

The Fine Art of Government

ONE

Nehru was human enough to enjoy the prestige which he commanded abroad. Many of his fellow-countrymen with sufficient awareness to appreciate the trends of international events also basked in India's dazzling, even unnatural, ascendancy in world affairs. But it was within the country that the real problems lay, and these were more intractable and less responsive to reason and argument than the issues in foreign affairs. Not that the great powers were willing to be talked into a more peaceful state; but as India was as yet not directly involved in these major rivalries, what to some seemed mere attitudinizing on Nehru's part in itself took shape as a policy and influenced opinion in many parts of the world. But in India mere influence and commitment to a respected line were no longer enough. Such success as there had been in creating an atmosphere for progress meant that it was now time for hard decision-making at all levels. Objectives had to be formulated more precisely, the area of popular participation had to be carefully extended, national fusion had to be ensured, and government by consensus sensitively tended. Nehru realized that these were matters of the first priority. By the mid-fifties, he would have happily given these problems all his attention and allowed the world to look after itself without his assiduous nursing. It is one of the myths of recent history that Nehru, and the Indians who shared his thinking, concentrated on foreign affairs to the detriment of their country's domestic demands. But certainly the achievements on this plane were less spectacular. In some cases, while policies were clear, their implementation was erratic; in a few others, the proper solutions evaded his grasp. Neither was his own handling of men at other levels than control of the crowds wholly to his satisfaction. To Nehru democratic government was a fine art, the achievement of a cooperation within a series of widening circles which gave a sense of participation to everyone involved. He exploited his personal dominance to secure, as he hoped, its own destruction. It was a magnificent effort which did not quite come off.
TWO

The reorientation of Nehru’s thinking on economic and social matters, brought about by the election campaign and results of 1952, was clearly reflected in his directive to the planning commission, written within a week of his forming a new ministry. The first Five Year Plan had been an exciting venture, if only because of its pioneering quality; but it was mainly a preparatory effort, a collection of projects giving a general indication of priorities. It could be taken no further for lack of information. Even the drawing up of this Plan was indispensable work, the best work, in Nehru’s opinion, done by the central government during the four years of its free existence.¹ At the meeting of the planning commission to discuss the various drafts, there had been ‘electricity in the air’.² But within two years of its formulation, the purpose of the first Plan had been served, and more positive, determined action was now required. Even after five years of freedom, India appeared more or less static. The central and state authorities were on the defensive and seeking to do no more than avoid the blows of untoward happenings. ‘We cannot go ahead because of circumstances and circumstances will not change until we go ahead.’ Dependence on foreign assistance, apart from its political disadvantages, encouraged this lack of self-reliance and confident effort. Production was to Nehru no longer all that mattered; consumption and purchasing power also demanded attention. Indeed, if they declined, production would slow down as well. The main aim should be the increase of both production and purchasing power — and this should be the purchasing power of not merely a handful of the rich but of large numbers of the relatively poor. Widespread development in production, providing employment for many, was the chief requirement; and budgetary and financial restrictions which stood in the way should be surmounted by an unorthodox, New Deal approach.

In war one takes great risks, because one must and there is no other way. One lives on the next generation. In any productive drive on a large scale in peace-time, however, we are building up wealth and not destroying it as in war. Therefore, we are not really living on the future. Such a risk is far less than the risks involved in war-time and far more profitable. The situation we have to face is, in a sense, as serious as any war situation and we should look upon it, therefore, from a special point of view and not allow ourselves to remain in very orthodox, set grooves of thought.

Large-scale productive works spread out all over the country would, above

¹Speech at Ahmedabad, 24 December, National Herald, 25 December 1951.
²Nehru’s address at meeting of planning commission, 27 May 1955.
all else, create a new atmosphere of aggressive and forward action in place of timid defence. No doubt there was some risk in this policy, but probably the greatest risk was an over-cautious approach to these major problems. A certain boldness in outlook had become essential. The government should plan for bringing about, in an orderly and democratic manner, large changes which would result in greater production and equality of opportunity. They should go all out to prepare the people for these changes and then proceed as fast as the people could be carried along.

To the planning commission, immersed in the immediate problems of existing commitments and paucity of resources, such a wide-ranging survey of future policy seemed wholly unreal. The burden of day-to-day management of even the first Five Year Plan had brought the commission to ‘a stage of something approaching mental disintegration. How to provide for a number of more excellent and important schemes with the resources at their disposal? Arithmetic does not help and magic is not available.’ In fact, the effort, which Nehru had seen as the basis of the first Plan, to bring the whole picture of India’s future — agricultural, industrial, social and economic — into a single framework of thought and action, went awry. Kidwai at the centre and Rajagopalachari in Madras acted on their own and spoke publicly in favour of progressive removal of controls on the prices and movement of foodgrains. Krishnamachari, the Commerce Minister, by threatening resignation, overcame Nehru’s disapproval of his encouragement of foreign firms and stifled any revival of the old swadeshi urge. During the five years of the first Plan, there was, despite Nehru, progressive liberalization of foreign imports. Irritated by the political hindrances to the technical implementation of the Plan, Deshmukh, the Finance Minister, offered repeatedly to relinquish office. Nehru dissuaded him but did not discipline the central and state governments. Moreover, though chairman of the planning commission, he knew little of what it was doing.

I am almost completely out of touch. Occasionally some paper may come to me. But the real job of planning is to think and discuss vital matters. Either this is done without my knowledge or this is not done at all, because I have no information about it.

The fault was not the planning commission’s; the fact was that Nehru’s interest now lay mostly elsewhere. At this time he was looking not to the

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8 Nehru’s note to planning commission, 16 May 1952.
4 Nehru to Chief Ministers, 20 June 1952.
6 Nehru to Morarji Desai, 3 August 1952.
7 Nehru to T. T. Krishnamachari, 29 September and 3 October 1952, and 5 March and 26 August 1953.
8 To V. T. Krishnamachari, deputy chairman, planning commission, 2 August 1953.
large projects, which were the heart of the Plan, but to small schemes, cottage industries and community development, for the increase of production and purchasing power which seemed to him so important. He was no longer fascinated by huge multi-purpose dams, for social welfare had become to him of as high a priority as economic progress. A sight of the hovels in which the workers of Kanpur lived caused him such intensive shame that he developed a sort of fever. 'I have no need for any industrialization which degrades a human being and sullies his honour.'

Besides urban housing, there were the problems in the rural areas of not just habitation, but sanitation, water supply and lighting. 'We might not be able to change the face of India quickly but we should proceed about it with some speed.'

All specific schemes for improving living conditions in the countryside and providing the ordinary peasant with an interest in the future were soon included in Nehru's mind in the need for integrated development of the village communities, with the active assistance of the local inhabitants. This would encourage growth from the bottom and enable the ordinary villager to a certain extent to govern his own destiny. The initiative had to be given to the people and they had to be vested with a sense of partnership and purpose. Backwardness was not an attribute of a few sections of Indian society; basically ninety-six per cent of the Indian people were backward, but they had all to be involved in the building of a new India, and a measure of equality in opportunity and fulfilment progressively produced.

Nilokheri, a township in the Punjab created by cooperative effort for the settlement of refugees, which Nehru thought was 'the brightest example of rehabilitation that I have seen anywhere', served as the model for community centres to be set up all over the country. The object was to encourage the villagers to participate and even take the lead in all aspects of rural development. The inauguration on 2 October 1952 of fifty-five community projects, covering about 17,000 villages, offered to him the promise of the small beginning of something big. 'That idea is to change the whole face of rural India and to raise the level of the vast majority of our population.' In the same vein he suggested, only half in banter, that it would be a good thing if the planning commission or part of it lived in village surroundings.

In 1953, as a development of the community projects programme, the

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8 Speech to the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry, 29 March, National Herald, 30 March 1952.
9 Nehru to Chief Ministers, 16 March 1952.
10 Nehru's speech at conference of development commissioners, May 1952, and talk to the first set of community project officers, August 1952. Jawaharlal Nehru on Community Development, Panchayati Raj and Co-operation (Delhi, 1965), pp. 2-3 and 12.
12 Nehru to Chief Ministers, 2 October 1952.
13 To V. T. Krishnamachari, 2 August 1953.
national extension service, whose purpose was to provide trained workers, was formulated. This service was intended to lay the broad foundation over the whole country for the community projects. Nehru saw in these twin programmes the possibility of a great revolutionary change carried out peacefully and without conflict. As the two schemes proliferated, almost every part of India came within their reach, and by 1955 there was no gap of more than fifty miles between any two areas touched by either one or other of them. This rapid progress was even, in a way, a cause for alarm, lest the government should fail to keep pace with it, mainly for lack of trained personnel.

THREE

Community projects and the national extension service were expected to form the base for the national edifice of 'a socialistic pattern of society' — the odd, half-hearted phrase adopted by the Congress at its session in January 1955. Nehru himself preferred straightforwardly to use the word 'socialist', and 'socialistic' soon dropped out of use. But the word had its advantage at the start, even if it was not coined by Nehru, in suggesting what he had in mind, that the country was accepting not a rigid or doctrinaire framework of ideology but certain methods of economic and social change. Rationality in long-term planning was to be taken seriously. The socialism to which Nehru committed India was, to adapt the definition of a modern philosopher, not so much a certain desirable set of social relations as a way of solving social problems. The goals were clear enough to Nehru soon after the elections and within two years of initiating the first Plan.

I will not rest content unless every man, woman and child in this country has a fair deal and attains a minimum standard of living ... Five or six years is too short a time for judging a nation. Wait for another ten years and you will see that our plans will change the picture of the country so completely that the world will be amazed.

To move towards this, the second Plan would have to be qualitatively different from the first. That had been a relatively easy ride, beginning at a slow pace, gradually gathering speed and finishing at a good canter. Its very success had brough the country not only to a promising stage of growth but also to a much more difficult one. So the second Plan would have to

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16 Nehru to Chief Ministers, 27 September 1953.
16 Nehru to Chief Ministers, 15 April 1955.
18 Speech at Sholapur, 30 April, National Herald, 1 May 1953.
look far ahead and concern itself with structural changes in the country’s economy and society. It should provide for rapid industrial development which would result by ten years in full employment and a society which gave priority to equality. Emphasis would be placed on the building of heavy industry for the production of capital goods as a base for a modern and strong country, and on the wide expansion of village industries for producing consumer goods as well as employment. If enough were produced to meet the growing needs of the community, deficit financing would not necessarily result in inflation.

The ways in which this socialism was to be made possible were very similar to those which Anthony Crosland formulated for Britain a year later.\(^{10}\) India was striving to move ahead from a low stage of economic backwardness whereas Britain was an advanced capitalist society, and the programme was necessarily very different. But the approach which Nehru favoured was on the lines of British left-wing thinking. The ownership of industry was in itself unimportant, and nothing was gained by nationalizing existing industries solely in order to gain control. But it was important for the state to control the strategic points of production. The discussion on the relative merits of the public and private sectors — an issue on which T. T. Krishnamachari once again offered to resign — was unrealistic. There was no doubt that the public sector would grow and gradually dominate the scene. ‘The argument that private enterprise is sacrosanct does not hold good in India today.’\(^{20}\) But both sectors had their roles in increasing production within the broad limits of general control by the state, and could even help, by healthy rivalry, in keeping each other up to the mark. Indeed, the kind of socialism which Nehru had in mind would be more easily achieved in a mixed than in a wholly state-owned economy.

The second Plan involved vast investments and a considerable measure of foreign assistance; but it also required the training of a large personnel and a careful balance at various levels, and this demanded ‘physical’ planning rather than merely regard for financial considerations. It was ‘this mighty problem’, rather than foreign affairs and the ‘unavoidable nuisance’ of domestic politics, which now began to claim more and more of Nehru’s attention. There was no comparable example elsewhere in the world to the task which India had set herself and the way in which she was proposing to deal with it. Indian planning had suddenly caught the imagination of the world. ‘It is for us now to make good the anticipations that we have aroused and the promises we are making. It is an exciting prospect and an adventure worthy of this great country.’\(^{21}\) It was much more than a matter of dry figures and statistics; it was a ‘living, moving process, affecting hundreds of millions’, which could succeed only by the combined and

\(^{20}\) To S. S. Bhutanagar, 8 April 1952.
\(^{21}\) Nehru to Chief Ministers, 13 January 1955.
cooperative efforts of all the Indian people. The government and the planning commission should provide the lead — clear and single-minded, "as it were, an arrow going straight from the bow"; but the achievement could only be that of the ordinary man and woman.

As the first step towards this goal of a socialist pattern, Nehru formulated a new resolution on industrial policy, replacing that issued eight years earlier. The public sector would necessarily be dominant, with a complementary private sector organized on cooperative lines. For achieving rapid economic growth, industrialization, particularly the development of heavy and machine-making industries, would have to be speeded up. These industries, and the material on which they were dependent, would necessarily have to be in the public sector. So too would transport, public utilities, drugs and industries of strategic importance or requiring large investments. Even in areas which normally would be left to the private sector, it would be open to the state to develop any industry. There would also be a growing sphere of state trading. But such stress on the role of the state was, in a paradoxical sense, intended to assure private enterprise of the government's goodwill and promise it relatively free play in secondary fields which were not of vital national interest. As technology and monopoly had not in India reached the stage which endangered society as a whole, the steps necessary in Western countries to control monopoly capitalism were not as yet required in India. There was enough time for the public sector to grow both absolutely and relatively, and gradually secure control of the whole economy. Thus the economic foundations of a socialist society would be gradually laid and, without a major and immediate assault being mounted on private enterprise, steps would be initiated to reduce disparities in income and wealth, weaken private monopolies and disperse the concentration of economic power in the hands of a few individuals. This appealed to Nehru as a realistic and yet a dynamic and even revolutionary programme. "Our way has been to bring about changes as rapidly as possible and at the same time to keep up the continuity of national life and tradition."

The second Five Year Plan, seeking to give form and shape to the new resolution on industrial policy "in as large a measure as our strength and resources and our will to success permit", was published soon after. In agriculture, from both the economic and the social viewpoints, preference was given to cooperative farming as a replacement of the zamindari system and not to the only other alternative of state ownership. Indeed, with smallholdings, cooperative farming seemed inevitable. The Indian farmer,

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23 Nehru to Chief Ministers, 15 April 1955.
24 Nehru's address at meeting of planning commission, 27 May 1955.
25 Nehru to V. T. Krishnamachari, 1 April 1956; Government of India resolution on industrial policy, 30 April 1956.
26 Nehru to Chief Ministers, 10 May 1956.
27 Ibid.
though not well educated, seemed intelligent enough to be able to understand this arrangement if it were explained to him.

I have not heard of the argument that we should not increase our railway system or even scrap the railways that we have, because the Indian farmer is used to the bullock-cart. We live in a different age and, indeed, even the age we live in is, perhaps, ending before long, to give place to yet another age, the atomic age. If we are not wide awake to these obvious facts, then we fail as a nation and as individuals.²⁷

The life of the village should revolve round the multi-purpose cooperative, the *panchayat* and the school and foster local democracy and self-reliant growth. Cooperation was more than an economic technique; it was a means by which social change could be effected. Nehru recovered his old faith in cooperation and talked once again of the ultimate objective of a cooperative commonwealth.²⁸

FOUR

The formal decision in 1955 to erect a socialist pattern of society had been preceded by a long-drawn-out effort by Nehru to reach an understanding with the Socialist Party; but the result was that relations became much worse than before. After the elections, Jayaprakash Narayan had accused Nehru of weakening the Socialist Party by claiming agreement with its leaders even while he emasculated the concept of socialism. Jayaprakash was worried, not so much by sneering references by Congressmen to the Socialists as Nehru’s second eleven, as by what seemed to him Nehru’s proneness to run down all forms of socialist thought and practice without elucidating his own ideas as to their true content.²⁹ Nehru replied that he had never said a word against socialism and had criticized the Socialist Party only with regard to its electoral alliances and its views on foreign policy. ‘I do not pretend to be a socialist in any formal sense of the word but surely socialism is not the monopoly of any particular group.’³⁰ Moreover, while he realized the importance of a coherent and healthy opposition, it appeared to him unnecessary to have two parties indulging in semantic quarrels while sharing broadly common objectives. So, early in 1953, he initiated talks with the Socialist leaders to explore the chances of working together. But a general agreement on the principles and aims of national reconstruction did not seem enough to the Socialists, especially as Nehru’s personal cordiality was not shared by many other members of his party, and

²⁷ Nehru to Chief Ministers, 12 August 1956.
²⁸ Nehru to Chief Ministers, 16 April 1952.
³⁰ Nehru to Jayaprakash Narayan, 27 May 1952.
particularly by the State governments. So Jayaprakash drafted a programme specifying constitutional amendments, administrative and land reforms and nationalization of banks, insurance and mines. Nehru, however, preferred to move cautiously and pragmatically; rather than the formalization of a joint programme he hoped for general cooperation between the Congress and the Socialist Parties.

Reading your letter, I realized not only how much we had in common in regard to our basic outlook, but also the differences in our approach. It may be that those differences are partly at least due to our viewing our problems from different angles. It is fairly easy to make a list of what we would like to have. It is more difficult to get that done in the proper order of priority. To attempt to do many things at the same time sometimes results in nothing being done.

No intelligent person could quarrel about the goals of socialism, but the many uncertain factors, including the human material in India, meant that one could only grope forward step by step. So he was seeking assistance from the Socialists, not in drawing up a precise programme but in promoting a sense of urgency in the country and accelerating the rate of progress. 'I feel after your letter and our talk that perhaps any kind of a formal step at the present moment would not be helpful. We have to grow into things, not bring them about artificially.' His public statement the next day made clear that he had no longer any thought of cooperative activity, let alone a merger of the two parties.

Thereafter, even personal understanding between Nehru and the Socialist leaders weakened. They believed that Nehru had given up his plan for a political partnership not for the reasons he had stated but after a talk with his Chief Ministers, who had no wish to share power. This particular suspicion that narrow party interests had prevailed seems to have been unfounded, though the Socialists may have been near the truth in believing that Nehru’s general attitude suggested an unwillingness to cooperate with them at the price of splitting his own party. But the bitterness increased. Far from appreciating the help given by Nehru in securing Kripalani’s unopposed return to the Lok Sabha, the Socialists resented the Congress taking credit publicly for its generosity. Jayaprakash condemned the Kashmir Government for the death of Mookerjee, and told Nehru that his explanation was unconvincing. ‘It seems to be my misfortune’, replied Nehru, ‘that I get out of step with you

31 Jayaprakash Narayan to Nehru, 6 February and 4 March 1953.
33 18 March 1953.
34 Nehru to Chief Minister, Bihar, 5 May, Kripalani to Nehru, 6 May, and Nehru to Kripalani, 6 May 1953.
however much I may try to do otherwise.’ His effort to draw closer to the Socialists had ended in controversy and imputation of motive, and both personal and party relations had become much worse than they had been at the start. ‘Evidently some evil fate is pursuing us and I have begun to think that the safest policy might well be not to tempt that fate and to remain quiet.’ He had made a mistake by writing to Jayaprakash about Mookerjee’s death, and had had his punishment. ‘If you feel that I am behaving in this matter or any other matter like some High Authority which considers itself infallible, then, of course, there is nothing more to be said by me. If I have fallen from grace, nothing can justify what I do.’

After the formation of Andhra province, Prakasam, who had joined the Socialist Party mainly because of dislike of Rajagopalachari, returned to head the first Congress ministry in the province. Jayaprakash saw in this personal manoeuvring by Prakasam an attempt by Nehru to weaken the Socialists. The relationship between the parties had clearly got beyond rational argument. At the Avadi session of the Congress in January 1955, Nehru was contemptuous of the Socialist Party as one which appeared to have lost its moorings and was tending to disintegrate. That process was accelerated by the explicit commitment of the Congress to socialism; but the commitment did not improve Nehru’s relations with Jayaprakash. The two friends continued to carp publicly at each other. When Jayaprakash termed Nehru’s criticism of student agitation in Bihar as a ‘command performance’, Nehru protested that facts should be investigated fully before such ‘unbalanced’ statements were made. ‘You refer to Congressmen’s behaviour having fallen. Perhaps you are right. But I think the remark would apply to others’ behaviour at least as much if not more. I may be wrong, but is it not possible that you may also be wrong?’

Obviously, for the time being at least, in his efforts to build socialism as he saw it, Nehru would have to go it alone, without the support of the Socialist Party. Even the broad cooperation he had hoped for, not compromising the individuality of either party, proved unattainable. ‘Privately, of course, we meet many of them often. But what is one to do when Jayaprakash Narayan talks the most unmitigated nonsense and hates the Congress so much as to prefer the devil to it?’

FIVE

Much as Nehru desired to concentrate on economic issues and ignore all else, some domestic problems continued to force themselves on his

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36 Nehru to Jayaprakash Narayan, 29 July 1953.
37 Jayaprakash Narayan to Nehru, 10 October 1953.
39 Nehru to Jayaprakash Narayan, 1 September 1955.
40 Nehru to V. N. Sharma, 7 October 1956.
attention. Although secularism had gained strength, it could still not be
taken for granted. The fall of Abdullah in Kashmir had inevitably pro-
moted communal feelings. Muslim communalism might have been
sharpened, but it was the reaction on the same lines of some elements in the
majority community which caused Nehru concern, for it was this which
ultimately mattered.

What real Hinduism may be is a matter for each individual Hindu to
decide. We can only take it as it is practised. In practice, the Hindu is
certainly not tolerant and is more narrow-minded than almost any
person in any other country except the Jew. It does not help much to
talk of Hindu philosophy, which is magnificent. The fate of India is
largely tied up with the Hindu outlook. If the present Hindu outlook
does not change radically, I am quite sure that India is doomed. The
Muslim outlook may be and, I think, is often worse. But it does not
make very much difference to the future of India.\footnote{To K. N. Katju, 17 November 1953.}

As one means of countering this growing communal attitude, Nehru
pressed his colleagues at the centre and in the States to provide adequate
representation for the minorities, especially the Muslims, in the armed and
civil services. As it was, these minorities felt that they were being
considered aliens in India. \textquoteleft{}All our ideals will go to pieces if we don't pull
ourselves up.\textquoteright{}\footnote{To A. P. Jain, 3 August 1953.} In a vast and mixed country like India it was vital to
produce in every citizen a sense of partnership.\footnote{To Chief Ministers, 20 September 1953.}
He urged incessantly the
importance of generous treatment of the minorities so that they would feel
that they were Indians, and be completely at home.

I do not wish to exaggerate this matter and I do not think it has gone
deep yet. But the mere presence of these tendencies is dangerous.
What troubles me most is the way most of us do not attach much
importance to this.\footnote{Nehru to Chief Ministers, 26 April 1954.}

But his words were scarcely heeded by those to whom they were addressed.
Far from trying to remove this feeling of frustration by steps which might
well, if taken on a large scale, reduce the economic and social dominance of
the majority community, fresh issues which fanned the fears of the Muslims
were being opened up. In the two provinces of Uttar Pradesh and Madhya
Pradesh, low priority was being given to the teaching of Urdu in schools
and Hindi and Sanskrit were sought to be imposed on both Hindus and
Muslims.\footnote{Paul R. Brass, \textit{Language, Religion and Politics in North India} (Cambridge, 1974), p. 211; Nehru to
R. S. Shukla, 20 March 1954.} The working of the \textit{Evacuee Property Act} was regarded by
many Muslims as a threat to their security. It was repealed in 1956, but the pending exceptions ran into many thousands and the custodians continued to exercise their inquisitorial powers in a manner which looked to Nehru as a vendetta against a large section of Indian citizens.  

Another group in India which raised problems causing Nehru considerable vexation was not, like the Muslims, a religious minority; but it had a certain individuality. The Nagas, in the farthest north-eastern corner of the country, had received special treatment from the British. Indeed, when the time came for them to withdraw from India, the British considered seriously the possibility of joining the Naga hills with the upper part of Burma and retaining the area as a Crown Colony. Administration in the Naga hills had always been carried out with a light hand; there had been little integration of the Nagas with the rest of the Indian community; and the influence of foreign missionaries was particularly strong. So it was not surprising that within a few years of India becoming independent a demand arose among the Nagas for breaking away from India and becoming independent themselves. While not prepared even to consider the grant of such independence, Nehru was willing to sanction a much greater measure of autonomy than was enjoyed by other States in the Indian union. He had promised this even in 1946, and he was prepared to respect his assurance.  

The Nagas were a tough people who could give much trouble and Nehru saw the danger of any hurried attempt to absorb their areas into standard administration. Between this and the isolation of British days there was a middle way, a friendly rather than a coercive attitude, an acceptance of their social structure, protection from encroachments and advance in such fields as education. They should neither be treated as anthropological specimens nor drowned in the sea of Indian humanity. They could not be isolated from the new political and economic forces sweeping across India; but it was equally undesirable to allow these forces to function freely and upset the traditional life and culture of the Nagas. It was presumptuous to approach them with an air of superiority and try to make of them second-rate copies of people in other parts of India.

Therefore, while authorizing the Government of Assam to reject the demand for independence and to make clear that incitement to violence would not be tolerated, Nehru emphasized the importance of dealing with this problem as a psychological rather than a political one, and instructed that punitive measures should as far as possible be avoided. As part of the same approach, he planned to visit the Naga hills and talk directly to the people. He was even willing to receive Phizo and other members of the Naga National Council, the group campaigning for independence, if they

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46 Nehru to G. B. Pant and to M. C. Khanna, 11 June 1956.
47 See his letter to Naga leaders reported in National Herald, 6 August 1946.
48 To J. Daulatram, Governor, and to B. R. Medhi, Chief Minister, Assam, 2 February 1951.
49 To J. Daulatram, 9 May 1951.
came to Delhi. The Government of India were big enough to be generous and to declare their willingness to consider any proposals short of independence. Further, three million rupees were granted as compensation to the Nagas for damage suffered during the war. 'It is likely that if government keeps its head cool and restrains its hand, the whole movement may gradually fizzle out, because it leads to nothing.' Phizo's influence appeared to be waning, and the government let it be known that they did not attach much importance to him and his followers. Phizo himself was informed that the Government of India could in no event recognize any attempt by any section of the people of India to claim an independent state.62

In March 1952, Nehru met Phizo and told him bluntly that he would not listen to any talk of independence; but he was prepared to help the Nagas to maintain their autonomy in cultural and other matters and he would see to it that there was no interference.63 As this did not satisfy Phizo, the authorities, instead of waiting for the independence campaign to fade away, had to take steps which would weaken the support for Phizo among the Nagas. Nehru had no doubt that it was right in itself as well as politically expedient to create among the tribes a feeling of kinship with the rest of the country. 'The movement for independence among the Nagas is entirely based on the assumption that Indians are foreigners ruling over the tribes. Our policy must be aimed at removing this impression.'64 They should feel part of India and sharers in its destiny, but free to live their own lives, with opportunities of advancement along their own lines.

To give a lead to this policy, in April 1953 Nehru, accompanied by U Nu of Burma, toured the Naga areas. A group of Nagas ostentatiously walked out of a public meeting, which was being addressed by the two Prime Ministers, in protest against an official order prohibiting the presentation of petitions. This deliberate discourtesy, not so much to him as to U Nu, stiffened Nehru's attitude. The Naga leaders were sent for and informed that by such behaviour the Naga National Council had put itself outside the pale and the government would not hereafter recognize or deal with it. Immediate counter-measures would also be taken in case of any unlawful action.65

This incident also brought to the fore the whole question of foreign missionaries in India. Nehru had not wished to lay down any general rules about them, but to leave each case to be considered on its merits by the central and state governments. Christians in India should not develop a sense of persecution. So, although foreign missionaries should not

60 To J. N. Hazarika, 13 May 1951.
61 To B. R. Medhi, 25 May 1951.
62 Phizo's principal private secretary to Phizo, 7 August 1951.
63 Nehru to B. R. Medhi, 13 March 1952.
64 Nehru to J. Daulatram, 4 April 1952.
65 Nehru to J. Daulatram, 3 April 1953.
normally be encouraged, and the Church in India should learn to stand on its own feet, there should be no bar on any person of whatever nationality who was clearly and solely engaged in evangelical work. The President, the Home Minister, Katju, and the Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh, R. S. Shukla, were all rebuked by the Prime Minister for giving credence, even remotely, to the charge that the authorities in India were anti-Christian or interested in any way in conversions. The government were concerned only with foreign missionaries because they were foreign and not because they were missionaries; and even in their case the government were concerned only with any political activity in which they might indulge. If they hindered their evangelical work with spiritual or racial arrogance, this was their affair. But it did seem that in the Naga areas foreign missionaries, enjoying considerable influence with the inhabitants, were involved in fostering anti-national sentiments. A letter had been circulated to pastors requesting them to celebrate 5 April as Naga Independence Day in their churches and chapels. So Nehru ordered that foreign missionaries in this area be informed that they would have to leave India if their complicity in such activity were established. It was also decided that no new missions should be opened and no more foreign missionaries should be allowed into the Naga area, and the antecedents of the foreign missionaries already functioning there should be checked. That this decision was independent of any prejudice is demonstrated by the freedom with which a British missionary, Verrier Elwin, roamed these tribal areas. Indeed, Elwin, rather than any Indian, was Nehru's trusted adviser on all tribal problems.

Elwin, however, was an exceptional character whose dedication to Christianity was not irreconcilable with a deep respect for India's national sovereignty. Some of the other British missionaries in the Naga hills were former officials who had not yet come to terms with the political changes in India. There had also been, since 1947, a heavy influx into India of missionaries from the United States. Nehru suspected that, even if they did not interest themselves in politics, their very presence might have a political impact. 'Americanism is not only a particular way of life but a particular way of thinking in politics. In the present context of the world this becomes politics directly.' But to avoid injustice to any individual and enable free entry without political embarrassment to the Government of India, he conveyed informally the message to foreign governments that the Government of India would deal with the principal missionary organi-

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56 Nehru's note, 23 February 1953.
57 Nehru to Rajendra Prasad, 10 August 1953; to K. N. Katju, 10 July, 29 July and 13 October 1953; to R. S. Shukla, 27 May 1955.
58 See Nehru to the Archbishop of Sweden, 22 August 1953.
59 Nehru to J. Daulatram, 3 April 1953.
60 Nehru to Amrit Kaur, 30 October 1953.
zations abroad rather than consider the case of every applicant separately.\footnote{Nehru's note, 24 January 1955.}

As regards general policy towards the Nagas, the incident of the walk-out made little difference. Nehru still insisted on a gradual spread of administration and its adaptation to local conditions. The situation was fluid and could with care be made to take the right shape; but it was equally easy for it to take the wrong shape. Possibly Nehru would have slowed down the pace of administrative permeation even more but for the necessity created by these tribal areas also being border areas. However, he laid emphasis on the presence of government being imposed more in the form of roads, dispensaries, and schools than in the enforcement of law and order. He directed also that a cadre of senior officials, specially selected and trained for these areas, be built up, and that their subordinates be drawn from the local tribes. A feeling should be created among the Nagas that responsibility would be cast increasingly on them and that the authorities regarded them as partners in development.\footnote{Nehru's note, 24 January 1955.} In fact, there was no alternative, for total suppression was out of the question and partial suppression would have served only as an irritant. The Nagas 'are a tough and fine lot of people and we may carry on for a generation without solving the problem.'\footnote{Nehru's note, 24 January 1955.}

At a political level, the kind of solution Nehru had in mind at this time was not a Naga province within the Indian union but a district with considerable autonomy so as to give 'a sensation of self-government' and check the widely resented growth of Assamese influence and control of the local economy.\footnote{Nehru's note on the north-east frontier area, 24 April 1953.} But neither prong of Nehru's policy made any marked impression, chiefly because of the inertia of the Assam Government, and he had to concede some months later that the effort to win over the people of these areas had largely failed. The 'law and order' approach had become the norm, and this could not be the basis of any policy. The adverse and not surprising result of this was a non-cooperative attitude on the part of the Nagas. There was now a growing demand not so much for independence as for separation from Assam; but if this were not controlled or diluted, it might well add to the feeling against India itself.\footnote{Nehru's note, 9 December 1953.} One way of initiating a friendly and constructive approach would be to extend the community project scheme to these tribal areas, but it would have to be followed up by more positive action. 'We are in a deadlock and we should explore ways of getting out of it.'\footnote{To S. Fazl Ali, Daulatram's successor as Governor, 10 August 1954.}

As for the rebel Nagas, Nehru refused to meet Phizo unless he gave up the demand for independence and publicly condemned violent activities.\footnote{To B. R. Medhi, 9 March 1955.}
We have to steer the middle course between a complacent approach to the problem and an over-dramatized approach. We must proceed calmly, without excitement, without shouting and yet with strength. But this was rendered impractical by the renewal of violent activities by Phizo’s followers, and Nehru ordered the arrest of Phizo and his henchmen and the suppression of their activity. Slow action gave them opportunities; the government should, therefore, hit hard and swiftly. It should become clear to the Nagas that the government would not deal with Phizo or weaken as a result of violence; nor would political or other changes be considered till complete calm had been restored. When three Nagas came to Delhi, claiming to be acting in an independent capacity, but obviously in contact with Phizo and probably sent by him, it was made clear to them that the first task was to restore law and order, and anyone not cooperating would be punished severely. There was also no question of any talks or negotiations. Confronted with an open, armed rebellion by the Nagas in which a number of Indian officers and troops had been killed in regular battles, the Government of India concluded that they had no option but to deal with it as a purely military situation. But Nehru vetoed suggestions for machine-gunning from the air.

Suppression of violent revolt, even if it were the first step to be taken, obviously could not be the only one. Once the back of resistance had been broken, a political approach would have to be renewed. The time for this had clearly not yet come, but as a prelude Nehru explained to the army and the civil authorities that nothing should be done which widened the gulf between the government and the mass of the Naga people.

We must not judge them as we would others who are undoubtedly part of India. The Nagas have no such background or sensations and we have to create that sensation among them by our goodwill and treatment. We shall have to think how we can produce this impression and what political steps may be necessary.

This was important both for internal stability and to counter the use being made of trouble in the Naga area for international propaganda against India. One administrative measure Nehru had in mind was to remove the Naga hills from the control of the Assam Government and attach the area to the frontier division so as to bring it directly under central control. But any such step required careful consideration. There was a growing

86 To B. R. Medhi, 8 September 1955.
87 Nehru’s telegram to Governor and Chief Minister of Assam, 25 January 1956.
88 Nehru’s telegram to Chief Minister, 28 February 1956.
89 Nehru to J. Daulatram, 8 and 9 March 1956.
90 Note to Defence Secretary, 19 June 1956.
91 Nehru to B. R. Medhi, 13 May 1956.
inclination to be hustled into some kind of political action. "It does not help in dealing with tough people to have weak nerves."  

The army, however, failed to deal decisively with the rebellion. Its efforts, reminiscent of what T. E. Lawrence once described as eating soup with a knife, served only to alienate even many loyal Nagas and to provoke criticism of India abroad. So Nehru urged the army to act swiftly but not brutally, and pressed ahead with many minor political changes while working out the major political decision on the future administration of the area.

It must always be remembered that if the Nagas are made to feel that they have no other alternative but to fight and die, they will prefer doing so. We must give them a better alternative and seek their cooperation or at least [that] of those who are prepared to cooperate. This has not been done so far either by the Assam Government or by our military.  

Thimayya, the most distinguished of the senior army commanders, was ordered to take charge immediately.

The Naga problem was, therefore, nowhere near solution. There was to Nehru no question of political or any other form of surrender to a small group in active revolt. "It is fantastic to imagine that the Government of India is going to be terrorized into some action by Phizo and company." Weakness in dealing with such people appeared to him to be almost a sin. But the military approach, while necessary, was not adequate; and Nehru insisted that soldiers and officials should always remember that the Nagas were fellow-countrymen who were not merely to be suppressed but, at some stage, had to be won over. They should be permitted the fullest freedom subject to the two overriding demands of national unity and national security. How this was to be worked out remained a problem for the future. Indeed, this postponement was a deliberate decision of policy. Nehru had no intention of making any precise commitments as long as the revolt was not called off. But the Naga problem remained a messy situation which his government had not, in these years, succeeded in tidying up. A correctly formed policy had not been effectively executed.

SIX

The Naga problem was created by some Indian citizens who were wishing to secede from the republic; the problem of the French and Portugese settlements was the reverse: many — if not all — of their inhabitants were

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74 Nehru's note, 21 May 1956.
75 To K. N. Katju, Defence Minister, 28 July 1956.
76 Nehru to Fazl Ali, 9 September 1956.
eager to merge their territories with the mother-country. This problem straddled the domestic and foreign policies of India. The Indian people regarded these demands for integration as part of their national movement. The Congress had always encouraged this view and Nehru, more than any other leader before 1947, had involved Pondicherry and Goa in the effort to defeat imperialism. 'Wherever human liberty and human suffering are involved, the problem is not a little one. Wherever people struggle for freedom and against repression they enact a drama which is always full of vital interest to lovers of liberty all over the world.'

Colonial domination, for however long, could not result in the assimilation of the occupied territory by the imperial power. Pondicherry and Goa were geographically and culturally parts of India and had to be so politically as well. It was only a matter of time and circumstance as to when this happened.

To assume, however, that the withdrawal of the British would be followed rapidly and inevitably by the liberation of other foreign possessions in India was to sink into facile optimism. The negotiations with the French dragged on till 1954, when M. Mendès-France found an honourable way of handing over Pondicherry and the other bits of French territory. But the Portuguese had no intention of leaving Goa at any time and, recognizing that the Government of India could not compromise on this issue, adopted an attitude of aggressive hostility. For example, they offered assistance to the Nizam in his attempt to keep Hyderabad aloof from the Indian union. Nehru realized that the Portuguese were beyond persuasion and would only yield under pressure, either from other powers or from the people of Goa. 'Sometime or other these people are going to have a rude awakening to the twentieth century.' But building up international support was a gradual and heartbreaking process, while there was considerable support for the Portuguese among the vested interests in Goa that had grown in strength over the centuries. It was not certain that, if a plebiscite were held immediately, India would win. So Nehru discouraged the States peoples movement and the Bombay Government from promoting a popular campaign on the borders of Goa, preferring to start negotiations with the Portuguese Government, 'exceedingly stupid and sticky' as they might be.

As expected, no progress resulted. Neither were the efforts to keep the situation from freezing any more effective. To work out a sanction to buttress the written note offering to commence consultations on the transfer of Portuguese territories, and the public declarations that Goa would have to become part of India, an examination of Goa's economic

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77 Nehru's statement on Goa, 22 July 1946.
78 Nehru to Chandraksha Mehta, 11 July 1949.
relations with the rest of India was undertaken. But nothing emerged from this. In 1952 Nehru again considered economic action. 'The attitude of our Government, though perhaps justifiable, is exceedingly demoralizing.'

But, chiefly because of the fear that economic sanctions might hurt the people of Goa more than the Portuguese authorities, Nehru was reluctant to order positive steps.

In this dilemma, it became increasingly clear that only military pressure would tell; but Nehru was even more determined to avoid taking this easy step than using economic sanctions. So, apart from closing the legation at Lisbon, he did nothing in the hope that time was an ally and the force of world opinion might eventually secure Goa for India. The Government and people of India, being mature and not 'children at play', would quietly wait. Generally it is recognized that both the Portuguese and the French possessions must come to India. Sir Winston Churchill said so to me and remarked on the extreme backwardness of Portuguese thought.

Nehru's decision to set an example to the world of postponing the attainment of a legitimate objective because the quickest means was questionable did not, however, shame the foreign powers into exerting diplomatic pressure on Portugal. Indeed, in the summer of 1954, when the Government of India made clear that they would not permit Goa to be used by any foreign power for military purposes, the British Government — whatever Churchill might think of Portugal — gave an oral reply that old treaties made it obligatory for them to defend any Portuguese colonies if the need arose. This woke Nehru up to the disregard of moral principle in international relations. 'If it is logic for Britain, having given up her empire, to protect other people's empires by force of arms, I am unable to comprehend it.' India would continue to seek a solution of this problem by peaceful methods but there could be no commitment to future policy; that would depend entirely on circumstances. A situation might well arise when a continuation of Portuguese domination over Goa would become a direct threat to India's security and welfare, and then India would be obliged to consider what steps should be taken.

These were brave words, but Nehru, because of his ethical commitments, was still unwilling to act upon his threats. He had the previous year decided that the Bombay Government and the district officials on the borders of Portuguese territory should give no direct or indirect assistance to the Portuguese authorities even if such abstention hurt the people of Goa; and he authorized the Congress Party in India to assist any effort in

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81 Nehru's note on Goa, 8 July 1952.
82 Nehru's statement at press conference at Delhi, 2 November, National Herald, 3 November 1952.
83 Nehru to Chief Ministers, 2 July 1953.
84 Secretary-General's note on interview with acting British High Commissioner, 11 June 1954.
85 Nehru's note, 11 June 1954.
Goa for integration with India. But Goans settled in India were not stopped from entering Portuguese territory, but all other Indians were discouraged from supporting what should essentially be regarded as a freedom movement within Goa. Nehru was not prepared to go further than this and restrained the eagerness in India for more positive action lest the Portuguese retaliate with the use of firearms, thereby forcing his hand.

The Portuguese are bent on violence and are inciting us to commit violence. They have prepared themselves well for this kind of thing. On no account must we fall into that trap and our people should realize that... Thus we shall put the Portuguese into a false position and they will make themselves rather ridiculous. The Portuguese live in a medieval climate of mind and are rather melodramatic. If their melodrama is made to appear completely ridiculous, their case suffers greatly... Circumstances have made Goa a first-class issue and the Portuguese have been driven to take all kinds of steps. I have no doubt that Goa will come to us, but we must adhere to non-violence.

This would seem to be the naivety of the over-sophisticated. But the policy bore, at the beginning, a few results. Diplomatic relations with Portugal were not severed, but when the Salazar government spoke in terms of defending Christianity, and Roman Catholicism in particular, in India, Nehru made sure of the sympathy of the Vatican and left it to Indian priests to answer the propaganda. Aid to resistance within Goa took the form only of economic measures. Suspecting more, the Portuguese proposed international observers. Nehru agreed promptly and the Portuguese, fearing that their proposal might lead unavoidably to negotiations, retracted. They were happier expressing their objections by shooting down some Indian volunteers who sought to cross into Goa. The Government of India protested formally but were still reluctant to react to this brutality with force.

We have to take not only the right steps but also in the right way. We have also to keep in view our general world policy because we cannot isolate one action from another. I have no doubt that we shall win in Goa. But I am anxious to do so without giving up in the slightest the basic policy that we claim to pursue.

To Morarji Desai, Chief Minister of Bombay, to Secretary-General, Ministry of External Affairs and to General Secretary, AICC, 29 October 1953.

Speech at New Delhi, 13 August, National Herald, 14 August 1954.

Nehru to Morarji Desai, 12 August 1954.

Nehru to Morarji Desai, 11 August, and to Cardinal Gracias, 23 August 1954.

Nehru to Chief Ministers, 3 September 1954.
Confidence in the ultimate outcome enabled Nehru to be still very much the narcissist saint in world affairs. Krishna Menon, it may be added, approved wholly of this policy of restraint.\(^{91}\)

To give the Portuguese no scope for complaint, Nehru vetoed the establishment in India of a provisional government of Goa. Organizations working for the merging of Goa with India were viewed with a little more tolerance than before; but this did not involve any alteration of policy, which was still one of inaction and patience, waiting for the popular movement in Goa to gain strength, for the colonial economy to weaken, for the transfer of Pondicherry to have an influence in Lisbon and for sympathy in world opinion to prevail. "To expect sudden changes and always to think in terms of bringing about a big crisis is wrong both from the general political point of view and that of satyagraha."\(^{92}\)

Impeccable in theory, this policy assumed a high degree of understanding in India as well as sensitive reaction on the part of the Portuguese. The political parties in opposition to the Congress saw in Goa a chance to criticize Nehru. They organized a campaign for Indian volunteers to cross into Goa and compelled him to warn them that he would take whatever action became necessary to prevent this.\(^{93}\) As for the Portuguese, Nehru accepted the advice of Morarji Desai, the Chief Minister of Bombay, that if the Portuguese gave provocation, such as deporting Indian persons, all diplomatic relations should be severed;\(^{94}\) but every step would have to be carefully considered.

Goa continues to be a headache. It is natural for people to demand strong action but we must always remember that we should not, in the excitement of the moment or because of anger and resentment, undertake any action without thinking out all the possible consequences. I need not tell you that we are giving continuous and earnest thought to this Goa situation. We do not propose to allow ourselves to be hustled into wrong action.\(^{95}\)

It was, in a sense, more to embarrass Nehru than to secure any concessions from the Portuguese that the Jan Sangh and the Socialist and the Communist Parties organized a mass satyagraha campaign; and the Portuguese opened fire on unarmed volunteers when they tried to cross the border. Passions rose sharply in India and Nehru was severely criticized for not retaliating and ordering Indian troops to advance into Goa. But Nehru stood firm and argued in detail the case for patience. India was afraid of

\(^{91}\) Krishna Menon's telegram to Nehru from New York, 30 September 1954.
\(^{92}\) Nehru's note on Goa, 2 December 1954.
\(^{93}\) To Peter Alvares, 28 March 1955.
\(^{94}\) Nehru's note on Goa, 6 May 1955.
\(^{95}\) Nehru to Chief Ministers, 20 May 1955.
nothing except of doing anything which did not fit in with her larger policy. She would not be stampeded into forgetting or bypassing those principles of her foreign policy which had grown since 1947. 96 'I say there is nothing more scandalous on God's earth today than the Portuguese occupation of Goa, historically, factually, religiously if you like or from any point of view.' 97 The Pope, when Nehru met him, had agreed that Goa was not a religious issue. 98 The world, and particularly the Atlantic Powers, should take note that India would tolerate no nonsense about Goa. But the peaceful approach was the right one not only from the point of view of Goa and India but also because of major issues in the world. The Government of India were not pacifist but they would only go to war in case of an armed attack.

If you are under the impression that the Government will take police action or use force to liberate Goa from Portuguese domination, you are entirely mistaken. I am not going to do any such thing . . . Wars and armed actions have never solved any problem anywhere in the world. 99

It was easy enough to occupy Goa, but that would be unfair to the people of Goa, form a betrayal of India's policies and result in many undesirable consequences.

We have set our face against the solution of problems by warlike methods, and we intend to adhere to that decision. Once the necessity of war on some occasions was accepted, who was to define the occasion? Every country would decide for itself, and the floodgates would be opened. Let no man think that a little war is justifiable though a big war will not be so. If once the principle is given up, then we are anchorless and cannot work for peace in the world, which is so essential for the future of humanity. 100

If the Government of India sought to solve the problem of Goa by other than peaceful methods, they would be regarded as 'deceitful hypocrites' and opportunists with no principles and the whole edifice of their foreign policy would come down. 101

Abroad, and especially in the neighbouring countries, this policy was regarded as weakness. The Pakistan Government spoke in terms of support to Portugal and, striking a pose emulating the Indian example,

96 Statement at press conference, 31 May, reported in Hindustan Times, 1 June 1955.
98 Nehru's statement in Rome, 8 July, National Herald, 9 July 1955.
99 Speech at Poona, 4 June, Times of India, 5 June 1955.
100 Address to U.P.P.C.C. at Sitapur, National Herald, 21 August 1955.
101 Speech (in Hindi) in Lok Sabha, 17 September 1955.
organized a crossing of the cease-fire line in Kashmir by a large crowd of armed civilians. Kotelawala of Ceylon offered to mediate between India and Portugal and, when reminded that he was committed by the Bandung resolution, if nothing else, to an anti-colonialist position, allowed his prejudice against India to express itself in sympathy for Portugal. It was not generally appreciated that Nehru had in fact shown a gritty resolution in adopting his policy of restraint. 'It has been no easy matter for us to stop satyagraha and I doubt if any other government anywhere in the world could have had the courage and strength to take such an unpopular step.' The only action he took to counter this misunderstanding of his policy was to send an official note to all the Bandung countries reminding them that India was entitled to their support on this issue. Adherence to peaceful methods despite flagrant provocation could not blur the fact that Goa was a symbol of intransigent and oppressive colonialism, completely out of keeping with the spirit of Asia and Africa and indeed of all freedom-loving people all over the world. Refusal to react to Portugal's use of force and the decision to stop the satyagraha should not be interpreted as acceptance of the 'monstrous anomaly' of Portuguese rule in Goa. The only settlement which India would accept was, as in the case of Pondicherry, an early withdrawal of the foreign power followed by a formal transfer of authority. 'A flash of anger shot through his eyes as he said, 'There are some questions over which it is permissible to have two points of view, but over this one, that is the Goa issue, it seems to me that only one view is possible.' But the very belief in Nehru's dedication to peaceful methods weakened the pressure that foreign governments were willing to exert on Portugal and confirmed them in the even-handed attitude that was all in favour of the status quo. Those who had faith in Nehru could not take seriously his assertion that India would not accept indefinitely the continuance of Portuguese rule in Goa. The adamant Portuguese attitude and the failure of other powers to interfere meant that the dilemma could not be solved by Nehru's methods. It would have to be broken, at the cost of Nehru's principles, or the Portuguese left undisturbed, in defiance of Nehru's commitments. Nehru was as yet not prepared to take what he considered adventurist action. 'We have to act with some responsibility and some wisdom in this matter, even though we may be very angry. We have got entangled in an international knot and we cannot untie it by pulling in the wrong direction. Untie it we will.' How this was going to be done was not clear. For the time being the situation was at a standstill, and Nehru was worried but helpless.

108 Indian High Commissioner in Colombo to Foreign Secretary, 19 August 1955.
109 Nehru's telegram to Vijayslakshmi, 14 September 1955.
110 Nehru's note to Ministry of External Affairs, 8 September 1955.
111 Nehru's message to mass rally of Goans, 25 September 1955.
112 Taya Zinkin's dispatch in Manchester Guardian, 29 February 1956.
113 Nehru to Peter Alvares, 27 August 1956.
SEVEN

Nehru's various public activities were held together by a general theory of government. Ruling India was to him not just a matter of dealing with files or issuing executive orders. These were important duties, but only a small part of the whole. Democratic government 'is not something which we can deal with merely because we have some general knowledge or ability.' Regard had to be paid to the deeper issues beneath the day-to-day concerns.

The fact is that often we are struggling with major problems without the larger experience which gives assurance to the mind. We have to be firm and we have to be flexible. We must not be undecided and unable to make up our minds. But we can only be firm if our minds are clear about major problems, and they seldom are... There should always be the human touch, but behind the human touch one should give the feeling of firm decisions. That is, while one should be flexible, one should not be weak in handling an issue and our approach to the party and to the public should always be friendly.108

Neither firmness by itself nor a flabby friendliness was enough. Nehru wished his followers, like himself, to have clear, long-term objectives, such as socialism and community development, and to work for them persuasively and not solely on the basis of dry logic.

A leader must always have a sense of the public. He cannot do some things, because he senses they would create difficulties... We have to deal with human beings as individuals and in the mass, and we must know the art of getting into their minds and hearts and not merely imagine that any logical argument must prevail.109

This art of human management had in these years to be exercised by Nehru at every level, both in the larger, impersonal context of binding the masses to the government and in the more delicate task of holding his colleagues together. 'This country requires such a tremendous deal of managing in a variety of ways, that sometimes I wonder how it holds together. And yet, I suppose there are stronger forces than individuals which hold us together.'110 This, of course, was true of India in general; but in dealing with narrower, personal problems Nehru was indispensable. He alone, in the higher ranks of the Congress, because of his undisputed command over the Party and the people, could keep individuals and groups from dissension. 'It seems to me that the most difficult job in the world is to

108 Nehru to H. Upadhyaya, 29 October 1953.
109 To B. K. Kaul, 29 October 1953.
110 Nehru to Mountbatten, 16 November 1953.
deal with human beings, especially those one has to work with. It is relatively easy to deal with opponents . . . I really do not know who else could succeed even in this measure.' In the central Cabinet Deshmukh, T. T. Krishnamachari and Kidwai pulled in different directions, bitterly denouncing each other and repeatedly offering to resign. Kidwai continued to snipe against Pant in Uttar Pradesh and Deshmukh fell foul of Rajagopalachari in Madras. In New York, Vijayalakshmi resented Krishna Menon's secretive handling of the Korean question. Nehru devoted considerable time to patching up these quarrels - advising, mollifying, sometimes even shouting a little.

It seems to me, whether in Delhi or elsewhere, that far the best part of my time is taken up in reconciling people or in soothing them when they get ruffled with each other. It is extraordinary how little our capacity is for friendly cooperation . . . I do not know if in other countries people are continually faced with these difficulties of individuals behaving too individualistically. In the Soviet, I suppose, when this happens somebody is liquidated.118

Nehru was generally successful in guiding his team, with its clashing temperaments and holders of conflicting opinions; yet on some major problems of human management he had to accept defeat. He could not subdue Abdullah's political tantrums. He could not harness to the public service the mutual affection between himself and Jayaprakash Narayan. Neither could he, after Rajagopalachari's departure from the Home Ministry, vest his relations with Rajagopalachari with any measure of cordiality and understanding. From 1952 their personal friendship plunged in a steep downward curve. Absence from Delhi did not, to a man like Rajagopalachari, mean retirement from politics. In the elections in Madras province the Congress had fared badly. Its local leaders had lost touch with the people, in the Andhra districts there was much soreness at the failure to secure a separate province, the belief was widely prevalent that the central government cared little for the interests of southern India, and the food shortage, particularly the lack of rice, was keenly felt. As the Congress Party was now in a minority in the Madras Assembly, Nehru recommended the democratic procedure of allowing the other parties, if they could muster a majority, to form a ministry. 'The one thing we must avoid is giving the impression that we stick to office and that we want to keep out others at all costs.'113 But Sri Prakasa, the Governor, Rajagopalachari, whom he consulted, and most Congressmen in Madras favoured executive government. They were agreed that the Communists

111 Nehru to Krishna Menon, 13 November 1953.
112 To Vijayalakshmi, 4 November 1953.
113 Nehru to Rajagopalachari, 29 January 1952.
should be kept out of office and it should be asserted as an axiom of Indian politics that the Congress ruled India, whatever the electoral setbacks in certain parts of the country. 'I do not think it would be justifiable from any point of view, even of ideological democracy, to leave patches of rebel areas and go into disorder. We cannot work out democracy in fractions of India.' Nehru vetoed this suggestion of permanent Congress hegemony, particularly in a State where the local Congress leadership had shown itself to be so incompetent. The electoral defeat of the Congress did not amount to a failure of the Constitution. This annoyed Rajagopalachari:

I can see how you and friends there have given the best consideration to the situation here and have on grounds of expediency, logic and democratic principles come to conclusions wholly contrary to my view. Let us agree to differ and let it rest there. Please do not therefore seek to explain to me: I can see the Euclidean steps that lead to the conclusions you have arrived at, and who can question Euclid?

Nehru, however, had no intention of giving way. It was evident that the Congress had failed in the primary business of winning the people to its side, and till it recovered its vitality by building up a new set of leaders, Nehru was convinced that others outside the Congress would have to be given a chance to function. To get round such obstinate commitment to democratic principle, Sri Prakasa and Rajagopalachari resorted to deviousness. Without informing Nehru, the Governor nominated Rajagopalachari to the upper house; thereupon Rajagopalachari was elected leader of the Congress Party and the Governor, ignoring Nehru's specific reminder that a chief minister should be a member of the lower house, invited Rajagopalachari to form a government. For once the President and the Prime Minister were united in disapproval of both the decision to recall Rajagopalachari to the leadership of the Congress in Madras and the manner in which this was done. But as there was no way of reversing the situation, Nehru decided not to object officially and to give Rajagopalachari such help as he could to stabilize his position.

From every wider point of view, the second term of Rajagopalachari as Chief Minister of Madras was a disappointment. He felt, as did Bidhan Roy, that Nehru's decision to release détenu and his attempts to deal with communism by methods within the democratic tradition were in effect assisting the Communist Party. Nehru was second to none in his

114 Rajagopalachari to Nehru, 10 February 1952.
116 Rajagopalachari to Nehru, 1 March 1952.
117 Nehru to Rajagopalachari, 4 March 1952.
118 Nehru to Sri Prakasa, 5 March 1952.
119 Nehru to Rajagopalachari, 7 April, and to the President and to Sri Prakasa, 8 April 1952.
denunciation of the methods followed by the Communists in India. He informed them sharply that their movement was not democratic and that there was considerable evidence to confirm the general belief that their policy was directed from outside; and he did not hesitate to tell them what he thought of their propaganda. 'I have seldom come across a greater bunch of falsehoods and distortions of truth.' But he was willing to accept and to act on their assurance that their party had now turned from violence and subversion to parliamentary activity. Rajagopalachari and Roy were unconvinced; and they regarded as weakness Nehru's contention that communism was a faith which force alone could not combat as some of its tenets were admired and believed in by most intelligent and sensitive persons. Rajagopalachari laid stress on routine administration rather than on economic planning and land reforms, which were so important to Nehru; and the strengthening of the Congress as a conservative party became to him the purpose of office. 'As Prime Minister, I am not concerned with parties but am only concerned with good and progressive government in the interests of the people.' Such sentiment was at this time unacceptable to Rajagopalachari. As a private citizen before becoming Chief Minister, he had recommended, on hearing of the electoral reverses of the Congress in southern India, that the Party be dissolved; but inconsistency was to Rajagopalachari always a cause of satisfaction. Deliberate perversity was a major facet of his intellectual arrogance. He now, for example, to the annoyance of Azad, excluded Muslims from his ministry on the ground that it would displease the remnants of the Muslim League in Madras.

Differences also arose on administrative matters between Rajagopalachari and the central government, and Nehru had repeatedly to smooth matters over. Rajagopalachari's proposal to reduce the salaries of members of the Indian Civil Service, while acceptable to Nehru on principle, was turned down by the Cabinet because of the constitutional aspects of the question. Then Rajagopalachari threatened to resign because a large subvention sought by the Madras Government had been refused.

You know very well that your advice is more important for me than from anyone else. India is some kind of a jigsaw puzzle with a tendency for separate parts to jump out. It is no easy matter to keep them together. Indeed, I am sometimes a little surprised that they do hold together... I am sorry I cannot think of releasing you, as you say. What am I to do when all our wise men go one after the other leaving me with some capacity but little wisdom to shoulder the burden of the country?

180 Nehru to A. K. Gopalan, 2 July 1952.
181 Nehru to Gyan Singh Rawarela, 24 April 1952.
182 Azad to Rajagopalachari, 19 April, and Rajagopalachari to Nehru, 22 April 1952.
183 Nehru to Rajagopalachari, 12 February 1953.
But finally Nehru’s patience broke. Within the Congress Party in Madras, especially after the separation of the Andhra areas, discontent against Rajagopalachari’s high-handedness had become widespread. Nehru strove loyally to smother this feeling\(^{185}\) but Rajagopalachari was not satisfied. He gave no help in smoothing over the situation, sneered at Kamaraj and his hopes of ‘running chief ministership with the help of literate stooges’,\(^{186}\) and was offended by Nehru’s suggestion that he keep in touch with and humour local Congressmen.\(^{187}\) A prompt apology by Nehru for daring to offer advice did not help.\(^{187}\) Even after this, Nehru sharply rebuked forty members of the Congress Party in the Madras Assembly who had demanded that Rajagopalachari be replaced.\(^{188}\) But Rajagopalachari, far from appreciating such support, even objected to Nehru having acknowledged this letter and forwarded it to him. Nehru would not accept that he had erred in this matter.

It is perfectly true that I make myself accessible to every disgruntled element in India. That is my consistent practice. In fact, I go out of my way. That does not mean that I encourage them; but it does mean that I am accessible to everyone, time permitting. I propose to continue this because that is the way I control these people and, if I may say so, to some extent, India. If Rajaji does not want me to send these letters to him, I shall not do so, but that will be a wrong policy both for me and him. It is difficult enough to hold this country together. If I followed Rajaji’s policy, I would fall out with most people. It may be a logical policy, but it will result in failure.\(^{189}\)

However, he decided to keep away from Madras politics and say or do nothing in any matter concerning Rajagopalachari. But it seemed as if even this were not possible. In accordance with Rajagopalachari’s advice, he instructed Kamaraj to choose between the chief ministership and the presidentship of the Party in Madras. Informing Rajagopalachari of this, he added,

The situation is obviously not a happy one, but there it is, and we have to face it. We cannot permit the Madras government or the organization to go to pieces. We shall, therefore, give him [Kamaraj] such help as we can and I have no doubt that you will also help him to the extent possible in the circumstances.\(^{180}\)

\(^{184}\) Letters to P. S. K. Raja and to K. Kamaraj and two letters to C. Rajagopalachari, 6 September 1953.

\(^{185}\) Rajagopalachari to Nehru, 5 September 1953. Kamaraj had had no regular education.

\(^{186}\) Nehru to Rajagopalachari, 6, 7 and 8 October 1953.

\(^{187}\) Rajagopalachari’s telegram to Nehru, 8 October 1953.

\(^{188}\) Nehru to P. V. Naidu, 29 October 1953.

\(^{189}\) Nehru to Sri Prakasa, 18 November 1953.

\(^{180}\) Nehru to Rajagopalachari, 6 April 1954.
Even these seemingly platitudinous remarks caused Rajagopalachari grave offence. An unrelenting hostility to Kamaraj was extended to include Nehru when it was realized that opposition to Kamaraj would not succeed unless Nehru was weakened.\textsuperscript{181}

Yet, what Nehru himself would have rated as his greatest failure in these years in political relationships was over his inability to secure immediately what he wanted for Krishna Menon. Deeply impressed by Menon’s efforts at Geneva and under the usual pressure from him, Nehru planned to appoint him a cabinet minister. Azad, who felt strongly about the charges of financial irregularity against Menon, immediately offered to resign in protest.\textsuperscript{182} Nehru tried hard to persuade Azad to withdraw his objection and finally made a personal appeal:

My dear Maulana,

I shall be grateful if you will let me have your decision about the matter we have discussed so often recently regarding Krishna Menon. I have been working under great strain for some months. To this has been added mental anguish during the past two weeks. The issues before me are far-reaching and involve my future life. It is becoming difficult for me to concentrate on my work till I know clearly what I shall have to do.

Should you so wish it I can come over to see you again.

Yours affectionately,

Jawaharlal.\textsuperscript{183}

Azad, however, would not give way and Nehru had to shelve the proposal for the time being. The disappointment influenced his announcement a few weeks later that he would like to retire from office, at least temporarily. He himself claimed that it was merely to shake off a feeling of physical and mental staleness and regain freshness and creativeness by going round the country mobilizing opinion and whipping up public enthusiasm in favour of official plans for development. Unlike previous occasions when he had offered to step down, his ideas and policies at this time did not run counter to those of the Party; he felt basically fit and was determined to remain so; he had a sense of confidence and fulfilment and believed he had still work to do; and relinquishing office would not mean retirement from public life. The country had reached a stage-post in its progress and could carry on for at least a short while without him. He wanted leisure to read and think and

\textsuperscript{182} Azad to Nehru, 1 August 1954.
\textsuperscript{183} Handwritten letter, 12 August 1954.
19 Nehru in 1954

20 At a charity cricket match, 1953

21 Presiding over a speech by Jayaprakash Narayan
to establish the irrelevance of the irritating question, 'After Nehru, who?' All these were arguments planned to convince. But no doubt the failure to obtain Azad's assent to Menon's return to Delhi, the inability to add to his team the man with the closest intellectual affinity without losing the colleague nearest to him in politics, helped to create a feeling of tiredness and disillusion in the midst of all-round success.

184 Nehru's speech to Congress Parliamentary Party, 30 September 1954; Nehru to Chief Ministers, 1 October 1954; Nehru to presidents, Pradesh Congress committees, 11 October 1954; Nehru to Sir Charles Trevelyan, 21 November 1954.
'The Light of Asia'

ONE

From the summer of 1954, the drift away from the United States and towards the Communist Powers continued steadily. Nehru became increasingly alienated by the strident bellicosity of the State Department. 'And yet, no one knows what it [American policy] is, except strong language and powerful emotions...'

Americans, he commented later, 'seem to imagine that every problem can be solved if there is enough talking and shouting about it. My own view is that a little silence might help.' It was almost as if he could not approve of any facet of the United States. On a project for Indian scholars visiting the United States, he wrote

I am all for broadening the outlook of the person. But mere breadth is not enough; there must be some depth also. As far as I can see, there is neither breadth nor depth about the average American. There is technical knowledge in a special field which is certainly important. The United States is hardly a place where one could go at present in search of the higher culture.

The dislike of United States policy, while it helped to expose a prejudice against the United States, did not immediately result in India drawing closer to the Soviet Union. When the Soviet Ambassador suggested, and even produced a draft of a non-aggression treaty embodying the Five Principles delineated in the Tibet agreement, Nehru shied away from signing and used the chairmanship of the Indo-China commissions as the excuse. All he was prepared to do was to accept more technical and

1 To K. N. Katju, 3 July 1954.
2 Note, 24 July 1954.
3 Note, 18 July 1954.
4 Nehru to K. P. S. Menon, Indian Ambassador in Moscow, 8 August 1954; note, 17 August 1954.
scientific assistance; and the fact that this would entail the presence of a large number of Soviet citizens in India caused him no worry.

In these international matters, there is always an element of risk in whatever one might do. The friends of today might be the enemies of tomorrow. Our main objective is to build up India and we should take advantage of any proposal to that end, unless it is clearly undesirable. At the present moment, I would almost say that, owing to various circumstances, we have rather undermined the Communist position in India.\(^5\)

There was less hesitation in Nehru's response to China, and his visit to that country in October was to him part of his continuing discovery of Asia. En route he spent a few days in the states of Indo-China, where the only event of significance was a meeting with Ho Chi Minh.

He came forward — almost leapt forward — and embraced and kissed me. Obvious that this was not a showpiece. He felt it and meant it. Fine, frank face, gentle and benign — not at all one's idea of a leader of a rebellion.\(^6\)

On arrival in Peking, he found that about a million people had turned out and crowded the twelve-mile route from the airport to give him what Desmond Donelly, a witness to the scene, described as 'a Roman triumph'.\(^7\)

For the only time on Nehru's visit, the hosts dispensed with the bullet-proof car with window glass nearly four inches thick, and Nehru and Chou rode in an open car. This was the first occasion that Chou, or anyone else in high office in the People's Republic of China, had so appeared in public, and it was clearly done to prove to Nehru that the leaders of the new China could, if they chose, behave as Nehru did in India. There were few men in police uniform to be seen on this drive but, as Nehru commented later, 'no doubt there must have been plenty of other people to maintain this order.'\(^8\)

It was not, therefore, the number of people gathered to welcome him, but their enthusiasm which impressed Nehru, for it seemed to him to possess an element of spontaneity. 'I make myself deliberately receptive when I go to any place, critically receptive if you like, but receptive. And I sensed such a tremendous emotional response from the Chinese people that I was amazed.' It was almost an upheaval of sentiment, representing the basic urges of the people for friendship with India.\(^9\) That India, not a member of the Communist fold but a fellow-Asian state, should be friendly

\(^5\) To K. N. Katju, 28 August 1954.
\(^6\) Diary entry, 17 October 1954. During his seventeen years as Prime Minister, Nehru kept a diary for only five days, from 15 to 19 October 1954.
\(^7\) Daily Mail (London), 8 July 1955.
\(^8\) Nehru to Lady Mountbatten, 2 November 1954.
\(^9\) Nehru's talk to the Congress Parliamentary Party, 17 November 1954, Tape 1, N.M.M.L.
to China perhaps served to increase the self-assurance of the Chinese people and strengthen a traditional outlook. For both the government and people of China still seemed to him, in spite of a new ideology, strongly Chinese; and a deep nationalist sentiment went along with an attachment to old-world virtues of courtesy, artistic sense and hospitality, and a sympathy for much of classical literature and culture.

Nehru still found Chou ‘very India-conscious’ and as eager as at Delhi to be as friendly as possible. It was Nehru who did not go out of his way to extend the area of assent. He pointed out the fear of China (and also perhaps of India) that prevailed in the minds of the smaller nations of Asia, drew attention to the problem of overseas Chinese and referred to the possibility of interference in the internal affairs of other countries through the medium of local communist parties. When Chou spoke of the expansionist policy of the United States and their effort to bully weaker nations and rule the world, Nehru replied that he did not think that the American people wanted war; but they were undoubtedly afraid of communist aggression and wanted to take action to protect their interests. Nehru also refused to discuss the future of Taiwan and the other islands under Taiwanese rule; but this did not seem to be resented although the Chinese attached much importance to this question, especially as they knew that the United States was negotiating a mutual defence treaty with Taiwan. Chou, however, hinted that he would welcome Nehru’s assistance in securing an invitation to any Asian-African conference, and also requested Nehru to sponsor a proposal for a conference on the Korean question. Chou added, as obvious testimony of goodwill, that he had repeatedly advised the Pakistan Government to draw away from the United States and improve relations with India. Nehru raised the question of India’s frontiers and their erroneous delineation on Chinese maps. Chou replied that this was a historical question and they had been mostly reprinting old maps as they had had no time to revise them. While the Kuomintang could be charged with intentional tampering with the delineation of boundaries, the People’s Government had no such motive. But one would always find some differences between maps because none of the boundaries of China, including those with the Soviet Union and Mongolia, had been precisely demarcated. This was a satisfactory answer as far as it went, and Nehru replied that the error in printing the boundary with India did not worry him much because India’s boundaries were quite clear and were not a matter for argument. He could understand that the revision of Chinese maps had not yet taken place, and expressed the hope that the depiction of the boundary with India would be corrected before long. ‘But I wondered how China would feel if a part of Tibet had been shown as part of India in our maps.’

Nehru’s note on his visit to China, 11 November 1954; Nehru to Chou En-lai, 14 December 1958.
discuss the frontier question, but in view of Nehru's 'strong attitude' had not pursued the matter.\textsuperscript{11} It was a pity that Nehru rejected Chou's suggestion of a final joint communiqué. Much later trouble on this question of maps could have perhaps been avoided if Nehru had not had to depend solely on his own record of the talks.

With Mao also Nehru had long talks, described by James Cameron as 'clearly a punctuation mark in the history of Asia,'\textsuperscript{12} Mao, talking, as Nehru later recorded,\textsuperscript{13} like an elderly uncle giving good advice, referred to the ancient ties as well as the new friendship between India and China, their common experiences and their need for peace to reconstruct their backward economies. There were no quarrels between them, and cooperation between two countries of different ideologies was fully possible. China needed at least twenty years of peace — time for four five-year plans — for economic development, and was willing to cooperate with any country, even the United States, in pursuit of this objective. But the United States would not permit China to live in peace; 'we cannot have even good sleep, you know.' The United States was occupying or helping in the occupation of Taiwan and many other islands near the mainland, and from these bases air-raids and bombardment were carried out frequently. American imperialism had made profits in two wars, but a third war might not be to her advantage, for then revolution would spread. Atomic weapons had made no basic change in warfare except that more people would be killed. Nehru ventured to disagree. Mao's arguments led to the conclusion that war, though bad and to be avoided, should be welcomed if it came, and this Nehru could not accept. Atomic warfare was not a matter of a greater quantity of deaths, but of qualitative change in killing, and a third world war would be quite different from earlier wars.\textsuperscript{14} But Nehru agreed with Mao that no country would benefit from such a war, and this

\textsuperscript{11} Chou to U Nu, December 1954, as reported by Burmese Ambassador. See Raghavan's telegram to Nehru, 28 October 1956.

\textsuperscript{12} James Cameron in a dispatch from Peking, News Chronicle, 20 October 1954.

\textsuperscript{13} Nehru's note to his principal private secretary, 25 November 1959.

\textsuperscript{14} Mao's version of this part of the discussion, as said to have been given at Moscow on 18 November 1957, was: 'I had an argument about this with Nehru. In this respect he is more pessimistic than I am. I told him that if half of humanity is destroyed the other half will still remain but imperialism will be destroyed entirely and there will be only socialism in all the world, and within half a century, or a whole century, the population will again increase by even more than half . . . ' See J. Gittings, Survey of the Sino-Soviet Dispute (Oxford, 1968), p. 83.

Mao gave another account seven years later, on 9 January 1965. 'As he remembered it he had said China did not want a war. They didn't have atom bombs, but if other countries wanted to fight there would be a catastrophe in the whole world, meaning that many people would die. As for how many, nobody could know. He was not speaking only of China. He did not believe one atom bomb would destroy all mankind, so that you would not be able to find a government to negotiate peace. He had mentioned this to Nehru during their conversation. Nehru said that he was chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission of India and he knew about the destructiveness of atomic power. He was sure that no one could survive. Mao replied that it would probably not be as Nehru said. Existing governments might disappear but others would arise to replace them.' Edgar Snow, The Long Revolution (New York, 1971); p. 208.
led Mao to suggest that Nehru use his influence with the United States to point this out.

If we act as chief of staff to Eisenhower, we would advise him not to go to war. This work, however, can be more easily done by the Prime Minister rather than us. If we do it, he will think we are intimidating him with revolution and he will say 'I am not afraid of revolution.'

Mao also proposed the convening of a world peace congress, in which over a hundred nations could participate and sign some form of treaty for peace and non-aggression. Nehru did not respond with much enthusiasm; with every passing year the possibility of war diminished, and if fifteen years went by without a war and there was an increasing fear of using weapons of such total destruction the time might then come for a world agreement. 'Of course,' replied Mao, 'it is difficult to sink entire China into the sea and so India too, no matter how many people are killed.'

The major impression left on Nehru by this visit to China was of a country smoothly running, with enormous potential power which was being translated gradually into actual strength. China was large not only in size but in spirit and character, and the Chinese people, unified, organized, disciplined and hardworking, exuded a tremendous sense of vitality. Arguments about recognition of the People's Republic of China or its admission to the United Nations seemed absurdly irrelevant when considered from China, for this enormous population lived in a world in itself. The question of accepting the new China was of crucial importance to the rest of the world, but China herself had passed the barrier when it could be made to suffer much from non-recognition.

Nehru was appreciative of what he saw, but by no means overwhelmed or cowed. 'I am impressed by China. Having said that, I may also tell you that, having been to China, I am very much impressed by my own country.'

There had been nothing in China to give him a sense of inferiority about India. He was neither thunderstruck by admiration nor paralysed by fear. He was conscious of how important India and Indian support were to China's leaders at this time and how keen and careful they were to retain his sympathy; and he did not feel that India was likely to be outstripped by China economically. The initial start that India had was still secure. But the pace the Chinese had set for themselves was swifter than that of India; 'we have to be very, very wide awake.' Though there was no unfriendly rivalry, and it seemed to him without doubt that the two countries could live together peacefully, 'there is something all the time there which we will

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18 Record of Nehru's talks with Mao, 19 and 23 October 1954. Nehru minuted on the file that this record was not always accurate.
19 To Lady Mountbatten, 2 November, note, 13 November, and to Chief Ministers, 15 November 1954.
20 Address to Congress Parliamentary Party, 2 December 1954, Tape 1, N.M.M.I.
have to watch to see that we do not fall back, something to keep us up to the
mark all the time . . ." But he saw no reason for India to change her ways
of functioning. Before his visit he had been committed to democratic
socialism.

I take it that our objective is to have ultimately a socialist economy. I
am not using the word in any doctrinaire sense, but in its broad
meaning. That economy as well as any planning requires an organized
approach based on adequate data with definite targets. It requires
- various kinds of controls at least at strategic points. It is clear that we
cannot proceed along authoritarian lines, such as in the Soviet Union
or even as in China. The problem for us, therefore, is how far we can
achieve our objective through democratic planning without too much
compulsion. It may be that this kind of planning does not yield those
spectacular results which might be obtained by an authoritarian
approach to this question and a great deal of compulsion. Even so, we
prefer the democratic approach because of certain values and
standards we cherish.19

First-hand knowledge of China provided him with no reason to change his
general view. Each country had to develop according to its own genius and
the fact that he did not criticize or condemn what took place in the Soviet
Union or China did not mean that he wanted to act in similar vein in India.
'But I have the strongest objection to India being made a rootless pale
shadow of some other country.'20 Indeed, to some it seemed that he felt
more strongly about this now than ever before.21 But there was, after his
visit to China, an added degree of urgency to his thinking on democratic
socialism.

For my part, I believe in parliamentary democracy and in individual
freedom. But I also believe that it is essential to have rapid economic
progress. We have to combine the two. That is a great test for us and it
will require all our wisdom and all our strength and unity of
purpose.22

18 Address to Congress Parliamentary Party, 17 November 1954, Tape 1, N.M.M.L.
19 To Chief Ministers, 15 September 1954. This incidentally disposes of the contention of some
critics of Nehru that he had been frightened by evidence of China's rapid progress, and it was only on
his return from China that he began, for the first time since 1947, to speak of the necessity of socialism in
20 To Chief Ministers, 9 December 1954.
21 'I thought, too, that on his return from Communist China he felt consciously satisfied — more than
before — that his way of running a country was better than Mao Tse-tung's. This feeling, whether
correct or not, was so strong that I have come to the conclusion that Nehru's visit to Red China was a
good thing for all the friends of democracy in India and the world, for his observation of Chinese
communism strengthened his conviction that democracy is better.' Robert Trumbull, 'Portrait of a
22 To Chief Ministers, 15 November 1954.
India still led, and was on the path which to Nehru was the only correct one; but the lead could not be taken for granted and the direction taken had to be justified by results.

TWO

At the Colombo conference, Indonesia had suggested the holding of a wider conference of Asian and African states. Nehru had not been in favour of providing what he thought would be a forum for heated discussion on local and regional matters, particularly Israel and Palestine.²³

Egyptian or indeed Arab politics appear to me to be extraordinarily immature and wrapped up in their petty problems with little understanding of what is going on in the world. When I met Nasser, I was attracted to him; he is a likeable person. When I read a little book of his, I felt disappointed, that is, in regard to his intellectual calibre.²⁴

He had indefinitely postponed an exchange of embassies with Israel because he believed that it would hamper India’s chances at an appropriate moment in mediating in the West Asian problem;²⁵ and a general discussion of the whole matter at this stage and in the setting of an Asian-African conference could only prove an embarrassment. But gradually Nehru came round to accepting the utility of such a conference, and saw in it perhaps a possible platform for refuting the United States policy of imposing military alliances on Asia and Africa. That India, Burma and Indonesia held together augured well; together they formed an area of peace which could be extended and buttressed.

Nehru, therefore, now gave serious thought to the details of such a conference. As the main purpose was to create an atmosphere of cooperation and improve the projection of Asia and Africa in the world picture, there should be no formal agenda and specific controversies should be avoided. Krishna Menon was for an invitation to Israel with an explanation to the Arab states that the presence of Israel committed them to nothing; Nehru, wishing to avoid dissension even on the question of the composition of the conference, agreed with reluctance that an invitation to Israel should be extended only if the Arab countries agreed to it.²⁶ But he was firm that China, who was eager to be present, should be invited. A hint by Eden that this would create a bad impression in Britain and the United States was sharply rejected. India had no desire to irritate opinion in these

²³Note, 8 August 1954.
²⁴To Ali Yavar Jung, Indian Ambassador to Egypt, 8 September 1954. The book was Nasser’s The Philosophy of Revolution.
²⁵Nehru’s note, 3 June 1954, and letter to M. Sharet, 5 June 1954.
²⁶Krishna Menon’s note, 18 December, and Nehru’s note, 19 December 1954.
two countries but the world was larger than them and account had to be taken of views and reactions in the rest of the world.

For us to be told, therefore, that the United States and the United Kingdom will not like the inclusion of China in the Afro-Asian conference is not very helpful. In fact, it is somewhat irritating. There are many things that the United States and the United Kingdom have done which we do not like at all.\footnote{Memorandum of British Foreign Office on Eden's conversation with Krishna Menon, 10 December 1954, and Nehru's note, 18 December 1954.}

So the five Colombo powers, meeting at Bogot, decided to invite all the independent countries of Asia and Africa barring South Africa and Israel. The first was an obvious omission, but Nehru conceded that the second was an illogical surrender to Arab susceptibility.\footnote{Nehru's telegram to all Indian missions, 4 January 1955.} The People's Republic of China, recognized by all the inviting powers, was asked to participate, despite Pakistan's initial opposition; and this ruled out Taiwan, for it enjoyed no separate statehood. All four states of Indo-China were included as they presented an urgent problem of peace and the Colombo powers had special responsibilities with regard to the Geneva agreements. There was no basic objection to inviting the two Koreas but on balance it was decided not to do so. The borderline cases of states on the verge of independence were considered each on its merits and invitations were sent to the Gold Coast, the Sudan and the Central African Federation — the last in order to establish the principle that the conference would not be merely a gathering of coloured races.

Though the mere fact of such a wide membership would give the conference high and unique importance of a general nature, the development of the crisis in East Asia added a topical relevance. The United States argued that the continued detention of American prisoners in China was a breach of the Korean armistice agreement, while China took the line that these were spies who had been parachuted directly into China. Nehru passed on a message that there was such strong feeling in the United States over this that the Canadian Government feared serious consequences;\footnote{Nehru's telegram to Raghavan, 6 December 1954.} but Chou assumed an attitude of indifference. Though China wanted peace, she would not beg for peace.\footnote{Raghavan's telegram to Nehru after interview with Chou, 9 December 1954.} The United Nations Secretary-General, Hammarskjöld, then offered to visit China to mediate on this issue and Nehru advised Chou to receive him. To refuse to do so would give some handle to China's enemies, while his visit might well help in stating China's case fully before the world.\footnote{Nehru's telegram to Chou, 13 December 1954.} This was all the more important as the United Nations had one-sidedly condemned China. Hammarskjöld claimed that as
he did not approve of the resolution he had not forwarded it; but he hoped that some good might result from his direct approach to China and open out fresh avenues.\textsuperscript{83}

The Chinese Government agreed to receive Hammarskjöld, and this in itself strengthened their diplomatic position by bringing them, despite non-recognition by the United Nations, more fully into the international system. But any quick settlement of this question was thwarted by the deeper involvement of the United States with Chiang Kai-shek.\textsuperscript{88} At the Commonwealth Prime Ministers’ Conference, Churchill, in ‘a kind of second childhood’,\textsuperscript{84} fully supported the United States; but Eden, R. A. Butler and Pearson were keen to exercise a restraining influence, and Eden requested Nehru to persuade China to refrain from interfering with the evacuation of the coastal islands and to send a representative to Lake Success.\textsuperscript{85} If Chou’s words were any indication, India still had some influence.

As I have said before, the Chinese people are very glad to have such a friendly neighbour as India in the common cause of defending peace. I have the firm conviction that the deep friendship between our two peoples and their common desire to work for peace have provided the prospect of broad development for the friendly cooperation between China and India.\textsuperscript{86}

So Nehru sent messages from London to Chou to isolate the Taiwan issue and give it low priority; agree to negotiations on other issues; not to insist on total withdrawal by the United States; to accept even an informal conference unconnected with the United Nations such as the Geneva conference on Indo-China; and to foster Sino-British relations by not raising the question of Hong Kong. A merely negative attitude, however strong one’s case, was neither adequate nor proper when the alternative was a major war; so one should proceed step by step, and start with diplomatic soundings and informal undertakings in order to lower tension. There was, for example, no reason why, if the United States desisted from action and restrained Chiang, China should not acquiesce in the evacuation of the coastal islands.\textsuperscript{87} Chou’s response was not very helpful. He complained of active provocation, observed that friendship with Britain would be as easy to secure as ‘fish on tree-tops’ and said nothing about any Chinese moves to

\textsuperscript{83} Nehru’s telegram to Raghavan, 3 January 1955.
\textsuperscript{84} On 1 December 1954 the United States had concluded a military security alliance with Taiwan, and on 24 January 1955 Eisenhower followed this up by speaking of military action to counter any effort from the mainland.
\textsuperscript{85} Nehru to Indira Gandhi, 1 February 1955.
\textsuperscript{86} Eden to Nehru, 2 February 1955.
\textsuperscript{87} Chou to Nehru, 28 December 1954.
\textsuperscript{88} Nehru’s telegrams to Raghavan, 4, 5, 9 and 10 February 1955; Krishna Menon’s telegram to Raghavan, 6 February 1955.
reduce tension. The only positive reaction was support of the Soviet proposal for a great power conference on the lines of Geneva. But this in itself was insufficient to thaw the attitude of the United States, and the prospect of a general war remained as menacing as before.

So the Asian-African conference could be of more than general significance, and Nehru was determined that it should succeed. No detail of organization was too trivial for him.

Above all, one fact should be remembered and this is usually forgotten in Indonesia. This fact is an adequate provision of bathrooms and lavatories, etc. People can do without drawing rooms, but they cannot do without bathrooms and lavatories.

It was such deficiencies which upset people, and frayed tempers were no good when considering important problems. It was generally recognized that he himself would be the most important figure at Bandung. Though People's China was mustering strength and prestige, India was still the political pivot of Asia, and in India Nehru was more than ever the pre-eminent figure. He spoke for almost every shade of opinion. The resolution of the Congress in January 1955 to build a 'socialistic pattern' of society blurred differences between the Congress and left-wing parties. To Rajagopalachari this was "the crazy piloting of the nation" but to the country as a whole it was a major step forward. Most Socialists felt there was now no basic reason why they should not return to the Congress fold, but Nehru dissuaded them. He claimed to have done so because of his belief that the Socialists still had a role to play as a responsible opposition party, but he was probably also influenced by the desire not to hurt Jayaprakash. In the elections in Andhra province the Communist Party, which had earlier exercised considerable influence, was now routed. Eden, then on a visit to Delhi, remarked to Nehru that this was an event of greater world importance than anything else that had happened recently. This triumph was the result not so much of a positive failure on the part of the Communists as of the new mood of hope and expectation created by an improved food situation, a successful foreign policy and the commitment of the Congress to socialism. For much of this Nehru could, and did, take personal credit. 'No, I don't believe it [communism] is at all a threat to my country. I can't speak of every other country, only that I feel reasons — well, frankly, because I think I'm quite good enough to prevent that.'

88 Raghavan's telegrams to Nehru, 6, 8 and 11 February 1955.
89 Nehru to B. F. H. B. Tyabji, Indian Ambassador in Indonesia, 20 February 1955.
91 Nehru to U.N. Dhebar, reporting conversation with Sucheta Kripalani, 1 April 1955.
92 Nehru to Vijaysalakshmi, 5 March 1955.
93 Interview with Margaret Chase Smith on television, 15 March 1955.
The Communists themselves were dejected, having little to criticize in Nehru's policy at home or abroad. A. K. Gopalan, a generally respected Communist leader, called on Nehru, evidently on instructions from his party, to apologize for some objectionable remarks made during the election campaign. He assured Nehru that it was now the policy of his party not to create trouble in any way.

He reminded me that he was an old Congressman and even though he had become a Communist he could not forget what he had learned as a Congressman. There was a difference between those Communists who had been Congressmen and had worked hard for the Congress and newcomers who did not have that past experience or discipline.\(^4^4\)

In fact, Nehru now needed to worry only about lone assassins, either those encouraged by the Salazar government or unbalanced individuals. He was told that the Portuguese had offered a considerable amount as payment for his murder;\(^4^5\) and at Nagpur a man jumped on the foot-board of his car with a large, razor-sharp knife. But Nehru vetoed any tightening of security.

Abroad, his status was equally unchallenged. No single individual had done more, in the years since the Second World War, to project Asia on to the world stage. Consistently, as at the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference earlier in the year, he had given expression to the general Asian viewpoint and drawn attention to the ferment taking place on the Asian continent. This basic upheaval of ideas had to be understood and come to terms with if it was not to become explosive. Even Churchill, though his mind and memory were clouded, grasped the pre-eminence of India's Prime Minister and cast him in a crucial role.

I hope you will think of the phrase 'The Light of Asia'. It seems to me that you might be able to do what no other human being could in giving India the lead, at least in the realm of thought, throughout Asia, with the freedom and dignity of the individual as the ideal rather than the Communist Party drill book.\(^4^6\)

The Commonwealth members as a whole relied heavily on Nehru to give value to their association. Others turned to him with particular problems. Ollenhauer, leader of the opposition in West Germany, travelled to London to explain to Nehru the viewpoint of his party on rearmament and reunification; Adenauer, the Chancellor, then expressed a desire for a meeting to argue the counter-case of the West German Government, but

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\(^{4^4}\) Nehru's note on interview with Gopalan, 1 April 1955.

\(^{4^5}\) Nehru's note to his secretary, 11 March 1955.

\(^{4^6}\) Churchill to Nehru, 21 February 1955. Churchill referred again to this phrase in his letter of 30 June 1955.
PRIVATE.

June 1955.

Mandir  Nehru,

I hope you will forgive the lapse of time in replying to your letter of April 8. Events following upon my resignation, and the General Election here, have delayed my correspondence greatly.

I was much touched by what you said. One of the most agreeable memories of my last years in office is our association. At our conferences your contribution was a leading and constructive one, and I always admired your ardent wish for peace and the absence of bitterness in your consideration of the antagonisms that had in the past divided us. Yours is indeed a heavy burden and responsibility, shaping the destiny of your many millions of countrymen, and playing your outstanding part in world affairs. I wish you well in your task. Remember "The Light of Asia!"

With warm personal regards,

I remain,

Yours sincerely,

Winston Churchill
an interview could not be fitted into Nehru's schedule. Mendès-France came to the airport at Paris for a tour d'horizon. Casey of Australia requested Nehru to restrain Indonesia on the question of West New Guinea. 'It is clear that you will personally be the leading figure at the Bandung Conference — although I expect that Chou En-lai will endeavour to make the most of the opportunities that the conference will provide.' 47 Eden and Hammarskjöld sought his personal intervention with Chou to persuade China to respond to the permission granted to seventy-six Chinese students to leave the United States by releasing the American airmen. 48 The Dutch Government desired him to speak to Sukarno and secure a fair and quick trial for thirty-five Dutch prisoners in Indonesia. 49 Non-official opinion also had faith in him, and Einstein, shortly before his death, passed on to Nehru Leo Szilard's suggestion that China agree not to occupy the offshore islands for some time after their evacuation. 50

The sabotage in Hong Kong which led to the crash in the Indian Ocean of the Kashmir Princess, the Air India Constellation carrying the advance party of the Chinese delegation, set a sombre note for the Bandung Conference. The chronic crisis in East Asia had escalated to the verge of war, 51 the formation of SEATO had muddied the waters in South East Asia and, with both Britain and Pakistan linked with the Baghdad Pact, tension had increased in West Asia. Given the imperative of the 'soul' of Dulles, 52 to throw a military harness not only round China but around communism everywhere, one could expect a crisis to develop at any place. In this context, the very fact of a meeting of the representatives of the peoples of Asia and Africa was of enormous importance; and it was, therefore, vital to Nehru that the conference should not end in failure. Agreement on specific issues was not possible; nor was it necessary. The broad purpose of the Bandung Conference, in line with the Asian Relations Conference at New Delhi in 1947, should be to reassert the importance of Asia and Africa in the world. For too long they had been treated as outer fringes of Europe; but now they had their own views on world affairs and these could not be ignored. They had no wish to intervene in other people's problems but to the extent that these problems impinged on Asia and Africa, their views

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47 Casey to Nehru, 6 April 1955.
48 Personal message from Eden transmitted by British High Commission in Delhi to Secretary-General, 10 April 1955; telegram from Indian Permanent Mission at United Nations to Foreign Secretary, 14 April 1955.
49 Secretary-General's record of conversation with Dutch Ambassador, 12 April 1955.
50 Einstein to Nehru, 6 April 1955.
51 Dulles publicly warned China on 8 March not to underrate United States determination to meet what it regarded as aggression, and Eisenhower later revealed that the United States had even selected targets on the Chinese mainland that might have to be hit. A number of senior officials in Washington expected in late March that war would break out within a month. J. H. Kalicki, The Pattern of Sino-American Crisis (Cambridge, 1975), pp. 149-52.
52 The phrase was Chou's years later, in an interview with an Australian delegation, 5 July 1971. See R. Terrill, 800,000,000 The Real China (Penguin, 1975), p. 148.
would have to be heard. Whatever the differences among the nations of these continents, they had inherited common social and economic problems, and on these perhaps there could be some unity of opinion. Certainly they would not accept any decisions imposed on them by others, however powerful, and particularly on issues created by the interference of other states in Asia and Africa.

All these aspirations could easily be lost in a mass of verbiage about the spirit of Asia and Africa; and aware of this, Nehru set out to keep the Bandung Conference firmly rooted to the fundamental issues. He spoke, like almost everyone else, of the new surge of feelings in these two continents, and of marching in step with history; but the course he sought to steer was one of 'practical idealism'. The first task was to hold together these variegated nations, covering all attitudes from military alliance with the United States to communism as the official creed. As the impact which the conference made on the outside world was as important as the relations which member countries developed among themselves, it was essential to conceal differences beneath wide generalizations and assert, wherever possible, common viewpoints. If the Bandung Conference were to be a success, it could only be as a tour de force. Without sleight of hand or trickery, an assembly which included so many allies of one side or the other would have to find ways of presenting themselves convincingly to the world as possessing, beneath their varied policies, a genuine sense of shared interest. To avoid each nation stating at the very outset its own attitude on various problems, thereby reducing elasticity of discussion, Nehru proposed that the conference dispense with opening speeches. Mahomed Ali opposed this and Nehru had to give way, but himself refrained from speaking at the inaugural sessions. Nehru was by now rousing considerable hostility among the other delegations by what was suspected to be a calculated effort at personal leadership. It was decided, after much discussion, to reach a consensus on general issues while reserving controversies for informal discussions. When a resolution condemning colonialism was being considered, Sir John Kotelawala of Ceylon raised the issue — which, apart from everything else, was far removed from Asia and Africa — of Soviet dominance in eastern Europe. Nehru’s sharp reaction revealed his annoyance. This was a conference of governments and should function within that limitation. The countries of eastern Europe were sovereign states and members of the United Nations, and for the conference to treat them as colonial territories would be ‘a most extraordinary position to take up’. If, however, the delegates wished to review the pressures and coercion to which independent countries were subject, ‘you enter into a region of doubt, uncertainty, difficulty and

international confusion about which you can argue day in and day out. Whatever the result you may arrive at, it will be a confusing one.' He was not an admirer of the Soviet Union. 'I dislike many things they have done as I dislike many things the Western Powers have done and at the proper moment, if members consider it necessary, we will give expression to it in our own language.' But this question of conditions in eastern Europe could not be raised as a formal matter and the policies of any country criticized. It would be enough if members emphasized, in general terms, that no country should interfere in the internal affairs of another.\textsuperscript{56} This hurdle was got over by condemning ‘colonialism in all its manifestations’ as an evil which should be speedily ended, but without making any specific reference to independent countries, or, as suggested by Turkey, to ‘international doctrines resorting to the methods of force, infiltration and subversion’. But even more fraught with difficulties was the question of military alliances, which was of direct concern to many participants. Nehru elaborated with some impatience on the meaning and virtues of non-alignment for the countries of Asia and Africa. NATO might have advantages for Western Europe, but to the rest of the world it assumed the face of colonialism, while SEATO was no more than an angry reaction to the Geneva agreements. Every nation had the right to defend itself but such a right would not be strengthened by joining either the Western or the Soviet bloc or even by forming a separate bloc. For the newly free and under-developed countries, potential strength lay not in piling up arms, but in industrial progress and the fostering of a spirit of self-reliance. Peace might well come through strength, but not, for the Bandung countries, through military strength or alliances. ‘We do not agree with the Communist teachings, we do not agree with the anti-Communist teachings, because they are both based on wrong principles.’ India certainly would not belong to either bloc whatever happened, and would cherish her identity. Non-alignment, however, was not just a matter of ideology. If the whole world were divided up between two big blocs the inevitable result would be war. But India could utilize her present position to promote the forces working against war and for friendly coexistence. A military alliance increased the insecurity of its members while commitment to the Five Principles lessened tension and harmed nobody.\textsuperscript{58}

This was not an issue on which Nehru could hope to persuade the representatives of governments which were already signatories of military pacts. Indeed, by conceding that they could organize for self-defence, he virtually recognized that he had no hope of securing the acceptance of his views. The clause in the final communiqué of the Bandung Conference, that every nation had the right to defend itself singly or collectively in conformity with the United Nations Charter, while stating nothing new,
seemed to Nehru not to cover the Manila treaty, because the Charter only provided for self-defence in case of armed attack. But no direct condemnation of that treaty was feasible at Bandung. The most that the non-aligned countries could secure was an indirect censure of SEATO by stipulating that such collective defence arrangements should not serve the particular interests of any of the big powers.

So the Bandung Conference was in no solid sense a victory for Nehru, if by that be meant the imposition of his outlook on a large number of the participating countries. In fact, he sacrificed his views in order to secure the maximum harmony and only asserted himself when the proceedings threatened to get out of hand. Yet he was satisfied, not so much with the trend of the formal discussions and the final communiqué drafted in such a way as to enable all to sign, as by the very fact that the conference had met and the leaders of the two continents had got to know each other. Nasser, who had never before left Egypt except for the pilgrimage to Mecca, was 'excited like a little boy'. Nehru himself, who was attending for the first time since 1947 a full-scale international conference, had to revise his opinions of many foreign statesmen, and was particularly impressed by Prince Wan Waithayakon of Thailand. But the conference was really a stage set by Nehru, with not naivety but conscious deliberation, for the Chinese Prime Minister. He saw himself as a producer-manager rather than as a hero; and had he not willingly abdicated, Chou would not have been the central figure. If Chou appeared to many to be the star of Bandung, frequently timing his diplomatic operations so as to overshadow the Indian Prime Minister, Nehru regarded Chou's success as his own personal triumph.

Chou, expectedly, made the fullest use of the occasion presented to him and projected an image of smiling friendliness.

He conducted himself with ability and moderation in the Conference and its committees. Whenever he spoke, he did so with authority. He took particular pains to meet delegates and went to many parties given by heads of delegations. He had private talks also with them. He did not put forward any important proposal but objected to something if it seemed to him to be opposed to any principle for which he stood. He was obviously anxious that the Conference should succeed and, therefore, tried to be as accommodating as possible. He was patient even when he had to put up with rather offensive behaviour, which sometimes happened. Only once did he lose his temper for a short while in a committee and said that China would not be bullied.

87 Address to Congress Parliamentary Party, 3 May 1955. Tape 2, N.M.M.L.
88 Nehru to Lady Mountbatten, 30 April 1955.
89 Note, 28 April 1955.
90 Gdo Agung, op. cit., p. 257.
He told Nehru that the People's Government had practically decided to release the American airmen when the Kashmir Princess was blown up; but he promised to review the matter and invited Krishna Menon to Peking for this purpose. At a meeting with the four sponsoring Prime Ministers, Prince Wan and Romulo of the Philippines, he laughed out the idea of introducing communism into Tibet, and invited them all to visit that region. He expressed publicly his willingness to hold direct talks with the United States on Taiwan and added in private that, while he could make no further commitment till the American reaction was known, he was anxious to seek a peaceful settlement. Though China could not accept a cease-fire as this implied acknowledgment of Chiang's possession of Taiwan and the presence of United States forces on the island, his government had no desire to punish Chiang's officers and men and would gladly absorb them in the Chinese army. He approved of the idea of recognizing the neutrality of Laos and Cambodia, and supported Nehru's rejection of U Nu's suggestion (made with the consent of Dulles) that India should channel economic and military aid to these two countries. Chou's own proposal, which was that India, Burma and China should jointly address Britain and the United States, seeking clarification of their suggestion, was turned down by Nehru.

On relations with other countries, Chou stated that China, though under a communist government, desired no expansion or internal subversion; so he had come to Bandung to reach a common understanding on the basis of the Five Principles. Each country should respect whatever way of life and economic system had been chosen by another, and he was prepared to give every assurance to remove apprehensions. He specifically mentioned that China respected the ways of life of the American and Japanese peoples, but claimed the same right, to be respected, for herself. China wanted no special privileges or status but only equality of treatment. Chou followed up this statement by personal discussions with the various participants. Talks were begun with Indonesia on the question of overseas Chinese, and even with the Thai delegates on possible improvement of relations. Indeed, Chou, a hard-headed communist beneath an exterior of 'reasonableness, restraint and good breeding', was not influenced by such infantile notions as friendship or a sense of obligation. Convinced that each country was utterly alone in the world, with nothing but its own self-reliance and resources to protect it, he had no qualms about acting to weaken India's position. When he found that Nehru had thrown his weight against a condemnatory resolution on Palestine, Chou carefully cultivated the Arab representatives and contended that the creation and support of Israel was an even more

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68 Nehru's notes on talks with Chou, 23 and 26 April 1955.
69 Nehru's notes on talks with Chou, 23 and 28 April 1955.
70 Nehru's notes, 25 and 26 April 1955.
71 Nehru to C. Rajagopalachari, 28 April 1955.
flagrant case of interference by the Western Powers in Asia than Taiwan. He also quietly established relations on a cordial footing with Pakistan. Mahomed Ali informed him that Pakistan was not hostile to China, did not fear Chinese aggression and would not be dragged into any war between the United States and China. It is said ‘on unimpeachable authority’ that in return Chou assured Pakistan that there was no conceivable clash of interest which could imperil the friendly relations between the two countries, but that this was not true of relations between India and China and a definite conflict of interests between them could be expected soon. If this report be accurate and even if Nehru had known of it, he would probably not have minded or even have been surprised. He had no wish to see the leaders of Bandung become yes-men of each other any more than of the Western or Communist Powers, and he was aware of the priorities of national interests. Even so, Chou saw fit to keep these overtures hidden. He was clearly not Nehru’s equal at this time in international trust and goodwill.

THREE

After Bandung, Nehru continued to maintain contacts with the two blocs. He had been severely critical of many aspects of American policy, while his opposition to the creation of a circle of alliances and to the extension of spheres of influence in Asia brought him in line with the current policy of the U.S.S.R. Large-scale economic assistance had also been inaugurated in a spectacular manner in February 1955 with Soviet agreement to build a steel mill with an annual capacity of one million tons. Yet Nehru regarded as unfair any suggestion that he was non-aligned more in favour of one side than the other. ‘I belong’, he had asserted at Bandung, ‘to neither [bloc] and I propose to belong to neither whatever happens in the world. If we have to stand alone, we will stand by ourselves, whatever happens . . . and we propose to face all consequences.’ On his return from Indonesia, he sent for the American Ambassador to assure him that there was no truth in the suggestion that his government was hostile to the United States. They wanted to be friends, although they certainly felt that American policies had been wrong and encouraged the very tendencies which they sought to end. Too much talk of communism or anti-communism confused the issue.

66 Report by S. Dutt, Foreign Secretary, of conversation with Foreign Minister of Jordan, 19 April 1955.
68 Speech at the closed session, 22 April 1955.
and the world crisis was better interpreted as one of large, dynamic countries inevitably trying to expand in various ways. It was as part of this attempt to facilitate a modus vivendi between the clashing powers that Krishna Menon shuttled between Peking, London and Washington; for it was in this manner, outside the realm of formal diplomacy, that Nehru believed the principal non-aligned power could play its most effective role.

There are no affirmatives and negatives about it. There are fine shades of opinion, hints thrown out, general impressions created without commitments, reactions awaited and so on. If a reaction is favourable, one takes another step forward. Otherwise one shuts up . . . What do we try to do? To soften and soothe each side and make it slightly more receptive to the other. This is not a matter of formal messages at all . . .

Few today would question the wisdom of Nehru's analysis and of his hopes of moving gradually towards a peace based on firmer foundations. Even then in the United States there were some far-seeing enough to discern that it was not the pursuit of a mirage. The New York Times agreed that there was enough development to allow hope that the cold war was growing lukewarm. But to those sections of opinion in the United States that were guided by Dulles and the 'nationalism-anti-communism-warfare coalition', Nehru's reasoning seemed an over-subtle apologia for partisanship. He was regarded as a declared protagonist, and his failure to steer the Bandung Conference clear of ideological dispute was received as a triumph for the allies of the United States. Propaganda was set afoot claiming that India was inclined to communism and was encouraging its spread, that she and, in particular, her Prime Minister, were arrogant, sought the leadership of Asia and were striving to develop into a strong and dominating power, and that India was opposed to Arab interests. Official American agencies were suspected of giving wide circulation to a

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69 Nehru's note on talk with John Sherman Cooper, 5 May 1955.
70 Nehru to G. L. Mehta, Indian Ambassador in Washington, 1 June 1955.
71 Cf. Professor George Kennan: 'In certain relatively powerless sectors of the American government establishment people continued to explore, patiently and with insight, the possible channels of approach to a less dangerous and more hopeful state of affairs. But in other and more powerful echelons other people continued to carry on with the concepts born of the Korean War, as though Stalin had never died, as though no changes had occurred, as though the problem were still, and solely, the achievement of superiority in preparation for a future military encounter accepted as inevitable, rather than the avoidance of a disastrous encounter for which there was no logical reason at all and which no one could expect to win . . . And who does not remember the result?' The United States and the Soviet Union, 1917-1976', Foreign Affairs, July 1976, p. 685.
72 1 June 1955.
73 The phrase is Professor J. K. Galbraith's, 'America's Undercover Coalition', New Statesman, 13 August 1976.
74 See dispatch from Washington in The Hindu, 27 April 1955.
75 Nehru's notes on interview with Prince (later King) Faisal, 5 and 7 May 1955.
vicious article by Nehru’s younger sister denigrating the Nehru family;\textsuperscript{76} and American money was being spent within India not merely to gain support for American policy but even to weaken Nehru’s hold over his own followers.\textsuperscript{77} All this might have embittered a smaller man and led to an open breach with the United States—a step which would have been received with considerable acclaim in India. Even Rajagopalachari, bothered by the growing American programme of nuclear armament, pressed Nehru to reject financial assistance from the United States. ‘Sometime or other you will have to take the great step of not taking American aid. I hope I am not becoming a visionary, but it seems it is inevitable we take this step to complete the moral structure of our freedom.’\textsuperscript{78} But it was precisely because the United States Government were so angry and promoting a widespread campaign against India and her leader that Nehru declined to take any step, however justified, that might further worsen relations between the two countries. Rajagopalachari was mixing up moral and political issues. ‘Will it help from any moral or other point of view for us to take up a line which makes us appear to be actually hostile to the United States and not to be understood or appreciated by any country? An act must bear some relation to the existing circumstances.’\textsuperscript{79}

Nehru, therefore, had no intention of being deflected from his genuine commitment to non-alignment by provocation or blandishment from either side, his general policy thereby being weakened and his personal integrity endangered. As a result, he exercised immeasurable influence in the world at large. It was India and not the United Nations whom China selected to announce the release of four American airmen. It was Nehru whom Hammarskjöld invited to wind up the tenth anniversary celebrations of the United Nations—\textsuperscript{80} an invitation which Nehru had to decline because he could not fit in his schedule a journey to San Francisco. Nehru knew the sources of his strength in international affairs and had no intention of throwing them away. Visiting the Soviet Union that summer, he was not surprised to find that his hosts had organized an unprecedented welcome. For many months the Soviet leaders had realized how helpful to their own interests Nehru’s general policies had been. Soon after the Geneva Conference Bulganin, referring to one of Nehru’s speeches in Parliament, had remarked, ‘All I can say of that speech, so full of wisdom

\textsuperscript{76} Krishna Hutheesing’s article in the \textit{Ladies Home Journal} (January 1955) was distributed freely in India and abroad, allegedly by United States authorities, and efforts were made to secure its republication in some Indian newspapers. Nehru was also told that the \textit{Pratap}, a Hindi journal of Delhi, was paid substantially by the United States Embassy for this purpose. See Nehru’s note, 15 May 1955.

\textsuperscript{77} ‘It might interest you to know that some little time ago I received definite information that the United States were looking for agents in the Congress Party in India.’ Nehru to S. N. Agarwal, secretary of the Congress Party, 24 May 1955.

\textsuperscript{78} C. Rajagopalachari to Nehru, 4 May 1955.

\textsuperscript{79} Nehru to C. Rajagopalachari, 9 May 1955. See also his statement at press conference, 31 May, \textit{Times of India}, 1 June 1955.

\textsuperscript{80} Dag Hammarskjöld to Nehru, 3 June 1955.
and vision, is may Nehru live long.' He knew of India's difficulties; he also knew that some people might even call Nehru communist. All that the Soviet people wanted was that Nehru should remain Nehru.81 Now they had the chance to demonstrate to the world their growing empathy and perhaps even to draw and bind Nehru closer. All the members of the presidium were present at the airport in Moscow, and Bulganin, for the first time in his career, drove with Nehru in an open car through the milling streets of the capital. It was clearly an effort both to outpace the reception in China a year earlier and to demonstrate to Nehru that the regard for him in the Soviet Union was in converse proportion to that in the United States. But even foreign observers in Moscow conceded that there was a spontaneous element in this reception for the man who had become a symbol of the world's hope for peace.82

Nehru himself, back in the Soviet Union nearly thirty years after his first tour, which had so impressed him, was in a receptive and inquiring mood. He went 'with an open mind and, I hope, with an open heart'83 to find out what he could for himself.

I remember reading in the thirties the great work of the Webbs: Soviet Communism — A New Civilization. I wondered then and I wonder still what this new civilization is. What are the enduring elements in it, what are superficial and will pass away. Is this a new religion that has appeared in human history with all the vitality and aggressiveness of a new faith, even though it puts on an economic garb? Is it a basic philosophy which gives us some understanding of the complexities of human relations and of the great and often tragic drama of man's adventure since first homo sapiens appeared on the surface of the earth? Does it give us some glimpse of the future?

The Soviet experiment had an economic appeal, but those bred in the Gandhian tradition of peaceful action and high standards of behaviour could not avoid doubt and distaste when techniques of unscrupulous violence were even made into a philosophy. Could the new economic approach, shorn of its violence and coercion and suppression of individual liberty, be helpful in solving India's problems or the world's problems?

There was no easy answer. Only by action and continuous effort and trial and error, could we proceed along the dimly lit path of the present towards an uncertain future. And whatever our decisions might be, events in other parts of the world could come in our way and influence them and even obstruct them.84

81 K. P. S. Menon's telegram to Foreign Secretary, 31 August 1954.
82 See, for example, dispatch from Moscow in New York Times, 12 June 1955.
83 Interview with Ralph Parker, Blitz (Bombay), 4 June 1955.
84 To Chief Ministers, written on the plane en route to Moscow, 5 June 1955.
To deal with such questions, obviously an official visit as Prime Minister to a closed society would not provide full information. Though Nehru saw much more than he had in 1927, he knew that even now he was not shown all. He was aware, for example, that labour camps existed, although he did not see or hear of them. But what did strike him was that the general look of the people — and he saw millions of them in far-flung parts of the Soviet Union — was happy and cheerful. They looked well-fed and were adequately clothed. Stress was being laid on the needs of children and on the importance of games and athletics. There was no civil liberty as Indians knew it, but this did not seem to be missed because, Nehru thought, it had never been known in Russia. Virtually all persons under fifty, that is, a very large part of the entire active population, had grown up under the Soviet system and been fully conditioned by it. So, 'the general impression I got was one of contentment, as practically everyone is occupied and busy and no one seems to get much time for complaining, or if there are complaints, they are about relatively minor matters.'

It seemed to Nehru that a new type of society was developing in the Soviet Union, a vital society, expanding in numbers, pushing ahead in the construction of new towns and cities and factories, and fully believing in its environment. Its production was increasing, its standards were rising, and its citizens were gaining the reading habit and were becoming attuned to thinking scientifically. Such a society, if it could shake off the war atmosphere which had enveloped it since its inception, was almost certain to settle down to normality. A measure of individual freedom might also follow. 'I do not think this will lead to the type of individual freedom that is known in some of the countries of the West, but a well-read and well-trained society is not likely to submit for long to many restrictions on individual freedom.'

With so much to safeguard and so much yet to be done, the people and rulers of the Soviet Union appeared eager for peace; for they were confident that given time they could do as well economically as the United States. Communists in the Soviet Union formed the government, daily facing national and international problems, and they were in touch with reality and responsibility. This made them very different from communists in non-communist countries, whom they cared little for and only utilized for political purposes when necessary.85

In his talks with the Soviet leaders, Nehru was concerned to put forward the case for the United States and to make clear that his independent thinking could not be submerged by cordiality and the current coincidence of his outlook with the Russians. He argued that China's release of four American prisoners had been appreciated in Britain and, to some extent, even in the United States; so the Soviet Government should use their

85 Nehru's note on visit to the Soviet Union, 1 August 1955.
influence with China to secure the release of those still under detention. He advised against any proposal for a conference of six powers, including India and China, to consider East Asian problems, as this would immediately raise the question of Chiang's attendance. It would, therefore, be far better to encourage bilateral talks between the United States and China. He rejected the Soviet offer to propose India as the sixth permanent member of the Security Council and insisted that priority be given to China's admission to the United Nations. Bulganin and Khrushchev severely criticized the United States for aggressive attitudes. 'I don't see', replied Nehru, 'why a strong man should always go about showing his muscles.' It was a remark seemingly made in agreement but in fact it had a double edge. Nehru then drew attention to the more hopeful elements in United States policy: the eclipse of Knowland and McCarthy, the differences between Dulles and Eisenhower and the more conciliatory attitude of the President, and the general friendliness of the people of the United States. He pressed the Soviet leaders not to be despondent about the Four-Power Conference soon to be held in Geneva, for Britain and France could be expected to side with the influences in United States decision-making that were keen on a settlement.

So clearly Nehru, while responsive to the enthusiastic reception he had received, had not lost his balance. 'A combination Cambridge man, Oriental sage and twentieth-century politician,' reported the correspondent of the New York Times at the start of the visit, 'he moved confidently and easily among the heirs of Bolshevism.' But as the days passed and Nehru's reaction to the sustained plaudits seemed to get more emotional, the comment of the New York Times turned sour.

The intentions, certainly on Mr Nehru's part, were good. One cannot doubt his desire to contribute to world peace and to act as a mediator or pacifier, as he sees it, between the two great powers of the United States and the Soviet Union. It is a pity that Mr Nehru's contribution to this ideal should have been a general acceptance of the Soviet policies. If that is the way he feels he cannot be blamed for saying so, but he is surely too intelligent a man not to realize that in espousing the Soviet cause he can only antagonize the American side of the balance. That could hardly have been his desire . . . He said as he took off from Moscow: 'I am leaving part of my heart behind.' We might be forgiven for thinking that he also left a part of his common sense behind.87

This assessment was unfair as well as harsh. Whatever the emotional tone of his speeches, the final communique, which was wholly the draft of

86 Dispatch of 7 June, published 8 June 1955.
the Indian side,88 was in line with Nehru’s arguments in the discussions, and committed the Soviet Government to the Five Principles of coexistence, the Bandung declaration and complete nuclear disarmament.88 ‘The curious thing’, commented The Times, more discerning than its counterpart across the Atlantic, ‘is that his Russian hosts let him put forward views — and they themselves endorsed them — not altogether in line with those which Mr Molotov was putting forward in their name at San Francisco.’890 The Chinese claim to Taiwan was accepted, but the stress was on peaceful means of acquisition, in contrast to Chinese threats of assault, and no time limit was set. The commitment to non-interference in each other’s internal affairs was amplified to cover all aspects, whether economic, political or ideological. This reference was clearly to the Cominform, and the Soviet Union was virtually renouncing it. But Nehru rejected a Soviet suggestion, made somewhat half-heartedly, that both sides condemn the policy of military blocs and agree not to participate in any coalitions or actions directed against each other. Even such a negative alliance, as Nehru described it, was not acceptable to him, and his hosts were obliged to drop the proposal.

While in Moscow, Nehru received an invitation from Eden to visit London on his way home, and the Soviet leaders approved of his acceptance. ‘It would be’, said Bulganin, ‘a good thing for the world if the West would understand you as much as we did.’ Nehru now, on leaving the Soviet Union, saw his task as being that of conveying to the Western Powers his understanding that there had been a real change in Moscow. It would be folly to assume that because of a grave shortfall in agricultural production the Soviet Union could be driven to retreat; but it did seem that Soviet policy was now genuinely projected towards coexistence.

My general impression was that a marked change had come over Soviet policy and that this was not a mere temporary phase. This gave me hope for the future and indicated that more than at any time in the past, there was substantial reason for hoping for peaceful approaches and settlements.891

He gave the same appraisal in his talks with Eden and Macmillan and, after the Four-Power Conference at Geneva, Macmillan informed the Commonwealth High Commissioners that

his Government were under a debt of deep gratitude to the Indian Prime Minister, whose assessment of the Russian situation had been

89 Joint declaration of Bulganin and Nehru, 23 June 1955.
90 24 June 1955.
91 Nehru to Eisenhower, 27 June 1955.
their guide throughout the talks and proved correct every time. He said he had taken notes of the conversation at Chequers and was amazed to find how closely the Russian approach followed the line indicated by the Prime Minister.93

The world, then, seemed to Nehru to have reached a turning point, moving away from the attitudes of the cold war and towards real peace; and the Geneva Conference marked the first stage on the new road. 'There has been, I believe, a turn in the tide.'93 He was hopeful that thereafter, step by step, the specific problems of the world would be brought nearer solution and there would be a gradual approach towards normality, less excitement and tension, and a stronger understanding by the leading military powers of each other's views and fears. To him the greatest iron curtain was the one in people's minds.94 As we know, these hopes soon faded. Neither can the temporary lifting of the clouds at Geneva be regarded as a triumph for India or the personal achievement of Nehru. Great powers know their own interests and act on them. The most that can be said is that India had helped in bringing about a mutual comprehension; but this in itself was no small effort. With a commitment to international goodwill and morality that was compelling to all sides, Nehru had narrowed the interstices in the relations between the Western Powers and the Soviet Union. 'Ours is not a loud voice. We speak in a soft, gentle voice because that is the tradition of India.'95 It was this performance behind the scenes, on the lines of what Nehru had indicated as the role of Menon, rather than the speeches and communiqués at Bandung and other conferences, that was the real service of non-aligned policy in these years and justified the comment of Radhakrishnan a few months earlier that if non-alignment did not exist it would have had to be invented.96

FOUR

Appreciative of the friendship with the Soviet Union, Nehru was yet concerned that India should not be tied up too closely with any country or give the impression that she was becoming dependent on the help from that country. Neither could India afford to let herself appear cheap.

Our prestige in the world today is largely because we maintain our self-respect and independence, at the same time being friendly. Therefore we must proceed with a certain restraint in all these matters.

93 27 July 1955. But Eden makes no mention of Nehru's visit to London in his memoirs.
94 Note of Nehru, 1 August 1955.
95 Address to the Parliament of Yugoslavia, 2 July, National Herald, 3 July 1955.
96 Speech at the Kremlin, 10 June, National Herald, 11 June 1955.
Restraint does not necessarily mean delay. Indeed, if an eager step is taken, the reactions may well be delay. 97

He ordered the organization of a cordial welcome to Bulganin and Khrushchev, who were visiting India that winter, but proposed to go no further than discuss Soviet assistance in training Indian technicians in heavy-machine building and drug manufacture. 98 He rejected a suggestion that the draft Second Plan be placed before the Soviet leaders and possibilities of collaboration explored. But circumstances, and the exuberance of the Soviet visitors, combined to vest the occasion with a significance and a spontaneous enthusiasm both far beyond Nehru's intent. The meeting at the same time in Baghdad of the MEDO powers, the formal alignment of Britain with the Baghdad Pact and the close association of the United States with it, came close to being an unfriendly act towards India. An official assurance from the British Government that they were most anxious to avoid doing anything against India's interests gave little satisfaction, for the arming of Pakistan, for whatever reason, this time by another Commonwealth country, in itself created a new and worse situation for India. 99 Taken with the Manila treaty, the Baghdad Pact suggested that Pakistan had succeeded in encircling India with a ring of hostile alliances. The tempo of violent denunciations of India in Pakistan was promptly raised. It must have been clear to Britain that her relations with India would be affected by this alliance; yet no reference had been made to India on this subject.

All this reacts on our public opinion. You know how we have consistently sought to foster and promote understanding and cooperation in all fields with the United Kingdom. We have looked upon the Commonwealth relationship as something of great importance and have supported it in spite of criticism in India. We have referred to the Commonwealth as a pillar of strength in the cause of peace and cooperation. Recent developments will give a handle to many of our critics and it will be difficult for us to explain them. 100

The United States were not far behind in taking steps which were bound to irritate Indian opinion. Provoked by some forthright speeches in India by Bulganin and Khrushchev which were critical of the Western Powers, Dulles issued a joint statement with the foreign minister of Portugal recognizing Goa as one of the 'Portuguese provinces' in Asia. It

98 To T. T. Krishnamachari, Commerce Minister, 13 November 1955.
99 Nehru's note on interview with Malcolm MacDonald, British High Commissioner, 26 November 1955.
100 Nehru to Eden, 2 December 1955.
overshadowed all the friendly assistance given by the United States over the years and brought Indian feeling to a peak of anger. The American Ambassador later explained that the statement had been meant only to call attention to the attacks on the policies of the United States by Bulganin and Khrushchev, and did not commit the United States on the Goa issue or imply that the NATO treaty extended to Goa.\(^{101}\) If so, it betrayed a naïve failure to anticipate the impact that such a statement, coming soon after Portuguese firing on Indians on the Goa border, would have on Indian opinion. Nothing could have been better calculated to weaken Nehru’s effort to impress on his Soviet guests the nature of non-alignment and the inappropriateness of criticizing other governments while on Indian soil. Indeed, even Nehru now saw some advantage in the spiralling of unqualified Soviet support of India’s policies on Goa and Kashmir and the consequent intensification of the welcome which the Soviet leaders received. ‘People in England and America are very courteous to us and friendly but, in the final analysis, they treat India as a country to be humoured but not as an equal.’\(^{102}\)

While the British press severely criticized Nehru for seeming to have fallen a victim to Soviet blandishments, the British Government hastened not only to seek to explain away the Baghdad Pact but to prevent Indian purchase of Soviet military aircraft. An under-secretary of the Ministry of Supply flew out to finalize the sale of Gnats and possibly of more Canberras, while Malcolm MacDonald conveyed the ‘grave concern’ with which Britain would view any purchase by India of military ware from the Soviet Union.\(^{103}\) Even Nehru’s Defence Minister thought it necessary to voice his fears that acquisition of Soviet bombers might affect India’s non-alignment.\(^{104}\) But all this was to underrate Nehru’s shrewd sense of business as well as the strength of his independent outlook. He saw no reason why purchase of Soviet aircraft should in itself undermine India’s basic policies. ‘But we should always be careful not to appear to be too eager to the other party. That is bad tactics. They are clever people and we gain our ends much better by keeping our dignity and restraint.’\(^{106}\)

The progress of Bulganin and Khrushchev through India gathered popular momentum till finally, at Calcutta on 1 December, a crowd of over two millions gathered to hear them speak and mobbed them in the streets. The visitors were both impressed and taken aback. When, as a measure of security, they were transferred from an open car to a prison van, they looked extremely frightened, and Serov, the K. G. B. official, suggested that troops be called out and, if necessary, ordered to fire.\(^{106}\) Nehru took

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\(^{101}\) Note of Foreign Secretary, 6 December 1955.

\(^{102}\) To Vijnalakshmi, 2 December 1955.

\(^{103}\) Nehru’s note of interview with Malcolm MacDonald, 26 November 1955.

\(^{104}\) K. N. Katju to Nehru, 29 November 1955.

\(^{105}\) To Mahavir Tyagi, 4 December 1955.

\(^{106}\) Note of G. K. Handoo, security adviser, 5 December 1955.
advantage of 'this feast of friendliness between the Soviet leaders and the people of India'\textsuperscript{107} to secure not immediate material assistance but commitments on political and international issues. There was firstly the question of Soviet relations with the Indian Communist Party. Nehru had no high opinion at this time of Indian Communists.

My own experience of Communists has been that it is exceedingly difficult to rely on their word or on their basic integrity... Their loyalty to their party overrides all other loyalties and, therefore, they are prepared often to function in a way which cannot be reconciled with my standards of personal behaviour... Personally I have had no animosity against the Communists at all but I have come to feel increasingly how quite out-of-date Communist parties in non-Communist countries are... they are like the Jesuits belonging to the strict Order and not over-scrupulous in their dealings with others, provided they carry out the dictates of that Order to whom they owe their basic loyalty.\textsuperscript{108}

These loyal followers of the Party were now puzzled, perplexed and embarrassed by the Soviet cordiality towards Nehru and the fading Soviet interest in international communism and the Cominform. Nehru, on his part, well in control of the domestic scene, did not, at the start, raise this issue with Bulganin and Khrushchev. He merely noted that when some Communist members of Parliament were introduced to them, they did not give their fellow-Marxists much encouragement; however, they pointedly mentioned to Nehru their interest in meeting Indian nationals as such rather than any specific category.\textsuperscript{109} But later, as Bulganin and Khrushchev relaxed and became more expansive, Nehru conveyed to them his feeling that, if the past were any guide, the Communist Party would often indulge in violent outbreaks and rely on instructions from Moscow. He also hinted that the party was receiving considerable funds from abroad. Khrushchev replied that the role of the Soviet Communist Party in leading the communist parties of other countries was exaggerated. Communist doctrines and activities would exist and expand whether the Soviet Union supported them or not, and it was unrealistic to ask the Soviet Union to order communist parties all over the world to cease to function. Naturally the Soviet authorities, as communists, had sympathy and understanding for communists elsewhere; but they had no intention of leading these communists. In fact, by abolishing the Cominform, they had dissolved any organization for doing so. Khrushchev then added, on his 'word of honour', that the Soviet Communist Party had no connection with the Communist

\textsuperscript{107} Nehru to Lady Mountbatten, 5 December 1955.
\textsuperscript{108} Nehru to Zakir Husain, 12 August 1955.
\textsuperscript{109} Nehru to U Nu, 1 December 1955.
Party of India, and this was confirmed by the very fact that Soviet policy had placed the Indian Party in an awkward position. When Nehru mentioned that the claims of the Indian communists to have contacts with the Soviet leaders endangered Indo-Soviet relations, Khrushchev said that he too was depressed by this. ‘Our relations should not be disturbed by misunderstanding.’ As for foreign subsidies to the Indian Party, Khrushchev asserted that he knew nothing about any such payments. Nehru then expressed the general belief that Indian nationals were employed in communist embassies on the recommendation of the Indian Communist Party, and that the peace movement was intended to encourage communism more than peace. Khrushchev replied guardedly that he was not in a position to say anything about employment in embassies, but the Soviet Ambassador should be very careful. Generally the Soviet Government would abide by the Five Principles, and did not wish anyone to weaken the Indian Government and its Prime Minister.\textsuperscript{110} In a way, therefore, the commitment to keep aloof from India’s internal affairs was blurred at the edges; but to Nehru it was at this stage satisfactory.

On the eve of the departure of Bulganin and Khrushchev, Nehru raised the question of the Soviet veto on the admission of eighteen countries to the United Nations. As a parting gift to their host, the Soviet leaders agreed to the entry of all but Mongolia and Japan. It was a demonstration of both flexibility and cleverness. In contrast to British clumsiness in promoting, perhaps without intent, the encirclement of India by the Manila treaty and the Baghdad Pact, and to the ‘astounding stupidity’\textsuperscript{111} of Dulles in lining up thoughtlessly with Portugal, Bulganin and Khrushchev demonstrated their recognition of India’s importance and of Nehru’s role in the world. The spectacular withdrawal of the Soviet veto, as a response to the Indian Prime Minister’s ‘grand gesture’\textsuperscript{112} in appealing to them on this matter, came as a climax to Soviet support for India’s policies on Kashmir and Goa, the offer to negotiate economic and military assistance on India’s terms and the promise to deny support to the Communist Party of India. The Soviet Government had realized that, although the summit conference at Geneva and even more so the meeting of the foreign ministers had led to no precise agreements, the cold war had to some extent diminished. There was now a new phase in world affairs, and in this the countries of Asia and Africa, and particularly India, would have a major part to play. So it was worth cultivating India, and this was best done with tact, and without seeking to push her into commitments. Support and assistance were, therefore, offered with no obvious expectations of response. As Khrushchev observed to Nehru on the last day of his visit, ‘We want to be friendly with you but

\textsuperscript{110} Nehru’s note on talks with Bulganin and Khrushchev, 12 December 1955.
\textsuperscript{111} Nehru to Vijayalakshmi, 15 December 1955.
not to separate you from your other friends. We want to be friendly with your friends.'\textsuperscript{113} Britain and the United States were not so perceptive. While Eden was seeking to placate Nehru and assuring him that there could be no question whatever of Britain giving military support to one Commonwealth country against another,\textsuperscript{114} the Commonwealth Secretary, Lord Home, annoyed Nehru by suggesting to the Indian High Commissioner that India make 'a gesture of goodwill' on the Kashmir question. 'I am afraid Lord Home and most of his colleagues in the United Kingdom Government still live in a past age and imagine that they can treat India as some casual third-rate country.'\textsuperscript{115} The United States, particularly with Dulles in charge of their foreign policy, seemed to Nehru no better: 'the great access to financial and military strength since the war has made them look down on almost every country, friend or foe, and they have developed a habit of irritating others by their overbearing attitudes.'\textsuperscript{116} Such short-sightedness of Britain and the United States weakened the goodwill they had earned by the large amount of economic assistance they had provided. Khrushchev was blunt and crude, but also wiser.

\textsuperscript{113} Mentioned by Nehru to Pineau. See Nehru's record of interview with Pineau, 11 March 1956.
\textsuperscript{114} Eden to Nehru, 12 December 1955.
\textsuperscript{115} Nehru to Vijayalakshmi, 15 December 1955.
\textsuperscript{116} Nehru's note on the visit of Bulganin and Khrusch, 18 December 1955.
The Problem of Linguistic Provinces

The frustrations on Goa and the Naga question, the inability to communicate the intensity of his anxiety that various religious groups in India be treated fairly, the inadequacy of his effort to transform his personal authority into democratic administration — all these caused Nehru concern. But to his countrymen they were overshadowed by what appeared as a continuous weakness in taking decisions on the issue of the formation of linguistic provinces. Towards the end of 1955, a problem that had been simmering for a long time came to the boil. For many years before independence, the Congress had been committed to the creation of provinces on a linguistic basis. The formation of composite units, consisting of people speaking different languages, had been one of the ways adopted by the British to dissipate the force of nationalism, and as a counter-measure the Congress had framed its own organization on linguistic lines. It seemed, therefore, a matter of course that a free India would recast the internal map in accordance with these principles. Some members of the Constituent Assembly pressed that steps be taken in this direction even before the introduction of the new Constitution. But Nehru gave the matter low priority. The country was facing a series of extreme crises and there were numerous and urgent demands on the government’s attention. ‘First things must come first and the first thing is the security and stability of India.’ A strong India had to be established before details about its component parts could be considered.¹ The desire of the Andhras for a breakaway province raised relatively few difficulties, but if a start was made in any one area there would be demands from many others; and the whole problem of provincial boundaries bristled with difficulties. As the best way of postponing decisions on this subject and avoiding the government themselves taking any step which would raise a large number of issues and precipitate a minor crisis, Nehru favoured the appointment by the Constituent Assembly of a committee to investigate and report on the

23 Receiving Chou En-lai in Delhi, June 1954

24 With Mao Tse-tung in Peking, October 1954
At a Congress session, 1955: throwing a pillow
feasibility of linguistic provinces. If this committee obtained a large measure of agreement, then one or more specific boundary commissions could be appointed.² He therefore, at the last stage, abandoned the idea of listing an Andhra province in the first schedule of the Constitution.³ Even if the creation of new provinces like Andhra and Karnataka had to be taken up later, it should be a very limited operation and the provincial boundaries should not be altered. The Congress was not committed to this and, considering the vast problems facing the country, it would be a disservice to divert interest to what seemed to Nehru to be petty issues.⁴

The committee set up by the Constituent Assembly received evidence, to Nehru’s surprise,⁵ in public and thereby helped to sustain an atmosphere of argument and passion. Its recommendations against the formation of linguistic provinces and in favour of the later recasting of some existing provinces on administrative considerations⁶ did not, therefore, enable the problem to be shelved. Nehru ordered the dissatisfied Andhra leaders to be silent. ‘I should like to have a little peace or the semblance of peace for sometime. After that we can go ahead in many directions.’⁷ But in February 1949 the legislative assembly of Bombay passed a resolution recommending the creation of a province of Maharashtra including Bombay city. As clearly the issue could not be avoided, Nehru thought the best course would be for himself, Patel and the President of the Congress to form a committee which could report to the Party; the government could then express their general agreement with the report.

Nehru drafted the report, which suggested that, in view of the unsettled conditions in the country, the consideration of linguistic provinces might be postponed for ten years; but some steps could be taken in individual cases if there was agreement between the parties. Accepting the report, the Constituent Assembly merely provided, in Article 3 of the Constitution, for the creation of such provinces sometime in the future. Nehru directed the Working Committee and the Parliamentary Party of the Congress not to press for early action on this.⁸

As it appeared that there was agreement between the Andhras and the Tamils on the details of an Andhra province, the Working Committee, despite Nehru’s known reluctance, asked the Government of India in November 1949 to form immediately an Andhra province, consisting of the undisputed Andhra districts but without Madras city; and Nehru

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² Nehru to Rajendra Prasad, 16 and 17 February 1948.
⁴ To N. Dutt Majumdar, 22 May 1948.
⁵ Nehru to Rajendra Prasad, 22 September 1948.
⁷ Nehru to T. Prakasham, 10 January 1949.
⁸ Note on linguistic provinces, 2 October 1949, read out at Working Committee and Parliamentary Party meetings during Nehru’s absence in the United States.
decided to act on this resolution. But then it transpired that the two sides could not agree on the temporary location of an Andhra capital; and the financial and other consequences also required careful investigation. With the elections drawing near, Nehru was able thankfully to avoid immediate action.

Even after the elections Nehru argued that, with economic problems assuming importance, the time was not right for forming linguistic provinces. As he repeatedly emphasized, once the government opened the issue, they would be dragged into a turmoil all over India. On the Andhra demand in particular Nehru was inclined to be sympathetic, for he realized that it had its root not so much in a narrow love of language as in a widespread feeling among the Andhras that they were not getting a fair deal in the composite province; but he feared that the creation of psychological satisfaction might well lead to greater financial, economic and other difficulties. Rajagopalachari, now Chief Minister of Madras, too, advised Nehru not to take up the question of linguistic provinces for at least another year, though his recommendation was based not on the priority of other issues but the fear that communist influence would be strong in an Andhra or Kerala province. He had also a marked streak of linguistic bigotry, which led him to adopt an attitude of cussed vindictiveness and, for example, object to the appointment of a senior civil servant, who happened to be an Andhra, as adviser to the planning commission on the ground that this official was touched with ‘Andhra shortsightedness.’ Nehru pointed out that he was committed to the creation of an Andhra province if there were general agreement and the Government of India could not be passive or on the defensive in this matter. He, too, thought that an Andhra province would be a mistake, but if the Andhras wanted it he would not stop them.

I am quite sure that it is not a good thing for the Telugu-speaking areas to be formed into a separate state. Their state will be a backward one in many ways and financially hard up. They cannot expect much help from the centre. However, that is their look-out. If they want the state, they can have it on the conditions we have stated.

On 19 December, after three days of rioting in the Andhra districts consequent on the death of an Andhra leader by fasting on this issue, the

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8 Nehru to Patel, 18 November 1949.
11 Rajagopalachari to Nehru, 27 and 30 May 1952.
12 Ibid., 1 November 1952.
13 Nehru to Rajagopalachari, 26 and 28 May 1952.
14 Ibid., 16 December 1952.
Government of India announced their decision to establish an Andhra province. Rajagopalachari now sought to block progress on points of detail. He vetoed a common capital, governor or high court for Madras and Andhra or any joint property at all. If the Andhras wanted separation, they must get out lock, stock and barrel. Nehru agreed—despite the recommendation of a senior judge commissioned to examine this matter, that the Andhra capital should be located in Madras for a temporary period of about three years—that the Andhras should have their own capital and should not maintain even a temporary headquarters in Madras city; but he could not persuade Rajagopalachari that the process of transfer was bound to take some time, and there were many minor matters which could not be settled in a hard and fast way. Then the grant of an interview by the President to the Andhra leader, Prakasam, further fanned Rajagopalachari’s wrath. ‘The slender threads of my faith and courage are weakening rapidly. Forgive me if I make any decision at any time without consulting anyone any more.’ He ignored Nehru’s suggestion that he make friendly statements offering help to the Andhras in setting up the new administration. When the Union Cabinet decided that ‘most’ of the offices of the Andhra government might continue to be located in Madras till arrangements were made for their transfer to an Andhra capital, Rajagopalachari insisted on the replacement of the word ‘most’ by ‘some’. It is one of the sadnesses of personal history to observe Rajagopalachari utilizing the enormous weight of his prestige for the petty purpose of spitting the Andhras.

The decision to create an Andhra province encouraged similar demands throughout the country. ‘You will observe that we have disturbed the hornet’s nest and I believe most of us are likely to be badly stung.’ It had become clear that few shared Nehru’s view that the Andhra province was an exceptional case which should not form a precedent. Even so, the general aspirations for comprehensive linguistic provinces might have been kept in control had Nehru declared firmly that there was no question of recasting India at this stage. His failure to do so was not solely a consequence of weakness. He felt that it would be undemocratic to smother this sentiment which, on general grounds, he did not find objectionable. Indeed, a

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18 Nehru has been criticized for not making this announcement a few days earlier and saving the life of the leader on fast. Narayana Rao, op. cit., pp. 252-3. It seems really to have been a matter of circumstances overtaking procedural delays. Nehru had, however reluctantly, decided on principle on the creation of an Andhra province; but he had to overcome Rajagopalachari’s resistance.

17 Rajagopalachari to Nehru, 17 December, and Sri Prakasa to Nehru, quoting Rajagopalachari, 20 December 1952.

19 Rajagopalachari to Nehru, 24 February 1953.

20 Minutes of Union Cabinet, 18-19 March; Rajagopalachari’s telegram, 24 March; Nehru to Rajagopalachari, 25 March 1953.

21 Nehru to K. N. Katju, 13 February 1953.
linguistic mosaic might well provide a firmer base for national unity. What concerned him were the timing, the agitation and violence with which linguistic provinces were being demanded and the harsh antagonism between various sections of the Indian people which underlay these demands. He therefore sought to delay matters and to wait until the Andhra province had been fully established before taking the next step, which would be the setting up of yet another commission to examine carefully the whole question, not just of linguistic provinces but of the redistribution of provincial areas on the basis of all the factors involved. Then, instead of isolated, random decisions being given, a general policy could be implemented, bearing in mind every aspect of the problem — the maintenance of national cohesion, the cultural and linguistic pulls, the considerations of finance, security and economic progress. 'I have to look at things from the all-India point of view. Otherwise I am not worthy of the place I occupy either in the Government or in the Congress.'

However, despite a clear declaration by Nehru that a commission for this purpose would be appointed by the end of the year, agitation and hunger strikes for the creation of particular provinces continued. There was a growing mood of provincial expansionism and claims were made by linguistic chauvinists for extra territory, forgetful of the fact that internal boundaries should be primarily a matter of administrative convenience. Nehru reacted vigorously. If national policies were to be controlled or influenced in this manner, both progress and unity would be destroyed. If the people regarded this matter to be of such vital importance as to be given precedence over all other questions, then they would have to find another Prime Minister. 'I cannot be responsible for taking a step which, I am convinced, means injury to the cause of India and to something which I have cherished and worked for.' At the inauguration of the Andhra State he stressed most the need for all Indians to grow into the thought of India. But the agitation in various parts of India continued and, even after the commission was appointed, there was no diminution of these pressures. Nehru's appeal to Congressmen to recall the role which the Party had played in the past as a cementing and unifying force was virtually unheeded. Shankarrao Deo, a senior Congressman who had been a prisoner with Nehru at Ahmadnagar fort, accused him of scorning the deeply felt sentiments of the people. Nehru pointed out the importance of acting in this matter at the right time and with the goodwill of all concerned; 'otherwise all attention and resources would have been taken up by this and we would have had to say a long goodbye to planning and economic

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82 Nehru to Morarji Desai, 19 February 1953.
83 To S. Nijalingappa, 10 May 1953, rejecting the demand for the immediate creation of a Karnataka province.
84 Nehru to Chief Ministers, 2 July 1953.
85 Speech at Kurnool, 1 October, National Herald, 2 October 1953.
86 Nehru to presidents of Prades Congress committees, 13 November 1953.
progress.' The whole future of India was involved in this question and it
could not be dealt with in a casual or partisan way. He himself had no fixed
opinion and wanted more light. But no one listened. Throughout the
two years that the commission gathered evidence the problem was clouded
by intense public feeling. Some provincial governments were known even
to be spending the secret funds at their disposal to further territorial claims
on the basis of language.

In this atmosphere, it was clear that, when the commission submitted its
report, the agitation would increase, for obviously, whatever the recom-
mendations, they would not be to the liking of everybody. Nehru had been
arguing for months that the only statesmanlike approach would be to
accept unquestioningly the proposals made, after careful deliberation, by a
commission consisting of experienced men with no partisan viewpoints;
but he knew that there was little likelihood of this and girded himself for
trouble. 'As a matter of fact, life is becoming very complicated here and the
report of the states reorganization commission is going to be the last
straw.' The report, published in October 1955, revealed, it must be said,
no basis of logic or principle. It recommended the establishment as separate
provinces of Kerala and Karnataka because of the common language of the
people; but Bombay would continue as a bilingual province, including
people speaking Marathi and Gujarati. The Marathi-speaking districts of
Hyderabad were transferred to Bombay but certain other Marathi-
speaking areas were taken away to form the separate State of Vidharba. The
Telugu-speaking districts of Hyderabad were also not to be transferred to
Andhra till 1961.

The popular reaction to the report, therefore, was intense. 'One might
almost think from reading reports of speeches etc. that we were on the
verge of civil war in some parts of India.' Nehru yielded ground to the
extent of conceding that, if the principal parties concerned reached
agreement on any particular issues, the government would accept this, as it
had done in the case of the Andhra province; otherwise, the recom-
mendations of the commission should be broadly followed. But in most
parts of India the only agreement that could be reached was in rejection of
the commission's proposals; and all sides looked to the Government of
India for fresh decisions. However, the very nature of the problem ensured
that Nehru would not be seen at his best. The redistribution of provincial
areas was to him too trivial and tedious a matter to engage his full and
sympathetic attention. While he appreciated the importance of language in
a community, he was not wholly committed to monolingualistic provinces.

77 Nehru to Shankarrao Deo, 25 November 1953, AICC Papers, Box 10. File PG-29/1953-55,
N.M.M.L.
78 Nehru's letters of rebuke to Chief Ministers of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, 6 July 1954.
79 Nehru to Vijaysalakhshi, 13 September 1955.
80 Nehru to Mountbatten, 12 October 1955.
81 Nehru to Chief Ministers, 14 October 1955.
The British might have established composite provinces for their own reasons but such provinces had other virtues too. A province like Hyderabad, with people speaking various languages including Urdu, appealed to Nehru as a potential centre of composite culture in south India, while Bombay had built up a rich cosmopolitan tradition which it would be vandalistic to throw away. So he could not comprehend the intense passions which the issue of linguistic States aroused; and, faced with such strong feelings, his idea of a solution was not the search for merits, which did not to him exist in any sharply defined sense, but producing the largest consensus and avoiding, as far as possible, compulsion. In his eagerness to get rid of this problem so that it would not continue to erode the unity of the country, and to concentrate on such matters as planning which were to him of far greater importance, Nehru seized on every proposal, regardless of its intrinsic soundness, which appeared to offer the chance of a settlement. Too sensitive to public feeling to impose decisions and yet anxious to reach them as quickly as possible, he allowed himself to be dragged along, shifting course and revising policy as the agitation demanded, appeasing the most influential sectors and hoping that every compromise arrangement would be the conclusive one. In this matter, of relatively little importance to him and in which right and wrong hardly figured, Nehru relied too much on the correct decision turning up and did not set out to find it.

This is a terrible job, and I do not see much light yet. Passions have been roused and old friends have fallen out. However, I suppose we shall see this through also with our usual luck. I do think we are rather lucky. Looking back, I am surprised at many of the things we have managed to do and the difficulties we have overcome.  

The chief centres of unrest were the Punjab, where the Sikhs wanted a state of their own, and Bombay city and the Marathi-speaking districts, where the people demanded a separate State of Maharashtra instead of being cobbled together with the Gujaratis in a bilingual province. A visit to Amritsar enabled Nehru to reduce the tension and animosity in the air and, without making any concession, to convince Tara Singh and his followers of his good intent. The welcome he was given in that town was, even to him, a new experience.

On two or three occasions I did something which I take it few prime ministers have done in the past. I climbed up a lamp-post in order partly to see the crowd and partly to exhibit myself to them so as to lessen the pressure. However, everything passed off well and

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38 Nehru to Lady Mountbatten, 5 December 1955.
39 Nehru to Pratap Singh Kairon, 24 November 1955.
Amritsar, from being a scene of conflict, suddenly became a place of overflowing friendship and goodwill. I do not know how long this will last.\(^4\)

The situation in Bombay city was less easily brought under control. That recognized political parties should organize violence on a mass scale, involving students and factory workers, and that society as a whole should remain strangely silent and not condemn it severely, worried Nehru, not just in itself but because of what it might mean for the general progress of India. It did not immediately strike him that in this case it might well be because many people felt strongly about the issue which sparked off such rioting. He tended to assume that his own list of priorities, in which the fresh demarcation of provincial boundaries hardly figured, was widely accepted. He took it for granted that the effort to decide issues in the streets by bludgeoning passers-by and committing arson could only be the work of a minority seeking to impose its view by almost fascist methods; a majority would not need to do this because it could secure its objectives by democratic processes. He failed to recognize straightaway that even a majority might, in desperation, tolerate such methods if it were driven to the feeling, however erroneous, that the government were wilfully refusing to appreciate its viewpoint.

So Nehru’s first reaction was to refuse to consider the demand for Maharashtra so long as it was backed by such violent agitation.

Obviously no Government can be coerced by such methods. Indeed the Government will cease to function if it tolerated such methods and the success of this behaviour would lead to its being followed in many other places. Our country would be reduced not only to chaos but to chaos of the lowest and most vulgar type.\(^5\)

But, realizing that it was the rival claims to Bombay city which mainly stood in the way of dividing the Bombay province into Maharashtra and Gujarat, Nehru began to think by December 1955 in terms of converting Bombay into a separate city-state.\(^6\) At the meeting of the Working Committee in October, when the formula had first been suggested, the representatives of Maharashtra had welcomed it;\(^7\) but when the plan was publicly announced, the Maharashtrians denounced this as a compromise wholly at their expense. So Nehru thought again. ‘I have even thought of what Bapu might have advised us if he had been present.’ Gandhi would obviously have placed emphasis on the long-term aspect of the question

\(^4\) Nehru to Lady Mountbatten, 13 November 1955.
\(^5\) Nehru to Chief Ministers, 26 November 1955.
\(^6\) Nehru to Shankarrao Deo, 20 December 1955.
and would have disliked bargaining. So Nehru switched back to the idea of a large, composite State, consisting of Bombay city, and all the Gujarati and Marathi-speaking areas, including Vidarbha, at least for five years, when the whole question could be reviewed. To make this palatable to the Marathis, he hinted that Morarji Desai, the Gujarati Chief Minister who had become unpopular with the Marathis, should step down. Gandhi would have favoured some gesture which would at least lay the foundation for better relations in the future, and his advice would naturally have been directed more to the Gujaratis than to the Maharashtrians. The initiative for this proposal of a composite State would have to be taken by Desai, but his continuance as Chief Minister should not be made part of the bargain. ‘That would not suit your dignity and you could very well make this perfectly clear. Later, when things are calmed down, this question can be considered in a more reasonable atmosphere and decisions can be taken then.’

The proposal for a composite State of Bombay fitted in with the latest trend in Nehru’s thinking, that India should have fewer and larger States. He was sufficiently persuasive to get the Chief Ministers of Bengal and Bihar to agree to merge the two provinces, while Madras agreed to join Travancore-Cochin. There was even talk of a larger Dakshina Pradesh, covering all the Tamil-, Kannada- and Malayalam-speaking areas. But these proved short-lived products of utopian imagination, with no influence on opinion in Bombay. Riots continued in the city and the Marathi districts against the continuance of a bilingual province, and even Deshmukh, the Finance Minister at the centre, protested sharply. Nehru had brought Deshmukh, a senior member of the Indian Civil Service, into the Cabinet in 1950 and had respect for his technical proficiency. There was even a little warmth in their relationship in the early years; but this was gradually demolished by the acidity of Deshmukh’s correspondence, his temperamental aversion to Krishna Menon and his inability to get on with Chief Ministers or other members of the Cabinet. He was too hard-minded to realize that adequate financial control was but a small part of the task of a finance minister. ‘Running the government’, Nehru gently reminded him, ‘as a competent business concern is not the whole of the picture.’

The advice was of little avail, and repeatedly Deshmukh, in letters that verged on personal discourtesy, offered to resign because some central department or State government had ignored financial decorum or demanded more money. Nehru did not let him go because he knew Deshmukh was honest and, in his limited way, able; but by 1956 Deshmukh was in Nehru’s tired disfavour.

The break with Deshmukh, however, came not, as in the case of Matthai, on matters of financial policy but on a purely political issue. Though a

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28 Nehru to Morarji Desai, 1 January 1956.
29 29 June 1952.
member of the Cabinet, Deshmukh had initially, to Nehru's irritation, been reluctant to join the Congress Party and had only at the last moment agreed to contest the elections in 1952 as a Congress candidate and not as an independent. But, once elected from a constituency which was a part of Bombay city, he took his duties as a member seriously and developed close relations with Congressmen and other members of Parliament from Maharashtra. He had little knowledge of politics; but he seems to have begun to nurture political ambitions, and in 1956 he stepped forward as a spokesman of Maharashtrian interests. He pressed his resignation in protest at what he said was Nehru's failure to consult the Cabinet before making his proposals for a separate city-state of Bombay. Nehru's recollection was that the matter had been generally discussed in the Cabinet. If a composite Bombay province were not feasible, the other alternative was three States of Maharashtra, Bombay city and Gujarat; the only question was whether the city should govern itself or be centrally administered. Deshmukh had thought that the three-State formula was acceptable to Maharashtrians, but the Congressmen of Maharashtra had later said that they would prefer the city to be centrally administered. It would have been better to have taken the whole matter to the Cabinet again; but Nehru himself had been clear about the Cabinet's views on the subject when he publicly made the proposal.

Deshmukh was not mollified. The punctilious custodian of the public revenue was by this time lost in the committed politician. But Nehru let Deshmukh's resignation lie; and the leaders of Maharashtra were also willing to await developments. Nehru was now searching for some solution which would hold at least for a while without irritating anyone by suggesting finality. His task was not made easier by the Bombay Government, which permitted the police to open fire on a number of occasions to subdue the agitation. The demands for inquiries into alleged excesses were rejected by the Chief Minister, Morarji Desai, and Nehru supported him on the ground that such investigations would only keep alive passions and hatred. Deshmukh again protested. Nehru authorized him to bring up the matter at a Cabinet meeting and added that he had called for a full report. But he himself was inclined to believe that, while unnecessary force might have been used on occasions, organized hooliganism had created a situation which had made any kind of orderly government almost impossible. As Nehru announced that no inquiry would be ordered, Deshmukh, under protest, did not pursue the matter.

This did not mean that the problem of Bombay was any nearer solution,

40 Deshmukh to Nehru, 22 and 26 January 1956.
41 Nehru to Deshmukh, 28 January 1956.
42 Nehru to Pant, 15 February 1956.
43 Deshmukh to Nehru, 19 February 1956.
44 Nehru to Deshmukh, 20 February 1956.
45 Deshmukh to Nehru, 24 February 1956.
and Nehru was subdued by a sense of inner failure. He had suggested the three-State formula, and even the formula of two States with Bombay as a centrally administered city, not as a final settlement but as a halfway house which would enable calm thinking and the adoption of long-term solutions at the right time and in the right spirit. His rejection in this particular case of his normal approach of a judicial inquiry into the use of firearms by the police had been motivated not by any desire to protect the Bombay Government from censure but because, whatever other consequences might follow, one certain result was an increase in bitterness and conflict. But it worried him that for once he had failed to maintain a spirit of understanding with a large section of the Indian people. He had lost his usual, intimate touch with the minds and hearts of Maharashtrians; and this lessening of the spirit of community sapped his self-confidence, limited his capacity for action and made him feel a little helpless.46 Deshmukh continued to be angry and opposed to a centrally administered Bombay city, especially as he thought that this would probably mean its administration ‘by those who are primarily responsible for ruining the relations between Maharashtrians and Gujaratis, particularly Shri Morarji Desai, owing to their overbearing and inequitable conduct of the affairs of the present Bombay state during the last five years.’47 Nehru hotly defended Desai:

It is not necessary to agree with a person in everything in order to recognize the person’s worth. I do not agree with some of the views of Morarji Desai. But in my large acquaintance in India I know very few persons whom I respect so much for their rectitude, ability, efficiency and fairness as Morarji Desai. I have known him and the general course of his life for a long enough time to be able to judge.48

As this suggested that Nehru would abide by the formula of establishing Bombay as a centrally administered city, Deshmukh proposed to appeal to Parliament to include Bombay in Maharashtra with safeguards for its special interests, and offered to resign before doing so. Nehru appealed to him not to take a step which would only add to tension and ill-will, but made clear that if he insisted on stating his case in Parliament, he would first have to resign.49 Deshmukh promptly resigned but Nehru, concerned more about the reaction in Maharashtra than the loss of Deshmukh’s services, prevailed on him to wait a little longer.50

It was now Morarji Desai’s turn to express resentment at Nehru’s policy.

46 To Shankarrao Deo, to V. V. Nene, and to T. R. Deogirikar, 15 March 1956.
47 Deshmukh to Nehru, 16 April 1956.
48 Nehru to Deshmukh, 16 April 1956.
49 Deshmukh to Nehru, 20 April 1956, and Nehru’s reply of the same date.
50 Deshmukh to Nehru, 23 April, Nehru to Deshmukh, 24 April, and Deshmukh to Nehru, 24 April 1956.
He believed that the continuous insistence that the three-State formula need not be a final settlement was helping to keep alive the agitation in Maharashtra. He threatened to retire from active political work if Nehru agreed to further changes and believed that any such action would weaken the influence of the Congress Party in the rest of India. The people of Gujarat also now began to agitate against the decision about Bombay, although it lay outside their area. The problem as it had developed was well beyond Nehru’s intellectual horizons and accentuated his bewilderment and depression.

I have always considered it a great privilege for people of this generation to live during this period of India’s long history and to take some little part in the shaping of that story. I have believed that there is nothing more exciting in the wide world today than to work in India. That very thought fills me with vitality and a desire to get the most out of this passing show in our fleeting lives.

But there could be too much excitement or the wrong kind of excitement. They had for nearly seven months been preoccupied with a question which had nothing to do with high political or economic or social policy and which had aroused such passions as to endanger the whole fabric of India. He had tried to convince himself that this was a relic of the narrow regionalism and parochialism which had been India’s failing in the past and which were having a final burst before the ghost was laid.

For the moment the ghost is there and we live a somewhat haunted existence. We may well blame each other, but that brings little solace or solution, for, in the context of India, we are all to blame and we have all to suffer the consequences. I have tried to search my mind and heart to find out where I have erred. What should I have done that I have not done and what should I have avoided doing that I have done? It is easy to be wise after the event. But the basic fact remains that we have yet to develop a unified nation. We distrust each other and sometimes even dislike each other.

Religion, caste, language and provincialism all served as separating factors and kept India in a tribal age. The country had undertaken tremendous tasks demanding all the strength and energy of her people, and yet these were frittered away in dealing with insubstantial problems, using coercive methods.

Nehru had virtually allowed the making of decisions on this matter to fall from his hands and was prepared to accept any solution that might be proposed by the contending groups. Even *The Hindu*, the Madras

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81 Morarji Desai to Nehru, 27 April 1956.
82 To Chief Ministers, 10 May 1956.
newspaper, the chief characteristics of which have always been timidity and an inclination to please whoever is in power in Delhi, was driven to criticize Nehru for his inability to make up his mind.

The root of the violence we see creeping over our country today does not lie truly with the people but the politicians. Those who resort to violence at least know their minds. But it is indecision in high places on both planes, economic and political, that threatens to loose on our country an orgy of highly decisive violence.58

However, it now looked as if some agreement was at last in the offing. Towards the end of May, the leaders of opinion in the Congress in Maharashtra, including Deshmukh, suggested that Bombay city be centrally administered for a fixed period, after which the issue should be reviewed by Parliament. Meantime, the administration of Maharashtra should be carried on from Bombay city.54 Acting on this suggestion, Nehru announced in Bombay on 3 June that the city would be centrally administered with some representatives of Bombay associated with this administration; and after a certain period, which might be about five years, the people of the city should have the opportunity to decide their own future. How this was to be done could be decided later in consultation with the people concerned.55

This firm decision seemed to have a healthy effect at the start. But soon violence was again the master. Nehru blamed the Communist and the communal parties. The Communist Party, bewildered by the changing attitudes of the Soviet Union, and struggling to formulate a new policy, publicly denounced the call of the Congress to abandon violence, while the R.S.S. and the Jan Sangh were active in both Maharashtra and the Punjab. The approach of the general elections encouraged such behaviour and Nehru appealed to his own party not to be influenced by this.

We are apt to take many things too much for granted and to forget that unless certain basic assumptions are agreed to generally, the superstructure that we try to build will have weak foundations . . . Above all, we have to adhere to certain basic principles of group and personal behaviour and to maintain certain standards. That is more important than some minor advantage or even some victory in an odd election.56

Despite the violence, the Government of India persisted with the proposal of a centrally administered Bombay. Deshmukh awaited Nehru's

58 'Violence in the Air', editorial in The Hindu, 31 May 1956.
55 Speech at AICC, 3 June, National Herald, 4 June 1956.
56 Nehru to Chief Ministers, 15 June 1956.
return from Europe and again resigned, sending Nehru a copy of the statement he intended to make in the Lok Sabha. On this occasion Nehru made no attempt to dissuade him and accepted the resignation. Deshmukh's statement was a severe criticism of both the official policy on Bombay and Nehru's functioning as Prime Minister. Nehru, in dealing with the latter charge, gave as good as he got; but feelings in Maharashtra were even more inflamed by Deshmukh's resignation. It was now suggested by Pataskar, a sober Maharashtrian Congressman and a member of Nehru's government, that the province be split and it be agreed that by a certain date Bombay city would automatically revert to Maharashtra. Nehru suggested as an easier compromise that Parliament consider the question at a later date. But, in fact, Nehru was coming round with great reluctance to the natural conclusion, which should have been accepted from the start, that Bombay's place was in Maharashtra. His own predilection for a composite State, the influence of Morarji Desai, the naïve political stances of Deshmukh and the distaste for seeming to yield to violence had all helped to prevent Nehru from comprehending the strength of the case for a Maharashtra inclusive of Bombay. It was as if it required the departure of Deshmukh for Nehru to see reason.

As you well know, I have been greatly distressed about the Bombay and Maharashtra matter and the fact that practically the entire people of Maharashtra feel almost unanimously and strongly on this subject, is rather an overwhelming one. Nobody can deny that there is a good deal of logic in what they say, although there is some logic for the other view too. Anyhow, we have landed ourselves in a position where we are doing something which intimately hurts the whole people of Maharashtra and their representatives. That is a bad position.

At this stage, 180 members of Parliament, belonging to all parties, no doubt influenced by a knowledge of Nehru's private wishes in the matter, revived the scheme for a bilingual State. It embarrassed the government officially, for they were on the eve of enacting the bill creating three States; but Nehru personally was far from unhappy. Consideration of the bill was promptly postponed and, after various consultations, the proposal for a composite State was approved by the Cabinet and accepted by the Congress Parliamentary Party amid scenes of general rejoicing. 'All this has been rather exhausting business, but I feel as if a burden was off me. And this is a common feeling in Parliament and outside here.'

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87 Deshmukh to Nehru, 23 July 1956, and Nehru's reply of the same date.
88 Nehru to H. V. Pataskar, 29 July 1956.
89 To G. B. Pant, 29 July 1956.
90 See his letter to K. M. Munshi, 4 August 1956.
91 Nehru to Lady Mountbatten, 6 August 1956.
The relief did not last long. This time it was in Ahmedabad and other parts of Gujarat that violence and arson spread. Preaching amity and peaceful settlements of disputes to the world, India seemed unable to evoke the same spirit of concord in dealing with her own problems. 'We talk of indiscipline, but the gravest of all indisciplines is emotional indiscipline which upsets the balance of the individual. We have seen in India these emotional upheavals and, what is worse, we have seen them take to violence.' At a time when India was playing for high stakes and striving to infuse a new life into the country,

suddenly all the evil hidden in our hearts came out and took possession of us, blinding us and leading us to wrong action. We stood out before ourselves and the world as narrow and parochial-minded, caste-ridden people who were unworthy of what we had ourselves proclaimed . . . Whether we like it or not, a high destiny has caught us in its grip. We may master it and shape it to our will, or fail and prove ourselves false to the opportunity that came to us.62

But, dejected as he was, Nehru was unwilling to consider further changes in the reorganization of western India. A return to the starting point of a multilingual province even larger than before was, after months of violence, accepted with relief as the solution of the crisis.

The past is done with and it is no good grieving over what has happened. I have no doubt in my mind that the final decision was a good decision and a right one . . . I am sure that on calm consideration even those who reacted strongly against it will realize that it was a right decision. It was right for the constituent parts of this great state, it was even more right for India.63

62 Nehru to Chief Ministers, 16 August 1956.
63 Nehru’s message on Bombay State, 8 September 1956.