The problems created by the reorganization of States and the drafting of the second Plan diverted Nehru's attention from foreign affairs; and the lack of any pressing crisis in the world justified this. For nearly a year relations with Pakistan had been at fairly low pressure. Early in 1955 the President had urged military action in retaliation for border raids by the Pakistan police and accused Nehru of 'nothing short of supine cowardice'.¹ Ignoring such bloodthirstiness, Nehru invited the new rulers of Pakistan, Ghulam Mahomed, Iskandar Mirza and Khan Sahib to pay a goodwill visit to India. Such goodwill cannot by itself solve a basic problem of national conflict, though it did help in relaxing tension. The Baghdad Pact reversed this trend and it was feared in Indian army circles that with the continuous and rapid flow of American arms Pakistan would, within a year, be in a superior military position to India. Nehru did not show his concern and continued to suggest a settlement on Kashmir broadly on the lines of the status quo. But the advocacy of an early settlement on Kashmir in the resolution of the SEATO Conference in Karachi in March 1956 was an irritant. The United States, which had the authority to prevent such a reference, had presumably not wished to do so, and three Commonwealth countries had sided with Pakistan against another member of the Commonwealth. The Foreign Ministers of the United States and France, who, unlike Selwyn Lloyd, came to Delhi after the meeting, were left in no doubt about Nehru's views on their having virtually placed a military alliance behind Pakistan on this issue. Of the three ministers, Pineau impressed Nehru the most. Perhaps this was because he apologized for what had been said about Kashmir, showed a willingness to conclude the treaty for arranging the transfer of the French possessions in India, publicly criticized the Baghdad Pact, and gave a sympathetic hearing to Nehru's analysis of the world situation. Nehru referred to the change in Soviet thinking and the growing similarity between the United States and the Soviet Union, and expressed half jokingly his fear at the distant prospect of

¹ Rajendra Prasad to Nehru, 6 January 1955.
these two countries coming to an agreement and sitting on the rest of the world — probably the first reference in high diplomatic circles to the détente that was to crystallize nearly twenty years later. But what, according to Nehru, stood in the way of a continuous lessening of tension were regional pacts and unnecessarily generalized thinking. Rather than condemnation of communism or capitalism, as the case might be, effort should be made to reach solutions on specific problems. With all this Pineau broadly agreed. He was most concerned with Algeria; but on this too Nehru thought Pineau’s attitude was reasonable and, as Pineau was going on to Cairo from Delhi, Nehru suggested to Nasser that he talk frankly to Pineau.²

Selwyn Lloyd, after the demonstrations against him in Bahrain and the news of Glubb Pasha’s dismissal, did not appear to Nehru to be in a condition for a calm discussion. Lloyd pleaded that Britain had practically been driven by the United States into SEATO and they had gone in with the object of toning it down and keeping Chiang Kai-shek out of it. Nehru stressed the concern felt by India at the arming of Pakistan and, when Lloyd suggested that Kashmir be settled on the lines of the Trieste agreement between Italy and Yugoslavia, replied that a partition was exactly what he had proposed to Pakistan.

Generally speaking, our talk was friendly and frank, and one had the impression (which he confirmed) that in spite of our differences of opinion in regard to some matters, our basic approaches were not far apart and there was much in common. We can at least talk in the frankest manner with each other.³

Britain’s chief concern at this time was to ensure that India made no purchase of Soviet military aircraft. Nehru, who thought that India was committed in this matter,⁴ told Lloyd that the Government of India would like to buy Gnats⁵ and Canberras but also a squadron of Ilyushins, which were liked by the Indian Air Force and which would be delivered quickly and at a reasonable price. This was a purely commercial transaction, and care would be taken to see that Soviet technicians did not have access to the secrets of new devices in British aircraft. But, even with these safeguards,

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²Nehru’s record of interview with Pineau, 11 March; telegrams to Krishna Menon in New York and Ali Yavar Jung in Cairo, 12 March, and letter to Chief Ministers, 14 March 1956.
³Nehru’s record of talks with Selwyn Lloyd, 4 March 1956.
⁴See Nehru’s letter to Krishna Menon, 8 March 1956.
⁵It is worth observing, in view of the splendid performance of the Gnats in the war with Pakistan in 1965, that in taking the decision to equip the Indian Air Force with Gnats, Nehru had to overrule Krishna Menon, who had a poor opinion of them. ‘Those little things would be blown out of the air by the fire-power of the American Sabres. You have said to me something about the psychological effect of these Gnats flying about. There is something in that so far as our own people are concerned, but I doubt whether this is so in regard to the other side, which is armed with Sabres against which we have no fighting and intercepting equivalents.’ Krishna Menon to Nehru, 1 July 1956.
the British were not satisfied. Eden wrote to Nehru that delivery of Gnats and Canberras would be speeded up, at the cost of supplies to the Royal Air Force; and the price of these aeroplanes, superior to anything the Soviet Union had to offer and containing highly secret equipment, had been reduced to the minimum. The British Government would be willing to consider any other proposal from India, but all this was on the understanding that no Soviet aircraft would be bought. This letter from Eden was followed by a visit from Mountbatten, who is said to have protested that if India purchased Ilyushins his own position would become impossible and he would be unable to arrange for the supply of Canberras with secret devices. India should buy arms only from Britain and nothing from the Soviet Union, whose Ilyushins were no match for the Sabre jets being provided to Pakistan by the United States. Nehru gave way, not so much out of conviction as out of friendliness. He agreed not to buy any Soviet military aircraft for the time being and, although no guarantee could be given for the future, promised not to take any such step without informing and consulting the British Government. While many aspects of British policy exasperated Nehru, in the spring of 1956 his basic goodwill for Britain and the Eden Government was without reserve.

Of all these visits of foreign ministers, that of Dulles was the most pointless. He could not have arrived in Delhi at a worse moment. The references to Goa the previous year and to Kashmir the week before had so angered the public that special precautions had to be taken by the Government of India to prevent demonstrations against him. The talks themselves, lasting five and a half hours, brought Dulles and Nehru no closer in ideas or intentions. "The most that we can expect out of his visit here is that he has got some idea into his rather closed head as to what we feel about various things." Nehru believed that the policy of the United States had reached a dead end and, if not altered, could only lead to war. To talk of containing communism was to miss the issue, which was basically a struggle for mastery between two powers. This, of course, made no sense to Dulles. When Nehru interpreted the developments at the twentieth Party Congress in Moscow as forming a further stage in the return of the Soviet Union to normality, Dulles politely assented, but added that it would probably take a generation before these changes could have full effect, and meanwhile the Western Powers should maintain their strength. So on the primary problem of world affairs the two men were really as far apart as ever. But Dulles used the occasion to try to clear the air on other topics. He blamed Britain for the Baghdad Pact and for embarrassing the United States by dragging them in. He was critical of French policy in Algeria and

* Eden to Nehru, 8 March 1956.
* K. N. Katju, Defence Minister, to Nehru, 15 March 1956.
* Nehru to Eden, 23 March 1956.
* Nehru to Padmaja Naidu, 10 March 1956.
Indo-China; and again the burden, said Dulles, had fallen on the United States to help France out. He agreed that Pakistan had no place in SEATO, attributed to others the initiative in making her a member and disowned major responsibility for the reference to Kashmir in the latest communiqué. As for the military alliance of the United States with Pakistan, Dulles repeated the assurances that the United States would never permit an attack by Pakistan on India, and had taken express guarantees from Pakistan on this score. These assurances had never carried conviction with Nehru; and he was confirmed in his lack of confidence by Mikoyan’s report a fortnight later in Delhi, that he had been informed in Karachi by the Pakistan Government that the defence pacts were intended solely to strengthen Pakistan’s military capacity against India and Afghanistan. In fact, Dulles informed Nehru that the Pakistan army would soon be of the same size as the Indian army and with superior equipment. This, in a way, was to lay bare the hollowness of his own assurances; and Dulles acknowledged that he had not realized till his visit to Delhi that India genuinely feared that Pakistan was growing in military strength and would use such strength against her.

Nehru then mentioned, as Dulles must have expected, the strong reaction in India to the statement on Goa issued by Dulles with the Foreign Minister of Portugal. Dulles replied that his chief anxiety was not to say anything which might hurt India. The Portuguese minister had suggested something very much worse and this had been turned down repeatedly. He had only agreed to the final communiqué after it had been approved by the experts on India in the State Department — which only showed, commented Nehru, how poor was the official advice Dulles received on India. Dulles agreed that the Portuguese could not remain in Goa, asked how he could help in settling this issue and remarked in passing, while discussing other matters, that it would be difficult for India to renounce the use of force completely in the matter of Goa.11

All Nehru’s impressions regarding the attitudes of the Western Powers were reinforced during his visit to Europe in the summer of 1956. He liked Eden and had appreciated his role at the Geneva Conference; they had got on well when Eden visited Delhi in the spring of 1955; and Nehru sent a handwritten letter of warm congratulations when Eden succeeded Churchill as Prime Minister.

This is just a brief personal note of welcome to you on your assumption of the high office of prime minister of the United Kingdom. I am happy that in England and in India we have had occasion to know each other a little more intimately. I am sure that this is of importance not only in the personal sense but in the larger

10 Nehru’s record of talks with A. Mikoyan, 26 March 1956.
11 Nehru’s two notes on talks with Dulles, 10 March 1956.
sense also. I hope that, whatever occasional differences of opinion we might have, we shall be able to cooperate in a large measure in the great causes that confront us. In this you have not only my personal goodwill but the goodwill of many in India.\textsuperscript{12}

At the Conference of Commonwealth Prime Ministers, even Nehru could not have improved on Eden's analysis of Soviet policy, which was the main item on the agenda. Reporting on the visit to Britain a few weeks earlier of Khrushchev and Bulganin, Eden said there was not so much a fundamental change of heart in the Soviet Union as a change of outlook and of direction. There was no reason to suppose that the Soviet Government had modified their ultimate aim for communism of world domination, but they were moving from the fixed positions implied by the cold war to more flexible policies. They wished to avoid a major war and to establish better and more normal relations with other countries. There was, as a result, a new element of flexibility in Soviet domestic policy also, and this provided new opportunities.

Nehru's already high opinion of Eden's diplomatic maturity and sophistication was enhanced by this analysis and the report from Moscow that both Khrushchev and Bulganin had been deeply impressed by Eden.\textsuperscript{13} At the Conference he urged that the improvement in world affairs effected by the new Soviet attitudes be supported by bringing China into the United Nations or, if this were too much to expect of the United States on the eve of a presidential election, at least by loosening the ties of the United States with Taiwan. The other prime ministers agreed but were unwilling to embarrass the United States by recommending China's entry into the United Nations, or even by making a general reference to the need for the United Nations to be more fully representative.\textsuperscript{14} Nehru, who had been invited to Washington by Eisenhower, proposed to press the matter at a personal level. He intended, as it were, to talk above the head of Dulles — who had recently criticized non-alignment as immoral and shortsighted — just as he rejected Krishna Menon's offer to join his party.\textsuperscript{15} No one else should be present when he talked to Eisenhower. But Eisenhower's illness and the consequent suggestion from Washington that Nehru should seek a postponement led to Nehru putting off his visit.\textsuperscript{16} Nehru thought that possibly Dulles had manoeuvred this; certainly

\textsuperscript{12} Nehru to Eden, 8 April 1955.
\textsuperscript{13} K. P. S. Menon's telegram to Nehru, 10 July 1956.
\textsuperscript{14} Record of discussions at the Conference of Commonwealth Prime Ministers, 27 June to 5 July 1956.
\textsuperscript{15} New York Times, 10 June 1956.
\textsuperscript{16} Nehru's telegram to Krishna Menon, 14 June 1956.
\textsuperscript{17} G. L. Mehta's telegram reporting conversations with J. F. Dulles and Sherman Cooper, 20 June, 1956.
Krishna Menon and Rajagopalachari were pleased, both taking the view that the invitation was part of electioneering.\textsuperscript{18}

It was not, therefore, to Washington but to Paris that Nehru went from London. It had already been agreed by Nehru, after his talks with Pineau in Delhi — to the disappointment of the British Government and of Krishna Menon, who was negotiating without authority for the purchase of Hunter aircraft — to buy French Mystère planes.\textsuperscript{19} Now Nehru met Mollet, and came to believe even more in the moderation and good sense of the French Government. He thought France was willing, once the military position in Algeria improved, to offer a generous settlement, and he sent word to the Algerian nationalists, who were sore that he had not helped their cause in Paris, to take advantage of the French offer.\textsuperscript{20}

Such sunshine in Nehru’s relations with the British and French Governments helped in shaping his position at the start of the crisis over Suez. Neither at Brioni, where Nasser, Tito and Nehru had met, nor later at Cairo, to which city Nehru and Nasser had travelled together, did Nasser mention to Nehru that he was considering the possibility of nationalizing the Suez Canal — a not surprising omission in the light of Nasser’s later statement that he had not thought of nationalization at this time.\textsuperscript{21} Indeed, at Brioni, war in West Asia had seemed far away, for an informal message had been received from the Prime Minister of Israel to the effect that Israel had made a mistake in leaning on the Western Powers and the Israelis now realized more than ever that they were of Asia and must look to Asia.\textsuperscript{22} But Nasser showed Nehru on the aircraft flying to Cairo a radio version of Dulles’s speech announcing withdrawal of assistance for building the Aswan dam, and the speech seemed to Nehru very discourteous and almost contemptuous in tone.\textsuperscript{23} Nasser’s only reaction at this stage was that he would abandon the Aswan dam project; and Nehru approved. It seemed wiser to distribute Egypt’s resources among a large number of small projects yielding quick results rather than concentrate on one major project which would not begin to function for at least another ten years and would vest any country providing major assistance with a commanding control of the Egyptian economy.\textsuperscript{24}

Nationalization of the Canal came, therefore, to Nehru as an unpleasant

\textsuperscript{18} See G. L. Mehta, Indian Ambassador in Washington, to Nehru, 25 July 1956; Rajagopalachari to Nehru, 26 July 1956.
\textsuperscript{19} Nehru’s note to Defence Ministry, 13 June; Eden to Nehru, 15 June 1956 and Nehru’s reply of the same date.
\textsuperscript{20} Nehru’s telegram to Krishna Menon, 17 July, and note to Foreign Secretary, 25 July 1956.
\textsuperscript{22} Nehru’s note, 9 September 1958.
\textsuperscript{24} Nehru’s telegram to Ali Yavar Jung, Ambassador in Cairo, 27 July 1956.
surprise. 'I feel that the Egyptian Government is undertaking more than it can manage and is being pushed by some extremist elements and by angry reaction to American and British refusal to help the Aswan dam project.' Nehru had an element of warmongering in Egypt's action. Rajagopalachari, who at this time, in contrast to Nehru, was adopting a pronouncedly anti-Western attitude, favoured prompt and pre-emptive action on the side of Nasser. He suggested an immediate declaration by all the Bandung countries clearly expressing their support for Egypt so as to prevent any intimidation by the Western Powers. But Nehru preferred to hold his hand and instructed that all governments be informed that India would make no commitment of support to either side and would merely watch developments. No one could doubt Egypt's right to nationalize the Canal, but the manner in which it was done and the offensive language employed made it difficult to reach any acceptable agreement providing for what Egypt had already promised, the continuance of the Canal as an open international waterway.

This was obviously an effort by Nehru to play fair by Britain and France who had, in his opinion, been behaving commendably on other matters in previous months, and not to be swept along by the deep tides of nationalism and anti-colonialism. But, thanks to Eden, he could not long maintain this attitude. Unlike Pineau who, after meeting Nasser had been persuaded that he was not a second Hitler, Eden, enclosed in the walls of his past career, regarded Nasser as 'an Asiatic Mussolini,' felt that no honourable agreement could be reached with him, and even thought it possible that Nehru might be willing to accept action against Egypt. Any such illusion was shortlived, for the fierce reactions in Britain to the nationalization of the Canal led Nehru to advise the British Government against any attempts at coercion. But hopes of Nehru's support in securing a diplomatic settlement were not baseless. On hearing that Britain intended to convene a conference to consider international control of the Canal, Nehru suggested to Nasser that Egypt herself might take the initiative and call together, on the basis of Egypt's sovereignty, all those interested in the international aspects of the issue. The crisis could be settled by negotiation if rigid attitudes did not result in further unilateral decisions, for the demands of the two sides were not contradictory. 'But

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26 Rajagopalachari to Nehru, 28 July 1956.
27 Nehru's directive to Foreign Secretary, 29 July 1956.
28 Nehru's background note for missions, 31 July 1956.
31 Britain rejected Pearson's suggestion that the Suez crisis be discussed by the NATO Council before the meeting of the London conference, because this might antagonize and alienate Nehru who would play a key role in the dispute. Pearson, Memoirs, Vol. 2, p. 229.
32 Nehru's messages to Lord Home and to Nasser, 2 August 1956.
how the question is going to be settled by show of force is more than I can understand.\textsuperscript{33}

While the tone of Nasser’s speeches had become more moderate, his reply to Nehru’s suggestion was not helpful. He requested Nehru to join him in declining the invitation to the London conference, and his positive counter-proposal was to offer to discuss the problem of all international waterways at the United Nations.\textsuperscript{34} He must have known that this was virtually a meaningless offer, for the waterways Nasser had in mind were the Panama Canal, the Dardanelles, Gibraltar and Aden;\textsuperscript{35} and the countries concerned with these would obviously not agree to multilateral discussions. So Nehru ignored Nasser’s suggestion and declared his willingness to participate in the London conference. ‘Our object would not be to weaken your position, but as you yourself have been doing, to work for conciliatory approaches. In this way, it may be possible to prevent the proposed conference from becoming a barrier to settlement.’ He added, in what was clearly a rebuke to Nasser: ‘We wish to emphasize these aspects and not to support any unilateral action taken by one nation or any group of nations.’\textsuperscript{36} But to Eden Nehru pointed out that the list of invitees was too partial and required expansion. He would also be reluctant to send a delegation to the conference if it was committed to consideration only of an international authority to manage the Canal. Attempts to impose a solution on Egypt would lead to armed conflict and powerful reactions all over Asia and large parts of Africa. If the conference were to have positive results, the whole approach would have to be different.\textsuperscript{37}

Taking seriously a polite request from Nasser for advice, Nehru rashly sent a draft of the reply which Nasser should send to Britain. He should express surprise at the convening of a conference without reference to the Egyptian Government, but state that Egypt would be willing to attend if there were an agreed list of invitees and no prior conditions and commitments. While Egypt could not accept any challenge to her sovereignty, she would be willing to execute a fresh agreement which would guarantee freedom of navigation. Disillusioned by the United Nations himself, Nehru cautioned Nasser against any reference of the issue to that organization.\textsuperscript{38} But Nasser rejected this draft and said his government would not be represented, under any circumstances, at a conference convened by Britain.\textsuperscript{39} So a lack of whole-hearted support by

\textsuperscript{33} Nehru to Mountbatten, 3 August 1956, the New York Times was of the same view: ‘This is no time for battleships and planes: It is a time for sober and responsible talk.’

\textsuperscript{34} Nasser to Nehru, 4 August 1956.

\textsuperscript{35} Egyptian Ambassador’s conversation with Indian High Commissioner in Pakistan, 4 August, reported in High Commissioner’s telegram of same date to Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi.

\textsuperscript{36} Nehru to Nasser, 5 August 1956.

\textsuperscript{37} Nehru to Eden, 4 and 5 August 1956.

\textsuperscript{38} Nehru to Nasser, 5 August 1956.

\textsuperscript{39} Report to Nehru of Indian Ambassador in Cairo after meeting Nasser, 7 August 1956.
India of Egypt’s action had been followed by a disagreement on tactics. With Nasser standing aloof, Nehru announced that India would attend the London conference on the basis of Eden’s assurance that participation need not imply acceptance of the British demand for an international authority.\(^{40}\)

It seems to me that the London conference cannot possibly come to any settlement as Egypt will not be there. Our main purpose at this conference has, therefore, to be to prevent any wrong and dangerous steps being taken and to leave the door open for a further conference or consultations in which Egypt must necessarily play an important part.\(^{41}\)

A conference without Egypt’s participation could only be a prelude to real discussions; but even this might not be without value. Nehru was continuing his balancing act, assisting Egypt without standing forth as her unhesitating champion. He suggested to the Speaker of the Lok Sabha that he disallow discussion on a private member’s motion advocating withdrawal from the Commonwealth.\(^{42}\) He discouraged the Egyptian Government from adopting the rupee as the medium of exchange for her trade with third countries. He directed Krishna Menon to break his journey at Cairo on his way to the London conference to explain to Nasser that it did not follow from Egypt’s refusal to attend that it would be best for her friends also to stay away, for they might be able to prevent foolish decisions being taken. But mediation without unqualified acceptance of his bonafides by either of the parties was not enviable. ‘This is far the most difficult and dangerous situation in international affairs we have faced since independence. I do not think we can do very much, but it is just possible that we might stop the rot. Probably we shall end by displeasing our friends on both sides.’\(^{43}\)

At Cairo Krishna Menon found Nasser more mellowed but, while appearing ‘to realize in his mind that perhaps he was precipitate’, unyielding on such issues as international control.\(^{44}\) At the conference in London Menon sought to persuade the Western Powers to negotiate with Egypt on the basis of her sovereignty, and was embarrassed by the Soviet Union taking the same line.\(^{45}\) His compromise formula provided for minority representation of international user interests, without ownership rights, on the Egyptian corporation for the Canal, a consultative body of user interests, and transmission by Egypt to the United Nations of the

\(^{40}\) Eden to Nehru, 7 August, and Nehru’s statement in Parliament, 8 August 1956.

\(^{41}\) Nehru to S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike, Prime Minister of Ceylon, 8 August 1956. Nehru had rejected suggestions for a preliminary meeting of the Colombo powers (particularly as Burma had not been invited to the London conference) but kept these powers informed of his thinking.

\(^{42}\) Nehru’s note to Speaker, 9 August 1956.

\(^{43}\) Nehru to Rajagopalachari, 10 August 1956.

\(^{44}\) Krishna Menon’s telegram to Nehru, 15 August 1956.

\(^{45}\) Krishna Menon’s second telegram to Nehru, 15 August 1956.
annual reports of the Canal corporation. The first two parts of the formula appeared inadequate to Britain and France and really an appeasement of Nasser; but the formula as a whole was disliked by Egypt. Neither could Nasser have liked Menon’s suggestion that if the Egyptian Government claimed to bar Israeli ships from the Canal as a legitimate act of war, they should abide by any decision of the Hague Court on this subject. So far from the Indian delegation virtually functioning, as Eden and Lord Home have later alleged, as Egypt’s spokesman and egging on Nasser, at the time Krishna Menon had to press the Egyptian Government to counter the growing impression that India had no influence in Cairo by giving a measure of support to India’s proposals. But Nasser could not be persuaded. Nehru was probably not surprised for, though he urged Nasser to be a little more flexible, he also directed Menon to formulate some ‘more constructive proposal’, implying that the earlier suggestion leaned too much towards the British side. This lack of close accord between India and Egypt made it easier for the majority at the London conference to support the Dulles plan for an international board of control. Krishna Menon’s wish to walk out of the conference was overruled by Nehru, who had never attached much significance to it. Such a dramatic step was, in fact, not necessary, as the conference decided merely to forward its proceedings to Nasser without any specific recommendation.

The retrospective bitterness of Eden and Home about India’s activity at this time is not justified by contemporary evidence. For, after the conference, both Eden and Selwyn Lloyd sought to utilize India’s general standing in Egypt to secure some arrangement which would provide international control of the Canal. But at Cairo, on his way back, Menon made no suggestion, as the Egyptian Government were still somewhat chary of India, wisely leaving any initiative to come from Nasser. On 6 September, when it became clear that the Menzies mission would be fruitless and the threats of the use of force by Britain and France became more open, Nasser requested Nehru to get negotiations started on the basis of the legitimate concerns of user interests, but without acceptance of international control. Nehru agreed to help, but again dissuaded Nasser from approaching the United Nations.

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46 Menon later recorded that he had been surprised that Nasser agreed to this, and thought he had done so ‘because he had no anti-Jewish feeling personally, and part of him was a statesman even then, and he wanted a settlement.’ M. Brecher, India and World Politics (London, 1968), p. 68.


48 Menon’s telegram from London to Indian Ambassador in Cairo, 20 August, and telegram to Nehru, 21 August 1956.

49 Nehru’s telegram to Indian Ambassador in Cairo, 21 August 1956.

50 Nehru’s telegram to Krishna Menon, 21 August 1956.

51 Menon’s telegram to Nehru, 22 August and Nehru’s reply, 23 August 1956.

52 Menon’s telegram to Nehru from Cairo, 31 August 1956.

53 Nasser to Nehru, 6 September, Nehru to Nasser, 7 September, and Nasser to Nehru, 8 September 1956.
announced their proposal for the formation of a negotiating body representative of all views among the user nations, and Nehru pressed Eden to react constructively.

\[ \text{The position of the two sides and the points of difference as between them, though they appear to be wide apart and seemingly difficult to reconcile, do not appear to me to be so in fact. I believe we could discover and establish some common ground from which a settlement on the points of difference can emerge.}^{54} \]

He also wrote to Eisenhower, who had by now rejected the possible use of force, seeking American support for a negotiated settlement.\(^{55}\)

Eden paid no heed. The British Government announced that a Suez Canal association would be set up, virtually taking over the operational control of the Canal. It was added that other steps in assertion of British rights were being contemplated, and this was thought to mean that the British Government would try to adopt successively stronger measures in the hope that somewhere along the line Nasser would crack or Arab support for him would weaken or a plausible excuse for military action would be provided.\(^{56}\) In view of this, Nehru advised Nasser, as the plan for a users’ conference had seemingly become out of date, to consider a reference to the Security Council. This would have the advantage of at least delaying a crisis.\(^{57}\) He also complained to Eden about his endangering whatever prospects still existed of a peaceful settlement.

In my mind and in my approach to you I do not contemplate or advocate appeasement to which references are frequently made, but a settlement that is satisfactory and honourable. This should be fully consistent with the interests and the position and prestige of the United Kingdom, which you know are our concern as well.

There should be an emergency meeting of the Commonwealth prime ministers before any steps leading to conflict were taken.\(^{58}\)

War now seemed possible, and Nehru ordered the various departments in Delhi to plan the measures that would be required in the event of hostilities. The consequences of a stoppage of traffic through the Canal had to be examined and suitable action considered.\(^{59}\) But he still could not

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\(^{54}\) Nehru to Eden, 11 September 1956.

\(^{55}\) Nehru to Eisenhower, 11 September 1956.

\(^{56}\) Vijaysakshmi’s telegram to Nehru, 13 September 1956. As we now know, on 1 September Israel had been informed of Anglo-French plans to seize the Canal Zone. M. Dayan, Story of My Life (London, 1976), p. 151.

\(^{57}\) Nehru to Nasser, 13 September 1956.

\(^{58}\) Nehru to Eden, 14 September 1956.

\(^{59}\) Nehru’s minute for the Cabinet, 14 September 1956.
believe that Britain would be so lacking in good sense as to wage war on this issue,\textsuperscript{60} so he persevered with his efforts to create some basis for future negotiation by informal soundings on both sides. A broad sympathy for Egypt need not mean support of every action taken by her or deliberate humiliation of Britain and France. Krishna Menon sought to persuade the Egyptian Government to be a little more cooperative even though the plan for a users’ association was totally unacceptable.\textsuperscript{61} Nehru was due to go to Saudi Arabia a few days after Nasser’s visit to that country; but to avoid any suggestion of ganging up, Nehru asked Nasser not to stay on in Riyadh to meet him.\textsuperscript{62} He also declined to supply to Egypt bren-guns and spare barrels and fuses for mortar bombs.

For us to supply arms to the Egyptian Government at this stage would naturally be greatly resented by the United Kingdom and other Western Governments and make them feel that we are supporting Egypt one hundred per cent in peace and war. Our capacity for playing a mediatory role would disappear.\textsuperscript{63}

This continuous reluctance to side unquestioningly with Egypt was not supported by a less bellicose approach from the Western Powers. Eden still favoured a users’ association and told Nehru that Egypt should be persuaded to agree. An immediate meeting of Commonwealth prime ministers would be difficult. ‘In any event we will maintain close touch with Commonwealth Governments by every means.’\textsuperscript{64} Dulles too, to whom Nehru had appealed,\textsuperscript{65} replied that while the United States would not support any disregard of Egypt’s rights, it was not clear what precisely these rights were. Her legal title to the Canal was coupled with an international easement across her territory. The United Nations could deal with any overt violation of this easement, and the users’ association would provide a comparable sanction against covert violations.\textsuperscript{66} These were not helpful attitudes; but, as the days passed, the threat of war seemed to Nehru to retreat a little, giving way to what would probably be a long period of cold war.\textsuperscript{67}

In such a new phase, while the Western Powers had much to lose, Nasser could not be complacent. He had, as Tito said, in his inexperience reacted too quickly and too sharply to the American withdrawal of assistance to the Aswan dam project; if he had been put in a very difficult position by that

\textsuperscript{60} See Menon’s account in Brecher, op. cit., p. 65.
\textsuperscript{61} Krishna Menon’s telegram from Cairo to Nehru, 19 September 1956.
\textsuperscript{62} Nehru’s telegram to Indian Ambassador in Cairo, 21 September 1956.
\textsuperscript{63} Nehru’s note to Foreign Secretary, 17 September 1956.
\textsuperscript{64} Eden to Nehru, 16 September 1956.
\textsuperscript{65} Nehru to Dulles, 14 September 1956.
\textsuperscript{66} Dulles to Nehru, 16 September 1956.
\textsuperscript{67} Nehru to Chief Ministers, 20 September 1956.
withdrawal, now his position was even more difficult. In the Arab world, too, the situation was turning against him and the Egyptians were showing signs of nervousness. The British Ambassador in Cairo reported at the beginning of October that the situation appeared to be moving in favour of Britain, and the near future appeared a favourable moment for any negotiated settlement. Krishna Menon worked out a fresh set of compromise proposals, providing for an Egyptian Canal authority whose annual report would be forwarded to the United Nations, a broad-based users' association with advisory functions and an agreement to settle all disputes in accordance with the United Nations Charter. He thought that he had persuaded Eden and Lloyd to accept these proposals and Nasser should now be pressed to accept.

For your information only we have got somewhere. If we can get over one or two smaller hurdles in Cairo, which should be possible with the weight of your backing, we would have turned the corner. Subsequent stages are largely methodological problems.

From this predicament of being pushed into a settlement not to his liking, Nasser was repeatedly rescued by Eden. Krishna Menon had been over-optimistic in his assessment of the British Government's reaction. Nehru was informed by Eden that Menon had put some hypothetical questions and the British Government could not commit themselves by answering these questions. They still stood by their earlier insistence on international control of the Canal, and Menon's proposals left Egypt in unfettered grasp of the waterway and provided no means of enforcing whatever arrangements might be reached. Discussions now shifted to New York, where Hammarskjöld kept Menon out of the picture and secured an agreement on principles between Egypt, Britain and France. Egypt, reported Menon, had given in far more than she ever gave India to understand she would, and on points which on the face of them were vital to her sovereignty. Dulles thought that this was the best opportunity that there might ever be for a reasonable and honourable solution peacefully arrived at. Nehru was confident that the problem had definitely reached a negotiating stage and it would be difficult to go back on this.

Even if, on this last lap, Nehru and Menon had played little part, their

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68 Report of Indian Ambassador in Belgrade on conversation with Tito, 15 September 1956.
70 Krishna Menon's telegram from London to Nehru, 29 September 1956.
71 Nehru's note on telegram to High Commissioner, 1 October 1956; Eden to Nehru, 9 October 1956.
73 Krishna Menon's telegram from New York to Nehru, 14 October 1956.
74 Dulles to Nehru, 18 October 1956.
contribution to the maintenance of peace over the whole period from the
time of nationalization of the Canal had been massive.

I want to help in letting you know how large a volume of support you
have in this country, and how deeply grateful most people here are for
the stand you have made from first to last. Your first outspoken
statement in your Parliament was, in my view, of immense value, and I
think it did more than anything else to give our hotheads pause.
Krishna’s work all through the Conference and ever since has been of
immense value, and if in the end your solution of the Canal problem is
adopted, as I hope and believe it will be, not only Britain but the whole
world will owe you very much. In any case, I think the Labour Party,
with Liberal and other support, are now strong enough to prevent the
Government pursuing the suicidal course which was nearly taken.76

Noel-Baker was, of course, wrong in this forecast. Eden, unknown to
Nehru and Dulles and even to his ambassadors,77 was working out other
plans. The secret arrangements with Israel necessitated a request for
postponement of further explanatory talks with Egypt, scheduled to begin
in Geneva on 29 October. The Egyptian Government believed that this
meant a lull78 and were as startled as everyone else by the Israeli attack and
the Anglo-French ultimatum. The invasion of Egypt was clearly no matter
on which Nehru could refrain from taking sides. ‘This is a reversal of
history which none of us can tolerate.’79 Apart from public condemnation
of the aggressors, he called on Hammarskjöld to ensure that the procedures
of the United Nations were swifter than those of invasion and aggression,
and urged the United States to intervene.

I cannot imagine a worse case of aggression. If this aggression
continues and succeeds, all faith in international commitments and
the United Nations will fade away, and the old spectre of colonialism
will haunt us again . . . The whole future of the relations between
Europe and Asia hangs in the balance. There can be no peace,
howsoever it might be imposed, if it means conquest by force of
arms.80

76 Philip Noel-Baker to Nehru, 26 October 1956. In earlier years Nehru had often justifiably been
irritated with Noel-Baker.
77 ‘Lately he [Nasser] has been telling me that he was quite prepared to believe that Britain was
restraining the Israelis. Trevelyan told me this was so, and that the Israeli Ambassador in London had
expressed to the British Foreign Office his country’s dissatisfaction at the British attitude. I conveyed
this information to Nasser for whatever it was worth.’ Report of Indian Ambassador in Cairo to
Ministry of External Affairs, 22 October 1956.
78 Telegram of Indian Ambassador in Cairo after talks with Egyptian Foreign Minister, 26 October
1956.
79 Nehru to Nasser, 31 October 1956.
80 Nehru to Dulles, 31 October 1956.
To Eden himself, who sent a formal letter of explanation, Nehru did not mince his words.

It seems to us that this is clear aggression and a violation of the United Nations Charter. For us in India and, I believe, in many other countries of Asia and elsewhere, this is a reversion to a previous and unfortunate period of history when decisions were imposed by force of arms by Western Powers on Asian countries. We had thought that these methods were out-of-date and could not possibly be used in the modern age. The whole purpose of the United Nations is undermined and the freedom of nations imperilled if armed might is to decide issues between nations... it is a matter of the deepest regret to me that the United Kingdom, with her record of liberal policies, should be associated now with aggression and invasion and, in the minds of many countries where memories of colonialism still linger, should become a symbol of something that they have fought against in the past and dislike intensely in the present. Our sympathies must necessarily be with Egypt in these circumstances... nothing can justify aggression and the attack on the freedom of a country. I have set down my feelings freely and frankly for I think it is due to a friend that I should do so. Unless these wrong courses are halted the future appears to me to be dark indeed.\footnote{Nehru to Eden, 1 November 1956.}

\footnote{Bulganin to Nehru, 2 November and Nehru’s reply of same date; Foreign Secretary to Indian chargé d’affaires in Cairo, 2 November; Chou En-lai’s message to Nehru, communicated by Indian Ambassador, 3 November 1956.}

\footnote{Telegram from Indian delegation in New York to Foreign Secretary, 3 November and Foreign Secretary’s reply, 4 November 1956.}
would operate for a temporary period on Egyptian soil with Egypt's consent, not as a successor of the invading forces but to push them back behind the armistice lines. But, whatever the merits of the proposal, Nehru was prepared to agree only if the Egyptian Government expressed an unqualified desire for Indian participation. 'You can assure the Egyptian Government of our complete solidarity with Egypt whatever happens.'

The Soviet proposal for a joint Soviet-American military effort to stop the fighting was obviously unacceptable to Eisenhower. But the threat to use rockets remained. The British Ambassador in Moscow, who did not think the threat an empty one, advised the Foreign Office to mobilize the United States and Nehru to warn the Soviet Union of the danger of such action. But this was a matter in which Nehru needed no prompting. He appealed to Bulganin not to take any steps which might lead to a general war but to agree to act through the United Nations. He also welcomed the Swiss proposal of a meeting of the heads of government of the United States, Britain, France and the Soviet Union, and expressed his own willingness to attend if desired. But there were other problems than the restoration of peace. Egyptian military resistance was disintegrating and Ali Sabry reported that Nasser proposed to lay down his life fighting. Though a cease-fire was accepted by Britain soon after, Nehru sent Nasser a warmly worded note of encouragement.

Recent developments indicate definitely that the tide has turned in favour of Egypt. I am sure that this process will continue and not only bring relief to Egypt but ultimate removal of all aggression wherever it may come from. I should like to congratulate you on this turn of events and to assure you that we shall stand by the independence of Egypt. World opinion has been largely with you and has undoubtedly helped greatly, but it is essentially your leadership and the determination of the Egyptian people to preserve their freedom that has made the difference. I trust that Egypt will long have your leadership and prosper under it.

Nasser replied that no expression of thanks or gratitude was necessary as he and Nehru had reached such a stage of close friendship and understanding; even now he suspected some political trick in the cease-fire and asserted

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84 Telegram from Indian delegation in New York to Foreign Secretary, 4 November; Krishna Menon's telegram from New York to Nehru, 5 November; Nehru's telegram to Indian chargé d'affaires in Cairo, 5 November 1956.
85 Bulganin to Nehru, 5 November, and Eisenhower to Nehru, 5 November 1956.
87 Nehru to Bulganin, 6 November 1956.
88 Nehru to the President of the Swiss Confederation, 6 November 1956.
89 Telegram from Indian chargé d'affaires, 6 November 1956.
90 Nehru to Nasser, 7 November 1956.
that he would accept nothing which limited Egypt's sovereignty.\(^{81}\)

In India itself, Nehru had to subdue the growing storm of hostility to Britain as well as to the Commonwealth as a whole. In both his private communications as well as in his speeches he never criticized Britain or even the British Government, but only Eden; and he always expressed his disapproval more in sorrow than in anger.\(^{82}\) To Nehru the Suez adventure was the aberration of one man; and the Indian public should remember that Eden did not symbolize the totality of British opinion. He knew that there was opposition even among the Conservatives and in the British Foreign Office to Eden's policy, while Pethick-Lawrence appealed to him to take into account the fact that the Labour Party was severely critical.

A rumour has reached me that there is a possibility that in view of your profound disapproval of what our United Kingdom Government is doing in the Middle East you may be considering withdrawal from the Commonwealth.

As one who is equally an out-and-out opponent of Sir Anthony Eden's policy, may I say that I should regard any such decision as a disaster. There is as you know a great number of people here in the United Kingdom whose views are similar to yours, and we hope you will not desert us in our struggle to rescue the Commonwealth from the disgrace which our Prime Minister has put upon it.\(^{83}\)

The demand for withdrawal from the Commonwealth came not only from left-wing parties and within the Congress but from even the conservative leader Rajagopalachari. But Nehru withstood the pressure. The Commonwealth connection had not inhibited India from expressing her opinions in the strongest possible manner, and any severance of this relationship should be not the result of an angry reaction to a particular crisis but a cool decision taken after consideration of every aspect of the issue. Britain had no monopoly of the Commonwealth, and India had been able to make her efforts more effective by acting in close collaboration with other members such as Canada.\(^{84}\) So, when the storm passed, the Commonwealth, despite the British Government's neglect of their obligations and the heavy volume of criticism in India, remained intact. Nehru was not only among the creators of the new Commonwealth; he was also, in its first major crisis, its saviour.

After the cease-fire, Britain requested India to 'come in heavily and assist

\(^{81}\) Report of Indian chargé d'affaires to Foreign Secretary of interview with Nasser, 8 November 1956.

\(^{82}\) Malcolm MacDonald, *Titans and Others* (London, 1972), p. 224. MacDonald was at this time British High Commissioner in Delhi.

\(^{83}\) Pethick-Lawrence to Nehru, 5 November 1956.

\(^{84}\)'In these difficult days through which we are passing, India has never been far from my mind.' St Laurent to Nehru, 7 November 1956.
26 Nehru, Bertrand Russell and Pethick-Lawrence, London, February 1955

27 With Bulganin and Khrushchev, Delhi, December 1955
28  Nasser, Nehru and Tito at Brioni, July 1956

29  With Lord and Lady Attlee, Delhi, October 1956
in bringing about a speedy settlement."\(^{95}\) The Egyptian Government were willing to accept an international force consisting of troops from India, Greece and Colombia only.\(^{96}\) Krishna Menon advised the addition of Canada and, if Colombia were to be accepted, of Yugoslavia or Poland or Czechoslovakia as a balance.\(^{97}\) Pearson announced the offer of a Canadian contingent, and Hammarskjöld said that the advance party would consist of Canada, Colombia and India. But on 12 November Fawzi, the Foreign Minister of Egypt, suddenly objected to India’s participation in the international force on the ground that neither close friends nor declared foes of Egypt should be represented. The Indian Ambassador attributed this sudden cooling off towards India to either dislike of the Commonwealth or the objection made by the United States, at the instance of the British, to the inclusion of India and the exclusion of Pakistan, Canada and New Zealand. Later, in the evening, Nasser overruled his Foreign Minister, whose attitude was put down to apprehension that India’s presence in what many Egyptians would regard as an occupation force might damage India’s popularity.\(^{98}\)

Egypt now suggested that the international force should be manned by the four Scandinavian countries, Colombia, Yugoslavia, India and Indonesia. Canada was still objected to as seemingly the choice of Britain and France. She was a member of NATO, her troops wore British uniform and she had recently agreed to supply jet aircraft to Israel. Pearson sought Nehru’s personal intervention.\(^{99}\) Although the Indian Ambassador felt that he could not press Nasser on this beyond a certain point, Nehru strongly argued the case for Canada with Nasser. Despite her close links with Britain and France, Canada had opposed their policy from the start of the Suez crisis, and Egyptian insistence on Canada’s exclusion would harm Egypt’s interests. The argument about membership of NATO had fallen with Egypt’s acceptance (to please Hammarskjöld) of Denmark and Norway; and Canada had with courage cancelled the contract for supply of aircraft to Israel.\(^{100}\) Nasser agreed at first only to a Canadian ambulance corps or air supplies and Hammarskjöld was satisfied with this. But India still insisted that Nasser allow a Canadian contingent that would not wear its own emblems but United Nations helmets, and Nasser agreed on principle.\(^{101}\)

The Suez crisis was basically now over. The British Government tacitly accepted defeat and were ready to withdraw their forces from Egypt.

\(^{95}\) Lord Home, Commonwealth Secretary, to Indian Deputy High Commissioner in London, reported in telegram to Foreign Secretary, 6 November 1956.

\(^{96}\) Telegram of Indian chargé d’affaires reporting views of Ali Sabry, 9 November 1956.

\(^{97}\) Menon’s telegram to Nehru, 9 November 1956.

\(^{98}\) Indian Ambassador’s telegrams to Foreign Secretary, 12 November 1956.

\(^{99}\) Message from Pearson to Nehru transmitted by Canadian High Commissioner in Delhi, 15 November 1956.

\(^{100}\) Nehru’s telegram to Indian Ambassador in Cairo, 15 November 1956.

\(^{101}\) Indian Ambassador’s telegrams to Nehru, 16 and 17 November 1956.
without, as before, demanding any assurance regarding the Canal. ‘All they want now appears to be to avoid humiliation.’\textsuperscript{108} It was Nasser’s Government that Nehru had at this stage to pull up for proposing to deport British and French nationals and persons of Jewish origin even though they had not been guilty of anti-Egyptian activities.

You have in the recent past shown exemplary patience in the most provocative circumstances. If I may say so, this has impressed the world almost as much as your courage throughout this critical period. I would request you, therefore, not to take steps which would compel a large number of persons to leave Egypt in penurious circumstances . . . Even from the short-term point of view a little patience and tolerance at this stage would help in the discussion of bigger issues concerning Egypt in the United Nations and elsewhere.\textsuperscript{103}

But Nasser was unwilling to act on this advice. He argued that British, French and Jewish interests had dominated the Egyptian economy for decades and, in recent months, had tried to paralyse the country’s economic life. He could not ignore these interests, particularly in the context of British and French radio propaganda aimed at his overthrow: and he was therefore attempting to rid Egypt of them.\textsuperscript{104}

Nehru was disappointed, for he had hoped that Nasser would not spoil his success on all the major issues by pettiness on minor ones. ‘True wisdom consists in knowing how far we can go, to profit by the circumstances and to create a feeling of generosity which again results in a change in one’s own favour.’\textsuperscript{106} Egypt would be well advised to consolidate her triumph step by step and to utilize it to reduce the perennial crisis in Arab-Israel relations.

The Suez crisis had brought out the best in Nehru. He had at no time compromised on principles and had been unshaken in his evaluation of the rights and wrongs of the basic issues. But he had combined such firmness with a genuine desire to protect British interests and, as the crisis developed, to rescue Britain from the mistaken decisions of her Prime Minister. His position in the other crisis which erupted during the same months was not so patently faultless.

\textsuperscript{103} Nehru to Tito, 2 December 1956.
\textsuperscript{108} Nehru to Nasser, 5 December 1956.
\textsuperscript{104} Report of Indian chargé d’affaires of interview with Nasser, 5 December 1956.
\textsuperscript{106} Nehru to Indian Ambassador in Cairo, 26 December 1956.
14

Hungary

When, at the end of October, Soviet troops quickly moved in to crush the revolt in Hungary, Nehru came round to the view, despite diverse and confusing reports, that a powerful and widespread national uprising was being suppressed with large-scale slaughter on both sides. Yet he declined to associate himself with the move of the United States to raise the matter in the United Nations.\(^1\) This refusal to place Hungary tactically on a par with Suez exposed Nehru to severe criticism both in India and abroad. Even senior officials in his Ministry of External Affairs warned him against an application of double standards.

If it is true that Soviet troops are trying to occupy Budapest and other areas in Hungary, whatever the ostensible reason, and if it is true also that this is being opposed by the Hungarian Government and that they have appealed to the United Nations, we cannot afford to appear to be indifferent in regard to these developments. I am not suggesting that we should raise our voice in the same way as certain others are doing; but I think the time has come for us to give further thought to the Hungarian situation with a view to deciding our attitude in the light of the principles we have been advocating.\(^2\)

But it was not easy to determine what those principles demanded. In the Suez crisis, the issues were clear; but on Hungary the main source of information was the Western press agencies, who were perhaps exaggerating the ‘continuing intervention’ made possible by the Warsaw treaty. Besides, a public condemnation of Soviet action might be self-defeating, having the reverse effect of what was intended. It could well be argued that, in the circumstances, the best way of assisting nationalist forces in Hungary was to bring pressure on the Soviet Government in private. But there was probably also a tendency, in Nehru’s thinking, for policy to follow

\(^1\) Telegram from External Affairs Ministry to Indian Embassy in Washington, 30 October 1956.

\(^2\) Note of Secretary-General to Prime Minister, 2 November 1956.
inclination. 'In the Foreign Office at New Delhi,' the then Foreign Secretary wrote years later, 'events in Hungary took a second place to those in Egypt.'

So all that Nehru did at the start was direct his Ambassador in Moscow to let the Soviet authorities know informally the reaction in India and to point out that sympathy naturally went to those who represented the national desire for freedom. The next day he cabled again, seeking full information from the Soviet Government. 'Any further conflict between Russians and Hungarians would be most unfortunate and will be used to divert attention from the Middle East situation. Till such information was obtained, he decided to move softly and instructed the Indian delegation at the United Nations to avoid condemnation of the Soviet Government, while making clear that fighting should stop and the people of Hungary should be free to decide their own future without external intervention or pressure.

Censure of Nehru's reluctance to make an open reference to the Soviet action in Hungary was widespread. 'If you do not speak out,' wrote Jayaprabhash Narayan, 'you will be held guilty of abetting enslavement of a brave people by a new imperialism more dangerous than the old because it masquerades as revolutionary.' In an attempt to stem such accusations, Nehru, on 5 November, for the first time publicly expressed his sympathy with national forces in Hungary and condemned Soviet conduct. This was not regarded as adequate by his critics, especially as Krishna Menon stated in New York that events in Hungary were a domestic affair. Nehru did not go as far, but it does seem that until the cease-fire was secured in Egypt, his mind, like Hammarskjöld's, was more engrossed in the aggression there than in the intervention in Hungary.

I have no doubt that the action of the Soviet Government is deplorable. But we do not yet have full information as to how and why these changes occurred. The case of Egypt is absolutely clear and there is no doubt about it. Because of this and because of our own intimate contacts both with Egypt and with the Suez Canal issue, we had to express our opinion immediately and forcibly.

He wrote to Eisenhower on 7 November that there was nothing to choose

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9 Nehru's telegrams to K. P. S. Menon, 2 and 3 November 1956.
10 Nehru's telegram to Permanent Mission at United Nations, 4 November 1956.
11 5 November 1956.
13 'If you disregard all other aspects and look at the time sequence, I think it is perfectly clear to you that Suez had a time priority on the thinking and on the policy-making of the main body in the United Nations. That was not their choice. It was history itself, so to say, which arranged it that way.' Hammarskjöld, quoted in H. P. Van Dusen, *Dag Hammarskjöld* (New York, 1964), pp. 141-2.
14 Telegram to K. P. S. Menon, 5 November 1956.
between Suez and Hungary. 'I entirely agree with you that armed intervention of any country in another is highly objectionable and that people in every country must be free to choose their own governments without interference of others.' But it was in Suez that he pressed for American action. What had happened in Egypt had revived fears of colonialism and created an atmosphere of ill-will which it might take a long time to remove; but the United States could do much to remove these fears and apply the healing touch to the deep wounds that had been inflicted.

After the cease-fire in Egypt, Nehru, still awaiting fuller information, moved with caution on Hungary but did not feel that he had in any way compromised his general principles. But his position became more awkward when Krishna Menon, acting on his own, abstained from voting on a resolution condemning the Soviet Union for the use of force, justifying his action with some abrasive speeches. Nehru stood by Menon in public, but privately expressed his unhappiness.

There is much feeling in AICC circles that our attitude in regard to Hungary has not been as clear as it might have been. There is naturally great sympathy for the Hungarian people and resentment at the use of the Russian army in strength to suppress them. It is recognized that the position in Hungary has been different from that in Egypt; but nevertheless it is felt that we have not been quite clear in our declarations. From the legal point of view and because of lack of full information, our statements can be justified. But the fact remains that large bodies of Soviet forces have suppressed a nationalist uprising in Hungary involving terrible killing and misery for the people. Events move fast and it is not possible to have consultations. Generally speaking, it appears better to abstain from voting on resolutions containing some objectionable features and moving amendments, rather than voting against it.\(^{10}\)

So clearly it was not Menon's abstention but his speeches in the debate that worried Nehru. Any criticism of the Soviet Government by Menon had been not direct but only by implication and immediately balanced by references to the conduct of other powers elsewhere or by vague statements which could be regarded as criticism of anti-Soviet elements in Hungary. Even the representatives of Yugoslavia and Poland had been more vigorous and forthright in their criticisms of the Soviet action than Menon had been. Menon's defence was that he had left no doubt that India desired and expected the withdrawal of foreign troops, and he had supported continuing consideration of the item. But no judgment was possible till the report, which the Secretary-General had been asked to make on the situation in Hungary, had been received. Counter-revolution was active in

\(^{10}\) Nehru's telegram to Krishna Menon, 11 November 1956.
Hungary and the issue was being used at the United Nations as part of the cold war, to restore Western unity, to rehabilitate Britain and France and to slow down progress with regard to Egypt. There was no deliberation on Hungary but only invective, and silent abstention by India would have been denounced as silent support of the Soviet Government. The Soviet Union had the right by treaty to prevent the return of fascism to Hungary. Apart from legalities, the Yugoslav delegation reported that there was no immediate alternative to the existing government in Hungary, and any abrupt Soviet withdrawal would cause anarchy and retard the liberalizing movements in Poland and Rumania. But Menon claimed that he had not argued a legal or a political case, as he should have if he had been fully free and honest; so it was wrong to insinuate that he had been influenced by any fear of the Soviet Union or desire to accommodate it. However, contrary to the facts and perhaps against his better judgment, he had spoken strongly about violence and India’s grave concern at events. ‘To do more would be to put ourselves in a sheer opportunist and somewhat dishonest position even though we might, but only might, gain some temporary applause. I feel unable to do this and don’t feel you would approve either.’

This long effort at justification did not convince Nehru and, to counter the impression of deliberate bias created by Menon’s speeches, he decided that India would help to implement the resolution and serve, if invited, on the investigation and observation groups. But Menon was rescued from his personal predicament by Pakistan, which introduced a resolution calling for a police force and elections supervised by the United Nations. Menon, while abstaining on the rest of the resolution, voted against such elections as contrary to the Charter and a truncation of Hungarian sovereignty. He told his Prime Minister that India should help towards a settlement and, while making clear her anxiety about the situation and her dislike of violence and foreign intervention, should not get drawn into vilification or the power politics of the two blocs.

What we have done and should continue to do is to refuse to be made an instrument of power politics of either side and as things are here become part of Western propaganda and action to bring about a régime of their choice by using the United Nations.

Menon now had Nehru’s full support. The Prime Minister agreed that elections under the auspices of the United Nations were not only contrary to the provisions of the Charter but also likely to come in the way of the very thing desired, which was the withdrawal of Soviet troops. But

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11 Krishna Menon’s telegram to Nehru, 11 November 1956. A more elaborate justification by Menon of his attitude can be found in M. Brecher, India and World Politics (London, 1968), pp. 85-96.
12 Foreign Secretary’s telegram to Krishna Menon, 11 November 1956.
13 Krishna Menon’s telegram to Nehru, 12 November 1956.
14 Nehru to R. Sorensen M.P., 16 November 1956.
obviously both Nehru and Menon, whatever the general principles
enunciated, had in mind the possibility of elections in Hungary supervised
by the United Nations serving as a precedent in discussions on Kashmir. ‘A
government’, as Nehru commented, ‘may follow a broad line of policy, but
usually its policy is the resultant of various pulls and urges. Sometimes one
pull is greater than the other.’

That Nehru had not changed his mind on the basic issue was made clear
once again in a joint communiqué issued by the Prime Ministers of India,
Burma, Ceylon and Indonesia, then meeting in Delhi. They reiterated that
Soviet troops should be withdrawn speedily from Hungary and the people
of that country left free to decide their future and make whatever
democratic changes they desired in their political system. But this could
not justify any proposal for elections under the supervision of the United
Nations or even the dispatch of observers by the United Nations, and
Nehru directed Krishna Menon to abstain on this latter issue. It seemed to
him that it was rather in Port Said, where atrocities were alleged to have
been committed, that observers were required, and he advised Nasser to
propose this. But in the case of Hungary he was willing to do no more
than inquire of the Indian Ambassador in Moscow whether he had any
information on the reported deportation of Hungarian youth to the Soviet
Union.

In fact, Nehru’s long-standing soreness at the partisanship and dilator-
iness customarily shown by the United Nations was leading him to react
more sharply than was justified. Krishna Menon surprisingly adopted a
more flexible attitude on this issue and advised the Soviet delegation that it
was in the Soviet interest to permit observers to go into Hungary, if only
because it would allow them time for things to settle down. Nehru came
round to this position, but his mind was again centred on Egypt; and he
believed that if the situation there worsened the chances of withdrawal of
Soviet troops from Hungary would greatly diminish. So his advice to the
Hungarian nationalists was to maintain peace, as any violence would not
only bring fresh misery but delay Soviet withdrawal. Such advocacy of
timidity was not in character.

But within hours the real Nehru, casting off the shadow of old
prejudices, the hesitations of realpolitik and the influence of other issues,
gave full utterance to his feelings. That the rising was popular and
widespread and had the backing of the army and even the communists now
seemed to Nehru established beyond doubt, and he stated his viewpoint in

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15 Nehru’s note to Siquerios, the Mexican mural artist, 14 November 1956.
16 14 November 1956.
17 Nehru’s telegrams to Krishna Menon, 15 November, and to Indian Ambassador in Cairo,
   16 November 1956.
18 Nehru’s note to Foreign Secretary, 16 November 1956.
19 Krishna Menon’s telegram to Nehru, 17 November 1956.
20 Nehru’s note to Foreign Secretary, 18 November 1956.
public and without qualification. The major fact stood out that the majority of the people of Hungary wanted a change, political, economic or whatever else, and demonstrated and actually rose in insurrection to achieve it but ultimately they were suppressed. There had then followed an extraordinary demonstration of passive resistance, more significant of the wishes of the Hungarian people than an armed revolt. This uprising had coincided with the Suez invasion and the guilty party in each case was attempting to lay stress on what had happened in the other place so as to hide its own misdemeanour. He himself was confident that the Hungarian people would ultimately triumph and felt that the immediate setback had powerfully affected the prestige of the Soviet Government, not only among the uncommitted countries but more among countries and governments which were on the side of that country, ‘including, if I may say so, the people of the Soviet Union itself’. He was now, reported the B.B.C. correspondent, as deeply involved emotionally in the fate of Hungary as he had always been in that of Egypt.

Now this speech was tremendously significant. It was delivered without text or notes, not a calculated speech but one straight from the heart. Never before has Mr Nehru spoken out so positively against Russian imperialism and for the oppressed peoples behind the iron curtain. And it seems, from India’s latest resolution before the United Nations, that she means to follow this up. What the Soviet reaction will be to this open defiance is something India awaits with the very keenest interest.

This resolution requesting the Hungarian Government to receive observers marked an emphatic change in Nehru’s attitude on the subject and was carried by a large majority against Soviet opposition. Nehru then sent strongly worded messages to Bulganin, Kadar and Tito urging acceptance of the resolution and an invitation at least to Hammarskjöld to visit Hungary. The consequences of rejection could be disastrous and might even lead to war, while to deny Hammarskjöld this courtesy would create serious misgivings in the minds even of those friendly to the Kadar régime, and virtually confirm reports about deportations. The Soviet Government were clearly piqued that India should have gone ahead with this resolution even after being informed of Soviet objections and the Soviet Ambassador called on Nehru to discuss, of all things, Kashmir. This was not then an immediate problem, and that the Soviet Government should raise this matter when the world was on the verge of war over Suez.

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82 Gerald Priestland, 20 November 1956.
83 Nehru’s telegrams to Bulganin, Kadar and Tito, 22 November 1956.
84 Nehru’s note, 23 November 1956.
and Hungary was obviously an effort at gentle blackmail — a reminder of Soviet support to India on this issue as well as a hint of possible withdrawal of such support. But no such pressure could be expected to make Nehru shift his position. Indeed, he now felt so strongly about Hungary that Krishna Menon thought it necessary to caution him against intervention. 'The best we can do at the moment is to press the visit of the Secretary-General and also hope that our Ambassador will get there quickly. I do not think we shall make any progress by our telling the Soviet Government in public what to do.' There was, replied Nehru, no question of intervention; but he had little doubt that it was the Soviet military commander and not the Kadar Government who ruled Hungary. The only solution was a phased withdrawal of Soviet troops, and as there seemed no way of bringing this about, Nehru approved of Krishna Menon's offer to lapse into silence.

None of us can control events. All we can do is to try our best and avoid any step which might aggravate the situation. At the same time we do not improve a situation by saying or doing something which we cannot easily justify and we have to adhere to our broad principles. If war comes, it will come in spite of us.26

A few days later, the abduction of Nagy in a manner which was a direct affront to the Yugoslav Government greatly annoyed Tito, who had till this time been arguing the Soviet case with Nehru, and he sought Nehru's support in any action he might be forced to take.27 But both Krushchev and Bulgarin again reminded India of Kashmir, and remarked that Hungary was as close to the Soviet Union as Kashmir was to India.28 Unshaken, Nehru authorized Krishna Menon, 'politely if possible but firmly' to state India's disapproval both of the arrest and deportation of Nagy and of the Hungarian refusal to receive Hammarskjöld. 'We cannot put ourselves in the wrong and do something which is against our own convictions. But we should try to avoid giving needless offence or aggravating a situation that is bad enough.'29 He directed general support to a resolution on Hungary which was being tabled by the United States, and Menon inquired if this indicated a change in India's policy towards the great powers in view of recent Soviet actions and Nehru's impending visit to Washington.30 This was presumptuous rhetoric, but Nehru answered patiently. The Soviet

25 Krishna Menon's telegram to Nehru, 22 November 1956. India was represented only by a chargé d'affaires in Budapest, the Ambassador being resident in Moscow.
26 Nehru's personal telegrams to Krishna Menon, 23 November 1956.
27 Tito to Nehru, 28 November 1956.
28 Telegrams of minister, Indian Embassy, reporting conversation with Krushchev, 28 November, and of Indian Ambassador reporting an interview with Bulgarin, 29 November 1956.
29 Nehru's telegram to Krishna Menon, 2 December 1956.
30 Nehru's telegram to Krishna Menon, and Menon's reply, 2 December 1956.
Union should not be condemned for defiance of the United Nations Charter, nor need any withdrawal of Soviet troops be required to be carried out under observation by the United Nations. Any such attempt at humiliation would prove self-defeating. But in her desire to do nothing which might lead to war, India could not defer support for right action so long that she appeared to be opposing it and thus compromising her principles.

While we do not wish to condemn and make the situation more difficult for us and others, we cannot remain silent when silence itself becomes acquiescence in patent wrong. We have always said that our policy is independent and we judge each situation from the point of view of our general principles. We have to follow that policy... I am very much concerned with maintaining the peace of the world, but I am equally concerned with our acting rightly and in conformity with the principles we have proclaimed.

The most that he was prepared to concede was to agree to abstention on the resolution of the United States, but not to non-participation. He also turned down a request from the Kadar Government that he use his influence with the Austrian authorities to secure permission for an official Hungarian delegation to visit refugee camps in Austria in order to give assurances and provide clarifications.

In the years that followed, there was no change in Nehru’s expression of censure of developments in Hungary. On 8 January 1957, the United States sought an immediate plenary session and brought forward a resolution to which the Soviet Union objected strongly. Krishna Menon offered to remain silent and sought instructions on voting.

Even if we make a reasonable speech, unless it at the same time supports them it will irritate the Americans which it is our desire to avoid. It is wholly difficult to maintain any sense of integrity in any statement we can make without causing offence to both sides which latter is not our purpose.

Ignoring the sarcasm, Nehru approved of Menon not speaking and ordered abstention on the vote; and Moscow’s reply to this was to abstain later in the month in the Security Council on a resolution on Kashmir

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31 Nehru’s personal telegram to Krishna Menon, 9 December 1956.
32 Krishna Menon’s telegram, 9 December, and replies of Foreign Secretary and Nehru, 10 December 1956.
33 Foreign Secretary’s telegram to Nehru in Washington, 17 December, and reply of Secretary-General, N. R. Pillai, 19 December 1956.
34 Krishna Menon’s telegrams to Nehru and to Foreign Secretary, 8 January, and Nehru’s reply, 9 January 1957.
which was unacceptable to India. Repeated requests from Kadar that the diplomatic representation between the two countries be raised to embassy level were turned down by Nehru as a mark of disapproval, and he only agreed in December 1959 to the appointment of a resident ambassador in Budapest.

On the revolt in Hungary in 1956, therefore, Nehru's attitude requires no unqualified apology. He was a little late off the mark and was too concerned with Egypt to take in at the start the full measure of the Hungarian crisis. It was also, in the nature of things, difficult to obtain an unprejudiced account of events. But once he had grasped what was happening Nehru spoke out unflinchingly, regardless of veiled pressure from the Soviet Union. He repeatedly proclaimed that, making all allowance for foreign incitement and reactionary activity, what had taken place in Hungary was basically a nationalist uprising which had been brutally suppressed. No government could call itself free so long as a few thousand foreign tanks were stationed in its capital and the neighbourhood; and his policy was shaped in accordance with this evaluation. The restoration of normal conditions would be most easily achieved, it seemed to him, if the Soviet Union were not roundly condemned in formal resolutions, but this should not, need not, and did not involve a compromise on primary principles. He had picked his own path through the crisis and it was, on the whole, an honourable one.

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35 The Soviet Government probably believed that the lesson had been learnt, for a few days later they vetoed another resolution on Kashmir.
Mid-Term Assessment

By the end of 1956 Nehru was recognized as one of the few living men who made an impression on the world — ‘the man who,’ in the words of Harper’s Magazine, ‘since the end of the Churchill-Stalin-Roosevelt era, is the most arresting figure on the world political stage.’ A writer in the New York Post described him as ‘one of the most incandescent figures of contemporary history’;¹ and the Chicago Daily Tribune warned its readers that ‘he will lead India as long as he wishes — for better or for worse — and his voice will be heard as long as he lives in world councils — again for better or for worse.’² The New York Times recognized in him one of the world’s most important politicians, and of the unchallenged rulers of the world perhaps the only one who ruled by love and not fear.³ This acceptance of Nehru was, of course, primarily because of the impact which the central strength and sanity of his foreign policy had achieved. He had, on assuming office, made clear that India would participate actively in the world not merely because of his own international interests and his understanding of the role which India had assumed and could not shirk; foreign policy was also to him a way of safeguarding India’s newly won freedom.

What does independence consist of? It consists fundamentally and basically of foreign relations. That is the test of independence. All else is local autonomy. Once foreign relations go out of your hands into the charge of somebody else, to that extent and in that measure you are not independent.⁴

National security did not imply defence of the borders alone; it also involved resistance to political and economic domination. He saw no

¹ 30 September 1956.
² 30 September 1956.
³ Book review, 7 October 1956.
⁴ Speech in the Constituent Assembly, 8 March 1949. J. Nehru, India’s Foreign Policy (Delhi, 1961), p. 240.
reason why India should take over the traditional quarrels between the established powers or have policies framed for her; and in adopting this attitude he spoke for all the countries of Asia and Africa that were attaining independence. Despite the differences between themselves and the variations in their immediate situations, what they found in common in non-alignment was, beyond its political and economic connotations, an attitude of mind. It was a common way of looking at the world and its problems, the obvious expression of peoples who, after centuries of suppression, could again make their voices heard.

Beyond the concerns of these ‘new’ continents, Nehru gave articulation to the widespread longing for reason and honest intelligence in world politics. To a considerable extent, he even made reason prevail. By the right mixture of principle and finesses, he helped to secure settlements in Korea and Indochina, enabled Britain and France, almost despite themselves, to redress their mistakes in Suez, and, adopting what was then an unpopular approach, did his best in the circumstances for the people of Hungary. He established India as a beacon in the cold war by never tiring of the assertion that such a confrontation, at its worst brings the world close to destruction and, even in more favourable circumstances, clogs, paralyses and coarsens the future. This brought him squarely into conflict with Dulles, who found Nehru’s policy repellent. Both were crusaders, but in these years it was Nehru’s efforts which were, fortunately for mankind, more effective. They were not wholly successful. He could not secure an agreement with Pakistan on Kashmir and he could not convince the world that India had adopted a fair policy on this issue. It was a general and oft-repeated criticism that, while India presented a kindly and pacifist face to the world, she showed a much less pleasing one to her neighbours. Even her non-alignment did not always appear to be rigidly equidistant, and the motto ‘friendly with all’ was thought to have gradually changed to ‘friendlier with some’. As relations with the Soviet Union grew firmer, this tendency was believed to have grown, and even before Suez, The Economist, generally friendly to India, was outspoken on this point: ‘If India seeks to be helpfully neutral, she has to guard against one very neutral tendency, a tendency to nag people with whom she is basically sympathetic more sharply than she nags those whom she does not understand or from whom she expects little understanding.’

This particular criticism was unfair. On issues such as racialism and colonialism, and on the willingness to contemplate a general war, Nehru genuinely felt that the Western Powers were more to blame than the communist states; but such conviction did not disguise his aversion to totalitarian methods and his awareness of the possibilities of the deliberate

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5 See, for example, ‘India’s Two Faces’, editorial in The Times, 2 June 1956.
6 Editorial in the Manchester Guardian, 29 April 1953.
7 ‘No room for freedom’, article in The Economist, 10 March 1956.
spread of communism. But the warm, comfortable feeling of gratuitous virtue that underlay many of his speeches was irritating. It is also true that, though he was clear-eyed about Chinese communist leadership and the innate potential for a clash between India and China, he did not expect it in the immediate future. Certainly he believed that the mountainous terrain of the border areas, China’s interest in domestic development and the configuration of world forces ruled out any military conflict. "So far as the external danger to India is concerned, the only possible danger is from Pakistan. There is no other danger — not even the remotest danger." As the context of world affairs gradually changed, this was revealed as a grave deficiency of judgment.

As the writer in the New York Times recognized, Nehru’s advantage was that he spoke to the world from within a framework of assurance — the enthusiastic support of a very large majority of his people. Unlike Gandhi, who was a strong man imparting strength to others, Nehru drew sustenance from popular idolatry. His immense influence over his countrymen fortified his belief both in them and in himself. He could not get close to others, either as individuals or in a crowd; but the people of India became a mystique with him. He had unqualified faith in them and they, in turn, until the end, saw neither any flaw in him nor any major fault in his actions. Their romantic image of him outlived his death.

Such strength of mutual attachment assisted the introduction in India of a democratic system. It would have seemed natural, considering the legacy of viceregal rule as well as his own personal standing, to develop a plebiscitary monarchy. Instead, Nehru preferred to strengthen libertarian traditions. This was to him worthwhile in itself as well as the proper setting for other objectives. The organizer of the civil liberties union was not lost in the Prime Minister. He ensured the precise elaboration in the Constitution of the rights of the individual, and the vesting of the courts with full authority to protect those rights. He was reconciled to keeping in preventive detention those whom he regarded as enemies, not so much of the state as of society, especially those spreading communal animosity; but even in such cases he insisted that detention should be for short periods, and never longer than necessary. Uneasy that India was dominated by one party and that party by one man, he shied away from any action that suggested wanton weakening of opposing elements. He insisted that advertisements be withdrawn from journals and newspapers only for scurrilous writing and not for criticizing, however severely, himself or the government. His ultimate responsibility for the detention of Sheikh Abdullah gnawed persistently at his whole sense of public values. He virtually apologized to the jailed comrade of former days for his helplessness.

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*Nehru’s address to senior police officers, 13 March 1956.
*See Nehru’s note to principal private secretary, 10 September 1956.
We, who are in charge of heavy responsibilities, have to deal with all kinds of forces at work and often they take their own shape. We see in the world today great statesmen, who imagine they are controlling the destinies of a nation, being pushed hither and thither by forces beyond their control. The most that one can do is to endeavour to function according to one’s judgment in the allotted sphere.10

While unwilling to interfere with the policy of the state government, he continuously pressed on them to consider the release of Abdullah. ‘So far as I am concerned my whole mind rebels against the long detention of any person without trial. I have objected to this so often in the past that naturally I do not like it.’ Circumstances sometimes compelled action that was normally undesirable; but the balance of advantage in imprisoning Abdullah appeared to have been passed, and a man could not be kept indefinitely in detention. ‘That very detention will become an increasing factor for instability and for reactions against us in India and abroad, apart from the effect on Kashmir itself.’11

Nehru gave as much importance to the institutional aspects of the democratic system. At the highest executive level, this was basically a personal problem. He had to curb his inclination to take all the decisions and make out that they were the results of innumerable discussions. He had to disown the eagerness of his colleagues to leave all making of policy to him and insist on the Cabinet seeming to function as a reality. The advice he gave to his Chief Ministers on this subject was faultless.

The main thing is teamwork of those in the Government and the organization; secondly, division of responsibility and at the same time close coordination of all activities; thirdly, the building up of cadres of workers with responsibility; fourthly, creating good reactions in the public about the work of Government and the organization. Above all, there must be the strengthening of your position, not some kind of a rival of others, but as the undisputed head of responsible colleagues who work as a team supporting each other and frankly discussing every important matter.12

But he himself found it no easy matter to function as merely the leader of a team and, particularly after the death of Patel, the Cabinet was gradually reduced to a collection of tame subordinates. Ambedkar had not really fitted into what was, once Syama Prasad Mukerjee had resigned, primarily a Congress government and he seized the first opportunity to depart. Then Deshmukh remained as an odd man out till he finally broke

10 Nehru to Sheikh Abdullah, 8 April 1955.
11 Nehru to Karan Singh, 11 January 1956.
12 To Bakshi Ghulam Mahomed, Chief Minister of Kashmir, 15 August 1956.
loose in 1956. But from the end of 1950 the Government of India was basically a one-man show. Even Pant, the Home Minister, although he enjoyed prestige and standing in the Party, was willing to be no more than Nehru’s anchor-man and sought to anticipate Nehru’s wishes rather than to participate in the making of joint decisions. In the framework of democratic institutions that Nehru strove to install in India, the weakest link was Cabinet government. He insisted that all important matters should at some stage be brought up in Cabinet; there were numerous Cabinet committees and consultation was frequent; the deficiency was in spirit and animation. But at least the procedures of collective policymaking were established, for life to be later instilled in them. This was the work of Nehru, achieved against the drive of his own personality and despite the eager subservience of mouldering mediocrities who claimed to be his colleagues.

This frail machinery of Cabinet government had to be set in the wider context of parliamentary authority. Building on the familiarization with politics brought about by the national movement, Nehru defied conventional wisdom and introduced adult suffrage. Much as he disliked the sordid rivalry implicit in elections to legislative assemblies, Nehru gave life and zest to the campaigns; and, between elections, he nurtured the prestige and vitality of Parliament. He took seriously his duties as leader of the Lok Sabha and of the Congress Party in Parliament, sat regularly through the question hour and all important debates, treated the presiding officers of the two houses with extreme deference, sustained the excitement of debate with a skilful use of irony and repartee, and built up parliamentary activity as an important sector in the public life of the country. The tone of his own speeches in Parliament was very different from that which he adopted while addressing public meetings. There was no suggestion of loose-lipped demagoguery. He still sometimes rambled, but sought to argue rather than teach, to deal with the points raised by critics, to associate the highest legislature in the country with deliberation on policy and to destroy any tendency to reduce it, in Max Weber’s phrase, to ‘routinized impotence’. By transferring some of his personal command to the institution of Parliament, he helped the parliamentary system take root. This ensured that no one else would be able to dominate Indian politics as he had done. One of his greatest achievements was the preclusion of a successor in any real sense.

Whereas in the West liberal democracy had developed gradually, leading even to the maintenance of the theory that it could endure in its purest form only in a setting of capitalist industrialization, Nehru was making the superhuman, anti-historical effort to impose it on a society whose central fact was backwardness. Today, mainly because of the Indian example, few hold the patronizing view that the poor are only interested in economic issues. But it is true that if democracy in such a society is not to be wholly
‘premature’, it has to be intertwined with considerable economic and social advance. And this socialism again has to be fundamentally different from that known in the West, a rapid movement towards industrialization rather than the liberation of an industrial proletariat from bureaucratic organization. It was Nehru who initiated the effort of adaptation of established ideologies to a new context, for which they were generally thought to be unfitted. He was not so much a profound as a pioneering thinker. Looking back today at the theoretical formulations of Asian and African independence, with the integrated drive of Mao and the clear-cut ideas of Fanon before us, Nehru’s efforts appear weak and fumbling. His attempts to build a coherent body of thought and practice seem halting, incomplete, and perhaps circumscribed by his class background. Gandhi, however lacking in some respects, and though he borrowed much from the West, had the advantage of internalizing all his ideas and activities in the Indian experience, whereas Nehru was always, in a way, the outsider. But he took up the burden of constructing a framework of democratic socialism for an under-developed and underprivileged country and, denying himself the easy because complete answer of Marxism, strove to work out what was necessarily a more untidy and complex programme of action. It was an unprecedented experiment in world history. It has not yet succeeded; but it has also not yet failed, and the question is still very much with us, ‘How is it possible to devise a form of government which ensures domestic peace, invites popular participation in conditions of freedom, and also creates conditions for an assault on intolerable poverty?’

By the end of 1956, certainly, the experiment seemed well set to succeed. Internal developments in Kashmir formed the only major and startling exception to the adequate functioning of democracy in all its aspects. Not only was an ideal being realized; parliamentary administration appeared to be the only practical mode of government for a country of India’s size, diversity and immensity of problems. Planning for socialism was also pushing ahead. The lack of definition in Nehru’s economic thinking, and in the two resolutions on industrial policy, was more than offset by the success of the first Plan and the widening of horizons characteristic of the second Plan, which was being drafted. Ideology may not have been discussed in the Cabinet or in the planning commission; but the socialist objective was not lost to sight. A wise and experienced, if committed, observer wrote that the second Plan papers and estimates possibly constituted one of the most important documents in the world at that time.

Even if one is pessimistic, and allows a 15 per cent chance of failure through interference by the United States (via Pakistan or otherwise), a 10 per cent chance of interference by the Soviet Union and China, a

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13 First article in the New Statesman, 8 July 1977.
20 per cent chance of interference by civil service traditionalism and political obstruction, and a 5 per cent chance of interference by Hindu traditionalism, that leaves a 50 per cent chance for a success which will alter the whole history of the world for the better.  

This fair chance of raising a rational, educated and forward-looking society based on modernization, industrialization and a scientific temper was made possible by a government that accepted the task, planned for it, and informed the people that they had been sentenced to hard labour striving for it. 'We have to work with our hands and march forward on our feet. No stars will come to our help. We have to use our brains and our strength to solve all our problems.' Though India was a labour-intensive society, progress could be accelerated with the help of science and technology, which the British had done little to promote. Even in the years before 1947, when political issues demanded priority, Nehru had not failed to emphasize the indispensability of scientific development and to draw attention to the immense possibilities which the proper use of technology would open up. But at that time he could do little more. As Bernal pointed out even then, perhaps not the dedicated scientists but the political workers, struggling for the freedom that would enable the unrestricted development of the Indian people, were rendering the best service to science in India. Yet within ten days of assuming office as Prime Minister, in the midst of communal orgy, Nehru found time to attend a meeting of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research. He established the tradition of the Prime Minister presiding over that council and attending the annual sessions of the Indian Science Congress. He periodically multiplied the funds allotted to scientific research by the government and stressed to scientists the contribution they should make to industrial development. The Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, set up in 1944, received official support; the first of the five institutes of technology, based on considerable assistance from various foreign countries, was established in 1951; and a large number of national laboratories, specializing in different fields of scientific endeavour, were strung out across India.

One of the biggest things that we have done since independence is the development of our magnificent national laboratories all over India, which are already showing important results and which are likely to be the very basis of India's progress in the future. If we had done nothing else during the last five years but the development of these laboratories, we would have had some reason to take credit for our achievements.

18 Speech from the Red Fort at Delhi, 15 August, National Herald, 17 August 1954.
18 Nehru to Mahavir Tyagi, 9 August 1952.
As a further step, Nehru constituted the atomic energy commission, convened a meeting of eminent Indian scientists and gave public support to the proposal of Homi Bhabha, India’s leading nuclear physicist, for setting up an atomic reactor in Bombay. The attainment of criticality by this reactor, the first in Asia, in August 1956, was the spectacular climax of nearly ten years of sponsorship by Nehru’s government of science and scientists.

At one end of the scale, planning was ‘science in action’; at the other it was the forward movement of a whole people building their own future. A British journalist described the basic attempt in India as ‘Nehruism: India’s Revolution without Fear’, and, though Nehru disliked the word Nehruism, the article as a whole seemed to him a fair assessment. For it pointed out that a socialist revolution by consent was under way in India and, if it continued to be as successful as it already had been, it would make communism look both old-fashioned and barbarian by comparison. It was a revolution without class wars, heretics or victims, and its weapon was a series of tedious legal acts. But, in fact, it was more than a revolution by mere consent. Nehru was not content to impose legislation. He envisaged a more positive role for the people. He was anxious to explain his policies to the masses and give them a sense of participation in economic and social development as well as in political activity. The meaning of democracy was the chance being given to people to decide for themselves on all basic issues rather than merely the securing of acquiescence in decisions taken by others. Modernization can, of course, be imposed from above. Kemal Ataturk achieved it in this manner in Turkey. Even in our own times, political democracy is not always regarded as a necessary element in the ideals of modernization. But Nehru’s attitude was entirely different. To him participation was an integral part of modernization and that which vested it with endurance. Even in technical matters like planning, progress would be more certain, even if less swift, if the people were taken into confidence and there was as little suggestion as possible of imposition.

In this matter, if I may say so, I am a good judge. Nothing is so helpful as the public knowing that you want their advice and you rely upon them. In fact, of course, the actual help coming, in so far as planning is concerned, will be very limited. But the mere approach makes a good atmosphere.

The community development programme evoked in him a crusader’s zeal.

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19. Nehru’s speech at the Indian Institute of Public Administration, 6 April 1957.
22. To V. T. Krishnamachari, 4 April 1955.
because it involved the masses directly and gave them considerable initiative and responsibility. By 1956 it covered over a quarter of rural India and was spreading fast. The organization was still well-knit, and Nehru thought the scheme could be extended from the development of amenities like roads, schools and wells to intensive agricultural production.

This programme, therefore, had not crumbled, and Nehru regarded it as the main avenue leading to his vision of India’s future — an opinion, particularly as regards the National Extension Service, which was widely shared among expert observers. But this programme, in itself, would not be adequate. If the Indian peasantry were to be rescued from its servitudes, it was necessary immediately to effect extensive land reforms and, as a long-term measure, to take steps to control the growth of population. Nehru was aware of the importance of giving the peasants a sense of ownership of the land and it was his constant goading of the chief ministers which led to the abolition, soon after independence, of the zamindari system. But this did not mean the abolition of landlordism and its replacement, as Nehru desired, by rural cooperatives. There being no limits to the extent of land which any individual could own, the rich tenants became more powerful and secured more land, and the middle and lower peasantry obtained no more than some forms of relief. While the ideology of Indian land reform was in the interests of the peasantry as a whole, in practice it served primarily the richer peasants rather than the rural poor. This disproportionate improvement by the higher class of tenants of both their power and their resources also affected electoral politics for the worse. The well-to-do peasantry built up considerable local influence, compelling political parties to seek their support; and this enabled them to determine the choice of candidates and to strengthen all those factors against which Nehru incessantly inveighed — caste, linguistic considerations and narrow provincialism. Nehru’s efforts at revolution by participation and consent were being converted by influential sectors of Indian society into a revolution by revisionist methods, thereby reducing it into virtually no revolution at all.

Nehru, moreover, did not wake up quickly enough to the arrest of planning and the decline in economic growth which the rapid increase in population was causing. While a family planning programme was initiated in 1950, there was little seriousness or enthusiasm in implementing it. Nehru failed to give priority to this programme because he felt that increase in food production and exploitation of natural resources would be more than adequate to meet the pressure of growing numbers. Indeed, in the early years he went as far as to contend that India was under-populated because large tracts of the country were unpopulated. He later fell back

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26 Speech at Ootacamund, 1 June, Hindustan Times, 2 June 1948.
from this extreme position and acknowledged that family planning was no longer a fad of some individuals but had become one of the important issues before the country.\textsuperscript{87} Even so, there was as yet no feeling of urgency about the need to curb the rise in population. He considered the rate of increase to be by no means abnormal, and in fact less than in most countries of Europe; and he was willing to rely on long-term forces, such as the spread of education, the development of a health service and industrial progress, to mitigate the problem.\textsuperscript{88}

Although Nehru preferred to exercise his pre-eminent personal authority through democratic machinery, the fact that his was the primary impetus in both the Party and the administration lends significance to his style of functioning. The differences between him and Patel derived from an impersonal conflict between two different systems of thinking and feeling; and what enabled an avoidance of open rupture was mutual regard and Patel's stoic decency. But even with Patel Nehru played the game of politics with professional skill; and after Patel's death, beneath the veil of idealist language which he cast over the disagreeable features of party struggle, one can discern formidable talents at work, far superior to those of obvious manipulators like Kidwai. He had no base in faction, nor did he need it, for he knew that his standing with the people made him indispensable to the Party; and when necessary he was willing to draw on this asset. On the only occasion in these years when he felt that his position was seriously challenged and he had to play to win — to defeat the challenge of Tandon — he showed acute tactical insight, an ability to let matters slide until the most advantageous moment of confrontation, and a sureness of touch in facing the Party with the fact that this time he was not prepared to compromise. Nehru was a subtle aesthete of power. But his methods of confirming his dominance of the Party were not equally well suited to control of the administration of a country like India. Every branch of policy was supervised and often determined by him, and he inspired a great flow of action. These were the years when the Prime Minister was working at full stretch, putting in a twenty-hour day with hardly even breakfast as a private meal. A probing interest in every aspect of the central administration was combined with full acceptance of his obligations in Parliament and general surveillance of developments in the country as a whole. Nothing that was happening in India was of indifference to him. He would have agreed with Sir Harold Wilson's definition of the job: "A prime minister governs by curiosity and range of interest."\textsuperscript{89} He gave orders for a sunshade to be provided for the policeman on traffic duty at Great Place in New Delhi, chided the Chief Minister of Bombay for the arrest of a man and wife found kissing in

\textsuperscript{87} Nehru's report to AICC, 6 July 1951. AICC Papers, File G-49/1951, N.M.M.L.
\textsuperscript{88} To Julian Huxley, 14 January 1955.
\textsuperscript{89} Observer magazine, 24 October 1965.
public, and was concerned that parts of the film of *Hamlet* had been censored. He took time off from Indian and world problems to send to the planning commission details of the standards of physical fitness to be expected of young men and women. During the weeks when his whole Kashmir policy was crumbling, he had the time and interest to suggest to the Health Minister that an official investigation be undertaken into the case of a girl in south India who claimed to live on air.

However, along with such limitless attention to even trivial matters, there was a deficiency in some major aspects of administration. His recognition of the value of pluralist trends led to a slackness of central supervision and guidance and even, as in the case of the reorganization of States, to a measure of drift. He allowed the provincial Congress parties, which were in office in all the States, to choose their own leaders and was content to do no more than advise those Chief Ministers on how they should function. The result was that men like Bidhan Roy of Bengal and R. S. Shukla of Madhya Pradesh functioned as they pleased. Roy’s partiality for the private sector and prejudice against left-wing parties led to actions discordant with Nehru’s general line, while Shukla was aggressively anti-Christian. Even on prohibition, which Nehru did not favour, his respect for provincial autonomy meant that he would go no further than warn those governments which introduced prohibition of the financial disadvantages of their policy. The reluctance to utilize his firmly established leadership of the Congress Party to check and guide his old political colleagues led to an unnecessary loosening of his authority and slackening of relations between the central government and the States.

Similar personal commitments weakened Nehru’s authority in Delhi as well. In 1956, when Krishna Menon was in one of his moods of sepulchral despair, Nehru finally overcame Azad’s resistance by citing the report of the parliamentary public accounts committee that Menon had been guilty of only bad judgment and carelessness. But it was not certain that the appointment of Menon as Minister without Portfolio, however much Nehru might have desired it, would strengthen his hand. An effective High Commissioner in London because of his dedication to both Britain and India, and a resourceful negotiator at the United Nations, Menon’s abilities were ill-suited in the Indian setting. Histrionic and self-regarding, ostentatiously standing apart, while he operated with clandestine deviousness, he was not fitted to the administrative position which Nehru clearly had in mind for him. But the full impact of Menon’s presence in Delhi was still to come. At this time, the more dangerous influence tarnishing Nehru’s image was that of his special assistant, M. O. Mathai. A stenographer with no education, he had joined Nehru’s staff in February 1946, when Nehru had not yet assumed office. As Prime Minister, Nehru,

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28 July 1952, P.M. Secretariat File 40(81)/49-PMS.
Nehru to Amrit Kaur, 13 July 1953.
although he functioned as overlord of the whole administration, managed
with a small personal secretariat — a private secretary who was a civil
servant of middle rank, the special assistant and six to eight typists. As a
measure of economy this was advisable, and set an example to his
colleagues and Chief Ministers, who regarded large offices as symbols of
high personal standing. From the point of view of work too, a small office
was no drawback. Nehru worked long hours and was very much his own
draftsman. Receiving, throughout the years of his prime ministership,
about 2,000 letters every day — not all concerning official matters —
Nehru spent four to five hours every night dictating replies. All he needed
was a flotilla of typists who worked round the clock. Nehru’s paperwork
was never in arrears. Even the most inconsequential letter was answered
within twenty-four hours.

So the private secretary, whoever he was — and many officials held that
post during Nehru’s term — had little work to do. In fact, Mathai, who
soon usurped the position of head of the secretariat, saw to it that men of no
great competence, men who were willing to let things be, were appointed
to the post. But Mathai’s own position very rapidly became of nodal
significance, because all important papers had to pass through the Prime
Minister’s secretariat, and Mathai could decide which papers Nehru saw
and on which papers he could himself decide or give an opinion in the
Prime Minister’s name, without the latter’s knowledge. He also attached
advisory notes to papers going up to the Prime Minister, sent memoranda
to Nehru giving his own views on various subjects and even fed his master
with ill-founded gossip which frequently prejudiced Nehru against those
whom Mathai disliked.

Prime ministers, by the very nature of their office, are lonely figures.
They are obliged to maintain a certain distance from their colleagues, are on
guard against the many who may seek to profit from their acquaintance and
are cut off from ordinary society. For seventeen years Nehru did not step
into a bookshop in India, hail a taxi or catch a bus. In his case, there was
evén further isolation, caused by personality and circumstances. He
sustained close personal relationships with his sister, Vijayalakshmi, and
his daughter, but did not, in these years, consult them seriously in public
affairs. The long association with Kidwai, broken only by his death in
1954, gave Nehru unsteady assistance rather than solid support. Kidwai’s
devotion to Nehru was unquestioning and beyond question; but in
consequence he rarely gave advice, being content to follow his hero. His
ways of functioning too were solitary and conspiratorial. Nehru accepted
this and only complained on the rare occasions when Kidwai’s actions
embarrassed him. For Nehru had been confirmed in his loneliness. The
disorientation he had experienced after Gandhi’s death had been sur-
mounted by the achievement of a new inner balance; but he became all the
more dependent on his own resources. In the 1950s, with Patel gone, he did
not have a full exchange of ideas with anyone — not even Krishna Menon, Mountbatten or Radhakrishnan. He was a man firmly enclosed within himself.

This was Mathai’s opportunity. He was not Nehru’s confidant; but Nehru, placing faith in his devotion, integrity and ability, relied on him for information, for saving him from minor routine, for sheltering him from importunate friends and for warning him against intriguing colleagues. Mathai, not the faithful retainer as Nehru thought but disloyal, avaricious and opportunistic, exploited the access to the Prime Minister, which he was quickly known to have, to build up an independent position of his own. In the flunkey atmosphere of the capital, senior ministers were not above seeking his good offices, officials called on him and carried out his behests and a small coterie grew up around him exercising considerable authority. Unknown to Nehru, Mathai’s irregular activities were generally accepted and his influence either sought or feared. Indira Gandhi encouraged him beyond normal limits, Vijayalakshmi addressed him as Deputy Prime Minister, Rajagopalachari told Mathai that he looked on him as a son, Padmaja Naidu regularly sent him affectionate birthday greetings and even the Mountbattens, who should have known better, fussed over him. Thus an illiterate upstart had succeeded in making Nehru the victim of his own isolation and had revived in Delhi the atmosphere of a decadent court.

Perhaps this failure to keep the vital central machine of control completely in his own hands was made easier by the fact that Nehru was not merely a political leader. In these early years of independence, he was the presiding genius in all aspects of Indian public life; and if he delegated administrative authority without knowing it, one major cause may be found in the varied demands on his attention. He occupied a larger area of the national consciousness than the mere office of prime minister warranted. To a large number of Indians he was the measure of all things. He never shed his earlier role as a hero of youth and the guide of intellectuals; and, especially after Gandhi’s death, he became also the father-confessor to whom many came with their personal problems. Nehru did not encourage this. ‘I do not function as a guru for anyone and my life is such that I cannot give personal guidance to anyone in the manner you suggest.’ He was not successful in rejecting this new dimension of his popular appeal, and when pressed to help in solving a marriage problem or restoring harmony in a family he was too kind-hearted to decline advice. When he set out, as he did almost every month, to visit some part of India to gain first-hand information and keep in tune with the people, the crowds gathered not merely to hear him and be educated but to see him and be blessed. A Brahmin who was Gandhi’s chosen heir, with a long record of

\[\text{Nehru to P. C. Agrawal, 26 May 1954.}\]
national service and now Prime Minister — all helped to make him a
thaumaturgic personality.

Though Nehru disliked being dragged into personal problems, acting as
arbiter in matters outside normal administration came to him naturally. He
had not a total commitment to politics and was never swallowed up, even
as Prime Minister, in the outer events of his life. He retained to the end
his wide range of sympathy and interest, his sensibility and dislike of vulgarity
in all its forms. The year 1947 had witnessed a political act, a transfer of
governmental authority; it was now the task of his generation to bring
about the more fundamental transformations of the structure of Indian
society. For this, mere economic development, however essential, was not
sufficient. There was need too for modernization of society if India were to
be a civilized nation and Indians integrated persons. Towards the end of his
life, asked what he regarded as the greatest real advance achieved under his
leadership, he had no hesitation in referring to the enactment of measures
for the improvement of the condition of Hindu women.\textsuperscript{33} Nothing could
be done for Muslim women because that might alarm the Muslim
community. Even as regards Hindu women, faced with the inertia of
orthodoxy, he could not secure the acceptance of the Hindu Code as a
whole. But traditional authority was slowly but sufficiently undermined to
enforce monogamy on Hindu men and obtain for Hindu women the rights
of divorce and inheritance to ancestral property.\textsuperscript{34} He had not tired of
asserting, even during the years of British rule in India, that the test of a
country’s progress was the status of its women;\textsuperscript{35} and after 1947, when he
had the opportunity, he led the assault on the barriers of ages and cleared
the way for the majority of Indian women to have full social as well as
political equality. Perhaps, as Ambedkar bitterly complained when he
resigned the law ministry in 1951, Nehru could have moved faster
rather than proceeding gradually, introducing piecemeal measures. But the
opposition was not to be lightly dismissed; and the results, however
belatedly achieved, were firm.

In that sense, the passage of this legislation marks an epoch in India.
It indicates that we have not only striven for and achieved a political
revolution, not only are we striving hard for an economic re-
volution, but that we are equally intent on social revolution. Only by
way of advance on these three separate lines and their integration into
one great whole, will the people of India progress.\textsuperscript{36}

\textsuperscript{34} Lotika Sarkar, ‘Jawaharlal Nehru and the Hindu Code Bill’ in B. R. Nanda (ed.), \textit{Indian Women from
Purdah to Modernity} (Delhi, 1976), pp. 87-98.
\textsuperscript{35} E.g., speech at Mahila Vidypith, Allahabad, 31 March 1928. \textit{Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru,
Vol. 3} (Delhi, 1972), p. 361.
\textsuperscript{36} Nehru to Chief Ministers, 10 May 1956.
Notes for a speech in Parliament on the rights of Hindu women, 5 May 1955
This was not all. Beyond these three avenues of prosaic endeavour lay the need to give India again a living culture. Himself responsive to all manifestations of art and beauty and moving with the ease of birthright in the world of style and elegance, Nehru was keen to share with others his pleasure in the grace of living. "A man of culture does not speak of culture but acts culture and, in fact, lives culture." He demanded a toning up of the environment such as could give play to sensibility in normal day-to-day activities even of those who were not rich. Seeing no reason why all Indians should not, like him, possess energy, gaiety and imaginative curiosity, he sought to enlarge their values till they matched his own vision and conceptions. He urged the introduction of fresh vitality into the creative arts. Much of what went for culture in India was merely, to use the phrase of H. G. Wells, 'the ownership of stale piddle'. It was this which Nehru wanted to replace. He planned the establishment in Delhi of a national theatre (a project still in the blueprint stage), and brought folk dancers from all parts of India to the capital every year on Republic Day. He directed the unimaginative Works and Housing Ministry to encourage the painting of modern murals on the walls of official buildings which would break the decorative tradition with new motifs and forceful themes. Murals have not been developed adequately in India yet. They are a popular form of art. Our art in the past was very fine, but it is of the past. Our paintings are definitely small and precise and not popular in that sense."

This portrait of a personality of many colours is incomplete without a reference to the whole man who held together such a variety of talents, sympathies and attitudes. Nehru was not an easy person to know. He was adored by the crowds but held in awe by individuals. It was not only high office and the carefully calculated reserve but an inner core of aloofness which kept his personal sanctuary inviolate. His company manners were normally bad. On most social occasions he would be sunk within himself, with a seemingly sadistic indifference to his guests or neighbours. Polite table chatter demanded an effort of which he was not normally capable. But when in the mood, he could be an entrancing companion with a lively sense of fun, neither coarsened by politics nor mesmerized by the circumstance of power. There was mobility in his mind and he could create any atmosphere he wanted. A natural spontaneity made him particularly good with children, and the country virtually drifted to celebrating his birthday as Children's Day. He was not a compulsive worrier and had the gift of throwing off care. During the turmoil in the first months of independence, there was anger and misery on his face as he toured the riot-afflicted areas and gazed on long trains of refugees; but he could also, in the

89 To Swaran Singh, Minister for Works, Housing and Supply, 11 June 1956.
course of the same tours, take his mind off the suffering by reading the translation of an old Sanskrit play.\textsuperscript{40}

Nehru enjoyed the almost endless scope, diversity and responsibility of his work. 'It's such an exciting job to lead the Indian people today!'\textsuperscript{41} Hearing that the ministers in Kashmir were finding the task of governing too heavy, he wrote back, 'I just wondered how you would feel if you had to shoulder about twenty different burdens, each as important as the Kashmir issue. However, I survive and refuse to get distressed.'\textsuperscript{42} What helped him to maintain his equanimity was a firm sense of detachment, born of temperament and character as well as of his general attitude to life. For all his boundless energy and high spirits, he was one of nature's anchorites, an onlooker by disposition and a participant only by necessity. He was aware of his ultimate responsibility as Prime Minister for all that happened in India and accepted this burden with faith and dedication. 'But under this tricolour I have pledged to serve India with my last breath and the same pledge I gave to Mahatmaji.'\textsuperscript{43} But he could always stand a little apart from the immediate problems in hand and set them in perspective. The fortnightly letters to Chief Ministers, in which he knit together his thoughts and comments on urgent issues as well as long-term purposes, were discursive monologues of an ardent and yet philosophic mind. Nehru was not capable of deep or original thought, and he knew it. He once disarmingly said to Deshmukh in the early days when their relations were harmonious, 'I wish, C. D., that I was cleverer.'\textsuperscript{44} His was, in fact, a commonplace mind, nourished by idealism and passion and strengthened by reflection. The result was ceaseless, even if sometimes shapeless, thought, striving to carry forward an innovative, many-sided crusade which was rooted in liberal principle and specifically suited to India. He had no doubt that this was the right approach, the effort was going well, and he had enough of both courage and stamina to give the lead in this long haul.

Nehru was not a religious person, as the word is generally understood. He had no spiritual beliefs or consolations and was always a mild agnostic. He prided himself on his pagan outlook on life and approved of the ancient practice of an altar to the unknown god. But the training under Gandhi, the attraction which the teachings of the Buddha had for him, and the influence of the \textit{Gita} all blended to strengthen the attitudes of his mind and personality — uninvolvcd in the immediate end but wholly committed to the larger purpose. 'It is true that there is no end to problems, but

\textsuperscript{40} See articles by A. Moore and H. V. R. Iengar in R. Zakaria (ed.), \textit{A Study of Nehru} (Bombay, 1959).


\textsuperscript{42} To Bakshi Ghulam Mahomed, 23 February 1953.

\textsuperscript{43} Speech at Kurukshetra refugee camp, 9 April, \textit{National Herald}, 10 April 1948.

\textsuperscript{44} C. D. Deshmukh to the author, 9 April 1969.
ultimately perhaps one learns the lesson that one must do the day’s work with as much strength as one possesses, and not worry too much about consequences. And beneath such unruffled endeavour was the strong foundation of confidence in India and in her people.

I try to do my best in the circumstances and am worried sometimes about the solution of some problem. But in the final analysis I am not worried about the future of India, about the things that I care for. Having done my best I have a good sound sleep and I get up refreshed in the morning whatever may happen. And if I speak to the great people of the earth, leaders of other nations, who probably are much cleverer than I am, may be more experienced than I am, I am not bowled over by their greatness or by their cleverness. Because my mind is fairly clear and frank and I say what I have to say and I want to be friends with them, but anyhow I am not afraid of what they might do or say.

By the end of 1956, Nehru’s long-term objectives did not appear beyond attainment. Unbroken growth at home was linked with increasing prestige abroad. After watching the military and civil parade at Delhi on Republic Day in 1955, the Prime Minister glowed with satisfaction. ‘My heart was filled with pride and joy at the sight of our nation on the march, realizing its goals one by one. There was a sense of fulfilment in the air and of confidence in our future destiny.’ Individual freedom, social justice, popular participation, planned development, national self-reliance, a posture of self-respect in international affairs — all high and noble goals, yet all being steadily achieved under the guidance of the Prime Minister, himself brimming with confidence. ‘There is the breath of the dawn, the feeling of the beginning of a new era in the long and chequered history of India. I feel so and in this matter at least I think I represent innumerable others in our country.’ When power came to him in 1947, he knew that he had great needs to meet and great hopes to fulfil; and he had not been found wanting. He had set himself against political and communal reaction and social conservatism; he had set out to add to political independence economic sovereignty and the rudiments of socialism — land to the people, adult literacy, equality, employment, better health facilities. He was the national appeaser, enclosing various conflicting elements in a broad pattern of agreement. Once the communist attempt at revolt had been beaten back, this was a period of undemanding politics, when the general habit of

46 To Sir Archibald Nye, 26 January 1952.
47 Address to Congress Parliamentary Party, 29 May 1956. Tape M-17/C. N.M.M.L.
48 Nehru to Chief Ministers, 26 January 1955.
49 Nehru to Chief Ministers, 5 June 1955.
success permitted the occasional, reparable mistake. The handling of the demand for linguistic provinces had left behind an atmosphere of stale hysteria; but this by itself did not endanger the general effectiveness and recognition of Nehru’s command. The axis of his leadership still held. The year 1956 was the summer solstice of the prime ministership.