POSTSCRIPT

Allahabad 29th December 1945

During March and April, 1945, the members of the Congress Working Committee, interned in Ahmadnagar Fort prison camp, were dispersed and sent to their respective provinces. The camp jail was wound up and presumably reverted to the military authorities. Three of us—Govind Ballabh Pant, Narendra Deva, and I—left Ahmadnagar Fort on March 28th and were brought to Naini Central Prison where we met a number of our old colleagues, among whom was Rafi Ahmad Kidwai. For the first time since our arrest in August, 1942, we had an opportunity of having first-hand accounts of some of the occurrences of 1942, for many of those in Naini Prison had been arrested some time after us. From Naini we three were taken to Izatnagar Central Prison, near Bareilly. Govind Ballabh Pant was released on account of ill-health. Narendra Deva and I lived together in a barrack in this prison for over two months. Early in June we were transferred to the mountain prison of Almora, which I had known so intimately ten years earlier. On June 15th we were both discharged, 1,041 days after our arrest in August, 1942. Thus ended my ninth and longest term of imprisonment.

Since then six months and a half have passed. I came from the long seclusion of prison to crowds, intense activity and continuous travelling. I spent only a night at home and then hurried to Bombay for a meeting of the Congress Working Committee. And then to the Simla Conference convened by the Viceroy. I found it a little difficult to adjust myself to the new and changing environment and could not easily fit in. Though everything was familiar and it was good to meet old friends and colleagues, I felt somewhat as a stranger and an outsider, and my mind wandered to mountains and snow-covered peaks. As soon as the Simla business was over I hurried to Kashmir. I did not stay in the valley, but almost immediately started on a trek to the higher regions and passes. For a month I was in Kashmir and then I came back to the crowds and the excitements and boredom of everyday life.

Gradually some picture of the past three years formed itself in my mind. I found, as others did, that what had taken place
was far more than we had imagined. These three years had been a time of heavy travail for our people and each person we met bore the mark of it on his face. India had changed and under the seeming quiet of the surface there was doubt and questioning, frustration and anger, and a suppressed passion. With our release and the turn events took, a change came over the scene. The smooth surface was ruffled and cracks appeared. Waves of excitement passed across the country; after three years of suppression, the people broke through that shell. I had not previously seen such crowds, such frenzied excitement, such a passionate desire on the part of masses of people to free themselves. Young men and women, boys and girls, were afire with the urge to do something, though what they should do was not clear to them.

The War ended and the atom bomb became the symbol of the new age. The use of this bomb and the tortuous ways of power politics brought further disillusion. The old imperialisms still functioned, and events in Indonesia and Indo-China added to the horror of the scene. The use of Indian troops in both these countries against people struggling to be free brought shame to us at our helplessness and an abiding anger and bitterness. The temper of the country continued to rise.

The story of the Indian National Army, formed in Burma and Malaya during war years, spread suddenly throughout the country and evoked an astonishing enthusiasm. The trial by court martial of some of its officers aroused the country as nothing else had done, and they became the symbols of India fighting for her freedom. They became also the symbol of unity among the various religious groups in India, for Hindu and Moslem and Sikh and Christian were all represented in that army. They had solved the communal problem amongst themselves, and so why should we not do so?

We are on the eve of general elections in India and these elections absorb attention. But the elections will be over soon—and then? The coming year is likely to be one of storm and trouble, of conflict and turmoil. There is going to be no peace in India or elsewhere except on the basis of freedom.