Preface

This second volume of the biography of Jawaharlal Nehru covers the first nine years of the prime ministership, from August 1947 to November 1956. I have chosen the latter date as a convenient point at which to end this volume not only because, chronologically, it falls approximately half-way in Nehru’s term of office, but also because, in domestic affairs, economic planning, foreign policy and almost every other sphere of his public activity it marks, curiously, the end of one phase and the beginning of a second, and more sombre, period.

As in the first volume, this is more than the personal story of an individual. The analysis, of course, throughout takes as its starting-point the hopes and efforts of the Prime Minister. More is said about matters in which Nehru was keenly interested, while those problems in which his involvement or responsibility was marginal have received correspondingly less attention. But the book spreads out to become, in a sense, the history of the first years of free India.

I am grateful to Shrimati Indira Gandhi for access to the private papers of Jawaharlal Nehru for the period after 1947. All letters and other documents to which no references are given are from these papers. The only official records which I have been able to consult are some files of the Prime Minister’s secretariat.

Mr Christopher Hill most kindly read the manuscript and made many suggestions for its improvement. I have been sustained, during the making of this book, by the support of my colleagues at the Centre for Historical Studies in the Jawaharlal Nehru University.