life, not disciple and master, but kindred souls who found it possible to accept each other's tough, resistant personality. When Jawaharlal responds to W.B. Yeats' explanation of the motivation of the Irish airman who soared to his death, that "a lonely impulse of delight" urged him on to greater heights, he is coming very near a mystical experience: in less exalted moments he arrives at a logical and coherent acceptance of an uncertain universe. His obsessive interest in the beauty of word and language, the attraction of the ideas of other men and the glories of nature, made him an unusual, rather lively figure in politics. His immediate political constituency, within the Congress organization and even in parliament, was unexcited and inclined to be critical of his theoretical predilections. But both in the years of the search for freedom and the years of the exercise of power, he demonstrated an ability to take unpleasant decisions. He was no "ineffectual angel"; his liminous wings beat not in vain, but with a certain purpose. There were both Caliban and Ariel in him, the earthy slave "crying freedom", always aware of class solidarity; and Ariel rearranging reality in visionary moments. In essence, however, he was like any other great statesman — Prospero, the interventionist magician, with inevitable disillusion at the end of it all.

This is the Jawaharlal I have come to know and understand a

little better in this study. His greatness precedes and, in a sense, transcends those tremendous years as nation-builder in the country he loved, and as an affectionate guardian angel for his people, who indulged him even when they did not understand.