The mood of elation evoked by the achievement of freedom was wiped out almost within hours. The immediate developments in India and Pakistan set a dazzling cast of characters in a context of primitive action and of the mingled frenzy of violence, idealism, triumph, passion and intrigue. The presence of Gandhi in Bengal helped to cool tempers in that area, but a ‘human earthquake’\(^1\) engulfed the divided Punjab. As early as March 1947 communal rioting in what was to be West Pakistan had led to migrations of non-Muslims; and the collapse of the non-League government and the administration of the province by officials had added to communal tensions. Yet no one, neither the Government of India nor the leaders of the Congress and the League, had paid much attention to this gathering potential of tragedy. So when, on 14 August, trouble started on a large scale almost simultaneously in Lahore and Amritsar, large towns lying just within the new border on either side, and spread out to West and East Punjab and even to Delhi, the reaction was one of surprise and helplessness. In the following weeks, a great number of people were killed,\(^2\) and there were migrations, with attendant murders and abductions, of at least five to six millions each way. The boundary force of about 23,000 men not only proved inadequate to control the situation but was itself weakening in morale, and some of its members were believed to have participated in these massacres on both sides.\(^3\) ‘People have lost their reason completely and are behaving worse than brutes. There is madness about in its worst form.’\(^4\)

This was both a psychological and an administrative crisis. All calculations had gone wrong. Partition, which had been accepted by the

\(^1\) Nehru’s speech at Lahore, 8 December, *Hindustan Times*, 9 December 1947.

\(^2\) Estimates vary. Moon (with whom Mountbatten agrees) reckoned the figure to be about 200,000 (*Divide and Quit*, London, 1961, p. 283); G. D. Khosla believed that it was about 400 to 500,000 (*Storm Reckoning*, Delhi n.d., p. 299); Ian Stephens places the figure at 500,000 (*Pakistan*, London, 1963, p. 80) and M. Edwards at 600,000 (*Last Years of British India*, London, 1963, p. 223).


\(^4\) Nehru to Lady Ismay, 4 September 1947.
Congress as a drastic way out of communal hatred, had only multiplied it; and as Nehru acknowledged, had the leaders of the Congress anticipated this, they might well have preferred to keep India united and distraught. Nehru made no secret of his discomfiture at events, and was honest enough to acknowledge his own errors of judgment.

Late in 1946, I was about to leave India, where I had been based for quite a long time, and I went to see Nehru to say goodbye and also for a last interview. . . . We — mostly Nehru — talked for over two hours. As I was going, he walked with me to the door, put a gentle hand on my arm and said: 'Marcuse, there are three things I want you to remember. One, India will never be a Dominion. Two, there will never be a Pakistan. Three, when the British go, there will be no more communal trouble in India.'

I was back in Delhi after 15 August 1947 . . . I hadn't the heart, of course, to remind Nehru of his three predictions. At the same time, I couldn't put them out of my mind and, as I asked the usual questions, I felt acutely embarrassed. Not he, though. For, after a while, he gave me one of his charming smiles and abruptly said: 'You remember, Marcuse, what I told you? No Dominion, No Pakistan, No . . .'

He broke off there and we were both silent for several seconds. You could have heard a fly fly, as the French say. And then he added, 'Wasn't I wrong?'

There was, I thought, more than a touch of greatness there.\footnote{See article by Jacques Marcuse in Richard Hughes, Foreign Devil (London, 1972), pp. 289-92.}

The first news of the murders and atrocities in West Punjab left Nehru numb. 'I feel peculiarly helpless. In action one can always overcome this feeling whatever the result of the action might be. But as I cannot take immediate action that can have any effect, the burden becomes heavy.' But he pulled himself together.

I cannot and do not wish to shed my responsibility for my people. If I cannot discharge that responsibility effectively, then I begin to doubt whether I have any business to be where I am. And even if I don't doubt it myself, other people certainly will. I am not an escapist or quitter and it is not from that point of view that I am writing. The mere fact that the situation is difficult is a challenge which must be accepted and I certainly accept it.\footnote{Nehru to Mountbatten, 27 August 1947.}

There were only two ways: to go under or overcome, 'and we are not going under.'\footnote{Nehru's remark to Sri Prakasa at Jullundur, September 1947. See Sri Prakasa's article in Nehru Abhinandan Granth (Delhi, 1949), p. 225.} With the reaction in India to the atrocities in Pakistan, Nehru's main task was to hire his own people back to sanity.
Life here continues to be nightmarish. Everything seems to have gone awry although superficially we seem to be improving. But our foundations have been shaken and all our standards seem to have disappeared. Only a certain pride and a sense of duty keeps one going . . . We have to build anew and that building must begin with the foundations at home. If the roots dry up, how long will the leaves and flowers continue?  

Nothing was to be gained by delving for the initial responsibility; horror had, whatever its origin, gained such momentum that it was futile to suggest at this stage that one side was worse than the other. Nehru moved tirelessly round Delhi, extending the protection of his personal interest to frightened Muslim families, and frequently jumped into mobs of fanatic rioters to scold and even to smite in order to quell. But more important than the maintenance of the public peace was the necessity to exorcize the madness, born of fear, which had seized the Indian people. Nehru addressed meetings throughout northern India and broadcast repeatedly that they should build an India where no citizen felt insecure because of his religion. Secularism, always a principle of the Congress, was now rendered more urgent by the compulsion of events. Everyone seemed to be thinking in terms of retaliation, but the Government would not adopt that as a policy. If the people of India had not retaliated, the Indian army, instead of being occupied with subduing mob violence and guarding hospitals in India itself, could have marched into Pakistan for the protection of the minorities there. Butchering Muslims was not just a matter of personal degradation and communal fanaticism; it destroyed the dignity of India and the prestige of her government, betrayed the philosophy of Gandhi which had inspired the struggle for freedom, and threatened democracy and liberty by strengthening the forces of fascism. "The battle of our political freedom is fought and won. But another battle, no less important than what we have won, still faces us. It is a battle with no outside enemy . . . It is a battle with our own selves."

In performing this duty, his first as the leader of a free people, Nehru could not rely on the unqualified support of his Cabinet. Some of the members, such as Azad, John Matthai, Kidwai and Amrit Kaur, were with him; but they carried little influence with the masses. The old stalwarts of the Congress, however, such as Patel and Rajendra Prasad, with the backing of the leader of the Hindu Mahasabha, Syama Prasad Mookerjee, believed not so much in a theocratic state as in a state which symbolized the interests of the Hindu majority. Patel assumed that Muslim officials, even if

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8 Nehru to K. P. S. Menon, 12 October 1947.
10 Speech at Allahabad, 14 December, National Herald, 16 December 1947.
they had opted for India, were bound to be disloyal and should be dismissed; and to him the Muslims in India were hostages to be held as security for the fair treatment of Hindus in Pakistan. He, therefore, resisted Nehru’s efforts to reserve certain residential areas in Delhi for Muslims and to employ Muslims to deal with Muslim refugees. Even more non-secular in outlook than Patel was Rajendra Prasad, the meek follower of Gandhi but untouched in any real sense by the spirit of Gandhi’s teachings. One-sided action, he wrote to his Prime Minister, could not bring the desired results but would in fact lead to most undesirable and unexpected consequences. There was no use in bringing in the army to protect the Muslim citizens of Delhi if the Hindus and Sikhs were expelled from the cities of Pakistan. ‘Our action today is driving the people away from us.’ Nehru’s exhortations to his countrymen to behave in a civilized manner only seemed to Prasad to convince world opinion of India’s guilt.11

Nehru, therefore, had not merely to goad the rioters into reason; he had also to persuade the most influential of his colleagues. It was not, he reminded them, what he said but what foreigners reported that had brought India’s name into the mud and made him ashamed even to meet members of the diplomatic corps.

These events taken as a whole have shown a picture of all Muslims, irrespective of their position or standing or residence, being hunted down and killed wherever possible. Every Ambassador’s house has been visited by gangs in search of Muslim servants . . . there is a limit to killing and brutality and that limit has been passed during these days in north India. A people who indulge in this kind of thing not only brutalize themselves but poison the environment . . . The future appears to be dark not so much because 50,000 or 100,000 people have been murdered, but because of the mentality that has accompanied this and that perhaps might continue. I quite realize that I am out of tune with this environment and not a fit representative of it. Yet I am entirely convinced that if we surrender to this mentality, then indeed we are doomed as a nation.

There was a time when under Bapu’s guidance and insistence we used to condemn terroristic acts even when by normal standards they might have been justified in the cause of national freedom. Now open murder committed in the most brutal way stalks everywhere and we hesitate to say much about it lest we may lose our hold on the people. I must confess that I have no stomach for this leadership. Unless we keep to some standards, freedom has little meaning, and certainly India will not become the great nation we have dreamt of for so long . . . We have faced and are facing the gravest crisis that any

11 Rajendra Prasad to Nehru, 17 September 1947.
Government can have to face, more especially a new Government. The consequences of each step that we might take are bound to be far-reaching. The world is watching us also and the world's opinion counts. But above all we are watching ourselves and if we fail in our own estimation, who will rescue us?  

Gandhi approved of this letter; and in fact Nehru, functioning in the eye of the storm as a man inspired, drew close once again to Gandhi and relied more heavily upon him than he had done in the two years prior to the transfer of power.

How many of you realize what it has meant to India to have the presence of Mahatma Gandhi these months? We all know of his magnificent services to India and to freedom during the past half-century and more. But no service could have been greater than what he has performed during the past four months when in a dissolving world he has been like a rock of purpose and a lighthouse of truth, and his firm low voice has risen above the clamours of the multitude pointing out the path of rightful endeavour.

Gandhi, back in Delhi on 7 September, supported Nehru's efforts to protect the minorities, shun vengeance, abide by the old ideals and resist the narrow outlook that appeared to be gaining strength at every level of Indian opinion. But Gandhi could lend no power to the Prime Minister in his role as head of the administration; and in this sphere Nehru recruited the services of Mountbatten, even though he was a constitutional head of state. Mountbatten's sharing of authority in handling the disintegrating situation was common knowledge even at the time. Indeed, Mountbatten was present at the press conference when Nehru announced that the emergency committee of the Cabinet, which was attended by the heads of departments concerned, was being presided over by Mountbatten. This involvement of Mountbatten in the government of the country has enabled him, in recent years after the death of Nehru, to make extravagant claims.

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18 Nehru to Rajendra Prasad, 19 September 1947; see also report of his speech at a public meeting in Delhi 30 September, The Hindu, 1 October 1947.

19 "... to see Nehru at close range during this ordeal is an inspiring experience. He vindicates one's faith in the humanist and the civilised intellect. Almost alone in the turmoil of communalism, with all its variations, from individual intrigue to mass madness, he speaks with the voice of reason and clarity. The negotiations for the transfer of power between March and August did not seem to me to evoke his full powers. A certain moodiness and outbursts of exasperation were the visible signs of overstrain; but now somehow he has renewed himself, and in this deeper crisis he is shown at his full stature — passionate and courageous, yet objective and serene; one of the enlightened elect of our time."


14 Address to the Allahabad University jubilee convocation, 13 December, National Herald, 14 December 1947.

for his own role. From March 1947 to April 1948 I gave him [Nehru] a course in administration, and he had enough confidence in me and liking for me to let me do it. But we need not go further than what has been said, on the basis of Mountbatten’s papers, that he had been asked to assist in governing.

The problem of administration extended rapidly from preventing murders and organizing refugee camps and hospitals to the broader issue of relations with the new state of Pakistan. Nehru believed that the division of India was a short-term political solution which could not override cultural affinities and economic compulsions. So the Government of India disavowed any intention of harming Pakistan or treating it as an enemy and expressed their continuing hope that, when the current turmoil ended, the two states might unite by the free will of their peoples. But events did not help to restore this goodwill and balance. Just as the fury in the two Punjabs was beginning to abate, a crisis emerged in Kashmir. On the eve of the transfer of power, the Maharaja’s Government, unable to decide between accession to India or to Pakistan, proposed to sign standstill agreements with both countries. The Government of Pakistan agreed, but from the Government of India there was no response, because the Maharaja’s proposal reached them only long after the trouble started. In fact, the official Indian attitude was indifference as to the Maharaja’s decision. Though Nehru was aware that Pakistan was seeking to force events and believed that the Pakistan Government intended to raise capital in the United States in return for leases and special privileges in Kashmir, his advice to the Kashmir authorities was merely to invite Sheikh Abdullah, who had been released by the end of September, to form a provisional government and to announce fresh elections; nothing should be done about accession until then. Abdullah too campaigned for democratic rights and did not publicly concern himself with accession.

More than Kashmir, the Government of India were at this time concerned with Junagadh, a small State with dispersed territory on the west coast. On 15 August 1947 its Muslim ruler, despite the fact that over

18 Mountbatten’s version is that Nehru and Patel jointly appealed to him to handle the situation for them, and that he agreed, provided his active role was kept secret for the time being and, while he would go through the motions of consulting his ministers, in fact what he decided would be final. These conditions were accepted. Interview with the author, 28 May 1970. Since then, Mountbatten has asserted that Nehru and Patel asked him, in so many words, to take over the country. Interview reported in the Listener, 30 October 1975.
17 Mountbatten’s interview with the author, 28 May 1970.
19 See Nehru’s statement to the press 16 September, Times of India, 17 September 1947.
20 It has been said (with what justification it is difficult to be sure) that the letter to the Government of India was held up in Lahore, the Kashmir postal system having been within the Punjab circle before partition.
22 Nehru to M. C. Mahajan, Prime Minister of Kashmir, 21 October 1947.
80 per cent of the population was of a different religion, declared the accession of his State to Pakistan. What happened to Junagadh would be important, as both the Governments of India and Pakistan recognized, not only in itself but because it would serve as a precedent in the larger issues, which were still pending, of Kashmir and Hyderabad. Mountbatten, though Governor-General of India alone and not of both dominions, inhibited his Government’s options. Concerned about his own position, he threw his weight against military action. The three British officers who commanded India’s armed services followed suit; and when the Government of India objected to their assumption of political authority Mountbatten took on the chairmanship of the Defence Committee of the Indian Cabinet and thus ensured that no military decision was taken without his knowledge. His suggestion of arbitration in the case of two bits of territory whose incorporation in Junagadh State was doubtful was vetoed by Patel. But Mountbatten was more successful in persuading Nehru to rule out war and commit himself to a plebiscite in Junagadh.

I emphasized the importance of Pandit Nehru’s statement to Mr Liaqat Ali Khan, and assured him that the Government of India would abide by it, and that Pandit Nehru would agree that this policy would apply to any other State, since India would never be a party to trying to force a State to join their Dominion against the wishes of the majority of the people. Pandit Nehru nodded his head sadly. Mr Liaqat Ali Khan’s eyes sparkled. There is no doubt that both of them were thinking of Kashmir.

Pakistan, therefore, had gained considerable vantage on the question of Kashmir even before the crisis broke. On the night of 24 October, news reached Delhi that well-organized tribesmen had entered Kashmir from Pakistan and were marching on Srinagar. The Defence Committee, meeting the next morning, decided to send arms to the Kashmir Government. Mountbatten was in favour of at least a temporary accession to India, but neither Nehru nor Patel attached any importance to this. Nehru was more concerned that the Maharaja should associate Abdullah with the resistance. The next day, when the Prime Minister of Kashmir saw Nehru and requested that Indian troops be flown into Kashmir, Nehru declined and was only persuaded by Patel and Abdullah to agree. Clearly, therefore, whatever Nehru’s romantic attachment to the mountains of

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23 See his report to the King cited in Hodson, op. cit., pp. 430-1.
25 Mountbatten’s report to the King, Hodson, op. cit., p. 436.
26 Hodson, op. cit., pp. 449-50.
Kashmir, it did not influence his policy, and the decisions on Kashmir were
not, as has been frequently suggested, being taken by him alone in an
overwhelming mood of sentiment.

At the meeting of the Defence Committee on 26 October, Mountbatten
and the Chiefs of Staff advised against flying troops to Kashmir; but when
Mountbatten saw that his ministers were determined to do so, he gave in.
He was wise enough to discern that on this issue Nehru and the Cabinet
might have ignored his views, especially as Gandhi felt as strongly as they
did and terminated what Nehru later termed 'a difficulty of the spirit' by
telling Nehru that there could be no peace by submission to evil in
Kashmir. But Mountbatten succeeded in persuading Nehru and Patel to
link military assistance to immediate accession and the offer of a plebiscite
after law and order had been restored. The accession of Kashmir was
accepted and Indian troops were flown out on the morning of 27 October,
just in time to prevent the sack of Srinagar and to thwart what was believed
to be the plan of Pakistan to proclaim accession after the city had been
captured so that Jinnah could make a triumphal entry.

Once these decisions had been taken, for Nehru the main task was to
drive out the raiders.

We have taken a tough job. But I am dead sure that we shall pull
through. Ever since the decision was taken yesterday and I heard
today that our troops had reached Srinagar I have felt much lighter in
heart. We have taken the plunge and we shall swim across to the other
shore. It has become a test of our future.

To be fighting side by side with the people of Kashmir against fanatic
hordes was a heartening experience which set aside for the moment the
memories of communal strife and partition; and the fact that Hindu
communal elements in India were opposed to the accession of Kashmir
because it had a Muslim majority added to the thrill of the adventure.

I trust in this defence we shall give a demonstration to all India and to
the world how we can function unitedly and in a non-communal way
in Kashmir. In this way this terrible crisis in Kashmir may well lead to
a healing of the deep wounds which India has suffered in recent
months.

Faced with the presence of Indian troops in Kashmir, Jinnah, as was

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88 Speech in Parliament, 8 March 1949, Constituent Assembly of India (Legislative) Debates, 1949,
89 Campbell-Johnson, op. cit., p. 224; Hodson, op. cit., pp. 452-4; Nehru to Sir T. B. Sapru, 1
November 1947.
90 Nehru to Sheikh Abdullah, 27 October 1947.
91 Nehru to the Maharaja of Kashmir, 27 October 1947.
usual with him, secured concessions by threatening the British with the possibility of a full-scale war with India. This time it was Ismay and Auchinleck who were subjected to this blackmail, and they persuaded Mountbatten that he should conduct Nehru to Lahore for talks. Nehru agreed to go on what Patel regarded as a mission of appeasement; but an official statement issued by Pakistan accusing India of ‘fraud and violence’ in Kashmir caused Nehru to cancel his visit. So Mountbatten went alone to hear Jinnah denounce India, accept implicit responsibility for the tribal raiders by offering to ‘call the whole thing off’ if India agreed to withdraw her troops, and reject a plebiscite conducted by the United Nations — a proposal to which Nehru had already been won over by Mountbatten.33
Nothing material came of this meeting, and the fighting in Kashmir continued. Nehru turned down Abdullah’s suggestion that an ultimatum be given to Pakistan and war declared at the end of it;33 but though he was not willing to launch into an all-out war with Pakistan, there was no slackening in the efforts to clear Kashmir of the invaders. Mountbatten still rather naively believed that Nehru and Liaquat Ali Khan could patch up a settlement and assiduously sought to leave them alone in a room; he could never see that the differences were too deep and the conflict of interests too great for any personal negotiations. The only result was intransigent talk, with both sides holding to their positions and Nehru now and then losing his temper and making such statements as that he would ‘throw up his prime ministership and take a rifle himself, and lead the men of India against the invasion.’34

Gandhi, more realistic than Mountbatten, believed that a solution could be imposed by the British if they took a hard line;35 but Attlee was unwilling to do this, and paid no heed to Mountbatten’s prompting that he fly out and meet Nehru and Liaquat Ali Khan. Nehru had no thought of compromise. Kashmir had become to him a symbol of the basic conflict in India and on the decision there ‘one might almost say, depends not only the future of Kashmir but the future of Pakistan and to a considerable extent the future in India. Thus we are playing for much higher stakes than might appear on the surface.’36 However, Mountbatten succeeded in persuading him to refer the Kashmir problem to the United Nations by arguing that the only alternative was a full-scale war. Mountbatten would have preferred a general reference to the United Nations to stop the fighting and conduct a plebiscite; but the Government of India would do no more than make a specific reference with regard to Pakistan’s aggression. Though India was committed to allow the people of Kashmir to decide their own

33 See Nehru to M. C. Mahajan, 31 October 1947.
34 Nehru to Sheikh Abdullah, 4 November 1947.
35 Cited by Mountbatten, Hodson, op. cit., p. 465.
37 Nehru to Sheikh Abdullah, 3 December 1947.
future, Nehru was unwilling now to tie this up with the reference to the United Nations. Nehru also made this clear to Liaqat Ali Khan when they met on 21 December. He added that if Pakistan continued its aggression, India might have to extend the minor war, which it had been waging so far, in order to strike at the base of operations, which was in Pakistan, as well as at the lines of communications. Liaqat Ali Khan said he would welcome the intervention of the United Nations, but did not raise two issues which had dominated so much of the earlier discussions, the internal administration of Kashmir and the Indian troops that might be left in Kashmir after the fighting was over. When Mountbatten suggested that Liaqat Ali Khan might be shown the draft of India’s reference to the United Nations, Nehru refused; and Liaqat Ali Khan, who was in a strangely subdued mood, said he did not think it necessary to see the draft.87

So the limited reference was made to the United Nations. Patel had not been in favour even of this;88 and Gandhi too, whom Nehru consulted, consented to it with some reluctance. He saw the draft and revised it to remove the suggestion of an independent Kashmir as a possible alternative to accession to either State. It was unfortunate — and Nehru was later deeply to regret it — that Mountbatten, who had no clear understanding of international affairs, had succeeded in persuading Nehru to bring the United Nations into the picture. Having achieved this, he now set himself to prevent any extension of the war. Nehru, however, was determined to ‘see this Kashmir business through. We do not believe in leaving things half-done.’89 He insisted to Mountbatten, even after the decision to refer the matter to the United Nations had been taken, that expulsion of the raiders was still the first priority:

on no account would we submit to this barbarity whatever the cost . . . I am convinced that any surrender on our part to this kind of aggression would lead to continuing aggression elsewhere, and whether we want it or not war would become inevitable between India and Pakistan. We are dealing with a State carrying on an informal war. The present objective is Kashmir. The next declared objective is Patiala, East Punjab, and Delhi . . . we must not carry on our own operations in a weak defensive way which can produce no effective impression on the enemy. We have refrained from crossing into Pakistani territory because of our desire to avoid complications leading to open war. Thereby we have increased our own peril and not brought peace any nearer . . . To surrender to this invasion will involve a complete degradation of India which I could not possibly

87 Nehru’s note on conversations with Mountbatten and Liaqat Ali Khan, 21 December 1947.
89 Speech at Jammu, 6 December, Statesman, 7 December 1947.
tolerate... There is an imminent danger of an invasion of India proper. Can we afford to sit and look on? We would deserve to be sacked immediately. We have taken enough risks already, we dare not take any more...  40

The reference to the United Nations of Pakistan's aggression was, therefore, expressly coupled with full military preparations to move the war, if necessary, into Pakistan. The British Government claimed to fear that India would attack Pakistan simultaneously with the filing of the complaint with the Security Council. 41 But, in fact, Mountbatten made sure that Nehru would permit no such action not merely by arguing that the matter had become sub judice but also by threatening that, in any such contingency, he would vacate the governor-generalship. 42 It was agreed that the Defence Committee need not consider for the time being the possibility of Indian troops entering Pakistan. No more was done than to keep a plan ready in case the defence of India should require an attack on bases in Pakistan. 43

By the reference to the Security Council India stood to suffer in every way. To the Indian request on 31 December 1947 that Pakistan be directed not to participate or assist in any way in the invasion of Kashmir, Pakistan replied not only with a denial but with general allegations against India of hostility to Pakistan, 'genocide' against Muslims and securing the accession of Kashmir by fraud and violence. The Security Council, under the guidance of the British delegate, Philip Noel-Baker, ignored the specific complaint of India and made clear its preference for Pakistan. It was assumed that India and Pakistan had an equal interest in Kashmir and therefore whatever was done should seem fair to the Government of Pakistan and the tribesmen as well as to the Government of India. Further, in virtual acceptance of Pakistan's general charges against India and ignoring the fact that the United Nations had been approached on a limited issue, the 'Kashmir question' was replaced on the agenda by the 'India-Pakistan question'.

In Kashmir itself, while India was inhibited from a full-scale effort to drive out the invaders, there was no abatement in Pakistan's offensive. It was in this context that the Indian Cabinet decided in January 1948 to withhold payment of Rs 55 crores (about £ 40 million), due to Pakistan as part of the assets of partition, until a settlement had been reached in Kashmir, for it was clear to them that this amount would be used for the purchase of arms to sustain the fighting against India. Patel took the lead in

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40 Nehru to Mountbatten, 26 December 1947.
42 Campbell-Johnson, op. cit., p. 259.
43 Nehru to Baldev Singh, 24 January 1948.
this matter, — ‘not a pie’ he had said at the Cabinet meeting — but Nehru had been in full agreement. Yet Mountbatten, acting unconstitutionally, criticized the decision of his Cabinet when Gandhi raised the matter and described it as both unstatesmanlike and unwise and the ‘first dishonourable act’ of the free Government of India. On Kashmir, Gandhi had no doubt that the troops of Pakistan would have to be driven out. He would not accept the premise that Muslims should, by the mere fact of their religion, be regarded as not Indian. When, at what turned out to be their last interview, Mountbatten spoke of partition of the state as a possible compromise, he and Gandhi parted, in Mountbatten’s naval phrase, ‘brass rags’. But the withholding of payment of money to which the Government of India were committed appeared to Gandhi to be on a different footing. This was one of the chief causes which impelled Gandhi to commence, on 13 January, a fast to quicken the conscience of the Indian people and improve relations between Hindus and Muslims. So the Cabinet reopened the question and, while convinced that their decision had been right on merits, decided to make immediate payment if Gandhi wished it. When all the facts were placed before Gandhi he advised full payment and the Cabinet announced a reversal of their decision.

The fast itself, which lasted five days, seemed to Nehru to have had generally a good effect even in Pakistan. He himself had fasted in sympathy for one or two days, eliciting from Gandhi, when he heard of it, affectionate concern. ‘Give up your fast . . . May you live long and continue to be the jewel of India.’ But the good effect wore out soon enough in both countries, the evil of religious hatred being too deep-set to be cured easily, and on the evening of 30 January 1948 Gandhi was assassinated. Death in the cause of human harmony was the perfect end to Gandhi’s life, the last line of the sonnet. He himself would have seen it as the final accomplishment. As long back as 1926, when informed that Swami Shradhanand had been murdered by a religious fanatic, Gandhi had remarked, ‘Unbearable as it is, my heart refuses to grieve; it rather prays that all of us may be granted such a death.’ In Delhi, a few weeks before his own death, he had asked a crowd of refugees from Pakistan: ‘Which is better — to die for the sake of one’s faith with the name of God on one’s lips, or to die a lingering death of sickness, paralysis or old age? I for one would infinitely prefer the former.’ As Nehru observed in one of his superb flights of English prose,

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44 C. D. Deshmukh’s interview with the author, 21 January 1969.
44 Kingsley Martin’s oral testimony, N.M.M.I.
44 Pyarelal, op. cit., p. 449.
Gandhi had unconsciously become the perfect artist in the art of living, and even in his death there was a complete artistry.

As he grew older his body seemed to be just a vehicle for the mighty spirit within him. Almost one forgot the body as one listened to him or looked at him, and so where he sat became a temple and where he trod was hallowed ground... Why, then, should we grieve for him? Our memories of him will be of the Master, whose step was light to the end, whose smile was infectious and whose eyes were full of laughter. We shall associate no failing powers with him of body or mind. He lived and he died at the top of his strength and powers, leaving a picture in our minds and in the mind of the age that we live in that can never fade away. 60

This was written a fortnight after Gandhi's death; but Nehru's immediate reaction was almost identical. The personal blow was, of course, overwhelming. Rushing to Birla House on hearing the news, he 'bent his head down and began to sob like a child.' 61 But within a few hours of the murder, pushed by Mountbatten in front of the microphone, his voice was again contained, and he mingled his heavy sense of loss with thanksgiving and a fresh call to duty.

Friends and comrades, the light has gone out of our lives and there is darkness everywhere... The light has gone out, I said, and yet I was wrong. For the light that shone in this country was no ordinary light... that light represented something more than the immediate present, it represented the living, the eternal truths, reminding us of the right path, drawing us from error, taking this ancient country to freedom... A great disaster is a symbol to us to remember all the big things of life and forget the small things of which we have thought too much. In his death he has reminded us of the big things of life, the living truth, and if we remember that, then it will be well with India... 62

60 Harijan, 15 February 1948.
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Kashmir and Hyderabad

The witness of Gandhi and his own commitment to what he regarded as the essential values held Nehru together in these first months of shock. Gandhi’s last efforts and the circumstances of his death reinforced Nehru’s awareness of Gandhi’s superhuman eminence. He was not ashamed to admit that, rationalist as he was, he bowed his head every time he passed the scene of the crime.¹ Daily, when confronted with a problem, his first thought was to run up to Gandhi for advice, and only then to remember that now he stood alone. There was the solace of Lady Mountbatten, gentle and companionable, seeking to brush away the worry and the sorrow. But it was not easy to carry on and often it seemed to Nehru that he was condemned to walk in darkness for the rest of his days.

I do not myself see any peaceful or safe anchorage for my mind anywhere. I have to wander through life, pulled in various directions, often doubting as to what I should do and what I should avoid . . . the only satisfaction I have is in working. Perhaps that is mere escapism, for much of my work is undoubtedly trivial. Isn’t life itself mostly trivial? We live for the high moments which seldom come and when they come they pass too soon.²

In these early months of 1948 there was in India as much tension and suspicion as sorrow in the air and Nehru was enclosed in a tight ring of security which he found irksome and unnatural. In matters of policy, too, on all sides Nehru encountered disillusion and bafflement. Developments in New York on Kashmir continued to be upsetting. Noel-Baker informed the Indian delegation that from his own sources he was satisfied that Pakistan had provided no assistance to the raiders.³ This could only mean that the British High Commissioners in Delhi and Karachi and British officers serving in Pakistan had persuaded Noel-Baker to reject India’s case.

¹ Nehru to G. D. Birla, 22 May 1948.
² Nehru to Clare Booth Luce, 1 July 1948.
³ N. G. Ayyangar’s telegram to Nehru, 7 February 1948.
even without considering her delegation’s arguments at New York. In fact, the British delegation took the view that the crisis in Kashmir had started with a massacre of Muslims instigated by the Maharaja, and sought to persuade the United States to insist on military policing of the state by Pakistan and refusal to recognize Abdullah’s government. The British attitude was generally regarded in India as a hangover from pre-independence days and a conversion of British support for the Muslim League into support of Pakistan, as well as a reflection of the desire of Britain and the United States to win back the support of the Islamic world, lost by their policy in Palestine. Some of the propositions put forward by these countries in the Security Council seemed to Nehru monstrous, and rather than ‘surrender either to the gangster tactics of Pakistan and the raiders or to the attempts at bullying by Britain and the United States’, Nehru was willing to consider defiance of the United Nations — the organization to which he had taken the initiative in appealing. Nehru felt deeply about this, especially as the decision to refer the case to the United Nations had been so much a personal one. Had he let his people down?

The world seems a very dark, dismal and dreary place, full of people with wrong urges or no urge at all, living their lives trivially and without any significance . . . I feel overwhelmed, not so much by the great problems facing us but rather by the affection and comradeship of friends who expect so much from me. A sense of utter humility seizes me in the face of this faith and trust.

In the same strain he wrote to Mountbatten that he contemplated resignation. ‘I think I should tell you that, subject to developments, I might have to consider my position in Government. I have made statements and have given pledges to the people of Kashmir and I do not propose to go against them.’

The hostility of Britain and the United States showed itself not only in the debates in the Security Council but also in the difficulty India experienced in securing arms and petrol. Nehru made it clear that India would react.

I must say that prepared as I was for untoward happenings, I could not imagine that the Security Council could possibly behave in the trivial and partisan manner in which it functioned. These people are supposed to keep the world in order. It is not surprising that the world

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5 To Krishna Menon, 20 February 1948.
6 Ibid.
7 To Zakir Hussain, 16 February 1948.
8 To Mountbatten, 13 February 1948.
is going to pieces. The United States and Britain have played a dirty role, Britain probably being the chief actor behind the scenes. I have expressed myself strongly to Attlee about it and I propose to make it perfectly clear to the British Government what we think about it. The time for soft and meaningless talk has passed.9

No doubt Mountbatten informed Attlee that this would affect India’s relations with Britain, and both Attlee and Cripps assured Nehru that the British representative at the United Nations would cease to be so partisan. Mountbatten’s own characteristic suggestion was that Nehru should have a heart-to-heart talk with Liaquat Ali Khan; and this was repeated by Attlee. But any chance there might have been of a bilateral settlement was destroyed by the unexpected support Pakistan had received in the Security Council; and despite the assurance of the British Government, there was no real change in the British delegation’s attitude. The Nationalist Chinese delegate introduced a resolution which the Indian Government accepted. The British Government promised Nehru that they would permit no material change in this; but their delegate suggested considerable alterations. The resolution as revised did not recognize the sovereignty of India over Kashmir, asked India to agree to a coalition government in Kashmir, toned down Pakistan’s obligations to secure the withdrawal of her troops and the tribesmen and vested the plebiscite administrator, to be appointed by the United Nations, with powers which implied that India and Pakistan had equal status in Kashmir. Attlee then, to Nehru’s astonishment, pressed him to accept the modified resolution.

I can only say I am amazed after all that has happened and the assurances that have been given to us. Quite apart from any differences of opinion, one has an uncomfortable feeling that an attempt has been made to lull us into a feeling of security when developments were taking place which were considered by us to be entirely objectionable.10

Nehru’s reaction was to ignore the Security Council and to press ahead with quick and effective military action in Kashmir, while being generous on other matters such as the flow of the Indus canal waters to Pakistan.11 Attention now centred on the Commission set up by the United Nations and to which India had considered nominating Belgium or Sweden but ultimately, because of her distrust of the Western bloc, had chosen Czechoslovakia. Mountbatten repeatedly hinted at the advantages of

9 To Vijayalakshmi, 16 February 1948.
10 To Mountbatten, 17 April 1948.
11 Nehru to Baldev Singh, 16 and 22 April 1948; Nehru to G. C. Bhargava, Chief Minister of East Punjab, 28 April 1948.
partition, while Nehru was urged at private conferences to push out Sheikh Abdullah for some time at least from the Kashmir administration. On the latter point Nehru refused to yield. The Security Council then extended the scope of the Commission to include Junagadh, ‘genocide’ and other matters raised by Pakistan and irrelevant to Kashmir. This was a deliberate affront to India, yet Nehru did not refuse to cooperate with the Commission; the Government of India would state their objections before it and reiterate their position on Kashmir.15

As soon as the Commission arrived in Pakistan in July, it was informed by the Pakistan Government that three brigades of regular Pakistani troops had been fighting in Kashmir since May. Mountbatten, who had laid down office a few weeks earlier, was as full as ever of bouncing optimism, and assured Nehru that with such evidence before it, the Commission would come up with a reasonably favourable report which would enable the United Nations to resolve the tangle in a way acceptable to India. But to Nehru the situation appeared fantastic and ‘Gilbertian’. An undeclared war was being waged between the two countries and British officers were planning and carrying out military operations against India in what was legally Indian territory. Such a situation could obviously not continue indefinitely and would, if not brought under control, extend into a regular, general war. Nehru braced himself for either alternative, and the British Government were informed that India was prepared for a withdrawal of British officers from both sides.14 With Pakistan reported to be getting ready for an all-out offensive in Kashmir and developments in Hyderabad coming to a boiling point, ‘things are moving so rapidly that by the end of this month there may be a bust-up.’18 However, Attlee had warned Liaqat Ali Khan that if Pakistan attacked Indian military aircraft on airfields in Kashmir, all British officers in both India and Pakistan would be withdrawn,16 and a month later the United Nations Commission eased the situation. Without commenting on the implication of Pakistan’s admission about the presence of its troops in Kashmir, the Commission took the fact into account in its resolution of 13 August 1948. There should be a cease-fire and a withdrawal of Pakistani troops, nationals and tribesmen; India should begin to withdraw the bulk of her forces after Pakistan had withdrawn her tribesmen and nationals and her troops were being withdrawn; and the future status of the State would be determined by a plebiscite.

Mountbatten urged Nehru to accept the cease-fire. A general war with Pakistan would lead to communal massacres such as would make the

15 To Chief Ministers, 4 June 1948.
16 Mountbatten (from London) to Nehru, 15 July 1948.
14 Nehru to Mountbatten, 1 August and to H. S. Suhrawardy, 3 August 1948; Bajpai’s telegram to Krishna Menon, 2 August 1948.
18 Nehru to Vijaysankhmi, 12 August 1948.
18 8 July 1948.
Punjab look mild by comparison and be the most inglorious end to the whole concept of the secular State. 'For God's sake don't get yourself plunged in "war" however great the internal pressure, for once in you cannot get out of the consequences.' Nehru was still indignant at Pakistan's belated acknowledgment of military intervention in Kashmir and the failure of world opinion to denounce this. But in London, during the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference in October, Nehru met Liaqat Ali Khan with some British ministers present, and suggested that either both countries accept the resolution of the Commission or the State be partitioned with certain areas in western Poonch and the north-western part of the State being allotted to Pakistan. Liaqat Ali Khan rejected both alternatives, and was willing to accept a cease-fire only if the details of a plebiscite were settled immediately; and on his return to Karachi, Liaqat Ali Khan suggested that a vote be taken in the Valley and the rest of the State be divided on the basis of the religion of the majority. This manifestly violated the principle of India's stand and was summarily rejected; and the military campaigning of both sides grew in vigour despite the setting in of winter. Two regular divisions of the Pakistan army were now known to be operating in Kashmir. That at this stage Attlee should appeal to both countries to avoid force in settling the Kashmir issue irritated Nehru. He told Krishna Menon to reply to Attlee that with all her dislike of the use of military force India would have no alternative to using it so long as the army of Pakistan, led and largely officered by Englishmen, was operating on what was legally Indian territory.18

It seems to be our function to go on agreeing and Pakistan's to go on refusing and rejecting, although we happen to be the victims of Pakistan's aggression. I just do not understand this. A problem can be tackled from the point of view of equity or practical convenience or preferably both. I find that in regard to Kashmir neither of these aspects has been fully considered with the result that more and more confusion and difficulty arises ... if we have been in error, we shall gladly suffer the consequences of that error. I have no doubt that we have made many mistakes. But in regard to Kashmir I am dead certain that we have made no major mistakes except to hold our hands repeatedly in the face of provocation. We are continually being asked not to do this or that as if we are the aggressors or the guilty party. Meanwhile a set of barbarians are let loose on parts of Kashmir territory, bringing up havoc in their train.19

Officially the Government of India complained to the British Government

17 Mountbatten to Nehru, 15 August 1948.
18 Nehru to Krishna Menon, 18 November 1948.
19 To Cripps, 17 December 1948.
1st Nehru in 1947
2 Mahatma Gandhi and Nehru at a refugee camp near Delhi, 1947

3 Announcing the death of Mahatma Gandhi, Birla House, Delhi, 30 January 1948
that the Kashmir problem would have been much nearer solution but for the encouragement given by British civil and military officers serving in Pakistan. Thus, it was not a matter of a few odd individuals acting according to their prejudices. As had been suspected in India, Ernest Bevin, the Foreign Secretary, attached importance to Pakistan’s role in his strategy of organizing the ‘middle of the planet’ and promoting cordial relations with the Arab states. He had asked Liaqat Ali Khan to take the lead in the matter. This naturally influenced Britain’s attitude on the Kashmir issue.

Yet, despite all provocation, Nehru, shying away from the prospect of a widening war with Pakistan, accepted the resolution of the United Nations Commission. It was a decision taken on general considerations rather than in India’s special interests. His visit to London and Paris brought home to him how much India was being judged by her conduct in Kashmir and Hyderabad. He was forced to recognize that his policies did not appear as impeccable to others as they did to him. But probably what weighed with Nehru more than anything else was the effect, a cease-fire could have in lifting the fear and suspicion of India which obsessed the leaders of Pakistan. In London Liaqat Ali Khan’s attitude had appeared to him ‘a frightened man’s approach and not a strong confident man’s approach.’ Nehru’s early hopes of a quick reunion with Pakistan had not lasted long, and even in January 1948 he had given a public assurance that the Government of India had no desire to reunite Pakistan with India ‘for the present’ and wished to devote attention to building up India. Six months later he was even more categorical, and declared that any reunion was for the distant future; for the present, if Pakistan wished to join India, the latter would not agree. A cease-fire in Kashmir, precluding any extension of the war, provided strong practical testimony to these assurances of Indian acceptance of Pakistan, and could help to eliminate any genuine fears of India which might still be lurking in that country.

Within India, once the immediate crisis of partition had been surmounted, freedom had to be translated into economic and social policy. It was in taking these first steps in dealing with the economic problem, which to his mind was more vital than anything else, that Nehru recovered a little of his old enthusiasm. Even before independence, he had realized that prime attention should be given to the standards of living of the Indian people, and giving them some hope to live and work for; this would itself

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20 Nehru’s letter to Krishna Menon, 18 December 1948, and telegram, 20 December 1948.
22 Nehru to Patel from Paris, 27 October 1948.
24 Speech at Delhi, 18 January, Hindustan Times, 19 January 1948.
26 Nehru to Assaf Ali, 10 January 1948.
ease all other problems, social, economic and human. But the enthusiasm was now tempered by the responsibilities of office. Radical theories of distribution gave place to an emphasis on production, and he no longer regarded nationalization as a talismanic concept. A sub-committee of the Congress, of which Nehru was a member, still advocated, in January 1948, ceilings on incomes and profits and widespread nationalization along with an encouragement of village and cottage industries. But Nehru, as Prime Minister, spoke in more cautious tones and committed himself to nationalization only if it did not impede production or upset the existing structure. The Government could not speak in vague formulae but had to consider every aspect of the problem and more especially what could be done in the immediate present. It was no longer a question of adopting a certain outlook, but of timing, priorities and the manner of implementation. Progress should be gradual, with the greatest amount of goodwill and taking into account the availability of trained personnel; otherwise the result might be a period of semi-disaster.  

Nehru claimed that this approach did not contradict the report of the Congress sub-committee which had placed emphasis on nationalization of new industries without much affecting the existing ones. He also urged his Minister for Industry to ensure that the official statement on industrial policy was broadly in conformity with the party’s proposals. But in fact the Government restricted public ownership to munitions, atomic energy and railways, reserved to themselves the right to start new industries only in coal, iron and steel, aircraft manufactures, shipbuilding, telephone and telegraph materials and minerals, and promised that there would be no nationalization of existing industries for at least ten years.

This was not merely a new emphasis on production; the Government of India was clearly moving away even from what Nehru had termed as no more than ‘a strong tendency towards socialism’. Nehru bravely defended this in public. There was never a clear slate with which to start afresh in life, and a sudden and completely new course had to be discarded because it was inconsistent with any intelligent approach. ‘If nationalization would increase our production, we will have it. If it does not, we shall not have it.’ It was far better to spend money on setting up new industries than to use it in buying up existing ones. Even in the areas of industrial expansion in which the Government did not retain a monopoly, it would participate alongside the private sector, especially in relation to certain basic industries such as fertilizers and drugs. But in private he did not dissemble his distress. ‘There is so much that seems to me wrong that I do not know how

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28 To S. P. Mookerjee, 5 and 9 March 1948.
and where to begin.° The widespread communal outlook, aided by the violent hostility of the Communists and the ‘quite astonishing folly of the Socialists was promoting a markedly reactionary trend. Whatever the reasons, the fact remains that we are looking in the wrong direction.°° The only hopeful development was the progress on the projects to harness the great rivers so as to provide a multitude of services. These appealed to Nehru’s sense of scale, and the statute for setting up an authority to develop the Damodar valley, the first of these schemes, was to him ‘in many ways the most notable piece of legislation that has ever been passed in this country.’°°° Soon after, he inaugurated work on the Hirakud dam in Orissa, and as he threw in some concrete ‘a sense of adventure seized me and I forgot for a while the many troubles that beset us.’°°° When, the next year, an economic crisis necessitated curtailment of public expenditure, Nehru ordered retrenchment even in the defence services but would not allow a scaling down of these river valley projects.

The building of a new India on these lines was not, however, merely a matter of funds; even more important was the recruitment of trained personnel with a commitment to the job. Could socialism be planned and constructed by cadres trained in the service of empire? When the Congress took over the administration it was manned at all the higher levels by members of the Indian Civil Service. Before independence, none had been severer than Nehru in criticism of these officials; but he did not, when the chance came, promptly retire them. Their retention was, in a sense, a concession to his basic generosity. Even Englishmen who were willing to remain gained his support.°°° But perhaps also, in the pressure of post-partition events, there was no alternative to reliance on the Indian Civil Service if the administration was not to break down completely.

Nehru never, like Patel, became the unqualified champion of these officials, who were conservative by training and temperament. ‘A Government should stand by its officers. But a Government’s reputation should not be too closely attached to everything that an officer does.’°°° He was particularly concerned at the increasing resort to shooting by the police and the refusal of Patel and some Chief Ministers to order inquiries. But he gave loyal support to those civil servants who served him with efficiency. The most striking case was that of Sir Girija Shankar Bajpai, who had risen to the topmost ranks of the bureaucracy under the British and had, during the war, been posted as Indian Agent-General in Washington. He had then, as part of his job, been obliged to propagate the anti-Congress policy of the British Government, and this had aroused considerable resentment in

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81 Nehru to Patel, 27 April 1948.
82 Nehru to Vijayalakshmi, 5 May 1948.
83 Nehru to Chief Ministers, 20 February 1948.
84 Nehru to Chief Ministers, 15 April 1948.
86 Nehru to Patel, 3 March 1950.
India. But in 1947 Nehru, overcoming some initial reluctance and influenced by Krishna Menon's recommendation, appointed Bajpai Secretary-General in the Ministry of External Affairs. The appointment evoked surprise among many of Nehru's colleagues, and the surprise grew as Bajpai rapidly gained Nehru's confidence. But to those who recalled Nehru's conduct as Mayor of Allahabad over twenty years before, this would have been easily understandable. Nehru did not expect officials to be partners in ideology; no more could be expected of these conventional men in secure jobs than ability and hard work, and he was, with the attainment of freedom, prepared to abandon his earlier resentment of their seeming lack of patriotism. 'I am so tired of second rate work that sheer efficiency appeals to me.'

As the years passed, however, it was not only loyal implementation, such as Nehru expected, that the officials provided; they gradually encroached on the making of policy. They were encouraged in this not only by Patel, who approved of their traditional attitudes, but also by Mountbatten, who though temperamentally close to Nehru, was in ideology akin to Patel. In his farewell memorandum to his Prime Minister he advised Nehru to proceed slowly with socialist measures so that foreign capital might not be frightened, and not to nationalize industries until there was an adequate supply of efficient managers. In the same conservative vein, he pleaded that the civil servants should be given every encouragement and the best of them posted on retirement as governors or ambassadors. It was, in fact, Mountbatten's pressure which led Nehru to appoint V. P. Menon as Acting Governor of Orissa — a decision which nearly precipitated a Cabinet crisis. Rafi Kidwai and Sri Prakasa offered their resignations and Nehru had to persuade them not to insist. But Mountbatten found that even his influence was not strong enough to secure V. P. Menon's election to Parliament and appointment to the Cabinet.

With an increasing variety of problems pressing on ministers and their minds preoccupied with political rivalries, the opportunities for civil servants to take major decisions grew. Nehru realized and regretted this; but he also recognized that there seemed little he could do about it. 'It is true that the services are playing a very important role in our official life, both at the Centre and in the provinces. This is due to a large extent to the fact that our other human material, with a few exceptions, is very poor. The services realize that and therefore feel much more assured about themselves than they used to. Our internal conflicts and quarrels among public men give the services a certain vantage point.' It would have been easier to have changed the over-bureaucratized system of government at the time of the transfer of power, but the nature and context of that occasion had

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37 To K. P. S. Menon, 12 October 1947.
38 Mountbatten's memorandum, 19 June 1948.
39 To Krishna Menon, 12 August 1949.
prevented it; and now the system, even though it lacked intrinsic strength, had succeeded in perpetuating itself.

On this issue, Patel had been helped by circumstances; but there were many other matters on which the Prime Minister and his deputy severely disagreed. It would, indeed, have been surprising if friction had not developed from the start between them. Their temperamental and ideological differences had been kept under control in earlier years by the transcendent leadership of Gandhi and by the common commitment to the cause of India's freedom. But now, with independence and the steady weakening of Gandhi's authority, it was difficult for these pre-eminent men, one with a massive hold on popular affection and the other with a sure grip on the Party, to work together in the unaccustomed field of administration. Matters came to a head within a few months of taking office, and on 23 December Patel was on the verge of formal resignation. The crunch came on the question of the authority of the Prime Minister. Nehru believed that he was, by virtue of his office, more responsible than anyone else for the general trends of policy and it was his prerogative to act as coordinator and supervisor with a certain liberty of direction. This meant that, if necessary, he should intervene in the functioning of every ministry, though this should be done with tact and with the knowledge of the minister concerned. It would be impossible for him to serve as Prime Minister if this overriding authority were challenged, or if any minister took important decisions without reference to the Prime Minister or the Cabinet. But Patel's interpretation of the Prime Minister's role was very different. It was for each ministry to implement the decisions of the Cabinet; and the Prime Minister's responsibility was merely to see that there was no conflict between ministries. To the extent that Nehru was seeking to do more and was taking decisions in matters which fell within the purview of ministers, he was, in Patel's view, acting undemocratically.

The dispute was referred to Gandhi, and each, as could be expected of them, offered to resign in favour of the other if this would help to resolve the situation. But Gandhi urged them to continue to pull together, and his death within minutes of giving this advice made it to both men a binding order. Patel still offered to resign, if only because the murder of Gandhi implied inefficiency on the part of the Home Ministry, but Nehru brushed the suggestion aside.

Now, with Bapu's death, everything is changed and we have to face a different and more difficult world. The old controversies have ceased to have much significance and it seems to me that the urgent need of the hour is for all of us to function as closely and cooperatively as

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40 Nehru to Patel, 23 December 1947, and Nehru's note of 6 January 1948 sent to Gandhi and Patel.
41 Patel's note to Gandhi and Nehru, 12 January 1948.
possible. Indeed, there is no other way . . . It is over a quarter of a century since we have been closely associated with one another and we have faced many storms and perils together. I can say with full honesty that during this period my affection and regard for you have grown, and I do not think anything can happen to lessen this. Even our differences have brought out the far greater points of agreement between us and the respect we bear to each other. We have even learnt to agree to differ and yet carry on together.

Anyway, in the crisis that we have to face now after Bapu’s death I think it is my duty and, if I may venture to say, yours also for us to face it together as friends and colleagues. Not merely superficially, but in full loyalty to one another and with confidence in each other. I can assure you that you will have that from me. If I have any doubt or difficulty I shall put it frankly to you, and I hope you will do the same to me.42

Patel responded as warmly,43 and for a time personal cordiality surmounted differences on policy. They aired, for example, healthily and in the open, their divergence of priorities on the communal issue. Nehru was concerned about the recrudescence of Hindu communalism in the form of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, while Patel attached more importance to the failure to check the immigration of Muslims from Pakistan.44 But other difficulties cropped up, wearing away at their decision to work together. Patel had suffered a heart attack and was away in Mussoorie. Though Nehru did his best to keep him informed, Patel resented the necessity of many decisions having to be taken without consulting him, while Nehru was irritated by the inevitable delay in action in the ministries under Patel’s charge.

An even more crucial issue on which Nehru and Patel found themselves coming up against each other was the problem of Hyderabad. It was being dealt with by Patel as part of the work of the States Ministry; but Nehru was keenly concerned not only as Prime Minister but because the future of Hyderabad had an obvious bearing on India’s policy on Kashmir, and both were, apart from the local issues involved, parts of the general question of relations with Pakistan. Hyderabad, with a Muslim ruler but a Muslim population of about only 11 per cent, had not acceded to either Dominion before 15 August 1947. The Nizam was known to be expanding his army and buying arms in Europe, and he had engaged the formidable legal talents of Sir Walter Monckton with a view, it was thought,45 to

42 Nehru to Patel, 3 February 1948, Sardar Patel’s Correspondence, Vol. 6 (Ahmedabad, 1973), pp. 29-30. There is no copy of this presumably handwritten letter in the Nehru papers.
43 Patel to Nehru, 5 February 1948.
44 Nehru to Patel, 2 May 1948, and Patel’s reply, 4 May 1948, Sardar Patel’s Correspondence, Vol. 6, pp. 318-20.
prolonging negotiations with India until he was ready either to assert his sovereignty or to accede to Pakistan. Hyderabad was, in Monckton’s phrase, land-locked in India’s belly and could not avoid a treaty or agreement of association; but this was compatible with Hyderabad’s sovereignty. In negotiations for such an agreement Monckton had the advantage that Mountbatten, who was a personal friend, had pledged that he would not be a party to any ‘improper pressure’ on Hyderabad.\textsuperscript{46} Apparently Mountbatten and Monckton were agreed on nominal independence and de facto incorporation of Hyderabad in India\textsuperscript{47} — a formula which could not be said to be in India’s interest. As a result of Mountbatten’s persuasion, the Government of India, though keen on accession, were induced to sign a standstill agreement for a year, with an understanding that within that period the problems of accession and responsible government would both be satisfactorily settled.

However, the increase of tension between India and Pakistan in the winter of 1947-8 encouraged the Nizam to stall further; and with the open sympathy of his government a fanatic Muslim organization, the Razackars, terrorized the State. Nehru desired an amicable settlement on Hyderabad, if only because he feared that any other course might lead to trouble and misery on a large scale. He did not wish to force or hasten accession. All that he sought immediately was that the standstill agreement should be fully honoured and there should be no disturbances within the state or on its borders. If Hyderabad ceased to be a feudal and autocratic State and its people decided on their own future, the Government of India would be willing to await their decision.\textsuperscript{48} Hyderabad could not possibly run away from India or the Indian Union even though the bigoted men in power could do much mischief.

Such moderation of the Government of India was interpreted in Hyderabad as weakness and the negotiations were not taken seriously. The violent Razackar outbursts, at which the Hyderabad Government connived, destroyed all semblance of order in the State and threatened the peace of the whole of southern India; and it was becoming increasingly difficult for the Government of India to remain passive. ‘I wish to avoid, as you must also do, any action on our part which might be construed as indicating aggression on Hyderabad State. Nevertheless we have to be prepared to protect the people.’\textsuperscript{49} It was not now a question of accession or even of responsible government, although these issues were important by themselves; the real question was that a certain section of the people in Hyderabad was committing hostile acts against the Government of India.

\textsuperscript{46} Monckton’s note to the Nizam, 15 September 1947, Ibid., pp. 59-62.
\textsuperscript{48} Nehru to Chief Ministers, 11 March 1948.
\textsuperscript{49} Nehru to Baldev Singh, 16 April 1948.
and if the Hyderabad Government could not stop this, other measures would have to be adopted.\textsuperscript{50} The movement of the armoured brigade and two infantry brigades to the south might in itself prevent any further deterioration of the situation. So Nehru ordered the Bombay Government not to obstruct the transit of non-military goods to Hyderabad. ‘I am anxious that our hands should be as clean as possible in our dealings with Hyderabad and we should not give any valid excuse to our enemies and opponents.’\textsuperscript{51} When, without his knowledge or that of the Government of India, the dispatch of salt to Hyderabad was stopped, Nehru pulled up the Bombay Government for this breach of his assurances.\textsuperscript{52}

Mountbatten was now satisfied that Nehru would authorize no military action against Hyderabad save in dire emergency such as a large-scale massacre.\textsuperscript{53} Monckton returned to India, despite a cable from Mountbatten advising him against it, and he and the Prime Minister of Hyderabad, Laik Ali, came again to Delhi. They resorted once more to delaying tactics, but Nehru did not think that a decision could now be postponed for long. ‘Our position is a strong one and there are many ways of showing our strength.’ It was of course possible that the Hyderabad Government or the Razackars might compel military action; but after the experience in Kashmir, Nehru preferred to avoid this or at least delay it by about two months. Immediate military action might weaken the campaign in Kashmir at a time when there was a possibility of these operations spreading and developing into a regular war with Pakistan; and ‘it is easier to begin military operations than to end them.’ The primary task was to weaken the morale of the anti-Indian elements in Hyderabad so that any action against India was precluded; if this were done, one need only await developments. The presence of strong contingents of the Indian army near the borders of Hyderabad might in itself be sufficient.\textsuperscript{54}

In June an agreement, on the lines demanded by the Nizam, was imposed by Mountbatten on Nehru and Patel; but once again the Nizam wriggled out.\textsuperscript{55} ‘I have little doubt that Hyderabad has been hand in glove with Pakistan and it is Pakistan that has prevented them from coming into line with us.’\textsuperscript{56} War material was being regularly flown from Karachi by British crews in four-engined bombers registered in Britain; it was known that the Nizam’s government, on the advice of British armament firms, was maintaining air squadrons for use against India in East Bengal, West

\textsuperscript{50} Nehru at Bombay, 26 April, \textit{National Herald}, 27 April 1948.
\textsuperscript{51} To B. G. Kher, Chief Minister of Bombay, 3 May 1948.
\textsuperscript{52} Telegram to Kher, 24 May 1948.
\textsuperscript{53} Campbell-Johnson’s diary entry, 25 May 1948, Campbell-Johnson, op. cit., p. 342.
\textsuperscript{54} Nehru to Patel, 30 May and 6 June, 1948.
\textsuperscript{56} Nehru to Sri Prakasa, 16 June 1948. Laik Ali agrees that the Nizam’s hope was not so much in the United Nations as in Jinnah. \textit{The Tragedy of Hyderabad} (Karachi, 1962), p. 261.
Pakistan, Iraq and Iran; British secret service men were loaned to the Hyderabad Government; and a secret treaty was signed by Hyderabad with Portugal granting Hyderabad the use of Goa in return for her developing port and harbour facilities. Even Monckton took the line that if the Nizam was pushed too far, his advice would be to fight it out.\textsuperscript{57} Patel was for firm and definite action,\textsuperscript{58} but he was ill and absent from Delhi, and the Government of India, under Nehru’s guidance, were still content to wait for wiser counsel to prevail in Hyderabad. There would be no independence for Hyderabad unless India disintegrated; but Nehru repeated that it was against India’s policy to secure accession by compulsion.\textsuperscript{59} All that was done, in face of known preparations for prolonged defiance, was to permit action and hot pursuit to repel minor raids from Hyderabad and to impose an economic blockade; only food, salt, medical stores and chlorine were to be allowed entry.

It may not be true, as Laik Ali has suggested, that Mountbatten had agreed to a plebiscite run by an outside body other than the United Nations.\textsuperscript{60} But he enjoyed influence in Hyderabad and inhibited action in Delhi. His departure in June 1948 removed the last hope of any settlement. It was now clear that a conflict could not be avoided. Negotiations had ended, the blockade was tightened, there were daily reports of deteriorating conditions on the borders and within Hyderabad, and all preparations were made for large-scale military intervention. Yet the Government of India delayed action, ‘in the faint hope that something might happen.’\textsuperscript{61} But there were no signs of either a formation of a representative government or control of Razackar atrocities. On the other hand, gun-running, blood and thunder speeches, intrigues with Pakistan and preparations for war with India continued and even increased in momentum. There were reports that the Hyderabad authorities were eager to precipitate a conflict before the economic blockade weakened them further, and were planning to invade parts of the Indian Union. ‘All this is sheer lunacy. But madmen are in charge of Hyderabad’s destinies.’\textsuperscript{62} Throughout India there was a widespread conviction that military action was inescapable, and that Nehru was the one person standing against it. However, even he was coming round.

I have tried my utmost, and not without success, to avoid and postpone any large-scale action against Hyderabad. The result of this has been that, in so far as this matter is concerned, I am completely

\textsuperscript{57} Interview with Campbell-Johnson, 3 June 1948, Campbell-Johnson, op. cit., p. 346.
\textsuperscript{58} See his letter to N. V. Gadgil, 21 June 1948, Sardar Patel’s Correspondence, Vol. 7, p. 217.
\textsuperscript{59} Nehru’s speech at Naini Tal, 11 June, and statement at press conference in New Delhi, 17 June, National Herald, 12 and 18 June 1948 respectively.
\textsuperscript{60} Laik Ali, op. cit., pp. 207-9.
\textsuperscript{61} Nehru to Rajagopalachari, 3 July 1948.
\textsuperscript{62} Nehru to Mountbatten, 3 July 1948.
distrusted by large numbers of people here. I do not worry much about this . . . I am quite convinced now that there can be no solution of the Hyderabad problem unless some effective punitive measures are taken; and if they have to be taken then there is not much point in indefinitely delaying them.\textsuperscript{63}

Indeed there was some advantage, if action had to be taken, in taking it quickly; for delay endangered communal peace in India.

On 7 September, Nehru announced that a contingent of the Indian army would be sent to re-station itself in the old Indian cantonment in Hyderabad. This would be purely an action to maintain law and order, with no influence on accession; but ‘when you indulge in a dynamic operation, numerous consequences follow, which you cannot foresee.’\textsuperscript{64} Even at this stage the Governor-General, Rajagopalachari, appealed to Mountbatten to persuade the Nizam to control his officials so that it might not be necessary for the Government of India to take over the administration.\textsuperscript{65} But it was too late to arrest the course of events.

The impact of the action in Hyderabad on the rest of India was unreservedly healthy. The problem of the States was finally settled and the central Government was recognized as paramount all over India. The Hindus lost their sense of fear and the Muslims had less reason to feel insecure. Pakistan talked less, for the time being at any rate, of war, and few in India, too, seemed to think in such terms. There was improvement in public morale and a general lowering of communal tension. The Muslims of India had made it clear — to those who required such testimony — by their attitude during the crisis that they were full citizens of the Indian Union who wished to fit themselves into the Indian structure. Secularism had come through its second test.

\textsuperscript{63} Nehru to Mountbatten, 29 August 1948.
\textsuperscript{64} Nehru at a press conference in New Delhi, 10 September, \textit{National Herald}, 11 September 1948.
\textsuperscript{65} Rajagopalachari to Mountbatten, 8 September 1948.
The Shaping of Foreign Policy

ONE

On joining the Interim Government in September 1946, Nehru made clear that India would develop an active concern in world affairs, pursuing an independent policy compatible with her own national interests—a statement of objective which remained true throughout his years in office. But at the start, not surprisingly, there was little precision and definiteness about this objective. It appeared to consist primarily of vague and rather grandiose hopes of closer ties between the Asian countries and even the formation of two or three Asian federations. India, said Nehru, could play a positive role in the stretch from Australia and New Zealand to East Africa, and, as the first of the Asian and African countries to have gained freedom, would adopt an uncommitted and influential stand on international issues. It was not easy to put all this into practice and, as Nehru recognized, India’s views on world affairs were to some extent ‘a continuation of British foreign policy; to some extent a reaction against it. For the rest they consist of benevolent intentions for all concerned.’ But the foreign policy of a newly independent nation does not emerge overnight, and with the general directions clear in his mind, Nehru set about building up the foreign policy of India brick by brick, in the process discarding the generalizations which had taken the place of rigorous thought.

For India, with much economic and diplomatic potential but little actual power, it was difficult to make any impact without at the same time arousing resentment in a world already riven by the cold war. The makers of policy in the United States were, despite their monopoly of nuclear weapons, not free of nervous tension, while Stalin and his colleagues were suspicious of every one who was not fully with them. Nehru’s constant reiteration of the need to cast out fear and suspicion irritated both sides;

1 Interview reported in New York Times, 1 September 1946.
2 Interview reported in National Herald, 17 August 1946.
3 Note, 18 January 1947.
and the reference of the Kashmir issue to the United Nations provided them with an occasion to display their displeasure. The United States, following Britain's lead, declined to come to grips with the facts of aggression. 'It is astonishing', complained an irritated Nehru, 'how naïve the Americans are in their foreign policy. It is only their money and their power that carries them through, not their intelligence or any other quality.' As for the Russians, they denounced non-alignment as a policy of collaboration with British imperialism, held aloof on the Kashmir issue and threw out hints of the need for India to make up her mind and not to refrain from joining either side. But Nehru, despite the pressures of Kashmir, was in no mood to revise his policy. It was not that he was priggishly parading principles and was determined to develop, at whatever cost, a policy of independent judgment of each issue because that was ethically the right position. He emphasized from the outset the practical advantages to India of non-alignment and judged its efficacy on a pragmatic basis. It was firmly based on the current realities of the world. Though in later years he often expounded the moral virtues of non-alignment or annoyed other governments by seeming to claim a great deal for India, he did not lose sight of the utility of his policy. It was not so much a code of conduct as a technique to be tested by results. It was 'not a wise policy to put all our eggs in one basket . . . purely from the point of view of opportunism, if you like, a straightforward, honest policy, an independent policy is the best.'

So, in these early years, Nehru saw no reason to be thrown off his course of equidistance by the hostility of the Great Powers. There being no immediate threat to India's security, she could afford to take a long-term view and build up her industry and defence in the context of non-alignment rather than seek immediate support by involvement in the cold war, for neither protagonist of which he had much intellectual respect.

After all that has happened in India during the past year, I have little conceit left about my capacity to handle any difficult problem. Nevertheless it does surprise me how the Great Powers of the world behave to each other. Quite apart from the principles involved, there is an extraordinary crudity about their utterances and activities. I do not suppose that there will be any war because nobody is prepared for it. But anything may happen to this unhappy world when the men in charge of its destiny function in the way they have been doing.

With the Soviet Union directing the Indian Communist Party to rebellion and condemning all the policies of the Government of India, relations between the two countries deteriorated further.

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*To Vijayalakshmi, 25 March 1948.*

*Speech in Constituent Assembly, 8 March 1948, J. Nehru, India's Foreign Policy (Delhi, 1961), p. 35.

*To Krishna Menon, 4 August 1948.*
We want friendship and cooperation with Russia in many fields but we are a sensitive people and we react strongly to being cursed at and run down. The whole basis of Russian policy appears to be that no essential change has taken place in India and that we still continue to be camp-followers of the British. That of course is complete nonsense and if a policy is based on nonsensical premises it is apt to go wrong.7

It was obviously worth making an effort to clear the air, but one difficulty in doing this was the poor contacts the Indian Ambassador in Moscow, Vijayalakshmi, had with the Soviet Government.

There was a suggestion of a change of approach by the Soviet Union in September 1948 when its Ambassador informed a member of Nehru’s Cabinet that his Government would be willing to help, particularly as regards Hyderabad and Kashmir, but India had not sought such help. However, nothing came of this. Mere lack of hostility and intent to be neutral in case of conflict still did not satisfy the Soviet Union; and Nehru was determined to go no further. The Soviet Government were not totally wrong in distrusting India; for it was clear that at this time Indian neutrality would be benevolent towards the Western Powers. Nehru himself recognized this and directed that Britain and the United States be informed that, in the world as it was, there was not the least chance of India lining up with the Soviet Union in war or peace.8 At the Conference of Commonwealth Prime Ministers in October 1948, Nehru, while critical of the expansionism of the United States, particularly in economic matters, declared that Asian peoples had no sympathy for Soviet expansionism and recommended publicity being given to this aspect of Soviet policy rather than to communism as an economic doctrine or a way of life.9 Non-alignment was, therefore, very much a hypothetical concept; Nehru was, thanks to some extent to the Soviet attitude, leaning heavily towards the Western Powers. The policy which Nehru was seeking to construct assumed a certain understanding on the part of the Great Powers. Stalin did not see this at this time, just as Dulles failed to grasp it later. The consequence at both times was a wavering of non-alignment.

**TWO**

This spiral, of Soviet antipathy and Indian reaction to it which in turn gave strength to Soviet criticism, provides an important element of the background to Nehru’s decision to retain India in the Commonwealth. After 15 August 1947, Nehru had no intention of going back on the

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7 Nehru to Krishna Menon, 26 June 1948.
8 Nehru’s notes of 11 and 12 September 1948.
9 Bajpai’s note on Commonwealth Prime Ministers’ Conference, October 1948.
resolution of the Constituent Assembly that India should be a free and sovereign republic. But the advantages of retaining a link with the Commonwealth were also becoming stronger. It was known that Jinnah was hoping to tease India out of that association, leaving Pakistan as the ‘northern Ireland’ of the sub-continent; and there was the continuous advocacy of Mountbatten and Krishna Menon at Nehru’s elbow. Apart from the need to prevent the Commonwealth from becoming anti-Indian, the military weakness and economic dependence of India could not be ignored; and the Commonwealth, while not limiting India’s independence and freedom of action, appeared likely to promote stability and peace, and ensure the continuance of ‘the British connection’ in a healthier context.\(^{10}\) But the hostility of Stalin’s Russia in the early years of India’s freedom also weighed in Nehru’s mind.

To Nehru it was the political advantage of a continuing link with the Commonwealth which at that time was primary, and he believed himself to be acting, to some extent, under ‘a certain pressure of circumstances.’\(^{11}\) He had, it is true, a sentimental attachment to Britain, but this did no more than tinge his policy. Nor did he, unlike some others at that time, see the Commonwealth as an effective entity in world affairs or as providing Britain with an opportunity to project her leadership. To him the Commonwealth was never anything more, in this respect, than a multi-racial association for exchange of views. He does not even seem to have expected the Commonwealth to play such a minor role effectively for long; for in reply to Jayaprakash Narayan’s criticism that membership suggested a lack of self-confidence and an implicit commitment to one of the power blocs, he spoke of the great practical help that India’s association would secure for at least two or three years, and at very slight cost.\(^{12}\) The future was free as air and India could walk out of the Commonwealth at any time she wanted. But in these years the Soviet Union was still aloof and distant, and the conflict with the Communist Party in India created additional barriers. So, while maintaining a friendly posture towards the Soviet Union and seeking to develop contacts, India could do little more. This, along with the need for financial and technological assistance, compelled close relations with the United States; and Nehru was looking for means by which he could avoid an over-dependent bilateral connection with that country. The United Nations, after its stand on Kashmir, could not be relied upon; but the Commonwealth seemed to provide a grouping which not only would safeguard the stability of a newly integrated India but would enable her to resist any stifling embrace of the United States.


\(^{11}\) Nehru’s report on the Commonwealth Conference, 7 May 1949.

\(^{12}\) Jayaprakash Narayan to Nehru, 10 April, and Nehru’s reply, 14 April 1949.
American diplomats themselves suspected that the British encouraged an anti-American attitude in India.\textsuperscript{13} As it was not clear on what basis India could retain her ties with the Commonwealth, Nehru, on whom the burden of this decision primarily lay, let the matter lie for the time being.\textsuperscript{14} But on 11 March 1948 Attlee raised the question privately with Nehru, suggesting that India remain in the Commonwealth and accept common allegiance to the Crown. India did not, in Attlee's view, have a native tradition of republicanism, which was basically an importation from the West. There would be no political problem as long as the head of the state under India's new Constitution enjoyed no greater powers than the Governor-General, and there would be considerable advantage in having as the head of the state a person who was not only above but outside the political battle. Continuance in the Commonwealth would also help India's relations with Pakistan, Ceylon and Malaya and promote the unity of India and of the world. Following this up, Mountbatten advised Nehru to replace the word 'republic' in the Indian Constitution by either 'commonwealth' or 'state'. This was impractical as well as meaningless; for even if Nehru had agreed, it would have made no difference to the whole structure of the Constitution, which was republican. But on the general question of membership of the Commonwealth Nehru made, and indeed could make, no commitment. Public opinion in India was in favour of going out and at this time Nehru shared this opinion.\textsuperscript{15} Certainly India could not remain a Dominion but would become a republic; whether the republic could have a closer relationship - 'some vague bond'\textsuperscript{16} - with Britain than with other states was the only issue for consideration. Nehru and many of his colleagues favoured close and intimate friendship, which was more important than a formal link, primarily, said Nehru, because of the change in British policy and more particularly because the presence and activities of the Mountbattens had enabled Indians to forget the heavy legacy of British rule.\textsuperscript{17} None the less, the attitude of British officials on Kashmir and of British interests in Hyderabad strengthened the dislike of any link with Britain. Krishna Menon wrote to Attlee stating his intention to resign the high commissionership in London as his mission had been a failure.

I left you on the last occasion for the first time with more than a

\textsuperscript{13}On more than one occasion, Mountbatten has warned Nehru against dollar imperialism . . . I have waited patiently for a hand of cooperation from the British, but it has never come . . . The British are not happy about the strong position which we have in India, or about the weak position which they have.' Dr Grady, first United States Ambassador in Delhi, to State Department, 26 December 1947, Foreign Relations of the United States 1947, Vol. 3 (Washington, 1972) pp. 177-8.


\textsuperscript{15}See his letters to Krishna Menon, 6 and 16 April 1948.

\textsuperscript{16}Note, 12 September 1948.

\textsuperscript{17}Nehru to Attlee, 18 April 1948.
passing feeling that we were making no impression and that there were barriers which appear almost unbreakable... I have the uncomfortable feeling that I am letting my side down by not recognizing that we are very much on the outside and will perhaps remain so... We have the distressing feeling that decent behaviour is penalized and ethical values at a discount, and that reasonableness lays us open to being regarded as weak or even cowardly... at any rate by lack of information, you should not find yourself against us on Hyderabad, practically waging war on us in Kashmir, or, worse than all this, treating Pakistan and us alike.\(^\text{18}\)

Even Rajagopalachari thought in these terms.

For it is the maintenance of peace as between the units in the Commonwealth that justifies the connection and when this incidence of Commonwealth connection is openly negatived, there is nothing left to say on its behalf... You have achieved the impossible and created tremendous goodwill when there was nothing but illwill and distrust before. This is now being, I do not wish to say has been, undone by the stupidity and shortsightedness of a few British officers.\(^\text{19}\)

The integration of Hyderabad had cleared the path to some extent by the time Nehru went to London in October 1948 for the Prime Ministers’ Conference. Attlee and Cripps were friendly and recognized India’s potential as a power in Asia. The talks with Liaqat Ali Khan in the presence of British ministers were fruitless; but Nehru had no reason to object to the attitude of the British Government. Therefore, as Attlee continued to press the desirability of India’s association with the Commonwealth, Nehru formulated his proposals. India would be a republic, but a separate statute could be enacted providing for common Commonwealth citizenship. This was an idea which probably owes much in its breadth of vision to Churchill’s offer to France in 1940 and, if taken up, would have altered the nature of the Commonwealth far more than the mere admission of a republic. ‘The King as the first citizen of the Commonwealth will be the fountain of honour so far as the Commonwealth as a whole is concerned.’ This would require no legislation but only understandings and administrative arrangements. In any fresh legislation or treaties Commonwealth countries would not be treated as foreign states or their citizens as foreigners; and in any new commercial treaties it would be made clear that for the purpose of the ‘most favoured

\(^{18}\) Krishna Menon’s strictly personal and secret letter to Attlee, 1 September 1948. Attlee Papers Box 6.

\(^{19}\) Rajagopalachari to Mountbatten, 8 September 1948.
nation' clause the Commonwealth countries were in a special position and not regarded as foreign states. 'These proposals represent a sincere desire to continue the Commonwealth association and what is practicable and adequate at present. No doubt as the relationship is not a static arrangement further development by way of association may take place.'

Although Nehru's proposals had been drafted after full discussion between his legal adviser, B. N. Rau, and British legal experts, the British Government now thought that they were insufficient from the legal viewpoint. Attlee suggested, in addition to an Indian enactment adopting the British Nationality Act, a declaration by all members of the Commonwealth that they wished to be and regarded themselves as still bound in a special form of association within the Commonwealth. Nothing less than a formal acceptance of the Commonwealth as a continuing association of long standing would help to withstand any challenge in a court of law by other nations seeking the same 'most favoured nation' treatment as India. The Australian, Canadian and New Zealand Governments also urged Nehru to give weight to the strength of sentiment in their Dominions in favour of the King as the symbol of Commonwealth association and as such exercising the authority to appoint ambassadors.

Nehru, who was having difficulty in India in securing assent even to the concept of the King as the fountain of honour, thought that these new suggestions had no chance of acceptance. It was then suggested that the King be recognized as the Head of the Commonwealth with no allegiance owing to him from India. Krishna Menon linked with this his own ingenious suggestion of 'dormant sovereignty', whereby India would not assert all her sovereign rights but permit the King to exercise some of them. But even these proposals seemed unlikely to be acceptable in India. There was, in fact, such opposition in the Congress Parliamentary Party to any hint of a subordinate status for India or her President that Nehru avoided a vote and merely sought and secured general agreement for a link with the Commonwealth. He discerned that although there was keen sensitivity about any formal diminution of India’s status, there was little resistance to substantial inroads into Indian sovereign exclusiveness.

The real point is that there is a basic difference in approach between the United Kingdom people and our people. The very point the United Kingdom wishes to emphasize for legal or sentimental reasons

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20 Nehru to Attlee, 28 October 1948.
21 Nehru to Mountbatten, 22 November 1948.
22 Attlee to Nehru, 19 and 20 November 1948.
23 Bajpai's telegram to Nehru forwarding the views of H. V. Evatt, Lester Pearson and Peter Fraser, 18 November 1948. The Canadian viewpoint at this stage seems in contrast with that of her Prime Minister, Mackenzie King, a few weeks earlier, when he had advised Nehru to lay stress on a Community of Free Nations rather than on the Crown. Brecher, op. cit. (1974), p. 72.
24 Krishna Menon's telegram to Nehru, 27 November 1948.
is objected to here. Most people are prepared to accept the common citizenship idea plus a declaration that we are in the Commonwealth. If you go beyond this, there is difficulty. . . . Our people want to make it perfectly clear that they are making a new start and that, as the Constitution will itself declare, sovereignty resides in the people and in no one else in any shape or form.25

So, while Attlee and some of the Dominion Prime Ministers desired a special stress on the role of the Crown, India preferred omission of any mention of the King. Krishna Menon, who was as anxious as any British statesman for a continuance of the Commonwealth association, suggested as a compromise that India need not undertake any overt act of recognizing the King, but he could continue to be the president, as it were, of the club in which India was remaining as a member.26 Nehru agreed. India would neither recognize nor repudiate the King. There would be no mention of the King as the fountain of honour, and it would be specifically stated that the Commonwealth was not a super-state but an association of free and independent states which accepted the concept of Commonwealth citizenship. The Indian people and their representatives, including the President of the Republic, would exercise all functions of sovereignty.27 But he once again at this time had doubts whether the Indian public would agree to remain in the Commonwealth in face of Britain’s failure to treat India ‘fairly or squarely’28 on other matters. Her delegate openly supported Pakistan at the United Nations, her nationals helped Pakistan to plan a military offensive in Kashmir and her Government supported Dutch efforts to crush Indonesian nationalism.

I am distressed that matters should take a wrong turn and come in the way of that close cooperation between India and the United Kingdom which I had looked forward to. I feel that British policy has not been very happy in Asia, in India and in Kashmir. Why it should have been so is more than I can understand, because I see no benefit to the United Kingdom in adopting this policy towards India. India counts even now and will count a great deal later.29

Nehru’s formal complaints were rejected by Attlee30 in his usual dry tone which Nehru found irritating. ‘We can only conclude that this general unfriendly attitude towards India in regard to Kashmir has nothing to do

25 Nehru to Krishna Menon, 28 November 1948.
26 Krishna Menon’s telegram to Nehru, 29 November 1948.
27 Nehru’s revised Commonwealth memorandum, 2 December 1948.
28 Telegram to Krishna Menon, 31 December 1948.
29 To Cripps, 17 December 1948.
30 Attlee to Nehru, 28 December 1948.
with justice or equity, but is apparently based on some other reasons which
we are unable to understand. 31

'You must', replied Cripps, 'be fair, Jawaharlal, and not take the attitude
that any stick will do to beat the British with!' 32 But Britain could not just
rest on her achievements in ending colonialism in South Asia, and the
hostile reactions to her seeming anti-Indian prejudices surfaced again.
Nehru, though he thought the reactions to be justified, had no intention of
yielding to them, and he strengthened his hand by securing a resolution at
the annual session of the Congress welcoming 'free association with the
independent nations of the Commonwealth.' 33 But he was also firm that he
would go no further than what he had agreed to in London, and was
surprised by the British Government's inclination to treat India's adher-
ence to the Commonwealth as a legal and technical rather than a political
question. The relationship between a republic and a Commonwealth
headed by a king, if desired by both sides, could not be settled by any
formula delegating authority to the Governor-General. 'I have done my
best in the matter. Somehow matters have come to a standstill. I do not
quite know where we are.' 34

Attlee and some Dominion Prime Ministers persisted in attaching
importance mainly to the position of the King and talked in terms, if need
be, of associate but not full membership for India. 35 Winston Churchill was
more imaginative and found a precedent in Roman history for the presence
of a republic in the Commonwealth; 36 but both he and the King seem to
have thought in terms of the King becoming the President of India. 37
Attlee then wrote what Nehru justifiably termed 'a surprisingly naive' 38
letter, extolling the virtues not merely of the King but of the royal family,
whom he saw as symbolizing in a very real sense the family nature of the
Commonwealth. 'The family is the basic unit of society. It is something
universal, transcending creeds and races.' Drawing Nehru's attention to
the 'solid advantages' in retaining the King in the Indian Constitution, he
suggested that a title might be found for him in India's heroic age. 39

It seemed pointless to Nehru to carry on further discussions on this
juvenile basis; and the position was not improved by Mr Gordon Walker's
visit to India to suggest a Commonwealth Privy Council, a Commonwealth
'honour' and the recognition of the King's right to appoint arbitral-
tribunals or to delegate to the President of India powers of appointment of

31 Nehru's telegram to Krishna Menon, 30 December 1948.
32 7 January 1949.
33 At Jaipur, 18 December 1948.
34 Nehru to Mountbatten, 20 February 1949.
35 Nehru's note on interview with the British High Commissioner, 23 February 1949.
36 Krishna Menon to Nehru, 11 March 1949.
37 Attlee's letter to the King, 2 March 1949, cited in F. Williams, A Prime Minister Remembers
38 Nehru to Patel, 26 March 1949.
39 Attlee to Nehru, 20 March 1949.
certain dignitaries. But Mr Gordon Walker had one useful suggestion—that the King might be recognized as the symbol of the unity of the Commonwealth and designated as its ‘Head’ or ‘Protector’. Nehru, while he rejected the idea of the King delegating powers to the President, did not commit himself on the other suggestions; but it was clear that the solution lay in finding some place for the King in the Commonwealth relationship without giving the Crown a place in the Indian Constitution. Attlee was told politely that, whatever the advantages of a hereditary kingship, any attempt to revise the Constitution in its final stages would lead to an uproar. The Lord Chancellor, Jowitt and Cripps then drafted formulae whereby India recognized the King ‘as the (fountain) head of the Commonwealth.’ Both the Indian Cabinet and the Congress Working Committee considered this idea. Nehru himself disliked the phrase ‘Head of the Commonwealth’ as it might create the impression that the Commonwealth was some kind of a superstructure, and preferred the language of the Statute of Westminster, ‘symbol of the free association of the members of the Commonwealth’. On the other hand, he was willing to go further than Attlee and the Dominion Prime Ministers in substantive matters and continued in vain to propose a common citizenship.

At the Conference of Prime Ministers which opened in London on 22 April 1949, Nehru tabled his three-point formula of Commonwealth citizenship, India’s continued membership and acceptance by her of the King as the symbol of the free association of Commonwealth countries. Australia, New Zealand and Canada stressed that they could accept no solution which modified their allegiance to the Crown, but Nehru was not prepared to agree to any arrangement which gave India a lower status than that of other countries. Surprisingly, Malan of South Africa supported Nehru. He thought it natural that a general relaxation of the common allegiance should accompany the growing consciousness of separate nationhood. More realistic than Attlee, he recognized that the Crown could not be a strong unifying factor in countries whose populations were not wholly of British descent. It was the awareness of a common outlook and way of life and a sense of community of interest which could give the new Commonwealth strength and cohesion; and a fresh step in adaptation could do it no harm.

The Prime Ministers authorized Attlee, Cripps and Nehru to draft a formula which could keep India in the Commonwealth on these terms. The idea of a common citizenship could have had far-reaching consequences;

40 Bajpai’s note on Mr Gordon Walker’s interview with Nehru, 30 March 1949.
41 Nehru to Attlee, 1 April 1949.
42 B. N. Rau’s telegrams from London to Bajpai, 2 and 5 April 1949.
43 Nehru to Patel, 14 April 1949, Sardar Patel’s Correspondence, Vol. 8, pp. 10-11; also Nehru to Krishna Menon, 14 April 1949. For Attlee’s indifference to the idea of common citizenship and the objections of other Commonwealth countries, see H. Tinker, Separate and Unequal (London, 1976), pp. 372-5.
one has only to consider the difference that would have been made by the peoples, say, of India, Pakistan and South Africa having common citizenship in the years after 1949. But this revolutionary idea was not taken up by the British side. On this point, the Conference was willing to go no further than record, in a separate, confidential minute, as a sop to Nehru, 'that nationals of other member countries are not [to be] treated as foreigners,'* without saying anything as to how this was to be done. The Prime Ministers concentrated their attention on the King's status and proposed the phrase 'Head of the Commonwealth and symbol of free association', which, under Nehru's pressure, was amended to 'Head of the Commonwealth as the symbol of free association.' It was originally decided to issue two declarations, one reaffirming the allegiance of the old members and the other defining India's adherence; but later the two declarations were merged and this had the advantage of not implying a different status for India. India accepted 'the King as the symbol of the free association of its independent member nations and as such the Head of the Commonwealth.'* Nehru still disliked the phrase 'Head of the Commonwealth' but did not think it worthwhile to insist on its deletion, especially as Malan had it placed on record that this designation did not imply that the King discharged any constitutional function by virtue of the headship. The declaration also made it clear that all members were 'free and equal', with no commitments in policy but 'freely cooperating in the pursuit of peace, liberty and progress.' The original draft spoke of 'peace, security and progress', but Nehru replaced 'security' with 'liberty', for neither India nor any other Commonwealth country could assume that it would be supported by all other members of the Commonwealth in all circumstances. Fraser, the Prime Minister of New Zealand, asked the conference, and Nehru in particular, what cooperation could mean in such circumstances. 'Nehru, who was put on the spot, made a brilliant reply, arguing that there could be no cooperation except for constructive and peaceful purposes, and that it was not enough to build up a Commonwealth defence bloc and hope to check communism in that way. I have seldom listened to a more impressive dialectical statement. Nehru certainly displayed a magnificent mind.'**

Though there was a wide consensus of support in India for Nehru's decision, the criticism of a few was severe. The Socialists in particular quoted Nehru's past speeches against Dominion Status and condemned his

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* Tinker, op. cit., p. 387.
** King George VI himself seems to have been helpful in securing the acceptance of this formula and won the appreciation of a sentimental radical like Krishna Menon. 'He was a really good man', cabled Menon to Nehru on the King's death (6 February 1952), 'and a greater man than usually believed. He was very thoughtful of us and understood and respected us. An occasion may well not arise again for me to say this, but it is part of history that in the last few years he did far more than is known or need be said to help. I feel sad and distressed perhaps strangely so.'
present action as ‘an outrage on the national sentiments of the Indian people’, while Pravda gave the lead to Communist opinion by regarding the arrangement as the creation of a new military-political basis for the British plan to keep India within the Empire.\(^{47}\) On the other side, the New York Times talked in the same vein of ‘a historic step, not only in the progress of the Commonwealth but in setting a limit to Communist conquest and opening the prospect of a wider defence system than the Atlantic Pact.’\(^{48}\) Patel’s statement, that association with the Commonwealth would inevitably have some influence on India’s policy, strengthened the critics; and the execution of an Indian trade union leader in Malaya for possessing arms belied the hope that membership would make it easier for India to look after the interests of Indians overseas. But Nehru himself, in this case the prime decision-maker,\(^{49}\) had no second thoughts. He was convinced that the London declaration was honourable to India in every way, and such as Gandhi would have approved. The Commonwealth was no super-state or arbitration tribunal, and without any compromise of her independence India had secured a ‘family arrangement’\(^{50}\) which shored up her stability, provided ‘somewhat of an outer cordon,’\(^{51}\) saved her from isolation and probably even gave her greater freedom of action. Even Asian countries, many of whom were by nature timid, felt more confident about consultation and closer relations with India merely because she was in the Commonwealth. ‘We are apt’, Nehru warned Jayaprakash Narayan,\(^{52}\) ‘to be too sure of our stability, internal and external. Taking that for granted we proceed to endeavour to remodel the world.’

The stand India continued to take on such questions as the status of Indians in South Africa made clear that Patel was wrong in suggesting even friendly pressure; but the mere fact that India had opted for membership had brought, in Nehru’s phrase, ‘a touch of healing’\(^{53}\) to her relations with Britain. To Cripps in particular it was the moment of fulfilment.

I have somehow looked upon this meeting as the climax of our mutual efforts over the last nine years and more! I am very happy and I do believe that you have done something really big in world history . . .

\(^{47}\) 26 April 1949.
\(^{48}\) 28 April 1949.
\(^{49}\) ‘I had able colleagues to advise me, but I was the sole representative of India and in a sense the future of India for the moment was in my keeping. I was alone in that sense and yet not quite alone, because, as I travelled through the air and as I sat there at the Conference table, the ghosts of many yesterdays of my life surrounded me and brought up picture after picture before me, sentinels and guardians keeping watch over me, telling me perhaps not to trip and not to forget them . . . I stand before you to say with all humility that I have fulfilled the mandate [of the Congress] to the letter.’ Nehru in the Constituent Assembly, 16 May 1949, India’s Foreign Policy, pp. 137-8.
\(^{50}\) The phrase was Lady Mountbatten’s; see Krishna Menon’s undated note to Nehru, written sometime before Nehru’s departure for London, October 1948.
\(^{51}\) Krishna Menon’s note, ibid.
\(^{52}\) 14 May 1949.
\(^{53}\) Speech in Constituent Assembly, 16 May 1949, India’s Foreign Policy, pp. 145 and 146.
It is good that we have been given this chance to work together — not always seeing eye to eye — but always working heart to heart.\textsuperscript{54}

THREE

Nehru’s marked leaning towards the Western Powers, his ties with the Commonwealth and India’s poor state of relations with the Soviet Union improved Nehru’s standing in the United States. The acceptance of a cease-fire in Kashmir helped to establish his bona fides and his positive anti-colonial role was not resented. The Dutch swoop in Indonesia and arrest of the Republican Government had led him to convene in Delhi a conference of the States bordering on the Indian Ocean. They extended from Egypt and Ethiopia to the Philippines, Australia and New Zealand; but he refused to invite the United States and Britain, despite, in the case of the latter, the urgings of Krishna Menon. The presence of Australia and New Zealand was sufficient testimony that this was a regional conference and not the first step in the formation of an Asian bloc animated by hostility to the West. To talk of an Asian bloc had no great meaning when all the countries concerned were relatively weak and would only rouse hostility and add to the tension in the world. Yet at this time, when China was still split by war and was not yet a force in world politics, Nehru thought in terms of an Asian federation with India as its nerve-centre,\textsuperscript{55} or at least an Asian regional organization on the lines of the Organization of American States, based on multi-racialism, anti-colonialism and mutual cooperation,\textsuperscript{56} and he saw the conference on Indonesia as the first step in such a development.

From the point of view of Asia, this conference has been a turning-point in history. It means new alignments and a new balance of power, if not now, then in the near future. We do not want to form a new bloc but inevitably the countries of Asia will come closer together and India will play a leading part in this.\textsuperscript{57}

It was in line with this new role which he envisaged for India in Asia that Nehru gave paternal advice to U Nu, Sukarno, Hatta and Shahrir, volunteered to mediate between the Government of Burma and the Karen insurgents,\textsuperscript{58} and sent invitations for another conference, this time to Britain, Australia, New Zealand, Pakistan, Ceylon and Burma.\textsuperscript{59} U Nu was

\textsuperscript{54}Cripps to Nehru, 28 April 1949.
\textsuperscript{55}Speech at Congress session, 17 December, \textit{Hindu}, 18 December 1948.
\textsuperscript{56}See his speech at the inauguration of the conference of 18 nations on Indonesia, 20 January 1949. \textit{Speeches}, Vol. 1, 1946-9 (Delhi, 1949), pp. 325-30.
\textsuperscript{57}To Chief Ministers, 3 February 1949.
\textsuperscript{58}Nehru’s telegram to U Nu, 10 February 1949.
\textsuperscript{59}Circular telegram, 21 February 1949.
unwilling to agree to mediation, but even so the representatives of these countries met informally and offered to send a conciliation commission. All these efforts met with marked approval in the United States, and by the beginning of 1949 there was in that country general acclaim for Nehru. Walter Lippmann hailed him as ‘the greatest figure in Asia’ and advised the United States Government to begin intimate consultation with him on their policy in China and Indonesia. The Baltimore Sun commented:

He is in many ways the most impressive statesman to emerge on the post-war scene. His greatness is the greatness of a man who is neither exclusively oriental nor occidental, politician nor ascetic, highbrow nor dire poor. Pandit Nehru is in part all of these things, and he speaks as a man who has straddled two worlds, two philosophies and two standards of living. The key to Nehru’s greatness as a statesman is his ability to leave past conflicts behind him as he enters new situations.

Life wrote a long article on him, and his was, in the same week, the cover portrait on Time. The State Department was not far behind, and the Ambassador called on Nehru to stress the need for mutual understanding with a view to cooperation in as many fields as possible.

Nehru responded to all this with pardonably complacent warmth. The United States and India, he told the American Ambassador, had much to give each other, for they were both nations of actual or potential significance.

Fate and circumstances have thrust a tremendous responsibility on the United States. Fate and circumstances have also placed India in a rather special position in Asia and, even though those of us who happen to control to some extent India’s destiny today may not come up to the mark, there can be no doubt that the new India will go ahead. It may stumble often, but it has the capacity to stand up again and take some more steps forward.

He was confident that India had turned a big corner in her domestic affairs and was now on the upgrade; so she could now play a more prominent role in the world. He told Parliament that India, having emerged again into the main trend of human affairs as a meeting-ground between the East and West, would now adopt a positive policy which was not neutral or sitting on the fence, or vaguely middle-of-the-road. Asia, unlike Europe, had no legacy of conflict and India could therefore keep aloof from power alignments and seek friendly cooperation with all. She would approach all

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60 New York Herald Tribune, 10 January 1949.
61 28 January 1949.
62 29 January 1949.
63 30 January 1949.
64 Nehru to Loy Henderson, 8 January 1949.
problems in her own way and not be restricted by any ideology emanating from Europe. There was now a growing emphasis in Nehru’s outlook on Indian-ness rather than on pragmatism. It was as a part of this new approach that he selected for the Embassy in Moscow not a politician or professional diplomat but Radhakrishnan, who, more than anyone else, represented as well as defined Indian values to the world.

Such a positive policy demanded a clarity of relationship with both the United States and the Soviet Union. The United Nations was important, but not as important as Nehru had thought or hoped; so for the moment vital work lay elsewhere. Nehru was anxious, despite Soviet criticism of his government and support for the Indian Communist Party, to be as friendly as possible and develop contacts in such non-political matters as exchange of films and cultural delegations, to continue talks on a possible trade agreement and offer to buy petrol. But the fact remained that, whatever the theoretical premises of non-alignment, India was much nearer to Britain and the United States than to the Soviet Union. It was to the Western Powers that India mainly looked for economic and technical assistance; and her political and trade connections were also mostly with them. So it was but logical that Nehru, strengthened by the Commonwealth connection, should be willing to explore the chance to develop direct relations with the United States. In Washington the Ambassador was his sister, Vijayalakshmi, but as she was unable to transform the cordiality into even a semblance of an entente Nehru decided to accept the invitation which Truman had been extending repeatedly for over a year. Soon after, the attitude of the United States on Kashmir caused sharp disappointment. Though the fighting had stopped, the United Nations Commission had been unable to make any progress on the implementation of the resolution of the Security Council. So it came forward in May 1949 with proposals which Nehru found unacceptable. He felt that the Commission was trying step by step to pull India away from her moorings, and there were limits beyond which she could not go without endangering her political and military position in Kashmir. The withdrawal of Indian forces depended on the total withdrawal of regular and irregular Pakistani troops and the disbandment of forces in ‘Azad Kashmir’, the area under Pakistani occupation, of which there were already thirty-five well-trained battalions. India could not allow her armies to be so weakened as to be unable to meet any internal or external danger, especially as Pakistan continued to be in an aggressive mood, and there was still a risk of war. This also made it essential for India to hold certain strategic areas in northern Kashmir.

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67 Nehru’s note, 14 February 1949.
68 Nehru to Bajpai, 10 April 1949.
69 To Chief Ministers, 14 May, and to Krishna Menon, 14 May 1949.
Faced with an unbridgeable gap between the two sides, the Commission suggested arbitration by Admiral Nimitz on points of disagreement regarding the withdrawal of the forces of India and Pakistan. Truman and Attlee intervened to urge acceptance even before the terms of reference were laid down. ‘All this barrage is, I suppose, meant to sweep us away.’ Nehru informed the American Ambassador that India would stick by what she considered right in Kashmir, whatever the cost. There were moral issues involved, and Pakistan’s behaviour in Kashmir had been disgraceful from beginning to end. It was utterly wrong to balance India and Pakistan on the Kashmir question, and India was not going to surrender feebly to aggression. He also, rejecting the advice of Mountbatten that India should make further concessions, wrote to Attlee that India was not opposed to the principle of arbitration, but any arbitration would have to be on a precise and defined issue; neither was the disbandment of ‘Azad Kashmir’ forces a matter for arbitration. All that was required was an immediate and positive decision.

‘We want’, cabled Nehru to Krishna Menon, ‘to be friendly with the United Kingdom and the United States but neither pressure tactics nor lure of help will make us give up a position which we are convinced is right from every point of view.’ He also stated publicly that his government had rejected the proposal for arbitration which Truman and Attlee had pressed on him, and asserted that Indian troops would not be withdrawn from Kashmir unless the people of that State desired it and the Government of India were satisfied that the safety of Kashmir would not be endangered thereby. The Manchester Guardian, usually friendly to India, commented that India seemed desirous of avoiding a plebiscite. Such censure in turn encouraged Pakistan to increase her threats of recourse to war, and trade between the two countries came to a virtual standstill. When the Commission reported failure, the Security Council nominated its president, General McNaughton, to hold informal discussions with India and Pakistan. His proposals, providing for demilitarization by equating the forces of India and Pakistan in Kashmir as well as the troops of the Kashmir Government and the ‘Azad Kashmir’ forces, also seemed to India to be heavily weighted against her.

So the Kashmir problem ‘remains as insoluble as ever and perhaps there is more tension now than ever before.’ For this Nehru attributed

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70 Nehru to Vijayalakshmi, 24 August 1949.
71 Letter to Nehru, 2 September 1949.
72 Nehru to Attlee, 8 September 1949.
73 Personal telegram, 11 September 1949.
74 Speeches at Ferozepur, 17 September, and at Srinagar, 24 September, National Herald, 18 and 25 September 1949 respectively.
75 7 September 1949.
76 Nehru to Mountbatten, 22 September 1949.
considerable responsibility to what appeared to him to be the lack of fairness shown by the United States. Yet he did not cancel or postpone his visit; rather, recognizing its enormous significance, he carefully prepared his mind for it. India needed the assistance of the United States, particularly in food, machinery and capital goods; ‘why not’, as Nehru asked Krishna Menon, ‘align with the United States somewhat and build up our economic and military strength?’ The question was not wholly rhetorical. But he was not prepared to pay the price of subservience to the foreign policy of the United States, which Nehru believed was prone to be immature and cocksure. It was important too not to get tied up too much with American business interests, and the much-needed financial aid would have to be secured on terms such as deferred payment which would not be humiliating to India. For Nehru was certain that India in her own way was of some importance to the United States; there was not at that time another country in Asia which had anything near the strength of India. ‘India has much to give, not in gold or silver or even in exportable commodities, but by virtue of her present position. It is well-recognized today all over the world that the future of Asia will be powerfully determined by the future of India. India becomes more and more the pivot of Asia.’

Nehru, therefore, decided that, while in the United States, he would remain his natural self, be friendly and talk frankly about the need for American assistance, not in any pleading tone but with confidence, conscious of India’s position in the world and with faith in her future.

I think often, whenever I have the time to think, of this coming American visit. In what mood shall I approach America? How shall I address people etc.? How shall I deal with the Government there and businessmen and others? Which facet of myself should I put before the American public — the Indian or the European, for after all I have that European or English aspect also. I shall have to meet some difficult situations. I want to be friendly with the Americans but always making it clear what we stand for. I want to make no commitments which come in the way of our basic policy. I am inclined to think that the best preparation for America is not to prepare and to trust to my native wit and the mood of the moment, the general approach being friendly and receptive. I go there to learn more than to teach. Indeed I have no desire to teach, unless of course people learn indirectly and rather casually. I have met a large number of Americans and read a good number of books on America. And yet I am not really acquainted, in the intimate way one should be acquainted, with the American atmosphere. I am receptive if I want to be and I propose to be receptive in the United States. I want to see their good points and

77 See Krishna Menon’s account of this conversation in his letter to Nehru, 7 August 1952.
78 To Chief Ministers, 2 October 1949.
that is the best approach to a country. At the same time I do not propose to be swept away by them. I do not think there is much chance of that.\footnote{79}{To Vijayalakshmi, 24 August 1949.}

The visit in October 1949, punctuated in the middle by a short stay in Canada, was not without its gaffes, giving point to the quip which Nehru had been fond of quoting that one should never go to America for the first time. The wealth and material prosperity were occasionally flaunted, as at a lunch of businessmen in New York, where he was informed that twenty billion dollars was collected round that table; and it is said that at the banquet in the White House most of the time was taken up in a debate between the President and the Chief Justice on the relative merits of Maryland and Missouri Bourbon whiskey.\footnote{80}{C. L. Sulzberger, *The Last of the Giants* (London, 1970), p. 131.}
The official discussions with Truman and Acheson also failed to develop any cordiality or understanding. Both sides adopted condescending attitudes.\footnote{81}{See the reports given to Marquis Childs by both Nehru and Acheson soon after the discussions. M. Childs, *Witness to Power* (New York, 1975), p. 134.}

Nehru hotly defended India's position on Kashmir and was critical of the equivocal attitude of the United States.\footnote{82}{Cf. It would be prejudicial to American interests in the Middle East and Far East to develop an Indian policy without taking into account Pakistan's legitimate interests.' Memorandum of Stephen J. Springsarn, Assistant to President Truman, 23 August 1949. *Truman Papers*. Reprinted by Dr M. Jha in *Mainstream* (New Delhi), 7 August 1971.}

His hosts, on their part, disagreed with his assessment of events in China and resented the early recognition, which was clearly in the offing, by India of the new People's Government. As for economic assistance, Loy Henderson informed Deshmukh, Nehru's financial adviser, that Truman would give Nehru anything he asked for;\footnote{83}{Deshmukh's interview with the author, 21 January 1969.}

but Nehru refused to beg or to do more than to state India's requirements of food and commodities in general terms. The result was that at a time when there was a glut of wheat in the American market and it would have been easy to make (as was widely expected) a gift of a million tons, India was not offered even special terms.

So the official side of Nehru's visit was a disappointment to all. 'He was so important', wrote Acheson much later, 'to India and India's survival so important to all of us, that if he did not exist — as Voltaire said of God — he would have to be invented. Nevertheless, he was one of the most difficult men with whom I have ever had to deal.'\footnote{84}{D. Acheson, *Present at the Creation* (London, 1969), p. 336.} Nehru's own assessment at the time was that the United States Government had expected acquiescence from him on all issues, and were unwilling to assist India for anything less. 'They had gone all-out to welcome me and I am very grateful to them for it and expressed myself so. But they expected something more...
than gratitude and goodwill and that more I could not supply them.85

Yet the visit was not a failure, for more important than the hard
bargainings in Washington were the impact of Nehru on the American
public and the first-hand appreciation which he acquired of many of the
attractive aspects of American life. Huge crowds turned out to receive him
with demonstrative acclaim wherever he went, and an American remarked
that he was surprised to find the darshan habit spreading in the United
States. 'A World Titan', said the welcome editorial in the Christian Science
Monitor. 'Only a tiny handful of men', said Adlai Stevenson, welcoming
him to Chicago, 'have influenced the implacable forces of our time. To this
small company of the truly great, our guest... belongs... Pandit
Jawaharlal Nehru belongs to the even smaller company of historic figures
who wore a halo in their own lifetimes.'86 Elsie Morrow reported in the
St Louis Post Dispatch that 'Nehru has departed from us, leaving behind
clouds of misty-eyed women.' But there was more to Nehru's popularity
than merely a captivating personality. To an American public that tended
to view Asia in terms of the Kuomintang he brought fresh vistas of a
continent striving once more towards the common goals of justice, liberty
and peace. In particular he provided a striking image of the new, free India,
eager to be friendly with the United States without becoming a tiresome
supplicant, weak in material strength but willing to make its contribution
to world affairs and, having shed every fear complex under the guidance of
Gandhi, keen to help in removing any similar complex from international
relations. He also repeatedly explained that India's detachment in the cold
war did not imply isolation and indifference on basic issues. Non-alignment
did not exclude commitment to principles. 'Where freedom is menaced or
justice threatened or where aggression takes place, we cannot be and shall
not be neutral.'87 Total agreement with all that the United States said or did
was not necessary in order to establish India's binding faith in the basic
values and her unfailing endeavour to ensure them. 'When man's liberty or
peace is in danger we cannot and shall not be neutral; neutrality would be a
betrayal of what we have fought for and stand for.'88

Not alliance or agreement but understanding and, in Nehru's phrase,
'emotional awareness'89 appeared to him important; and it was these that he
sought to promote by his many speeches in the United States. He hoped for
close ties with the United States; but the 'most intimate ties are ties which
are not ties.'90 He believed that, whatever the resistance in Washington, he
had made some impact on the common folk; and indeed the harmony of

85 To S. Radhakrishnan, 6 February 1950.
p. 181.
87 Speech to the Joint Session of Congress, 13 October, National Herald, 14 October 1949.
88 Address at Columbia University, 17 October, National Herald, 19 October 1949.
89 Broadcast from New York, 19 October, National Herald, 21 October 1949.
90 Talk to journalists in New York, 15 October, National Herald, 16 October 1949.
outlook that appeared to have been established led the Soviet Government to protest informally. They had been suspicious of his visit from the start — the warning article in the New Times91 had been entitled 'Chiang Kai Shek's successor?'; and later the Indian Ambassador was summoned for a pointed inquiry,92 with reference to Nehru's statement that India would not be neutral where aggression took place, into who the aggressor was that Nehru had in mind.

The impact, however, was not solely one-sided. Nehru himself was deeply influenced by what he saw, and the recognition of the specifically distasteful was accommodated within a general appreciation. In the last years of the freedom movement he had hoped for much from the United States. In prison at Ahmadnagar he had secured a book list from Pearl Buck, read Truslow Adams and Benjamin Franklin and, like any schoolboy, copied in his notebook the full text of the Gettysburg Address. Yet until 1947 the United States had not been to him more than a distant beacon; and the first years of freedom had brought considerable disappointment in official relations. Now the direct exposure to the people of the United States, and their intellectuals and scientists, altered his notions of that country.

I found my visit to America not only interesting but rather exciting. America is of course a strange mélange. We all know of its worship of success and dollars. But I found something much more appealing to me and much more enduring there. This made me feel almost at home. In a sense America shows up the essential conflict that is present all over the world, a conflict of the spirit of man. I have come back therefore with a larger measure of confidence than I had when I went.93

FOUR

On his return from the United States, relations with the Truman administration became even worse than before. A message from Acheson on Kashmir appeared to Nehru highly objectionable and in the nature of an ultimatum. 'I am sick and tired of the attitude that the British and the American Governments have been taking in this matter.'94 He rejected the suggestion of arbitration on Kashmir95 and expressed strong resentment at international pressure. 'The people who run the Government of India have a record in the past of standing for what they consider to be right,

91 12 October 1949.
92 S. Radhakrishnan's telegram from Moscow to Nehru, 29 October 1949.
93 To Professor Harlow Shapley, 3 December 1949.
94 Nehru to B. N. Rau, 17 January 1950.
regardless of the consequences, for the last thirty years and they propose to do that in regard to Kashmir or any other matter. Yet it did strike him that this critical attitude to India's case on Kashmir might be due not only to the general policies of Britain and the United States but also to an ambiguity in India's outlook and an increasingly communal approach to the Muslim minority in India. So he sought to take the initiative in lessening tensions between India and Pakistan. Far from his efforts succeeding, by March 1950 the two countries moved to the brink of war; and Nehru continued to believe that this could be attributed mainly to the unbroken encouragement given by the United States, Britain and other countries to Pakistan in some of its policies. The gilt was also taken off his memories of his stay in the United States by the effusive welcome given to Liaquat Ali Khan in Washington in May 1950 and the obvious attempt to build him up as a great Asian leader against Nehru, who was human enough to be piqued.

I must say that the Americans are either very naïve or singularly lacking in intelligence. They go through the identical routine whether it is Nehru or the Shah of Iran or Liaquat Ali . . . All this lessens the value of their fervent protestations and the superlatives they use. A superlative used too often ceases to have any meaning. Having been trained in a school of more restrained language and action, I am afraid I do not appreciate this kind of thing.

But it was not just the vulgarity which was worrying and his vanity which was hurt:

It does appear that there is a concerted attempt to build up Pakistan and build down, if I may say so, India. It surprises me how immature in their political thinking the Americans are! They do not even learn from their own or other people's mistakes; more especially in their dealings with Asia, they show a lack of understanding which is surprising.

Even so, Nehru took care to see that the stand-offishness of the United States Government did not push India nearer to the Soviet Union, and he avoided any step which might worsen relations with the Western Powers. For he was still wary of the Soviet Union.

97 Nehru's note for the Cabinet, 16 January 1950.  
96 Cf. Lester Pearson's account of Philip Noel-Baker's activities in Karachi at this time: 'He has certainly taken a very strong anti-India stand on this matter and is, I think, not doing much to help settle things by his activities.' Memoirs, Vol. 2, p. 115.  
88 Nehru to Vijayalakshmi, 10 May 1950.  
100 Nehru to Vijayalakshmi, 29 May 1950.
India does think that international communism is aggressive, partly because of communist philosophy and partly because communism today is very much Slavism. India does not charge the Soviet Union with responsibility for Communist activities in India, but we have little doubt that Russia has encouraged them and can certainly stop them if it so chose.\textsuperscript{101}

When Radhakrishnan in Moscow suggested a friendship treaty and even Bajpai, the Secretary-General, who rarely approved of Radhakrishnan’s ideas or style of functioning, was willing to consider it, the Prime Minister directed them to move cautiously, not to go too far, and to watch reaction (presumably of the United States) at every stage.\textsuperscript{102}

If there is a world war, there is no possibility of India lining up with the Soviet Union whatever else she may do. It is obvious that our relations with the United States as with the United Kingdom in political and economic matters are far closer than with other countries. We have practically no such relations with the Soviet, nor is it likely that they will develop to any great extent for obvious reasons.\textsuperscript{103}

With the developing crisis in East Bengal and poor relations with the Western Powers, he directed Radhakrishnan to go slowly in taking even obvious steps towards closer relations with the Soviet Union, as these might further disturb relations with Britain and the United States.\textsuperscript{104}

This coolness towards the Soviet Government and concern about the expansionist tendencies of international communism also coloured Nehru’s attitude to the new government in China. The acid criticism of him that poured continuously from Peking he charitably ascribed to the ‘exuberance of a victorious revolution’.\textsuperscript{105} In any event, this could not erase the need for a careful formulation of policy. The establishment of the new regime in China was obviously a world event of the first magnitude, and the reaction of other countries would determine the way in which this event would alter the balance of forces. At the start, China would generally support Soviet foreign policy, but she was too large and distinctive to function merely as a camp-follower. The new rulers had come to power in their own way, without Soviet assistance; and what could be of importance was not that this regime was communist but that it provided a strong central government. It had been welcomed by the Chinese people not for its ideology but because anything seemed better to them than the Kuomintang. There was little chance of any internal upheaval, and so the

\textsuperscript{101} Nehru’s note on foreign policy, 7 February 1950.
\textsuperscript{102} Nehru’s note to Bajpai, 6 February 1950.
\textsuperscript{103} Nehru’s note on foreign policy, 7 February 1950.
\textsuperscript{104} Nehru to Radhakrishnan, 5 March 1950.
\textsuperscript{105} Nehru to President Sukarno, 22 December 1949.
4  With Lady Mountbatten, 1948

5  With the Mountbattens, Delhi, 1947

6  Nehru and Patel, 1948
Nehru and Mountbatten, Delhi University Convocation, March 1948
other nations would have to deal with the communist government. The coming years appeared to Nehru to be crucial in determining in which direction China would develop. If recognition were withheld, that in itself would lead to barriers and hostility between China and the rest of the world and a correspondingly closer association between the Soviet Union and China. But if China were befriended, she might be encouraged to take what seemed the more natural course of walking out of the Soviet ring. Apart from dissipating the uniformity of communist development, a divergence of foreign policy might also be expedited. Especially in South East Asia, the Soviet Union had adopted a wholly destructive line and seemed to be aiming solely at chaos in order to weaken the countries of the area and prevent them from serving as bases for the Western Powers; but China would probably be more inclined to prevention of conflict, at least until the People's Government had stabilized themselves at home and gained some measure of economic strength.

So Nehru advocated an attitude of 'cautious friendliness' towards China. It should be made manifestly a friendly approach, and there should be no support of the enemies of China or formation of any bloc which could be regarded as anti-Chinese or anti-communist. He promptly rejected U Nu's suggestions of a defence pact between India, Burma, Ceylon and Pakistan — which was anyway impractical — and of an extension of the Truman doctrine to South East Asia. But, although he saw at this time little danger of any Chinese aggression across the Indian borders, he intended to make it quite clear, when occasion arose, that the slightest attempt at such aggression, whether in India or Nepal, would be stoutly resisted. As for aggressive communism, it could be best resisted in South East Asia by removing every vestige of colonial control and strengthening the nationalist forces. The Commonwealth Foreign Ministers, meeting at Colombo in January 1950, agreed; and Nehru secured general acceptance that what was needed was not a Pacific pact on the lines of NATO but the raising, with the assistance of the Commonwealth countries, of the economic standards of the region.108