



29 *She*

This chapter on an intensely personal experience of the author's, written without inhibition in the D. H. Lawrence style, has been withdrawn by the author at the last moment.

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**PUBLISHERS**

### 30 *V.K. Krishna Menon—I*

Krishna Menon was born in 1896. He completed his college education in Madras and became a follower of Annie Besant. He was put in charge of scouting. In 1924, at the age of twenty-eight Annie Besant sent him to England to teach in a theosophical school in Letchworth. He taught for a year and in 1925 obtained a London diploma in teaching. From 1925-27, he studied political science under Harold Laski in the London School of Economics and took a B.Sc. He became Joint Secretary of Annie Besant's Commonwealth of India League. He was called to the bar at the Middle Temple in 1934 at the age of thirty-eight when all one had to do was to eat a few dinners in dinner jackets. Actually he never studied law; in London he had no legal practice worth mentioning.

Much has been made of his editing books in London. Editing meant condensing. He edited only the first batch of Pelican books. He was in partnership with Allen Lane of Bodley Head. Lane soon found Krishna Menon a strain on his nerves and called him a bottleneck. Thus ended the partnership.

Krishna Menon stayed in the slum areas of London in extreme poverty. For long years he subsisted on innumerable cups of tea, biscuits and sometimes lentil cutlets. In the process he damaged his health.

A south Indian journalist, as a command performance, wrote extensively on Krishna Menon. He would have us believe that Krishna Menon's family was accustomed to wealth; that his father belonged to a line of Rajas who enjoyed royal privileges; that considerable luxury surrounded Menon's years of childhood; and that, in the wake of idealism, Menon cut himself off from riches and pleasures. If you tell this to anyone in north Kerala, he will laugh. Actually Menon's father, Krishna Kurup, was one of the junior pleaders of a landlord in the small town of Tellicherry. The

same south Indian journalist would have us believe that Krishna Menon was a modern Siddhartha who rejected the world and all its attendant pleasures and comforts and found enlightenment under a horse-chestnut tree in St Pancras!

When the Commonwealth of India League disintegrated, Krishna Menon converted it into the India League with himself as Secretary. A group of well to do Indians in England, mostly doctors, provided financial assistance to the India League. Krishna Menon ran it as a one-man show and refused to render accounts of the money which passed through India League. He also received financial assistance for meeting his personal needs. But gratitude was not in his nature. Some believe that the secret of his success as an agitator was his ability to identify the cause with himself. This meant that if you supported India's independence, you had to support Krishna Menon; supporting anyone else was unpatriotic. He believed in the proposition, "Those who are not for me are against me," and refused to entertain the proposition, "Those who are not against me are for me." This stemmed from his incurable intolerance.

Before he became High Commissioner in London in August 1947, after having watched his tendency to play the lone wolf and refusal to hunt with the pack, and his extreme hatred of his former sincere supporters and helpers, I asked Krishna Menon, "Do you believe in the theory that hatred is stronger than love?" He replied, "Yes." He had not read Turgenev's short story about his hunting, his ferocious dog, and a mother bird protecting her fallen chick. The dog retreated in the face of the mother bird's incredible courage and aggression emanating from love. After watching the scene Turgenev concluded, "Love is stronger than hatred." I told Krishna Menon that he should read that short story. Subsequent events proved that he did not benefit from it if he ever read it.

With the starting of Gandhiji's noncooperation movement, Mrs Besant wrote her famous editorial in *New India* under the title "Brickbats must be Answered by Bullets." She, and moderates like Srinivasa Sastri, followed it up with a series of lectures at the Gokhale Hall in Madras.

At the thought of Gandhiji's arriving in London for the second Round Table Conference in 1931, Krishna Menon used to get so agitated that he would call down imprecations. He created a scene at 145 Strand once while Gandhiji was on the high seas. Throwing

up his arms like a Druid invoking a curse, he said to a small group of Indians, "I wish that ship would go down to the bottom of the sea with that man." Menon had mortgaged his mind to Mrs Besant for so long that he had not yet recovered from its effects.

Krishna Menon's eyes were opened when news reached England about the repression in India in the wake of Gandhiji's Civil Disobedience movement after the second Round Table Conference. He arrived in India in 1932 as Secretary of an India League delegation comprising three Labour MPs, Monica Whately, Ellen Wilkinson and Leonard Masters. During the delegation's sojourn in India, Krishna Menon had an interview with Nehru. Menon came into real contact with Nehru during his brief visit to England in 1935-36, during Kamala Nehru's illness abroad. Krishna Menon organized Nehru's programme in London. Nehru also put him in charge of the publication of his autobiography, which he succeeded in messing up. Again, on his brief visit of less than a week to Spain in 1938, Krishna Menon accompanied Nehru. Afterwards Nehru, together with Indira, visited Czechoslovakia where A.C. Nambiar looked after him. I have referred to Nehru's visit to Spain in the chapter "Nehru's Sensitivity to his Surroundings."

I first met Krishna Menon in New Delhi in 1946. He came about the time the interim government was formed on 2 September 1946. I did not like his lean and hungry look, nor his nose which resembled a vulture's beak. He had unkempt hair, perpetually reminding people that he needed a haircut. He wore cheap and badly cut English clothes. Fortunately, he did not wear a hat—otherwise he would have looked like a tramp. He had all the characteristics of a man who had lived in the slum areas of London for long.

Krishna Menon's appointment as Nehru's personal representative in Europe in September 1946 to facilitate establishment of diplomatic relations has been mentioned in the chapter "Some Books."

At Nehru's instance, the Preamble to the Constitution was drafted by Krishna Menon. Nehru made a few verbal changes and presented it to the Constituent Assembly which passed it.

The decision of the Constituent Assembly on 22 January 1947 to declare India a Sovereign Independent Republic was bound to be interpreted by British leaders as an attempt to dispose of all prospect of Indian membership of the Commonwealth. To allay such fears, Nehru, in his speech in the assembly on 22 January 1947,

said, "At no time have we ever thought in terms of isolating ourselves in this part of the world from other countries or of being hostile to countries which have dominated over us. We want to be friendly with the British people and the British Commonwealth of Nations."

With the arrival of Mountbatten as Viceroy, Krishna Menon became active and constituted himself as an honest broker much to the annoyance of Sardar Patel and Maulana Azad. Sardar Patel never gave Krishna Menon a proper interview. Whenever he asked for one, the reply from Patel's house was, "He can join him on his walk at 5 A.M." Nothing was more inconvenient to Menon; but he had no choice.

One day Nehru told me that Mountbatten had mentioned about Krishna Menon being closely related to the royal family of Cochin and that, according to the matriarchal system obtaining in Cochin, Krishna Menon would succeed then present incumbent as the Maharaja of Cochin. Nehru asked me if I knew anything about it. I laughed and said that obviously Krishna Menon had managed through someone to take Mountbatten for a ride. I told Nehru that, much to my amusement, Krishna Menon had told me sometime before about his relationship with royal families. Living in the London slums in abject poverty for long, Krishna Menon developed a type of inferiority complex which prompted him to invest himself with imaginary royalty. Menon's younger sister, Narayani Amma, was married to a poor member of the Cochin family. The man was then a translator (Malayalam) in the Madras government secretariat. He retired from this lowly job and returned to Cochin. In his dotage he became the seniormost member of the family and became the Maharaja for a very brief period. According to the matriarchal system the wife of a Maharaja is no more than a mistress; it is the offspring of the Maharaja's sisters who are the heirs. The Maharaja is not entitled to give anything to his wife from the family property. Nehru told me that I might enlighten Mountbatten on this subject whenever I met him in the normal course. However, I did not bother to do any such thing. But when Mountbatten gave expression to his "discovery" at a recent meeting in London, I had to correct him.

When the dominion government was formed on 15 August 1947 Nehru wanted to include Krishna Menon in the Cabinet. Gandhiji firmly opposed it; and Nehru dropped the idea. Not even Sardar

Patel knew about it. Krishna Menon was never told of this.

Nehru never thought of Krishna Menon as High Commissioner in London. Krishna Menon grew fidgety. He enlisted Mountbatten's support. Mountbatten at last recommended Krishna Menon's appointment as High Commissioner. Mountbatten also spoke to Gandhiji privately. Thus the decks were cleared.

A couple of days after the announcement of his appointment, Krishna Menon came to me, beaming. He said he had secured the appointment of A.K. Chanda as Deputy High Commissioner and said, "He is the most brilliant man in the whole of the civil service in Delhi." I replied, "If you would give him a free hand in administration and control of the supply organization, he could be of enormous help." I warned him, "If you keep him idle and generally neglect him, he can prove to be too much of a handful for you." In 1948, when I met him in London, Krishna Menon told me bitterly, "Chanda has turned out to be a nitwit." I said I could not understand how the "most brilliant man in the whole of the civil service" could suddenly become a nitwit. Krishna Menon shared with T.T. Krishnamachari the quality of being extremely temperamental. I suppose most men who suffer from ulcers are like that. The fact is that Krishna Menon denied Chanda any freedom to function; and Chanda became a bundle of complaints biding his time to return to India.

In 1948, while I was in London with Nehru for the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference, Krishna Menon gave me the names of a few Indians who should not be allowed to meet Nehru. I discovered that they were all prominent men who sincerely supported the India League and Krishna Menon personally. I told him that Nehru should not appear as a partisan and he should meet anyone he liked, subject to time being available. And Nehru did meet them all.

There was a Bengali group in London which had a rival organization to Krishna Menon's India League. Soon after Krishna Menon took over as High Commissioner, they invited Sarat Chandra Bose to London in 1947. Bose made a few well-publicized speeches in London attacking Krishna Menon personally and indirectly Nehru's foreign policy. These speeches were widely reported in Indian newspapers. It was known that Sardar Patel, Home and Information Minister, connived at it.

Sarat Chandra Bose's fulminations in London were, in a sense,

an extension of his brother Subhas Bose's opposition to the Congress foreign policy which was developed by Nehru. About this Nehru had written as early as 1944:

In 1938 the Congress sent a medical unit consisting of a number of doctors and necessary equipment and material to China. For several years this unit did good work there. When this was organised, Subhas Bose was President of the Congress. He did not approve of any step being taken by the Congress which was anti-Japanese or anti-German or anti-Italian. And yet such was the feeling in the Congress and the country that he did not oppose this or many other manifestations of Congress sympathy with China and the victims of fascist and Nazi aggression. We passed many resolutions and organised many demonstrations of which he did not approve during the period of his presidentship, but he submitted to them without protest because he realised the strength of feeling behind them. There was a big difference in outlook between him and others in the Congress Executive, both in regard to foreign and internal matters, and this led to a break early in 1939. He then attacked Congress policy publicly and, early in August 1939, the Congress Executive took the unusual step of taking disciplinary action against him, who was an ex-President.

Sarat Chandra Bose's performance in London had one lasting effect on Nehru inasmuch as he felt convinced that the attack on Krishna Menon was an attack on him. Nehru held this view tenaciously till the end of 1962, or till the final exit of Menon from government. Krishna Menon and some of his cronies found this fallacious theory quite handy and assiduously spread it. Indira also fell a victim to it.

Within a year of his becoming High Commissioner, Krishna Menon recruited a substantial number of local Indians to the High Commission staff. Some of them were known Communists or with close Communist connections. Krishna Menon failed to realize that the British Labour Government was not fond of Communists and fellow-travellers. Soon, the British Government made it known to the External Affairs Ministry in New Delhi through the British High Commissioner that the British Government had reluctantly decided not to pass on any secret and other



classified material to India House so long as sensitive posts were held by known Communists and Communist sympathizers. Nehru was annoyed with Krishna Menon and sent Commonwealth Secretary S. Dutt to London to make inquiries. Krishna Menon resented Dutt's visit. Ultimately Krishna Menon had to terminate the services of a number of locally-hired staff.

In 1947 and 1948 considerable informal discussions between Sardar Patel and Nehru took place, as well as talks between Nehru and Gandhiji about India's relationship with the Commonwealth. Mountbatten also played a helpful role. When Rajaji became Governor-General in June 1948, he too came into the picture. Some correspondence also took place between Nehru and Attlee.

The principal Indian leaders were in favour of India as a Sovereign Republic continuing its membership of the Commonwealth principally on the basis that the King would cease to have any function in India. They came to the conclusion for the following main reasons:

- 1) The existence of Pakistan;
- 2) disinclination to isolate ourselves by snapping existing ties;
- 3) the excellent impression created by Lord and Lady Mountbatten by the manner of their functioning augured well for a new relationship with Britain and the Commonwealth;
- 4) heavy dependence of the armed forces for supplies from British sources, especially in the transitional stage.

Krishna Menon, as High Commissioner, was asked to initiate a continuing dialogue with the British Government at the political level. At the appropriate time the principal law officers of the British Government also came into the picture.

During the regular Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference in London in October 1948, the question was discussed privately by Nehru with Attlee as well as with the Prime Ministers of Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Various suggestions were put forward. Associate membership was proposed. The King might be King of the Commonwealth. The President of India might be nominally appointed by the King. Mountbatten suggested that the crown should be in a corner of the Indian Tricolour. He was aware

of the fact that his earlier suggestion in 1947 that the Union Jack should find a place in a corner of the Indian flag, as was the case with all dominion governments, was rejected summarily. An unrealistic tentative suggestion by Krishna Menon that the King should be designated as "the First Citizen of the Commonwealth" did not find favour with anyone except himself. All the suggestions were rejected.

At the end of the conference, on 28 October 1948, Nehru sent a ten-point memorandum to Attlee.

On return from the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference, there were further consultations among Nehru, Patel and Rajaji. On 2 December 1948, Nehru sent the following telegram to Krishna Menon:

My ten-point memorandum to Attlee dated 28th October 1948 should be revised, being reduced to 8 points, as follows:

1. The declaration as to the status of India will be left as at present in the draft Constitution.

2. In a Nationality Act, to be passed by the Indian Legislature, contemporaneously with the coming into effect of the new Constitution, there will be incorporated the substance of the relevant provisions of the British Nationality Act 1948, which will have the effect of making Indian nationals Commonwealth citizens and the nationals of any Commonwealth country, Commonwealth citizens when they are in India. This arrangement will be on a reciprocal basis. 'Commonwealth' in this connection does not mean a super-State but stands merely for an association of free and independent States which accept this concept of Commonwealth citizenship.

3. As soon as the constitutional changes are settled, or at such other time as may be agreed upon, the Prime Minister of India and the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom will make declarations announcing the changes and their nature and results.

4. In any new legislation, or new treaties entered into with other countries, the Commonwealth countries will not be treated as foreign. States and their citizens will not be treated as foreigners.

In particular, in any new commercial treaties it will be made clear that for the purpose of the 'most favoured nation' clause:

the Commonwealth countries are in a special position and are not regarded as foreign States.

5. In foreign States, where Indian Government has no representation, it will be at liberty to make use of any other Commonwealth country's Ambassador or Minister; and the Indian Government will be willing to provide reciprocal facilities for any Commonwealth Government that so desires.

6. For the purpose of fulfilling the obligations of the Crown towards Commonwealth citizens other than Indian nationals, the President of the Indian Republic may, at the request of the Crown, act on behalf of the King within the territories of India. A similar arrangement on a reciprocal basis will apply to Indian nationals in the rest of the Commonwealth.

7. So far as the United Kingdom is concerned, the position is that generally speaking the King waived all functions of sovereignty in relation to India in favour of the people of India in pursuance of the Act of 1947. Under that act there would be no further legislation on India by the Parliament of United Kingdom, and after India's new Constitution comes into force there can be no such legislation. The Indian people and their representatives, including the President of the Republic, will thus exercise all functions of sovereignty.

8. These proposals represent a sincere desire to continue the Commonwealth association and what is practical and adequate at present. No doubt as the relationship is not a static arrangement, further developments by way of association may take place.

(Paragraph 6 above may be omitted if necessary.)

In another telegram on the same date Nehru directed Krishna Menon to have informal discussions with Attlee. He indicated, "We are prepared to consider minor changes but it will be very difficult to introduce any major change."

In December 1948, at the Jaipur session of the Congress, a resolution was passed expressing support for India's "free association" with the Commonwealth.

A Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference was held in April 1949 for the specific purpose of deciding on India's membership of the Commonwealth. By the time the conference met, the designation of the King as "Head of the Commonwealth" received

general approval. It was finally the “formula man” Krishna Menon’s definition of the King as “the symbol of the free association of the Commonwealth’s independent member nations and as such the Head of the Commonwealth” which was accepted by the Commonwealth Prime Ministers’ Conference. Several people took credit for this, including Girja Shankar Bajpai, the Secretary-General of the Ministry of External Affairs. It reminded me of the saying, “Success has many fathers; failure is an orphan.” It might be mentioned in this connection that King George VI, in his private conversation amused himself and others with the remark that his position in the Commonwealth was “as such.”

After a two-day debate in the Constituent Assembly, approval of the decision to remain in the Commonwealth as an independent republic was recorded on 17 May 1949, with only one dissenting vote. On 21 May 1949 the AICC at Dehra Dun passed a similar resolution with only six dissenting votes out of 230 present.

It must be admitted that in handling political issues in the crucial two years when he was High Commissioner (1947-49) Krishna Menon did very well and was acknowledged as such by Indian and British leaders. But in the field of administration he created chaos at India House. Scandal mounted on scandal and Krishna Menon developed an acute persecution mania and took to taking powerful drugs as an escape, especially as criticism of some of his foolish deals mounted in the Indian parliament. By 1950 Krishna Menon was a mental and physical wreck. More in the next chapter.

### *31 V.K. Krishna Menon—II*

As furor in parliament became a frequent affair with fierce persistence since the latter half of 1949, the Prime Minister sent Secretary-General N.R. Pillai of the Ministry of External Affairs to London in 1950 to make discreet enquiries and to report to him. Pillai went and returned as did S. Dutt on a previous occasion. Pillai declined to submit a written report. But he told the PM that he was convinced that large amounts of money passed hands in connection with Krishna Menon's various deals. He would not say it went into Krishna Menon's pocket; it was in all probability received by the India League, the organization whose accounts Krishna Menon refused to render to anyone. Pillai said that Krishna Menon not drawing his salary had only added to the suspicions. People in London began to ask, "Where did he get the money suddenly to build up a very large wardrobe of expensive clothes?" His refusal to account for the substantial entertainment allowance he drew from government added to the confusion. Everyone knew that Krishna Menon never entertained anyone except in the subsidized canteen of India House. Pillai told the PM that all the scandals connected with various deals were before the Public Accounts Committee and parliament, and government would have to deal with them as best it could. Pillai summed up by saying that the decision in the case of Krishna Menon was a political one. The PM did not take the hint and continued the policy of drift.

Criticism of Krishna Menon in parliament became fiercer and fiercer. In the meantime, visitors returning from London, including Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, reported the virtual breakdown of work at India House; Krishna Menon propping himself up by powerful drugs; and certain sex scandals. In October 1951 the PM asked me to go to London, have talks with Krishna Menon, and also inquire into all the recent reports. He knew that I was not unfriendly to

Krishna Menon and whatever report I would make would be objective. I stayed at the inexpensive India Club, within walking distance of India House.

Arriving at India House, the first thing I saw was a code telegram containing a message from the Prime Minister to Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations Lord Home, sent a week before I left Delhi, still lying unattended to on Krishna Menon's desk. Since Krishna Menon was terribly under the influence of drugs and could hardly open his eyes, I took the cable and went to First Secretary P. N. Haksar and asked him why it happened. He said that the advance copies of cypher telegrams were sent to the High Commissioner and copies could be distributed only after his clearance. Therefore, nobody had seen this particular telegram. I told him that he might assume the High Commissioner's clearance and send the message to the Commonwealth Relations Office at once. After that I went back to Krishna Menon, shook him up, and told him that I would see him only when he was sober; and if he refused to be sober, I would take the next available flight to Delhi. In the evening Krishna Menon came to my room at the India Club reasonably sober. I told him I was trying to avoid publicity and would have talks with him and a few persons who were genuinely friendly to him along with his own British psychiatrist. But I made it clear to him that I would meet that doctor only with an introduction from him, even though Mountbatten had offered to arrange a meeting for me.

The first person I met was Dr Handoo, an old friend and supporter of Krishna Menon. He told me that Krishna Menon was an ill man and almost mad. He was taking luminol and other powerful drugs on the sly. He added that he was surprised at the PM keeping him on in office.

Mountbatten said that Attlee and the principal ministers of the Labour government felt that Krishna Menon should have been replaced a year before. Mountbatten felt the same.

P. N. Haksar, though a relatively junior civil servant at that time, spoke frankly about the need for replacing Krishna Menon. He said that it ought to have been done some time ago. At my request he gave an unsigned note giving his assessment which I could show to the PM.

I met the British doctor who told me that Krishna Menon was undergoing electric shock therapy and so was a female member of

his staff. He said that Krishna Menon's condition was such that he should be in a nursing home and not in an office where serious work was involved. He added that Krishna Menon was a mental case with an intense persecution mania; but the basic trouble with him was that he was an oversexed person who had no capacity to perform the sexual act. This had created psychological problems for him and was the reason for all his oddities. His strange behaviour and aggressiveness stemmed from that fact. He gave me an unsigned note on his letterhead to be privately shown to the PM.

One evening Krishna Menon brought with him Cleminson to my room at the India Club and left him with me. Cleminson was one of the adventurers involved in several of Krishna Menon's deals. Krishna Menon expected Cleminson to explain to me the circumstances which had led to the deals and to justify them. Cleminson started by narrating to me the happening in his flat the previous night. Krishna Menon arrived there at midnight with one of his Indian female secretaries who was also undergoing electric shock therapy. She was in high spirits, stripped herself and started a sexy dance. He said that Krishna Menon had been fooling around with her and the girl had got emotionally entangled. Owing to Krishna Menon's inability to satisfy her, she had also become a mental case. He said that the girl threw tantrums in the office also. He talked about several other matters and finally left without uttering a word about Krishna Menon's deals.

Krishna Menon himself had several talks with me. They mostly centred round the various deals he had entered into through undesirable intermediaries and which resulted in substantial losses to government. He was full of complaints against most civil servants and some ministers in Delhi. The last talk he had with me was such that I thought that he was either naive or out of his head. He told me that government should recognize that the office of the High Commissioner in London was next only in importance to that of the Prime Minister and that the President, by an order, should confer on him the rank of Deputy Prime Minister as long as he was High Commissioner in London. He talked as if he was going to be High Commissioner for the rest of his life with the rank of Deputy Prime Minister. Krishna Menon was such a subjective person even under normal conditions that had he been the Indian Ambassador to Peru he would have made out a similar case for the conferment of the rank of Deputy Prime Minister.

On returning to Delhi, I gave the PM a brief account of my talks in London and told him that Krishna Menon should be replaced without further delay. I said he should be advised to initially take leave due to him and enter a nursing home for treatment and rest cure. He could draw his accumulated tax-free salary for the expenses involved. I advised the PM to write to him and also make the offer to take him into the Cabinet when the new government would be formed in May 1952 after the general elections. Nehru accepted my suggestions and wrote to Krishna Menon accordingly. After he signed the letter to Krishna Menon, Nehru sent for me at about midnight. He knew I was still working. I read the letter which was in accordance with my suggestions. He noticed I was somewhat upset. He told me, "It is all my fault; I should have taken this action over a year ago." I said, "You know Krishna Menon better than I do." He said, "Certainly not. If you calculate the amount of time I have spent with him, it will not be more than a few hours. You know him much better because I have noticed that whenever he has been in Delhi he is most of the time with you, either in your study or your bedroom. Even in London, I have noticed that he spends considerable time with you." Soon Nehru got involved in work connected with the general elections and Krishna Menon managed to hang on for a while. On 13 June 1952 B. G. Kher took over as High Commissioner in London from Krishna Menon. The latter stayed on in London and refused to go in for treatment. So Nehru did not make any move to induct him into the Cabinet in May 1952.

During his tenure as High Commissioner, Krishna Menon, under the influence of Harold Laski, who was a Jew, had been privately advocating that India should establish diplomatic relations with Israel. Nehru was in favour of it as he considered that it was the right thing to do, having already recognized Israel which was a member of the United Nations. He also thought (it was wishful thinking) that we might be able to influence Israel in its relations with Arab countries. The man who stood in the way was Maulana Azad. In course of time India's policy gradually tilted towards the Arabs. Again, the argument was that India could influence Arab countries. No doubt it was in India's interests to favour Arab countries; but it went against one of the elements in nonalignment, namely, "judging every issue on merits." Krishna Menon not only fell in line but also, after the death of his mentor, Laski, went to the absurd length of giving a call to the Arabs, in a speech in Cairo, to



unite and bide their time until they could throw the Israelis into the sea. He took cynical delight in adding, "but then that will only contaminate the sea."

In 1952 Krishna Menon was included in the Indian delegation to the UN General Assembly under the leadership of Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit. Menon concentrated his attention on the Korea crisis.

In 1953, on the elevation of Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit as President of the UN General Assembly, Menon assumed charge as leader of the Indian delegation. He played a useful role in the Korean crisis. After the ceasefire, India became the Chairman of the UN Commission in Korea with General Thimayya as its chief.

Also, in 1953, Krishna Menon was elected to the Rajya Sabha from Madras.

Seeds for the bedevilment of India-China relations were well and truly sown by Ambassador K. M. Panikkar. He advocated India's formal recognition of Chinese suzerainty over Tibet. There could be no objection to this because it was an established fact for long years. Panikkar was content to ignore the fact that during all this period Tibet enjoyed practically complete autonomy. Nehru wanted to raise simultaneously the question of China recognizing the McMahon Line. Panikkar advised against it. Panikkar thought it would delay matters. It did not occur to Panikkar that the China he was dealing with was a strong nation and Tibet's autonomy would disappear. Panikkar thought that the Chinese might turn round and say that the McMahon Line was an imperialist line and China would prefer to deal with border problems as between equals. Panikkar predicted that a satisfactory solution about the McMahon Line would emerge if we showed patience. Unfortunately, Nehru gave in at this stage. It was the beginning of appeasement.

A telegram was sent to Panikkar authorizing him to formally communicate to the Chinese Government India's recognition of Chinese suzerainty over Tibet. Panikkar changed the word to "sovereignty." Later, when questioned, Panikkar took shelter behind the familiar excuse of corruption in transmission of the cypher telegram. This reminds me of an episode during wartime. When Eden went to Cairo, Churchill asked him, if possible, to send for his son Randolph who was in Ismalia. Eden and Randolph spent some time together in Cairo. From Cairo, Eden sent a brief code telegram to Churchill reading, "Have seen Randolph, who had just arrived. He sends his love. He is looking fit and well and has the

light of battle in his eye." Either owing to a corruption in transmission or to a lively sense of mischief on the part of a Foreign Office official in London, this telegram was delivered to Churchill with the "a" in battle replaced by an "o." When Churchill saw the telegram, he was momentarily annoyed with both Eden and Randolph.

Panikkar's action was more important than the "bottle" and Nehru should have taken prompt steps to clear the matter with the Chinese. If necessary he should have repudiated Panikkar.

When the Chinese overran Tibet, India was in no position to do anything except to submit to the inevitable. Tibetan autonomy vanished into thin air. Nehru opened his eyes too late. On the question of Tibetan autonomy, India could have taken a stand and kept its options open. Instead, negotiations between India and China on relations between New Delhi and Tibet opened in Peking on 31 December 1953 and concluded on 29 April 1954, with Ambassador Raghavan signing for India and Chang Han-Fu, Deputy Foreign Minister, signing for China. The preamble to the agreement stated that it was based on certain principles which were spelt out. These were later incorporated in the joint communique issued on 28 June 1954 at the end of Chou En-lai's four-day visit to Delhi—which later came to be called the "Five Principles" or "Panch Sheela" which consisted of

- 1) Mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty.
- 2) Nonaggression.
- 3) Noninterference in each other's internal affairs.
- 4) Equality and mutual benefit.
- 5) Peaceful coexistence.

When there was criticism of the Tibetan agreement in parliament, Nehru made the amazing assertion that in the realm of foreign affairs, he could never take so much credit as for the India-China settlement over Tibet. A lesser man could not have got away with it.

At the next Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference in London, Nehru held forth about the Tibetan agreement and the joint communique by himself and Chou En-lai, and asserted that even if the trust is belied, China would definitely appear to be in the

wrong. We know that everything has since been violated; and what has been the result of putting China in the wrong? Thousands of square miles of Indian territory in the Ladakh area (through which the Aksai-Chin road was illegally and surreptitiously constructed by China) continues to be under Chinese occupation. Nehru was a great, but selective, admirer of Chanakya before whom Machiavelli pales into insignificance. What impressed Nehru most was the fact that Chanakya specialized in putting his opponents in the wrong and was able to achieve almost everything he wanted without resort to war. But Nehru conveniently ignored the fact that Chanakya used methods which would have been repulsive to him. Chanakya was not tormented by the question of ends and means. Nehru was also an admirer of Asoka. What impressed him most was Asoka's contrition in Kalinga about large-scale killings and the calling off of the Kalinga war. But by that time Asoka had accomplished all he wanted and what remained was consolidation of his conquests. Nehru had Asoka and the Kalinga war in mind when he ordered a ceasefire in Kashmir at a time when our forces were in a sound position and poised to roll back the enemy. Nehru's decision, which was impulsive, was a grievous error much resented by the armed forces. Nehru's was an imitative and an absorptive mind. He had infinite capacity to borrow ideas from others and make them his own with remarkable speed. Essentially Gandhi's was an original mind, while Nehru's was a secondrate one. He was all heart and less mind. This is reflected in his books also.

At the Indo-China conference in Geneva in May 1954 Krishna Menon arrived without invitation. He made himself available to the leaders of all the delegations, including Chou En-lai. His was a moderating influence. At the appropriate times he was able to produce sound formulae. Krishna Menon made a significant contribution to the success of the Geneva conference. India was ultimately appointed Chairman of the Control Commissions of the three Indo China states. Eden, Macmillan and the American spokesman, Cabot Lodge, paid rich tributes to India and to Krishna Menon personally for the contribution for solving the Korea crisis and for the success of the Indo-China conference in Geneva.

In 1954 Nehru wanted to appoint Krishna Menon as a Cabinet Minister. Maulana Azad objected. The ostensible reason was the numerous allegations against him. The Maulana made it known to

Nehru that he would not remain in the Cabinet with Krishna Menon in it. It was known that two other Cabinet Ministers—C. D. Deshmukh and T. T. Krishnamachari—were also opposed to Krishna Menon's inclusion in the Cabinet. No serious notice was taken of this as both were political lightweights. The Maulana's attitude deeply hurt Nehru. Throughout their long association Nehru was deferential and affectionate towards the Maulana and even defended him before Gandhiji. Nehru gave vent to his feelings by announcing publicly that he was seriously considering resignation from government. But the Maulana remained unmoved. Krishna Menon had to wait for one and a half years before he could enter the Cabinet.

Ever since he met Chou En-lai in Geneva in the summer of 1954, Krishna Menon had been trying to function as China's Foreign Minister. He did the same thing vis-a-vis President Nasser before and after the Suez crisis in 1956 and in the process came into conflict with Egyptian Foreign Minister Mohammad Fawzi. From 1953 onwards Krishna Menon had been carrying on an unseemly private campaign against Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjold, of the United Nations. Krishna Menon wanted to denigrate him so that he could remain as the sole peacemaker on the international scene. Hammarskjold had unconcealed contempt for Krishna Menon, but enormous respect for Nehru and India for its tremendous contributions for the UN peace-keeping operations. He used to say, "Thank God for India."

### *32 Krishna Menon's Vote at the UN on Hungary*

Article 2 of the Hungarian Peace Treaty which was signed by the Soviet Union, the United States, Great Britain, France, Australia, Canada, India, New Zealand, South Africa, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Byelorussia and the Ukraine, laid down that the Hungarian Government had the obligation to secure for all persons under Hungarian jurisdiction, without distinction of race, sex, language or religion, the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms including freedom of expression, press and publication, religious worship, political opinion and public meeting.

The Hungarian national revolt broke out during the night of 23-24 October 1956.

It might be mentioned in this connection that the Anglo-French invasion of Egypt in the wake of the Suez crisis started on 31 October 1956. India was quick to condemn the Anglo-French aggression on Egypt.

The Soviet Union found it a convenient moment to launch a massive attack with tanks and infantry on 4 November to crush the uprising in Hungary. Over 100,000 Hungarians fled to Austria as refugees. There were reports that thousands of Hungarian youths were transported to Siberia.

Krishna Menon arrived in New York on 5 November. Till 9 November India observed silence about the happenings in Hungary. This appeared to be strange to many, both in India and abroad.

On 9 November the five-power resolution on Hungary, sponsored jointly by Italy, the Irish Republic, Pakistan, Cuba and Peru, was voted upon at the second Emergency Session of the UN General Assembly. The resolution called upon the Soviet Union to withdraw its forces from Hungary without further delay and proposed free elections under UN auspices in Hungary. The

resolution was adopted by forty-eight votes against eleven, with sixteen abstentions. India voted against the resolution and was the only non-Communist country to do so. Of the sixteen abstaining countries, thirteen were from the Afro-Asian bloc together with Austria, Finland, and Haiti.

No action of the Government of India in the field of foreign affairs provoked so much hostility in parliament and elsewhere in India as Krishna Menon's vote in the UN General Assembly. The press was up in arms. Important leaders asked for Krishna Menon's recall and removal from the political scene.

Krishna Menon's assertion before Michael Brecher, the Canadian writer, in 1967 that he had a free hand and had no instructions in regard to the Hungarian question is totally incorrect. In a personal telegram Krishna Menon asked for instructions. Nehru was in Jaipur when the telegram came. I telephoned and conveyed to him the contents of Krishna Menon's telegram. Nehru asked me to send a most immediate telegram to Krishna Menon instructing him to abstain from voting on the five-power resolution; and I did so in Nehru's name.

To Michael Brecher Krishna Menon confessed that some people in the Indian delegation advised him to abstain, but that he told them, "Either we have a conviction or we haven't." Whose conviction? It certainly was not Nehru's, or that of the Cabinet's as a whole.

Soon after Krishna Menon returned from New York, I questioned him closely about the voting which amounted to flouting of instructions. He told me that the telegram containing the instructions reached him a little too late. I smiled and told him that I was going to write to the permanent representative of India in New York to check up on the exact time and date of arrival of the telegram of instructions there and the time of the voting on the resolution at the UN. Krishna Menon was unnerved. He said to me, "Old man, why do you want to rake up something which is all over?" I reluctantly, and perhaps rather foolishly, dropped the matter.

To Nehru it became a question of either letting down a subordinate or supporting the action to a certain extent in his own self-defence. Nehru chose the latter course. His speech in parliament leargely failed to convince most people. In this whole melancholy episode there was only one man with "conviction," and that was

Krishna Menon. That conviction of his cost this country and Nehru dearly in moral terms. India's image stood tarnished and the policy of nonalignment stood distorted.

Krishna Menon's assertion to Michael Brecher that Nehru defended him in parliament over the voting on the Hungarian question reminds me of an important incident in Disraeli's career as Prime Minister.

The Russians had long been carrying on a flirtation with the Amir of Afghanistan. In full accord with the Amir, the Russians had despatched a mission to Kabul, a success which aroused the jealousy of Lord Lytton who was then Viceroy of India. Lord Lytton was the son of Disraeli's old political friend Bulwer. Against the advice of Disraeli, who strove hard to obtain, by friendly negotiations, the withdrawal of the Russian mission, Lord Lytton took it into his head to send a British mission up to Kabul. The Amir stopped Lytton's envoys at the entry of Afghan territory; and Disraeli suddenly found himself forced either to bow shamefacedly before a small potentate or wage a dangerous war. Gladstone succeeded in rousing public opinion against Disraeli; and Disraeli, in his irritation, said, "When a Viceroy or a Commander-in-Chief disobeys orders, they ought at least to be certain of success." Would Disraeli have to disavow Lord Lytton and prove the innocence of the government at the expense of a subordinate? It was contrary to all Disraeli's principles. He stood by Lord Lytton; ordered war, and General Roberts routed the Amir's troops. Soon the trouble kicked up by the Russians and by Gladstone evaporated into thin air. Nothing succeeds like success. But Nehru had to live with that vote, explaining it away for the rest of his life.

### 33 V.K. Krishna Menon—III

During the second half of 1955 India was considering the question of buying some military aircraft from the Soviet Union in preference to a British make. Krishna Menon got scent of it. He told me it was a dangerous thing to put ourselves in the position of dependence on the Soviet Union for defence supplies because that country was used to sudden reversals of policy and such shifts might one day leave us in the lurch. He did not speak to the PM; but on his way to the UN, he stopped over in London and spoke to Anthony Eden, the British Prime Minister, about India's intentions. The latter sent a telegraphic message to Nehru expressing apprehension about injecting the USSR into the Indian defence system. He earnestly hoped that the proposal would be given up. India did not proceed with the matter. India ordered British war-planes instead.

In the summer of 1955, aware of my good relations with the Comptroller and Auditor-General A. K. Chanda and Defence Secretary M. K. Vellodi, both of whom were known to be bitter enemies of Krishna Menon, Nehru asked me to privately discuss with them the question of finally disposing of the various scandals in which Krishna Menon was involved. The major scandals were:

*The Jeep Contract.* Owing to difficulties in obtaining jeeps urgently needed by the army for the Kashmir operations, Krishna Menon struck a deal with an adventurous intermediary called Potter who had a private firm with a capital of twenty pounds. Generous advances were paid to Potter who supplied secondhand, reconditioned jeeps. When the jeeps arrived in India, the army experts rejected them as unserviceable, Krishna Menon was asked to stop further payments to Potter. Government suffered a loss of £136,052, equivalent to Rs 1.8 million; and Potter had further claims.



*Procurement of Ammunition and Grenades.* Again, these were through adventurous intermediaries who were men of no substance. The principal one was a man called Cleminson who was involved in a criminal case before. Potter was also brought in, most probably to compensate him for his claims in the jeep contract. Reckless extra payments were authorized by Krishna Menon. The excess payments, which became a total loss to government, were estimated at about £500,000 or about Rs 7.2 million.

In both these deals there had been procedural and technical irregularities and errors of judgment both at the stage of the negotiations and later at the stage of interpretation and enforcement of the terms of the contracts.

*Advance Payment for the Acquisition of the Gaiety Theatre.* It was Krishna Menon's utter and inexcusable stupidity, which some people termed as a diabolical swindle by him, to have paid £17,000 or about Rs 228,000 in July 1950 to a private company floated in December 1949 with a nominal capital of £1,000 and a paid-up capital of £2! The adventurer Cleminson was involved in this also. The amount had to be ultimately written off by government. I closely questioned Krishna Menon on this and asked him about the circumstances surrounding the deal. I reminded him that in 1950 there were no Kashmir operations! Krishna Menon was uncomfortable, evaded my questions, and said, "Old man, get me a cup of tea." And while he was sipping tea someone else came in, and Krishna Menon heaved a sigh of relief and left.

Then there were allegations about the lease of residential premises, and exchange of cars. But they were comparatively minor matters.

I had a preliminary talk with Defence Secretary Vellodi. I told him I proposed to tackle the big fish, Auditor-General Chanda first. Vellodi assured me that he would fall in line with anything agreed to by Chanda in this matter.

A series of meetings with Chanda followed. I told him that I would like to see an end to this business of Krishna Menon's scandals and would welcome suggestions from him. He asked me, "Why do you want to stick your neck out to save Krishna Menon?" I said I was more interested in clearing the government than in Krishna Menon.

At our final meeting, the Auditor-General suggested as follows:

About the two major contracts, if government is satisfied that the defence authorities had to procure these stores, as a matter of urgency, for reasons of internal security and defence strategy, and as these stores were not available from the traditional sources of supply, they acquiesced in unorthodox methods being adopted for procurement and were prepared to take consequential risks, there should be a clear statement to that effect before the Public Accounts Committee. The fact that an informal Cabinet Committee consisting of the Prime Minister, Defence Minister N. Gopalaswami Ayyangar, and Finance Minister C. D. Deshmukh went into these transactions and came to the conclusion after closely questioning Krishna Menon that there was no clear evidence against the *bona fides* of those concerned should also be similarly stated. It should also be mentioned that suitable instructions regarding the procedure to be followed in future for procurement overseas have been issued to avoid the recurrence of such irregularities.

The suggestion, for such a statement being made, flows from the parliamentary convention in the United Kingdom, adopted by us also, that if government finds itself unable to act on the recommendations of the Public Accounts Committee, it should restate its case, with such additional information as is available, to enable the Public Accounts Committee to review its own recommendations.

It seems that the recommendation of the Public Accounts Committee that one or more judges should be appointed to investigate the matter, even if accepted by the government, is unlikely to produce any material results. The judges will have no right to call upon foreign nationals to give evidence before them. With this serious limitation, it is doubtful whether a judicial inquiry will lead to any positive conclusions. It might further complicate an already complicated issue.

On the basis of my appreciation, my advice would be that the Defence Ministry, with the concurrence of the Finance Ministry, should submit a fuller statement to the Public Accounts Committee, on the lines suggested above, accepting the gravamen of the audit charges that there have been losses, additional cost, and other irregularities. It should explain the circumstances in which risks had to be taken and the possibility of loss faced. As there has been no clear evidence of culpable negligence or

misdemeanour and remedial measures have also been taken to avoid such losses in future, the Public Accounts Committee should be requested to review its conclusions. Any other defence will be untenable and will not meet the situation. If the suggested line is adopted, the Public Accounts Committee might well revise its conclusions.

I said that going back to the Public Accounts Committee would mean needless delay, and that government should make a statement in both Houses of parliament, such as the one he had suggested. I added that I would prefer Finance Minister C. D. Deshmukh to make the statement which would be drafted by Defence Secretary M. K. Vellodi. The Auditor-General agreed to my suggestion. Then I asked him, "If Krishna Menon is not satisfied with this solution, can he be given the opportunity to personally appear before the Public Accounts Committee and defend his actions? He should have access to all relevant papers regarding the various matters which have come up before the Public Accounts Committee so that he can have no complaint that facts have been concealed from the Public Accounts Committee." He agreed. Later, the Defence Secretary also agreed to both my suggestions.

I explained to Krishna Menon what transpired between me and the Auditor-General as well as between me and the Defence Secretary. Krishna Menon knew that both of them were his sworn enemies. I told him that he should be thankful to them for being helpful. But, of course, Krishna Menon could never be accused of possessing the quality of gratitude. I put before Krishna Menon the two options open to him. I made it clear that there was no other alternative and that the choice must be entirely his. He said that the proposed statement did not absolve him enough. I told him that the criticism was mild and that if he wanted full vindication, and if he was sure of his grounds, he could appear before the Public Accounts Committee and fight it out. I advised him to think it over for a couple of days and then come to a decision. At 2 A.M. that night the fellow crept into my room and woke me up by switching on the light. He looked like a ghost with hair standing on end. In a wailing voice he asked me, "Old man, what is your advice?" I was annoyed and said, "My advice is, go and sleep." He persisted. I said, "You want me to make up your mind. I shall do

that. It is in your interest to agree to the statement being made in parliament. I shall see that your 'bosom friend' Deshmukh makes the statement. If you do not agree, you will only sink into deeper waters. Do you think you can ever defend the Gaiety Theatre deal you entered into in 1950? You should be in sackcloth and ashes for it." He sat quiet for a while and said, "All right, you tell the PM that I agree to the statement being made."

I explained the situation to the PM. He agreed fully. However, he said, "Why should Deshmukh make the statement? I shall make it." I replied, "Yes, you could; but Deshmukh, who is widely known in parliament as a bitter critic of Krishna Menon, making the statement will have considerably more effect. Moreover, Deshmukh is close to the Maulana. And, as Finance Minister, he is a very appropriate person to make the statement. You need not have to approach Deshmukh for it; I shall try and get Deshmukh's agreement." The PM agreed.

Vellodi did not take much time in producing the draft statement along the lines suggested by the Auditor-General. When I received the draft statement from him I took it to the Auditor-General who had previously promised me to vet it privately. He made it clear to me that officially it was not part of his job to bail out the government or Krishna Menon. The Auditor-General made some verbal changes in his own hand in the draft. I handed over Vellodi's draft as amended by Chanda to Secretary-General N. R. Pillai, of the Ministry of External Affairs, who was a personal friend of Deshmukh's, and briefed him about the background. At my request he took it to Deshmukh and talked to him. He also told Deshmukh that I would meet him in a couple of days. When I met Deshmukh, he raised no objections and authorized me to tell the PM that he would make the statement.

So the statement was made eventually. Maulana Azad heard that I was behind it all. He was very annoyed. Some time earlier the Maulana had canvassed for the inclusion of Dewan Chaman Lall in the Council of Ministers as a condition for his agreeing to Krishna Menon's entry into the Cabinet. The Prime Minister was surprised at the Maulana's move. He asked one of the Secretaries in the External Affairs Ministry to send to the Maulana the file containing accounts of the shady deals of Chaman Lall in foodgrains while he was Indian Ambassador in Turkey and Argentina. The Maulana remained silent.

The Maulana could no longer advance any further excuse to prevent Krishna Menon from entering the Cabinet. On 3 February 1956, Krishna Menon was sworn in as Minister without Portfolio. He continued to lead the Indian delegation to the UN and became more cocky after becoming minister.

The question of choosing a constituency for Krishna Menon for the 1956-57 general elections arose. Some leftists suggested North Bombay to him. Krishna Menon asked for my advice. I said, "You will win in North Bombay as long as the PM is on the scene. After his time you will not win because essentially your constituency is Jawaharlal Nehru. If I were you, I would go to Kerala and stand from Calicut. You can have roots there but not in Matunga. Krishna Menon chose the easier path and opted for North Bombay. My prediction came true. After Nehru's death, Krishna Menon could not even get a Congress ticket for North Bombay. He stood in North Bombay as an independent and was twice defeated by persons of no standing in Congress.

Piqued by Krishna Menon's stand on the Suez and Hungarian crisis, the Western powers wanted to be one up on Krishna Menon. Encouraged by them, the Pakistan Foreign Minister sent a letter to the Security Council on 2 January 1957 asking for a debate on the Kashmir question. During the debate, which began on 23 January, Krishna Menon made a marathon thirteen-hour speech and then fainted. He was under the influence of powerful drugs. As usual he had taken with him to New York the chief of the Delhi bureau of the Press Trust of India at government expense, with all telegram charges and other expenses paid. The long speech, which tortured the members of the Security Council and was reported in a couple of sentences in newspapers in Moscow, London, Paris, New York and other world capitals, was beamed in full to India and splashed in the Indian press. No people in the world loves verbal diarrhoea as much as the Indians do. Krishna Menon felt like the "hero of Kashmir" despite the fact that his speech did not win a single vote in India's favour. He and India were bailed out by the Soviet veto.

On 11 March 1957 Krishna Menon was elected to the Lok Sabha from North Bombay constituency with a margin of 47,741 votes. After the election I suggested to the PM that Krishna Menon might be sent to the Defence Ministry in the hope that he

would progressively be eliminated from foreign affairs. My hopes were belied.

For a while after assuming the role of the “hero of Kashmir” and after the elections, Krishna Menon began to lose his head. He made it plain to many that he was the natural successor to Nehru. Many important Congress leaders were annoyed by this. In the presence of senior civil and military officers in the Defence Ministry he would criticize his principal colleagues in the Cabinet. His principal targets were Govind Ballabh Pant, Morarji Desai and T. T. Krishnamachari. He invariably referred to Pantji as “that shaky walrus.” He was very indiscreet in making nasty remarks about people, and never knew how to make friends. But he had perfected the art of losing them and had the inborn gift of making enemies.

Krishna Menon told me that he was attracting as big crowds wherever he went as the PM did. I told him of one person who, at one time, attracted bigger crowds than Nehru did; but it was a passing phenomenon; he could not sustain it and soon settled down as a neglected Deputy Minister. He asked me who the person was. I said, “Shah Nawaz Khan of INA.” I reminded him of what happened to the Duke of Wellington. He lived to see his house being stoned by the populace. I told Krishna Menon that Nehru’s having maintained his popularity for a whole lifetime was no joke. And it so happened that, after Krishna Menon’s exit from government, he was stoned by the people in several places in northern India.

In 1957 it was known in the Ministries of Defence and External Affairs at the higher levels that China had completed the construction of the Aksai-Chin road in Ladakh. Parliament and the public were deliberately kept in the dark.

I had thought that after burning his fingers at India House in London, Krishna Menon had learnt a lesson in administration. But no. He created havoc in the Defence Ministry and in the defence forces. He found favourites. The classic example was B. M. Kaul who had practically no experience as a field commander. In promoting Kaul to the rank of Lieutenant-General from the third position in a panel of three submitted by the Army Chief General Thimayya, superseding several outstanding officers, Krishna Menon exercised his discretion in favour of the army’s greatest known coward. This was amply proved later when braggart Kaul was sent to the front to

face the Chinese. He developed cold feet, feigned illness, flew back to Delhi and took to bed. President Radhakrishnan wanted Kaul to be examined by a full medical board and exposed if necessary. In the confusion then reigning in Delhi, Kaul escaped medical examination. However, later he had an ignominious exit from the army.

When the Defence Ministry embarked on a programme of accelerating defence production, Krishna Menon brought in a private person from Madras who was in the scout movement with him before. He was a man of no means. Soon he became an international traveller. He remained a private individual but under Krishna Menon's patronage entered into dealings with British firms having collaboration for production of tanks at Avadi, aircraft at Kanpur; the German firm having collaboration for the production of Shaktiman trucks; and the Japanese firm having collaboration for the production of Nissan light trucks; and some other foreign concerns. This individual became a financial supporter of Krishna Menon. He is now back in Madras as a rich man and a Director of several important companies.

### 34 *V.K. Krishna Menon—IV*

The news of the Aksai-Chin road and the Chinese menacing probes in the north and northeastern region broke out, and government had to face the strongest possible criticism in parliament and in the press. Krishna Menon was a discredited person by then. In April 1960 Chou En-lai came to Delhi and received a stiff and cold reception. At that time Krishna Menon suggested to the PM a political deal with China. The suggestion was that India should lease to China the Aksai-Chin salient; and in turn China should lease to India the narrow strip of Tibetan territory projecting into India between Sikkim and Bhutan. Krishna Menon's argument was that when the agreement came up for renewal, India would be in a stronger position to bargain. The whole thing was vague. The duration of the lease was not mentioned. No thought was given to the possible relative strength of India and China at the time of renewal. The proposal was rightly torpedoed by Govind Ballabh Pant and T. T. Krishnamachari. A south Indian journalist's assertion that G. B. Pant threatened to revolt and resign is a cock and bull story which emanated from Krishna Menon's fevered brain. Pant was such a "Rama Bhakta" in so far as Nehru was concerned that he was incapable of hurting Nehru. What Pant told the PM was that Krishna Menon's suggestion, if accepted, would inflame popular anger further. The fact is that Nehru, had, by then, lost confidence in Krishna Menon who was kept out of parleys with Chou En-lai.

The period 1960-62 was one during which Krishna Menon relapsed into heavy drugging. Once he crossed all limits at the UN and used the most intemperate and offensive language in a speech. Nehru at once sent a telegram to him reading, "Remember the world is a much bigger place than the UN." On reading the telegram in the UN Assembly chamber, Krishna Menon got upset, staggered out into the lounge in an effort to go to the toilet, opened



the buttons of his trousers in the presence of the women in the lounge, to their utter embarrassment, caught hold of the PTI man who was at hand to help and cried, "This telegram was drafted by Mathai; the PM does not use such tough language." Soon after, Radhakrishnan urged Nehru to stop sending Krishna Menon to the UN any more because he was an ill man. Radhakrishnan always thought that Krishna Menon's was a diseased mind. Krishna Menon earned many epithets from the press and people at the United Nations and elsewhere abroad. Here are a few: "the undiplomatic diplomat; the unspeakable Menon; the most hated diplomat; international gadfly; His Grey Eminence; India's Rasputin; the venomous cobra; Hindu Vishinsky; tea-fed tiger." The Western press described Krishna Menon's mind as "a weird eclectic mixture containing more of Marx than of Gandhi, more of a Bloomsbury agnostic than the Hindu, more 19th century radicalism than 20th century reality—all held together by intolerance and insufferable arrogance." To some, the tea Krishna Menon swallowed was flavoured with malice.

The police action in Goa in December 1961 was, to a large extent, dictated by political considerations—having an eye on the impending general elections. The decision to take over Goa was taken six months before. Krishna Menon discovered a pliable senior intelligence man to prepare the ground. He was a pastmaster not only in provoking incidents but also in inventing them. Wild reports of Portuguese military strength in Goa, and the "impending" arrival of Pakistani forces by air and sea in Goa were widely circulated. Actually there was no need to deploy the army. The Central Reserve Police could have accomplished the job. The invasion of Goa did not enhance Nehru's moral stature. President Kennedy, who was an admirer of Nehru, did not question India's claim to Goa; but he remarked that "the priest has been caught in the brothel."

In the general elections early in 1962 Krishna Menon was again the Congress candidate in the North Bombay constituency. His opponent was an Independent—the redoubtable Acharya J.B. Kripalani. There were reports that Krishna Menon would have an uphill task. Nehru, unfortunately, felt that Acharya Kripalani was challenging him. Nehru made North Bombay a personal issue. He wanted Krishna Menon to win in a big way and told S. K. Patil so. Throughout the election campaign, wherever Nehru went, he spoke of Krishna Menon's election—in Poona, Gwalior, New Delhi,

Jabalpur, Madurai—everywhere. Many people took Nehru's pre-occupation with Krishna Menon almost as a joke. Krishna Menon ultimately won, polling 296,804 votes as against Acharya Kripalani's 151,437. It turned out to be a barren victory, for within seven months Krishna Menon had to leave government.

In September 1962 major Chinese incursions took place in the eastern sector; and on 20 October full-scale invasion started. We were outnumbered and outgunned. The Chinese exploded the myth of the impregnability of the Himalayas.

A sizeable section of the Congress Parliamentary Party executive demanded the removal of Krishna Menon. The PM resisted for a while. On 31 October Nehru took over the portfolio of Defence and Krishna Menon was designated as Minister for Defence Production. Then Menon made the most unwise and suicidal statement at Tezpur. He said that nothing had changed and that he was still sitting in the Defence Ministry. This sealed his fate. Senior Cabinet Ministers, including T. T. Krishnamachari, asked for Krishna Menon's ouster. President Radhakrishnan advised the PM to drop Krishna Menon from the Cabinet. There was a threat that most of the Congress members of parliament would boycott the party general meeting if the PM was not prepared to dismiss Menon. Nehru at last saw the writing on the wall. He could no longer cling to the absurd theory that an attack on Krishna Menon was an attack on him. Indira also did her bit. She conferred with Lal Bahadur and induced some prominent leaders, including Congress President U.N. Dehbar and Kamaraj, to ask for Krishna Menon's ouster. Kamaraj could not speak English fluently and, in any event, he spoke only in monosyllables. He started his interview with the PM with the cryptic sentence, "Krishna Menon must go." Nehru tried to defend Krishna Menon and explained the situation to Kamaraj; but the last sentence Kamaraj uttered at the end of the interview was, "Krishna Menon must go."

And Krishna Menon went on 7 November 1962 as the man who brought discredit to India, dishonour to the Indian army, and ignominy to himself.

Nehru tried to retain Krishna Menon as a member of the Planning Commission. The Attorney-General, however, ruled that it could not be done unless Krishna Menon resigned from parliament, for the Planning Commission members are technically government servants.

After his exit from government, Krishna Menon tried to start legal practice in the Supreme Court with great fanfare of publicity which was resented by the legal fraternity. To begin with he got a few briefs; but he did not study them. On more than one occasion the judges had to remind him that he was not addressing a political rally. Gradually briefs failed to come his way.

Many people believe that Krishna Menon was wedded to the public sector. He was very elastic about it. In 1947 he told me that it would be a wrong thing for an underdeveloped country like India to start a public sector for industries except for defence industries. He said that the Tatas, Birlas and others should be encouraged and fully supported to go in a big way for industrial development. Government should not have labour problems on its hands; the private industrialists would act as cushion in the matter.

One day a long telegram marked "For Himself—Most Immediate—Top Secret" received in code in the cypher bureau was decoded and delivered to me. It filled ten closely typed foolscap pages. It was from Krishna Menon addressed to the Prime Minister from Bombay. It was coded in the Bombay government secretariat and decoded in the Ministry of External Affairs. It contained disjointed rambling thoughts of Krishna Menon on some foreign affairs issues of no urgency. It took five days to reach me because of its length and the time consumed in coding and decoding. The cypher bureau calculated the telegraphic charges at about Rs 5,000. I mentioned this to the PM. When Krishna Menon returned, I asked him why he sent that telegram and told him the cost. I added that it could have been sent by post and I would have received it the next day. His reply was, "A telegram will have more impact on the mind of the PM." I said I had already told the PM about the costly absurdity of that telegram. Krishna Menon had no sense of economy.

After he became Defence Minister, Krishna Menon continued to occupy his large room in the External Affairs Ministry with the "Princes Room" as the anteroom. One day I visited the large chamber. Krishna Menon was away in Kashmir for two days and was expected back only after another couple of days. I discovered that the five-ton airconditioner had been on for the two days he was away. I made enquiries and was told that they were "orders." I asked the administration branch of External Affairs to put off the airconditioner, remove all the furniture, dismantle the numerous

telephones, and refurnish the room into a conference room where Cabinet meetings also could be held. The officer concerned was diffident. He thought he might get into trouble. I said that no trouble would come to him and that he could say it was done under my orders. I sent a note to Krishna Menon informing him of the action I had taken and the reason why. I informed the PM also. He fully approved of the action that I had taken. When Krishna Menon saw my note on return from Kashmir he was upset. He came to see me to find out if I could undo the thing. The reason he gave was that his not keeping an office in the External Affairs Ministry would give the impression that he was out of foreign affairs. I replied, "It is as it should be."

Soon after Krishna Menon became Minister without Portfolio, Potter, the man involved in the jeep scandal, threatened to go to court. In fact he sent a legal notice to Krishna Menon who made an air-dash to London under false pretences. There he drew his accumulated tax-free salary as High Commissioner for five years. It amounted to about £15,000. A substantial part of it was given to Potter to buy his silence.

When Krishna Menon became Minister without Portfolio, the Prime Minister wanted him to leave the Prime Minister's house and have an establishment of his own. The PM spoke to me and asked me to see that it was done gently. He said that apart from the fact that it was the right thing for Krishna Menon to do, "he barges in too often while I am working; he is getting on my nerves; whenever he enters my study he brings in tension." I broached the subject with Menon without bringing in the PM's name. He hummed and hawed. Finally he said, "Ole man, get me something nearest to the PM's house; I don't want the impression to get round that I am no longer in close contact with the PM." He was allotted the staff bungalow a few yards away from the gate of the PM's house.

Whenever Krishna Menon went abroad, particularly in the United States, he used to carry with him a certificate from a British doctor that he was incapable of performing the sex act. Once, in New York, he got into trouble with a shapely young Spanish woman. He used to take her round to restaurants and nightclubs. She ultimately threatened to blackmail him by telling the press that Krishna Menon had been intimate with her. Krishna Menon got the fright of his life. He enlisted the services of a UN employee, an Indian whom he had helped to get employment at the UN

secretariat. This man talked to the Spanish woman and showed her the British doctor's certificate. She was not dissuaded and said, "Let him publish that certificate also." Finally Krishna Menon had to buy her silence at considerable expense.

I had three tiffs with Krishna Menon. The first happened in my study in the PM's house where Krishna Menon had come to see me. He sat and gossiped. He was then a Cabinet Minister. In the course of his gossipy talk he said, "You know, the PM is the kept man of Lady Mountbatten." I was incensed and told him, "If you had said it was the other way round, I may not have taken notice of it. You do not have even a modicum of gratitude to the man without whom you would have been in the gutter." I firmly asked him to leave my room. He looked sheepish and left.

The second happened in the Cabinet room of 10 Downing Street, London, where a meeting of the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference was in progress. Nehru and Mrs Pandit were at the table. N.R. Pillai, Krishna Menon, and I, in that order, were behind. Next to me was the Canadian Permanent Secretary for External Affairs. Nehru was speaking. Krishna Menon leaned towards me and said, for the benefit of the Canadian, "He is weak; how long am I to drive the car from the back seat?" Also for the benefit of the Canadian I replied, "You shut up."

The third incident happened in my office in the PM's secretariat a week after my resignation. I had heard about some caustic comments made by Krishna Menon about my resignation. I rang him up and said that I would like to see him in his office. He said, "Ole man, I will come and see you." I said I preferred to see him in his office. But he insisted and came to my office. I told him, "I wanted to speak to you in your office because what I am going to tell you will not be pleasant. You are an ungrateful man; everyone, including the Prime Minister, is a convenience for you. I am not going to take back my resignation as some people do and I am not going to return to government. But remember that I can, if I choose, do more harm to you from outside than from within. Now I do not want to see your horse-face again." Krishna Menon was visibly shaken and mumbled, "Nobody has talked to me like this." I said, "I am not a nobody." He staggered out of my room. I never met him afterwards though on two occasions he tried to meet me.

Krishna Menon had no sense of humour. His first visit to

Kashmir was with the Prime Minister. Menon was not a minister then. The PM, Krishna Menon and I were sitting in the potrico of the Chashma Shahi guest house one sunny morning. Nehru was in a somewhat mischievous mood. He turned to Krishna Menon and said, "You Malayalis have to be brought here to be civilized." Krishna Menon went red in the face and wanted me to say something. In the hearing of the PM, I asked Krishna Menon, "Why don't you ask the PM what is on top of the tall hill in the middle of the Srinagar valley? It is the Shankaracharya temple. Shankaracharya had to come all the way on foot to civilize the Kashmiris." Krishna Menon revived and his face beamed in triumph. For the rest of his life Krishna Menon never forgot the Shankaracharya hill in Srinagar.

One morning I was having breakfast with the PM as Indira was out of Delhi. Krishna Menon barged in. I ordered tea for him. After coffee, the PM lit a cigarette. Krishna Menon began playing with the cigarette box and started talking about different brands of British cigarettes. And to my surprise he held forth about the flavours of the different brands. I asked him, "Have you ever smoked a cigarette in your life?" Krishna Menon looked deflated and uncomfortable. The PM burst into laughter and smoke went down the wrong way in the process. As we all went out of the dining room, Krishna Menon said, "You should not have said it in the presence of the PM." I replied, "Why do you talk about things of which you know nothing?"

Even after his exit from government, Krishna Menon's wandermania persisted. He continued to travel by first class by air and stayed in the most expensive hotels in London, New York and other places. Tongues began to wag. People asked, "Where does he get all this money from?"

All his life Krishna Menon chased controversy and sometimes controversy chased him. In death also controversy chased him. People began to ask questions about the sum of over Rs 100,000 in cash and the fabulous wardrobe of expensive European clothes with 500 expensive unused British and French shirts thrown in, which he left behind. Death stills most things.

During the period Krishna Menon reached the peak in attacking the West at the UN and elsewhere, the French Ambassador to the UN caused a witty story to go the rounds. It referred to the

difference between accident and disaster—"If Krishna Menon falls into a well, it will be an accident; if he comes out of it, it will be a disaster." This did not represent the Ambassador's originality. He was only adapting what Clemenceau, in his exasperation, said of President Woodrow Wilson at Versailles after the first world war.

### 35 *Was Nehru Arrogant?*

Soon after Nehru's death on 27 May 1964, the Chinese Prime Minister Chou En-lai was gracious enough to tell a visiting Ceylonese delegation in Peking, "I have met Khrushchev, I have met Chiang Kai-shek, I have met American Generals, but I have never met a more arrogant man than Nehru. I am sorry, but this is true."

One High Commissioner in Delhi, who was a conceited fellow and never missed an opportunity to make it known that he was a Rhodes scholar, and who was despised by a fellow Commonwealth High Commissioner as an insufferably arrogant person, once told me that he thought Nehru was arrogant.

At the Asian-African conference in Bandung (18-24 April 1955) Sir John Kotelawala, the Prime Minister of Ceylon, drew attention to the fact that the "satellite" countries under Communist domination such as Hungary, Bulgaria, Rumania, Albania, Czechoslovakia, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, and Poland were as much colonies as any of the colonial territories in Africa or Asia." Chou-En-lai and many others felt that Sir John was bent on breaking up the conference. Later, Nehru went up to him and asked him with some heat, "Why did you do it, Sir John? Why did you not show me your speech before you made it?" I am afraid Nehru behaved as if he were the Congress President speaking to one of the Working Committee members. Sir John shot back, "Why should I? Do you show me yours before you make them?"

Sir John Kotelawala, in his book, *An Asian Prime Minister's Story*, commented, "I have no doubt that the remark was well meant. Nehru and I are the best of friends. I have the highest regard for him and especially for his disinterestedness in all that he says and does, and the incident must have been quickly forgotten by him as it was by me."

Nehru was too much of a refined person to be arrogant. Some-



times he could be abrupt. He was also impatient. He had the minor drawbacks of a person who started public life at the top. I would not have been surprised if, at the marriage of one of his family members, he had proceeded to cut the wedding cake until someone called him back; he would then look like a shy child.

It did not behove Chou En-lai to judge Nehru when he, in his rank arrogance, let his country attack India, thereby returning evil for good.

### *36 Nehru and the Services*

Nehru entered government on 2 September 1946 with an understandable prejudice against the ICS and other so-called "superior service" people who constituted the steel frame of British imperialism in India. The fact that the External Affairs Department was then, and for some time to come, manned at the top by British civilians did not help matters. The Commonwealth Relations Department, also under Nehru, were manned by Indians of indifferent calibre.

An experience with a very senior ICS man of the Madras cadre, S. V. Ramamurti, who had acted as a provincial Governor under the British regime, was not a happy one. He was sent for by Nehru as a possible choice for the chairmanship of the Refugee Relief and Rehabilitation Board. Nehru wanted a person who was not emotionally involved in the influx of refugees. He explained the problem to Ramamurti. Here was a great human problem; instead of discussing the challenge posed by the problem and its possible future dimensions, Ramamurti foolishly raised questions about his position, salary and emoluments, place in the Warrant of Precedence, perquisites such as the type of bungalow, railway saloon and the like. Nehru terminated the interview and got rid of the pompous fellow.

But the aftermath of partition proved that most of the ICS and other service people were free from narrow communalism and functioned fairly and justly in an extremely difficult situation. This created a good impression on Nehru. From then on it was smooth sailing for the civil servants. The defence services provided the finest example of noncommunal outlook.

Around 1953 I took up with the PM three issues: (i) Abolition of Lee Commission passages for Indian ICS officers; (ii) abolition of the practice of stating pensions to Indian officers, both civil and

military, in terms of pound sterling; (iii) abolition of the title of Commander-in-Chief for the three service chiefs.

The Lee Commission extended to Indian ICS officers, their wives and dependent children the privilege of return passages between India and England and staying in England for a few months five times during their career at government expense and drawing their salaries during that period in pound sterling. The PM wrote to Home Minister K. N. Katju and Cabinet Secretary Y. N. Sukthankar about it. He also mentioned it in Cabinet which directed the Home Ministry to submit formal proposals for consideration and decision. In spite of repeated reminders to the Home Ministry and the Cabinet secretariat, nothing was done for about five years. Then, suddenly, a paper was submitted to the Cabinet for the abolition of the Lee Commission passages. This was immediately after Cabinet Secretary Sukthankar and his wife returned after a three-month holiday in England where they had gone on their last entitlement under the Lee Commission! This is a typical example of the dilatoriness of the civil service and the incompetence of the Home Minister.

Abolition of sterling pensions was also done at the same time.

In all democratic countries the Head of State is the Commander-in-Chief of all the services. The serviceman in the top position is designated as the Chief of Staff. He has no command functions; territorial Commanders have. General Cariappa, who thought that the mantle of Lord Kitchner had fallen on him, was the loudest in protesting against the proposed change. Some top brass in the army went to the extent of saying in private, "The army will not tolerate a Dhoti Prasad as C-in-C." (The reference was to President Rajendra Prasad.) On General Cariappa's retirement, the change was carried out.

During Bangladesh operations, Chief of Army Staff General Maneckshaw, in his message to Major-General Firman Ali, used the expression, "the forces under my command." Maneckshaw had no command. The command was with the GOC-in-C, Eastern Command. It is a small matter, but important.

In 1950, when new diplomatic passports were to be issued to the PM and myself, I asked the Chief Passport Officer to dispense with narrating the countries for which the passport was valid and simply write on page four, "All countries in the world." He protested and said that there was no precedent for it. I told him, "You

never had a PM before; don't be a slave to precedent; create one; I want the passports with all the required visas within a week." He asked, "Suppose foreign governments object?" I said, "They will not object; go and do as you are told." He went to his boss, the Foreign Secretary, who had sense enough to direct him to issue the passports as I wanted.

I shall not discuss individuals here except one—Girja Shankar Bajpai, who prospered well under the British. He became a member of the Viceroy's Executive Council rather early in his career. Before the Quit India movement he was sent as Government of India's Agent-General in Washington. His office was an adjunct of the British Embassy. His principal function was to malign the national movement, Gandhi and Nehru. In his private conversations Bajpai took delight in referring to Nehru as the Hamlet of Indian politics. Bajpai was pompous in his behaviour, language and pronunciation. Once in New York he was late for an important function. He ordered the chauffeur to ignore traffic rules without endangering safety. Soon the police stopped his car. Bajpai was annoyed and asked the policeman, "Don't you know who I am?" and answered the question himself, "I am Bajpai." The policeman, who had a lively sense of humour, replied, "If you do not observe traffic rules, you will soon be mincepie." At a large party in New York, the man at the entrance announced, "Sir Baj and Lady Pai," Sir Baj was visibly annoyed and entered into an unseemly argument with the announcer.

Soon after the formation of the interim government, Bajpai was recalled from Washington. Since the senior officers in the External Affairs Department were British, Bajpai was appointed as Secretary-General. This was also intended to relieve Nehru from routine meetings with foreign Ambassadors. In many ways Bajpai was a good Secretary-General. But in dealing with Kashmir affairs, he was a disaster. He did not know where India's interests lay. He allowed himself to be tied into knots by UN representatives. Instead of sticking to basic principles and asking for an answer to our original complaint to the UN on Pakistan's aggression, he indulged in a series of compromises and complicated the whole issue which is still with us today.

When we went to London in 1948 for the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference, we were put up at Claridges Hotel as guests of the British Government. The manager of the hotel came

ALSO SEE PAGE 7.

Countries for which this Passport is valid  
Pays pour lesquels ce Passeport est valable

*British Empire (See Regs. 3 & 4)*  
*All countries in Europe including*  
*the U. S. S. R. & Turkey,*  
United States of America, JAPAN,  
SAUDI-ARABIA, IRAQ, TRANSJORDAN,  
SYRIA, LEBANON, EGYPT & NORTH AFRICA

*See also page 124*

The validity of this passport expires :  
Ce passeport expire

21st SEPTEMBER, 1953

**CANCELLED**  
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à moins qu'il ne soit renouvelé.

Issued at }  
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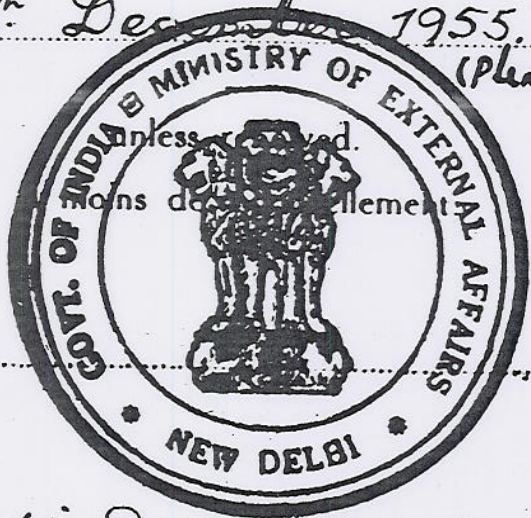


Countries for which this Passport is valid  
Pays pour lesquels ce Passeport est valable

*All Countries in the  
World.*

The validity of this passport expires :  
Ce passeport expire le :

*14<sup>th</sup> December 1955.*  
*(Please see page 6)*



Issued at }  
délivré à }

date } *14<sup>th</sup> December 1950.*  
date }

up to me and told me that the hotel had orders from His Majesty's Government that regardless of shortages, we were to be served whatever we wished to have. I asked him what was the most difficult thing to get. He said eggs, and added that butter and sugar were served in limited quantities to the inmates of the hotel. I told him, "The Indian delegation will share your shortages; eggs might be cut out; and nothing special is required by us." He was pleased and impressed and said no other delegation staying in the hotel had done such a thing and added, "I know you come from the land of Gandhi." I did mention the matter to the PM who thoroughly approved of my action. I knew he would. But Bajpai became a bundle of grumbling and never forgave me. Conditions in England were so bad that when we went over to Dublin for a couple of days Lady Mountbatten thrust into my pocket innumerable pound notes of different denominations and told me, "Mac, we have not eaten good meat for a long time, be an angel and bring me some from Dublin." On return to London I delivered to her fifty kilos of succulent fresh meat, several dozens of fresh eggs, and the small balance of her money. She showed her joy and excitement almost like a half-starved war prisoner.

Here I must digress a little. Agatha Harrison took me to a new pre-fab housing colony for working class people. I visited one small family of husband, wife and a child. The husband was away to his factory. With Agatha's permission I asked the young woman some questions about the rigours of life, shortages and the like. Quick came the spontaneous reply, "Yes, we have our difficulties and shortages, but my child gets the same quantity of milk as a Duke's child, we share our shortages, I have no complaint." Rationing during and after the war was a clean operation, and there was very little black-marketing. From London we went over to Paris and I had a chance of seeing conditions there. They were totally different from what I saw in London. Before leaving Paris for India, I said to myself, "The British are a great people."

On our first visit to the United States in 1949 we travelled from London to Washington in President Truman's personal aircraft *Sacred Cow*. We had a halt in Newfoundland where the American air base Commander looked after us. Nehru and Indira descended from the plane followed by Bajpai and myself. After the Commander drove away with Nehru and Indira, an air force Captain approached Bajpai with a silly question, "Understand English?"

Bajpai turned red in the face and asked irritably, "What do you want?" I intervened and told the Captain, "He was educated at Oxford and speaks King's English which few Americans know." The Captain said sorry to Bajpai who regained his composure. For two days Bajpai was full of that Captain and told me innumerable times, "Think of it, that bumptious bastard asking me if I knew English! I speak many languages—English, French, Persian, Sanskrit, Urdu and Hindi." If Bajpai had added Yiddish to the list, I would not have cared to question him!

For the formal social functions in the United States, Bajpai had ordered from Saville Row, of all places, a black achkan, churidar pyjamas, and a couple of Gandhi caps. They were ill-fitting—the result of being an insufferable snob. At a dinner in Washington Bajpai and I found ourselves on opposite sides of the table. He looked like a cook in his new costume which he had never worn before in foreign countries. The vivacious woman on one side of Bajpai, whom she had known personally before but could not recognize in his comic costume, started a conversation about Lady Bajpai, who, incidentally, was more than double the size of her husband. She asked, "How is Lady Bajpai? Isn't she wonderful? That mole on her chin is heavenly." Bajpai had a sense of elevation. Suddenly she asked, "How is her little husband?" Bajpai's face fell. Fortunately, the man on the other side of the woman started talking to her. Bajpai revived.

During the Korea crisis Bajpai used to see Vallabhbhai Patel frequently. Both were privately opposed to the policy of non-alignment. Bajpai's notes and drafts submitted to the PM were slanted. I sensed an attempt at defeating Nehru at the level of details. I spoke to K. P. S. Menon, who was for some time connected with a UN Commission on Korea and asked him to brief the PM. He was reluctant for fear of offending Bajpai. So I asked him to send me unsigned notes on every cypher telegram received from the office of our permanent representatives at the UN. Soon Bajpai discovered that his notes and recommendations were being rejected by the PM. Bajpai complained to Vallabhbhai Patel that I was influencing the PM too much and that I was a dangerous socialist. More about this in the chapter on Vallabhbhai Patel.

After two extensions Bajpai was due to retire from the service early in 1952 and was desperately anxious to go as a Governor. He



mentioned it to the PM who was noncommittal. So he came to me to enlist my assistance. He said he was interested only in the governorship of Bombay. That did not make matters easy. I spoke to the PM who said that most of the important Chief Ministers were reluctant to accept civil servants as Governors. He expressed his reluctance in thrusting Bajpai on anybody and added, "There is something lacking in that man." However, he said that I might have a word with Bombay Chief Minister B. G. Kher, who happened to be in Delhi then. I met him and spoke about Bajpai. He was not enthusiastic, though not entirely opposed to the idea. He said that he would consult Morarji Desai the next day in Bombay. He suggested that, since Morarji Desai was going to succeed him as Chief Minister after the impending elections, I might ring him up in Bombay within three days after he had spoken to him. Accordingly, I rang up Morarjibhai who asked me, "Does he drink?" I said no. I also told him that Bajpai smoked only one cigarette a day at tea time. These momentous revelations had a good effect on Morarjibhai. He included Bajpai's name in the panel of three names submitted to the PM. So Bajpai achieved his ambition. He had the best of both worlds.

### *37 Nehru and Women*

Nehru once described himself as a pagan. He was completely amoral. I have yet to see a Nehru, male or female, who believed in the proposition, "one man: one woman."

Napoleon had many mistresses; but women did not influence him in matters of state. He once said, "Woman is the occupation of the idle mind, and the relaxation of the warrior." These can be applied equally to Nehru.

#### MRIDULA SARABHAI

A female who pursued Nehru with determination and in an uninhibited manner normally not associated with Indian women was Mridula Sarabhai, heiress from a wealthy Gujarati family. She was a dedicated and tireless Congress worker. By early 1946 Nehru had lost interest in her. She lacked feminine charm, clad herself in the most atrocious clothes, and generally disfigured herself. In 1946, when Nehru became Congress President, he wanted several socialists in the Working Committee and two of them as General Secretaries. Since they chose to keep out, Nehru appointed B. V. Keskar and Mridula Sarabhai as the General Secretaries. Mridula knew very little English. So she employed more than one ghost writer. Sometimes she herself wrote in English to Nehru on political matters. Few could make head or tail of her letters in English.

In 1947 Mridula Sarabhai was put in charge of the recovery of abducted women during partition. In this she worked tirelessly and with great zeal and rescued many women. She showed great courage but it was the reckless courage of a wild boar. She possessed no more than the wisdom of the same animal. There have been many cases of Mridula inflicting physical violence on

refugee women, especially on the abducted ones. In 1947 and thereafter many people thought that this Amazon missed her profession and that she should have joined the Military Police. She utterly lacked humaneness in dealing with human problems.

Bhuta Singh, aged fifty-five, a bachelor Sikh farmer, rescued a seventeen year old Muslim girl, Zanib, trying to flee her abductor to whom he paid Rs 1,500 early in 1947. He married her and within eleven months Zanib gave birth to a daughter. They lived happily. A nephew of Bhuta Singh, having an eye on the uncle's landed property, reported to the authorities the presence of Zanib in the village. The information ultimately reached Mridula. Her gang, with a police escort, arrived on the scene and forcibly took Zanib, much against her will, put her in a camp for six months, and finally sent her to Pakistan to join her relatives. How a forlorn Bhuta Singh knocked at every door to get his wife restored to him, how he became a Muslim for the sake of Zanib, how he smuggled himself and daughter Tanveer to Pakistan, how he managed to meet Zanib whom he dearly loved, how Zanib's relatives forced her to disown him, how he committed suicide, how he was buried with solemnity in Lahore by local Muslims, how his daughter Tanveer was brought up by foster parents in Lahore and married off to an engineer, constitute a tragic story known to millions in Pakistan and India. Bhuta Singh came to symbolize to millions of Punjabis on either side of the border the tragic aftermath of their insane conflict as well as the faint hope that man's ceaseless quest for happiness might ultimately overcome the hatred that keeps them asunder.

In 1953 and after, Mridula was accused of anti-national activities in regard to Kashmir, and the Government of India, on the advice of Home Minister Govind Ballabh Pant, arrested and imprisoned her. In my view she was not guilty of anti-national activities, but foolishness arising out of mulishness and a total lack of a sense of proportion.

I had two tiffs with Mridula. One was in 1946 at the Retreat in Simla during the visit of the British Cabinet Mission. Dressed in Pathan clothes, she barged into my room and started ordering me about. I had never met her before. I asked her, "Who are you?" She replied, "I am Mridula Sarabhai." I said, "Never heard of such a name; if you behave like this in future, you will get into serious

trouble with me. Now you can go." She gave me a dirty look and left.

The second was when I heard that whenever the Prime Minister went on tours, she used to ring up Chief Ministers and Chief Secretaries directing them what should be done about security arrangements, food, etc. I immediately had a circular sent to the Chief Ministers and Chief Secretaries to say that such interference by Mridula Sarabhai was unauthorized and that in future she should be ignored. I did not fail to inform Mridula about what I had done. After that she was careful.

Whenever I think of Mridula, the saying of the late West German Chancellor Adenauer comes to my mind—"God," he said, "limited the intelligence of women; but he forgot to limit her stupidity at the same time."

#### PADMAJA NAIDU

Born on 17 November, 1900, Padmaja Naidu was the elder of the two daughters of Sarojni Naidu. Endowed with a perpetual bedroom look, with features somewhat resembling a Negress's, she fashioned herself after the "Black Princess" of the Ajanta Caves. She was pathetically overburdened by illusions. She convinced herself that she was irresistible and that every man who came across her fell in love with her. At a relatively early age she took great delight in imagining that Nawab Salar Jung was in love with her. If he happened to look at any other woman, Padmaja would go into tantrums. Eventually, she was cured of her hallucination in so far as the Nawab was concerned.

I first met Padmaja in Allahabad in February 1946. She made it a practice to be in the Nehru household in Allahabad and later in Delhi as often as possible. She always insisted on being put up in the room next to Nehru's. Heavily burdened with huge, hanging breasts, she perfected the art of folding them into her bra to look like Mae West. She always wore low-cut blouses and deftly managed to let her sari fall frequently from her shoulder before men to bare her breasts and make them shake like jelly pudding. When she occupied her room, she filled it with the aroma of powders and perfumes. I never considered her to be attractive; but of course, tastes differ.

Invariably, Padmaja turned up at Nehru's residence from

Hyderabad in the first week of November to celebrate the birth-days of Nehru (14th), Indira (19th) and of herself (17th). Indira disapproved of Padmaja coming too often and staying for too long; but she could do nothing about it.

One day Indira told me that she did not like Padmaja arriving with her father in public places such as Rajpath on Republic Day, Red Fort on Independence Day and the like, and wanted me to do something about it. I told her, "You stop going with your father in his car and let your two little boys go with him; you and Padmaja should go together in another car ahead of your father." This used to work, to the annoyance of Padmaja who was not free from wanting to give misleading impressions.

In the winter of 1947 Nehru was scheduled to pay a brief visit to Lucknow. Sarojini Naidu, who was then the Governor of UP, spread the news among her inner circle that Nehru was going to propose to Padmaja. And Padmaja was all keyed up and in great expectations. And, lo! Nehru arrived in Lucknow with Lady Mountbatten. Padmaja locked herself up in her room and went into a tantrum. She refused to meet Lady Mountbatten.

During the winter of 1948 Padmaja was elected to the Constituent Assembly from Hyderabad. Soon after, she landed herself in the Prime Minister's house and occupied her strategic room. She had no intention of taking advantage of the government accommodation normally allotted to a Constituent Assembly member. She had every intention of overstaying her welcome. However, the problem was soon solved. She was told of the impending arrival of Lady Mountbatten on her way to the East and again on her way back. A couple of days before Lady Mountbatten's arrival, Padmaja moved into Western Court where she established herself in a suite of rooms next to her sister Leilamani Naidu who was working in the External Affairs Ministry. After Lady Mountbatten's arrival, Padmaja sent for Indira and told her that she wanted to hand over all the letters Nehru had written to her. She also told Indira that she was going to commit suicide. Indira told me about this the same day; she was somewhat disturbed. I asked her to tell Padmaja that if she handed over the letters in a sealed packet, she would give it to her father. Then I burst into laughter and told her the story of a young married woman who lived in a house on the bank of the river Pamba near my ancestral home in Travancore. The woman had perpetual quarrels with her husband. One day,

while it was raining very heavily and the river was in flood, the woman shouted at her husband and told him that she was going to drown herself in the river. She rushed into her room, took an umbrella, opened it and rushed out of the house towards the river. The foolish woman thought that the husband would get a fright and run after her. He did nothing of the kind. She stealthily returned to the house, crestfallen. Then the husband burst out laughing and asked her, "Will anyone who is serious about committing suicide give notice of it to others? Will anyone who wants to drown herself in the river or the sea, open an umbrella for protection from the rain?" I advised Indira that "hereafter if anyone tells you about the intention of committing suicide, you should encourage the person to carry it out."

While in Delhi, Lady Mountbatten wanted to meet Padmaja. She sent a message to Padmaja that she would call on her at the Western Court. But Padmaja, who was in a tantrum, refused to meet her.

After the departure of Lady Mountbatten, while Padmaja was composed and somewhat normal, I met her in Western Court. Among other things she told me sadly, "Jawahar is not a one woman's man." I said to myself, "She has taken such a long time to discover it." She did not know when to retire. A year later, having seen two photographs of Lady Mountbatten in Nehru's bedroom, Padmaja could not bear the thought of not having one of hers there. So she hung a small but provocative painting of hers (bust) above the fireplace in Nehru's bedroom—in such a position that Nehru could see it while lying in bed. The moment Padmaja left Delhi, Nehru had the painting removed and stored.

Soon after Govind Ballabh Pant became Home Minister, he wanted to send Padmaja, whom he had known personally well and for long, as Governor of West Bengal. He consulted the Chief Minister, B. C. Roy, who was a long-standing personal friend of Padmaja. Roy enthusiastically welcomed the appointment. Pantji also had an informal talk with President Rajendra Prasad who also welcomed it. Only after that did Pantji broach the subject with the Prime Minister. Nehru's younger sister, Krishna Hutheesing, wrote to me an astounding letter asking me, "Was it done for services rendered?" I wanted to reply and tell her that the initiative in the matter was taken by Pantji without clearance from the Prime Minister. But then I remembered Nehru's advice to me not to

enter into any correspondence with her in so far as possible.

Padmaja proved to be a good Governor. After Roy she got on well with his successor P. C. Sen. She remained Governor of West Bengal for a little over ten years. She revelled in behaving like a pucca "Lat Sahib." Her truly noncommunal outlook and approach to problems in the problem state were eminently helpful. She retired from governorship some time after the death of Nehru.

#### SHARDHA MATA (*Assumed name*)

In the autumn of 1948 a young woman from Banares arrived in New Delhi as a sanyasini named Shradha Mata. She was a Sanskrit scholar and well versed in ancient Indian scriptures and mythology. People, including MPs, thronged to her to hear her discourses. One day S. D. Upadhyaya, Nehru's old employee, brought a letter in Hindi from Shardha Mata about whom he spoke very highly. Nehru gave her an interview in the PM's house. As she departed, I noticed that she was young, shapely and beautiful. Meetings with her became rather frequent, mostly after Nehru finished his work at night. During one of Nehru's visits to Lucknow, Shradha Mata turned up there, and Upadhaya brought a letter from her as usual. Nehru sent her the reply; and she visited Nehru at midnight. Padmaja was hysterical.

I did not like Upadhyaya taking personal interest in this matter and I told him so. I said I had my misgivings about Shradha Mata. Nature's fool, as he was, he told me with great conviction that she was a goddess.

Suddenly Shardha Mata disappeared. In November 1949 a convent in Bangalore sent a decent-looking person to Delhi with a bundle of letters. He said that a young woman from northern India arrived at the convent a few months ago and gave birth to a baby boy. She refused to divulge her name or give any particulars about herself. She left the convent as soon as she was well enough to move out but left the child behind. She however forgot to take with her a small cloth bundle in which, among other things, several letters in Hindi were found. The Mother Superior, who was a foreigner, had the letters examined and was told they were from the Prime Minister. The person who brought the letters surrendered them. But he declined to give his name, or the name of the Mother Superior, or the name and address of the convent. Nehru was told of the facts.<sup>1</sup>

He tore off the letters without any emotion reflected in his face. He showed no interest in the child then or later. This reminded me of Subhas Chandra Bose's attitude when he discovered that an Austrian girl, who was working in his office in Germany during the war, became pregnant by him. A.C.N. Nambiar, who was with Bose, told me the story. Bose was anxious to have an abortion done; but it became impossible because pregnancy was a little too advanced. Bose did not want to marry her at that stage. He was too interested in his political future. Bose left Germany by a submarine for Japan.

In matters of sex or the consequences arising therefrom, no politician will normally risk his political future by owning up and accepting the responsibility in all its aspects.

Shardha Mata returned to north India and discarded her sanyasini's robes. The last I heard was that she was in Jaipur and was going about with bobbed hair, lipstick and all that. Never again did she attempt to see Nehru.

I made discreet enquiries repeatedly about the boy but failed to get a clue about his whereabouts. Convents in such matters are extremely tightlipped and secretive. Had I succeeded in locating the boy, I would have adopted him. He must have grown up as a Catholic Christian blissfully ignorant of who his father was.

Whenever I think of the boy, the story of Napoleon's son by Countess Marie Walewska comes to mind. Napoleon discovered his existence only at Elba while, with the connivance of the British, Marie Walewska visited him on the island with her little son. As they were returning to the mainland, Napoleon took the boy in his arms, kissed him and gently put him down. Then he started to present him with a sword by saying, "My son, this was the sword with which I conquered Italy when I was twenty-six." Marie Walewska asked Napoleon to take back the sword and told him, "Oh Napoleone, there are other ways of distinguishing oneself than by the sword." Her wish ultimately came true. Her son, Alexandre Florian Joseph Colonna Walewska (1810-1868) was made a Count of France and became French Ambassador to Florence, Naples and London. In 1855 he became the Foreign Minister of France and acted as the French Plenipotentiary at the Congress of Paris the following year. When he left the Foreign Office in 1860, it was to become Minister of State, an office which he held until 1863. Senator from 1855 to 1865, he entered the Corps Legislatif in 1865 and was installed as President of the chamber. A revolt against his authority



two years later sent him back to the senate. He died on 27 October 1868.

Would anything like this have happened to Nehru's son if he were not anonymous and if he were talented and competent? Some of the great men in the past have been "bastards." Confucius and Leonardo da Vinci are classic examples. In modern times we have had Ramsay MacDonald and now Willy Brandt.

#### COUNTESS EDWINA MOUNTBATTEN

Of all the women in Nehru's life after 1947, Lady Mountbatten was pre-eminent and occupied the pride of place. She was a remarkable woman, full of compassion and nervous energy. During the partition period, she spared no effort in bringing solace and succour to innumerable refugees and displaced Muslims. She organized the United Council for Relief and Welfare and brought together all the social service organizations in Delhi within its ambit and provided the much needed coordination. Much of her time was taken up in visiting hospitals and refugee camps which were mostly insanitary. She did not hesitate to visit dingy hovels. Gandhiji was so impressed by her ceaseless work that he publicly referred to her as "the angel of mercy."

Before the Mountbattens left India, Lady Mountbatten extracted a promise from me that I would write to her regularly. Actually I did not have to because Nehru started to reply to her in his own hand. Their letters were numbered in order to make sure that if any went astray, it could be detected.

In my office there was a carefully-selected confidential assistant to process mail. To begin with I opened all communications marked personal, secret and confidential. Their number grew so large that I soon discovered I could not cope with them. I asked the confidential assistant to open them all except those marked "For himself" which were to be given to me to be placed before Nehru unopened. To begin with, such marking was to be resorted to only by Indira, Nehru's two sisters and Lady Mountbatten. The marking became known and several people resorted to it. Letters of such unauthorized persons were opened by me.

One day the confidential assistant opened a letter from Lady Mountbatten. He brought it to me in great distress. I asked him not to worry, but to be more careful in future. I sent it to Nehru with a

slip explaining the circumstances under which it was opened and that I had taken steps to ensure that the mistake was not repeated. Nehru was understandably annoyed. Even today I cannot understand how a woman of Lady Mountbatten's age could write such adolescent stuff. After this incident Lady Mountbatten resorted to the practice of placing her letters to Nehru in a closed envelope which was put in an outer envelope addressed to me.

Rather early in life Lady Mountbatten developed a leathery skin. I have been several times to the Rashtrapati Bhawan swimming pool with Nehru and Lady Mountbatten and have seen her in scanty swimming costumes. There was nothing physically attractive about her; but she had a nice face.

Practically every year Lady Mountbatten used to halt in New Delhi for a number of days on her way to and back from her East and Southeast Asia visits in her capacity as Superintendent in-Chief of the St John's Ambulance Brigade.

One thing that I could not fail to notice was that whenever Nehru stood by the side of Lady Mountbatten, he had a sense of triumph.

\* \* \*

While M. K. Vellodi was the Chief Minister of Hyderabad after the integration of that state with the Indian Union, some well-meaning people approached Nehru to use his good offices with the Nizam to make the long-overdue financial settlement for Niloufer, the Turkish wife of the Nizam's second son from whom she had separated. She was then living in Paris. Nehru wrote to Vellodi to persuade the Nizam to do the right thing in the matter. The Nizam, who disapproved of both his sons, did make a reasonable settlement. This made tongues wag in Hyderabad and the gossip that Nehru was personally interested in Niloufer spread to Delhi. At this time a Director of the Tatas, known as a busybody, told Nehru that Niloufer was anxious to come to Delhi to thank him personally for his kindness. The Tata Director went to the extent of suggesting that Niloufer might be put up in the Prime Minister's house. Nehru told him that Niloufer was welcome. Later Nehru told Indira about Niloufer's intentions and told her that she should be put up in the PM's house as a personal guest. Knowing the background, Indira was worried and wanted me to do something. I

expressed my reluctance to interfere in a matter like this; but she insisted that it was really in her father's interest to do so. I sent for the Tata Director and told him that Niloufer's proposed visit could only do some harm to the PM. I added that it was inappropriate for her to come especially after the PM had done her a personal favour. I asked him to have her visit cancelled and to tell her that she might meet the PM at Paris airport on his way to London within three weeks. I saw her at the Orly airport and found that she was more beautiful than I had imagined.

Sometimes Nehru had to be saved from himself and some of his so-called friends. The Tata Director made me recall a saying of Voltaire, "Oh God, save me from my friends; I shall deal with my enemies myself."

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The last female to make a try for Nehru was a princely woman of northern India. She was married at the age of fifteen and, before she knew what it was all about, she had produced, by the time she was twenty-two, four children. After that her eyes opened up about the ways of her husband and his keeping several women as his mistresses. Even though they did not part, they were estranged, and lived a life of make believe.

Two years before Lady Mountbatten's death in 1960, the princely woman persuaded herself that she was in love with Nehru. Even though she met Nehru off and on, she did not get very far. When Nehru died, she imagined herself to be in deep private mourning—which was a pathetic sight to watch.

A few years after Nehru's death, this woman's bearded husband also died. Without wasting much time she found for herself another beard—this time it belonged to someone from western India. He prefers to be known as "author and political thinker."

Ramsay MacDonald, himself a bastard, remained Prime Minister of Great Britain despite many love affairs and several illegitimate children. As his son, Malcolm MacDonald, almost boastfully put it, "He was probably the greatest natural Don Juan in the history of British politics. To portray his life without taking into account this side of his personality is like failing to depict Beethoven's handicap of deafness during the composition of his greatest works."

Lord Krishna had 16,008 women in his life. Neither he nor his favourite Radha have suffered in reputation on this account. On the contrary, they are lauded and profusely depicted in paintings and other forms of art as well as in poetry. That is a basic Indian tradition. On the whole the Indian people did not suffer from mid-Victorian prudery.

### *38 Nehru and the Socialists*

It is now part of history that Vallabhbhai Patel, Rajendra Prasad, Rajagopalachari, J. B. Kripalani, Jairamdas Daulatram, Jamnalal Bajaj and Shankarrao Deo, resigned from the Congress Working Committee in June 1936 after the Lucknow Congress where Nehru took over as Congress President. Their reason was that Nehru's preaching of socialism and encouraging the Socialist members of the Working Committee at that juncture was harmful to the country. Later, on Gandhiji's advice, they withdrew the joint letter of resignation. This conflict of ideology was always there in dormant form. The Socialists, in their hurry, did not help matters. They had been declaring that the old guard represented outworn ideas and were obstructing the progress of the country and that they deserved to be cast out of the positions they were holding. The Socialists also felt that Nehru was not supporting them enough. Nehru's concept of nonalignment started to take practical shape in the late twenties because of the untimely struggle between the right and the left in the national movement.

In the first quarter of 1946, having caught out Maulana Azad for telling two lies to him, Gandhiji was anxious to see a change in the presidentship of the Congress. Having a clear vision of the coming of independence, he wanted to see that Nehru, his chosen heir, was put in position. Gandhiji asked Acharya Kripalani to formally propose Nehru's name for Congress presidentship. Thus Nehru became Congress President for the third time on 9 May 1946. At the AICC meeting in Bombay soon after, Gandhiji advised Nehru to feel free to have a Working Committee of his own choice. He went to the extent of suggesting the dropping of Vallabhbhai Patel, Rajendra Prasad and others of the old guard, and assured him that he would personally ensure that none of them created any difficulties for him. Nehru did not accept this advice. He however wanted a

good number of prominent Socialists, including Jayaprakash Narayan, in the Working Committee. He spoke to them. Jayaprakash Narayan, who was the principal spokesman for the Socialists, did not believe in the British intention of quitting, and was most adamant that they were going to prepare the country for the final assault on British imperialism. The Socialists refused to join the Working Committee. This was the beginning of the long Socialist drift into the wilderness, owing primarily to a lack of a sense of realism and timing.

When the Constituent Assembly was formed towards the end of 1946, Nehru, as Congress President, was again anxious to bring a number of prominent Socialists into the assembly and eventually into government. But Jayaprakash Narayan and others still kept on harping on their pet theory of the final assault on British imperialism. One very valuable woman Socialist called Nehru the Indian Kerensky. That was at a time when she was having a brief honeymoon with the Communists. People who are incapable of original thinking import foreign situations into Indian conditions and make themselves ridiculous.

Nehru was perforce left with no choice but to carry on with such tools as were available to him. However, he continued to have a soft corner for Jayaprakash Narayan. Even though he did not say so, Nehru hoped that Jayaprakash Narayan, with his charisma, would eventually succeed him as Prime Minister. If Jayaprakash Narayan had exercised patience and had accepted Nehru's advice at an early stage, Nehru would have groomed him and left government in 1962.

Nehru made yet another attempt to bring in Jayaprakash Narayan and other Socialists after the death of Sardar Patel—this time into government. Before his meeting with Nehru, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya arranged for Jayaprakash Narayan to meet me at two after-dinner sessions at her residence. He had prepared fourteen points for discussion with Nehru. A copy of these was sent to me by Kamaladevi who was anxious that Jayaprakash Narayan should work with Nehru in government. When I saw the fourteen points, my reaction was, "The Almighty had only ten!" Most of them were copybook Marxist theory. I did not want an endless argument with him. I took up only one point—nationalization without compensation. I quoted to him the example of the Tata Iron and Steel Company. He immediately said, "They have

already given more than several times the face value of the shares by dividends." I asked him to find out from his friend Minoo Masani how much of the shares of Tata Iron were held by widows and small people and at what price they had acquired them over the years. I told him that at that time Tata Iron ordinary shares of Rs 75 each were being quoted in the market at well over Rs 300 per share. I asked him if he would penalize the widows and small people, who were numerous, by nationalizing the company without compensation. He had no answer. I attended the second meeting without enthusiasm. I told Kamaladevi that nothing concrete would come out of the meeting between Jayaprakash Narayan and Nehru. That is exactly what happened. I felt sad because I considered Jayaprakash Narayan as a fine person and a fit successor to Nehru in government and felt that the drop from Nehru would not be too steep as happened later in the case of Lal Bahadur.

From then on the Socialists, particularly Jayaprakash Narayan, drifted. He got attracted to Panchayati Raj in Nepal, basic democracy in Pakistan, the Bhoodan movement, partyless democracy, Sarvodaya and now total revolution about which few people know anything. I once tried to figure out the various *dans* (gifts)—Bhoodan, Gramdan, Sampatidan, Shramdan, Bhudhidan, Jivandan. I dislike all *dans*. I suppose it is all part of the trusteeship theory of Gandhiji's.

It was only after the effects of the partition wore off, and after the death of Vallabhbhai Patel, that Nehru could give any serious thought to socialism; and at the Avadi session of the Congress the resolution on a Socialistic Pattern of Society was moved by Maulana Azad and passed.

The Socialists, among whom there were some good and able people, some Don Quixotes and some scatterbrained clowns, needlessly found themselves in the wilderness primarily because of a series of wrong assessments of situations. This often reminded me of a statement by Bernard Shaw, "Socialism had a chance in Western Europe but for the Socialists."

In a mood of frustration Jayaprakash Narayan described Nehru as the greatest roadblock in the way of socialism. After the disappearance of the roadblock I have never heard anything from Jayaprakash Narayan on socialism.

For individual Socialists Nehru continued to have personal regard and consideration. As in the case of Acharya Kripalani once,

Nehru saw to it that the Congress did not put up a candidate against Asoka Mehta in a by-election to the Lok Sabha.

Once Pantji, who was then UP Chief Minister, telephoned me from Lucknow to find out if the PM would be good enough to visit Faizabad to campaign for a Congress candidate against Acharya Narendra Deva who was contesting a by-election to the UP Vidhan Sabha. I offered to put him on to the PM; but he did not want to speak to the PM directly. He wanted me to persuade the PM and ring him back the next evening. I mentioned the matter to the PM who got annoyed. He asked me to tell Pantji that it was not his practice to campaign in by-elections and added, "Also tell him that if I make an exception and visit Faizabad, it can only be to campaign in favour of Narendra Deva against that fool who is opposing him." I did not, of course, convey all this to Pantji, but only conveyed the PM's excuses. Pantji understood. Nehru had great regard and personal affection for Acharya Narendra Deva.

Recently, George Fernandes, a pseudo-Socialist, called Nehru a hypocrite. I doubt if Fernandes knows the meaning of the word he has used. He can only appear pitifully ridiculous in the eye of millions of people by making such statements about a man, the laces of whose shoes Fernandes is not worthy to unloosen. In the United States also one can come across bumptious twerps and scatterbrained clowns who call Abraham Lincoln a "lousy bastard."



### *39 More on Nehru*

In his early years in office, Nehru lacked knowledge of statecraft as practised in modern times. That is why he declared India's intention to hold a plebiscite in Kashmir. It served no purpose except to provide a handle to Pakistan. Then, like Woodrow Wilson, Nehru went about offering a referendum each in the French and Portuguese possessions in India. These were impulsive off the cuff pronouncements. There was no referendum in India for British withdrawal. Looking back, one is entitled to doubt if a referendum in Goa would have gone in favour of India.

Nehru was, to a large extent, responsible for the organization of Pradesh Congress Committees on a linguistic basis during the freedom struggle. For example, Madras Presidency had four Pradesh Congress Committees—Tamil Nadu Congress Committee, Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee, Kannada Pradesh Congress Committee, and Malayala Pradesh Congress Committee. To a considerable extent he was influenced in this by the Soviet system which even provided for secession of federating republics and autonomous regions. What Nehru forgot was that if any Soviet constituent unit tried to secede, it would have been crushed ruthlessly and masses of people transported to Siberia. We know what happened to the sovereign state of Czechoslovakia. When revolt occurred there, the Soviet Union propounded a new theory of "limited sovereignty" for "socialist countries" and intervened with massive force and suppressed the uprising mercilessly.

The States Reorganization Commission was the inevitable result of organizing linguistic Pradesh Congress Committees. When the report of the commission was received, Nehru was in favour of keeping Hyderabad as a separate entity mostly due to its composite culture. But he really had no choice in the matter. Nehru was in favour of splitting up UP and Bihar into smaller manageable

states; but Govind Ballabh Pant talked him out of it. Pant's only argument was, "How can the land of the Ganga and the Jamuna be cut up?"

After decisions were taken on the States Reorganization Commission recommendations, some people from Kerala approached Nehru saying that they did not want a separate state and would like it to be part of Tamil Nadu or Mysore (later to be known as Karnataka). Like a drowning man clutching at a straw, Nehru seriously made the proposal to Kamaraj who said the equivalent of *parkalam* (will see). He had no intention of seeing anything. Then Nehru spoke to Nijalingappa who promised to consult his colleagues. Actually he had no intention of consulting anyone. In fact he told me, "Why should we have a cancerous growth on our body?"

Whenever I went to London with the PM, I was invited to spend a weekend with Aneurin Bevan and his wife Jennie Lee at their farm in Chesham. On one occasion, sipping coffee and cognac after dinner, Bevan talked about Nehru for whom he had great admiration. He said that Nehru was too much of a refined man to be a Communist who is normally associated with coarseness and ruthlessness. He also said that Nehru was too much of a democrat to be a radical Socialist. Jennie Lee asked, "Then how will you describe Nehru?" Bevan replied, "Nehru is, without doubt, the last of the great British Liberals—and something more, a man of great compassion."

Nehru had no use for any form of organized religion which only repelled him. However, he was not irreligious. He used to carry in his satchel a copy of the *Light of Asia*, Bhagavad Gita, the four Gospels, Asoka's Edicts, and the UN Charter—all in tiny editions.

Before the Chinese invasion, when trouble loomed large on the horizon, Krishna Menon made an extraordinarily foolish statement, "We won't send a postcard to the Pentagon." But on 19 November 1962 Nehru sent a frantic telegraphic message to President Kennedy requesting air cover. The copy of this message was not filed in the PM's secretariat, or the Ministry of External Affairs. It is in the "file at home" papers which I started in the PM's house years ago. In response to Nehru's request, an American aircraft carrier was on its way to the Bay of Bengal. Lal Bahadur was not aware of Nehru's appeal when he, as the new PM, answered a question in parliament contradicting a statement in Sudhir Ghosh's book

*Gandhi's Emissary*. Sudhir Ghosh had written that Nehru had asked for an aircraft carrier and that it was positioned in the Bay of Bengal. Technically, Lal Bahadur was right; but in substance he was wrong.

Professor J. K. Galbraith, in his book *Ambassador's Journal* wrote on 5 January 1963:

M. J. Desai told me about Indian thinking on containment of the Chinese. They are willing to work with the United States, both politically and militarily, in the rest of Asia. This is *quid pro quo* for our assistance and quite a remarkable advance. Nehru, a week ago, hinted that their thoughts were moving in this direction.

M. J. Desai, who was Secretary-General of the Ministry of External Affairs, happened to meet me around that time and related to me what he had told Galbraith and added that he did so with the PM's full knowledge and approval. When I met the PM soon after that, I asked him about it and he confirmed what M. J. Desai had told me.

When Galbraith's book was published, the passage quoted above was hotly contested by some left wing Congressmen and others in parliament. Little did they know that Nehru never considered non-alignment as an eternal verity. He, in fact, did not like the word when it was first coined. He adopted it because he could not think of a better single word. Nonalignment was never a fetish with him as it is with some "progressive" politicians of little consequence.

On 13 November 1962 Ambassador Galbraith wrote to President Kennedy, "All his life Nehru has sought to avoid being dependent on the United States and the United Kingdom—most of his personal reluctance to ask (or thank) for aid has been based on this pride. Now nothing is so important to him, more personally than politically, than to maintain the semblance of this independence." Galbraith is substantially correct.

I could never reconcile myself to two very unwise statements of Nehru's. After the completion of his talks with the young President Kennedy in Washington in 1962, he was asked at a press conference how he got on with the President. The American pressmen were giving a chance to Nehru to say something gracious about their President who was an admirer of Nehru and had singled him out for

respectful reference in his inaugural address to the joint session of Congress. But quick came the most unfortunately worded reply, "I get on with all kinds of people!"

The other statement was in parliament after it was belatedly made known that the Chinese had completed the construction of the Aksai-Chin road across Ladakh in Indian territory. Nehru in his speech described the area as one "where not a blade of grass grows." No blade of grass grows on the vast stretches of the Arabian desert underneath which lies untold wealth in "black gold." We do not know yet what the bowels of the bleak and inhospitable regions of the Himalayas hold.

Nehru was never vindictive. He did not believe in hounding people. I can remember only two instances of his publicly castigating individual Congressmen. One was Gopichand Bhargava of Punjab whom he called "a man lacking in political integrity." The other was D. P. Mishra about whom he said at a public meeting in Jabalpur during the 1951-52 general elections, "I want to warn the people of Madhya Pradesh against the activities of Dwarka Prasad Mishra." Years later, Indira and Mishra became thick as thieves as mutual supporters when it suited them.

Nehru was conscious of his good looks, proud of his shapely head, his perfect nose and his "runner's feet." After a very tiring day, he would have his bath and come to dinner as a rejuvenated man. His powers of recuperation were immense.

## 40 *Govind Ballabh Pant*

A descendant of Maharashtrian Brahmans settled in Almora under the patronage of the Maharaja of Kumaon before the advent of the British, Pantji became a successful lawyer and a leading figure in the national movement. He became the first Chief Minister of UP and remained in that capacity until early 1955 when he came over to Delhi.

In September 1954, having seen Kailas Nath Katju as a supremely ineffective Home Minister, I suggested to the PM that he might persuade Pantji to come over to the centre. The PM was gruff with me and said, "I have asked him several times; he never said yes or no; I am not going to ask him again; you go and talk to him if you like." So I went to Lucknow early in October 1954. Before going I spoke to the PM who told me that if Pantji was prepared to come, he could have as his portfolio Finance, Defence or Home. From Lucknow Pantji took me to Naini Tal where we had some quiet talks. Ultimately he agreed to come. He said he was most reluctant to take up Finance because central finance was vastly different from state finance (he was also Finance Minister of UP) and at his age he would not like to study the intricacies of high finance. He was also not enthusiastic about Defence. He added that Home was his natural portfolio. He extracted a promise from me that I would help him until he found his feet in labyrinthine Delhi. Thus, on 10 January 1955, Pantji was sworn in as Union Home Minister. Katju went over to Defence.

When I returned from Naini Tal, Lal Bahadur came to see me. He was eager to know if I had succeeded where the PM had failed. He was not too happy when I told him that Pantji was coming and that he should be of considerable assistance to the PM. Lal Bahadur said, "You may be disappointed."

After Pantji's arrival in Delhi, he used to visit me almost every

evening for about six months in my study in the PM's house, on his way back from his evening drive, and talk with me for half an hour. I had to find a wide chair to be put in my study to accommodate Pantji's elephantine frame. I had already asked the Cabinet Secretary to see Pantji frequently and brief him generally.

One day Pantji told me that he was finding it difficult to travel in commercial planes because of his unwieldy bulk. In UP he had the use of a flying club plane; he did not like to travel by train. He asked me if anything could be done in this matter. I spoke to the PM and suggested that Maulana Azad and Pantji might also be put on the list of persons entitled to use IAF planes of the VIP squadron for official purposes. The PM agreed and appropriate instructions were issued to the Defence Ministry. I knew about Pantji's proverbial unpunctuality. When I conveyed to Pantji the news about the arrangements for him, I told him that the IAF people are sticklers for punctuality and that he would have to observe their timings strictly as, otherwise, he wouldn't find them at the airport. Pantji was not a great traveller. With the IAF he observed punctuality.

One evening Pantji was in a gay, jovial and mischievous mood. He spoke to me about the most important characteristic of a wise and civilized man. He said, "If a man finds his wife in bed with another man, he should disappear without making any sound; the next time he sees her, he should be very pleasant and convey his profoundest and undying love to her." I dismissed the subject by asking him, "How many people can do that?"

After Pantji became Home Minister, the PM directed successive Finance Ministers to discuss the budget personally with the former before coming to the PM. In the absence of the PM from India, matters relating to External Affairs were referred to Maulana Azad and those relating to economic and internal affairs to Pantji. Maulana Azad presided over Cabinet meetings. All important matters, however, were referred to the PM by code telegrams wherever he was. After the Maulana's death, it was all Pantji.

In 1956, after his resignation from the Cabinet on 24 July in protest against the exclusion of Bombay city from Maharashtra under the States Reorganization Bill, C. D. Deshmukh carried on an unseemly attack on Pantji, accusing him of corruption, and publicly stated that he was prepared to give evidence before a

judicial commission. Deshmukh also detailed his charges against Pantji. Nehru was upset and annoyed. He requested S. R. Das, retired Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of India, to go into the charges. In a personal talk with me Pantji said that he was deeply grieved that towards the fag end of his life of service and sacrifice for the nation, he should be subjected to such humiliation by a small fellow "who was no more than a toady of the British and, after independence a desiccated calculating machine." He added, "But for my admiration, affection and loyalty for Jawaharlalji, I would have resigned and gone away from Delhi." Justice S. K. Das, who went into the allegations against Pantji, completely exonerated him; and Deshmukh made a monkey of himself in the process. Both Deshmukh and Pantji shared the trait of vindictiveness. Pantji had the size, memory and vindictiveness of an elephant.

During Pantji's tenure as Home Minister, the Maharaja of Dholpur died without an heir. I suggested to the PM that the theory of lapse might be applied as was done in some cases during British times. The MP wrote to Pantji more than once on the subject. The Maharaja of Nabha, whose wife was the daughter of the departed ruler of Dholpur, appeared on the scene to press the claim of his second minor son to succeed to the Dholpur throne. The Maharaja of Nabha was seeing Pantji's son-in-law more frequently during this period than was good for the latter. Eventually Pantji persuaded himself to support the claim of the Nabha infant.

In view of the PM's letters on the subject, Pantji was hesitant. He spoke to me about the matter and put forth certain unconvincing and specious arguments in favour of the Nabha infant. He suggested that I might speak to the PM. I replied that in such a matter it was appropriate that he himself should talk to the PM. He was reluctant. I had no intention of pulling his chestnut out of the fire. Finding that I was reluctant, he waited for a couple of weeks and then saw the PM. Later, I was to discover that the PM had reluctantly acquiesced in Pantji's proposal. In the process Pantji's son-in-law earned a bad name, and tongues wagged against Pantji also.

Despite Lal Bahadur's prediction, Pantji continued to be a tower of strength to the PM until his death, which Nehru mourned

by not attending any formal social functions in London where he had gone rather belatedly to attend a meeting of the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference. Nehru had great affection, regard, and respect for Pantji—the Tiger of Kumaon.



## 41 T.T. Krishnamachari

After a stint in business as agent of Lever Brothers in the south, T. T. Krishnamachari came to the Constituent Assembly in December 1946. He had a patron in Delhi in N. Gopaldaswami Ayyangar for whom Nehru had great regard. Krishnamachari made a mark in the Constituent Assembly proper and the Constituent Assembly (Legislative).

On the eve of the formation of the dominion government on 15 August 1947, Nehru had TTK on the list for inclusion as a Cabinet Minister. But Sardar Patel had no use for TTK and objected to his inclusion. TTK however had the illusion that he was very much in Patel's good books. That illusion remained with him all through, and I did not wish to disabuse his mind. Sardar Patel insisted on the inclusion of Shyamaprasad Mookerjee in the Cabinet even though Gandhiji was opposed to it. Nehru relented because B. C. Roy also, for different local political reasons, pleaded for Mookerjee who became Minister for Industry and Civil Supplies. TTK was deeply disappointed because Gopaldaswami Ayyangar had given him hopes.

After the resignation of Shyamaprasad Mookerjee, TTK got his chance to enter the Cabinet. As Minister of Commerce and Industry TTK proved to be a signal success.

In the early fifties a person called Mulraj Kersondas of Bombay, who was known to Pandit Motilal Nehru and the PM, came to see me. He said that the chief of the Soviet trade representative in India had offered him technical assistance and financial collaboration to start a large steel plant in India. Mulraj Kersondas had met TTK, but the latter dismissed it without a thought. I told Mulraj that I was somewhat surprised at the Soviet offer of technical and financial collaboration with private industry in India. He said that he had seen Soviet Ambassador Menshikov that day and would ask

him to get into touch with me. I spoke to TTK the same day. He told me that the Russians did not know how to make steel. He reminded me of an old American woman who, when told that the Soviet Union had produced a car, asked, "Does it run?"

Menshikov rang me up and invited me to have a quiet lunch with him with no one else present. At the lunch he confirmed the offer of the Soviet trade representative. I said that the steel plant could be established in the public sector with Soviet assistance. I put him in touch with the Secretary of the Ministry of Production which was in charge of steel. This was the beginning of the Bhilai steel plant which was in turn the beginning of considerable industrial and trade relations with the Soviet Union and subsequently with East European countries. Menshikov kept in touch with me and we had many lunches together until he left India.

Even though steel was not one of his subjects, TTK negotiated with B. M. Birla for establishing a large steel plant in the private sector with American collaboration. B. M. Birla made all the necessary arrangements and TTK tried to push the proposal through the Planning Commission and the Cabinet. Gulzarilal Nanda was dead set against it and the PM lent his support to him. TTK was incensed and sent in his resignation on the eve of the PM's departure for London. He made it clear that he did not wish to continue in government unless steel was transferred to him. The resignation was never formally accepted. TTK went off to Madras in a huff saying that the ball was in the PM's court. This action of TTK's was both unwise and untimely.

On our return from London, I mentioned to the PM in the car, while going home from the office, the question of recalling TTK's whose resignation was not yet accepted. The PM lost his temper right royally. The car shook. He said, "I am not going to recall that insufferable fellow, that obnoxious merchant of discourtesy." I held my ground and said quietly, "You have lost many Cabinet Ministers from the south—Rajaji, Giri and Gopaldaswami Ayyangar, and you are now left with K. C. Reddy to represent the entire region south of the Vindhyas." He kept quiet. That evening, on my own, I sent a teleprinter message to Ram Nath Goenka in Madras, through the *Indian Express* office in Delhi, asking him to go and see his friend TTK and tell him on my behalf that he should come back to Delhi unconditionally and that he should not cause embarrassment to the PM by sticking to conditions. I added,

“I saw no insuperable difficulty in having steel as part of his diet eventually.” I placed before the PM a copy of my teleprinter message. At that time I was working on a paper for the reorganization of some economic ministries.

Wiser counsels prevailed and TTK returned to Delhi and resumed his work in the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

In a reorganization of government machinery, the new Ministry of Steel came into being on 15 June 1955 and TTK was asked to take charge of it in addition to his existing portfolio.

Soon after the resignation of C. D. Deshmukh as Finance Minister, TTK took over the Finance Ministry on 1 September 1956.

TTK was a highly temperamental person with a very bad tongue. At least on two occasions I saved him from the wrath of two prominent MPs for whom he used foul language.

When he took over as Finance Minister, TTK brought in H. M. Patel as the Principal Finance Secretary. TTK told me that he would give a great deal of responsibility to Patel and in fact treat him as a Minister of State. I told him, “Fine; but Patel is an over energetic person who can prove to be too much of a handful.” TTK also described B. K. Nehru, who was then in the Finance Ministry, as the most brilliant civil servant in India. I asked him how he could possibly say that without meeting all the civil servants in India. He kept quite. Within a year TTK told me, B. K. Nehru is a nitwit.” I simply could not understand how the most brilliant man could suddenly turn out to be a nitwit!

It was TTK’s practice to walk into my office in Parliament House frequently and spend an hour with me discussing everything except the budget.

I shall skip subsequent events which led to TTK’s resignation from Nehru’s Cabinet.

TTK got elected to the Lok Sabha in 1962 unopposed. Everyone knew that this was prearranged with the Swatantra Party opponent. TTK was back in the Cabinet when the new government was formed. In the Lal Bahadur Cabinet in 1964 TTK again became Finance Minister. But there were plenty of people to level charges against him. He told Lal Bahadur that he would resign unless he made a statement in parliament clearing him. Lal Bahadur said he could not do that unless a Supreme Court judge privately inquired into the charges as was done in the case of K. D. Malaviya.

Thereupon, TTK resigned and went home to Madras never to return. He kept up a sporadic correspondence with me. Unlike Krishna Menon, TTK was a grateful man.

All those who levelled charges against TTK were to learn subsequently that he died a poor man. As H. G. Wells said about Pericles, "Religious intolerance and moral accusations are the weapons of the envious against those in public positions." I retain the most pleasant memories of my relationship with this controversial and difficult person.

In his last days, TTK told several people, including journalists, that Nehru had thought of him as his successor. Nothing is further from the truth.

## 42 Kamaraj

Beautifully black as ebony, with lips like those of an anteater, Kamaraj always reminded me of *Homo Erectus*, the earliest generally accepted representative of the genus man, which was widespread in Asia, Africa and Europe 500,000 years ago. An anthropologist seeing Kamaraj for the first time might have had second thoughts about the place of origin of man and might have concluded that man originated in India and not in Africa. An American, who had a wry sense of humour, once remarked that Kamaraj's mother must have been an inkpot.

A member of the Nadar community who were toddy-tappers like the Eazhavas of Kerala, Kamaraj became a protege of the late S. Satyamurti, to whom he remained loyal, and entered the national movement as a Congress volunteer. With little formal education, Kamaraj could speak only Tamil. This remained a handicap throughout his life. He managed to learn enough English to understand a conversation in that language. He refused to learn Hindi. Privately he remained an anti-Brahman in spite of his loyalty to Satyamurti. In this and in his opposition to Hindi, he was as strong as any DMK leader in Tamil Nadu. His anti-Brahmanism, however, was confined within the borders of Tamil Nadu.

By dint of hard work, total dedication to the cause and the help of Satyamurti, Kamaraj soon rose in the Congress hierarchy and became President of the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee. He was a strong opponent of Rajaji and in this he did not hesitate to defy even Gandhiji. For a long time Kamaraj remained aloof from the corridors of power in Tamil Nadu. He preferred to pull strings from behind the scenes.

Kamaraj, who remained a bachelor, led a simple life which never changed with acceptance of office or when he became the

powerful Congress President and king-maker after Nehru's time. But he had a benefactor in a Tamil Christian who had extensive business interests in Kerala. From this man Kamaraj took judicious financial assistance for himself, his mother and his dependent sister. Eventually Kamaraj rewarded his benefactor by getting him elected to parliament. I knew the man well.

In the fifties, Kamaraj was persuaded to accept office as Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu. He was already a member of the Congress Working Committee. During his tenure as Chief Minister he never charged government the travelling and other expenses when he came primarily to attend Congress Working Committee meetings in Delhi even though he attended to a great deal of work for the Government of Tamil Nadu while in Delhi. He was perhaps the only Chief Minister to be so meticulous in this matter.

Soon after the Chinese invasion of India, Kamaraj expressed to the PM his desire to give up as Chief Minister and devote all his time for organizational work. He knew that the DMK was gaining considerable ground in Tamil Nadu. Nehru, by that time, was an ill man. Indira and C. Subramaniam took up the thread where Kamaraj left off and the Kamaraj Plan was hatched. Nehru gave in and accepted it. Kamaraj and a number of politically important people, and some not so important, resigned from government. In the chapter "Lal Bahadur" I have referred to the circumstances under which both Morarji Desai and Lal Bahadur got out. It was clear to all but the credulous that the Kamaraj Plan was a plot primarily to get rid of some inconvenient people.

Soon Nehru got Kamaraj elected as the Congress President, in which capacity he functioned no more than as a Congress volunteer while Nehru was alive. Kamaraj had an awe of Nehru.

Kamaraj blossomed forth as a fixer and king-maker after Nehru's death. In the chapter "Lal Bahadur" I have referred to the circumstances under which Lal Bahadur became the PM and the part Kamaraj played in it.

After Lal Bahadur's death, Kamaraj and other bosses chose to support Indira against Morarji for the leadership of the Congress Party in parliament. The ostensible reason Kamaraj gave was, "She will attract votes like a magnet." The fact is that the bosses did not want a strong man. Radhakrishnan's comment to an Egyptian editor about Indira's election was, "We can see a beautiful

face every morning in the newspapers.” Radhakrishnan thought very poorly of Indira’s intellectual capacity and general competence. He told me so. He also told me that one of the things he regretted most in his life was his recommendation made during Nehru’s lifetime to send her as a delegate to UNESCO and to get her elected to its governing body. He said that Indira proved to be an utter flop in Paris.

When the Indian rupee was devalued in a drastic manner under the Indira regime, the media blared out the advantages of devaluation and that it would have no effect on domestic prices. Kamaraj was very upset at the devaluation. The next morning he found that the price of brinjals had gone up. To everyone who saw him those days he was full of brinjals. About this time Kamaraj happened to see me in a friend’s house. He spoke to me bitterly against Indira. He related to me what Indira had said about him to someone whose word he would not question. She said, “Who wants to talk to Kamaraj? He is such a bore.” I told him that she was the type that would kick the ladder by which she climbed. He nodded agreement. Then he came out with devaluation and brinjals, and commented in Tamil, “*chinna pennikku moolai illai*,” meaning the little girl has no brains. I said, “My dear fellow, you have discovered it too late. She has no understanding of economic affairs. Arithmetic had always been one of her weak points. I do not think even now she can add two and two and make four. She does not know the difference between an acre and a hectare. Why do you blame her? You have to blame yourself.” Kamaraj kept quiet.

And then came the 1967 general elections. Kamaraj’s illusion that Indira would be a magnet to attract votes proved to be a mirage. Congress lost in many states and in parliament also the party position became precarious. The Kamaraj Plan lay shattered and exposed. Tamil Nadu was lost to the Congress. Kamaraj himself got defeated in the election to the legislative assembly by an unknown student. The once powerful Congress President limped back to Delhi. He was a doubly defeated man, helpless to direct the course of events. He did not want Indira as the Prime Minister any more. In the interest of the battered party he also did not want a contest for leadership. Indira’s position was also not strong in the party. Kamaraj ultimately persuaded Morarji Desai not to contest. He told Morarji, “You go in; otherwise she will make a further mess of things.” He extracted an agreement from Indira to

designate Morarji as Deputy PM—an honorific without power.

Kamaraj was hurt by the editorial of a prominent scribe in Delhi who wrote, “Hand Over and Go.”

Later Kamaraj got himself elected to the Lok Sabha in a by-election. Subsequently he was succeeded as Congress President by Nijalingappa who looked like a bullfrog and was very much of an indecisive man.

Kamaraj lived to receive further insults from the “*chinna pennu*” (little girl) whom he had built up, and died a disillusioned, broken and unhappy man.



## 43 Lal Bahadur

*Humility is a good thing, but overhumility is near to crookedness; silence is a virtue, but undue silence bespeaks a deceitful mind.—Chinese Proverb*

Lal Bahadur had plenty of reasons to be humble; but he need not have shown overhumility. In his early days he was a Congress volunteer hanging around Anand Bhawan in Allahabad. He was a shrewd dwarf of a man who never offended anyone. Once an elderly Congress woman told me, "Whenever I see little Lal Bahadur, I feel like placing him on my lap and feeding him with some milk."

He started his official career as a Parliamentary Secretary in the first UP government under Govind Ballabh Pant. Later Pantji promoted him to the Cabinet and give him the innocuous Police portfolio. Lal Bahadur generally kept away from groups in the Congress.

Early in September 1951, when Nehru took over as Congress President, consequent on the resignation of Purushottamdas Tandon, and the AICC was in the doldrums with feverish preparations being made to gear up the organization for the impending general elections, I suggested to Nehru to have Lal Bahadur and U. S. Malliah as the General Secretaries at the AICC. He asked me to ring up Lal Bahadur in Lucknow and give him a hint and, in any event, ask him to come to Delhi at once after speaking to Pantji. Lal Bahadur came and took over as one of the General Secretaries. He was invited to stay in the PM's house. He stayed in the room opposite mine. During that period I had great sympathy for him, mostly because he worked long hours like me and took his meals at odd times. At that time he was afraid of that Amazon Mridula Sarabhai and asked for my protection in dealing with her. I asked

him, whenever he had trouble with her, to report to me and I assured him that I would put him right with the PM. I advised him to ignore her as much as possible.

I did not particularly like the way Lal Bahadur was dealing with the PM. He would try to find out what was likely to please the PM and act accordingly. Once I told him that he should change his approach and added, "You place facts before him and you will find that in ninety-nine per cent of the cases his reaction will be sound." He replied, "Mathai Sahib, I know you don't want anything from Panditji; you can even scold him; but I am a humble political worker and I cannot afford to adopt your approach." He continued to be a calculating man.

Nehru and Sri Prakasa stood for election in 1951-52 from adjoining constituencies in Allahabad district—Nehru from Phulpur and Sri Prakasa from the city proper. Lal Bahadur was put in charge of the election campaign in both. After the election Lal Bahadur joined the Union Cabinet as Minister of Railways and was soon elected to the Rajya Sabha in 1952.

Lal Bahadur's resignation from the Cabinet after the railway accident, when the second general election was round the corner, was not wholly free from political motives for the future. For many ordinary Congress MPs, Lal Bahadur had put on a halo.

In the second general election in 1956 Lal Bahadur got elected to the Lok Sabha and returned to the Cabinet, this time as Minister for Commerce and Industry. Both in the Railways and in his new ministry, Lal Bahadur's performance was less than average. He was a fence-sitter with a sterile mind. As regards Congress organizational matters, however, he was a firstclass man in secondclass politics. During those years, whenever I thought of Lal Bahadur, the story of a famous Chinese poet used to come to my mind. The poet was, thank heavens, one who loved the good things of life. One evening he was drunk and got into a tiny boat and rowed to the middle of the yellow river in bright moonlight. There he saw the reflection of the full moon in the water. Like all poets and a few other species "he was all imagination compact." He imagined and passionately believed that the reflection of the moon was the woman he had wanted all his life. He laid down the oar and bent down with outstretched hands to embrace the beloved woman. Alas, the boat capsized and he was drowned. Before his

death, this delightful man had left behind in writing a profound truth fit to be considered as one of the eternal verities, "Myself having been brilliant and clever and made a mess of my life in the conventional sense of the word, the one ambition left in me is that my only son and heir should grow up as a mediocre so that he will end up as an Ambassador and a Cabinet Minister." How true of our own ministers who "strut and fret their hour upon the stage" and torment people by speaking on every conceivable subject about which they know nothing!

In the execution of the controversial Kamaraj Plan Nehru did not want Lal Bahadur to go. This episode was related to me by Lal Bahadur himself. But a wise man, whose identity I do not wish to disclose now, told Nehru, who was an ill man then, that either Lal Bahadur and Morarji Desai should go out together or both should stay in the Cabinet. He added that if Morarji alone was sent out, it would be obvious to the public that it was an unprincipled Chanakyan plan for throwing out Morarji who, in the process, would only acquire sympathy and support. That is how Lal Bahadur got out. But after Nehru suffered a stroke in Bhubaneswar, he recalled Lal Bahadur as Minister without Portfolio for the ostensible purpose of assisting the PM. With a room in the External Affairs Ministry, Lal Bahadur spent the most frustrating time of his life till the death of Nehru. All important matters were taken to Nehru by the Cabinet Secretary and the senior Secretaries of the External Affairs Ministry while Indira would be hanging around. All that Lal Bahadur got was some reports and other reading material submitted to him by the Deputy Secretaries of the External Affairs Ministry. During this period Lal Bahadur complained to me bitterly about Indira. He also told me with a measure of sadness, "I miss you terribly. If you were with Panditji, things would have been different." Even in his precarious physical condition Nehru was not inclined to delegate. He ought to have told the Cabinet Secretary and the senior officials of the External Affairs Ministry to take up all matters with Lal Bahadur and put up to him only such matters as they or Lal Bahadur thought should finally be cleared by the PM. He did nothing of the kind because throughout his life he had, as is said in a Chinese proverb, "a secondrate man's belief that you must do everything yourself to have it well done."

Even before Nehru's death on 27 May 1964 the bosses of the

Congress, particularly Kamaraj, Atulya Ghosh, C. B. Gupta, and S. K. Patil, with Sanjeeva Reddy on the periphery, had decided upon Lal Bahadur to succeed Nehru as the PM. They did not want a strong man like Morarji Desai. In fact Nehru had given an indication of his preference by recalling Lal Bahadur to government after his stroke. Indira very much wanted Acting Prime Minister Gulzarilal Nanda to be confirmed as PM. Nobody that mattered would look at him, and Indira was a person of no particular consequence then.

So, little Lal Bahadur became the PM. The popular joke at that time was that India deserved a man as the PM and not a mouse. About ten days after Lal Bahadur took over as the PM, N.R. Pillai took me out to the cinema. The newsreel shown that day included the scene of Lal Bahadur receiving Anasthas Mikoyan, the Soviet Deputy PM. Lal Bahadur's puny figure, with his Jawahar jacket unbuttoned, doing *namaskar* with folded hands invited peels of derisive laughter from the audience. I felt sorry for Lal Bahadur for the terrific disadvantage he suffered from in succeeding Nehru because the drop from Nehru to him was so unbridgeably great. This reminded me that soon after Lord Addington succeeded Pitt as the Prime Minister of Great Britain, Castlereagh thundered in parliament, "Pitt is to Addington what London is to Paddington." Lord Addington did not last for long.

Two eventful things happened during Lal Bahadur's brief tenure as PM. The first was the Kutch incident. We lost some territory in the process. The second was the brief war between India and Pakistan. Under international pressure in which the Soviet Union was most actively involved, India agreed to a ceasefire when we had the upper hand.

During the war some scribes of the press extolled Lal Bahadur as "the man of steel," an epithet which caused me much amusement for I knew him over the years as no more than a man of cheese. He did not even know where our forces were deployed on the western front. Fortunately our Chiefs of Staff then, particularly General J. N. Chaudhuri and Air Chief Marshal Arjan Singh, were firstclass men. During that short war Lal Bahadur and his family never slept in their house. Radhakrishnan told me that they slept in a rathole—a sprawling underground cellar from the basement of Rashtrapati Bhawan, dug deep and far into the far-flung vegetable garden and the small woods beyond in Lord Linlithgow's

time during the second world war.. Radhakrishnan refused to go underground. He told me that he preferred to die with his fellow-men breathing fresh air.

At the Tashkent conference, called by Soviet Prime Minister Alexi Kosygin, Lal Bahadur succumbed to pressure and agreed to everything Kosygin demanded. From Tashkent Lal Bahadur rang up his staff in Delhi to find out the reaction in India. Normally he would have returned to Delhi to a hostile reception. But, like Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed after him, Lal Bahadur knew when to die. Death stills most controversies.

Two nights before Lal Bahadur's death in Tashkent, I had an unusual dream. I saw a dead Lal Bahadur being taken out of a plane at Palam airport. Early next morning I rang up my friend P. K. Panikkar who told me, "Your horoscope is such that the dream will come true." I said, "Damn my horoscope, I wish Carl Jung were accessible to me at this moment."

## *44 Two Weather-Beaten Ministers*

Both Jagjivan Ram and Swaran Singh became ministers primarily because they happened to belong to their respective communities and continued for long for the same reason.

### JAGJIVAN RAM

Nehru's original choice of a scheduled caste member for the interim government in 1946 was Muniswami Pillai from Madras, a state notorious for its barbarous practice of untouchability. Rajendra Prasad took the initiative in sponsoring Jagjivan Ram about whom he spoke to Vallabhbhai Patel and Gandhiji. Then they all pleaded for him with Nehru, and the latter fell in line. That is how Jagjivan Ram got in. Again, in 1952, Nehru did not want to include Jagjivan Ram in the Cabinet. He wanted to send him as a Governor. But Rajendra Prasad, who was then President, persuaded the PM to keep him on in the Cabinet. Jagjivan Ram possesses qualities of shrewdness and cunning and resembles Rafi Ahmed Kidwai in a certain type of efficiency and also luck.

A bulky file grew in the Home Ministry about Jagjivan Ram. This had some repercussions on his position later on. The only living person who has seen the file is Morarji Desai apart from myself.

Now Jagjivan Ram seems to have made himself indestructible; but he could have shown some courage by resigning from government when the emergency was imposed without the Cabinet's knowledge.

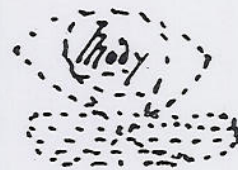
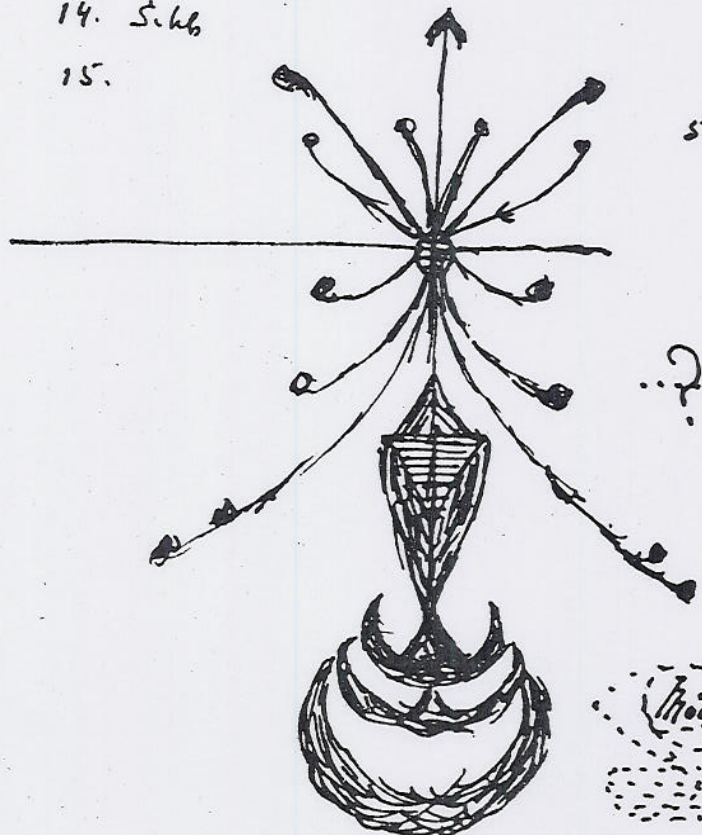
### SWARAN SINGH

But for the vulgarization of words in Hindi and Punjabi, his name

would have been Swarna Simham, meaning Golden Lion. As Nehru lost confidence in the political integrity of Baldev Singh, Swaran Singh was pulled out of the Punjab government in 1952 and inducted into the Union Government as a Cabinet Minister. No minister in the Union Government has held so many portfolios as Swaran Singh in his long innings. A decent man with average ability with the back-

- 4 In L.
- 1 Zohir Hussain
- 1 Stk. Chaw.
- 1 Mathar
- 1 Deshmukh
- 1 woman H.M.
- 1 Parsi ?
- 1 Raj Bah
- 12 J.N
- 13. Vallabhbhai
- 14. S. Ch
- 15.

- 9h ✓
- VIP ✓
- R.P. ✓
- Rajee ✓
- (P.O. Sopalswan (Pangan)
- Deshmukh ✓
- (M. Pillai) - Jagjivan Ram ✓
- 1 Liagat Ali ✓
- 2 Jinnah ✓
- 3. Ismail Khan ✓
- 4. Nazimuddin ✓
- 5. Z. Z. Zohir Hussain ✓
- Baldev Singh ✓
- Mathar ✓
- ~~Mathar~~
- ...?? Anthony ✓



Nehru's scriblings of names for his Cabinet

ground of a district court lawyer, he lacked imagination and boldness in the discharge of his functions. One action of his while he was Minister for Works, Mines and Power made me remember a saying, "God created only two kinds of people—good people and good-for-nothing people." On my recommendation the PM and Home Minister Pant took the initiative in persuading the Chairman of the Union Public Service Commission to induct K.K. Sahni, a senior executive of *Burmah-Shell*, into government. That was the beginning of an oil policy for the government. To begin with, Sahni was posted to the Planning Commission as he did not wish to accept the junior post of Petroleum Officer in the Ministry of Works, Mines and Power. Swaran Singh was asked to consult Sahni on all important matters concerning oil. When the Suez crisis arose the foreign oil companies demanded a hike in ocean freight for crude oil from the Gulf region. Without consulting Sahni, Swaran Singh meekly agreed to it. Neither Pakistan nor Ceylon committed that folly. India lost several crores of rupees on account of this. Swaran Singh was pulled up. After TTK took over as Finance Minister, Swaran Singh took over the new Ministry of Steel, Mines and Oil with K. D. Malaviya as his junior minister. Sahni was put in charge of oil. He held the grade of something between Joint Secretary and Additional Secretary. A series of measures which Sahni initiated resulted in the saving of crores of rupees for the government, mostly in foreign exchange; and the colossal exploitation by foreign oil companies was substantially curbed. I understand that Sahni is writing a book on the subject which will be published soon. Ultimately Sahni fell out with K. D. Malaviya and left government.

When a government has to start interminable negotiations with a foreign government on a ticklish problem which is neither easy of solution nor wished to be solved, the man to be looked for is Swaran Singh. With his infinite patience and inexhaustible capacity for endless talk, Swaran Singh was a marvellous success in the negotiations with Pakistan on the Kashmir question. His colourless personality fitted in with India's reduced importance in international affairs when he became Minister for External Affairs in the post-Nehru era. But he had one drawback—he had a woman's voice. This was not helpful to him, particularly at the UN General Assembly and other international forums.

It is in my personal knowledge that Swaran Singh was unhappy about the declaration of the emergency, the arrest of opposition



leaders, and the imposition of censorship. The Golden Lion, however, could not gather enough courage to resign. He tarried aimlessly and was eventually eased out; and the Prime Minister's spokesman, in a brief statement, wrongly accused him of a burning desire to give up office after a long innings and make place for a younger person. Swaran Singh accepted the compliment by remaining silent.

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From the photostat in this chapter, it will be clear to readers that Frank Anthony, the distinguished Anglo-Indian leader, was on Nehru's list for inclusion in the interim government. But due to Viceroy Lord Wavell's insistence on limiting the number to fourteen, Frank Anthony, unfortunately, could not be accommodated.

Nehru's choice of a Parsi for the interim government was H. P. Mody; but Vallabhbhai Patel pleaded for C. H. Bhabha and Nehru reluctantly agreed. Later H. P. Mody was sent as the Governor of UP.

## *45 Vallabhbhai Patel*

Thirteen years older than Nehru and only seven years younger than Gandhiji, Vallabhbhai Patel came from peasant stock. He possessed considerable organizing ability and an ample measure of ruthlessness. To be the boss of the party machine came naturally to him. That was the type of work Nehru shunned. He also left the field open for Patel to be the Chairman of the Congress Central Parliamentary Board until independence. This gave Patel a hold on the party machine.

I have referred to Vallabhbhai Patel in several other chapters. On 2 September 1946 he joined the interim government in charge of Home Affairs and Information and Broadcasting. From then on till his death on 15 December 1950 he functioned in a way which encouraged senior civil servants to be divided into two camps; in fact government was almost an illegitimate diarchy. Morarji Desai, who was an admirer of Vallabhbhai Patel, once told me, "The Sardar lacks the personal discipline required in a number two."

Power was Nehru's mistress and he did not like Patel to flirt with her; but he put up with it in the interest of a semblance of unity and harmony. Those were not normal times.

Before the formation of the dominion government on 15 August 1947, some interested people set a rumour afloat that Patel would not be included in the Cabinet. Nehru was annoyed. He not only included him in the Cabinet but also designated him as Deputy Prime Minister. The designation Deputy PM was only an honorific without any responsibility attached to it. But in the hands of Patel it was different.

A new Ministry of States was contemplated with the formation of the dominion government. It was Nehru's intention to be in charge of it. In fact he had selected H. V. R. Iengar to be the Secretary of the States Ministry. Lord Mountbatten thought that

Nehru would not be overindulgent to his friends—the princes. He believed that Nehru had his head in the clouds and Patel had his feet on the ground. He not only wanted Patel to be the Minister of States but also his own factotum, V.P. Menon, as the Secretary of the Ministry so that he himself could have a finger in the pie. So Mountbatten had a little talk with Patel to prepare him. It was Mountbatten's intention to talk Nehru out of the new ministry. The decision about the new ministry lay with the Prime Minister-designate and not with the Governor-General. But Nehru allowed himself to be talked out of the new ministry.

Patel did not want John Matthai as Finance Minister in the dominion government because he had agreed with Liaqat Ali Khan, and had later persuaded Nehru to agree to set up an Income Tax Investigation Commission. Patel was of the view that Liaqat Ali Khan's real motive was to ruin Hindu businessmen and industrialists. So he managed to persuade Nehru to bring in R.K. Shanmukham Chetty as the first Finance Minister of independent India. Patel knew that Chetty would be pliable and do his bidding. Chetty's appointment, with the Ottawa Pact background, came as a complete surprise to most people. At the appropriate time Patel persuaded Shanmukham Chetty to delete a few names of Gujarati businessmen and industrialists from the list of those who were to be proceeded against on the basis of the findings of the commission. When this became known, there was a furor in parliament and Patel found himself in a tight corner. He kept quiet and let down the man who did his bidding, and did not lose a wink of sleep in the process. Nehru asked for and received Chetty's resignation. He was succeeded by John Matthai as Finance Minister. Patel was then in no position to prevent John Matthai's appointment. Some time later John Matthai was to say about Chetty that he was more sinned against than sinning.

One of John Matthai's sons got into trouble in Allahabad where he was a student at the university. The boy ran his car over a pedestrian and killed him. He was arrested by the police. John Matthai, in his distress, hopefully rushed to the PM with an appeal to save the boy. I am afraid John Matthai came to the wrong person; Nehru would never interfere with the course of justice. The PM expressed his sympathy. John Matthai was deeply disappointed and hurt. This coloured his subsequent attitude to the PM. Having failed with the PM, John Matthai rushed to Patel

who was eager to put him under his personal obligation. Patel rang up Govind Ballabh Pant, UP Chief Minister, and asked him to release the boy at once and send him under police escort to Delhi. The next day the boy was delivered at Patel's house. He rang up John Matthai and asked him to come over. On his arrival, Patel told him, "I have a surprise for you," and had the boy brought to them. He told John Matthai to get the boy out of the country without any loss of time. So the boy was quietly sent abroad for further studies. No more was heard of the case against him. This is one example of Patel's style of administration.

Patel was not wholly free from communalism. He never trusted Maulana Azad whose opponent he remained. To Patel, Rafi Ahmed Kidwai was a detestable enemy. During partition and the mass migrations of people, Patel took delight in making fun of Nehru. He once told a group of Congress MPs that there was only one nationalist Muslim in India. They asked who he was and felt sure that Patel would name Rafi Ahmed Kidwai. To their surprise Patel answered, "Maulana Nehru."

One move of Patel remained an incomprehensible mystery to me. He invited Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar to Delhi and treated him as his house guest when the memory of the man declaring the independence of Travancore and naming a High Commissioner to Pakistan remained fresh in people's minds. Patel seriously recommended to Nehru that Sir CPR might be appointed as the Indian Ambassador to the United States to replace Asaf Ali. Nehru was taken aback and told Patel that he would not touch Sir CPR with a barge-pole. If the proposal was to show magnanimity to a traitor, the least one can say is that it was not only ill-timed but absurd.

While Nehru was away in the United States in 1948, on a goodwill tour, Patel took the opportunity to rush through two constitutional provisions in the Constituent Assembly—one giving constitutional guarantee to the princes about their privy purses and archaic privileges and immunities, and the other giving a constitutional guarantee to the ICS and other "Secretary of State Services" to protect their emoluments, privileges and service conditions. Patel allowed himself to be persuaded too much by civil servants like V. P. Menon and H. M. Patel. Nehru disapproved of these measures but chose to acquiesce in them. Patel had also persuaded the Congress Working Committee, in Nehru's absence, to pass a

resolution permitting RSS workers to join the Congress. Nehru was hopping mad about this. The first thing he did on return from the United States was to ask for a meeting of the Congress Working Committee at which the Patel-sponsored resolution on RSS workers joining the Congress was revoked.

Some time early in 1948, U. S. Malliah, MP, had told me about his confrontation with Vallabhbhai Patel before independence while he was Acting President of the Kannada Pradesh Congress Committee. With a list of Congress candidates for the assembly elections, he and his colleagues appeared before the Congress Parliamentary Board in Bombay presided over by Vallabhbhai Patel. Maulana Azad was also there. Malliah said his list was a unanimous one. Patel intervened to say, "I know what your unanimity is," and proceeded to demolish the list by suggesting a number of replacements. Turning to Patel, Malliah said, "I know the Parliamentary Board has the authority to make changes in the list. I withdraw my list. You select your own candidates, camp in the Kannada area and conduct the election campaign." Malliah left the meeting abruptly, followed by all his colleagues. Patel sent a couple of people to persuade Malliah to return to the meeting. Malliah refused and sent one of his colleagues instead. This was the first time that Patel experienced such defiance. Ultimately Malliah's list was approved without any change. Malliah had taken the view that he himself was not a candidate, he had no personal axe to grind, and, therefore, was not prepared to submit to dictation. He told me that the image of Patel as a strong man was a myth and that he was no more than a bully.

During the independence movement Sardar Patel, and Gandhiji to a certain extent, were opposed to Congressmen interfering in Indian states. In fact Patel wanted to befriend the princes. It was in the teeth of Patel's and Gandhiji's opposition that Nehru started the All-India States People's Conference. Movements against despotic rule and for representative governments were started and kept alive in the Indian states. The princes realized that their position was not secure without the support of their people. But for this, the integration of the Indian states would have run into difficulties. When Sir C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar declared the independence of Travancore and named his High Commissioner to Pakistan, he was physically attacked by the people and had to leave the state.

Patel gave V. P. Menon too much of a free hand to settle matters with the princes. This violated healthy norms of administration. Much too large privy purses and privileges were bestowed on the princes, sometimes even without Patel's knowledge. V. P. Menon was very much under the thumb of Mountbatten until his departure from India. Patel was later to confess to U. N. Dhebar that unduly large privy purses were sanctioned without his knowledge by V.P. Menon. Finance Minister John Matthai, who revelled in straining at a gnat, readily swallowed many a camel. No important decision of the States Ministry was placed before the PM or the Cabinet. Hailing Vallabhbhai Patel as the Bismarck of India and the Iron Man was a little too thick.

I might refer the readers to the chapter "Mahatma Gandhi" and Appendix 2 which is an unsigned note by Nehru circulated only to Gandhiji and Patel. In his own language Nehru has spelt out his differences with Patel in that note.

In the chapter "Nehru and the Services" I have referred to Girja Shankar Bajpai complaining to Patel that I exercised too much influence on Nehru and that I was a Socialist. To Patel, words like Socialist and Communist were like red rags before a bull. Until then I was, on the whole, in the good books of Patel even though I attached no importance to it. He once told Rajkumari Amrit Kaur that "among those close to Jawaharlal, Mathai is the only person who does not create trouble between us." But the word Socialist put him on his guard. He asked Intelligence Chief Sanjeevi to find out all about my political antecedents and my present contacts. He also asked PTI Chief K. S. Ramachandran in Delhi to find out as much as he could about me. Sanjeevi, who knew me well, came straight to me and told me privately what Patel had asked him to do. He said he was not going to make any inquiries and that, after a couple of weeks, he would send Patel a clean chit about me. I advised Sanjeevi not to do that but to carry out the directions of his minister faithfully. The same day Ramachandran also came to see me not only to warn me but also to comply with Patel's suggestion that he might frighten me by saying that he was making investigations about me. I asked Ramachandran to do me a favour by conveying the following message to Patel that evening at his usual daily meeting with him: "Who is Sardar Patel? I do not recognize him; but if the man with whom I have the honour to work, asks me to declare

my political faith, I shall say that I am not only a Socialist but a Communist." In fact I wrote out this message on a piece of paper and handed it over to Ramachandran so that he would make no mistake. Ramachandran dutifully showed the paper to Patel who promptly asked Sanjeevi to call off the investigation.

Before joining government, I did something which slightly annoyed Patel. After he arrested Ram Manohar Lohia in Delhi in the summer of 1947 I visited the latter in jail and gave him some mangoes. At that time I had a soft corner for Lohia, the Sancho Panza, who preached the weird theory of permanent Satyagraha and whom Patel described in parliament as the "permanent duragrahi." Nehru told me that Patel did make a mild complaint against me for visiting Lohia and giving him mangoes. I said, "I am not in government; but if this sort of thing embarrasses you personally, I shall not repeat it."

In the second half of 1950 Patel sponsored Purushottamdas Tandon, a traditionalist, obscurantist, and an ardent advocate of "shudh Hindi" and "Hindu culture" as the candidate for election as Congress President. Nehru disapproved of the proposal, but Patel stood firm. He was annoyed with Nehru for listening more to Rafi Ahmed Kidwai and others than to him in Congress affairs. Nehru did not wish to get entangled in a controversy by sponsoring a rival candidate. But Rafi Ahmed Kidwai, Mridula Sarabhai and some others persuaded Acharya J. B. Kripalani to contest. Nehru kept aloof because he hated the idea of being a partisan or group leader in the Congress. Patel got busy and constantly rang up all the Congress Chief Ministers seeking support for Tandon. The contest was a close one. Tandon polled 1,306 votes as against Kripalani's 1,092 votes—a difference of only 214. Thus Tandon got elected as Congress President on 2 September 1950. If Nehru had made his preference known publicly, Tandon would have been badly defeated in spite of Patel. At the Nasik session of the Congress, Nehru took the offensive. He made some fighting speeches on fundamental questions. Patel came to Nasik but did not attend the session. He stayed quietly in Birla House there. Patel was then not only an ill man but averse to any open conflict with Nehru. All the resolutions sponsored by Tandon and his supporters were voted down by large margins. I have never forgotten two Hindi words uttered by Tandon repeatedly at the session after the

voting on each resolution, "*Samshodan girgaya.*" Nobody was left in doubt as to who was the leader.

Vallabhbhai Patel died in Bombay on 15 December 1950. Did Patel seriously entertain the idea of ousting Nehru at any time in the post-partition period? My answer is no. Patel never forgot that Nehru was Gandhiji's declared heir. In fact he told several people in private, "I cannot forget that Jawaharlal is Bapu's chosen man." Also Patel fully realized that Nehru, not he, had the mass following. It was this conviction that prompted him, after a great deal of agonizing struggle with himself, to support the Nehru-Liaquat Pact on the East-West Bengal crisis—a pact which he personally abhorred. And he showed exemplary statesmanship as well as basic loyalty by going to Calcutta to make a public speech in support of the pact. Nehru greatly appreciated it.

Nehru resigned from Tandon's Working Committee on 10 August 1951. Maulana Azad followed suit the next day. Tandon made a dignified parting statement in which he said that Nehru was the symbol of the nation and resigned from the Congress presidency. Nehru was unanimously elected Congress President on 9 September 1951.



## 46 Indira

*When a hen crows, it heralds the end of an Empire—*  
Chinese Proverb

*When a hen crows, it heralds the end of the world—*  
Malayalam Proverb

The first impression Indira made on me thirty-one years ago was that of conceit. About young Disraeli, Queen Victoria said to her Prime Minister Lord Derby, "I have seen some of the notes of the new Chancellor of the Exchequer. He is conceited." Lord Derby made his submission, "Your Majesty, everyone has a right to be conceited until he is successful." With Indira, conceit swelled with success.

It was my practice to keep a spare copy of everything Nehru wrote and also copies of important telegrams and documents. With Nehru's informal permission, I let Indira read all these daily. This helped her to inform her mind and to talk somewhat sensibly to foreign dignitaries who sat on either side of her at social functions. She was extremely good at keeping secrets. I also informally placed at her disposal my personal staff—two of them who were in the same grade as the PM's PAs. This I did because, as the PM's hostess, she had a good deal of work to do. I myself had the use of the PM's PAs.

Indira hated small cars. When Hindustan Motors put their first cars on the road, Nehru asked me to get rid of his "chariot" which was a Buick and buy a Hindustan. I promptly carried out his wishes. It was only when she saw the small Hindustan that she realized that the Buick had gone. She was livid with rage and did not talk to me for a week.

Indira had a constant complaint against her father—that he always kept quiet at mealtimes, when they were alone, and never gave satisfactory answers to her questions. I advised her against raising heavy stuff at mealtimes but to tell him amusing stories and jokes and make him laugh. This she could never do. I also asked her to note down whatever she wanted to ask her father and that arrangements could easily be made for her to see him quietly twice a week. But she started passing on to me her questions saying, “Papu never fails to give you clear-cut answers.” Once she said to me, with a lump in her throat and moist eyes, that while she was in England and Europe as a young girl she was kept in want and that on a few occasions she had to starve. This was also an indirect complaint against her father.

One day, when she was surrounded by her two little kids, she looked at me and said, out of the blue, “I shall not hesitate to dash my children against a rock if it is in the interest of the country.” I got angry and told her, “You are too full of illusions. As a child your dolls fought against British soldiers and defeated them; as a little girl you were the Commander-in-Chief of the monkey brigade; as a teenage girl you were Joan of Arc; and now you are Lady Macbeth. The interest of the country will be better served if you can catch field rats and dash them against rocks.” Then I walked out.

Indira’s taste in art bordered on the grotesque. When Jacqueline Kennedy came to stay in Nehru’s house, Indira wasted government money by having a wooden carving made to be placed at the fireplace in the bedroom. It was a real horror. How Mrs Kennedy slept in that room without getting nightmares was a wonder. But Indira was very pleased with that horror. Verily Nikita Khrushchev uttered the truth when he said “Modern art is the work of a donkey’s tail.”

It was on the recommendation of Lal Bahadur that Indira was taken into the Congress Working Committee by U. N. Dhebar. Nehru had nothing to do with it. Her election as interim Congress President early in 1959 at Hyderabad was also not on Nehru’s initiative. It was Kamaraj’s suggestion. Nehru was a silent witness. He neither encouraged it nor discouraged it. On his return from Hyderabad he told me so; but I have no doubt that he was pleased. The next morning I was looking at three photographs—of Motilal Nehru, Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira—placed in a row in the corridor leading from the PM’s study to his bedroom. After breakfast

the PM and Indira came as I was looking at the photographs. The PM asked me what I was looking at so attentively. I pointed out the three photographs and said, "Father, Son and Holy Ghost." He laughed and Indira was much amused.

Nehru spoke critically of Indira to me only twice. The first time was when Indira managed to delay for a long time the surrender, to government, of the expensive necklace presented to her by the King of Saudi Arabia. Nehru was annoyed. He told me, "Like most women, Indu has a highly developed sense of possessions." I told him, "It is the result of her having had no security right from childhood. I do not know what the future has in store for her; but insecurity will follow her like a shadow all her life and her actions will largely be governed by it." He listened attentively with a measure of sadness. He loved his daughter dearly. Much later, while Indira was the PM, a question on the necklace, with insinuations, was raised in parliament by Ram Manohar Lohia. It was answered by Morarji Desai who was Finance Minister and Deputy Prime Minister. He said that the necklace was kept by Nehru in his custody in a safe. This was totally incorrect. Nehru never kept a safe. His office in the PM's house had no safe; it had only a small Godrej cashbox in which a necklace could not be accommodated. There was only one safe in the PM's house. It was a Chub safe which I had put in Indira's spare bathroom long before, at her request, to keep her jewellery and such other valuables as she possessed. Both the keys of the safe were with her.

The second time that Nehru showed annoyance towards his daughter was after Indira made an unwise statement in Hong Kong, on her way to Tokyo, to fly over the North Pole to the United States on a paid lecture tour for which she had collected many ghost-written speeches. If I remember correctly it was in 1963. Nehru was not well then, and yet she went. Soon after she left, Nehru's condition worsened. I had to go to the PM's house to take charge of the situation. I rang up Dr B. C. Roy who came the next day. He organized the course of treatment with the help of government doctors in New Delhi. Once, while the PM and I were alone in his room during that period, he told me with a measure of irritation, about Indira's statement in Hong Kong that her father had asked her to join his Cabinet as Minister for External Affairs. He added that he did not make any such offer, but a vague thought did occur to him in view of his indisposition and he did some loud thinking in

her presence for a fleeting moment. He further said that, on mature consideration, he was unlikely to take her into his Cabinet.

On Nehru's death Indira flagrantly flouted the wishes expressed in his will that he did not want any religious ceremonies after his death.

It can be said, without fear of any contradiction, that the Congress Parliamentary Party voted for Indira to succeed Lal Bahadur mainly for one reason—that she happened to be Nehru's daughter. It was indeed a tribute to Nehru. A day before the voting, a minister visited me and said that he had advised Morarji Desai not to contest and to give way to youth. He added, "You know her better than any person; what is your advice?" I replied, "Go and vote according to your assessment or conscience and see me afterwards." Straight from the Central Hall of parliament, immediately after the voting, the minister came to me and asked, "What is your opinion?" I said I had no doubt that she would be elected because Nehru's image loomed large in the background." He asked, "What is your assessment of her, what sort of a PM will she be?" I said, "She will ruin this country. How long she will take to achieve this, I do not know. There is nothing of the father in her except the noncommunal outlook. She will play a different type of politics—the politics of manoeuvre, manipulation and deception. She will have no loyalty to anyone except to herself. Not being overburdened with scruples, she can do almost anything. She will administer unpleasant surprises to Kamaraj and others who supported her. And, what is worse, there is an element of crankiness in her nature. She will surpass Gladstone in axing people. Perhaps your turn will come soon. She will swear by socialism, in which she does not personally believe and the meaning of which she does not understand. When you find her swearing by socialism, remember a saying of Samuel Johnson's, "When a butcher says his heart bleeds for his country, rest assured that he is swearing by a sinecure." In any serious crisis in which her personal interests are gravely threatened, she will not have the capacity to take a bold decision by herself. She will fall into the hands of others; if they are not honest and fearless people, then she has had it. It is enough for the present." He was flabbergasted and said that he would write down all I had said and keep it for future reference.

Indira's tenure as PM was marked by some very unhealthy trends: (i) Her absurd advocacy of committed civil servants,

committed judiciary, and committed press; (ii) the sickeningly vulgar solidarity rallies artificially arranged in Delhi on the slightest provocation at public expense by Delhi state and the adjoining states of Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and UP. A tribe of paid rallymen were as readily available as instant coffee, and public transport was always there; (iii) reducing the Council of Ministers to a bunch of nonentities; (iv) befriending and making use of the Communist Party of India and ex-Communists while she was shaky and discarding them when she felt politically safe; (v) making ghost-writers out of all except chaprasis.

The classic example of a committed civil servant was P.N. Haksar, who had some experience only in the Foreign Service in rather minor positions, and who did not possess a modicum of discipline and detachment so essential in a civil servant. He was allowed to play party politics for which he was singularly unfit.

Even after a lapse of time I cannot understand how Cabinet Ministers and prominent functionaries, with considerable experience in public life, reduced themselves to jesters, buffoons, sycophants and abject flatterers. One made an ass of himself by saying, "Indira is India, and India is Indira," and felt satisfied with his profundity, while two so-called political heavyweights sat on either side and applauded. The same joker hailed Sanjay as Shankaracharya and Vivekananda! Another made a monkey of himself by saying, "What happens to Indira, happens to India; and what happens to India, happens to Indira"—profound secondary school stuff! And the opposition Jana Sangh leader, Atal Behari Vajpayee, was swept off his feet at the fall of Bangladesh and blurted out, "She is Durga!" The campaign in Bangladesh was a very ordinary military operation, and it needed no Durga or Bhadra Kali. No Prime Minister had any option but to act the way she did in Bangladesh. I do hope, as External Affairs Minister, Vajpayee will not allow himself to become so easily unbalanced. UP Chief Minister Tiwari committed blasphemy by hailing Sanjay as Lord Krishna!

After the Allahabad judgment, S. Mulgaokar and B. G. Verghese wrote powerful editorials in their respective newspapers under the identical title "Time to Go." Tables were turned on them and they were made to realize that it was their time to go. So much for the freedom of the press!

To David Frost, the journalist and broadcaster, Indira said recently, "I felt utter, utter relief when ousted from power.... When I

got the news of my personal defeat, I had a surge of relief as if a tremendous rock had been lifted from my shoulders." I don't think she herself believes in the statement she made to Frost. She could have had the "utter, utter relief" by casting off the "tremendous rock" herself, when the Allahabad High Court judgment came, by resigning; thereby she would not only have salvaged herself but enhanced her personal image. I believe it was the gravest mistake she committed; all the rest flowed from it; unscrupulous, crude and small men and an immature boy took charge of her and from then on she was no more than a miserable automaton piling folly upon folly and strewing faggots around her.

Vision, imagination, boldness, efficiency are the essential qualities which a worthwhile minister possesses; but above all is the capacity to resign. If the members of the Union Council of Ministers showed courage and resigned on the question of declaring Emergency without Cabinet approval, as laid down in the Constitution, Emergency would have ended within a few days. These men failed at the moment of the nation's supreme crisis. They and the vociferous supporters of the Emergency in the Congress Parliamentary Party are a bunch of cowards who have forfeited their right to hold public positions. Until they disappear, there is no hope for the Congress which has a glorious record spread over almost a century. Like the fabulous Phoenix, the Congress should burn itself so that a new generation can rise rejuvenated from its ashes and give the country a new leadership and new hope.

The day after Emergency was declared on 25 June 1975, my minister friend rang up and started talking. I said, "I don't talk about serious matters over the telephone, and hung up. He came to see me later in the day with his diary and read out what I had told him about ten years ago. He said "She has ruined the country all right." I replied, "This is only the beginning; she is on the high road to ruining her party and herself beyond repair. She will not last long. What I am worried about is what forces will emerge in place of the Congress."

With all kinds of inquiry commissions functioning, I do not wish to write more about Indira at present. In a companion volume to this book, I shall write more.

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After writing what has appeared above, I happened to glance through the book, *All the Prime Minister's Men* by Janardan Thakur, a newspaper reporter. This man, who looks like a giant sausage, barged in to see me. I find that his book bristles with untruths. He has exhibited considerable incapacity to sift fact from fiction and great capacity for inventing, twisting and making defamatory comments and observations. I imagine these are inevitable characteristics of "instant history" of which we have had a big crop in recent months. Obviously, Thakur's book was written in haste to make a quick buck. Here is an extract from the book:

But in those earlier days she could do little but stew with impotent rage, or take it out in dissipation. During the fifties, there were times when Nehru, a non-interfering man, got troubled over the goings-on in the house. Indira Gandhi would often return to the house late at night in 'quite a state' and though Nehru knew about it he did not know what he could do. He was a man who respected others' privacy. Nehru once gave some advice to a woman functionary of the house which showed how well he understood his daughter. 'About Indu', he advised the person, 'you must understand one thing—you will get by—be available, but don't go near her. Don't intrude'.

These are atrocious and malicious inventions. Indira was the opposite of a socialite. It was with reluctance that she went with her father for protocol functions. She never drank or smoked. She never went out alone at night. The story about Nehru giving some advice to a woman functionary is ridiculous nonsense. Nehru would never talk to any functionary about his daughter.

## 47 *Morarji Desai*

Long years ago, on a Sunday, I happened to be at Qutab Minar with a friend. He asked me about Morarji Desai. I pointed out to him the iron pillar nearby and said, "You put a Gandhi cap on top of that pillar, and you have Morarji Desai—a man straight in body and mind." Nehru once told me that the two straightest men he had come across in India were Purushottamdas Tandon and Morarji Desai.

I developed great personal regard for Morarji for his courageous stand in giving protection to Muslims in the undivided Bombay state during the dark days of partition. He was then Home Minister of the state and his chief, that good man, B. G. Kher, had given him a free hand. Morarji performed his difficult task with great personal conviction and exemplary competence. No other Congress leader functioning in the states, including G. B. Pant, was a patch on Morarji in this matter. This regard for him has persisted in me ever since. Nehru was greatly impressed by Morarji's performance.

When the news of Morarji's defeat in the assembly constituency during the first general elections in 1951-52 reached him, Nehru considered it a freak occurrence and at once stated publicly, "He is the victorious leader of a victorious party." Morarji succeeded B.G. Kher as Chief Minister of Bombay and later won a by-election.

Nehru brought Morarji to Delhi and he became a Union Cabinet Minister on 14 November 1956. Pantji was already the Home Minister in the Union Government. Within a few days of Morarji's entry into the Union Cabinet, U. S. Malliah, MP, who was Deputy Chief Whip of the Congress Party in parliament, came to see me and said that Morarji Desai would like to be listed as number three in the Cabinet, immediately after Pantji. I mentioned this to the PM who hesitated for a moment, but when I quoted the



example of Pantji, he agreed and I informed the Cabinet Secretary accordingly.

While he was Finance Minister, Morarji once told me that he was perturbed at the talk of abolishing the status of Bombay as a Union Territory and merging it with Maharashtra, and added that if it was done, he would resign from government and retire from public life. I smiled in disbelief and told him that he would not resign and the question of his retiring from public life would not arise. As most politicians, Morarji is not completely free from eating his words to add to his frugal diet.

Morarji has all the fads of Gandhiji, minus his greatness, plus ample obstinacy and no compassion.

In 1953, when I arrived in Bombay with the PM from London, I told Morarji that B. G. Kher was serving sherry and light wines to foreign guests at the High Commissioner's residence and that he had told me that in the unlikely event of his returning as Chief Minister in Bombay, he would substantially modify the prohibition policy. Morarji was surprised and annoyed and said that he would be writing to Kher.

The legendary Motilal Nehru gave up alcoholic drinks as part of Congress discipline. Later, when he fell ill, his doctors, including B. C. Roy, advised him to take drinks in moderate quantities. The old man refused. Roy then spoke to Gandhiji. The great man immediately advised Motilal Nehru to give up the abstinence. I doubt very much if Morarji would have been so flexible.

During the visit of British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan to Delhi, British High Commissioner Malcolm MacDonald gave a small dinner party at his residence. The chief guest was Nehru. Morarji was one of the invitees. I was also invited. I normally avoided diplomatic functions; but since I personally liked Malcolm MacDonald I decided to attend. At the party I discovered that everyone was holding a glass of fruit juice. I was told that Morarji had laid down the law that no alcoholic drinks should be served if he was to be present. I cannot think of anything more impertinent than this, especially because Morarji was not the chief guest and, according to international law, embassies and High Commissions are not Indian territory. The British greatly resented Morarji's condition, and they all had stiff drinks in the adjoining room before the dinner which was purposely fixed somewhat late.

Two incidents in parliament made Nehru doubt Morarji's

capacity to keep people together by showing some flexibility. One was in connection with the Gold Control Bill. There was a demand in Lok Sabha to invite the Attorney-General to the House to give an opinion on the legality of the measure. Morarji popped up and said that even if the whole House asked for it, he would not agree. Nehru had to overrule him; and the Attorney-General did appear in the House. The other incident was in the Rajya Sabha where Morarji mentioned Gandhiji's name in support of some measure. Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, who knew Gandhiji better than Morarji, stood up and said that if Gandhi were alive he would have disapproved of Morarji's measure. Morarji retorted in intemperate language and called the Rajkumari a Miss Mayo. Nehru was annoyed.

After Pantji's death Morarji was the obvious person to succeed him as Deputy Leader of the Congress Party in parliament. I was then not with Nehru officially. Nehru found that there was considerable opposition to Morarji among Congress MPs. A section of the party wanted to put up Jagjivan Ram to contest. Sensing the mood of the party, Nehru suggested changing of the Constitution of the Congress Party in parliament to have two Deputy Leaders, who were not ministers, to be elected—one each from both Houses.

During the Chinese invasion Nehru's mind was poisoned by some, chiefly Indira, against Morarji who was wrongly accused of intriguing against Nehru. Morarji is a man who would never stoop so low. He is courageous enough to come out into the open. I know for a fact that before the split in the Congress, when Indira's position was shaky, one politically important minister in Indira's Cabinet went to Morarji and offered his wholehearted help in ousting her. He told Morarji that it was of the utmost importance and urgency to get rid of Indira and went to the extent of saying that Morarji need not even take him into his Cabinet. Morarji was then the Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister. Morarji replied that so long as he was a member of Indira's Cabinet loyalty demanded that he should not lift a finger against her. He added that he could oppose her only after resigning from her Cabinet and that too openly. Morarji expressed his readiness to follow the latter course at the appropriate time. That Cabinet Minister continues to be a "big-wig" in what is left of the Congress today.

Recently, Morarji said, with a measure of satisfaction, that when Bulganin and Khrushchev visited Bombay, he had issued liquor

permits to them but that they did not use them and did not drink while in Bombay; further, he stated that they wished they could introduce prohibition in the Soviet Union. I never thought that Morarji could be so naive. Bulganin and Khrushchev did not, of course, go to the Matunga liquor shop with the permits. They must have thrown them away. Khrushchev was a heavy drinker. The Soviet party had brought with them vast quantities of Vodka as well as brandy, wines and champagne. These were carried wherever they went, including Bombay, and they drank everywhere, including Bombay. They also imbibed coconut juice, while in the south, one morning, for a change!

Morarji has considerable respect for vegetarians. One of the great qualities he discovered in Rukmini Arundale, whom he whimsically sponsored as a candidate for the office of President of India, is that she is a vegetarian. Actually neither she nor Morarji is a vegetarian. There is no such thing as vegetarianism. Milk, butter, ghee and curd are not vegetables; they are animal products. The late K.M. Munshi once told me that an unfertilized egg was a vegetable. His theory was that vegetarianism meant not taking life. I asked him if he had ever talked to Sir Jagadish Chandra Bose or to his collaborator Dr Boshi Sen about life and feelings in trees, plants, vegetables, fruits and nuts. He admitted his ignorance. I hope Morarji, in his relentless and heroic determination to be the perfect Adam, will not give up milk, butter, ghee, curd, vegetables, fruits and nuts. Otherwise, he will have to live on bolts!

I suppose Morarji knows that Lord Buddha, the divinely Compassionate One, was a nonvegetarian and he died of indigestion after eating putrid pork put in his begging bowl by a well-meaning man.

Several times in the past Morarji and I have discussed prohibition. I once asked him how he became a fanatical prohibitionist. Had there been any incident in his life which turned him that way? He said that there had been a case of a young man, in his home town, who forced his sister to have sex with him when he was drunk. I told him that the youthful Emperor Nero had sex with his beautiful, young and voluptuous mother Agripina when neither was drunk.

Now Morarji wants to impose total prohibition on the people of India within a minimum period of four years. He has asked the Chief Ministers to enact laws within a year. He does not give a

thought to the sum of Rs 4,500 million (which was the excise revenue from the sale of all types of alcoholic drinks in 1976-77) or more per year because it is "tainted" money. Neither does he give a thought to the enormous amount of untainted money which will be needed for country-wide enforcement of prohibition. Nor is he much concerned about the fate of the 500,000 people who are directly or indirectly dependent on the industry and the trade in alcoholic drinks for employment. I have wondered why Morarji does not consider the enormous excise revenue from cigarettes and other forms of tobacco as tainted money. Morarji will remain blind to the widespread abuses and the total moral degradation which total prohibition will bring, as he did in Bombay. Morarji has quoted the Constitution. Our lengthy written Constitution contains many irrelevant things. It narrowly escaped being further cluttered with a provision for "monkey-worship."

I wonder if Morarji has considered, among other things: (i) the possible reactions among the members of the defence services who are officially entitled to draw their liquor rations (mostly rum) even in a dry state. Does he want to torment the Jawans who stand sentinel in bleak and inhospitable regions of bitter cold in the Himalayas? Does Morarji know that into the battle of Berlin Marshal Zhukov threw his armies after making the men fully drunk with only four words on their lips, "Death to the Germans"? No army will fight fierce battles on coconut juice; (ii) foreign diplomatic and consular missions in India will remain as islands where prohibition cannot be enforced; (iii) certain tribal and coastal regions where the people are traditionally addicted to local brews as a part of their culture.

Morarji said recently that drinking is against our ancient culture. He has perhaps forgotten that *Soma* was a powerful drink of our ancients.

Morarji does not drink, does not smoke, does not eat meat, does not eat eggs, does not eat fish, does not take coffee, does not take tea, and stopped sex when he was twenty-seven—a formidable array of virtues this! His only positive attachment is politics which, in essence, is the pursuit of power. Had he eschewed politics also and gone for *vanaprastha* (jungle exile) in accordance with "our ancient culture," he would have had some chance of being hailed as a saint.

Jesus Christ drank wine, ate meat and fish, and even converted

water into wine at the marriage at Cana for other people. And he said, "That which goeth in defileth not a man, but that which cometh out—covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, pride." Atrocious things these!

No Prime Minister has a right to be a Don Quixote. Total prohibition will be a total failure leading to total degradation. No politician should thrust on administrators any policy which is not administratively feasible. Let him campaign for temperance in which I shall gladly join him.

Morarji will do well to read the following lines which were addressed to statesmen by Liddell Hart in his book *Deterrent or Defence*:

Keep strong if possible. In any case keep cool. Have unlimited patience. Never corner an opponent, and always assist him to save his face. Put yourself in his shoes so as to see things through his eyes. *Avoid self-righteousness like the devil—nothing is so self-blinding.*

I would like to request Morarji to read Norwegian playwright Henrik Johan Ibsen's great dramatic poem "Brand" written in 1866. Brand is a priest and an idealist with fierce earnestness and determination to do nothing wrong. He declares himself the champion not of things as they are, not of things as they can be made, but of things as they ought to be. Things as they ought to be mean for him things as ordered by men who conformed to his ideal of the perfect Adam who, again, is not man as he is or can be, but man conformed to all the ideals—man, as it is his duty to be. In insisting on this conformity, Brand spares neither himself nor anyone else. Life is nothing; the perfect Adam is everything. Brand, aspiring from height to height of devotion to his ideal, plunges from depth to depth of inhuman follies.

It is in "Brand" that Ibsen, one of the world's greatest dramatists of all time, definitely takes the field against idealism and, like another Luther, nails his thesis to the door of the Temple of Morality.

## 48 Epilogue

*A great man is one who has not lost the child's heart—*  
Mencius, the great Chinese philosopher and principal  
disciple of Confucius—372-379 B.C.

I have come to the end of my labours for the present. I shall write more about Nehru in a companion volume to this book. If, for any reason, I am not in a position to do so, I would like to record here my feelings towards him. While he was alive, they were "more than yesterday, less than tomorrow." With the passage of time and in the perspective of history, my admiration and affection for him have grown. From 1946 I have known him in all his moods better than any other person. It is said that no man is a hero to his valet. But to me he is and will be long as I am alive. No man in all recorded history was loved so much by so many for so long.

As in the case of Gandhiji, Nehru's finest hour was the partition and post-partition days. The secular character of the nation he had dreamt of was in dire peril. Alone in government, undeterred by the ridicule of some of his principal colleagues, Nehru waged a heroic battle against religious fanaticism and mob hysteria. Even Abraham Lincoln was at one time prepared to compromise on the question of slavery. But Nehru stood as firm as a rock for something basic he believed in. He risked his political future and his life by going against the current. With the sublime support of Gandhiji from outside, Nehru ultimately triumphed. A lesser person would have crumbled. It was Nehru's vision, courage, faith and his vast personal prestige which sustained him in those dark days. Seeing him use his fists against some hysterical refugees looting a Muslim shop in the Connaught Circus area reminded me of the righteous indignation of Christ in the temple.

On the Madras beach on 9 October 1952, Nehru made a speech in which he wrote his own epitaph: "If any people choose to think of me, I would like them to say that this man, with all his mind and heart loved India and the Indian people, and they were indulgent to him and gave him of their love most abundantly and extravagantly." The people of India will think of him as he said, despite the pitiful attempt of some puny ministers of the Janata Party to denigrate him. These little men will "strut and fret their hour upon the stage" and then be heard no more. But Nehru, with a heart as large as the universe and full of compassion, will be remembered as long as India lasts, as the liberator of his people, the founder of the republic, and the builder of the nation.

One of the quotations which Nehru liked most and knew by heart was from the book *How the Steel was Tempered* by the incomparable Ostrovsky:

Man's dearest possession is life, and since it is given to him to live but once, he must so live as not to be seared with the shame of a cowardly and trivial past, so live as not to be tortured for years without purpose that dying he can say: 'All my life and my strength were given to the first cause in the world—the liberation of mankind'.

I have a hunch that this quotation came to his mind in the morning of his day of death as a pleasant source of comfort. That is perhaps why he looked so serene, as the Buddha, after his death.

Truely, it can be said of this great and good man that "his life was a great epic written by the hand of Fate."

## 49 Postscript

### “WATER OF LIFE”

Prime Minister Morarji Desai has recently let loose the astounding disclosure that during the past five or six years he has been indulging in the nauseating practice of drinking a glass of his own urine every morning. He asserted “it is *very very good* and it is free.”

Medical men laugh at Morarji’s statement that in America doctors are using extracts from urine to treat certain heart conditions and are charging thousands of dollars. Long years ago medical scientists in the West used to extract a chemical substance from the urine of mares by a process of intensive refining. The urine of mares is rich in this chemical which could be put to some medicinal use. The practice was given up long ago as the chemical began to be produced synthetically.

Morarji has gone further and said, “Even in the Bible it says to drink from your own cistern. What is your own cistern? It is your own urine.” Morarji’s knowledge of the Bible seems to be as profound as that of pharmacopoeia! Throughout the history of the Hebrews, whether in their ancient homeland, or in their captivity in Babylon and Egypt, or during the forty years of wandering through the Sinai desert, or even in present-day Israel, water was and continues to be a great problem. Israel has been spending enormous amounts to convert seawater to potable water by an expensive process as is also now being done by some oil-rich Arab countries. To the Hebrews water became so much of an obsession as weather is to Englishmen. Both are understandable. The wandering Hebrews in the desert areas and elsewhere used to store water in cisterns (pitchers) as a precious commodity. “Drink from your own cistern” is almost a commandment to the Hebrews not to steal water from others.



When Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, a taller man than Morarji, left Bonn, after his visit to the Federal Republic of Germany, he turned to Ambassador A.C.N. Nambiar and said, "Red wine *very good*." And, of course, it was not free but expensive. Normal people will prefer to be in the Maulana's company.

- A Prime Minister has no right to make himself ridiculous and loathsome.

#### M.R. MASANI'S BOOK "ELISS WAS IT IN THAT DAWN"

Minoo Masani has stated that on the eve of the transfer of power, Gandhiji thought of Jayaprakash Narayan as the Congress President as a check on Nehru and Patel who were entering the government. I have never heard of this. I doubt if in 1947 Jayaprakash Narayan's position in the Congress was such as to enable him to stand up to the formidable combination of Nehru and Patel or to either of them. Masani has further asserted that Nehru did not respond to Gandhiji's proposal, that Nehru's suggestion was Acharya Narendra Deva whose name Sardar Patel vetoed, and that finally Babu Rajendra Prasad was nominated. The fact is that after 1941 Rajendra Prasad was never the Congress President. Nehru was succeeded as Congress President by Acharya Kripalani who was subsequently replaced by Pattabhi Sitaramayya.

I do not know where Masani got the story about the British Labour Government's opposition to Krishna Menon's appointment as India's High Commissioner to Britain. He says, "Sir Stafford Cripps sent a letter trying to explain to Nehru why this was a bad idea and saying that, as far as the Labour Party was concerned, Menon was a Communist who was unacceptable as High Commissioner." This is news to me. However, there was a private letter from Stafford Cripps, written in his own hand in his usual red ink, towards the end of the first half of 1947 advising Nehru to get Krishna Menon "out of the hole in a wall on the Strand," where the India League was located, and to put him to some effective work for the new government.

During the major part of the second world war, Krishna Menon was high in the favours of British Government leaders—both Labour and Conservative. They were impressed by a letter Krishna Menon wrote to Nehru advocating unconditional support to the British Government in India without seeking representation in it.

Nehru, however, ticked off Krishna Menon and told him that he was completely out of touch with political realities in India and that he should not talk to anyone in Britain along the lines he had advocated. These communications, which were copied by the Secret Service, have been published in the book *A Viceroy at Bay* written by Lord Linlithgow's son. The Labour Government was also impressed by the assistance Krishna Menon rendered to Lord Mountbatten in India in his negotiations with the Congress leaders, particularly Nehru. In the chapters on Krishna Menon in my book I have referred to the circumstances leading to Krishna Menon's appointment as India's High Commissioner to the United Kingdom.

### POLITICAL PROPRIETIES

Some time after the defeat of the Conservative Party at the general elections in Britain soon after the surrender of Nazi Germany in the second world war, Winston Churchill visited the United States where he made the "Iron Curtain" speech at Fulton. On his way back home he was asked by pressmen in New York what he thought of the Labour government and its policies in Britain. His reply was at once dignified and eminently appropriate. He firmly told his questioners that, as Leader of the Opposition, he had ample forums in his own country to make his views known about internal matters. He refused to say anything more.

Recently Foreign Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee bemoaned the fact that Indira had been indulging in the unbecoming habit of complaining to foreign newsmen thereby lowering the image of India abroad. What he stated is true. But Vajpayee himself had been speaking to foreign correspondents in New York in a manner unbecoming of the Foreign Minister of India. He had no business to tell foreign correspondents that Indira ought to have been tried by a special tribunal. On a matter like this, he should have opened his mouth only in India. Several ministers of the Janata Party in recent times have made extraordinarily untenable statements abroad which have been patently partisan and covered themselves with scorn. When ministers, opposition leaders and indeed any Indians of any standing go abroad in normal times, they should conduct themselves as representatives of a great country and not as representatives of a party, a faction, or a caucus.

## *Appendix I*

### *Will and Testament of Jawaharlal Nehru*

1. I, Jawaharlal Nehru, of Anand Bhawan, Allahabad, am desirous of making my Will and indicating in it how I wish my property and assets to be disposed of after my death. The circumstances of my life have been and are so uncertain that I do not know if there will be anything at all to dispose of it at the time of my death. The assets which I inherited from my father, and for which he had taken steps with loving foresight and care to protect for me, have been largely spent by me. The capital at my disposal has progressively diminished, in spite of my income from royalties, on books and other writings, which have been considerable. I have not had much of a property sense and the idea of adding to my possessions has almost seemed to me an addition to the burdens I had to carry. The kind of journey through life I had undertaken long ago required as few encumbrances as possible. Also, believing in my capacity to add to my income if I chose to do so, I was not interested in making financial provision for the future. For this reason also I did not at any time insure my life.

2. Because of this and other reasons, it is exceedingly difficult for me to make any detailed provision for the future. I did not think it even necessary to make any kind of a Will as I doubted that I would have anything to dispose of in this way. In the normal course, I thought, that my daughter Indira Priyadarshini Gandhi, would inherit such property or assets that I might leave, as she was my natural and obvious heir.

3. When I was in Ahmednagar Fort prison and had leisure to think about the future, it struck me that it would be desirable to make some kind of a Will. The news of the sudden death of my brother-in-law, Ranjit Sitaram Pandit came as a great shock to me and induced me to think again of making a Will. I could not take any formal steps in prison though in December 1943, while still in Ahmednagar, I made a draft of a Will and Testament.

4. I was released from prison in the summer of 1945 and since

then have had little leisure to think of personal matters. So, the draft has remained with me for over ten years now. These ten years have seen many changes in my life and the old draft is out of date. As a matter of fact, such assets as I possessed even ten years ago have largely vanished during this period. Since I became Prime Minister, I have been unable to add to my income by any fresh writing and I have had to draw repeatedly on what capital I possessed because my salary as a Prime Minister was not adequate for my needs, limited as they were. Nevertheless, I consider it necessary to make this Will now and so dispose of a matter which has been at the back of my mind for a number of years.

5. My daughter and only child, Indira Priyadarshini, married to Feroze Gandhi, is my sole heir, and I bequeath to her all my property, assets and belongings, subject to such provision as may be hereinafter provided for.

6. My property at present consists of my house, Anand Bhawan, in Allahabad, with the land and buildings attached to it, and the furniture, books and other appurtenants thereto. I have also books, papers and personal belongings at present in the Prime Minister's house, New Delhi. I own a few securities, investments and shares and some cash in current and fixed deposits accounts in banks, though most of these securities and investments have already been transferred in favour of my daughter or have been otherwise disposed of. I have an uncertain and varying income also from royalties on the old books I have written. All these assets, that is, the house, Anand Bhawan, with all that appertains to it, and all my securities, investments and shares, cash in current or fixed deposit accounts, wherever they might be, and income from royalties on books, and any other property or assets belonging to me not herein mentioned, will be inherited by, and will belong after my death to, my daughter, Indira Priyadarshini, and she shall have full authority over them and can deal with them in any manner she chooses.

7. In the event of my daughter, Indira Priyadarshini, predeceasing me, her two sons, my grandsons, Rajivratna Nehru Gandhi and Sanjay Nehru Gandhi, will be my heirs and all my property and assets will be inherited by them absolutely in equal shares, which they may hold jointly or otherwise, as they choose.

8. In the course of a life which has had its share of trial and difficulty, the love and tender care for me of both my sisters, Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit and Krishna Hutheesing, have been of the

greatest solace to me. I can give nothing to balance this except my own love and affection which they have in full measure.

9. Any of my father's or mother's personalia, still in my possession or in Anand Bhawan, will be given to my sisters for they will have a prior right to these than anyone else can have. They can share or divide these articles among themselves, as they choose.

10. I have, by the above mentioned clauses, bequeathed Anand Bhawan, and such other property as I might possess, absolutely to my daughter and her children, as the case may be and she or they will have full proprietary rights over it, including rights of alienation and disposition of every kind. This house, Anand Bhawan, has become for us and others a symbol of much that we value in life. It is far more than a structure of brick and concrete, more than a private possession. It is connected intimately with our national struggle for freedom, and within its walls great events have happened and great decisions have been reached. It is my wish, and I am sure it is my daughter's wish also, that whoever lives in Anand Bhawan must always remember this and must not do anything contrary to that tradition. This wish of mine, as well as other wishes to which I refer in subsequent clauses, are not intended to be in any way a restriction on the proprietary rights conferred upon my daughter.

11. I should like my daughter, her husband Feroze Gandhi and their children to make Anand Bhawan their home, and, if owing to any reasons, they do not find it possible to do so, to visit Anand Bhawan frequently.

12. Our house, Anand Bhawan, in Allahabad, should always be open to my sisters, their children, as well as my brother-in-law, Raja Hutheesing, and they should be made to feel that it continues to be their home where they are ever welcome. They can stay there whenever they like and for as long as they like. I should like them to pay periodic visits to the house and to keep fresh and strong the bonds that tie them to their old home.

13. Our house, Anand Bhawan, has drawn many people to it from all parts of the country during past years, when my father was alive and subsequently. More especially, poor folk, peasants, and others, from the surrounding districts and from more distant parts of India, have come there for advice and help or solace, in their life-long suffering. I hope the doors of Anand Bhawan will ever be open to these countrymen of ours and every courtesy will be shown to

them. It is a matter of deep regret to me that because of my duties and responsibilities as Prime Minister, I have been unable to visit our home, except rarely.

14. I should not like the house to be rented out to strangers. If my daughter or her children do not find it convenient to maintain Anand Bhawan as a family residence, they should use it or dedicate it for a public purpose. This may be in connection with the Kamala Nehru Memorial Hospital or the proposed Children's Home that is likely to be put up nearby or any like purpose.

15. I have collected a considerable number of papers and letters of national and historical interest. Many of these connected with various phases of our national struggle for freedom were unfortunately destroyed or mislaid during the long years when we were in prison. Still some remain. There are other papers and documents as well as letters relating to the subsequent period after I took office, which have also considerable historical value. All such important papers and documents and letters should be offered to the National Library or the National Archives.

16. I have from time to time given various articles, which had been presented to me, to public museums. I shall continue to do so. In case any remain, which are worthy of public display, these should be presented to the National Museum. Some of them may be kept in the Prime Minister's house which itself is a public building.

17. I have received so much love and affection from the Indian people that nothing that I can do can repay even a small fraction of it, and indeed there can be no repayment of so precious a thing as affection. Many have been admired, some have been revered, but the affection of all classes of the Indian people has come to me in such abundant measure that I have been overwhelmed by it. I can only express the hope that in the remaining years I may live, I shall not be unworthy of my people and their affection.

18. To my innumerable comrades and colleagues, I owe an even deeper debt of gratitude. We have been joint partners in great undertakings and have shared the triumphs and sorrows which inevitably accompany them.

19. Many of those who served my father or me faithfully and with affection have passed away. A few remain. They have been parts of our household and I should like them to be considered as such so long as they are alive. I cannot mention them all here, but I

should particularly like to mention Shiv Dutt Upadhyaya, M.O. Mathai and Harilal.

20. I wish to declare with all earnestness that I do not want any religious ceremonies performed for me after my death. I do not believe in any such ceremonies and to submit to them, even as a matter of form, would be hypocrisy and an attempt to delude ourselves and others.

21. When I die, I should like my body to be cremated. If I die in a foreign country, my body should be cremated there and my ashes sent to Allahabad. A small handful of these ashes should be thrown in the Ganga and the major portion of them disposed of in the manner indicated below. No part of these ashes should be retained or preserved.

22. My desire to have a handful of my ashes thrown in the Ganga at Allahabad has no religious significance, so far as I am concerned. I have no religious sentiment in the matter. I have been attached to the Ganga and the Jumna rivers in Allahabad ever since my childhood and, as I have grown older, this attachment has also grown. I have watched their varying moods as the seasons changed, and have often thought of the history and myth and tradition and song and story that have become attached to them through the long ages and become part of their flowing waters. The Ganga, especially, is the river of India, beloved of her people, round which are intertwined her racial memories, her hopes and fears, her songs of triumph, her victories and her defeats. She has been a symbol of India's age-long culture and civilization, ever-changing, ever-flowing, and yet ever the same Ganga. She reminds me of the snow-covered peaks and the deep valleys of the Himalayas, which I have loved so much, and of the rich and vast plains below, where my life and work have been cast. Smiling and dancing in the morning sunlight, and dark and gloomy and full of mystery as the evening shadows fall; a narrow, slow and graceful stream in winter, and a vast roaring thing during the monsoon, broad-bosomed almost as the sea, and with something of the sea's power to destroy, the Ganga has been to me a symbol and a memory of the past of India, running into the present, and flowing on to the great ocean of the future. And though I have discarded much of past tradition and custom, and am anxious that India should rid herself of all shackles that bind and constrain her and divide her people, and suppress vast numbers of them, and prevent the free development of

the body and the spirit; though I seek all this, yet I do not wish to cut myself off from that past completely. I am proud of that great inheritance that has been, and is, ours, and I am conscious that I too, like all of us, am a link in that unbroken chain which goes back to the dawn of history in the immemorial past of India. That chain I would not break, for I treasure it and seek inspiration from it. And, as witness of this desire of mine and as my last homage to India's cultural inheritance, I am making this request that a handful of my ashes be thrown into the Ganga at Allahabad to be carried to the great ocean that washes India's shores.

23. The major portion of my ashes should, however, be disposed of otherwise. I want these to be carried high up into the air in an aeroplane and scattered from that height over the fields where the peasants of India toil, so that they might mingle with the dust and soil of India and become an indistinguishable part of India.

I have written this Will and Testament in New Delhi on the twenty-first day of June in the year Nineteen Hundred and Fifty-four.

Sd—JAWAHARLAL NEHRU  
21 June 1954

Signed before me by the testator and I am signing and attesting the Will in his presence.  
21 June 1954

Sd—KAILAS NATH KATJU

Signed before me by the testator and I am signing and attesting the Will in his presence.  
21 June 1954

Sd—N.R. PILLAI

I have signed two identical copies of this Will—One is a duplicate of the other.

Sd—J. NEHRU  
21 June 1954



## *Appendix II*

*Note by Jawaharlal Nehru distributed only to Gandhiji and Sardar Patel*

The recent correspondence between Sardar Patel and me has raised important issues of vital consequence; and yet the origin of that correspondence related to a relatively minor matter.

2. It is true that there are only temperamental differences between Sardar and me but also a difference in approach in regard to economic and communal matters. These differences have persisted for a large number of years, ever since we worked together in the Congress. Nevertheless, in spite of these differences, there was obviously a very great deal in common in addition to mutual respect and affection and, broadly speaking, the same national political aim of freedom. Because of this we functioned together during all these years and did our utmost to adapt ourselves to each other. If the Congress came to a decision, we accepted it, though there might have been a difference in implementing it.

3. Our political aim having been more or less achieved, the other questions on which we have differed to some extent, come more and more to the forefront. At the same time crises face the country which make it incumbent on all of us not to stress the differences but rather to emphasize the points of agreement and to cooperate in the face of these crises. So far as the economic and communal matters are concerned, we are bound down by Congress policy and decisions, and both of us, as well as other Congressmen, must necessarily work in accordance with them. On the communal issue the Congress standpoint has been clarified recently. On the economic issue the broad lines of policy have been laid down and, no doubt, further details will soon follow. The Cabinet will have to consider these matters soon. We have delayed too long already in laying down an economic policy and this has led to differing interpretations and statements by Ministers.

4. We may therefore, for the moment, leave out of consideration these important matters and come down to the immediate issue.

This issue essentially relates to the functions of the Prime Minister. It is something much more than a personal issue and it should be considered, therefore, as a question of principle, whoever the Prime Minister might be.

5. As I conceive it, the Prime Minister's role is, and should be, an important role. He is not only a figurehead but a person who should be more responsible than anyone else for the general trend of policy and for the coordination of the work of various government departments. The final authority necessarily is the Cabinet itself. But in the type of democratic set-up we have adopted, the Prime Minister is supposed to play an outstanding role. This, I think, is important (again quite apart from personal factors) as otherwise there will be no cohesion in the Cabinet and the government and disruptive tendencies will be at work.

6. Speaking for myself, I have at present two functions to perform in government. As Minister for External Affairs, I function like any other Minister and my Ministry is like any other Ministry. As Prime Minister, however, I have a special function to perform which covers all the Ministries and Departments and indeed every aspect of governmental authority. This function cannot be easily defined and the proper discharge of it depends a great deal on the spirit of cooperation animating all the parties concerned. Inevitably in discharging this function of Prime Minister, I have to deal with every Ministry not as head of one particular Ministry, but as a coordinator and a kind of supervisor. Naturally this can only be done effectively with tact and goodwill and without in any way diminishing the prestige of other Ministers. Other Ministers must not normally be interfered with and should have freedom to carry out their work without unnecessary interference.

7. If this position is recognized, then no present difficulty arises, and if at any time a difficulty does arise, it can be resolved by personal contact and discussion between the parties concerned. Because of this I have endeavoured in almost every matter of importance to confer with Sardar Patel.

8. The immediate issue arose out of my sending Iengar [H.V.R. Iengar was Principal Private Secretary to the Prime Minister] to Ajmer. I think that my sending him was not only completely within my competence but also it was an eminently desirable thing to do in the circumstances and that undoubtedly it did some good. This opinion of mine has been strengthened by my visit

to Ajmer. Iengar had nothing to do with holding any kind of an inquiry or sitting in judgment in any way on the officials in Ajmer. He was sent as the eyes and ears of the PM and to convey the PM's regret for his having had to cancel his visit to Ajmer previously. In Ajmer and elsewhere we have to deal with psychological problems and mental states. The approach to the people direct is always important when dealing with such problems. The importance of Ajmer had induced me to pay a visit there even at inconvenience. I could not go then because of a death in the family. My not going was variously interpreted in Ajmer and gave rise to all manner of suspicions and rumours. Iengar's going helped to lessen these suspicions somewhat among the people by making them realise that the government was greatly interested in their peace and welfare. My subsequent visit, of course, did much more good. It did not, as it was not meant to, affect the position of the Chief Commissioner whom indeed I praised publicly for his ability and impartiality. But apart from these facts the question remains: is the PM entitled to take such a step and who is to be judge of this? If the PM cannot even take this step and is not himself to be the judge of what is proper and what is not in such matters, then he cannot function properly or fulfil his functions. Indeed he does not function at all as the PM should. The mere fact that he is PM presumably leads to the conclusion that he is capable of judging aright and carrying out the policy laid down. If he is not capable of this, then he should cease to be PM. Indeed this means abdication of his functions and he cannot in future function with any effectiveness. There will be no proper coordination of governmental authority and, in such circumstances, the administrative machinery weakens and there are rival pulls.

9. If this view is correct, then the PM should have full freedom to act when and how he chooses, though of course such action must not be an undue interference with local authorities who are immediately responsible. The PM obviously is as much interested as anyone else in having the loyalty and cooperation of the services.

10. In the event of the PM not functioning in this way, then he can hardly carry on as a mere figurehead and much harm may be done to the services as well as to the public at large by the enunciation of contradictory policies by Ministers.

11. This is the background. But whatever the theory may be, practical difficulties continually arise. Normally speaking, the best

way out of these difficulties would be for some rearrangement in the Cabinet to be made which would cast the responsibility on one person more than anyone else. In the present set-up this means that either I should go out or that Sardar Patel should go out. For my part I would greatly prefer my going out. Of course this going out of either of us need not and should not mean any kind of subsequent opposition. Whether we are in or out of government, we remain, I hope, not only loyal Congressmen but loyal colleagues, and we will still try to pull together in our respective spheres of activity.

12. Nevertheless there can be little doubt that if either of us goes out at the present juncture, it would create a sensation both nationally and internationally, and the consequences may not be good. At any time this position would have to be faced; but at the present juncture, with the Kashmir issue and the great problem of rehabilitation facing us, not to mention the States and the growth of communal organizations in India, any such parting of ways may well have very serious consequences affecting the good of India. None of us wants to do anything which may be at all injurious to the national good, even though our views of the national good may differ somewhat. After having given very serious thought to this matter during the last fortnight I have come to the conclusion that as far as possible we must avoid, at this particular juncture, any parting of ways in government. We are too much in a transitional stage and a serious shake-up of government may well lead to an upsetting of the applecart. I think that we should carry on for some months more till the Kashmir issue is more clarified and other problems have also been tackled to some extent. The way to do this must be the fullest consultation about every important matter. At the same time I do feel that the Prime Minister's function, as defined above, must be appreciated.

13. If, however, this is not considered possible, then the only alternative left is for either me or Sardar Patel to leave the Cabinet. As I have said above, I consider this an undesirable alternative in the present context, and I have come to this conclusion as objectively as possible. If someone has to leave, I repeat, I would prefer to leave.

14. Latterly there has been a growing tendency towards a lack of cohesion in the various Ministries and Departments of government. This has resulted in members of the services also being affected. This is unfortunate and, in any event, to be countered, for if

the Cabinet and government do not work jointly, all work must necessarily suffer and a psychology produced in the country which comes in the way of cooperative working.

15. Probably before very long we shall have to consider a refashioning of the governmental set-up in the sense of introducing Deputy Ministers, Parliamentary Secretaries, and the like. It may be desirable to put certain Departments in charge of Deputy Ministers, each group of such Deputy Ministers being under the supervision of a Minister. This would make the real Cabinet a somewhat smaller body. However, this can be seen to later. At the present moment the allocation of portfolios is not a very logical one and some are very heavy indeed.

16. The States Ministry is a new Ministry which has to deal with vital questions. If I may say so, it has dealt with these questions thus far with remarkable success and surmounted the many difficulties that are continually arising. I feel, however, that many decisions have been taken involving matters of principle without any reference to the Cabinet. For my part I agree with those decisions; but it seems to me a wrong procedure for these decisions to be taken without reference to the Cabinet or to the PM. Being a new Ministry, it functions naturally outside normal procedure. To some extent this is inevitable and quick decisions have to be taken. But an attempt should be made to bring this functioning within the terms of our ordinary procedure.

17. Before the Constituent Assembly meets, or some time during its next session, we have to come to some decision regarding our general economic policy. The problem of rehabilitation may well be tied up with this policy.

*New Delhi*

*6 January 1948*

### *Appendix III*

*Text of letter from Shri M.O. Mathai to the Prime Minister*

New Delhi  
January 12, 1959

My dear Panditji,

I have already placed before you clippings from certain Communist newspapers and from two other journals which normally specialise in sensationalism. In these press write-ups, which are couched in not very elegant language, there are references which are not very flattering to me. What has appeared in the Communist press is from a "News Release" by the so-called IPA (Indian Press Agency) which is a Communist organ.

You do not personally need explanations in regard to the allegations because you have been aware of the facts. Nevertheless, I consider it appropriate to state them in this letter.

Insofar as the Trust is concerned, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur has written to you. The Trust is named after my mother who died a few years ago. Rajkumari Amrit Kaur as well as my other personal friends had heard of my mother from me; and when Rajkumari suggested that the Trust might be named after my mother, I did not object. I shall confine myself to other specific personal attacks on me. I shall ignore flippant, silly and childish remarks as well as unworthy insinuations with the contempt they deserve.

When I joined you in Allahabad in January 1946, at a time when it was not monetarily profitable to do so, you were aware of my background. You were also generally aware of such personal assets as I possessed then—which enabled me to work in an honorary capacity indefinitely. You will also remember that I refused to work in Government when you joined the Interim Government on 2nd September 1946. When independence came on 15th August 1947 you asked me to work with you in Government also. I was not at all enthusiastic about it because I felt that temperamentally I was not suited for governmental work. Also, being a bachelor,

I had enough to live on and I was not in need of paid employment. Since you thought that my joining Government would facilitate your work, I agreed to do so without payment. But you did not, as a matter of principle, approve of my not taking a salary.

So, ever since then I have been a sort of *ad hoc* temporary Government employee much to my distaste. You will also remember that during these past several years I have requested you at least a dozen times to release me from governmental work. I have all along been staying in your house and my personal expenses have been extremely limited as I do not have to maintain a household establishment.

I have always held the view and continue to hold the view that what I do with my money is my own business so long as I pay the taxes imposed by Parliament. I am not answerable to anyone for it.

Yes, of course, I bought an orchard with a fully furnished house in Kulu Valley early in 1952 from two Scottish sisters at a price of Rs 120,000. Registration and other incidental expenses amounted to a little over Rs 5,000. All this money came from personal assets I possessed before I joined you.

Before I purchased the property in Kulu I informed you of my intention to do so both orally and in writing. I still have in my possession the detailed note I submitted to you then. After some time I found that it was difficult to manage the property efficiently unless I myself stayed on the spot—which was not possible. So I sold the property. It was bought by Morton and Company of Calcutta, a firm engaged in the manufacture of fruit preservatives and the like. The price I received was Rs 125,000. All that has accrued to me in this transaction was a loss of a few hundred rupees! I should like to publicly declare that when I am a free man it is still my intention to acquire a suitable place in the Himalayan region which has irresistible attraction for me.

The last allegation is that I have an Insurance Annuity Policy. If the Communist friends had taken the trouble of asking me I would have gladly told them that I have more than one—I have two in fact! The annual premia on these two Policies amount to Rs 18,290.62. I had informed you some time ago in writing about these Insurance Policies. For the benefit of our Communist friends I might state that my personal net income from my salary and investments, after payment of income-tax etc., is approximately

Rs 27,500 per year. These figures will speak for themselves. In fact I happen to have some small surplus savings every year. All these savings are invariably invested in Government in some form or other.

It is stated in the IPA News Release that my friendship with American circles is sometimes becoming far too conspicuous. This has amused me greatly. You are aware that I am not a social bird and I keep to my work. Americans, Russians and all others are my friends and none my enemy. I have no capacity to compete with Communist friends in extra-territorial loyalties. Mine are rooted deeply to the Indian soil.

I am inclined to believe that the scurrilous attack on me by Communist friends has a definite political motive. It seems to be clear that it is an indirect attack on you and the Government. I fear it is the beginning of an infantile political shift which so frequently takes place in the Communist Party. I am afraid some of our Congressmen fall victims to this nefarious game.

You have more than one person to defend periodically and sometimes perpetually. I have no claim or right to join that distinguished company. I wish to be free to defend myself. In my present position it is not possible for me to do so. Therefore I beg of you to allow me to terminate my association with Government. After all I joined you long before you had anything to do with Government; and perhaps I can still be of some little use to you outside of Government. In doing so I lose nothing but my chains; and this is a phrase the Communist friends will readily understand.

I seek permission to release this letter of mine to the press together with Rajkumari Amrit Kaur's letter to you. More than direct personal attacks it is the ugly rumours that I am concerned about. Let all our people know about it even though it is somewhat embarrassing to me to make public intimate personal details. A person like me, who has had the great honour and privilege of working closely with you during the most momentous period in the history of our Nation, should be prepared to stand in the Sun for public gaze; and I gladly and willingly submit myself to it. Thereafter I shall consider the question of taking such steps as are open to me against the newspapers which have published defamatory statements about me.

I very much wanted to deal with this matter earlier; but I considered it proper to await your return to Delhi from Nagpur before



taking any step.

Fortunately I still possess some strength to withstand attacks. But the ever-mounting tendency in our Parliament and our Press to attack public servants without caring to verify facts is having a devastatingly demoralising effect. Under such deplorable conditions very few self-respecting persons will care to enter Government service or public life.

I do hope you will comply with my request. I am deeply grateful to you for all the indulgence you have shown me for thirteen years.

My love to you as always wherever I happen to be.

Ever yours affectionately,  
SD—M.O. MATHAI

*Text of letter from Rajkumari Amrit Kaur addressed to the Prime Minister*

2 Willingdon Crescent,  
New Delhi,  
11th January, 1959

My dear Jawaharlal,

I have seen, with a measure of surprise, some newspaper items about the Chechamma Memorial Trust of which I am the Chairman. I should like to give you some background information about this Trust, which is a public charitable Trust registered under the Societies Registration Act.

A few years ago some personal friends, whom I have known for a large number of years, placed at my disposal certain sums of money (a little over Rs 6 lakhs) to be spent at my discretion for specific humanitarian objects. I put these funds in a separate bank account to begin with. Later I decided to create a Trust as I did not wish to continue holding the moneys. I, therefore, invited Shri M.O.Mathai and Miss Padmaja Naidu to join as Trustees. This was before Miss Padmaja Naidu became the Governor of West Bengal.

Before Shri M.O.Mathai consented to be a Trustee, I know he consulted the Comptroller and Auditor-General about the propriety

of his being a Trustee. He was assured that there was no impropriety in any Government functionary being a Trustee of a public charitable trust and that no Government permission was necessary for this. Nevertheless he took the additional precaution of obtaining written formal permission from the Ministry of Home Affairs to become a Trustee.

I myself have for some time been a Trustee of the Guru Nanak Engineering College and of the Gandhi Smarak Nidhi from its inception. Group Captain Leonard Cheshire has a Trust in India for his "homes" and I am a Trustee of that also.

I take full responsibility for naming the Trust. Chechamma stood in her life for what countless Indian women have stood for through out the ages—devoted mothers of the race. I felt it would be a good thing to have an unknown name as a symbol of womanhood of which I, as an Indian woman, am proud. Furthermore, it is the objects of the Trust that count and the moneys from the Trust have to be spent for such objects as are declared as charitable.

I give below the objects of the Trust:

- 1) Grant of scholarships to students who, in the opinion of the trustees, deserve such scholarships for general and specialised education, research and educational travels.
- 2) Grant of financial assistance to hospitals and other public institutions devoted to medical relief.
- 3) Grant of financial assistance to persons wholly devoted to voluntary social service.
- 4) Grant of financial assistance to institutions established for the purpose of advancing the welfare of women and children.
- 5) Grant of financial assistance for writing and publishing books of historical and educational value.

The Press write-ups give wildly exaggerated accounts of the corpus of the Trust. The total amount in the Trust, including the money spent on acquiring the house property, is only Rs 1,073, 683.31. Again it is stated that "Shri Shanti Prasad Jain and several Bombay businessmen" are among the donors. This is totally incorrect. I strongly repudiate the insinuation that Shri Haridas Mundhra may have contributed to the Trust. I should like to make it perfectly clear that I have accepted no contribution for the Trust

from any person whom I have not known personally for the last 25 years.

We have so far spent Rs 25,000. This was given to an educational institution in Northern India devoted to the training of village women for constructive work. This was done on my initiative.

The donation of the house property to the Trust was made through me by a friend who has been known to me for a large number of years. My agreement with the donor was that the Trust would reimburse the donor of the expenditure in connection with the transfer of the house property. This expenditure has amounted to approximately Rs 75,000.

It has, however, been pointed out to me that since the rent of the rather dilapidated house property is only Rs 189.06 per month, the acquisition of the house property has not been a sound proposition from the investment point of view because the bank interest on Rs 75,000 would be much more than the rent. I also found it difficult to get the present tenant, who is a hair-dresser, to vacate the house in the normal way. For these reasons, the Trust will be obliged to sell the house property at the best possible terms. It is, therefore, my intention to dispose of it.

The responsibility for executing the Gift Deed was entirely the donor's. The Trust is in no way responsible for it. However, I should like to point out that, according to Wealth Tax Act, a house property is to be valued at twenty times its annual rental. On this basis the value of the house property donated to the Trust comes to only Rs 45,374.40. Presumably the donor fixed the value of the House Property in the Gift Deed at Rs 50,000 on the basis mentioned above. Anyhow, the Trust cannot be held in any way responsible for it.

As Chairman of the Trust I take the fullest responsibility for the administration of its funds. No moneys of the Trust can be spent without my personal approval. Shri M.O.Mathai is *not* the Managing Trustee as has been stated in the press write-ups.

The accounts of the Trust are audited by a firm of Chartered Accountants on the approved list of Government.

I have been noticing, with sorrow, a gradual deterioration in our public life. People are attacked, charges are levelled and insinuations made without making the least effort to verify the facts.

In so far as certain personal attacks on Shri M.O.Mathai are concerned, he will no doubt deal with them.

You are free to make such use of this letter as you deem proper.

Yours ever,

Sd—AMRIT KAUR

*Prime Minister's Secretariat*  
New Delhi, January 15, 1959.

THE ABOVE IS NOT TO BE PUBLISHED OR BROADCAST  
BEFORE SATURDAY, JANUARY 17, 1959.

VRB/NLP/RAK

1000/15.1.59/15.15/228. PRM

## *Appendix IV*

*Letter No. 1046-PMH/59 dated May 6, 1959, from the  
Prime Minister to the Chairman, Rajya Sabha*

Dear Mr Chairman

As you are aware, various allegations were made against Shri M.O. Mathai in Parliament. On the 11th February I requested the Cabinet Secretary to examine these allegations and to find out if Shri M.O. Mathai had made any improper use of his official position during the period of his employment with Government. This enquiry was in the nature of an investigation for my own guidance. I stated however in Parliament that when I received the report of the Cabinet Secretary, I would send it to the Finance Minister and separately to the Comptroller and Auditor-General so that they may judge the financial propriety of any action that had been taken,

The Cabinet Secretary submitted his report to me on May 2, 1959. I sent copies of it to the Finance Minister and the Comptroller and Auditor-General. I attach their comments.

It is not usual for departmental enquiries to be given publicity. The present report was not even a departmental enquiry; it was in the nature of an investigation to establish the facts.

I had previously stated that I would either submit the Cabinet Secretary's report or my own report to you. I am therefore writing to you now on this subject and enclosing a note prepared by me based on the Cabinet Secretary's report. In this note, the Cabinet Secretary's comments and findings have been briefly given.

As a result of considering the report of the Cabinet Secretary as well as the comments of the Finance Minister and the Comptroller and Auditor-General, I am of opinion that during the period of his employment with Government, Shri Mathai has made no improper use of his official position.

Yours Sincerely,  
Sd—JAWAHARLAL NEHRU,

*Note by the Prime Minister in regard to certain allegations  
made against Shri M.O. Mathai*

The Cabinet Secretary was asked by me on the 11th February 1959 to examine the allegations against Shri M. O. Mathai of improper use of his official position during the period of his employment with the Government and submit a report. Some days later, on the 17th February, the Home Minister announced in the Rajya Sabha that anyone who had material information on this subject could send it to the Cabinet Secretary. No such information was sent to him, except a letter from a person in prison who made some general charges without supporting evidence, and an anonymous communication.

2. The Cabinet Secretary received various statements from Shri Mathai in regard to his finances. He also saw income-tax assessment figures and wealth tax returns. The pass-book from one bank and a statement of account from another bank were also consulted by the Cabinet Secretary. He found that these various statements and the information from the banks tallied.

3. The charge made against Shri Mathai was of improper use of his official position during the period of his employment with Government. Before this employment began, he had a considerable sum of money with him as a result of his service with the American Red Cross on the Assam-Burma border as well as by his obtaining some American surpluses. Shri Mathai came to me in Allahabad about a year before I entered Government. I had informed him then that I could not afford to pay him any suitable salary. He had told me in reply that he had earned a considerable sum during his service with the American Red Cross in the Assam-Burma border and that he could support himself without any difficulty for some years without any salary. So far as I can remember, he mentioned the sum of Rs two or three lakhs with him then. He served me therefore without any salary till some time after I had joined Government, when a salary was fixed for him which began with Rs 750 a month and later was fixed at Rs 1,500 a month. He was treated as a special officer and did not have a regular post which was an integral part of the Prime Minister's Secretariat. His appointment was an *ad hoc* and temporary one and he was not treated as a permanent Government servant.

4. The initial sums that he brought with him plus his salary and

the income from dividends and interest have been found by the Cabinet Secretary to be adequate for the various purchases or payments that he made subsequently and which are referred to in the statements and bank accounts. It was out of this that he sent remittances from time to time to his relatives.

5. The purchase of a property in the Kulu Valley was made for Rs 120,000 by a registered sale deed. He disposed of some of his shares and investments for this purpose. After some time, finding that he could not manage this Kulu property from Delhi, he sold it for approximately the same amount as the purchase price. He had mentioned this transaction to me both before the purchase and at the time of sale. The Cabinet Secretary finds that there is no evidence of improper use of his official position in this transaction.

6. In regard to the insurance policies that he had taken and the conversion of some of them into annuities, payment was made partly from the money with him and partly from his provident fund which he realised. According to the Cabinet Secretary, there is no evidence of any improper use of his official position in these transactions.

7. As regards the Trust called "The Chechchemma Memorial Trust" this was a public charitable trust formed in August 1956, the original trustees being Rajkumari Amrit Kaur and Shri M.O. Mathai. The objects of the Trust are: grant of financial assistance for the production of books of historical and educational value, grant of scholarships to students, grant of financial assistance to persons devoted to voluntary social service, to hospitals and other public institutions devoted to medical relief and institutions established for the purpose of advancing the welfare of women and children. Subsequently a third trustee was appointed, namely, Kumari Padmaja Naidu. There was no single Managing Trustee. Shri M. O. Mathai has stated and Rajkumari Amrit Kaur has confirmed that all the donations were collected by Rajkumari. Shri M. O. Mathai had nothing to do with approaching donors or collecting donations.

8. At the time of the formation of this Trust, Shri M. O. Mathai mentioned this matter to the Comptroller and Auditor-General of India and asked him about the propriety of his becoming a Trustee. He was told in reply that there was no objection to it. Shri Mathai however wrote formally to the Ministry of Home Affairs on this subject. The Home Secretary replied that there was no objection to

the proposed course. He had also mentioned this matter to me.

9. The cash donations received by this Trust amount to Rs 1,012,000. In addition, a house at 9 Tees January Marg was given to the Trust on the 3rd January 1958 by M/s Birla Cotton Spinning and Weaving Mills, Delhi. The Cabinet Secretary had this valued by the Superintending Surveyor who has reported that the total value of the property, both house and land, is about Rs 187,000. Shri B.M. Birla has stated that the gift was made at the request of Rajkumari Amrit Kaur for the purposes of the Trust.

10. Rajkumari Amrit Kaur stated that all the donations were collected by her on the understanding that they would be treated as anonymous donations. She was not prepared therefore to make public the names of the donors. As a matter of fact, she showed the names of the donors both to me and the Cabinet Secretary, but on the express understanding that they would not be made public. In this list there are twenty donations mentioned beginning from 14th October 1954 to the 17th December, 1958. More than half the money was collected by Rajkumari Amrit Kaur before the Trust was actually formed.

11. Only Rs 25,000 has been spent out of the corpus of the Trust money. The rest is intact, except for the payment of Rs 73,000 to the Land Development Officer, Delhi, in consideration of permission to transfer the lease-hold of the house in Tees January Marg. Further a sum of Rs 1,798.56 was paid to the Mills on account of stamp duty and registration charges which had been incurred by the donor. Apart from payments, the corpus of the Trust money is intact. This is supported by a statement from the bank. Rajkumari Amrit Kaur said that she did not wish to spend the money in dribbles but was aiming at collecting enough money so that the trust could function as a foundation for charitable purposes.

12. The Cabinet Secretary states that according to the facts placed before him, Shri Mathai did not abuse his official position in connection with the Trust.

13. As regards the charge that Shri Mathai had undeclared money in foreign banks, there appears to be no truth in it. It appears that some money was sent by the Prime Minister to Shri A.C.N. Nambiar, then Ambassador in Western Germany, for a particular purpose. Shri A.C.N. Nambiar having fallen ill later thought it desirable to place the amount in a joint account so as to avoid any difficulties arising later in regard to its withdrawal in the



event of his unexpected death. As the money had been sent to him through Shri M.O. Mathai, he had his name added and made this account a joint account. No cheque book was sent to Shri Mathai nor indeed did Shri Mathai deal with this account in any way. On enquiry it was found that there was a balance of Swiss Francs 948.50 in this account.

New Delhi  
May 6, 1959

Sd—JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

*Comments of Shri Morarji Desai, Minister of Finance, on the  
Cabinet Secretary's Report*

After having gone carefully through the report of the Cabinet Secretary on the allegations against Shri M. O. Mathai, I had a discussion with the former on the subject matter of the enquiry and the enquiry held by him and have come to the following conclusions.

The Kulu Orchards were purchased from some Scottish ladies in a proper manner and there cannot be any question of an improper dealing in this case. There was nothing wrong or improper in the sale of this property to a company which dealt in fruit canning as the sale price was not more than the price paid for the property. Shri Mathai had informed the Prime Minister before entering into both transactions.

I find nothing irregular in the insurance policies of Shri Mathai. There does not seem to be anything unaccounted for as regards the premia paid for the various policies. The payment made by Shri Mathai in this connection were from his salary income and the moneys possessed by him before he joined the Prime Minister in the beginning of 1946. The large policy for which a lump payment of Rs 48,000 was made was paid for out of provident fund receipt and sale of savings certificates.

The moneys sent by him to his brothers and sisters during the last 10 years amount to about Rs 125,000. These were sent by registered and insured postal parcels which were sent through the clerks in the office and there was no secrecy about these remittances.

The question which arises from these transactions is how Shri Mathai came into the possession of all these moneys, that is, whether the possession was legitimate or whether the moneys were

obtained in an illegitimate manner. The total amount of the following five items comes to Rs 575,000.

1) Living expenses at the estimated rate of Rs 250 p.m. for 13 years	Rs 39,000
2) Insurance premia paid	Rs 138,466
3) Money spent on acquiring existing assets	Rs 247,000
4) Remittances to brothers and sisters	Rs 125,000
5) Bank balance on 24/2/1959	Rs 25,781
Total	575,247

Shri Mathai's statement shows that he had Rs 390,000 out of which Rs 125,000 were set apart for his brothers and sisters, before he joined the Prime Minister early in 1946. His net income from salary and investments up to date amounts to Rs 231,074. The total of the two amounts comes to Rs 621,000. This will show that the original assests plus the income from salary and investments exceed the disbursements and the bank balance by Rs 45,753. The explanation, that this amount would represent personal expenditure other than living expenses as well as some remittances which would be in addition to Rs 125,000 mentioned earlier, appears quite reasonable.

The question that would arise would be whether the statement that Shri Mathai had with him Rs 390,000 including Rs 125,000 earmarked for his brothers and sisters before he joined the Prime Minister is acceptable. Shri Mathai was serving in the American Red Cross before he joined the Prime Minister. We have been told that Shri Mathai's work was very much appreciated by the Red Cross Authorities. It is stated that as a mark of their appreciation they gave him some part of the surplus stocks which they were disposing of at the conclusion of the war. Much of this surplus stock was destroyed, part of it was given to their Indian officials. I had heard of this method of disposal from different sources in 1946. There is, therefore, no reason to disbelieve Shri Mathai's statement in this matter, especially when it is remembered that Shri Mathai had told the Prime Minister, at the beginning of his service with him, that he had in his possession about rupees two to three lakhs. His income tax and wealth tax returns after 1947 are in order.

Shri Mathai has stated that he has no other properties or moneys and nobody has given any material to show that he has any other

assets. The explanation is, as I have said above, reasonable and there is no evidence whatsoever to the contrary. It would not, therefore, be right for anybody to say without any reasonable evidence that Shri Mathai obtained these assets by improper means or by abuse of his official position.

He had reported to the Prime Minister his assets before he joined him and also reported to him the transactions regarding the Kulu Orchards. If he did not report his insurance policies, he did not do so because he had no idea that he had to do so. Many highly placed Government officials have not reported their insurance policies as they did not think that the rules required such report. This has been clarified only recently. Moreover, Shri Mathai was a temporary Government servant and would have left Government service with the Prime Minister, that is, he would not be a permanent servant at any time. He was not in ordinary Government service. In any case, the point of substance is not reporting, but whether they were proper. I have already commented that the payments were fully explained.

The only question that remains to be dealt with is that of the Chechamma Trust. Shri Vishnu Sahay's inquiry has shown that there was nothing irregular in this Trust and that the moneys obtained were obtained through the efforts of Rajkumari Amrit Kaur. The correspondence between one of the donors and Rajkumariji supports this contention. Shri Mathai while writing to the Home Secretary in 1954 to find out if there was anything wrong in being a Trustee of this Trust had stated explicitly that he would not be collecting any funds for the Trust. The giving of Shri Mathai's mother's name by Rajkumariji to the Trust and Shri Mathai's agreeing to it may be called imprudent but cannot be called an abuse of official position or immoral in any sense.

The Home Minister had stated in the Rajya Sabha that anybody who has any information and evidence as regards any allegation against Shri Mathai should give it to Shri Vishnu Sahay. The fact that nobody has come forward with any reliable information or evidence is significant. In view of this and the facts given above as elicited in the enquiry by Shri Vishnu Sahay, it is obvious that Shri Mathai cannot be held guilty of any abuse of official position as alleged or of any illegitimate action.

*New Delhi*  
*6 May 1959*

MORARJI DESAI

*Comments of Comptroller and Auditor-General of India on the  
Cabinet Secretary's Report*

In his report to the Prime Minister, the Cabinet Secretary has examined the allegations that Shri M.O. Mathai has made improper use of his official position during his tenure as Special Assistant to the Prime Minister. After analysing all available material, the Cabinet Secretary has reached the conclusion that there is no evidence of the improper use of his official position by Shri M.O. Mathai. From a reading of the report, I see no reasons to disagree with this conclusion.

Sd—A.K. CHANDA  
6.5.1959

## *Appendix V*

### *Disposal of the Trust Funds*

Before her death in February 1964, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur disposed of the assets of the Trust. Apart from substantial grants to numerous educational, medical, and social service organizations and institutions, the principal beneficiaries have been:

- 1) The All India Institute of Medical Sciences
- 2) The Indian Council for Child Welfare
- 3) The Indian Red Cross Society
- 4) The Hind Kusht Nivaran Sangh
- 5) Edwina Mountbatten Memorial Fund
- 6) Motilal Nehru Centenary Fund
- 7) Tuberculosis Association of India
- 8) National YWCA
- 9) Lady Irwin College
- 10) Sarojini Naidu and Margaret Cousins Fund

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