

# Jawaharlal Nehru

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India's  
Independence  
and  
Social  
Revolution

**INDIA'S INDEPENDENCE AND  
SOCIAL REVOLUTION**

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# India's Independence and Social Revolution

**Jawaharlal Nehru**

*Md. Kamuruzaman*  
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**ALL INDIA CONGRESS COMMITTEE (I)**

FOREWORD

Jawaharlal Nehru had three great founts of strength, and three great causes to serve - India, the Indian people and the Indian National Congress. In his address to the Lucknow session he described how the Congress had grown from small beginnings into a powerful democratic organization, deeply rooted in the Indian soil and the Indian masses.

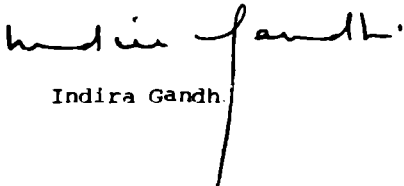
Jawaharlal Nehru's contribution towards this conversion and the evolution of the Congress tenets of democracy, secularism and socialism was significant. He worked indefatigably among peasants, artisans and the rural masses. Through his extraordinary hold on the minds of the young and his appeal for the working class, he lined the younger generation and the radicals behind Mahatma Gandhi's strategy of non-violent struggle. The building up of the central office of the Congress was again largely Jawaharlal Nehru's work. Further, it was he who made the rank and file of the Congress realize that "our struggle was but a part of a far wider struggle for freedom." The credit for India taking its stand with the progressive forces of the world goes to Nehru.

The Indian National Congress led the country to freedom. Its ideals shaped the spirit of the Constitution, guaranteeing personal freedom and social and economic justice. Through its advocacy of planning, the Congress helped the country to modernise its agriculture, industry and science and to move securely towards self-reliance. The Congress commitment to pluralism enabled the minorities to enjoy equality in all its forms and our regional cultures to flower. The exertions of the Congress enabled the Scheduled Castes and Tribes to break through the old barriers which blocked the road to opportunity. Again, due to the Congress insistence on independence in judgment and decision-making in foreign policy, India came to be considered a pillar of the Non-Aligned Movement and a consistent voice for peace.

Jawaharlal Nehru was first elected President of the Congress in 1929 and had the privilege of holding that high office thrice more. Earlier he had also twice been General Secretary of the Party. To him work and service were more important than prestige or position.

This collection of Jawaharlal Nehru's speeches as Congress President before and after Independence will give Congress members and a wider public a feel of his

aspirations for India and for humanity as a whole. It brings out his determination to make the Congress a historical instrument of change and social justice. He was proud of being a Congressman. He regarded anything that weakened the Congress as a disservice to the motherland. Let us follow his example and keep our feet firmly on the path made for us by Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and the other great leaders of our country.

  
Indira Gandh.

New Delhi  
May 17, 1984





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# I

## THE HISTORIC DECLARATION\*

*The historic declaration for complete independence and pledge for a social revolution was made by Jawaharlal Nehru as President of the Indian National Congress in 1929. He asked the nation to be prepared for the inevitable and long struggle that lay ahead.*

For four and forty years this National Congress has laboured for the freedom of India. During this period it has somewhat slowly, but surely, awakened national consciousness from its long stupor and built up the national movement. If, today we are gathered here at a crisis of our destiny, conscious of our strength as well as of our weakness, and looking with hope and apprehension to the future, it is well that we give first thought to those who have gone before us and who spent out their lives with little hope of reward, so that those that followed them may have the joy of achievement. Many of the giants of old are not with us and we of a later day, standing on an eminence of their creation, may often decry their efforts. That is the way of the world. But none of you can forget them or the great work they did in laying the foundations of a free India. And none of us can ever forget that glorious band of men and women who, without recking the consequences, have laid down their young lives or spent their bright youth in suffering and torment in utter protest against a foreign domination.

Many of their names even are not known to us. They laboured and suffered in silence without any expectation of public applause, and by their heart's blood they nursed the tender plant of India's freedom. While many of us temporised

\*The above is the text of the Presidential speech delivered at the 44th Session of the Indian National Congress held at the banks of the river Ravi in Lahore, December 29-31, 1929.

and compromised, they stood up and proclaimed a people's right to freedom and declared to the world that India, even in her degradation, had the spark of life in her, because she refused to submit to tyranny and serfdom. Brick by brick has our national movement been built up, and often on the prostrate bodies of her martyred sons has India advanced. The giants of old may not be with us, but the courage of old is with us still and India can yet produce martyrs like Jatindas and Wizaya.

This is the glorious heritage that we have inherited and you wish to put me in charge of it. I know well that I occupy this honoured place by chance more than by your deliberate design. Your desire was to choose another — one who towers above all others in this present-day world of ours — and there could have been no wiser choice. But fate and he conspired together and thrust me against your will and mine into this terrible seat of responsibility. Should I express my gratitude to you for having placed me in this dilemma? But I am grateful indeed for your confidence in one who strangely lacks it himself.

### **Changing World**

You will discuss many vital national problems that face us today and your decisions may change the course of Indian history. But you are not the only people that are faced with problems. The whole world today is one vast question mark and every country and every people is in the melting pot. The age of faith, with the comfort and stability it brings, is past, and there is questioning about everything, however permanent or sacred it might have appeared to our forefathers. Everywhere there is doubt and restlessness and the foundations of the State and Society are in process of transformation. Old established ideas of liberty, justice, property and even the family are being attacked and the outcome hangs in the balance. We appear to be in a dissolving period of history when the world is in labour and out of her travail will give birth to a new order.

### **India's Part**

No one can say what the future will bring, but we may assert with some confidence that Asia and even India, will play a determining part in future world policy. The brief day of European domination is already approaching its end. Europe has ceased to be the centre of activity and interest. The future lies with America and Asia. Owing to false and incomplete history many of us have been led to think that Europe has always dominated over the rest of the world, and Asia had always let the legions of the West thunder past and had plunged in thought again. We have forgotten that for millenia the legions of Asia overran Europe and modern Europe itself largely consists of the descendants of these invaders from Asia. We have forgotten that it was India that finally broke the military power of Alexander. Thought has undoubtedly been the glory of Asia and specially of India, but in the field of action the record of Asia has been equally great. But none of us desires that the legions of Asia or Europe should overrun the continents again. We have all had enough of them.

India today is a part of a world movement. Not only China, Turkey, Persia and Egypt but also Russia and the countries of the West are taking part in this movement, and India cannot isolate herself from it. We have our own problems — difficult and intricate — and we cannot run away from them and take shelter in the wider problems that affect the world. But if we ignore the world, we do so at our peril. Civilisation today, such as it is, is not the creation or monopoly of one people or nation. It is a composite fabric to which all countries have contributed and then have adapted to suit their particular needs. And if India has a message to give to the world as I hope she has, she has also to receive and learn much from the messages of other peoples.

### **Social Adjustment**

When everything is changing it is well to remember the long course of Indian history. Few things in history are more amazing than the wonderful stability of the social structure

in India which withstood the impact of numerous alien influences and thousands of years of change and conflict. It withstood them because it always sought to absorb them and tolerate them. Its aim was not to exterminate, but to establish an equilibrium between different cultures. Aryans and non-Aryans settled down together recognising each other's right to their culture, and outsiders who came, like the Parsis, found a welcome and a place in the social order. With the coming of the Muslims, the equilibrium was disturbed, but India sought to restore it, and largely succeeded. Unhappily for us before we could adjust our differences, the political structure broke down, the British came and we fell.

Great as was the success of India in evolving a stable society she failed and in a vital particular, and because she failed in this, she fell and remains fallen. No solution was found for the problem of equality. India deliberately ignored this and built up her social structure on inequality and we have the tragic consequences of this policy in the millions of our people who till yesterday were suppressed and had little opportunity for growth.

### **Religious Liberty**

And yet when Europe fought her wars of religion and Christians massacred each other in the name of their Saviour, India was tolerant, although alas, there is little of this toleration today. Having attained some measure of religious liberty, Europe sought after political liberty, and political and legal equality. Having attained these also, she finds that they mean very little without economic liberty and equality. And so today politics have ceased to have much meaning and the most vital question is that of social and economic equality.

India also will have to find a solution to this problem and until she does so her political and social structure cannot have stability. That solution need not necessarily follow the example of any other country. It must, if it has to endure, be based on the genius of her people and be an outcome of her thought and culture. And when it is found, the unhappy differences between various communities, which trouble us today and keep back our freedom, will automatically disappear.

Indeed, the real differences have already largely gone, but fear of each other and distrust and suspicion remain and sow seeds of discord. The problem is how to remove fear and suspicion and, being intangible, they are hard to get at. An earnest attempt was made to do so last year by the All-Parties' Committee and much progress was made towards the goal. But we must admit with sorrow that success has not wholly crowned its efforts. Many of our Muslim and Sikh friends have strenuously opposed the solutions suggested and passions have been roused over mathematical figures and percentages. Logic and cold reasons are poor weapons to fight fear and distrust. Only faith and generosity can overcome them. I can only hope that the leaders of various communities will have this faith and generosity in ample measure. What shall we gain for ourselves or for our community, if all of us are slaves in a slave country? And what can we lose if once we remove the shackles from India and can breathe the air of freedom again? Do we want outsiders who are not of us and who have kept us in bondage, to be the protectors of our little rights and privileges, when they deny us the very right to freedom? No majority can crush a determined minority and no minority can be protected by a little addition to its seats in a legislature. Let us remember that in the world today, almost everywhere a very small minority holds wealth and power and dominates over the great majority.

#### **Plea for Generosity**

I have no love for bigotry and dogmatism in religion and I am glad that they are weakening. Nor do I love communalism in any shape or form. I find it difficult to appreciate why political or economic rights should depend on the membership of a religious group or community. I can fully understand the right to freedom in a religion and the right to one's culture, and in India specially, which has always acknowledged and granted these rights, it should be no difficult matter to ensure their continuance. We have only to find out some way whereby we may root out the fear and distrust that darken our horizon today. The politics of a subject race are



largely based on fear and hatred and we have been too long under subjection to get rid of them easily.

I was born a Hindu but I do not know how far I am justified in calling myself one or in speaking on behalf of Hindus. But birth still counts in this country and by right of birth I shall venture to submit to the leaders of the Hindus that it should be their privilege to take the lead in generosity. Generosity is not only good morals, but is often good politics and sound expediency. And it is inconceivable to me that in a free India, the Hindus can ever be powerless. So far as I am concerned, I would gladly ask our Muslim and Sikh friends to take what they will without protest or argument from me. I know that the time is coming soon when these labels and appellations will have little meaning and when our struggle will be on an economic basis. *Meanwhile*, it matters little what our mutual arrangements are, provided only that we do not build up barriers which will come in the way of our future progress.

#### **Towards the Goal**

The time has indeed already come when the All Parties' Report has to be put aside and we march forward unfettered to our goal. You will remember that the resolution of the last Congress fixed a year of grace for the adoption of the All-Parties scheme. That year is nearly over and the natural issue of that decision is for this Congress to declare in favour of independence and devise sanctions to achieve it.

#### **Viceroy's Announcement**

Recently, there has been a seeming offer of peace. The Viceroy has stated on behalf of the British Government that the leaders of Indian opinion will be invited to confer with the Government on the subject of India's future constitution. The Viceroy meant well and his language was the language of peace. But even a Viceroy's goodwill and courteous phrases are poor substitutes for the hard facts that confront us. We have sufficient experience of the devious ways of British diplomacy to beware of it. The offer which the British

Government made was vague and there was no commitment or promise of performance. Only by the greatest stretch of imagination could it be interpreted as a possible response to the Calcutta resolution. Many leaders of various political parties met together soon after and considered it. They gave it the most favourable interpretation, for they desired peace and were willing to go half-way to meet it. But in courteous language they made it clear what the vital conditions for its acceptance were.

Many of us who believed in independence and were convinced that the offer was only a device to lead us astray and create division in our ranks, suffered bitter anguish and were torn with doubt. Were we justified in precipitating a terrible national struggle with all its inevitable consequences of suffering for many, when there was even an outside chance of honourable peace? With much searching of heart we signed that manifesto and I know not today if we did right or wrong. Later came the explanations and amplifications in the British Parliament and elsewhere and all doubt, if doubt there was, was removed as to the true significance of the offer. Even so your Working Committee chose to keep open the door of negotiation and left it to this Congress to take the final decision.

During the last few days there has been another discussion of this subject in the British House of Commons and the Secretary of State for India has endeavoured to point out that successive Governments have tried to prove, not only by words but by deeds also, the sincerity of their faith in regard to India. We must recognise Mr. Wedgwood Benn's desire to do something for India and his anxiety to secure the goodwill of the Indian people. But his speech and other speeches made in Parliament carry us no further. "Dominion Status in action", to which he has drawn attention has been a snare for us and has certainly not reduced the exploitation of India.

The burdens on the Indian masses are even greater today, because of this "Dominion Status in action" and the so-called constitutional reforms of ten years ago. High Commissioners in London and representatives of the League of Nations, and the purchase of stores, and Indian Governors and high officials are no parts of our demand. We want to put an end to

the exploitation of India's poor and to get the reality of power and not merely the livery of office. Mr. Wedgwood Benn has given us a record of the achievements of the past decade. He could have added to it by referring to Martial Law in the Punjab and the Jallianwala Bagh shooting and the repression and exploitation that have gone on continually during this period of "Dominion Status in action." He has given us some insight into what more of Dominion Status may mean for us. It will mean the shadow of authority to a handful of Indians and more repression and exploitation of the masses.

What will this Congress do? The conditions for cooperation remain unfulfilled. Can we cooperate so long as there is no guarantee that real freedom will come to us? Can we cooperate when our comrades lie in prison and repression continues? Can we cooperate until we are assured that real peace is sought after and not merely a tactical advantage over us? Peace cannot come at the point of the bayonet, and if we are to continue to be dominated over by an alien people, let us at least be no consenting parties to it.

If the Calcutta resolution holds, we have but one goal today, that of independence. Independence is not a happy word in the world today; for it means exclusiveness and isolation. Civilisation has had enough of narrow nationalism and gropes towards a wider cooperation and inter-dependence. And if we use the word 'independence', we do so in no sense hostile to the larger ideal. Independence for us means complete freedom from British domination and British imperialism. Having attained our freedom, I have no doubt that India will welcome all attempts at world-cooperation and federation, and will even agree to give up part of her own independence to a larger group of which she is an equal member.

### **British Imperialism**

The British Empire today is not such a group and cannot be so long as it dominates over millions of people and holds large areas of the world's surface despite the will of their inhabitants. It cannot be a true commonwealth so long as

imperialism is its basis and the exploitation of other races its chief means of sustenance. The British Empire today is indeed gradually undergoing a process of political dissolution. It is in a state of unstable equilibrium. The Union of S. Africa is not a happy member of the family, nor is the Irish Free State, a willing one. Egypt drifts away. India could never be an equal member of the Commonwealth unless imperialism and all it implies is discarded. So long as this is not done, India's position in the Empire must be one of subservience and her exploitation will continue.

There is talk of world-peace and pacts have been signed by the nations of the world. But despite pacts armaments grow and beautiful language is the only homage that is paid to the goddess of peace. Peace can only come when the causes of war are removed. So long as there is the domination of one country over another, or the exploitation of one class by another, there will always be attempts to subvert the existing order and no stable equilibrium can endure. Out of imperialism and capitalism peace can never come. And it is because the British Empire stands for these and bases itself on the exploitation of the masses that we can find no willing place in it. No gain that may come to us is worth anything unless it helps in removing the grievous burdens on our masses. The weight of a great Empire is heavy to carry and long our people have endured it. Their backs are bent down and their spirit has almost broken. How will they share in the Commonwealth partnership if the burden of exploitation continues? Many of the problems we have to face are the problems of vested interests mostly created or encouraged by the British Government. The interests of the Rulers of Indian States, of British Officials and British Capital and Indian Capital and of the owners of big Zamindaris are ever thrust before us, and they clamour for protection. The unhappy millions who really need protection are almost voiceless and have few advocates.

#### A Test

We have had much controversy about Independence and Dominion Status and we have quarrelled about words. But

the real thing is the conquest of power by whatever name it may be called. I do not think that any form of Dominion Status applicable to India will give us real power. A test of this power would be the entire withdrawal of the alien army of occupation and economic control. Let us, therefore, concentrate on these and the rest will follow easily.

### **Declaration of Independence**

We stand therefore today, for the fullest freedom of India. This Congress has not acknowledged and will not acknowledge the right of the British Parliament to dictate to us in any way. To it we make no appeal. But we do appeal to the Parliament and the conscience of the world, and to them we shall declare, I hope, that India submits no longer to any foreign domination. Today or tomorrow, who may not be strong enough to assert our will. We are very conscious of our weakness, and there is no boasting in us or pride of strength. But let no one, least of all England, mistake or underrate the meaning or strength of our resolve. Solemnly, with full knowledge of consequences, I hope, we shall take it and there will be no turning back. A great nation cannot be thwarted for long when once its mind is clear and resolved. If today we fail and tomorrow brings no success, the day after will follow and bring achievement.

### **No Surrender**

We are weary of strife and hunger for peace and opportunity to work constructively for our country. Do we enjoy the breaking up of our homes and the sight of our brave young men going to prison or facing the halter? Does the worker like going on strike to lose even his miserable pittance and starve? He does so by sheer compulsion when there is no other way for him. And we who take this perilous path of national strife do so because there is no other way to an honourable peace. But we long for peace, and the hand of fellowship will always be stretched out to all who may care to grasp it. But behind the hand will be a body which will not bend to injustice and a mind that will not surrender on any

vital point.

With the struggle before us, the time for determining our future constitution is not yet. For two years or more we have drawn up constitutions and finally the All-Parties' Committee put a crown to these efforts by drawing up a scheme of its own which the Congress adopted for a year. The labour that went to the making of this scheme was not wasted and India has profited by it. But the year is past and we have to face new circumstances which require action rather than constitution-making. Yet we cannot ignore the problems that beset us and that will make or mar our struggle and our future constitution. We have to aim at social adjustment and equilibrium and to overcome the forces of disruption that have been the bane of India.

#### **Socialist Ideal**

I must frankly confess that I am a socialist and a republican and am no believer in kings and princes, or in the order which produces the modern kings of industry, who have greater power over the lives and fortunes of men than even kings of old, and whose methods are as predatory as those of the old feudal aristocracy. I recognise, however, that it may not be possible for a body constituted as in this National Congress and in the present circumstances of the country to adopt a full socialistic programme. But we must realise that the philosophy of socialism has gradually permeated the entire structure of society the world over and almost the only points in dispute are the pace and methods of advance to its full realisation. India will have to go that way too if she seeks to end her poverty and inequality, though she may evolve her own methods and may adapt the ideal to the genuine of her race.

We have three major problems, the minorities, the Indian States, and labour and peasantry. I have dealt already with the question of minorities. I shall only repeat that we must give the fullest assurance by our words and our needs that their culture and traditions will be safe.

The Indian States cannot live apart from the rest of India and their rulers must, unless they accept their inevitable

limitations, go the way of others who thought like them. And the only people who have a right to determine the future of the State must be the people of these states, including the rulers. This Congress which claims self-determination cannot deny it to the people of the States. Meanwhile, the Congress is perfectly willing to confer with such rulers as are prepared to do so and to devise means whereby the transition may not be too sudden. But in no event can the people of the States be ignored.

### **Labour**

Our third major problem is the biggest of all. For India means the peasantry and labour and to the extent that we raise them and satisfy their wants will we succeed in our task. And the measure of the strength of our national movement will be the measure of their adherence to it. We can only gain them to our side by our espousing their cause which is really the country's cause. The Congress has often expressed its goodwill towards them; but beyond that it has not gone. The Congress, it is said, must hold the balance fairly between capital and labour and zamindar and tenant.

But the balance has been and is terribly weighed on one side and to maintain the status quo is to maintain injustice and exploitation. The only way to right it is to do away with the domination of any one class over another. The All-India Congress Committee accepted this ideal of social and economic change in a resolution it passed some months ago in Bombay. I hope the Congress will also set its seal on it and will further draw up a programme of such changes as can be immediately put in operation.

In this programme perhaps the Congress as a whole cannot go very far today. But it must keep the ultimate ideal in view and work for it. The question is not one merely of wages and charity doled out by an employer or landlord. Paternalism in industry or in the land is but a form of charity with all its sting and its utter incapacity to root out the evil. The new theory of trusteeship, which some advocate, is equally barren. For trusteeship means that the power for good or evil remains with the self-appointed trustee and he may exercise it as he

will. The sole trusteeship that can be fair is the trusteeship of the nation and not of one individual or a group. Many Englishmen honestly consider themselves the trustees for India, and yet to what a condition they have reduced our country.

### **Human Interests First**

We must decide for whose benefit industry must be run and the land produce food. Today the abundance that the land produces is not for the peasant or the labourer who works on it; and industry's chief function is supposed to be to produce millionaires. However golden the harvest and heavy the dividends, the mud-huts and hovels and nakedness of our people testify to the glory of the British Empire and of our present social system.

Our economic programme must therefore be based on a human outlook and must not sacrifice man to money. If an industry cannot be run without starving its workers, then the industry must be closed down. If the workers on the land have not enough to eat, then the intermediaries who deprive them of their full share must go. The least that every worker in the field or factory is entitled to is a minimum wage which will enable him to live in moderate comfort, and human hours of labour which do not break his strength and spirit. The All-Parties' Committee accepted the principle and included it in their recommendations. I hope the Congress will also do so and will in addition be prepared to accept its natural consequences. Further that, it will adopt the well known demands of labour for a better life, and will give every assistance to organise itself and prepare itself for the day when it can control industry on a cooperative basis.

### **Our Peasant Class**

But industrial labour is only a small part of India, although it is rapidly becoming a force that cannot be ignored. It is the peasantry that cry loudly and piteously for relief and our programme must deal with their present condition. Real relief can only come by a great change in the land-laws and



the basis of the present system of land tenure. We have among us many big landowners and we welcome them. But they must realise that the ownership of large estates by individuals, which is the outcome of a State resembling the old feudalism of Europe, is a rapidly disappearing phenomenon all over the world. Even in countries which are the strongholds of capitalism, the large estates are being split up and given to the peasantry who work on them. In India also we have large areas where the system of peasant proprietorship prevails and we shall have to extend this all over the country. I hope that in doing so, we may have the cooperation of some at least of the big landowners.

It is not possible for this Congress at its annual session to draw up any detailed economic programme. It can only lay down some general principles and call upon the All India Congress Committee to fill in the details in cooperation with the representatives of the Trade Union Congress and other organisations which are vitally interested in this matter. Indeed, I hope that the cooperation between this Congress and the Trade Union Congress will grow and the two organisations will fight side by side in future struggles.

### **Conquest of Power**

All these are pious hopes till we gain power, and the real problem therefore before us is the conquest of power. We shall not do so by subtle reasoning or argument or lawyers' quibbles, but by the forging of sanction to enforce the nation's will. To that end, this Congress must address itself.

The past year has been one of preparation for us and we have made every effort to reorganise and strengthen the Congress organisation. The results have been considerable and our organisation is in a better state today than at any time since the reaction which followed the non-cooperation movement. But our weakness are many and are apparent enough. Mutual strife, even within Congress Committees, is unhappily too common and election squabbles drain all our strength and energy. How can we fight a great fight if we cannot get over this ancient weakness of ours and rise above our petty selves? I earnestly hope that with a strong programme

of action before the country, our perspective will improve and we will not tolerate this barren and demoralising strife.

### **Violence or Non-Violence**

What can this programme be? Our choice is limited, not by our own constitution, which we can change at our will but by facts and circumstances. Article one of our constitution lays down that our methods must be legitimate and peaceful. Legitimate I hope they will always be, for we must not sully the great cause for which we stand by any deed that will bring dishonour to it and that we may ourselves regret later. Peaceful I should like them to be, for the methods of peace are more desirable and more enduring than those of violence. Violence too often brings reaction and demoralisation in its train, and in our country especially it may lead to disruption. It is perfectly true that organised violence rules the world today and it may be that we could profit by its use. But we have not the material or the training for organised violence and individual or sporadic violence is a confession of despair. The great majority of us, I take it, judge the issue not on moral but on practical grounds, and if we reject the way of violence it is because it promises no substantial results.

Any great movement for liberation today must necessarily be a mass movement and mass movements must essentially be peaceful, except in times of organised revolt. Whether we have the non-cooperation of a decade ago or the modern industrial weapon of the general strike, the basis is peaceful organisation and peaceful action. And if the principal movement is a peaceful one, contemporaneous attempts at sporadic violence can only distract attention and weaken it. It is not possible to carry on at one and the same time the two movements, side by side. We have to choose and strictly to abide by our choice. What the choice of this Congress is likely to be I have no doubt. It can only choose a peaceful mass movement.

Should we repeat the programme and tactics of the non-cooperation movement? Not necessarily, but the basic idea must remain. Programmes and tactics must be made to fit in with circumstances and it is neither easy nor desirable for this

Congress at this stage to determine them in detail. That should be the work of its executive, the All-India Congress Committee. But the principles have to be fixed.

The old programme was one of the three boycotts — Councils, law courts and schools — leading up to refusal of service in the army and non-payment of taxes. When the national struggle is at its height, I fail to see how it will be possible for any person engaged in it to continue in the courts or the schools. But still I think that it will be unwise to declare a boycott of the courts and schools at this stage.

The boycott of the Legislative Councils has led to much heated debate in the past and this Congress itself has been rent in twain over it. We need not revive that controversy, for the circumstances today are entirely different. I feel that the step the Congress took some years ago to permit Congressmen to enter the Councils was an inevitable step and I am not prepared to say that some good has not resulted from it. But we have exhausted that good and there is no middle course left today between boycott and non-cooperation. All of us know the demoralisation that these sham legislatures have brought in our ranks and how many of our good men, their committees and commissions lure away. Our workers are limited in number and we can have no mass movement unless they concentrate on it and turn their backs to the palatial Council Chambers of our Legislatures. And if we declare for independence, how can we enter the Councils and carry on our humdrum and profitless activities there? No programme or policy can be laid down for ever, nor can this Congress bind the country or even itself to pursue one line of action indefinitely. But today I would respectfully urge the Congress that the only policy in regard to the Councils is a complete boycott of them. The All India Congress Committee recommended this course in July last and the time has come to give effect to it.

This boycott will only be a means to an end. It will release energy and divert attention to the real struggle which must take the shape of the non-payment of taxes, where possible, with the cooperation of the labour movement, general strikes. But non-payment of taxes must be well organised in specific areas, and for this purpose the Congress should

authorise the All India Congress Committee to take the necessary action, wherever and whenever it considers desirable.

I have not so far referred to the constructive programme of the Congress. This should certainly continue but the experience of the last few years shows us that by itself it does not carry us swiftly enough. It prepares the ground for future action and ten years' silent work is bearing fruit today. In particular we shall, I hope, continue our boycott of foreign cloth and the boycott of British goods.

#### **Question of Debts**

Our programme must, therefore, be one of political and economic boycott. It is not possible for us, so long as we are actually independent, and even then completely, to boycott another country wholly or to sever all connection with it. But our endeavour must be to reduce all points of contact with the British Government and to rely on ourselves. We must also make it clear that India will not accept responsibility for all the debts that England has piled on her. The Gaya Congress repudiated liability to pay that debts and we must repeat this repudiation and stand by it. Such of India's public debt as has been used for purposes beneficial to India we are prepared to admit and pay back. But we wholly deny all liability to pay back the vast sums which have been raised, so that India may be held in subjection and her burdens may be increased. In particular the poverty-stricken people of India cannot agree to shoulder the burden of the wars fought by England to extend her domain consolidate her position in India. Nor can they accept the many concessions lavishly bestowed without any proper compensation on foreign exploiters.

I have not referred so far to the Indians overseas and I do not propose to say much about them. This is not from any want of fellow-feeling with our brethren in East Africa or South Africa or Fiji or elsewhere, who are bravely struggling against great odds. But their fate will be decided in the plains of India and the struggle we are launching into is as much for them as for ourselves.

**Efficient Machinery Necessary**

For this struggle, we want efficient machinery. Our Congress constitution and organisation have become too archaic and slow moving and are ill-suited to times of crisis. The times of great demonstrations are past. We want quiet and irresistible action now and this can only be brought about by the strictest discipline in our ranks. Our resolutions must be passed in order to be acted upon. The Congress will gain in strength, however small its actual membership may become, if it acts in a disciplined way. Small determined minorities have changed the fate of nations. Mobs and crowds can do little. Freedom itself involves restraint and discipline and each one of us will have to subordinate himself to the larger good:

**Ever-Supreme Endeavour**

The Congress represents no small minority in the country and though many may be too weak to join it or to work for it, they look to it with hope and longing to bring them deliverance. Ever since the Calcutta resolution, the country has waited with anxious expectations for this great day when this Congress meets. None of us can say what and when we can achieve. We cannot command success. But success often comes to those who dare and act; it seldom goes to the timid who are ever afraid of the consequences. We play for high stakes; and if we seek to achieve great things it can only be through great dangers. Whether we succeed soon or late, none but ourselves can stop us from high endeavour and from high writing a noble page in our country's long and splendid history.

We have conspiracy cases going on in various parts of the country. They are ever with us. But the time has gone for secret conspiracy. We have now an open conspiracy to free this country from foreign rule, and you comrades, and all our countrymen and countrywomen are invited to join it. But the rewards that are in store for you are suffering and prison and it may be death. But you shall also have the satisfaction that you have done your little bit for India, the ancient, but ever young, and have helped a little in the liberation of Humanity from its present bondage.

## II

### THE CONQUEST OF POWER\*

*"Between Indian Nationalism, Indian Freedom and British Imperialism, there can be no common ground. . ." He reiterated that the conquest of power must lead to the elimination of mass poverty and establishment of an egalitarian society, guaranteeing full freedom and social justice to all.*

After many years I face you again from this tribune, many weary years of strife and turmoil and common suffering. It is good for us to meet again, it is good for me to see this great host of old comrades and friends, linked together by strong bonds that cannot break, to sense the old brave spirit yet again, to feel your overwhelming kindness and goodwill to one whose greatest privilege it is to have been a comrade and a soldier with all of you in a mighty struggle for freedom. I am heartened and strengthened by you, though even in this great gathering I feel a little lonely. Many a dear comrade and friend has left us, worn out, long before the normal length of our earthly days, by the stress and strain of conflict. One by one they go, leaving a void in our hearts and a dull misery in our minds. They find peace from this turmoil perhaps, and it is well, for they deserved it. They rest after their labours.

But what of us who remain behind with a heavier burden to carry? There is no rest for us or for those who languish in prison or in detention camp. We cannot rest, for rest is betrayal of those who have gone and in going handed the torch of freedom to us to keep alight; it is betrayal of the cause we have espoused and the pledge we have taken; it is betrayal of the millions who never rest.

I am weary and I have come back like a tired child yearning for solace in the bosom of our common mother, India.

\*The above is the English translation of the Presidential address delivered by Jawaharlal Nehru as President of the Indian National Congress at the 49th Session in Lucknow, April 12-14, 1936.

That solace has come to me in overflowing measure, thousands of hands have been stretched out to me in love and sympathy, millions of silent voices have carried their message of affection to my heart. How can I thank you, men and women of India? How can I express in words feelings that are too deep for utterance?

For many years now I have been a distant looker on this Indian scene where once I was an actor, and many a thing has happened that has filled me with distress and anguish. I do not wish to survey this recent past of ours, which must be fresh in your memory, and which has left a sorry trail behind and many knots which are difficult to unravel. But we may not ignore it for out of that past as well as the present, we have to build our future. We have followed high ideals and we have taken pride in the fact that our means are worthy of those ideals.

We have been witnesses of many a miracle in this old and battered land of ours and yet our very success has been followed by failure and disillusion. Temporary failure has little significance when the aim is high and the struggle bound to be a long one; it is but the incentive to further effort. Often it teaches us more than a victory easily won and becomes a prelude to a greater success. But we profit by it only if we learn its lesson and search our minds for an explanation of that failure. Only by constant self-questioning, individual and national, can we keep on the right path. An easy and unthinking confidence is almost as bad as a weak submission to helpless dejection. Real failure comes only when we forget our ideals and objectives and principles and begin to wander away from the road which leads to their realization.

In this crisis of our history, therefore, let us look into ourselves and examine, without pity or prejudice, what we have done and what others have done to us, and seek to find out where we stand today. We dare not delude ourselves or evade real issues for fear of offending others, even though some of these others are comrades whom we respect. That is the way of self-deception which none who seek great and vital changes can follow except at their peril.

Sixteen years ago, under the inspiration of our leader, we took a new and long step converting this Congress from an

ineffective body, feebly functioning amongst the upper classes, into a powerful democratic organization with its roots in the Indian soil and the vast masses who live on it. A handful of our old friends, representing an age and a class which had had its day, left us, fearful of this democratic upsurge, and preferring the shelter and protection of British imperialism to joining hands with the new vital forces which convulsed the country and struggled for freedom.

Historically, they lapsed into the past. But we heard the rumbling of those forces and for the moment, lined up with them and played a not unworthy part in current history. We sensed the new spirit of mass release, of psychological escape from the cramping effects of long subjection; we gloried in the breaking of the mental bonds that encompassed us. And because our minds became free we felt that political freedom could not be far, for it is often harder to break the bonds of the spirit than physical bonds and chains of iron and steel. We represented the Spirit of the Age and were marching step by step with countless others in our country and outside. The exhilaration of being in tune with the masses and with world forces came upon us and the feeling that we were the agents of historic destiny.

We were engrossed in our national struggle and the turn it took bore the powerful impress of our great leader and of our national genius. We were hardly conscious then of what was happening outside. And yet our struggle was but part of a far wider struggle for freedom, and the forces that moved us were moving millions of people all over the world and driving them into action. All Asia was astir from the Mediterranean to the Far East, from the Islamic West to the Buddhist East; Africa responded to the new spirit; Europe, broken up by the war, was struggling to find a new equilibrium. And right across a vast area in Europe and Asia, in the Soviet territories, a new conception of human freedom and social equality fought desperately against a host of enemies. There were great differences in the many aspects of this freedom struggle all over the world and we were misled by them and did not see the common background.

Yet if we are to understand these varied phenomena, and derive a lesson from them for our national struggle, we must



try to see and understand the whole picture. And if we do so we cannot fail to observe an organic connection between them which endures through changing situations. If once we grasp this organic bond, the world situation becomes easier to understand and our own national problems take their proper places in the wider picture. We realise then that we cannot isolate India or the Indian problem from that of the rest of the world. To do so is to ignore the real forces that are shaping events and to cut ourselves adrift from the vital energy that flows from them. To do so, again, is to fail to understand the significance of our own problems, and if we do not understand this how can we solve them? We are apt to lose ourselves, as we have indeed done, in petty conflicts and minor questions, like the communal problem, and forget the major issues; we are apt to waste our energy (like our moderate friends do) in interminable discussions over legal quibbles and constitutional questions.

During the troubled aftermath of the Great War came revolutionary changes in Europe and Asia, and the intensification of the struggle for social freedom in Europe, and a new aggressive nationalism in the countries of Asia. There were ups and downs, and sometimes it appeared as if the revolutionary urge had exhausted itself and things were settling down. But economic and political conditions were such that there could be no settling down, the existing structure could no longer cope with these new conditions, and all its efforts to do so were vain and fruitless. Everywhere conflicts grew and a great depression overwhelmed the world and there was a progressive deterioration, everywhere except in the wide-flung Soviet territories of the U.S.S.R., where, in marked contrast with the rest of the world, astonishing progress was made in every direction.

Two rival economic and political systems faced each other in the world and, though they tolerated each other for a while, there was an inherent antagonism between them, and they played for mastery on the stage of the world. One of them was the capitalist order which had inevitably developed into vast imperialisms, which, having swallowed the colonial world, were intent on eating each other up. Powerful still and fearful of war, which might endanger their possessions, yet

they came into inevitable conflict with each other and prepared feverishly for war. They were quite unable to solve the problems that threatened them and helplessly they submitted to slow decay. The other was the new socialist order of the U.S.S.R. which went from progress to progress, though often at terrible cost, and where the problems of the capitalist world had ceased to exist.

Capitalism, in its difficulties, took to fascism with all its brutal suppression of what western civilization had apparently stood for; it became, even in some of its homelands, what its imperialist counterpart had long been in the subject colonial countries. Fascism and imperialism thus stood out as the two faces of the new decaying capitalism, and though they varied in different countries according to national characteristics and economic and political conditions, they represented the same forces of reaction and supported each other, and at the same time came into conflict with each other, for such conflict was inherent in their very nature. Socialism in the west and the rising nationalisms of the eastern and other dependent countries opposed this combination of fascism and imperialism. Nationalism in the East, it must be remembered, was essentially different from the new and terribly narrow nationalism of fascist countries; the former was the historical urge to freedom, the latter the last refuge of reaction.

Thus we see the world divided up into two vast groups today — the imperialist and fascist on one side, the socialist and nationalist on the other. There is some overlapping of the two and the line between them is difficult to draw, for there is mutual conflict between the fascist and imperialist power and, the nationalism of subject countries has sometimes a tendency to fascism. But the main division holds and if we keep it in mind it will be easier for us to understand world conditions and our own place in them.

Where do we stand then, we who labour for a free India? Inevitably we take our stand with progressive forces of world which are ranged against fascism and imperialism. We have to deal with one imperialism in particular, the oldest and the most far-reaching of the modern world, but powerful as it is, it is but one aspect of world-imperialism. And that is the final

argument for Indian independence and for the severance of our connection with the British Empire. Between Indian nationalism, Indian freedom and British imperialism there can be no common ground, and if we remain within the imperialist fold, whatever our name or status, whatever outward semblance, of political power we might have, we remain cribbed and confined and allied to and dominated by the capitalist world. The exploitation of our masses will still continue and all the vital social problems that face us will remain unsolved. Even real political freedom will be out of our reach, much more so radical social changes.

With the development of the great struggle all over the world we have seen the progressive deterioration of many of the capitalist imperialist countries and an attempt at consolidation of the reactionary force under fascism or Nazism or so called 'national' governments. In India the same process has been evident to us during these past years, and stronger the nationalist movement has grown, the more have efforts been made by our imperialist rulers to break our ranks and to gather under their banner the reactionary elements in the country. The Round Table Conferences were such attempts and, though they helped our rulers in some measure, they served a useful purpose by showing us clearly the division between the imperialist and the anti-imperialist forces in the country. Unhappily we did not fully profit by this lesson and we still imagine that we can win over some of these imperialist groups to the side of Indian freedom and anti-imperialism, and in a vain attempt to do so, we suppress our ideals, blush for our objectives and tone down our activities.

Meanwhile the decay of British imperialism in India becomes ever more apparent. It cannot, by its very nature, solve our economic problems and rid us of our terrible poverty, which it has largely itself created. It subsists on a normal fare of the fiercest repression and a denial of civil and even personal liberty. It surrounds us with a wide network of spies and among the pillars of its administration, are the tribes of informers and agents provocateurs and the like. Its services try to seek comfort for their obvious deterioration and incompetence by perpetually singing songs of mutual adulation. Argument gives place to the policeman's baton and the

soldier's bayonet and prison and detention camp, and even our extraordinary finances are justified by the methods of the bully. It is astonishing to find to what depths of vulgarity our rulers have descended in their ardent desire to hold on to what they have got and it is depressing, though perhaps inevitable that some of our own countrymen, more interested in British Imperialism than the British themselves, should excel at this deplorable game. So wanting in mental equilibrium are they, so obsessed by fear of the Congress and the national movement it represent that their wishes become thoughts, their thoughts inferences, and their inferences facts, solemnly stated in official publications, and on which the majesty of the British Government rests in India, and people are kept in prison and detention camp without charge or trial.

I have watched this process of moral and intellectual decay and realized, even more than I did previously, how autocratic power corrupts and degrades and vulgarizes. I have read some times the reports of the recent assembly meetings and noted the great difference in tone and content between them and the Assembly of ten years ago. I have observed forced attempts made to discredit the Congress by a reference to the Tilak Swaraj Fund with which I was connected for many years as Secretary of the Congress. But prepared as I was for much, even I was surprised at the insinuations made against our much loved chief Rajendra Babu, and the charges brought against the Bihar Relief Fund. A mild criticism by me of official incompetence soon after the Bihar earthquake was deeply resented probably because the truth of it was realized. Newspapers that criticized the official arrangements at a subsequent earthquake were heavily penalized or suppressed. All criticism hurts the sensitive skin of the Government and its reactions are quick and far reaching. The more incompetent it grows the less it likes being told so. But this does not prevent it from indulging in reckless allegations about others.

This psychological aspect interests me even more than the more aggressive manifestations of British authority in India, for it throws light on much that has happened. It shows us how a clear and definite fascist mentality has developed among our rulers and how closely allied is imperialism to

fascism. How this fascist mentality has functioned in the recent past and is functioning today, I shall not go into now. You know well the horror of these years and of the nightmare that we have all experienced. We shall not easily forget it and if there are some who have been cowed down by it, there are who have steeled themselves to a greater resolve to end this infamy in India.

But of one thing I must say a few words for to me it is one of the most vital things that I value. That is the tremendous deprivation of civil liberties in India. A government that has to rely on the Criminal Law Amendment Act and similar laws that suppresses the press and literature, that bans hundreds of organisations, that keeps people in prison without trial and that does so many other things that are happening in India is a government that has ceased to have even a shadow of a justification for its existence. I can never adjust myself to those conditions, I find them intolerable. And yet I find many of my own countrymen complacent about them, some even supporting them, some, who have made the practice of sitting on a fence into a fine art, being neutral when such questions are discussed. And I have wondered what there was in common between them and me and those who think like I do. We in the Congress welcome all cooperation in the struggle for Indian freedom; our doors are ever open to all who stand for that freedom and are against imperialism. But they are not open to the allies of imperialism and the supporters of repression and those who stand by the British Government in its suppression of civil liberty. We belong to opposite camps.

Recently, as you know, we have had a typical example of the way Government functions in India in the warning issued to a dear and valued comrade of ours, Subhas Chandra Bose. We who know him also know how frivolous are the charges brought against him. But even if there was substance in them we could not tolerate willingly the treatment to which he has long been subjected. He did me the honour to ask me for advice and I was puzzled and perplexed for it is no easy thing to advise another in such a matter, when such advice might mean prison. Subhas Bose has suffered enough at the cost of his health. Was I justified in adding to this mental and physical agony? I hesitated and at first suggested to him to

postpone his departure. But this advice made me unhappy and I consulted other friends and then advised him differently. I suggested that he should return to his homeland as soon as he could. But, it appears, that even before my advice reached him, he had started on his journey back to India.

This instance leads us to think of the larger problem, of the way the bogey of terrorism has been exploited by the Government to crush political activity and to cripple physically and mentally the fair province of Bengal. You know that terrorism as such is practically non-existent now in Bengal or any part of India. Terrorism is always a sign of political immaturity in a people, just as so-called constitutionalism, where there is no democratic constitution, is a sign of political senility. Our national movement has long outgrown that immature stage, and even the odd individuals who have in the past indulged in terrorist acts have apparently given up that tragic and futile philosophy. The Congress, by its stress on peaceful and effective action, has drawn the youth of the country into its fold and all traces of terroristic activity would long have vanished but for the policy of the Government which feeds the roots out of which a helpless violence grows. But terrorism or no terrorism, government which adopts the methods which have long prevailed in Midnapore and elsewhere in Bengal stands self-condemned. Similar methods have also long prevailed in the Frontier Province, although there is no hint of terroristic activity there, and that fine man and true beloved of millions, Abdul Ghaffar Khan, still lies in prison. Excuses differ, but the real reason is the ever growing fascist mentality of our rulers.

That is one side of the picture. What of us? I have found a spirit of disunion spreading over the land, a strange malaise, and petty conflicts amongst old comrades growing ever bigger and interfering with all activity. We have forgotten for the moment the larger ideals we stood for and we quarrel over petty issues. We have largely lost touch with the masses and, deprived of the life-giving energy that flows from them, we dry up and weaken and our organization shrinks and loses the power it had. First things must always come first and because we have forgotten this and argue and dispute over secondary matters, we are in danger of losing our bearings.

Every great struggle has its ups and downs and temporary failures. When such a setback occurs there is a reaction when fund of national energy is exhausted and has to be recharged. That happens again and again, and yet that is not an adequate explanation of all that has taken place. Our direct action struggles in the past were based on the masses, and especially the peasantry, but the backbone and leadership were always supplied by the middle classes, and this, under the circumstances, was inevitable. The middle classes are a group or groups; at the top, a handful of them are closely allied to British imperialism; at the bottom are the dispossessed and other groups who have been progressively crushed by economic circumstances and out of whose ranks come the advanced political workers and revolutionaries; in between are the centre groups, which tend often, to side with the advanced elements, but which also have alliances with the upper groups and live in the hope of joining their superior ranks.

A middle class leadership is thus often a distracted leadership, looking in two directions at the same time. In times of crisis and struggle, when unity of aim and activity is essential, this two-faced leadership is bound to injure the cause and to hold back when a forward move is called for. Being too much tied up with property and the goods of this world, it is fearful of losing them, and it is easier to bring pressure on it and to exhaust its stamina. And yet, paradoxically, it is only from the middle class intellectuals that revolutionary leadership comes, and we in India know that our bravest leaders and our stoutest comrades have come from the ranks of the middle classes. But by the very nature of our struggle, these front-rank leaders are taken away and the others who take their place tire and are influenced more by the static element of their class. That has been very evident during our recent struggle when our propertied classes were hit hard by the Government's drastic policy of seizure and confiscation of monies and properties, and were thus induced to bring pressure for the suspension of the struggle.

How is this problem to be solved then? Inevitably we must have middle class leadership but this must look more and more towards the masses and draw strength and inspiration from them. The Congress must be not only for the masses, as

it claims to be, but of the masses; only then will it really be for the masses. I have a feeling that our relative weakness today is due to a certain decay of our middle class elements and our divorce from the people at large. Our policies and ideas are governed far more by this middle class outlook than by a consideration of the needs of the great majority of the population. Even the problems that trouble us are essentially middle class problems, like the communal problem, which have no significance for the masses.

This is partly due, I think, to a certain historical growth during the last fifteen years to which we have failed to adapt ourselves, to a growing urgency of economic problems affecting the masses, and to a rising mass consciousness which does not find sufficient outlet through the Congress. This was not so in 1920 and later when there was an organic link between Congress and the masses, and their needs and desires, vague as they were, found expression in the Congress. But as those needs and desires have taken more definite shape, they have not been so welcome to other elements in the Congress and that organic connection has gone. That, though regrettable, is really a sign of growth and, instead of lamenting it, we must find a new link and a new connection on a fresh basis which allows for growth of mass consciousness within the Congress. The middle class claim to represent the masses had some justification in 1920; it has much less today, though the lower middle classes have still a great deal in common with the masses.

Partly also our divorce from the people at large is due to a certain narrowness of our Congress constitution. The radical changes made in it fifteen years ago brought it in line with existing conditions then and it drew in large numbers and became an effective instrument of national activity. Though the control and background were essentially middle-class and city, it reached the remotest village and brought with it political and economic consciousness to the masses and there was widespread discussion of national issues in city and village alike. One could feel the new life pulsating through this vast land of ours and, as we were in harmony with it, we drew strength from it. The intense repression by the Government during later years broke many of our physical and outward



bonds with our countryside. But something more than that happened. The vague appeal of earlier days no longer sufficed, and on the new economic issues that were forcing themselves on us, we hesitated to give a definite opinion. Worse even than the physical divorce, there was a mental divorce between the middle class elements and the mass elements.

Our constitution no longer fitted in with changing conditions; it lost its roots in the soil and became a matter of small committees functioning in the air. It still had the mighty prestige of the Congress name behind it and this carried it a long way, but it had lost the living democratic touch. It became a prey to authoritarianism and a battleground for rival cliques fighting for control, and, in doing so, stooping to the lowest and most objectionable tactics. Idealism disappeared and in its place there came opportunism and corruption. The constitutional structure of the Congress was unequal to facing the new situation; it could be shaken up anywhere almost by a handful of unscrupulous individuals. Only a broad democratic basis could have saved it and this was lacking.

Last year an attempt was made to revise the constitution in order to get rid of some of these evils. How far the attempt has succeeded or not, I am not competent to judge. Perhaps it has made the organization more efficient, but efficiency means little if it has no strength behind it, and strength, for us, can only come from the masses. The present constitution stresses still further the authoritarian side of the organization, and in spite of stressing rural representation does not provide effective links with the masses.

The real problem for us is, how in our struggle for independence we can join together all the anti-imperialist forces in the country, how we can make a broad front of our mass elements with the great majority of the middle classes which stands for independence. There has been some talk of a joint front but, so far as I can gather, this refers to some alliance among the upper classes probably at the expense of the masses. That surely can never be the idea of the Congress and if it favours it, it betrays the interests it has claimed to represent, and loses the very reason for its existence. The essence of a joint popular front must be uncompromising opposition

to imperialism, and the strength of it must inevitably come from the active participation of the peasantry and workers.

Perhaps you have wondered at the way I have dealt at some length with the background of international affairs and not touched so far the immediate problems that fill your minds. You may have grown impatient. But I am convinced that the only right way of looking at our own problems is to see them in their proper place in a world setting. I am convinced that there is intimate connection between world events, and our national problem is but a part of the world problem of capitalist-imperialism. To look at each event apart from the others and without understanding the connection between them must lead us to the formation of erratic and erroneous views.

Look at the vast panorama of world change today, where mighty forces are at grips with each other and dreadful war darkens the horizon. Subject peoples struggling for freedom and imperialism crushing them down; exploited classes facing their exploiters and seeking freedom and equality. Italian imperialism bombing and killing the brave Ethiopians; Japanese imperialism continuing its aggression in North China and Mongolia; British imperialism piously objecting to other countries misbehaving, yet carrying on in much the same way in India and the Frontier; and behind it all a decaying economic order which intensifies all these conflicts. Can we not see an organic connection in all these various phenomena? Let us try to develop the historic sense so that we can view current events in proper perspective and understand their real significance. Only then can we appreciate the march of history and keep step with it.

I realize that in this address I am going a little beyond the usual beat of the Congress president. But I do not want you to have me under any false pretences and we must have perfect frankness with each other. Most of you must know my views on social and economic matters for I have often given expression to them. Yet you chose me as President. I do not take that choice to mean an endorsement by you all, or by a majority, of those views, but I take it that this does mean that those views are spreading in India and that most of you will be indulgent in considering them at least.

I am convinced that the only key to the solution of the world's problems and of India's problems lies in socialism, and when I use this word I do so not in a vague humanitarian way but in the scientific, economic sense. Socialism is, however, something even more than an economic doctrine; it is a philosophy of life and as such also it appeals to me. I see no way of ending the poverty, the vast unemployment, the degradation and the subjection of the Indian people except through socialism. That involves vast and revolutionary changes in our political and social structure, the ending of vested interests in land and industry, as well as the feudal and autocratic Indian States system.

That means the ending of private property, except in a restricted sense, and the replacement of the present profit system by a higher ideal of cooperative service. It means ultimately a change in our instincts and habits and desires. In short, it means a new civilization, radically different from the present capitalist order. Some glimpse we can have of this new civilization in the territories of the U.S.S.R. Much has happened there which has pained me greatly and with which I disagree, but I look upon that great and fascinating unfolding of a new order and a new civilization as the most promising feature of our dismal age. If the future is full of hope it is largely because of Soviet Russia and what it has done, and I am convinced that, if some world catastrophe does not intervene, this new civilization will spread to other lands and put an end to the wars and conflicts which capitalism feeds.

I do not know how or when this new order will come to India. I imagine that every country will fashion it after its own way and fit it in with its national genius. But the essential basis of that order must remain and be a link in the world order that will emerge out of the present chaos.

Socialism is thus for me not merely an economic doctrine which I favour; it is a vital creed which I hold with all my head and heart. I work for Indian independence because the nationalist in me cannot tolerate alien domination; I work for it even more because for me it is the inevitable step to social and economic change. I should like the Congress to become a socialist organization and to join hands with the other forces in the world who are working for the new civilization. But I

realize that the majority in the Congress, as it is constituted today, may not be prepared to go thus far. We are a nationalist organization and we think and work on the nationalist plane. It is evident enough now that this is too narrow even for the limited objective of political independence, and so we talk of the masses and their economic needs. But still most of us hesitate, because of our nationalist backgrounds, to take a step which might frighten away some vested interests. Most of those interests are already ranged against us and we can expect little from them except opposition even in political struggle.

Much as I wish for the advancement of socialism in this country, I have no desire to force the issue in the Congress and thereby create difficulties in the way of our struggle for independence. I shall cooperate gladly and with all the strength in me with all those who work for independence even though they do not agree with the socialist solution. But I shall do so stating my position frankly and hoping in course of time to convert the Congress and the country to it, for only thus can I see it achieving independence. It should surely be possible for all of us who believe in independence to join our ranks together even though we might differ on the social issue. The Congress has been in the past a broad front representing various opinions joined together by that common bond. It must continue as such even though the difference of those opinions becomes more marked.

How does socialism fit in with the present ideology of the Congress? I do not think it does. I believe in the rapid industrialization of the country and only thus I think will the standards of the people rise substantially and poverty be combated. Yet I have cooperated whole-heartedly in the past with the khadi programme and I hope to do so in the future because I believe that khadi and village industries have a definite place in our present economy. They have a social, a political and an economic value which is difficult to measure but which is apparent enough to those who have studied their effects. But I look upon them more as temporary expedients of a transition stage rather than as solutions of our vital problems. That transition stage might be a long one, and in a country like India, village industries might well play an

important though subsidiary role even after the development of industrialism. But though I cooperate in the village industries programme my ideological approach to it differs considerably from that of many others in the Congress who are opposed to industrialization and socialism.

The problem of untouchability and the Harijans again can be approached in different ways. For a socialist it presents no difficulty for under socialism there can be no such differentiation or victimization. Economically speaking, the Harijans have constituted the landless proletariat and an economic solution removes the social barriers that custom and tradition have raised.

I come now to a question which is probably occupying your minds – the new Act passed by the British Parliament and our policy in regard to it. This Act has come into being since the last Congress met, but even at that time we had had a foretaste of it in the shape of the White Paper, and I know of no abler analysis of those provisions than that contained in the presidential address of my predecessor in this high office. The Congress rejected that proposed constitution and resolved to have nothing to do with it. The new Act, as is well known, is an even more retrograde measure and has been condemned by even the most moderate and cautious of our politicians. If we rejected the White Paper, what then are we to do with this new charter of slavery to strengthen the bonds of imperialist domination and to intensify the exploitation of our masses? And even if we forget its content for a while, can we forget the insult and injury that have accompanied it, the contemptuous defiance of our wishes, the suppression of civil liberties and the widespread repression that has been our normal lot? If they had offered to us the crown of heaven with this accompaniment and with dishonour, would we not have spurned it as inconsistent with our national honour and self-respect? What then of this?

A charter of slavery is no law for the slave, and though we may perforce submit for a while to it and to the humiliation of ordinances and the like, inherent in that enforced submission the right and the desire to rebel against it and to end it.

Only lawyers have examined this new constitution and have condemned it. But constitutions are something much

more than legal documents. "The real constitution" said Ferdinand Lassalle, consists of "the actual relationships of power," and the working of this power we see even today, after the Act has been passed. That is the constitution we have to face, not the fine phrases which are sometimes presented to us, and we can only deal with it with the strength and power generated by the people of the country.

To this Act our attitude can only be one of uncompromising hostility and a constant endeavour to end it. How can we do this?

Since my return from Europe I have had the advantage of full and frank discussion with my colleagues of the Working Committee. All of us have agreed that the Act has to be rejected and combated, but all of us have not been able to agree to the manner of doing so. We have pulled together in the past and I earnestly hope that we shall do so in the future, but in order to do so effectively we must recognize that there are marked differences in our outlooks. I do not yet know, as I write, what the final recommendation of the Working Committee will be on this issue. I can only, therefore, venture to put before you my own personal view on the subject, not knowing how far they represent the views of the Congressmen. I should like to make it clear, however, in fairness to my old colleagues of the Working Committee, that the majority of them do not agree with all the views I am going to express. But whether we agree or disagree, or whether we agree to differ, there is a strong desire on our part to continue to cooperate together, laying stress on our many points of agreement rather than on the differences. That is the right course for us and, as a democratic organisation that is the only course open to us.

I think that, under the circumstances, we have no choice but to contest the election to the new provincial legislatures, in the event of their taking place. We should seek election on the basis of a detailed political and economic programme, with our demand for a Constituent Assembly in the fore front. I am convinced that the only solution of our political and communal problems will come through such an Assembly, provided it is elected on an adult franchise and a mass basis. That Assembly will not come into existence till at least

a semi-revolutionary situation has been created in this country and actual relationships of power, apart from paper constitutions, are such that the people of India can make their will felt. When that will happen I cannot say, but the world is too much in the grip of dynamic force today to admit of static conditions in India or elsewhere for long. We may thus have to face this issue sooner than we might expect. But, obviously, a Constituent Assembly will not come through the new Act or the new legislatures. Yet we must press this demand and keep it before our country and the world, so that when the time comes we may be ripe for it.

A Constituent Assembly is the only proper and democratic method for the farming of our constitution, and for its delegates then to negotiate a treaty with the representatives of the British Government. But we cannot go to it with blank minds in the hope that something good will emerge out of it. Such an Assembly, in order to be fruitful, must have previous thought behind it and a definite scheme put forwards by an organised group. The actual details, as to how the Assembly is to be convened, must depend on the circumstances then existing and need not trouble us now. But it will be our function as the Congress to know exactly what we are after, to place this clearly and definitely before the Assembly, and to press for its acceptance.

One of the principal reasons for our seeking election will be to carry the message of the Congress to the millions of voters and to the scores of millions of the disfranchised, to acquaint them with our future programme and policy, to make the masses realize that we not only stand for them but that we are of them and seek to cooperate with them in removing their social and economic burdens. Our appeal and message will not be limited to the voters, for we must remember that hundreds of millions are disfranchised and they need our help most for they are at the bottom of the social ladder and suffer most from exploitation. We have seen in the past wide-spread official interference in the elections; we shall have to face that, as well as the serried and monied ranks of the reactionaries. But the real danger will come from our toning down our programme and policy in order to win over the hesitating and compromising groups and individuals.

If we compromise on principles, we shall fall between two stools and deserve our fall. The only right way and the only safe way is to stand four square on our own programme and to compromise with no one who has opposed the national struggle for freedom in the past, or who is in any way giving support to British imperialism.

When we have survived the election, what then are we to do? Office or no office? A secondary matter perhaps, and yet behind that issue lie deep questions of principle and vital differences of outlook, and a decision on that either way, has far-reaching consequences. Behind it lies, somewhat hidden, the question of independence and whether we seek revolutionary changes in India or are working for party reforms under the aegis of British imperialism. We go back again in thought to the clash of ideas which preceded the changes in the Congress in 1920. We made a choice then deliberately and with determination and discarded the old sterile creed of reformism. Are we to go back again to that blind and suffocating lane after all these years of brave endeavour, and to wipe out the memory of what we have done and achieved and suffered? That is the issue and let none of us forget it when we have to give our decision. In this India, crying aloud for radical and fundamental change, in this world pregnant with revolutionary and dynamic possibility, are we to forget our mission and our historic destiny, and slide back to static futility? And if some of us feel tired and hunger for rest and quiet, do we imagine that India's masses will follow our lead, when elemental forces and economic necessity are driving them to their inevitable goal? If we enter the back waters, others will take our place on the bosom of the flowing stream and will dare to take the rapids and ride the torrent.

How has this question arisen? If we express our hostility to the Act and reject the entire scheme, does it not follow logically that we should have nothing to do with the working of it and should prevent its functioning, insofar as we can? To accept office and ministry, under the conditions of the Act, is to negate our rejection of it and to stand self-condemned. National honour and self-respect cannot accept this position, for it would inevitably mean our cooperation in some measure with the repressive apparatus of imperialism, and we



would become partners in this repression and in the exploitation of our people. Of course we would try to champion the rights of the people and would protest against repression, but as ministers under the 'Act, we could do very little to give relief, and we would have to share responsibility for the administration with the apparatus of imperialism, for the deficit budgets, for the suppression of labour and the peasantry.

It is always dangerous to assume responsibility without power, even in democratic countries; it will be far worse with this undemocratic constitution, hedged in with safeguards and reserved powers and mortgaged funds, where we have to follow 'the rules and regulations of our opponents' making. Imperialism sometimes talks of cooperation but the kind of cooperation it wants is usually known as surrender and the ministers who accept office will have to do so at the price of surrender of much that they might have stood for in public. That is a humiliating position which self-respect itself should prevent one from accepting. For our great national organisation to be party to it is to give up the very basis and background of our existence.

Self-respect apart, common sense tells us that we can lose much and gain little by acceptance of office in terms of the Act. We cannot get much out of it, or else our criticism of the Act itself is wrong, and we know that it is not so. The big things for which we stand will fade into the background and petty issues will absorb our attention, and we shall lose ourselves in compromises and communal tangles, and disillusion with us will spread over the land. If we have a majority, and only then can the question of acceptance of office arise, we shall be in a position to dominate the situation and to prevent reactionaries and imperialists from profiting by it. Office will not add to our real strength, it will only weaken us by making us responsible for many things that we utterly dislike.

Again, if we are in a minority, the question of office does not arise. It may be, however, that we are on the verge of a majority and with the cooperation of other individuals and groups we can obtain office. There is nothing inherently wrong in our acting together with others on specific issues of

civil liberty or economic or other demands, provided we do not compromise on any principle. But I can imagine few things more dangerous and more likely to injure us than the acceptance of office on the sufferance of others. That would be an intolerable position.

It is said that our chances at the elections would increase if we announced that we were prepared to accept offices and ministries. Perhaps that might be so for all manner of other people, eager for the spoils and patronage that office gives, would then hurry to join us. Does any Congressman imagine that this would be desirable development or that we would gain strength thereby? Again it is said that more voters would vote for us if they knew that we were going to form ministries. That might happen if we deluded them with, false promises of what we might do for them within the Act, but a quick nemesis would follow our failure to give effect to those promises, and failure would be inevitable if the promises were worth while.

There is only one straight course open to us, to go to the people with our programme and make it clear to them that we cannot give effect to the major items in it under present conditions, and therefore, while we use the platform of the legislatures to press that programme, we seek to end these imperialist bodies by creating deadlocks in them whenever we are in a position to do so. Those deadlocks should preferably take place on those programmes so that the masses might learn how ineffective for their purposes are these legislatures.

One fact is sometimes forgotten — the provision for second chambers in many of the provinces. These chambers will be reactionary and will be exploited by the Governor to check any forward tendencies in the lower house. They will make the position of a minister, who seeks advance, even more difficult and unenviable.

Some people have suggested, though their voices are hushed now, that provincial autonomy might be given on this office issue and Provincial Congress Committee should be empowered to decide it for its own province. An astonishing and fatal suggestion playing into the hands of our imperialist rulers. We who have laboured for Indian unity can never be parties to any proposal which tends to lessen that unity. That

way lies disaster and a disruption of the forces working for freedom. If we agree to this, why then should we also not agree to the communal issue being decided provincially, or many other issues, where individual provinces might think differently? First issues will sink into the background, independence itself will fade away, and the narrowest provincialism raise its ugly head. Our policy must be uniform for the whole of India, and it must place first things first, and independence is the first thing of all.

So that I am convinced that for the Congress to favour the acceptance of office, or even to hesitate and waver about it, would be a vital error. It will be a pit from which it would be difficult for us to come out. Practical statesmanship is against it, as well as the traditions of the Congress and the mentality we have sought to develop in the people. Psychologically, any such lead might have disastrous consequences. If we stand for revolutionary changes, as we do, we have to cultivate a revolutionary mentality among our people, and anything that goes against it is harmful to our cause.

This psychological aspect is important. For we must never forget, and never delude our masses into imagining, that we can get any real power or real freedom through working these legislatures. We may use them certainly to advance our cause to some extent, but the burden of the struggle for freedom must fall on the masses, and primarily, therefore, our effective work must lie outside these legislatures. Strength will come from the masses and from our work among them and our organization of them.

Of secondary importance though the work in the legislatures is, we may not treat it casually and allow it to become a hindrance to our other work. Therefore it is necessary for the Congress, through its executive, to have direct control over the elections and the programme placed before the country, as well as the activity in the legislatures. Such control will inevitably be exercised through committees and boards appointed for the purpose, but the continued existence of semi-autonomous parliamentary boards seems to be undesirable. Provision should also be made for a periodical review of all such activities so that Congressmen in general and the country should keep in touch with them and should influence them.

We have considered the provincial elections which, it is said, may take place early next year. The time is far off yet and it is by no means impossible that these elections may not take place for a much longer time, or may not take place at all, and the new Act may take its rightful place in oblivion. Much may happen in the course of the next year, and war is ever on the horizon, to upset the schemes and time-tables of our rulers. But we cannot speculate on this and we have to make provision for contingencies. The decision might even have been delayed, but dangerous and compromising tendencies seek to influence Congress policy, and the Congress cannot remain silent when the issue is raised and its whole future is in the balance.

The provincial legislatures may come, but few persons, I imagine, are confident about the coming of the federal part of this unholy structure. So far as we are concerned we shall fight against it to our utmost strength, and the primary object of our creating deadlock in the provinces and making the new Act difficult of functioning, is to kill the Federation. With the Federation dead, the provincial end of the Act will also go and leave the slate clean for the people of India to write on. That writing, whatever it be, can never admit the right of the Indian States to continue as feudal and autocratic monarchies. They have long survived their day, propped up by an alien power, and have become the strangest anomalies in a changing world. The future has no place for autocracy or feudalism; a free India cannot tolerate the subjection of many of her children and their deprivation of human rights, nor can it ever agree to a dissection of its body and a cutting up of its limbs. If we stand for any human, political, social or economic rights for ourselves, we stand for those identical rights for the people of the states.

I have referred to the terrible suppression of civil liberties by the British Government in India. But in the states matters are even worse, and though we know that the real power behind those states is that of British imperialism, the tragic suppression of our brothers by their own countrymen is of painful significance. Indian Rulers and their ministers have spoken and acted increasingly in the approved fascist manner, and their record during the past few years especially has been

one of aggressive opposition to our national demands. States which are considered advanced ban the Congress organization and offer insult to our national flag, and decree new laws to suppress the Press. What shall we say of the more backward and primitive states?

There is one more matter concerning the Constitution Act which has given rise to much controversy. This is the communal decision. Many people have condemned it strongly and, I think, rightly; few have a good word for it. My own viewpoint is, however, somewhat different from that of others. I am not concerned so much with what it gives of this group or that but more so with the basic idea behind it. It seeks to divide India into numerous separate compartments, chiefly on a religious basis, and thus makes the development of democracy and economic policy very difficult. Indeed the communal decision and democracy can never go together. We have to admit that, under present circumstances, and so long as our politics are dominated by middle class elements, we cannot do away with communalism altogether.

But to make a necessary exception in favour of our Muslim or Sikh friends is one thing, to spread this evil principle to numerous other groups and thus to divide up the electoral machinery and the legislature into many compartments, is a far more dangerous proposition. If we wish to function democratically the proposed communal arrangement will have to go, and I have no doubt that it will go. But it will not go by the methods adopted by the aggressive opponents of the decision for they help in continuing a situation which prevents any reconsideration.

I have not been enamoured of the past Congress policy in regard to the communal question and its attempts to make pacts and compromises. Yet essentially I think it was based on a sound instinct. First of all the Congress always put independence first and other question, including the communal one, second, and refused to allow any of those other questions to take place of pride. Secondly, it argued that the communal problem had arisen from a certain set of circumstances which enabled the third party to exploit the other two. In order to solve it, one had either to get rid of the third party (and that meant independence), or get rid of that set of

circumstances, which meant a friendly approach by the parties concerned and an attempt to soften the prejudice and fear that filled them. Thirdly, that the majority community must show generosity in the matter to allay the fear and suspicion that minorities, even though unreasonably, might have.

That analysis is, I think, perfectly sound. I would add that, in my opinion, a real solution of the problem will only come when economic issues, affecting all religious groups and cutting across communal boundaries, arise. Apart from the upper middle classes, who live in hopes of office and patronage, the masses and the lower middle classes have to face identical political and economic problems. It is odd and significant that all the communal demands of any group, of which so much is heard, have nothing whatever to do with these problems of the masses and the lower middle classes.

It is also significant that the principal communal leaders, Hindu or Moslem or others, are political reactionaries, quite apart from the communal question. It is sad to think how they have sided with British imperialism in vital matters, how they have given their approval to the suppression of civil liberty, how during these years of agony they have sought to gain narrow profit for their group at the expense of the larger cause of freedom. With them there can be no cooperation, for that would mean cooperation with reaction. But I am sure that with the larger masses and the middle classes, who may have temporarily been led away by the specious claims of their communal leaders, there must be the fullest cooperation, and out of that cooperation will come a fairer solution of this problem.

I am afraid I cannot get excited over this communal issue important as it is temporarily. It is after all a side issue and it can have no real importance in the larger scheme of things. Those who think of it as the major issue, think in terms of British imperialism continuing permanently in this country. Without that basis of thought they would not attach so much importance to one of its inevitable off-shoots. I have no such fear and so my vision of a future India contains neither imperialism nor communalism.

Yet the present difficulty remains and has to be faced. Especially our sympathy must go to the people of Bengal who

have suffered most from these communal decisions, as well as from the heavy hand of the Government. Whenever opportunity offers to improve their situation in a friendly way, we must seize it. But always the background of our action must be the national struggle for independence and the social freedom of the masses.

I have referred previously to the growing divorce between our organization and the masses. Individually many of us still have influence with the masses and our word carried weight with them, and who can measure the love and reverence of India's millions for our leader, Gandhiji? And yet organizationally we have lost that intimate touch that we had. The social reform activities of the Khadi and village industries and Harijan organizations keep large numbers of our comrades in touch with the masses and those contacts bear fruit. But they are essentially non-political and so, politically, we have largely lost touch. There are many reasons for this and some are beyond our control. Our present Congress constitution is, I feel, not helpful in developing these contacts or in encouraging enough the democratic spirit in its primary committees. These committees are practically rolls of voters who meet only to elect delegates or representatives, and take no part in discussion or the formation of policy.

It is interesting to read in that monumental and impressive record, the Webbs' new book on Russia, how the whole Soviet structure is based on a wide and living democratic foundation. Russia is not supposed to be a democratic country after the Western pattern, and yet we find the essentials of democracy present in far greater degree amongst the masses there than anywhere else. The six hundred thousand towns and villages there have a vast democratic organization, each with its own soviet, constantly discussing, debating, criticizing, helping in the formulation of policy, electing representatives to higher committees. This organization as citizens covers the entire population over 18 years of age. There is yet another vast organization of the people as producers, and a third, equally vast, as consumers. And thus scores of millions of men and women are constantly taking part in the discussion of public affairs and actually in the administration of the country. There has been no such

practical application of the democratic process in history.

All this is of course utterly beyond us, for it requires a change in the political and economic structure and much else before we can experiment that way. But we can profit by that example still and try in our own limited way to develop democracy in the lowest rungs of the Congress ladder and make the primary committee a living organization.

An additional method for us to increase our contacts with the masses is to organize them as producers and then affiliate such organizations to the Congress or have full cooperation between the two. Such organizations of producers as exist today, such as trade unions and peasant unions, as well as other anti-imperialist organizations could also be brought within this sphere of mutual cooperation for the good of the masses and for the struggle for national freedom. Thus Congress could have an individual as well as a corporate membership, and retaining its individual character, could influence, and be influenced by, other mass elements.

These are big changes that I have hinted at, and I am by no means sure how they can be brought about, or whether it is possible to go far in this direction in the near future. Still we must move to some extent at least if we are to have our roots in the soil of India and draw life and strength from its millions. The subject is fascinating but complicated and can only be tackled by an expert committee which I trust will be appointed on behalf of the Congress. The report of that committee must be freely discussed so as to get the widest backing for it.

All this will take us to the next Congress. Meanwhile perhaps some urgent changes are needed in our constitution to remove anomalies and avoid difficulties. Owing to my absence I have had little experience of the working of the new constitution and cannot make any concrete suggestions. The reduction in the numbers of delegates and A.I.C.C. members would be, to some extent, desirable if there was a background of wide-spread activity in the primary and secondary committees. Without it, it makes us even less responsive to mass opinion, and, therefore, an increase seems desirable. But the real solution is to increase the interest and day to day activity of the lower committees.



I have been told that the manual labour franchise has not been a success and has led to a great deal of evasion. If that is so, a change is desirable for a constitution must be such as can be worked easily and without subterfuge.

The Congress is an all-inclusive body and represents many interests, but essentially it is a political organization with various subsidiary and allied organizations, like the Spinners' Association and the Village Industries Association. These allied organizations work in the economic field but they do not seek directly to remove the burdens of the peasantry under the present system of land tenure. Nor can the Congress, situated as it is, wholly function as a peasant organization, although in many provinces it has espoused the cause of the peasantry and brought them much relief. It seems to me necessary that the Congress should encourage the formation of peasant unions as well as workers' unions, and cooperate with such as already exist, so that the day to day struggle of the masses might be carried on, on the basis of their economic demands and Abyssinia bloody and cruel war has already gone on for many months and we have watched anew how hungry and predatory imperialism behaves in its mad search for colonial domains. We have watched also with admiration the brave fight of the Ethiopians for their freedom against heavy odds. You will permit me, I feel sure, to greet them on your behalf and express our deep sympathy for them. Their struggle is something more than a local struggle. It is one of the first effective checks by an African people on an advancing imperialism and already it has had far-reaching consequences.

In the Far East also war hovers on the horizon and we see an eastern imperialism advancing methodically and pitilessly over ancient China and dreaming of world empire. Imperialism shows its claws wherever it may be, in the West or in the East.

In Europe an aggressive fascism or Nazism steps continuously on the brink of war and vast armed camps arise in preparation for what seems to be the inevitable end of all this. Nations join hands to fight other nations, and progressive forces in each country ally themselves to fight the fascist menace.

Where do we come in this awful game? What part shall we play in this approaching tragedy? It is difficult to say. But we must not permit ourselves to be passive tools exploited for imperialist ends. It must be our right to say whether we join a war or not, and without that consent there should be no cooperation from us. When the time comes we may have little say in the matter, and so it becomes necessary for the Congress to declare clearly now its opposition to India's participation in any imperialist war, and every war that will be waged by imperialist Powers will be an imperialist war, whatever the excuses put forward might be. Therefore we must keep out of it and not allow Indian lives and Indian money to be sacrificed.

To the progressive forces of the world, to those who stand for human freedom and the breaking of political and social bonds, we offer our full cooperation in their struggle against imperialism and fascist reaction, for we realize that our struggle is a common one. Our grievance is not against any people or any country as such, and we know that even in imperialist England, which throttles us, there are many who do not love imperialism and who stand for freedom.

During this period of difficulty and storm and stress, inevitably our minds and hearts turn to our great leader who has guided us and inspired us by his dynamic personality these many years. Physical illhealth prevents him now from taking his full share in public activities. Our good wishes go out to him for his rapid and complete recovery, and with those wishes is the selfish desire to have him back again amongst us. We have differed from him in the past and we shall differ from him in future about many things, and it is right that each one of us should act up to his convictions. But the bonds that hold us together are stronger and more vital than our differences, and the pledges we took together still ring in our ears. How many of us have that passionate desire for Indian independence and the raising of our poverty-stricken masses which consumes him? Many things he taught us long years ago it seem now — fearlessness and discipline and the will to sacrifice ourselves for the larger cause. That lesson may have grown dim but we have not forgotten it, nor can we ever forget him who has made us what we are and raised

India again from the depths. The pledge of independence that we took together still remains to be redeemed, and we await again for him to guide us with his wise counsel.

But no leader, however great he be, can shoulder the burden single handed; we must all share it to the best of our ability and not seek helplessly to rely on others to perform miracles. Leaders come and go; many of our best loved captains and comrades have left us all too soon, but India goes on and so does India's struggle for freedom. It may be that many of us must suffer still and die so that India may live and be free. The promised land may yet be far from us and we may have to march wearily through the deserts, but who will take away from us that deathless hope which has survived the scaffold and immeasurable suffering and sorrow; who will dare to crush the spirit of India which has found re-birth again and after so many crucifixions?

### III

## THE MASS STRUGGLE\*

*"The essence of our freedom struggle lies in mass organization and mass action". The successful mass struggle launched by the Congress has shaken the bases of British power in India; and it has also placed enormous responsibilities on the Congress. Nehru said: "We have great tasks ahead, great problems to solve both in India and in the international sphere. Who can face and solve these problems in India but this great organization of ours, which has, through fifty years effort and sacrifice, established its unchallengeable right to speak for the millions of Indians?"*

Comrades,

Eight and a half months ago I addressed you from this tribune and now, at your bidding, I am here again. I am grateful to you for this repeated expression of your confidence, deeply sensible of the love and affection that have accompanied it, somewhat overburdened by this position of high honour and authority that you would have me occupy again, and yet I am fearful of this responsibility. Men and women, who have to carry the burden of responsible position in the world today, have a heavy and unenviable task and many are unable to cope with it. In India that task is as heavy as anywhere else and if the present is full of difficulty, the veil of the future hides perhaps vaster and more intricate problems. Is it surprising then that I accept your gracious gift with hesitation?

Before we consider the problems that face us, we must give thought to our comrades — those who have left us during these past few months and those who languish year after year, often with no end in prospect, in prison and detention

\*The above is the text of Presidential address delivered by Jawaharlal Nehru at the Faizpur Congress, (50th Session of the Indian National Congress) Dec. 27-28, 1936.

camp. Two well-beloved colleagues have gone — Mukhtar Ahmad Ansari and Abbas Tyabji, the bearers of names honoured in Congress history, dear to all of us as friends and comrades, brave and wise counsellors in times of difficulty.

To our comrades in prison or in detention we send greetings. Their travail continues and it grows, and only recently we have heard with horror of the suicide of three detainees who found life intolerable for them in the fair province of Bengal, whose young men and women in such larger numbers live in internment without end. We have an analogy elsewhere, in Nazi Germany where concentration camps flourish and suicides are not uncommon.

Soon after the last Congress I had to nominate the Working Committee and I included in this our comrade, Subhas Chandra Bose. But you know how he was snatched away from us on arrival at Bombay and ever since then he has been kept in internment despite failing health. Our Committee has been deprived of his counsel, and I have missed throughout the year this brave comrade on whom we all counted so much. Helplessly we watch this crushing of our men and women, but this helplessness in the present steels our resolve to end this intolerable condition of our people.

One who was not with us at Lucknow has come back to us after long internment and prison. We offer cordial welcome to Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan for his own brave self as well as for the sake of the people of the Frontier Province whom he has so effectively and gallantly led in India's struggle for freedom. But though he is with us, he may not, so the orders of the British Government in India run, go back home or enter his province or even the Punjab. And in that province of his the Congress organisation is still illegal and most political activities prevented.

I must also offer on your behalf warm welcome to one who, though young, is an old and well-trying soldier in India's fight for freedom. Comrade M.N. Roy has just come to us after a long and most distressing period in prison, but, though shaken up in body, he comes with fresh mind and heart, eager to take his part in that old struggle that knows no end till it ends in success.

The elements have been unusually cruel to us during these

past few months and famine and floods and droughts have afflicted many provinces and brought great suffering of millions of our people. Recently a great cyclone descended on Guntur district in the South causing tremendous damage and rendering large numbers homeless, with all their belongings destroyed. We may not complain of this because the elements are still largely beyond human control. But the wit of man can find a remedy for recurring floods due to known causes, and make provision for the consequences of droughts and the like, and organise adequate relief for the victims of natural catastrophes. But that wit is lacking among those who control our destinies, and our people, always living on the verge of utter destitution, can face no additional shock without going under.

We are all engrossed in India at present in the provincial elections that will take place soon. The Congress has put up over a thousand candidates and this business of election ties us up in many ways, and yet I would ask you, as I did at Lucknow, to take heed of the terrible and fascinating drama of the world. Our destinies are linked up with it, and our fate, like the fate of every country, will depend on the outcome of the conflicts of rival forces and ideas that are taking place everywhere. Again I would remind you that our problem of national freedom as well as social freedom is but a part of this great world problem, and to understand ourselves we must understand others also.

Even during these last eight months vast changes have come over the international situation, the crisis deepens, the rival forces of progress and reaction come to closer grips with each other, and we go at a terrific pace towards the abyss of war. In Europe fascism has been pursuing its triumphant course, speaking even in a more strident voice, introducing an open gangsterism in international affairs. Based as it is on hatred and violence and dreams of war, it leads inevitably, unless it is checked in time, to world war. We have seen Abyssinia succumb to it; we see today the horror and tragedy of Spain.

How has this fascism grown so rapidly, so that now it threatens to dominate Europe and the world? To understand this one must seek a clue in British foreign policy. This policy,

in spite of its outward variations and frequent hesitations, has been one of consistent support of Nazi Germany. The Anglo-German Naval Treaty threw France into the arms of Italy and led to the rape of Abyssinia. Behind all the talk of sanctions against Italy later on, there was the refusal by the British Government to impose any effective sanction. Even when the United States of America offered to cooperate in imposing the oil sanction, Britain refused, and was content to see the bombing of Ethiopians and the breaking up of the League of Nations system of collective security. True, the British Government always talked in terms of the League and in defence of collective security, but its actions belied its words and were meant to leave the field open to fascist aggression. Nazi Germany took step after step to humiliate the League and upset the European order, and even the British 'National' Government followed meekly in its trail and gave it its whispered blessing.

Spain came then as an obvious and final test, a democratic government assailed by a fascist-military rebellion aided by mercenary foreign troops. Here again while fascist powers helped the rebels, the League Powers proclaimed a futile policy of non-intervention, apparently designed to prevent the Spanish democratic government from combating effectively the rebel menace.

So we find British imperialism inclining more and more towards the fascist powers, though the language it uses, as its old habit, is democratic in texture and pious in tone. And because of this contradiction between words and deeds, British prestige had sunk in Europe and the world.

So in the world today these two great forces strive for mastery — those who labour for democratic and social freedom and those who wish to crush this freedom under imperialism and fascism. In this struggle Britain, though certainly not the mass of the British people, inevitably joins the ranks of reaction. And the struggle today is fiercest and clearest in Spain, and on the outcome of that depends war or peace in the world in the near future, fascist domination or the scorching of fascism and imperialism. That struggle has many lessons for us, and perhaps the most important of these is the failure of the democratic process in resolving basic conflicts and

introducing vital changes to bring social and economic conditions in line with world conditions. That failure is not caused by those who desire or work for these changes. They accept the democratic method, but when this method threatens to affect great vested interests and privileged classes, these classes refuse to accept the democratic process and rebel against it. For them democracy means their own domination and the protection of their special interests. When it fails to do this, they have no further use for it and try to break it up. And in their attempt to break it, they do not scruple to use any and every method, to ally themselves with foreign and anti-national forces. Calling themselves nationalists and patriots, they employ mercenary armies of foreigners to kill their own kith and kin and enslave their own people.

In Spain today our battles are being fought and we watch this struggle not merely with the sympathy of friendly outsiders, but with the painful anxiety of those who are themselves involved in it. We have seen our hopes wither and a blank despair has sometimes seized us at this tragic destruction of Spain's manhood and womanhood. But in the darkest moments the flame that symbolizes the hope of Spanish freedom has burnt brightly and proclaimed to the world its eventual triumph. So many have died, men and women, boys and girls, that the Spanish Republic may live and freedom might endure. We see in Spain, as so often elsewhere, the tragic destruction of the walls of the citadel of freedom. How often they have been lost and then retaken, how often destroyed and rebuilt.

I wish, and many of you wish with me, that we could give some effective assistance to our comrades in Spain, something more than sympathy, however deeply felt. The call for help has come to us from those sorely stricken people and we cannot remain silent to that appeal. And yet I do not know what we can do in our helplessness when we are struggling ourselves against an imperialism that binds and crushes.

So I would like to stress before you, as I did before, this organic connection between world events, this action and interaction between one and the other. Thus we shall understand a little this complicated picture of the world today, a unity in spite of its amazing diversity and conflicts. In



Europe, as in the Far East, there is continuous trouble, and everywhere there is ferment. The Arab struggle against British imperialism in Palestine is as much part of this great world conflict as India's struggle for freedom. Democracy and fascism, nationalism and imperialism, socialism and a decaying capitalism, combat each other in the world of ideas, and this conflict develops on the material plane and bayonets and bombs take the places of votes in the struggle for power. Changing conditions in the world demand a new political and economic orientation and if this does not come soon there is friction and conflict. Gradually this leads to a revolution in the minds of men and this seeks to materialise, and every delay in this change-over leads to further conflict.

The existing equilibrium having gone, giving place to no other, there is deterioration, reaction, and disaster. It is this disaster that faces us in the world today and war on a terrible scale is an ever present possibility. Except for the Fascist Powers every country and people dreads this war and yet they all prepare for it feverishly, and in doing so they line up on this side or that. The middle groups fade out or, ghost-like, they flit about, unreal, disillusioned, self-tortured, ever-doubting. That has been the fate of the old liberalism everywhere, though in India perhaps those who call themselves Liberals, and others who think in their way, have yet to come out of the complacency that envelops them. But we

“Move with new desires.  
For where we used to build and love  
Is no man's land, and only ghosts can live  
Between two fires.”

What are these new desires? The wish to put an end to this mad world system which breeds war and conflict and which crushes millions; to abolish poverty and unemployment and to release the energies of vast numbers of people and utilise them for the betterment of humanity; to build where today we destroy. During the past eight months I have wandered a great deal in this vast land of ours and I have seen again the throbbing agony of India's masses, the call of their eyes for relief from the terrible burdens they carry. That is our

problem; all others are secondary and merely lead up to it. To solve that problem we shall have to end the imperialistic control and exploitation of India. But what is this imperialism of today? It is not merely the physical possession of one country by another; its roots lie deeper. Modern imperialism is an outgrowth of capitalism and cannot be separated from it.

It is because of this that we cannot understand our problems without understanding the implications of imperialism and socialism. The disease is deep-seated and requires a radical and revolutionary remedy i.e. the socialist structure of society. We do not fight for socialism in India today for we have to go far before we can act in terms of socialism, but socialism comes in here and now to help us to understand our problem and point out the path to its solution and to tell us the real content of the swaraj to come. With no proper understanding of the problem, our actions are likely to be erratic.

The Congress stands today for full democracy in India and fights for a democratic state, not for socialism. It is anti-imperialist and strives for great changes in our political and economic structure. I hope that the logic of events will lead it to socialism for that seems to me the only remedy for India's ills. But the urgent and vital problem for us today is political independence and the establishment of a democratic State. And because of this, the Congress must line up with all the progressive forces of the world and must stand for world peace. Recently there has taken place in Europe a significant development in the peace movement.

The World Peace Congress, held at Brussels in September last, brought together numerous mass organisations on a common platform and gave an effective lead for peace. Whether this lead will succeed in averting war, no one can say, but all lovers of peace will welcome it and wish it success. Our Congress was ably represented at Brussels by Shri V.K. Krishna Menon and the report that he has sent us is being placed before you. I trust that the Congress will associate itself fully with the permanent peace organisation that is being built up and assist with all its strength in this great task. In doing so we must make our own position perfectly clear. For us, and we think for the world, the problem of peace cannot be separated from imperialism, and in order to remove the root

causes of war, imperialism must go. We believe in the sanctity of treaties but we cannot consider ourselves bound by treaties in the making of which the people of India had no part, unless we accept them in due course. The problem of maintaining peace cannot be isolated by us, in our present condition, from war resistance. The Congress has already declared that we can be no parties to an imperialist war and we will not allow the exploitation of India's man power and resources for such a war. Any such attempt will be resisted by us.

The League of Nations has fallen very low and there are few who take it seriously as an instrument for the preservation of peace. India has no enthusiasm for it whatever and the Indian membership of the League is a farce, for the selection of delegates is made by the British Government. We must work for a real League of Nations, democratically constructed, which would in effect be a League of Peoples. If even the present League, ineffective and powerless as it is, can be used in favour of peace, we shall welcome it.

With this international background in view, let us consider our national problems. The Government of India Act of 1935, the new Constitution, stares at us offensively, this new charter of bondage which has been imposed upon us despite our utter rejection of it, and we are preparing to fight elections under it. Why we have entered into this election contest and how we propose to follow it up has been fully stated in the Election Manifesto of the All India Congress Committee, and I commend this manifesto for your adoption. We go to the legislatures not to cooperate with the apparatus of British imperialism, but to combat the Act and seek to end it, and to resist in every way British imperialism in its attempt to strengthen its hold on India and its exploitation of the Indian people. That is the basic policy of the Congress and no Congressman, no candidate for election, must forget this. Whatever we do must be within the four corners of this policy. We are not going to the legislatures to pursue the path of constitutionalism or a barren reformism.

There is a certain tendency to compromise over these elections, to seek a majority at any cost. This is a dangerous drift and must be stopped. The elections must be used to rally the

masses to the Congress standard, to carry the message of the Congress to the millions of voters and non-voters alike, to press forward the mass struggle. The biggest majority in a legislature will be of little use to us if we have not got this mass movement behind us, and a majority built on compromises with reactionary groups of individuals will defeat the very purpose of the Congress.

With the effort to fight the Act, and as a corollary to it, we have to stress our positive demand for a Constituent Assembly elected under adult suffrage. That is the very cornerstone of Congress policy today and our election campaign must be based on it. This Assembly must not be conceived as something emanating from the British Government or as a compromise with British imperialism. If it is to have any reality, it must have the will of the people behind it and the organised strength of the masses to support it, and the power to draw up the constitution of a free India. We have to create that mass support for it through these elections and later through our other activities.

The Working Committee had recommended to this Congress that a Convention of all Congress members of the legislatures, and such other persons as the Committee might wish to add to them, should meet soon after the election to put forward the demand for the Constituent Assembly, and determine how to oppose, by all feasible methods, the introduction of the Federal structure of the Act. Such a Convention, which must include the members of the All India Congress Committee, should help us greatly in focussing our struggle and giving it proper direction in the legislatures and outside. It will prevent the Congress members of the legislatures from developing provincialism and getting entangled in minor provincial matters. It will give them the right perspective and a sense of all India discipline, and it should help greatly in developing mass activities on a large scale. The idea is full of big possibility and I trust that the Congress will approve of it.

Next to this demand for the Constituent Assembly, our most important task will be to oppose the Federal structure of the Act. Utterly bad as the Act is, there is nothing so bad in it as this Federation and so we must exert ourselves to the

utmost to break this, and thus end the Act as a whole. To live not only under British imperialist exploitation but also under Indian feudal control, is something that we are not going to tolerate whatever the consequences. It is an interesting and instructive result of the long period of British rule in India that when, as we are told, it is trying to fade off, it should gather to itself all the reactionary and obscurantist groups in India, and endeavour to hand partial control to the feudal elements.

The development of this federal scheme is worthy of consideration. We are not against the conception of a federation. It is likely that a free India may be a federal India, though in any event there must be a great deal of unitary control. But the present federation that is being thrust upon us is a federation in bondage and under the control, politically and socially, of the most backward elements in the country. The present Indian States took shape early in the nineteenth century in the unsettled conditions of early British rule. The treaties with their autocratic rulers, which are held up to us so often now as sacred documents which may not be touched, date from that period.

It is worthwhile comparing the state of Europe then with that of India. In Europe then there were numerous tiny kingdoms and princedoms, kings were autocratic, holy alliances and royal prerogatives flourished. Slavery was legal. During these hundred years and more Europe has changed out of recognition. As a result of numerous revolutions and changes the princedoms have gone and very few kings remain. Slavery has gone. Modern industry has spread and democratic institutions have grown up with an ever-widening franchise. These in their turn have given place in some countries to fascist dictatorships. Backward Russia, with one mighty jump, has established a Soviet Socialist State and an economic order which has resulted in tremendous progress in all directions. The world has gone on changing and hovers on the brink of yet another vast change. But not so the Indian States: they remain static in this ever-changing panorama, staring at us with the eyes of the early nineteenth century. The old treaties are sacrosanct, treaties made not with the people or their representatives but with their autocratic rulers.

This is a state of affairs which no nation, no people can tolerate. We cannot recognise these old settlements of more than a hundred years ago as permanent and unchanging. The Indian States will have to fit into the scheme of a free India and their peoples must have, as the Congress has declared, the same personal, civil and democratic liberties as those of the rest of India.

Till recent years little was heard of the treaties of the states or of paramountcy. The rulers knew their proper places in the imperial scheme of things and the heavy hand of the British Government was always in evidence. But the growth of the national movement in India gave them a fictitious importance, for the British Government began to rely upon them more and more to help it in combating this nationalism. The rulers and their ministers were quick to notice the change in the angle of vision and to profit by it. They tried to play, not without success, the British Government and Indian people against each other and to gain advantages from both. They have succeeded to a remarkable degree and have gained extraordinary power under the federal scheme.

Having preserved themselves as autocratic units, which are wholly outside the control of the rest of India, they have gained power of other parts of India. Today we find them talking as if they were independent and laying down conditions for their adherence to the Federation. There is talk even of the abolition of the Viceregal paramountcy, so that these states may remain, alone in the whole world, naked and unchecked autocracies, which cannot be tampered with by any constitutional means. A sinister development is the building up of the armies of some of the bigger States on an efficient basis.

Thus our opposition to the federal part of the Constitution Act is not merely a theoretical one, but a vital matter which affects our freedom struggle and our future destiny. We have got to make it a central pivot of our struggle against the Act. We have got to break this Federation.

Our policy is to put an end to the Act and have a clean slate to write afresh. We are told by people who can think only in terms of action taken in the legislatures, that it is not possible to wreck it, and there are ample provisions and safe-

guards to enable the Government to carry on despite a hostile majority. We are well aware of these safeguards; they are one of the principal reasons why we reject the Act. We know also that there are second chambers to obstruct us. We can create constitutional crises inside the legislatures, we can have deadlocks, we can obstruct the imperialist machine, but always there is a way out. The Constitution cannot be wrecked by action inside the legislatures only. For that, mass action outside is necessary, and that is why we must always remember that the essence of our freedom struggle lies in mass organisation and mass action.

The policy of the Congress in regard to the legislatures is perfectly clear; only in one matter it still remains undecided that is the question of acceptance or not of office. Probably decision of this question will be postponed till after the elections. At Lucknow I ventured to tell you that, in my opinion, acceptance of office was a negation of our policy of rejection of the Act; it was further a reversal of the policy we had adopted in 1920 and followed since then. Since Lucknow the Congress has further clarified its position in the Election Manifesto and declared that we are not going to the legislatures to cooperate in any way with the Act but to combat it. That limits the field of our decision in regard to offices, and those who incline to acceptance of them must demonstrate that this is the way to non-cooperate with the Act, and to end it.

It seems to me that the only logical consequence of the Congress policy, as defined in our resolutions and in the Election Manifesto, is to have nothing to do with office and ministry. Any deviation from this would mean a reversal of that policy. It would inevitably mean a kind of partnership with British imperialism in the exploitation of the Indian people, an acquiescence, even though under protest and subject to reservations, in the basic ideas underlying the Act, an association to some extent with British imperialism in the hateful task of the repression of our advanced elements. Office accepted on any other basis is hardly possible, and if it is possible, it will lead almost immediately to deadlock and conflict. That deadlock and impasse does not frighten us; we welcome it. But then we must think in terms of deadlocks

and not in terms of carrying on with the office.

There seems to be a fear that if we do not accept office, others will do so, and they will put obstacles in the way of our freedom movement. But if we are in a majority we can prevent others from misbehaving; we can even prevent the formation of any ministry. If our majority is a doubtful one then office for us depends on compromises with non-Congress elements, a policy full of danger for our cause, and one which would inevitably lead to our acting in direct opposition to the Congress mandate of rejection of the Act. Whether we are in a majority or in a minority, the real thing will always be the organised mass backing behind us. A majority without that backing can do little in the legislatures, even a militant minority with conscious and organised mass support can make the functioning of the Act very difficult.

We have put the Constituent Assembly in the fore-front of our programme, as well as the fight against the federal structure. With what force can we press these two vital points and build up a mass agitation around them if we wobble over the question of office and get entangled in its web?

We have great tasks ahead, great problems to solve both in India and in the international sphere. Who can face and solve these problems in India but this great organisation of ours, which has, through fifty years effort and sacrifice, established its unchallengeable right to speak for the millions of India? Has it not become the mirror of their hopes and desires, their urge to freedom, and the strong arm that will wrest this freedom from unwilling hands? It started in a small way with a gallant band of pioneers, but even then it represented a historic force and it drew to itself the goodwill of the Indians. From year to year it grew, faced inner conflicts when ever it wanted to advance and was held back by some of its members.

But the urge to go ahead was too great, the push from below increased, and though a few left us, unable to adjust themselves to changing conditions, vast numbers of others joined the Congress. It became a great propaganda machine dominating the public platform of India. But it was an amorphous mass and its organisational side was weak, and effective action on a large scale was beyond its powers. The coming



of Gandhi brought the peasant masses to the Congress, and the new constitution that was adopted at his instance in Nagpur in 1920 tightened up the organisation, limited the number of delegates according to population, and gave it strength and capacity for joint and effective action. That action followed soon after on a countrywide scale and was repeated in later years. But the very success and prestige of the Congress often drew undesirable elements to its fold and accentuated the defect of the constitution. The organisation was becoming unwieldy and slow of movement and capable of being exploited in local areas by particular groups.

Two years ago radical changes were made in the constitution again at Gandhiji's instance. One of these was the fixation of the number of delegates according to membership, a change which has given a greater reality to our elections and strengthened us organisationally. But still our organisational side lags far behind the great prestige of the Congress, and there is a tendency for our committees to function in the air, cut off from the rank and file.

It was partly to remedy this that the Mass Contacts resolution was passed by the Lucknow Congress, but unhappily the Committee that was in charge of this matter has not reported yet. The problem is a wider one than was comprised in that resolution for it includes an overhauling of the Congress constitution with the object of making it a closely knit body, capable of disciplined and effective action. That action to be effective must be mass action, and the essence of the strength of the Congress has been this mass basis and mass response to its calls. But though that mass basis is there, it is not reflected in the organisational side, and hence an inherent weakness in our activities. We have seen the gradual transformation of the Congress from a small upper class body, to one representing the great body of the lower middle classes, and later the masses of this country. As this drift to the masses continued the political role of the organisation changed and is changing, for this political role is largely determined by the economic roots of the organisation.

We are already and inevitably committed to this mass basis for without it there is no power or strength in us. We have now to bring that into line with the organisation, so as to give

our primary members greater powers of initiative and control and opportunities for day to day activities. We have, in other words, to democratise the Congress still further.

Another aspect of this problem that has been debated during the past year has been the desirability of affiliating other organisations, of peasants, workers and others, which also aim at the freedom of the Indian people, and thus to make the Congress the widest possible joint front of all the anti-imperialist forces in the country. As it is, the Congress has an extensive direct membership among these groups; probably 75% of its members come from the peasantry.

But, it is argued, that functional representation will give far greater reality to the peasants and workers in the Congress. This proposal has been resisted because of a fear that the Congress might be swamped by new elements, sometimes even politically backward elements. As a matter of fact, although this question is an important one for us, any decision of it will make little difference at present; its chief significance will be as a gesture of goodwill. For there are few organised workers or peasants unions in the country which are likely to profit by Congress affiliation. There is not the least possibility of any swamping, and, in any event, this can easily be avoided. I think that now or later some kind of functional representation in the Congress is inevitable and desirable.

It is easy for the Congress to lay down conditions for such affiliation, so as to prevent bogus and mushroom growth or undesirable organisations from profiting by it. A limit might also be placed on the number of representatives that such affiliated organisations can send. Some such recommendation, I believe, has been made by the U.P. Provincial Congress Committee.

The real object before us is to build up a powerful joint front of all the anti-imperialist forces in the country. The Congress has indeed been in the past, and is today, such a united popular front, and inevitably the Congress must be the basis and pivot of united action. The active participation of the organised workers and peasants in such a front would add to its strength and must be welcomed. Cooperation between them and the Congress organisation has been growing and has

been a marked feature of the past year. This tendency must be encouraged. The most urgent and vital need of India today is this united national front of all forces and elements that are ranged against imperialism. Within the Congress itself most of these forces are represented, and in spite of their diversity and difference in outlook, they have cooperated and worked together for the common good. That is a healthy sign both of the vitality of our great movement and the unity that binds us together. The basis of it is anti-imperialism and independence. Its immediate demand is for a Constituent Assembly leading to a democratic state where political power has been transferred to the mass of the people. An inevitable consequence of this is the withdrawal of the alien army of occupation.

These are the objectives before us, but we cannot ignore the present day realities and the day to day problems of our people. These ever-present realities are the poverty and unemployment of our millions, appalling poverty and an unemployment which has even the middle classes in its grip and grows like a creeping paralysis. The world is full of painful contrasts today, but surely nowhere else are these contrasts so astounding as in India. Imperial Delhi stands, visible symbol of British power, with all its pomp and circumstance and vulgar ostentation and wasteful extravagance; and within a few miles of it are the mud huts of India's starving peasantry, out of whose meagre earning these great palaces have been built, huge salaries and allowances paid. The ruler of a state flaunts his palaces and his luxury before his wretched and miserable subjects, and talks of his treaties and his inherent right to autocracy. And the new Act of Constitution have come to us to preserve and perpetuate these contrasts, to make India safe for autocracy and imperialist exploitation.

As I write, a great railway strike is in progress. For long the world of railway workers has been in ferment because of retrenchment and reduction in wages and against them is the whole power of the state. Some time ago there was a heroic strike in the Ambernath Match Factory near Bombay owned by a great foreign trust. But behind that trust and supporting it, we saw the apparatus of Government functioning in the most extraordinary way. The workers in our country have

yet to gain elementary rights; they have yet to have an eight hour day and unemployment insurance and a guaranteed living wage.

But a vaster and more pressing problem is that of the peasantry, for India is essentially a land of the peasants. In recognition of this fact, and to bring the Congress nearer to the peasant masses, we are meeting here today at the village of Faizpur and not, as of old, in some great city. The Lucknow Congress laid stress on this land problem and called on the Provincial Committees to frame agrarian programme. This work is still incomplete for the vastness and intricacy of it has demanded full investigation. But the urgency of the problem calls for immediate solution. Demands for radical reforms in the rent and revenue and the abolition of feudal levies have been made from most of the provinces.

The crushing burden of debt on the agricultural classes has led to a wide-spread cry for a moratorium and a substantial liquidation of debt. In the Punjab Karza (Debt) Committee have grown up to protect the peasantry. All these and many other demands are insistently made and vast gatherings of peasants testify to their inability to carry their present burdens. Yet it is highly doubtful if this problem can be solved piece-meal and without changing completely the land system. That land system cannot endure and an obvious step is to remove the intermediaries between the cultivator and the state.

The reform of the land system is tied up with the development of industry, both large-scale and cottage, in order to give work to our scores of millions of unemployed and raise the pitiful standards of our people. That again is connected with so many other things — education, housing, roads and transport, sanitation, medical relief, social services, etc. Industry cannot expand properly because of the economic and financial policy of the Government which, in the name of Imperial preference encourages British manufacturers in India, and works for the profit of Big Finance in the City of London. The currency ratio continues in spite of persistent Indian protest; gold has been pouring out of India continuously now for five years at a prodigious rate, though all India vehemently opposes this outflow. And the new Act tells us

that we may do nothing which the Viceroy or the Government might consider as an unfair discrimination against British trade or commercial interests. The old order may yield place to the new but British interest are safe and secure.

And so one problem runs into another and all together from that vast complex that is India today. Are we going to solve this by petty tinkering and patch work with all manner of vested interests obstructing us and preventing advance? Only a great planned system for the whole land and dealing with all these various national activities, coordinating them, making each serve the larger whole and the interests of the mass of our people, only such a planned system with vision and courage to back it, can find a solution. But planned systems do not flourish under the shadow of monopolies and vested interests and imperialist exploitation. They require the air and soil of political and social freedom.

These are distant goals for us today though the rapid march of events may bring us face to face with them sooner than we imagine. The immediate goal — independence — is nearer and more definite, and that is why perhaps we escape, to a large extent that tragic disillusion and hopelessness which affects so many in Europe.

We are apparently weak, not really so. We grow in strength, the Empire of Britain fades away. Because we are politically and economically crushed, our civil liberties taken away, hundreds of our organisations made illegal, thousands of our young men and women always kept in prison by hordes of secret servicemen and informers, our spoken word taken down, lest it offend the law of sedition, because of all this and more we are not weaker but stronger, for all this intense repression is the measure of our growing national strength. War and revolution dominate the world and nations arm desperately. If war comes or other great crisis, India's attitude will make a difference. We hold the keys of success in our hands if we but turn them rightly. And it is the increasing realisation of this that has swept away the defeatist mentality of our people.

Meanwhile the general election claims our attention and absorbs our energy. Here too we find official interference, in spite of denial, and significant attempts to prevent secrecy

of voting in the case of illiterate voters. The United Provinces have been singled out for this purpose and the system of coloured boxes, which will be used everywhere else, has been ruled out for the U.P. But we shall win in these elections in spite of all the odds – state pressure, vested interest, money.

That will be but a little step in a long journey, and we shall march on, with danger and distress as companions. We have long had these for our fellow travellers and we have grown used to them. And when we have learnt how to dominate them we shall also know how to dominate success.

## IV

### FIGHT AGAINST POVERTY AND UNEMPLOYMENT\*

*"The dominating urge today is that of social justice and the wiping out of the vast inequalities that exist. We have said so in our Constitution... The abolition of the big zamindari system had been the major plank of our programme for many years... That is the first essential step, but it is not enough, for in order to raise the standards of our people, we have to produce far more wealth by our own labours."*

*"Our fight against poverty and unemployment and our attempt at the economic betterment of the people thus becomes major objectives..."*

It is just over a year since we met at Nasik and it is right that we should meet again in a full session of the Congress. The tempo of events in the world and in India grows ever faster and a year now represents much more than it used to be in the unhurried days of, what seems to us now almost the distant past. Much has happened in this year and among these many unusual and unexpected happenings is the fact that I stand before you here today as Congress President. You know the chain of events that brought this high honour to me for the fifth time in my life. With the honour came a tremendous responsibility and a burden which stronger men than I am would have hesitated to shoulder. But fate and circumstance left me no choice. I claim your indulgence, therefore, and I beg your cooperation not merely during these few days of the Congress Session but in the great and vital tasks which you and I have to face.

At the Bangalore Session of the All India Congress Committee three months ago, I presented a report which was

\*The above is the text of the Presidential Address delivered by Jawaharlal Nehru at the 57th Session of Indian National Congress, New Delhi, Oct. 18-19, 1951.

meant to be a brief review of the past five eventful years in India. I shall not repeat that here. It seemed to me then that the Congress was slowly drifting in a wrong direction. That was not the fault of any particular individual but rather a weakening of the inner fibre of this great organisation, gradual infiltration into it of ideas and persons which had been foreign to it in the past. I was deeply troubled by this process and I raised my voice against it. That voice was heard and echoed by many in the country and, as a result, some changes took place of which you are well aware. The fact that played some part in this changing scene was of little consequence; what mattered was the realisation by large numbers of Congressmen and Congresswomen in the country that something was awry and needed immediate attention. That awakening itself was, I think, a healthy sign and showed that there was still vigour and vitality in the Congress in spite of its sixty-six years and the many vicissitudes it had gone through, the most dangerous of which was the very successes that had crowned its labours. Subsequent events showed that our fears and apprehensions were not unfounded and indeed had great substance. It is now for this Congress to determine with firmness and clarity which way we should look and in which direction we should march. We are yet far from the end of the journey, if, indeed, there is ever any end to a nation's march forward. One major stage has been concluded and perhaps we have loitered too long at a halting place. Events move fast and those who do not move with them are left behind.

Year after year as we meet, some familiar faces are missing and some of the old captains who led us to freedom are no more. This Congress will miss especially that great leader and builder of modern India, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, whose memory will endure and inspire us in ages to come.

I am happy to welcome back to the Congress some who left it not long ago. I hope that they will play an honoured role in the activities of the Congress in the days to come and the spirit of faction that had invaded the Congress will gradually fade away.

We have met here not to have academic debates about theoretical propositions but to face reality and to chalk out



a programme of action. The world today is grim and cruel and the voice of calm and dispassionate reason has sunk to a whisper and is often drowned by strident and passionate cries. The proud culture and civilisation, built up through ages of human effort, still endure in their outer semblance, but somehow they lose their inner content. Their values and standards fade away. The quest for truth and beauty and goodness gives place to a race for unabashed power. The tenderness, graciousness, of the sanctity and dignity of human life are replaced by callousness, vulgarity and naked force. Hate is propagated as a doctrine and politics and economics have assumed the form of dogmatic religion with all its fanaticism, which tolerates no heresies and persecutes those who differ from it. This was the phase of fascism and authoritarianism as we knew them. World War was fought against this degradation of the spirit of man. The war was won but the disease continued.

Communism, for all its triumphs in many fields, crushes the free spirit of man. Democracy itself gradually succumbs to the new cult of force and violence.

What then are we to do? The problem before us has to be viewed as an integrated whole, whether we think of the Congress, of country or of the world. We cannot, to any large extent, affect the course of events in the world. We can mould our own destiny some measure and thereby have some slight effect on world affairs. I want you to think of our problems in this perspective and on this broad canvas. We shall soon have general election in this country on a colossal scale and already the fever of elections is raising temperature of men's minds. These elections have an importance, but they are of little significance unless we see them in this larger perspective. What do we aim at and whither do we go? These are difficult questions to answer, but of one thing I am sure, that we shall not function rightly if we lose our own freedom of spirit and the springs of action that come out of it. Those of my generation can never forget that breath of freedom that came to us when our great leader Mahatma Gandhi came into our ken. That was something more than political freedom which came much later. It was a freedom of the spirit that came to us, a fearlessness and a faith in our cause and in our

country, political freedom has to come us and we are an independent country today, but I miss that fearlessness and that freedom of spirit. I miss these not only in our own country but elsewhere in the world. Indeed the predominant sensation in most countries, including the greatest, is that of fear, and fear is a bad companion and inevitably drives to wrong action. Our master taught us the ancient lesson of **Abhaya** and **Ahimsa**, and even we, small men built in a lesser mould, increased in stature thereby.

He taught us also the importance of means and that means should not be subordinated to ends. Yet today nations encouraged hatred and violence and prepare for the most terrible of wars. The lesson of history is forgotten, that these great wars have a way of following their unpredictable courses and lead to results which were not desired or aimed at; that in fact wars do not solve any major problem.

We live in an age of science and that is supposed to be the moving spirit of the modern age. It was opposed to dogmatic religion. But, in spirit of it, dogmas rule the world today though they are not called religious. Science, which was a liberating force and which has brought untold benefits to humanity, threatens to destroy everything that it has built, including the mind of man.

Is this ultimate result of the Industrial Revolution which began two hundred years ago or so and which arrived at a stage when even the free mind and the spirit of man are becoming affected by the machine and progressively incapable of that quest for truth and human happiness, which has distinguished humanity through millennia of painful effort?

I venture to place before you some of these ideas which trouble me and many others because I feel that we must find some answer to these questions before we can define our own objectives with clarity. Unless we have that answer, life becomes functionless and without meaning. The problem is a world-wide one. Culture and civilisation are not the monopoly of any one or more nations and the hope of peace on the world is not just a pious aspiration but a vital necessity if civilised existence is to endure. We have a great deal to learn from other countries, but we have also to unlearn something and, in any event, I am convinced that if we lose our identity

and the ideals that have inspired us in the past, then we cease to have any significance. We have served India not just because she is a geographical entity and the land of our birth, but because we thought that she represented certain ideals and objectives, the material and spiritual growth of man, and the unity of mankind. We had no desire to impose our ideas on others, but we are firmly convinced also that we would not allow any imposition on ourselves. If those ideals go and the service of India does not represent them, then our pride in India goes also and the urge to serve fades away.

We may be told that all this is impractical idealism, far removed from the cruel reality of today. It is this "impractical idealism" that brought success to us and it is the so-called reality that people talk about, that has brought great wars and might bring another and a greater one. This realism ignores the rise of great and new historical forces which form the dynamics of revolution in the world today. Unless these forces are understood, there will be no correct appreciation of the situation. Gandhiji understood and represented in his own person these historical forces in the Indian context. That was why he was great and that was why evoked a tremendous response from the millions of India. He understood also what India had stood for, her strength and weakness. His life was, therefore, devoted not only to the political freedom of India but also to the emancipation of suffering and down-trodden masses of people. He was a liberating force for these masses and for our women folk. But this mighty force for social justice and racial and economic equality was used without hatred and violence. It was his ambition to wipe every tear from every eye. It appears to be the ambition of many great men today to produce an ocean of tears and blood and in that way to try to solve the world's problems.

Our policies, domestic or foreign, flow from each other or affect each other and have to be integrated to some extent. They cannot be viewed separately. It is not our desire to play an important role in the world or even in Asia. Some people vainly imagine that India aspires to leadership elsewhere. That is a completely wrong assumption. But, as the world is constituted today, international cooperation has become essential and there can be no isolated existence for a nation.

Either there is international cooperation or conflict. We are driven to cooperation and to have our say when circumstances require it. We would greatly prefer not to interfere in any way in the problems of other countries, just as we would like no interference from outside in our own problems. But we would welcome cooperation and help and, where possible, we would like to give our help in the solution of any problem.

The United Nations Organisation and the great Charter, which was its basis, attracted us because it represented an ideal for world cooperation which had always been our own aim. Indeed we believe that some time or other, if this world is to survive, the idea of "One World" must take shape. We have given our allegiance to the United Nations even when some of its decisions have surprised and pained us. We still believe that it contains, within itself, the germs of that world order, which is the hope of mankind. But it has seemed to us that the UNO has somewhat drifted away from what it was meant to be and the intentions of its great founders have not been realised. It was meant to be a universal organisation; it is something less now. This is a serious development and, in considering this, it is immaterial whose fault has led to this change. If the UNO ceases to have that universal background and appeal, then it begins to represent only a part of the world, however big and important that part might be. Instead of a mighty instrument for peace, it would tend to develop into something different. It is, therefore, becoming necessary to reconsider this problem afresh and perhaps to reorganise the UNO on a new basis, keeping to the old moorings, reiterating the Charter, but giving it a wider appeal and making it more in touch with reality.

Perhaps the danger of a World War is somewhat less now than it was previously. Yet the fear of that war consumes and paralyses nations and much of their strength and energy is devoted to rearmament. A hungry and impoverished world cries for food and development, but the world's resources are directed not so much to development but to the production of weapons of destruction, and the mind of man is also turned away from constructive and cooperative effort. It is strange indeed that this should be so when the people of every country desire peace and everyone knows the terrible

danger of war. Has something gone wrong with our thinking, and have we lost touch with the simple facts of life? Surely, it should be possible for the statesmen of the world to put a stop to this mighty race for rearmament and to divert this energy into more fruitful channels. The alternative is too dreadful to contemplate. Even if that final disaster is somehow avoided or delayed, this continuing process starves and degrades the world. Standards of life are lowered, frustration sets in, and the light of faith in the future, which has carried humanity through ages of suffering, grows dim. What shall we do when that light goes out?

There is aggression and fear of aggression and each feeds the other. It is not possible to stop all aggression and interference by one country, so that each country can live according to its lights? We may not approve of the ways of another country and are not likely to bring conviction by force and coercion. The only practical way is to accept that the world is various and diverse and that the people have different faiths and different ways of living. No doubt they will gradually approximate to each other because of modern conditions. To try to impose our system or our way of life on another is to provoke fierce resistance which defeats the very ends in view. There is plenty of evil in the world and evil has to be combated, but this will not be done by methods that are themselves evil, nor will it be achieved through hatred and violence.

If this is a correct approach, then India's foreign policy must be fashioned to this end. It has to adapt itself to changing conditions, but basically it must hold to these objectives. Indeed, throughout our struggle for freedom, we held to this view-point and it is natural that we should continue to adhere to it. To say that India is neutral or passive is completely incorrect. We are humble enough to know that we cannot do much to change the world, but we have a definite and positive approach to world problems and we would be untrue to ourselves if we discard it. We are convinced that any control imposed by one country over another, by whatever name this might be called, is bad and is a danger to peace. We are convinced also that the propagation and practice of racial inequality is an evil and is opposed to

the basic principles of democracy. Large parts of the world today are under-developed and lack the primary necessities of human existence. This imbalance has to be rectified, for otherwise it will continually lead to conflict.

The First World War ended the world of the nineteenth century and upset the balance of power which had existed for a long time. The Second World War brought further upsets and a new set of political, economic and financial conditions were produced. It has been difficult for countries to adjust themselves to these new conditions, to the fact that Asia is a changed continent, where there is a mental ferment in vast masses of people and revolutionary changes are taking place. There is a passion there for social and economic change in the hope of betterment. The land problem is the primary one for most people in Asia, but there are others also almost as important. These problems are not going to be solved by wars and large scale destruction. Nor can they be held up by vested interests, either domestic or foreign. Liberating forces are at work everywhere and if they are not given a chance for proper development, they go in wrong directions. These forces represent the powerful urges of millions of people. Any attempt, therefore, to influence a situation must be such as to keep these liberating forces in view and direct them into right channels. To suppress them or to support some out-of-date system or reactionary force, which opposes them, is to fight against the current of history.

In India, as elsewhere, we have these conflicts between reactionary and static elements and dynamic and progressive forces. Essentially it is on the economic plane, but it touches the social life of the people in many ways. Thus, the Hindu Code Bill, which has given rise to so much argument, became a symbol of this conflict between progress and reaction in the social domain. I do not refer to any particular clause of that Bill, which might or might not be changed, but rather to the spirit underlying that Bill. This was a spirit of liberation and of freeing our people and, more especially, our womenfolk, from outworn customs and shackles that bound them. We cannot progress along one front and remain tied up on other fronts. We have, therefore, to keep in view this idea of integrated progress on all fronts, political, economic and social.

That progress cannot be based on a rejection of our past, out of which we have grown, nor can it be a mere copying of what others do; it must be based on our own genius and cultural inheritance. But it has to reject many of the evils that have prevented social growth and it must take advantage of all that is good in the world.

The dominating urge today is that of social justice and the wiping out of the vast inequalities that exist. We have said so in our Constitution, but our progress has been slow. Unfortunately that Constitution, fine as it is, rather comes in the way of swifter progress. Recently we had to amend the Constitution so as to remove an obstacle that had come in the way of land reform. The abolition of the big Zamindari system had been the major plank of our programme for many years and we had laboured to that end. But difficulties cropped up continually and years passed without achievement. I am glad that a recent decision of the Supreme Court has removed many of these difficulties and I hope that progress now will be swift. Some of our states have gone ahead with land reforms, others have lagged behind. This is a programme which applies to the whole of India and we must put an end as rapidly as possible to all such rights in land which bear down upon the people and come in the way of their growth.

That is the first essential step, but it is not enough, for in order to raise the standards of our people, we have to produce far more wealth by our own labours. We would welcome help from others. But it is dangerous to rely too much on outside assistance. This may be denied or it may come in the way of a feeling of self-reliance, which is essential in a community. This applies more especially to food. We had proclaimed that we had to achieve self-sufficiency in food. Some progress has been made, no doubt, but it is not enough. As our food production grows, so does our population. Food of course is not the only necessity, although it is most essential and, therefore, we have to think of other things also which are necessary for our development. But I am sure that production of foodgrains must be given the first priority. Till we achieve self-sufficiency in this, we shall always be dependent on others and this dependence will weaken us.

Almost everyone talks of planning now. Our Planning

Commission has produced an outline five-year plan. There is nothing very dramatic about this plan and we have not tried to paint a rosy and idealistic picture of the present or the future. Yet I think that this plan is of great importance. It is in essence a realistic survey of what it is possible to do with the resources likely to be available within the limitations of our Constitution and without a marked break from our existing social and economic framework. The plan has done a valuable service by saying in a realistic way what we can do, if we set our minds and hearts to it, and what we cannot do in existing circumstances. We have to remember that any advance or progress does not simply take place because we want it. Objectives and vague hopes and wishful thinking, divorced from hard reality, are likely to remain in the air and lead to disillusion. This plan forces people to think not only of objectives but of how to achieve them and of the resources at our command. Whatever some people's views might be, I think that future thinking or planning will largely be based on this Five-Year Plan.

The only way to build for the future is to put aside or save something each year, and use this saving for some kind of progress. This may be improved agriculture, more river valley projects, more factories, more houses, more education or better health services. Our resources are limited and the most that we may hope to save has been indicated in the plan. Because of this limitation of resources, we have to make hard choices at every step and priorities become important. We have to choose sometimes between a river valley scheme and more housing or more schools. Unfortunately we cannot have all that we want at the same time. The plan recommends one set of priorities. This may be varied, but we cannot go beyond the limits set by our resources as well as the social and political conditions and the Constitution. We have thus to adjust our minds to realities.

Our limitations are obvious enough, but they need not frighten us. It is only by struggling against them that we come to know of their true nature. We may perhaps find that the limitations are such that in spite of every effort, progress is slow. We shall then have to think how far we can remove some of those limitations, within which we are obliged to



work at present, that is, we shall be driven to think of more basic changes in our economic structure.

In our river valleys, a vast quantity of water runs to waste, while we lack water elsewhere. We try to build dams and reservoirs so that we can use this waste water to better advantage and irrigate our lands and produce sources of power and energy. In the same way we may have to think how best to collect all the time that is wasted by idleness and unemployment so that we can utilise this as a source of creative effort and the accumulation of national wealth. It is a tragedy and an anomaly that while greater production is wanted, large numbers of people suffer unemployment.

Whatever plan we might make, the test of its success is how far it brings relief to the millions of our people who live on a bare subsistence level, that is the good and advancement of the masses of our people. Every other interest must be subordinated to this primary consideration. Our Constitution has rightly laid stress on our raising our Scheduled Castes and Tribes and other economically backward classes. This is a duty not only to them but to the nation because only so can we raise the general level of our people. The unfortunate fact must be remembered, however, that, from any economic point of view, probably eighty per cent of our people can be called backward classes.

Our fight against poverty and unemployment and our attempt at the economic betterment of the people thus become major objectives. This is the next vital stage of our journey after political independence. This can only be achieved by social and economic planning so that our resources can be used to the best advantage and increased as rapidly as possible. It cannot be achieved by leaving things to chance or to the vagaries of private enterprise or by the encouragement of the acquisitive instinct. We have had unfortunately an abundance of anti-social practices in this country during the last war and after. This has to be combated on a planned basis and with controls where necessary. Nobody likes controls but controls on certain things become essential when the acquisitive instincts of some individuals or groups come in the way of public good. Private enterprise, therefore, has to be related to, and brought into the pattern

of, the National Plan. It may be encouraged but it should always function within that pattern. If it goes outside that pattern, then it upsets the plan itself.

I have laid great stress recently on the evils of communalism and separatism. It is this evil that brought about the division of India and it is this evil that culminated in the assassination of Gandhiji.

Communalism and separatism are not new growths in India. We had hoped, however, that the new nationalism would put an end to both. It did so in a large measure and the National Congress was largely instrumental in unifying India. Hindu communalism could not stand up before the unifying appeal of nationalism. But Muslim communalism gradually grew and fed itself on hatred and separatism. It was a throw-back from every point of view. Ultimately this resulted in Pakistan. We had hoped that having achieved its objective, it would give place to a broader outlook in Pakistan. We had hoped also that the essence of Muslim communalism having gone to Pakistan, India would free herself of all types of communalism. We were mistaken. In Pakistan the state itself made this its basis and gospel. In India the communal spirit, instead of subsiding, also grew in the shape of Hindu and Sikh communalism. Inevitably, both in Pakistan and India, this was accompanied by the propagation of hatred against the other. It resulted in Western Pakistan in pushing out practically the entire non-Muslim population and from Eastern Pakistan a very large number of Hindus. Government policy there coincided with this narrow and bigoted sentiment and there was no check. In India there were many checks, both governmental and non-official. Nevertheless, as a reaction to what was happening in Pakistan, both Hindu and Sikh communalism began to play a greater and noisier part in our public life. They tried to frighten Muslims and exploited the vast number of refugees who had suffered so much already.

It is not for us to interfere with internal conditions in Pakistan. We are interested of course in the fate of the minorities there. We have accepted partition and we stand by that. Indeed it is quite absurd and completely unreal for any person in India to talk about a reversal of the partition. Some

people are foolish enough to do so, though it is difficult to imagine how any intelligent person can think in this way. So far as we are concerned, we must oppose this folly which can only bring trouble and disaster in its train. The great majority of our people realise this and normally one would not attach any importance to it.

While we may not be concerned overmuch with internal developments in Pakistan, we are concerned very much with what happens in India. It is our age-old policy to build up a united India, united not only politically but in heart and mind, so that the various religious and other groups should cooperate together for their mutual advantage and have full opportunities of growth.

Apart from this being our policy, let us examine this question from the political point of view. Communalism is a narrow and disrupting creed. It is completely out of place in the modern world. There can be no progress in India if we put up communal barriers amongst ourselves. This is not merely a question of Hindu and Muslim but of other religious and sectarian and caste groups also. Once this dangerous tendency spreads, we do not know where it will end and any dreams that we may have of rapid progress in this country will have to be given up.

We have seen communalism at work both in Pakistan and India in its different forms. It is based on hatred and violence and the narrowest bigotry. It attracts to its fold reactionary and anti-social elements who try to prevent social progress under cover of religion or some form of extreme nationalism, which really can only be applied to one community. Therefore it is not merely communalism that we have to deal with, but social reaction in every form. It is because of this that I have laid great stress upon the danger of vague thinking on this vital issue. There are not many who openly profess unabashed communalism, but there are a large number who unconsciously adopt its modes of thought and action. Some organisations proclaim that they are not communal and yet, they have functioned in the narrowest and most dangerous communal way.

Communalism bears a striking resemblance to the various forms of fascism that we have seen in other countries. It is in fact the Indian version of fascism. We know the evils that have

flowed from fascism. In India we have known also the evils and disasters that have resulted from communal conflict. A combination of these two is thus something that can only bring grave perils and disasters in its train. It is degrading and vulgarising; it plays upon the basest instincts of man. If India were to listen to this pernicious cry, then indeed India would not only have continuous trouble within her own borders, but would be isolated from the rest of the world, which would look down upon her.

The issue in Kashmir must be in this context, because Kashmir has become the living symbol of that non-communal and secular state which will have no truck with the two-nation theory on which Pakistan has based itself. The fate of Kashmir will of course be decided by the people of Kashmir. If they wish to go some way not to our liking, we shall not come in their way. Fortunately, the mind and heart of Kashmir are firm about this basic issue and it is because of this that Kashmir has held out in spite of pressure from Pakistan or other countries. We are quite content to have a plebiscite in Kashmir not only because we are committed to it but because we are quite sure of its result. But that plebiscite must be a fair one and must not be held under conditions which give encouragement to the aggressor and justify his aggression. It is easy for any person to go to Kashmir and find out for himself what the conditions are like there and what the people of Kashmir want. He will see communities living peacefully together and cooperating in the defence of their country and in social progress. He will find that in some ways Kashmir has progressed more rapidly than the rest of India, more particularly in land reform. If India had not rejected communalism, would Kashmir hold on to India and look up to her?

Therefore it is a matter of vital importance today that we must curb and check and put an end to both conscious and unconscious communal thought in India. There can be no compromise with that and no quarter can be given. Only then can we realise true freedom and make progress. Only then can we live up to the old traditions of our country and to the heritage of our great movement for freedom.

In a much lesser degree, we have to face the disrupting

nature of provincialism. India is a vast country which has a varied culture. All of us have a rich and common inheritance. We have also, in different parts of the country, variations in that common culture. While unity is essential, an enforced uniformity is not only not necessary but, I think, is undesirable. Why should we not keep this great variety which enriches our lives in addition to our basic unity? Most people, living in their particular corner of India, think of India as if it was a mere extension of that corner, and, therefore, want to impose their way on others. But India is much bigger than that part and much richer and deeper. It would be doing great harm to our concept of India, if we tried to confine it in a strait jacket of a particular point of view or some special customs or ways of life to which some of us are accustomed. There is a vast difference between the people in the southern tip of India and the people living across the Himalayas in Ladakh. Yet they both belong to the infinite pattern of India. Are we going to try to regiment them and make them all of one pattern? We cannot do so, because geography, climate and cultural inheritance prevent this regimentation.

There is also the cry of having what is called one culture for India, whatever that might be. India has a basic cultural outlook of her own, but it has been enriched in the distant past by numerous streams coming from various parts of Asia and, in later years, from the western world. All these are intimate parts of India now and have been woven into her rich and intricate pattern. It is this composite culture which is our proud heritage and which we have to preserve and develop. If we try to deprive ourselves of something that has grown with us and is part of us, we grow poorer for it and we start a process of disruption which is bad for us politically, culturally and in the domain of the spirit.

I have spoken about matters which I consider important, though they might not appear so to some people whose minds are filled with some present-day political problem or the elections. But to me all political or other effort is but a means to an end and that end is an all-round development of India both in material and cultural progress. That progress comes only if we discard a narrow and intolerant view of life and develop a broad outlook. In our Election Manifesto, we

have said that an essential part of education should be an appreciation of and devotion to Truth and Beauty in their various forms. Art and literature, music and drama, singing and dancing should be encouraged. Truth and beauty and art and literature are not the monopoly of any one country or one people. Those who imagine that they are the sole possessors of any of these, have probably lost all understanding or appreciation of them.

It was hardly necessary for me to say all this to an assembly of Congressmen, for the Congress has based itself and grown up in the company of these ideals and objectives. But the turn of events has produced confusion in people's minds and diverted them from what we considered to be the right path. It is necessary therefore for us to think anew about these basic principles and to be clear in our minds, both about the ends in view and the means to attain them. It is possible that in the pain and turmoil of today, gradually a new civilisation is being built up in the world. We can help in this only if we hold to our principles and are not distracted by fear or hope of momentary gain.

I have referred to Pakistan earlier in this address. The partition of India and what followed it immediately produced powerful reactions both in India and Pakistan. Millions of people became refugees, not only bereft of all they possessed but with deep wounds in their minds and hearts. It is not surprising that this terrible experience which these millions have passed through, and indeed which, to some extent, the whole country has gone through, has produced all kinds of complexes and crises of the spirit. The healing process is bound to be slow, and yet without the healing of those deep wounds, we shall not return to normalcy. We have to take particular care to rehabilitate all these millions of refugees and displaced persons and make them contented and productive citizens of India. We have to apply that touch of healing also to our relations with Pakistan, which have remained in a continuous state of crisis during these past four years.

Indeed, on some occasions, we have come to the verge of war. And yet nothing can be so foolish or so harmful such as a war. Every intelligent person, whether in India or Pakistan, must realise this. But passion and anger confuse the minds of

people and fill them with hatred. We have seen, during the past year especially, an amazing exhibition of war hysteria in Pakistan and, because of this, we were compelled to take adequate precautions. Those precautions were not only inevitable in the circumstances, but probably prevented such a dreadful war between two neighbour countries, which have had and must continue to have so much in common. While we take all necessary precautions whenever necessity arises, we must always remember that the objective we aim at is not a peaceful settlement of our problems with Pakistan but the growth of close and friendly relations with that country which, not long ago, was part of our own country. It is inevitable that some time or other we must have these friendly relations with Pakistan. If so, then we must work to that end without doing anything which we consider wrong or which injures or endangers our own country. I am quite sure, in this as in other matters, that the right approach on our part must bring right results some time or other.

We meet as Congressmen, drawing strength from the traditions and history of this great organisation, and yet many of us have had doubts about its future. If the Congress is to continue as a vital and progressive organisation, giving the lead to the Indian people and continuing its tradition of service to them, then we shall have to reorganise it and make it fit in with the conditions of today. The Congress is inevitably a party, but it has always been something much more than a party and has drawn allegiance from millions of people who did not formally belong to it or to any other party. We have to retain something of that wider aspect of the Congress, but this should not lead to floppiness and loose thinking and an accommodation of all kinds of contrary opinions within its fold. In regard to principles, political, social and economic, this must be clear. There should be no room for reactionaries in the Congress fold. Nor should there be any room in it for those who seek, through its medium, personal advancement and profit at the cost of the public good.

The coming elections have an importance because they will affect the future governance of this country. But that importance is very little if we think only in terms of winning elections and forget the basic principles for which we stand. If we

make these elections a fight for those principles and choose our candidates accordingly, then these elections are worthwhile and will undoubtedly profit the country. But if, in our eagerness to win the election, we compromise with something that is wrong, then we have lost the fight already and it matters little who tops the polls.

We have to pull ourselves up from narrow grooves of thought and action, from factions, from mutual recrimination, from tolerance of evil in public life and in our social structure, and become again fighters for a cause and upholders of high principles. Let us not attach too much importance to winning or losing an election. If we win a fight within ourselves, then other triumphs will come to us also. But the real triumph will be, as it was in the past, that we have laboured to the utmost of our ability for something that is worthwhile and bigger than ourselves.



## V

### UNITY IN DIVERSITY\*

*"India is a country with a basic unity, but of great variety in religion, in cultural traditions and in ways of living. It is only by mutual forbearance and respect for each other, as the great Asoka thought, that we shall build up a strong, stable and cooperative community in the whole of India."*

*"The major and most urgent problem for us today is that of economic advance, advance not only of the nation as a nation but in the conditions of masses of people who live in it."*

I am here at your bidding. I need hardly tell you how very greatly I appreciate this honour and the confidence and affection that accompanied it. And yet, I feel a little unhappy that I should have been chosen once again as Congress President. I agree entirely with those friends and comrades of ours who have objected to the high offices of Prime Minister and Congress President being held by one and the same person. I tried hard that this should not occur and pleaded with my comrades in the Congress to make some other choice, but their insistence and the circumstances were against me in this matter. I felt that for me to go on saying "No", in spite of the advice of so many of my valued colleagues, would not be proper. Facts and circumstances hemmed me in and I had no alternative left but to accept, in all humility, this position of high responsibility. I did so in the faith that you will help me to shoulder the burden and that our faith in the great tasks which face the Congress and the country will inspire me to put forth such strength and energy as still remain with me.

We meet after fifteen months. During this period, we have had our General Elections and new Governments have been formed at the Centre and in all the States of India. All but

\*The above is the text of the Presidential Address delivered by Jawaharlal Nehru at the 58th Session of the Indian National Congress, Hyderabad, Jan. 15-18, 1953.



*"I have found that there is nothing more wonderful in the wide world than the love of the Indian people."*

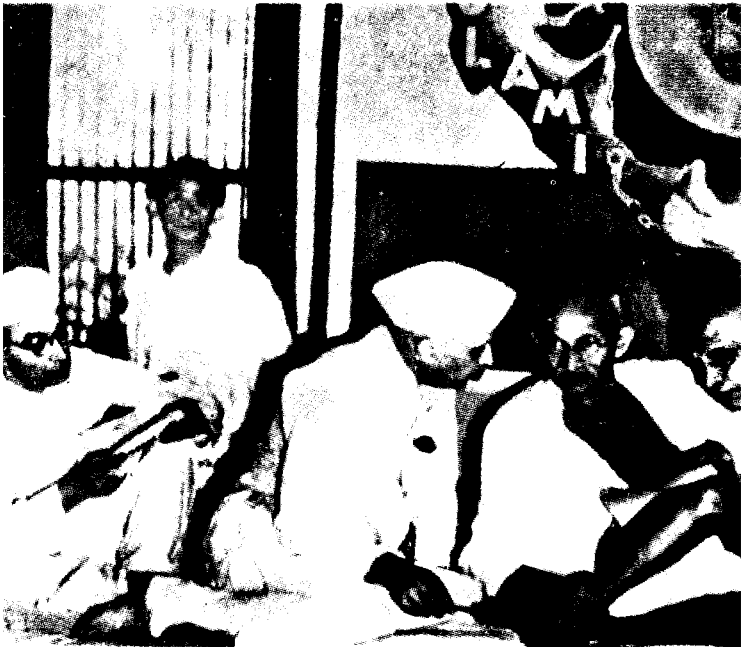
*Incoming and outgoing Presidents of Congress—1929*



*Jawaharlal Nehru with Congress volunteers at Lucknow  
Session of the Indian National Congress held in 1936*



*Congress meeting, Agra, July 1953*



*Pandit Nehru with Gandhiji and Sardar Patel at a meeting of  
AICC in Delhi, September 1946*



*Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi standing with  
Rajiv and Sanjay*

one of these Governments owe allegiance to the principles and policies laid down by the Congress. This is a tremendous responsibility not only for those who are directly associated with these Governments, but for this great organisation which has fathered India's independence and which has to take us along the next stage of our long journey as well. Unlike all other groups and parties in India, we have to face our problems with our responsibility in Government and not merely negatively in opposition or in an academic manner which need pay little attention to the realities that face us. Because of this and because of the past history of the Congress, we cannot function along narrow and party lines. Always we must think in terms of the country as a whole and shape all our action with that larger end in view. Whenever we fail to do so and fall into the narrow grooves of party politics, or, still think of group advantage, we stray from the ideals that have given us strength and from the basic outlook of the Congress. We make ourselves less effective and less in tune with the spirit of our great national movement. We are, however, a party and we must have the discipline of a party. This is vital and essential. But we are much more than a party also and must always keep their wider vision before us always.

Some of our old comrades have left us and formed other groups and parties. Some who left us have come back to us and they have been welcomed. We bear no illwill to those who might have left our ranks owing to differences of principle or of conviction. If their aim is to serve the causes which are dear to us, we shall always willingly cooperate with them and if they choose to come back to the Congress, they will always be welcome. Only those whose objectives or methods are completely alien to those of the Congress can find no place in this organisation. We have been wedded in our domestic as well as our international policy to methods of peace. Those who believe in violence must go their own way and will have to be opposed by us with all our strength. So also, those who believe in separatism of any kind, whether it is communalism or provincialism or casteism, have to be opposed, for they would break up the unity of India, obstruct and delay our progress and even imperil our hard-won freedom.

The General Elections bore evidence, which the world recognised, that democracy had deep roots in our country and that our people had discipline and good sense. The elections demonstrated, yet again, the faith of the people in the Congress and its ideals.

We have tremendous problems to face in our country and in the world. We would have liked to concentrate our energy and the advancement of our people and, as far as possible, not to get entangled in international affairs. We have no ambition to guide others or for leadership elsewhere. Our own tasks are heavy enough to absorb all our energy and strength. But we cannot choose our destiny. India, free and independent, cannot escape from or ignore her responsibilities to the world or as a member of comity of nations. Nor will the world ignore her or exempt her from such responsibilities. There is something of the inevitability of destiny in the way India is compelled by circumstances, even against our wishes, to take an ever-increasing part in the world affairs. We have to accept that destiny and try to live up to it. Even though we have no great power in the shape of organised armed might or great economic or financial power, India is respected more and more in the councils of the nations. It is only five years since we attained our independence. In these brief five years, India has built up for herself a position which commands respect and which brings additional responsibilities. There are hardly any instances in history of a country establishing itself in this way during the first five years of its freedom.

In the political sphere, from this larger point of view, we have succeeded to an extent which is not only surprising but is embarrassing to us. What of our internal conditions and our economic position? The basic strength of a nation does not come from political activity, but from economic strength. That is the key to its own security and its progress. It is out of that that political strength comes. We have many critics in our own country who tell us that little has been done and our pace is slow. I welcome criticism and nothing is worse in this respect than complacency. Even in our ranks of the Congress, there are many critics. It is right that we should never be satisfied with what we do and should ever aim higher and

farther. And yet, it is significant that competent observers who look at India from afar, or who come to India and see what has been done, have expressed their astonishment at the progress made during these five years and have sensed a certain excitement at the way this ancient country is renewing her youth and building herself anew. Perhaps we are too near our own achievements to judge of them correctly. Those achievements stand out and, I have no doubt, will be recorded in history.

In the world today there is much disharmony, friction and conflict between nations and races. There is a menacing lack of equilibrium. The ominous spectre of war and mounting armaments are ever before us. Fear dominates men's minds and the policies of nations and the resources of the world are disproportionately allocated to preparation for or against war according to how one looks at it. Old empires fell before the advancing tide of nationalism or faded away. New countries came into existence and grew in strength and power. This fact was not easily understood or appreciated by people used to the old world which had passed away. They ignored facts and tried to struggle against them. Even now, some colonial powers cling on to the remnants of their empire, though it is patent that imperialism and colonialism are doomed, and that the urges and determination to win national freedom cannot be put down. Our place is with those who, like ourselves in the past, seek the freedom of their motherland.

The great revolutionary forces of science and technology have transformed human life and changed not only political, social and economic organisations, but have also changed even human thought. New philosophies develop and traditional beliefs fade away. Nevertheless, old traditions hold, even when they are demonstrably untrue, and superstitions flourish in this country, as elsewhere. In spite of the world becoming more and more one, in many respects, national rivalries continue. Education spreads, but does not bring either wisdom or vision. Countries think that their policy of outlook is in the nature of self-evident truth and not to accept it is regarded as a denial almost of some divine law. And so, those who do not accept their view are considered



wicked and almost enemies. It is curious that in this age of science, we seem to have less of the true spirit of criticism, of tolerance and receptivity to other views and ideas, which are the basis of scientific thinking. It has become an ominous possibility that science might lead to the extinction of the human race.

In the world today, the two largest and most powerful countries are the United States of America and the Soviet Union. From the point of view of population and potential resources alone, there are two other countries, China and India, both relatively undeveloped yet. East and South-East Asia contain the largest aggregate of human populations, no longer quiescent but demanding the good things of life. These are basic facts from which far-reaching consequences flow.

The foreign policy of a country must depend on the strength of the country itself. Wishful thinking does not alter such facts or add to that strength. Our foreign policy based on friendly relations with all countries and no interference with any. It is never easy to sustain such a policy and more especially when there is so much bitterness and mutual suspicion in the world and when every move by any one party is suspected. Nevertheless I am happy to say that our relations with other countries are good. The only country which unfortunately is somewhat of an exception to this is our neighbour, Pakistan. One recognises that it is not easy to forget recent history or to heal the deep wounds caused during the past few years. We have, however, always held that it is essential to establish and maintain friendly and cooperative relations with Pakistan. This is in our mutual interest and would be an example to the world of good neighbourly relations and a contribution to peace itself. Despite disappointments and provocations, we have striven consistently to this end. Unfortunately the response from the other side has been disappointing and there is frequent talk even of war against us. We cannot surrender to threats, nor any vital principle. In any event, we shall protect our territory and our basic interests if they are attacked. Our policy thus has been one of friendliness as well as firmness, and we have avoided, in so far as we could, any action which might increase the tension

between our country and Pakistan. Some critics of ours have called this a policy of weakness and appeasement and suggest and demand what they call “strong” action. This can only lead to a major conflict. That is a folly from every point of view and I am glad that the great majority of our people are entirely opposed to it. We shall continue to pursue the policy to which I have referred because we think not only that it is the right policy, but that it yields good results both in the short run and in the long run.

We have four major points of dispute with Pakistan — Kashmir, the treatment of minorities in East Pakistan resulting in large numbers of refugees coming over, evacuee property, and canal waters. The Kashmir issue has been before the Security Council for five years and recently the Council passed a resolution which we could not accept. During all these years we have waited patiently for a proper consideration of the problem, and yet it is strange that the Security Council has never given thought to the basic issues underlying the Kashmir problem. Because the Security Council has ignored basic facts and tried to bypass fundamental issues, it has often gone wrong. Its last resolution to which I have referred was even contrary to some of the decisions of the UN Commission itself. It is also opposed to the pledges and assurances we have given and from which we cannot resile. It has distressed us that two great countries should have sponsored such a resolution, which appears to us to be grossly unfair. We took this issue to the Security Council on the basis of Pakistan’s aggression. Our territory had been invaded. We proposed on our own initiative a reference to the people. Even though part of our territory was in enemy occupation, we proposed a cease-fire and gave effect to it immediately. We proposed to Pakistan that both countries should make a no-war declaration. This was refused. Constant threats of war against us have been made and we have not retaliated. The whole history of these years shows how patient and peaceful we have been in spite of aggression, invasion and continuous provocation. We have adhered to every assurance that we have given, because we have been anxious to secure a settlement by peaceful methods. We propose to continue this policy, because we are convinced

that that is the right policy. But we could not keep the Jammu and Kashmir State in a condition of political and constitutional inertia waiting for something that does not eventuate because of no fault of ours. Therefore, a Constituent Assembly was convened. This Assembly is in the process of framing the State Constitution in tune with the Constitution of India and has already passed important laws affecting land reform. In spite of the travail that Jammu and Kashmir has gone through, the State has made progress in many directions.

Unfortunately there has been an agitation in Jammu Province which ostensibly aims at a closure union with India but, in fact, has the contrary effect. It is a disruptive agitation which can only do good to the enemies of the State and of India. I recognise that the people of Jammu have certain legitimate grievances and that economic conditions there are difficult. These matters should be attended to cooperatively and peacefully. The present agitation is basically communal and encouraged by communal organisations. It strikes, therefore, at the very root of the policy according to which we are trying to build up our new India.

We know that Pakistan was the child of communalism and the recent report of the Basic Principles Committee of the Pakistan Constituent Assembly makes it clear that the present leaders of Pakistan intend it to be a medieval theocracy, where non-Muslims may perhaps be tolerated but will have no equal or honourable existence. That also makes it evident what the basic difficulty of non-Muslims in Pakistan is. It is not surprising that they are unhappy in the present and look to the future with apprehension. It is not for me to criticise the internal policies of Pakistan. But we cannot shut our eyes to a policy which creates problems for these minorities and for us. Behind this narrow communal outlook, lies wider policy which is utterly different from that pursued by us in our country. This is evident in many ways, most noticeably in the fact that one of the bravest soldiers of freedom and peace and reconciliation, has been in prison in Pakistan for about five years. Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan was not only our great leader but the leader of those also who live in Pakistan now and his continued incarceration is a tragedy

and a portent of the first magnitude. Our hearts go out to him.

How then are we to meet this situation? Not by war or threats of war, because that is not policy but a failure of policy, and will not solve any problem, much less bring relief to those with whom we sympathise. It will only bring disaster to them and to all concerned.

Nor can we adopt the communal policy of Pakistan in retaliation or as a corrective. That policy will be failed in any country which adopts it, because it is wrong and out of tune with the modern age. It is strange that certain organisations in India, which raise their voices loudly against Pakistan, tend to become themselves more and more replicas of the Pakistan communal organisation. Evil cannot be conquered by evil. Our policy may appear slow and might not bring immediate results. That is the fate of many a problem in the world today, but delay in achieving our objectives does not mean that we should, in our excitement, adopt evil or wrong courses of action and bring about disaster. In respect of those who suffer in Pakistan and with whom we are profoundly in sympathy, it is both a wrong and a dangerous course to seek to excite others and raise expectations when we are in no position to render effective assistance. Such course of action on our part would only render worse the position of those who already suffer.

There is the problem of evacuee properties which affects millions of people. It is distressing that even this problem has not been solved yet. It is eminently a problem which can be dealt with dispassionately and even judicially. But all our proposals to this end have been rejected by Pakistan.

The canal waters issue again should depend for its decision on facts and a correct appreciation of the situation. This also is capable of easy solution if the proposals we have made are accepted. I am glad that an attempt is being made now with the help of the International Bank to get at these facts. Meanwhile, entirely false charges are continuously being made in Pakistan, accusing us of having stopped the flow of water through the canals. It is unfortunate that all these questions, which raise national and international issues, should be exploited for party purposes by communal organisations in

India. The plight of the refugees is a matter which concerns the whole of India. It is not a party issue and all of us should join together in trying to help them and rehabilitate them. The Kashmir issue has become entangled in the web of international affairs and power politics. It is not considered objectively or dispassionately and it will take all our strength and patience to resolve the disentanglements.

It is an issue which requires unity of national outlook on our part. Some of our people and our communal organisations, referring often to India's culture of the past, forget the very basis of that culture, which was a long tradition of tolerance. From the Buddha to Gandhiji, all the great souls of India have reminded us that it is through following right means that we achieve right ends, that it is through tolerance and compassion that people really advance. India is a country with a basic unity, but of great variety in religion, in cultural traditions and in ways of living. It is only by mutual forbearance and respect for each other, as the great Asoka taught, that we shall build up a strong, stable and cooperative community in the whole of India. Any other approach means disruption and disaster, apart from giving up the basic tradition of our rich heritage.

Some people talk of one nation, one culture, one language. That cry reminds me of some of the fascist and Nazi slogans of old. We are one nation of course, but to try to regiment it in one way will mean discord and conflict and bitterness. It will put an end to the richness and variety of India and confine and limit the creative spirit and the joy in life of our people.

We have fourteen languages of India listed in the Eighth Schedule of our Constitution. They are all great languages, from the ancient magnificent Sanskrit, which has still so much life in it, to the other languages nurtured by our ancestors in the soil of India. We have rightly decided that Hindi should be the national language of India, because Hindi, more than others, fulfils the qualifications of a national language for this country. We must encourage it in every way and make it a fitting vehicle for modern thought and a suitable instrument for our work and creative activity. But at the same time, we have to encourage the other great

provincial languages also. There should be or need be no rivalry between them. I have been surprised to hear voices raised against Urdu. Urdu does not compete with Hindi now. It only claims a place which is its right by inheritance in the large household of India. It is our language, nurtured in our country, adding to the cultural richness of our people. Why should we reject it or consider it as something foreign? It is this spirit of intolerance, this parochial outlook, which is more dangerous for our cultural and other growth than anything else that can happen to us.

In the name of culture, we hear slogans and loud cries which have no relation to culture or the growth of the mind or spirit. In particular, the communal organisations are guilty of this narrow outlook which kills the spirit and the mind and weakens the nation. In a sense, they represent some medieval mentality; they stand for reaction in the political and the economic field, even though sometimes they talk in terms of some advanced social doctrine. They are the replicas in this country of what was known in Europe as Fascism and Nazism.

Language is both a binding force and a separating one and we have to be very careful in the matter of languages in India, lest in our enthusiasm for unity we might not encourage disruption. We have seen how powerful are the sentiments for linguistic provinces. There is reason behind that sentiment. At the same time, provinces cannot be carved out merely on the basis of language. There are other very important factors which have to be taken into consideration. It is true that where there is a powerful demand, we should pay heed to it, unless there are some insuperable obstacles in the way. It must be remembered that political changes delay other kinds of progress. A multiplicity of governmental machinery means more expense and less efficiency. The formation of linguistic provinces means the diversion of our energy and resources from the major economic tasks of the day. If we get entangled in this business now, what happens to our Five Year Plan? And if, in addition, such attempted redistribution involves conflict and bitterness, then, indeed, the ultimate result will be much worse. We are a mature people and we should not allow ourselves to be led away by sentiment without giving

the fullest consideration to every aspect of the question.

We have stated that where there is a well-established demand and the proposal meets with the general consent of those concerned, we should give effect to it. We have decided to do so in the case of Andhra and steps are being taken to that end. I earnestly hope that this will be achieved cooperatively with the least disturbance possible. Even so, there is going to be a great deal of upset and our meagre resources will have to be spent in other ways than intended. The decision to form the Andhra State has led to a renewal of demands for some other linguistic provinces. Some of these demands can probably be justified. Others have no such justification. But, in any event, it had to be realised that any widespread and more or less simultaneous change in the political geography of India will create very great problems and will strain our resources to the utmost. It would mean definitely our putting a stop to any real progress in accordance with our Five Year Plan. It might weaken national unity which is the foundation for everything else. Therefore, I would earnestly suggest that while establishing Andhra State, we should wait to see the consequences that flow from it and then take into consideration any like problems elsewhere. We should concentrate now on the Five-Year Plan and having accomplished it, we can then go ahead with added strength to solve other problems.

There is talk of the disintegration of Hyderabad State. Such disintegration would upset the whole balance of the South and lead to innumerable new problems. To all these we should give the most careful consideration and due time. For the next few years at any rate we must postpone consideration of such problems and concentrate on economic advance. We dare not play about with our country or do things that weaken it when the world hovers on the brink of war.

We have a large number of states in the country. Part A States have a great deal of autonomy. Part B States are approximating to the Part A States and before long there will be no major difference left. Part C States are generally small. The integration of Part B States has been a great achievement and has brought improvement in many ways to them. But it has also brought a higher scale of expenditure on the

machinery of government and this is a great burden. The addition to the number of states and thereby to the expenditure on governmental machinery will add to this burden and will result in reducing standards, when we are anxious to improve them. We should think rather in terms of reducing the number of states or in having some common features in states which would lessen the expenditure at the top. We have to choose between the development of the country and balkanization and consequent continuing low standards of life.

The major and most urgent problem for us today is that of economic advance, advance not only for the nation as a nation but in the conditions of masses of people who live in it. We have to fight poverty and unemployment and improve the conditions of life of our people. Our resources are limited, even though our wish to progress is great. It is for this purpose that the Five-Year Plan has been evolved, after a great deal of thought and consultation. This Plan initiates a process of balanced economic development of the country with a view to raising the standard of living and bringing about an increasing measure of economic equality and opportunities for employment. I shall not discuss this complicated Plan here, because the argument is given in the Plan itself, to which I would invite attention. That Plan is not based on any doctrinaire approach and is not rigid. It is modest in a sense, and yet it has far-reaching consequences. I have no doubt that if we succeed in implementing this Plan, we shall then be in a position to go ahead at a much faster pace. The Plan does not limit our growth in any direction. Although there is a private sector, our stress is laid on the public sector which should progressively expand.

Though the development of industry is exceedingly important, special stress has been laid on agriculture, because that is the basis of our economy. In particular, we must make our country self-sufficient in food. From recent statistics and results obtained, I have no doubt that we can do so in the course of the next few years. Our object is to prevent monopoly control and to limit private profit, so as to bring about a distribution of economic power. Our great river valley schemes are magnificent examples of what we can do. They



have been admired by all who have seen the work done there. But it is not by a few major schemes that we will ultimately be judged, but rather by the general improvement all over the country. Our great national laboratories have laid well the foundations for future scientific advance. Great factories have also sprung up in various parts of the country for basic and key industries. Even last year our industrial productivity increased by about ten per cent. It is our pride and good fortune to take up this Five-Year Plan now and make it a full success.

I have referred to agriculture. That depends upon land policy. We have to complete the abolition of the zamindari, jagirdari and like systems as rapidly as possible. We have to put a ceiling on land and we have to encourage cooperative farming. In industry we have to encourage, by all means in our power, village and cottage industries. That is the surest and swiftest method of relieving unemployment. There is no conflict between that and the big industry that we wish to develop. But this big industry will not solve the problem of unemployment except for a relatively small number of persons. Hence the importance of small and village industries.

A very important part of our Five-Year Plan consists of the community centres which have been started in various parts of India and which is intended to increase every year. Through them we hope not only to increase production in rural areas but more especially to raise the level of community life in every direction. Their success, as indeed the success of the whole Five-Year Plan, depends largely on voluntary effort and the spirit with which our people take up this great task of building new India.

We live in an age of what is called cold war, which, at any moment, may develop into something worse. In this world of conflict, the only guarantee of our safety and our freedom is our own strength. That strength ultimately depends upon the economic condition of the people. The Five-Year Plan is an answer to the challenge of the times and on its success depends our survival as a great nation. Those who criticise that Plan and wish to be merely onlookers when this great work calls for endeavour, do little service to the country. If the Plan does not go far enough, let us try to improve it and

take it further. Nothing prevents us from doing so except our own lack of resources or incapacity. If we can do more or go ahead faster, we should certainly attempt it.

We talk of the possibility of war, but, as a matter of fact, wars are going on in various parts of the world — in Korea, in Indo-China and elsewhere. They are serious enough, though from the world point of view they may be limited in scope. As you know, we have been intensely interested in the promotion of peace. We have not tried to interfere and we have no desire to play a dramatic role. But quietly and persistently, for a long time past, we have sought to help in some way so that the tension in the Far East might be relieved and the threat of world war might lessen. Unfortunately, the major changes that have taken place in the Far East during the last three or four years have not been fully appreciated yet by many people who still try to hold on to their conception of a world that no longer exists. The emergence of China as a great unified and vital country has completely changed the balance of power in the Far East and, to some extent, in the world. The revolution in China was no sudden development, although the final change appeared to be sudden and unexpected. That revolution had nearly 40 years of history behind it, during which period this great country suffered from invasion and civil war. The non-recognition by some countries of this new People's Government of China was a refusal to see one of the major and obvious facts of the age. That refusal has led step by step to grave consequences. There cannot be any final settlement in the Far East without the full recognition of this new China. This is not a question of likes and dislikes. A country or a Government is recognised because it exists and functions effectively, not because the political or economic structure there is approved or liked by others. The world can only carry on if there is acceptance of the fact that each country has freedom to develop according to its own way of thinking and there is no interference with it. There is far too much interference today and attempts to impose one country's will on another.

During the last sessions of the General Assembly of the United Nations, a resolution was put forward on our behalf in regard to the Korean war. That resolution was ultimately

passed by a very great majority, but unfortunately two great countries, China and the Soviet Union, did not accept it. And the result is that the deadlock in Korea continues. Our resolution was meant as a proposal to show a way out of this deadlock. It was no mandate and it was based entirely on the Geneva Convention, about which so much has been said. It did not recognise voluntary repatriation of prisoners, nor was there any question of prisoners being asked whether they wish to return or decline to do so. It did not recognise the right of asylum for prisoners of war which applies to political refugees. There was to be no screening of prisoners. It ensured that all prisoners would be released from the custody of the detaining side and in neutral territory. The presumption was that they would go back to their country of origin. In fact, repatriation would have begun as soon as these prisoners were released from detention. The resolution did say that if an individual prisoner of either side refused to go over to his country from the neutral zone, force would not be used or obliged to be used against him. This is fully in accordance with the Geneva Convention which does not lay down an obligation to lift a prisoner of war physically and put him on the other side in spite of his opposition.

I do not wish to argue about this resolution. Our purpose was not to raise legal quibbles, but to help in arriving at a settlement. We made an honest attempt and we failed. I think, however, that even though we failed then our attempt did some good and may perhaps lead to a more fruitful result later. So far as we are concerned, we shall gladly help in every effort which might lead to peace.

While there is cold war between great nations, there is also something very much like a race war developing in Africa. The policy of the South African Government has been opposed by us in so far as people of Indian origin are concerned. That policy has progressively emphasised racial discrimination and indeed the overlordship of one race over another. The movement in South Africa has now become widespread and the Africans are taking a leading part in it. It is being carried on peacefully in accordance with the technique discovered by Gandhiji in South Africa itself long years ago. While passive resistance is taking place in South Africa, in

East Africa a very different situation has developed. On the one side, there have been terroristic outrages, on the other, severe and widespread repression. I have no desire to balance these, but I am concerned at the grave consequences that are already flowing from this conflict. I am exceedingly sorry that some people in Kenya took to methods of violence which can only do them harm and will not strengthen their cause in any way. They have suffered long and I can understand their feeling of utter frustration and despair. But they will not achieve anything by methods of violence. On the other hand, repression will never solve the problem of Africa and the grave danger is that something in the nature of race war will develop and bring disaster in its train. I earnestly hope that a wiser and a more positive approach to these problems will be made. It must be understood quite clearly that no doctrine based on racial inequality or racial suppression can be tolerated for long. There will be no peace in the world if one race tries to dominate over another or one country over another.

We have to deal with our own internal problems in the Congress. The mere fact that our organisation is strong and widespread and controls Governments, has brought many evils in its train. They are the evils of success and we have to be very careful, lest we allow these evils to corrupt and enfeeble the Congress. During recent Congress delegate elections, many such evils came to light. We tried to tackle them and have taken stern measures in many places. We propose to be vigilant in this matter and I must ask your fullest cooperation for this purpose. Some amendments to the Congress Constitution will be placed before you which are intended to help us in removing some of these evils.

Recently, in the Patiala and East Punjab States Union, certain developments took place which have distressed me greatly. They are a warning to all of us. During the last forty years or so of my public life, I do not know of anything so disgraceful and so degrading in our public life as these recent happenings in PEPSU. If in our passion for power we forget standards of public behaviour and the principles that have guided us in the past, then indeed we are doomed and we deserve to perish. But we must not judge the whole of our

organisation by these instances. I am sure that there are all over the country any number of earnest Congressmen of high integrity who are carrying on their work without expectation of reward or profit. They are the backbone of the Congress and are in our true tradition. It is they who gave strength and life to this organisation of ours.

During the past five years we have been trying to build up our new Republic. We have failed in many things and we have not succeeded in others in the measure that we desire. But I think I am justified in saying that our record has been a creditable one, which can bear comparison with any elsewhere. Let us remember our failures and try to avoid them in the future, but let us also keep in mind our successes which have raised the reputation and credit of the country all over the world. We have now to carry on this process and build up in a more conscious, deliberate and planned way. The path has been chalked out. The journey, however, is not an easy one. But then let us remind ourselves constantly that we have not been used in the past to soft living or easy reward. We have to develop that old spirit again, that temper which forgets self and is not depressed by any difficulty or lack of success.

## VI

### EQUALITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE\*

*"After the attainment of independence, our urgent task has been to devote ourselves to the economic betterment of our people, to raise their standards of living, to remove the curse of poverty and to promote equality and social justice. The extent to which we succeed or fail in this great task will be the measure of our achievement. . ."*

*"We stand on the threshold of the atomic age which knits together this world and makes it one integrated whole, for good or ill. . . We have thus to develop some kind of an integrated view of the world, for we cannot live in isolation."*

We meet at a critical time. It is true that at no time now are we free from some crisis or other, and the world lives in a state of high tension, alternating between hope and fear. And yet, it may be said, that the issues that the world is facing, in the present and in the immediate future are of peculiar difficulty and danger. As I write this or say it, I do not know what the next few days might bring. Even this day when we meet together, in this Congress session, is a critical day, for it marks a definite period in the tragic story of Korea. Two days later, eminent representatives of four great powers are due to meet in Berlin. On the outcome of that meeting may well depend which way the scales are going to be weighted. The next day, the 26th January, we celebrate the fourth anniversary of the foundation of our Republic, a happy day for us, and an historic one for the last twenty four years, a day on which we pledge ourselves anew to the service of the great causes to which our country has dedicated itself. Soon after comes another anniversary, that of the martyrdom of the Father of the Nation, when we look deep into our hearts

\*The above is the text of the Presidential Address delivered by Jawaharlal Nehru at the 59th session of Indian National Congress at Kalyani, Jan. 23-24, 1954.

and try to find how far we have been true to his teaching.

This curious mixture of events and significant happenings is symbolic of the world today, where we are pulled in various directions, often by forces that we cannot control. We have the firm anchor of the principles that Gandhiji taught us to believe in, we have the hope and faith that nourish us and give us strength, and we have also the strong winds of fear and hatred and violence that blow in from all directions and seek to uproot us from our anchorage. We live in the dim twilight of the cold war, not knowing whether this will end in the black night of war or herald the dawn and sunlight of a fresh hope for humanity.

It is a difficult task to balance ourselves on the sharp edge of the present with these various and opposing forces that try to push us hither and thither. Fortunately for us, we carry still the inspiration that Gandhiji gave us and even though we may occasionally forget his teaching, the light of it still illumines our minds and hearts.

In Korea, we undertook heavy responsibilities in accepting the Chairmanship of the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission and sending our Army personnel. We did so as part of our contribution to bring the Korean war to an end and promote peace in that unhappy and war-torn land. Whatever may happen today or in the near future in regard to Korea, we may feel in all humility that we used our endeavours in helping to bring hostilities to an end. That was some service to the cause of peace and it is in this light that the real significance of our proposals before the United Nations, in regard to the issue of prisoners of war, should be judged.

We have had no easy or smooth task, and we have been attacked from all sides and have had to function in the context of the hostility, suspicion and bitterness that exist between the two sides. Our impartiality and objectivity have been assailed, and the President of the South Korean Government has hurled threats and insults at us. In spite of this, we have continued to shoulder these responsibilities without giving way to pressure or departing from the purposes that have always guided us – the promotion of peaceful and just solutions. In our thoughts, in our proposals and our policies, we have endeavoured to adhere to a non-violent approach

and our basic policy of non-alignment and partisanship.

Korea has been a field test of our foreign policy and, we hope, in a small way, a lesson and example to us and to others. We shall have to face difficult problems and to make sometimes decisions which are not acclaimed or welcomed by many, but we shall persist in our endeavour and our duty. That is the only course that is consistent with our inheritance and, I believe, is in accordance with the desires of our people. The purposes for which the Repatriation Commission was formed have not been fully achieved. The great majority of the prisoners of war have had no chance of hearing explanations and the Political Conference, which was to decide many issues, has not taken shape. Normally these processes should have been completed before the next step was taken. But a time-limit was imposed on us and we could not go beyond that without the consent of both parties. That agreement was lacking and so we had to take the only course left open to us. Any other course would have led to violence and anarchy.

In the circumstances, we could not release the prisoners or declare them of civilian status because the repatriation processes were not complete; we could not keep them in our custody because we had no authority to do so beyond the specified date. In our considered view, further action could only be taken by agreement between the two sides, and not unilaterally. We must always remember the main aim in Korea, that is, a settlement and the restoration of peace. For this purpose, the Armistice Agreement provided the Political Conference. I hope that this Conference will meet soon to consider and decide on the issues that have been referred to it.

Our representatives on the Repatriation Commission and our forces in Korea have had to face difficult decisions. They have acquitted themselves with distinction. We wish them well and I want to tell them, on your behalf, that they can function in the knowledge that we at home have confidence in them and are proud of their record in Korea.

After the attainment of independence, our urgent task has been to devote ourselves to the economic betterment of our people, to raise their standards of living, to remove the curse of poverty and to promote equality and social justice. The extent to which we succeed or fail in this great task will be



the measure of our achievement. That remains therefore, and will remain, our first duty and concern. But the world presses in upon us from all directions and we cannot remain unconcerned with what happens elsewhere, more especially in Asia. We stand on the threshold of the atomic age which knits together this world and makes it one integrated whole, for good or ill. The geographical position of India in South Asia has throughout history brought her in intimate contact with other parts of Asia. We cannot ignore or change geography.

We have thus to develop some kind of an integrated view of the world, for we cannot live in isolation. That does not mean that we should interfere with others or that we should submit to the interference of others in our country. But it does mean greater cooperation among the countries and peoples of the world, for the only alternative left is conflict on a colossal scale and terrible destruction.

Instead of this spirit of cooperation, we find the very reverse of it, and great and powerful countries are ranged against each other, prepared for armed conflict and accusing each other of aggressive designs. The world is sick and weary of this conflict and of the fear that it has bred. No one wants war and yet, by some strange fate or uncontrollable destiny, it is the thought of war that dominates our lives.

Can war, if it comes, solve any of the problems that confront us? It is clear that it will bring no solution. All that it is likely to do is to bring uttermost destruction and even uproot the very basis of modern civilisation and culture. It will degrade humanity and lead to far more problems than we face today. War, therefore, must be avoided for, in existing circumstances, there can be no greater evil. Any step that leads to war has also to be avoided and we must seek solution of our problems by other methods. The first step is to ease the tensions that exist.

Two powerful blocs of nations confront each other, each trying to play a dominant role. One is called the Communist bloc and the other calls itself the democratic and anti-communist group. Those who refuse to join either of these groups are criticised as sitting on the fence, as if there could be only two extreme positions to take up. Our policy has been one of non-alignment and of development of friendly

relations with all countries. We have done so not only because we are passionately devoted to peace but also because we cannot be untrue to our national background and the principles for which we have stood. We are convinced that the problems of today can be solved by peaceful methods and that each country can live its own life as it chooses without imposing itself on others. We are a democratic country and our objectives have been laid down in the Constitution that we have framed. We can never forget the great teaching of our Master that the ends do not justify the means. Perhaps most of the trouble in the world today is due to the fact that people have forgotten this basic doctrine and are prepared to justify any means in order to obtain their objectives. And so, in the defence of democracy or in the name of liberation, an atmosphere is created which suffocates democracy and stifles freedom, and may ultimately kill both.

We claim or desire no right of leadership anywhere. We wish to interfere with no country just as we will not tolerate interference with ours. We believe that friendly and cooperative relations are essential among the countries of the world, even though they may disagree in many ways. We do not presume to think that by our policies or by any step that we might take, we can make any serious difference to the great world issues. But perhaps we might sometimes help to turn the scales in favour of peace and if that is a possibility, every effort to that end is worthwhile.

Peace is not merely an absence of war. It is also a state of mind. That state of mind is almost completely absent from this world of cold war today. We have endeavoured not to succumb to this climate of war and fear and to consider our problem as well as the problems of the world as dispassionately as possible. We have felt that even if some terrible tragedy overtakes the world, it is worthwhile to keep some area of the world free from it to the extent possible. Therefore, we have declared that India will be no participant in a war and we have hoped that other countries in Asia would likewise keep away from it, thus building up an area of peace. The larger this area is, the more the danger of war recedes. If the whole world is divided up into two major and hostile

camps, then there is no hope for the world and war becomes inevitable.

It is not our way to live in or by fear. We should not live in fear of aggression from any country. If, by misfortune, there is any aggression, it will be resisted with all our strength.

It is in this context that we have viewed the proposals for military aid from the United States to Pakistan. That is not merely a question of a rich and powerful country aiding an undeveloped country, but something which goes to the root of the problem of peace as well as the freedom of many countries in Asia. These countries, including India, have only recently attained independence. They will only retain it so long as they are worthy of it and are capable of defending it. The moment they rely upon others to do so, they have already lost part of that independence and the rest may also slip away later. For the countries of Asia which have suffered so long and so terribly under foreign rule, this is no small matter. In the long perspective of history, this means a reversal of that process of liberation for which we have all struggled in Asia for generations past and which at last yielded results. This is not a question of motives, but of certain steps which inevitably lead to others. We have struggled for freedom and guard it as a precious heritage. Are we now to risk it because of fear or a feeling of helplessness? That is a question which every country in Asia has to put to itself and to answer.

There have been so many contradictory statements about this proposal of American military aid to Pakistan that it is difficult to know what the real facts are, but enough has been said to show that this is no airy talk, but has much substance behind it, and enough has been said also that behind this proposal lie far-reaching consequences. If Pakistan accepts this aid, she becomes part of a great group of nations, lined up against another. She becomes potentially a war area, and progressively her policies are controlled by others. To deny this has little meaning. Freedom recede in Asia and the currents of history reversed.

For India this is a serious matter from many points of view. The mere fact that war is likely to come to our frontiers is grave enough. The other fact that this military aid

might possibly be utilised against India cannot be ignored. I earnestly trust that even at this stage this unfortunate development will not take place and I say so, not in hostility, but in all friendship for the people of Pakistan.

Ever since partition, with the establishment of Pakistan as an independent state, it has been my conviction which, I believe, is shared not only by the Congress, but by vast numbers of our countrymen, that India and Pakistan should live in friendship and cooperation. We accepted the independence of Pakistan and there was no question of challenging it in any way. Any other course would have been the height of folly. Therefore, we have wished well to Pakistan and hoped that its people would prosper and develop. It is true that we had disputes on a number of issues and several of them still remain unresolved. But that does not lessen in any way the basic fact that India and Pakistan have to live in friendship, or else, both suffer greatly and endanger their freedom. Our disputes must be treated as matters for us to decide and not for outsiders to interfere. Indeed, I think that some of these disputes might well have been settled by this time if there had been no external interference from outside parties.

Two or three years ago, I offered to Pakistan that we should make a "No War" declaration, thus making it clear that on no account would our two countries war against each other. That offer was rejected. So far as we are concerned, it remains open, for we want no war. Indeed, we are prepared, as a natural consequence of our policy, to have such agreements with any of our neighbouring countries, thus ensuring that there would be no aggression on either side.

While the situation created by the reported military aid to Pakistan is a grave one and deserves our earnest attention there is no reason why we should be alarmed by it. But it does make certain demands upon us and it calls to us for one thing above all, that is, national solidarity. Time and again in our long history, we have been threatened and assailed from outside. Whenever we failed before such an onslaught and our country was dismembered or vanquished, it was not so much because of lack of arms or courage, but always because of internal weakness. We have great variety in our country many diversities amongst ourselves, which have contributed

to the richness of our life and civilization, but they have also sometimes led to our internal weakness. Our fundamental and historic unity has broken down again and again in the past because of this weakness. Our own arms have been used against us, our own people have betrayed us. That is the lesson of history. Let us profit by that lesson. This is no time to allow a section of our people on grounds of race or region, religion or caste or language to get the better of our national solidarity. If we are united, that unity will confront and confound those who dare to menace our independence or our well-known desire to live in peace.

National solidarity means equally the development of the strength of our nation. This rests on us and us alone. We must seek to build up our strength on ourselves and not by dependence on others. Dependence in one direction leads to dependence in another. Nations, it is said, by themselves are made. By self-reliance, we shall command respect and we shall make our country more and more our own, of each one of us.

This calls for great endeavour, not only physical, economic or financial, but spiritually also on our part. It was that kind of endeavour that made us an independent nation and also enabled us to overcome the catastrophes of the early days of our independence. That is the real spirit of our people and the answer to the challenge that is hinted to us. We shall be vigilant, we shall safeguard our national heritage and security, we will pursue our endeavour for peace in the world, but we must basically rely on ourselves.

I have no doubt that we can do it. We have survived and overcome great difficulties during these past years and, whenever a challenge has come to us, we have faced it with courage. Even the experience of recent years has convinced me that if we make the right approach, the response of our people is good. Where there is lack of success, the fault lies in us, not in the people. Our strength will come not from building up arms or entering into a competition in armaments, but from the development of our country and the well-being of our people.

Two and half years have passed since our first Five-Year Plan began, and all over this great land vast schemes are

being worked out. Many of these schemes are magnificent in conception as well as in execution, and the mere fact that we have taken them up and have pursued them with vigour indicates daring and faith in our future. The great process of consolidation in India has gone on and we have laid still further the foundations of the New India of our dreams. I think that India can stand comparison during a like period with any other country and we may well feel a little pride in our achievements.

And yet, we have many failings and the greatest of these is the tendency to grow complacent. Our administrative machinery, good in many ways, has not yet been fully adapted to the changed circumstances in the country and has not been geared up for swift action. Delays occur at every step and even the monies we allot for various developmental schemes are not spent. We tend to work in fits and starts and that constant pressure, which is so necessary, is not maintained. Our people tend to rely on the Government agencies far too much and, at the same time, criticise those agencies. A high rate of progress can be kept up by constant pressure from every side — from the people, from their representatives in Parliament and Assemblies and from the Government. Between all three, there has to be cooperation. This task is not confined to the Congress and all can share in this great adventure. The Congress is specially fitted for it because of its past history and tradition and its great position today in the country, but it will only function effectively if we revive our old time spirit and forget our petty internal conflicts and desire for office and personal advancement.

The Community Projects and the National Extension Service present us with a unique opportunity for creating a peaceful revolution in this country and, more especially, in the rural areas, which were so neglected in the past. There is scope in them for everyone, whatever his party or group might be. In this struggle for survival, we have to rise above all influences and tendencies which narrow our vision and limit our outlook. We have, in particular, to root out communalism and provincialism and casteism and build up a new India, where these distinctions have no force and where there is a fuller life and opportunity for all.

Even as we work for the fulfilment of the first Five-Year Plan, we have to think of the second five years. This second plan, we have said, must be drawn up in full cooperation with the people and keeping in mind their special needs. Panchayats and village communities should begin to think of it and make their proposals. We can no longer function merely from the top, for we have to organise cooperatively the millions of our people and make them partners and sharers in these great undertakings. In order to do so, we have to enter into the spirit of our people, in their song and dance and music, in their day to day joys and sorrows. It is thus that work and play will be joined together and our projects and schemes become vital in the eyes of our people. That was the approach of our forefathers to the people and in this way they taught them great lessons and noble truths and gave them that joy in life which survived misfortune and disaster. In spite of their dreadful poverty, our people have not forgotten to laugh and dance to be generous to each other. It is only some of the city folk who, in their assumed superiority, have lost touch with the vital spirit of India and often suffer frustration.

Our strength lies not merely in the cities but much more so in the countryside where hundreds of millions of our people dwell. It is for the revival of that countryside that the Community Projects and the National Extension Service are meant. Our young men and women have an ideal opportunity to serve there and thus to get in tune with our masses and fit themselves for higher responsibilities.

The response in many places has already been surprisingly good. Students, who sometimes have gone astray and have shown great lack of discipline and good sense, have made a vital contribution to this rural programme. Our Universities, both teachers and students, can become the living centres from which work radiates. This will be a most effective preparation for leadership. We have often criticised our students, and rightly so, but we must always remember that they are the heirs of the tomorrow that we are trying to build.

Unemployment, on a large scale, casts a blight on many young lives and is one of our major problems. We cannot

remove it by some magic but we can gradually put an end to it by proper planning and hard work. It is no good for everybody to look up to posts in Government service. But we should be able to guarantee employment and work to anyone who is prepared to work hard and is not disdainful of manual labour.

I am convinced that it is not lack of money that is going to come in our way if we are determined to go ahead and are prepared to pay the price for it. The next Five-Year Plan, which should begin to take shape soon, must go a long way in settling our land question and in providing employment.

Freedom is precious and has its rights and privileges; it has also its responsibilities and obligations. We shall only preserve that freedom if we are conscious all the time of discharging our duties. Those of us, who are privileged to serve in our legislatures, have a special duty to perform. Their work does not lie in the legislatures only, nor is the success of parliamentary government measured mainly by its legislative output or the number of days on which the legislature sits. It is the quality of its work that counts and the nature of the relationship between the members and the people who elect them. It also depends upon the growth of a proper relationship between the executive and the legislature.

The Member of Parliament or of an Assembly is the symbol of our democracy in his constituency. It is his work there that brings the legislatures and the people close together and helps to maintain the contacts and relationships that make democracy dynamic and effective. Thus, his work and functions in his constituency are continuous and are not limited to election time. It is his responsibility to have an informed electorate and, therefore, an informed country. He should be the guardian of the people's interests and their voice; it should be his function also to render the people conscious and alert about the great obligations which independence has enjoined on all of us. The faith of the people in democratic and parliamentary methods largely rests on the work of the members of the legislatures in their constituencies. These members should not seek to perform the functions or take the place of the administration, local, state or national; but if they function properly, they make a great impact on them



and make Governments respond to the needs and aspirations of the people.

When an election takes place or an event of national or local importance occurs, it is the Member of Parliament or Assembly to whom the people should look with confidence for guidance. He should help them to develop a balanced judgment, so necessary to parliamentary government, and prevent the emergence of communal or racial feuds and bitterness. He cannot live on slogans. A Congressman, when elected to a legislature, represents not only Congressmen there but the entire people in his constituency. He is the representative of the nation or the state.

The Congress necessarily has to function as an electoral organisation, but that is not its only or most important task. It has been our proud privilege to be soldiers in a mighty national movement which brought freedom to this country. We cannot allow the Congress to shrink now into just an electoral organisation. It is vital that it should function, not only at election times, but at other times also, seeking to serve the cause of the people and to render the work of our Parliament, legislatures, local bodies and Panchayats, part of the life of our people. This does not mean intervention in the affairs of the local administration or coming in the way of the organs of government, local, state or national. Our party organisation must be something more than a party and must win confidence and respect by patient and self-sacrificing service, and thus live in the hearts of our people.

We welcome criticism and even opposition, for that is the essence of democracy. But unfortunately most of the criticism directed against us is unrealistic and has little relation to the problems of the day. The same theme is repeated again and again regardless of its relevance or its practicality. We are asked to nationalise all our major industries as if that would bring some immediate cure. We are pressed, with unflinching regularity, to leave the Commonwealth without being told what good this will do us. For my part, I am convinced that it was the right step for us to remain in Commonwealth. It was right both from our point of view and that of larger world problems. There could be no association of nations with as little binding force or inter-

ference with each other. We would welcome not only this but also any other association with other countries. Indeed, we have been associated with an Asian-African group in the United Nations without any commitments, and this association has been mutually advantageous. We have also close relations with some of our neighbour countries.

As for nationalisation, most of us accept the broad principles of socialism, though we may not agree on any dogmatic approach to it. Where nationalisation is obviously beneficial, we should not hesitate. Indeed, we have built up already a large number of magnificent state-owned undertakings and their number is growing. Why should we use up our slender resources in the acquisition of old industries when we want to start new ones? Each question must be examined on the merits.

We must remember that the complicated problems of any country are not solved by a blind attempt to copy some other. The United States of America is a great and highly industrialised country. Are we to introduce their methods and techniques in our under-developed economy, or are we to copy the Russian methods regardless of their applicability here? We have to face the problems of a heavily populated underdeveloped country, which is trying to make good in a democratic and peaceful way. On no account are we prepared to adopt the methods of violence or any other methods which we consider utterly wrong. That is not only a principle we stand by, but good practical politics, for methods of violence would inevitably produce conflict and disruption and put an end to all progress.

We have no desire to interfere with other countries. But our whole past background and our understanding of the world today inevitably make us opponents of all forms of colonial domination. By our own experience we know that this is bad. It is bad for those who are governed and those who govern. In the context of the world today, colonialism is a constant danger to world peace and encourages a tendency to racial conflict. We had welcomed the progressive elimination of colonialism in many parts of Asia and had hoped that this process would continue to the end. Lately, however, there has been a marked tendency to reverse this

process, chiefly in Africa, but also elsewhere. There have been distressing examples of this which have powerfully affected our people. I earnestly hope that these retrograde steps will be reversed before they lead to even greater disaster. I should like to say, however, that there have been two highly promising developments recently. One is the growth of self-government in West Africa and the other is the emergence of the Sudan, in the heart of Africa, as a self-governing state. Africa is bound to play an increasing part in the world's affairs and it would be disastrous if its normal development is sought to be hindered by force.

Another unfortunate tendency is to support feudal and reactionary regimes, which have completely outlived their day. No amount of support can give vitality to something that does not possess it. Everywhere, and especially in Asia, there has been a passionate desire for political freedom and economic betterment. Anything that comes in the guise of liberating force is, therefore, welcomed. To support a reactionary regime is to lose the support of the people. Unfortunately, it is forgotten that in the ultimate analysis it is the people that count. There is far too much of the mentality which is apt to ignore human beings.

I should like to give expression to a feeling which all of you must share, my deep joy at the liberation, after long years of prison, of our old comrade and leader Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, that man of God, who has been for more than a generation a symbol of truth and fearlessness. We rejoice also at the release of our old comrades Dr. Khan Saheb and Khan Abdus Samad Khan, the gallant soldiers of freedom, whose sufferings did not end even with the advent of independence. We send them all our greetings, affection and good wishes.

Fate and circumstances have cast a heavy responsibility on India. All of us, to whatever party we might belong, have to shoulder this responsibility. In particular, those who are privileged to be in the Congress must necessarily carry a greater burden. They should do so not in any pride of spirit but in all humility and with the consciousness that the great organisation to which they belong still continues to be an agent of historic destiny. They must not only live up to

its traditions but always seek the cooperation of others so that in the brief span of life that remains to us, we may write a worthy chapter in India's long history.

## VII

### ECONOMIC SECURITY AND PROGRESS\*

*The Congress stands for a new social and economic order. "The existing economic structure has failed... and to seek to maintain it is, therefore, to ignore reality and invite defeat... Can we provide economic security and progress without sacrificing democratic liberties? There is no reason why this should not be possible though the path may be difficult. This will involve social vision and a social purpose in all our activities."*

I am submitting this report to the AICC because I think it is necessary for the AICC to consider from time to time the broad policies pursued by the Government. The Government has not been and is not, at present, a fully Congress Government in the sense that every member of it has been drawn from the Congress. Nevertheless, it is predominantly a Congress Government and it relies upon the Congress organisation for its support. It is essential, therefore, that there must be a close understanding and cooperation between the Government and the Congress and the broad policies of Government should have the approval of the Congress.

I think it would have been desirable to have an annual survey and stock-taking by the Congress of the work of Government so that there might be coordination between governmental activity and public opinion which is so essential. A Prime Minister drawing mandate from the Congress should present a report, preferably to the annual session of the Congress, for the consideration of the delegates. I regret that this has not been done in the past.

It is difficult for me, in the compass of a brief report, to present a picture of governmental activity during the last three or four years. The subject is too vast and complicated

\*The first Prime Minister of independent India chose to present the report to the A.I.C.C. at the 57th Session of the Indian National Congress held in New Delhi, October 18-19, 1951.

and involves writing some kind of a history of these few years since we attained independence. Such a report, if at all adequate, would involve consideration of all manner of political, social, economic and other problems. Apart from the length of complexity of such a report, I fear I am not competent to produce one at this stage. Nevertheless, I am presenting these few rather sketchy and disjointed remarks in order to enable the AICC and, if possible, the full session of the Congress itself, to survey this scene and to have an opportunity to expressing its opinion upon its broad features.

It will be remembered that in August 1946 I was asked by Lord Wavell, the Viceroy, in my capacity as Congress President, to form a Government at the centre. The Working Committee considered this offer carefully and took Gandhiji's advice upon it. It was decided that I should accept the offer. In spite of the constitutional limitations then prevailing, it was to be made clear to the Viceroy that we would function not as the old Viceroy's Executive Council, but, to the largest possible extent, as a free government.

Early in September 1946 my colleagues and I took . . . My colleagues, some of whom were non-Congressmen, . . . selected in consultation with the then Working Committee.

Some weeks later, some representatives of the Muslim League came into the Government. This broke up the integrity of the cabinet and led to continuing internal conflict. An agreement was arrived at with the British Government which led to the partition of India and from the 15th August 1947 onwards India became independent; so also Pakistan.

This past period, full of conflict, has raised many controversies, but they are of little relevance today. I have merely given it as the background out of which arose independent India.

One of the immediate results of independence and partition was a communal upheaval of unprecedented magnitude in Western Pakistan and East Punjab, Delhi and the surrounding areas. This led to vast migrations from one country to another and problems of colossal magnitude had to be faced by newly independent India. Powerful disruptive forces were at work and the first objective of Government was to meet

this menace, which might have put an end to our unity and freedom and all ordered government. Government also had to face the tremendous problem of looking after millions of dispossessed persons, most of whom had lost everything and were reduced to destitution. At the same time, Government had to help in building up structure of independent India, which had been badly shaken up in a variety of ways by the partition.

Two and a half months after the partition, a sudden raid from Pakistan into Kashmir took place bringing destruction and misery in its train. An appeal for help came to the Government of India from both the Government and the people of Kashmir and, after serious thought, it was decided to respond to this appeal. This raid developed into a war in Kashmir state territory and Pakistan forces, first secretly and furtively and then openly, committed aggression on the state territory, which had become Indian Union territory because of the accession of the State to India.

Gandhiji's assassination, a little over three months after the raid on Kashmir began, was evidence of the powerful communal and anti-social forces at work in India.

These were the problems facing independent India in its early months. In addition we had to face the new problems which arose after the world war. This war had put an end to the old world and a world, different in many ways, was taking shape and posing entirely new problems to minds which still moved in the old ruts everywhere. As a result, as we have seen, there was a good deal of confusion everywhere and people groped in different directions. In every country there was a certain lack of uniformity of policy. India, in common with other countries, suffered from this hiatus of thinking in old terms in a new world. Our economy had been powerfully affected during the war and in post-war years and by the partition. The pressure of a growing population was continuous. Just at a time when advance was most necessary, our economy became static and even stagnant. Production did not increase adequately and even in some cases went down and the prices shot up.

It would have been Government's first task to deal with these economic problems which affected the lives of the

great masses of our people. Indeed, the desire to bring about rapid progress led the Governments of the union and the states to start many schemes of economic development and social amelioration, in accordance with the general aims of the Congress. We attempted too much because of this urge and the pressure of circumstances and the demands made upon us. This led to enormous strains on our economy with its depleted personnel and multiplying activities. The overriding necessity of the moment, however, continued to be to preserve the integrity and freedom of the country. The administrative machinery was run down and greatly affected by partition. Its quality had suffered in war-time and the quick changes that followed independence affected that quality still further. The transport system was in a broken-down condition. Meanwhile, entirely new and highly complex problems grew up and the activities of Government covered fresh fields. Three entirely new Ministries developed rapidly. These were the States Ministry, the Relief and Rehabilitation Ministry and the Ministry of External Affairs. Some other Ministries also had to deal with novel problems and grew in size. Thus the machinery of the Government of India became more and more an unwieldy structure trying to grapple with entirely novel and highly complex political, social and economic problems. The state intervened more and more in the economic sphere and in business and industry. All this was done with a continuing sense of crisis or impending crisis. Often these activities were uncoordinated and unplanned and did not take into consideration the limited resources of the country.

Controls, introduced during war-time, continued but there was always pressure for their removal, chiefly because of the corruption they led to. Government's policy in regard to them was not uniform and at the end of 1947 a measure of decontrol was adopted, resulting in a shooting up of prices. There is little doubt that this resulted in great harm to our economy and was one of the dominant causes of our later fiscal and economic difficulties. Some months later controls were again re-introduced. To hold and reduce prices became the first objective of Government. This was generally followed with some success, but even here there were minor



variations, due to the pressure of the food and textile problems, which led to some rise in prices. It has become clear that it is of vital importance to keep prices down and any lapse on our part in this matter leads to serious consequences.

During the larger part of this period a great deal of attention was paid to the drawing up of the Constitution of India. It was, I think, a remarkable feat that in spite of the tremendous pressure of our problems and of some kind of crisis succeeding crisis, the Constituent Assembly proceeded with this arduous task and completed it, ushering in the Republic of India on the 26th January 1950.

There is no doubt that the pressure of economic developments has borne heavily on many classes of the community, more especially perhaps the lower-middle class, and there has naturally been a good deal of dissatisfaction because of this. It is possible to attribute many causes for this and blame external events or anti-social elements. But Government must shoulder the responsibility for what has happened and must try to seek remedies. One of the significant and depressing features of the situation has been the lack of coordination and cooperation between governmental activity and the public. Indeed, public apathy has grown.

Looking back at these years, I think I can say with justice that the record of constructive activity of both the central Government and the state Governments has been very considerable. I do not think we need be ashamed of that record at all and I am sure that, in some matters at least, we have laid the foundations for future progress. Everyone knows about the success of the state integration policy for which credit must go to Sardar Patel. A fact not generally recognised is the remarkable growth in scientific research in India during the last few years. We consider this as something basic for future progress in a world dominated by science and its applications. The progress made has not been merely in the setting up of very fine Central Laboratories and Institutes all over India, but in the quality of work that is being done there and the fine body of men and women scientists who are working there. In spite of financial stringency we have continued and made good progress in our major river valley schemes — the Damodar Valley, the Bhakra-Nangal, and the

Hirakud. That again is something fundamental for our future progress. These river valley schemes, which are using up so much of our resources, require, however, careful attention and constant vigilance. An exhibition held in Delhi early this year was evidence of the remarkable progress being made in India in the river valley and other engineering schemes. Our transport system has improved greatly and has been progressively nationalised in many states. -

Many of our great state undertakings like the Sindri Fertiliser Factory, in spite of initial difficulties and delays, are making very good progress. Our communications system has improved considerably.

The results obtained in our rehabilitation work for displaced persons are, I think, remarkable. It is true that much remains to be done and there is still much suffering. But the rehabilitation of millions of persons during the past three years is a great achievement. Model and cooperative townships have grown up, with enthusiastic people engaged in productive activities.

I do not wish to give a list of what has been done, but I am quite sure that the achievements of our various Governments have been quite considerable. From a social point of view, the biggest achievement has been the legislation in many states for the abolition of the zamindari system. Unfortunately, this was held up by an interpretation of the Constitution in the courts and it became necessary to amend the Constitution to get over these difficulties. I trust that progress in this respect will now be rapid and there will be no further impediments. Many state Governments have, in addition, many other achievements to their credit, of which any country can be proud.

Yet, while we have this record of achievements, in spite of great difficulties and in spite of the colossal problem of rehabilitation of many millions of people, the fact remains that the basic economic situation in the country has not been successfully grappled with. At the most it has been, to some extent, held. This has troubled me greatly during these years and I came to the conclusion that the only way to deal with it with any measure of real success, and to direct the available resources of the nation into proper channels, was to have a

Planning Commission. Without an overall picture of the situation and continuous attempts at keeping the major objectives in view and defining priorities and having targets, it seemed to me that our efforts, however well meaning and however much they were backed up by hard work, would be uncoordinated and partly wasted. A Planning Commission was, therefore, established a year ago and ever since then this body of eminent and earnest men have wrestled with this enormous variety of problems in their entirety. They hope to issue very soon their first preliminary and provisional survey in which they propose to make recommendations for a five-year plan. I feel that the wisest thing that our Government has done during these three or four years has been the appointment of this Planning Commission. I am quite sure that without some such approach, it is not possible to deal with the situation that faces us with any measure of success.

Congress has defined from time to time its objectives and laid down broad lines of policy, more especially in regard to agrarian matters, which count for so much in this country. Those directions are helpful. But in order to translate them into an actual programme, much more detailed investigation of each problem and its relation to other problems is necessary. We cannot go beyond our resources and, therefore, we must know exactly what our resources are and how best to apply them. A government may be and should be idealistic in its approach, but its idealism will fail if it is not based on realities.

It is essential that we make progress, or else we go down and for this purpose we must have the wherewithal for progress and a complete picture of what we are aiming at in the near future. It seems to me that both for the Government and the Congress, and indeed for all other parties and the people generally, the only right approach is through a consideration of the Planning Commission's report. This report is something more than the report of a few eminent men. It has been evolved after the fullest consultation with various departments of Government, both central and state, and with eminent men and women representing different interests and viewpoints all over the country. It thus represents a very large measure of cooperative effort. Government is not committed

to it yet because it has had no opportunity of fully examining it. Nor can the Congress be committed to it. But any consideration of our various problems should, I think, take place in future on the basis of this report. It is not helpful for the Congress or for any other organisation merely to pass general resolutions which indicate the direction in which we have to go. These are important in their place, but are not enough when we are dealing with practical problems. I do not propose, therefore, to refer here to these various problems except to draw attention to some aspects of some of them.

I should like to say that I have been very deeply conscious of the lack of success in many matters, and more especially these basic economic matters. I feel that, as Prime Minister, I must shoulder the responsibility for all that has happened, both the successes and failures of Government, and I should like to be judged by that standard. My colleagues in Government have worked hard for a number of years and given the best that was in them to the service of the country. All of them are responsible men and women, but the final responsibility must inevitably rest with me. I became Prime Minister because the Congress willed it so and the country accepted it. I have shouldered this very heavy responsibility for a long time now and I would welcome younger shoulders to carry it in future. It is possible that fresh and earnest minds may throw more light on our complex problems than those who have perhaps got into a rut of thinking and action. Indeed, in any event, we have to use our best resources in the country and not rely on just a few persons to carry the burden.

Although nearly four years have elapsed since independence came to us, neither we nor the world have gone back to any degree of normality. We live in a precarious and dangerous age and this requires constant vigilance. The distance between freedom and the lack of it is not great and it is a possibility not to be forgotten that wrong policies might lead to a breakdown of some of the essentials of freedom. We have faced the spectre of famine and we hope that we have prevented it from materialising. Yet the situation requires constant and unremitting care. Disruptive and anti-social forces are at work in the country and the law and order situation also requires vigilance. We have not yet developed

sufficiently a sense of loyalty to the nation, overshadowing and overriding regional and sectional loyalties. Or perhaps most of our people feel that freedom having been attained any danger to the nation is past and, therefore, they can indulge in these narrow and sectional activities.

In spite of apparent differences and strong condemnation of each other, I believe that there is a very large measure of unanimity in the country about our basic objectives. If we are to succeed, presumably there should be also an equal measure of agreement in working for those objectives. I see no harm in differences in methods of approach or emphasis, provided there is a wide measure of agreement. Any national plan must necessarily have that large measure of agreement. There must also be adequate power to give effect to it and an administrative setup suitable for it. It is necessary to have a strong Central Government which can work out this national plan throughout the country in cooperation with the State Governments. There has been sometimes a lack of this co-operation between the Centre and the States. Nothing would be more injurious to the nation's progress at this stage in history than to have weak and unstable governments which cannot adopt any firm policy or give effect to it.

There are risks and dangers in adopting any plan of democratic progress, but the greatest risk of all today is in remaining static. At the same time we must necessarily minimise risks and not indulge in adventurist policies, which may well lead to reaction, as they have done in some other countries. Broadly speaking, we aim at democracy with the essential features of socialism. Thus we would realise the purpose embodied in our Constitution and the objective of a Cooperative Commonwealth that the Congress has laid down. To move slowly is dangerous, because events might overwhelm us. To move too fast might well lead to bitter conflicts and weaken the country and involve a heavier price in the end. Whether it is possible to find the middle path, I do not know. But we have to try our utmost to find that way, for any other path is likely to prove harmful. We have to function within the limits of the Constitution which has been drawn up with exceeding care. But that does not mean that, if urgent necessity arises, or experience points that way, we

cannot amend or vary it.

Political and economic theories and doctrines are important as they are presumably based on knowledge and experience. But if they are to be worthwhile, they have to satisfy basic human needs. It is patent that these basic human needs are not satisfied in India and in many other countries, for a vast number of people today. The existing economic structure has failed to that extent and to seek to maintain it unchanged is, therefore, to ignore reality and invite defeat. We must find some way out. Communism's appeal to the many has been based on its promise to satisfy certain essential human needs and to provide security. But we have seen that it brings in its train conflict and violence and authoritarianism and the suppression of the individual. Can we provide economic security and progress without sacrificing democratic liberties? There is no reason why this should not be possible though the path may be difficult. This will involve social vision and a social purpose in all our activities. This will mean our deliberately aiming at a new type of society whose chief purpose is the welfare of the people, not only in material living standards, but also in the things of the spirit. That is the Welfare State, which may be far from us now, but which we can progressively realise if we set our minds and hands to this great task. If we have to avoid authoritarianism, as we must, we have also to avoid unregulated private enterprise. We have to try to replace the acquisitive instinct with the spirit of cooperative effort in a common cause.

The world is full today of the spirit of conflict, and behind that lie fear and hatred. The destructive forces are at work and armaments pile up. Every man knows that even victory in a vast world conflict means nothing to humanity, which will have to face a wilderness of destruction, and the growth of centuries of civilised effort will be shattered. Yet vast elemental forces push humanity to the brink and blind men's eyes. Violence and conflict cannot always be avoided, internationally or nationally, but their outcome seldom leads to human progress. At any rate we have arrived at a stage when the very survival of man and of all human values is threatened by unrestrained violence. From this world scene we can learn some lessons for our national problems. Those national

problems, which are essentially human, have to be solved or else there is progressive degradation and perhaps disaster. If we try to solve them by large-scale conflict, we not only fail but possibly bring untold human suffering and go back for a generation or more. For us also it is a question of survival. The middle way is the democratic way, provided that such democracy is a vital force, with something of the revolutionary ardour about it.

India is a secular state. That is the very basis of our Constitution and we must understand it with all its implications. That, of course, is the only modern and civilised approach. That approach is in keeping with the whole growth of our national movement. It is not only in consonance with our ideology but also with practical considerations. Any other approach is fraught with disaster and would be a negation of all that we have stood for. I am laying stress on this because there has been some flabbiness in this matter even in Congress circles. I feel that on this subject there can be no compromise of any kind. Unfortunately there are some communal groups in the country which challenge this secular aspect of the state and which nourish narrow and reactionary ideals. It is necessary for us, therefore, to be perfectly clear on this issue and to be prepared to stand or fall by it. As a consequence we have to give special care to all our minorities, such as Muslims, Sikhs, Christians and others. This fact has always to be remembered and in the forthcoming elections it should, more especially, be borne in mind.

Our objective in ensuring justice, social, economic and political, to all may take some time before we realise it fully. But it involves special attention being paid to the backward and unprivileged classes, including those living in the tribal areas, so that they might raise themselves educationally and economically.

I would certainly not call our women backward. In our national struggle for freedom they have played a splendid part and they have distinguished themselves in many fields. But it is true that they labour under great social disabilities and even in the political field they have not yet been given the position that they deserve. I think that a nation's progress depends far more than many men think on its women and on

the care that is bestowed upon them. For some years past a legislative measure which sought to remove certain disabilities on Hindu women has been before the Legislature. I hope that it may be possible to pass the Hindu Code Bill before long.

We have been criticised for our economic policy and some of the criticisms are, as I have mentioned above, justified. But I feel that the criticisms would have had more weight if they had been based more on facts. Inevitably, our policy has been that of what is called a mixed economy with a public and a private sector. A policy of pure *laissez faire* is not feasible and must therefore be rejected. The only alternative to a mixed economy is something in which the private sector hardly plays any important part. But this cannot be brought about merely by legislation unless we have the resources and the training for it. We have felt that there is still an honourable place for private enterprise. But, if we have any national plan, as we must, then the private sector must accept the objectives of that plan and fit into it. Indeed, both the public and private sectors must function, more or less as a single whole, in the interests of that plan and serve the same social ends.

The only test of any system that we apply is that it gives us the desired results. It is the objective that counts and not the method. To what extent there should be a public sector or a private sector must therefore be judged by the results achieved. Any plan will involve certain controls, certain priorities, and the adjustment of conflicting claims. It involves also a balance between present benefits and future progress. If we are to go towards the achievement of the purposes we aim at, then we must lay the foundations for more rapid economic growth in the future. We have to enlarge our resources and, to some extent, sacrifice present good. Inevitably, this involves a certain degree of austerity, not as a virtue, but as a political and social necessity so as to secure the essentials of life for those who lack them and to ensure future progress. I am sure that this would be accepted by a great majority of our people, provided that the entire picture is before them, and provided that they realise that the burden is evenly borne.



It was with this purpose in view that we gave first priority to the great river valley schemes which promise more irrigation and power. It was also with this objective in view that we developed scientific talent and resources in the country. Top priority has to be given to agriculture and rural economy and to certain basic industries, such as steel, on which so much else depends. Stress has frequently been laid on an increase in production. Without this, the most we can do is to distribute our poverty and to bid good-bye to any real advance. Another essential condition is to check inflation. If prices continue to go up, then all our plans are shattered. It must therefore be kept always in mind that it is of the highest importance to keep down prices and every step taken should be judged from this point of view.

As agriculture is the principal occupation of the great majority of our people, it must be the first concern of the state. The abolition of the zamindari system has been the first reform and this must be expedited. But it must be remembered that this by itself is no solution of the problem. Even before this abolition a very large proportion of land was self-cultivated. An addition to it, without any further reforms, will not help much. The small subsistence farm makes progress difficult; We have to think, therefore, and think soon, of other and further steps. There should be a diversion of a part of the agricultural population to other occupations. There should be a development of cottage and small scale industries. But essentially the problem of agriculture needs cooperative cultivation and the application of modern techniques. This does not mean necessarily mechanising agriculture all over India, though some degree of mechanisation is taking place and is desirable. But there is no escape from some form of cooperative cultivation, if we are to make agriculture progressive.

In this connection we have to think also of the tremendous growth of population and the necessity for what is called family planning. From being a fad of some individuals in India, this has become one of the important issues before the country and it seems clear that the state must encourage this family planning or birth control.

In dealing with agriculture, the cooperation of the farmer

is essential. Our Government departments have an abundance of good plans. But they seldom reach down to the farmer. If any large-scale improvement in our agriculture is to be brought about, it can only be by the understanding and cooperation of the cultivator. Where this understanding has been aimed at and achieved, quite substantial results have followed.

The food problem is necessarily of top-most priority. During the last two or three years this has over-shadowed other matters and we have barely escaped a large scale famine. 'Grow-more-food' campaigns have been severely criticised and it has been said that they have been wasted effort. This criticism is not justified, although mistakes have been made. The campaign has yielded substantial results as statistics show. It is likely to yield even more results. But, because this additional production did not come in the net of procurement, the results were not so obvious and the necessity for imports continued. I should like to express my gratitude to various countries, who came to our help at our time of need, especially to the United States of America for their recent food legislation which will enable us to get two million tons of foodgrains from them. The position, nevertheless continues to be serious and requiring our utmost effort.

In this connection there has been a good deal of controversy about controls. Nobody likes controls as such and some of the criticism has great weight. But the removal of controls of foodgrains is likely to lead to a substantial rise in food prices. This is too grave a risk to run and it will upset not only our price policy but our entire plan. An attempt at decontrol in 1947-48 had disastrous consequences. Because of our present difficulties and dissatisfaction with the working of some controls, we must not lose sight of the fact that removal of control on essential articles in short supply may not only have serious consequences on the well-being of the people generally, but affect our entire structure of planning.

In regard to industry, the question of industrial relations is obviously of importance. No real progress can be made and no plan can function if there is industrial discord or if there is sense of frustration and lack of effort in the worker. As with

the cultivator, so also with the industrial worker, his cooperation has to be sought and obtained. The Industries (development & control) Bill of 1949 for the regulation of industry has unfortunately been pending for some time. I should like it to be passed as soon as possible.

I have mentioned cottage and small-scale industries. These are important even in highly industrialised countries. But they are of very special importance in India. If we lack capital, we do not lack man-power and, like China, we must use this man-power both to add to the wealth of the country and to reduce unemployment. It is important, however, for both cottage and small-scale industries to use the latest techniques and to be coordinated with large-scale industry.

There is always a difficulty in planning for the urgent needs of a country. A large part of our national revenue is spent upon the defence services. They are not productive in the normal sense of the word and all that spent upon them ultimately reduces our capacity for other and more productive expenditure, and yet the basic need of national security demands the defence services. Apart from reasons of security, they are useful in toning up our country in regard to disciplined service. It is our endeavour to use them more and more for social purposes also. They can be used not only to help in food production, but also for social education, sanitation, and some kinds of public works.

Because of our urgent need for economic development, which will add to our resources, many of our important plans for education and health have unfortunately suffered. Ultimately progress in these will depend upon our resources and these resources can only come from higher production and greater national wealth. Apart from the formal education, I should like to lay stress on other forms of cultural progress which brighten the lives of our people and raise their standards of appreciation of beauty. I think the state should encourage art, drama and literature, music and song and dance.

There has been a great deal of criticism of the administrative machinery of Government. We have carried on with the old machinery and added to it. That has its advantages and disadvantages. I have no doubt that the advantages were

greater than the disadvantages and that progressively the disadvantages will grow less. As a machine, it was as efficient as any in the world, but it is true that it was nurtured under a different tradition and it was not easy to change that tradition or the habits that grew out of it. There is no doubt that in the large number of persons that constitute the administrative machine, there are all kinds of persons, good, bad and indifferent. There are persons whose integrity is not beyond dispute and there are persons who are communal-minded. But I think that the strong criticism made is, by and large, not justified. We have had able and devoted service from a large number of the old civil servants and I am sure that none of them ever worked quite so hard as they have done in recent years. I think, however, that this whole question of the administrative machinery has to be considered afresh from the point of view of the general plan that the country may adopt. The administration must serve the purposes of that plan. The present rules governing Government servants make it difficult to distinguish much between the efficient and the inefficient, the good worker and the bad, the man of integrity and the man whose integrity is in doubt. It is difficult to measure efficiency in terms of Government rules; it is still more difficult to get proof of lack of integrity. These rules must be changed so that even the reputation for a lack of integrity should be enough to prevent an officer from holding any position of responsibility or influence. At the same time it is due to our officers to protect them from unfair attacks. In a democratic regime, the services are not usually criticised. It is the Minister who is held responsible. We must endeavour to maintain moral standards in our public work and do so in a manner that the public understands and appreciates. Public confidence is essential. Where a charge of misconduct is made by a responsible person or there is a prima facie case for it, there should be an inquiry, however highly placed the person concerned might be.

Unhappily during the war and afterwards various types of corruption have grown. Controls have added to them and general standards have fallen, both in Government servants and in the public. Black-marketing in India is not merely an individual offence, but a social evil. There can be no two

opinions that adequate measures should be taken to check and end this degradation of our public life.

There is one aspect of our public life to which I should like to draw special attention. Religious and sentimental reasons have to be respected, but if problems are to be considered on these grounds alone, then there will not only be no solution, but conditions might conceivably worsen. Thus proper cattle preservation and improvement of breeds and increase in milk supply are of high importance to the country. But the sentimental approach to them is not by itself likely to yield any results. Many of our social habits are separatist and do not encourage the community outlook. The objective of the Congress of a Cooperative Commonwealth cannot be achieved if we continue to nurse these habits and customs. Old customs and social habits and conventions cannot be changed by legislation, though legislation can help in the process. It is by personal example and a constant friendly attempt to convince others that results can be achieved.

A development took place in the Punjab recently which must be regretted. This was the suspension of normal constitutional government, and the Governor, functioning for the President, exercising the authority of Government. In view of the resignation of the ministry and no alternative ministry being formed at the moment, the Governor had no alternative but to report as he did to the President. The responsibility for this development was not that of the Governor or the President, but rather of the Central Parliamentary Board which called upon the Chief Minister to resign. The story of the Punjab during recent months has been a long, complicated and rather depressing one. The state is one of our most important and contains fine human material. Its importance has become even greater by the fact of its being the frontier province of India. Unfortunately, it has been the scene of factional and communal strife for a considerable time and the situation was rapidly deteriorating in many ways. In particular, there was a continuing conflict between the ministry and the Congress organisation in the province. The Parliamentary Board decided that, in the circumstances, the functioning of a Congress ministry was not desirable. They did so in the hope that this unusual step might tend to put an end

to this factional strife.

There has been a good deal of feeling in Congress circles, especially in the states which are called Part 'B' and 'C' states, in regard to their present status. There can be and should be no discrimination between different parts of India. This particular classification arose out of certain historical and administrative necessities of the moment and cannot be permanent. It has, however, to be realised that certain parts of India are different or have developed differently during past years. The tribal folk, who are a fine liberty-loving people, require special treatment. So also certain border areas which have assumed a new importance because of recent events. In regard to Part 'B' and 'C' states, the chief difficulty has been the lack of a legislature in most of them. As soon as these come into existence the differences between them and the part 'A' states will largely disappear. Where such legislatures and ministries exist, there is no reason for any differentiation to continue, except for the fact that there are certain covenants which have to be honoured. A certain amount of guidance for the improvement of standards of administration may be provided where necessary. The general policy should be to speed up the removal of differential treatment as rapidly as possible.

I should like to say something here about our foreign policy. This has been, I believe, very largely approved by the country and no apology is needed for it. This policy has been the natural outcome of our past outlook on foreign affairs and on independence. We have followed no ambitious course and have tried to develop friendly relations with all countries. I am glad to say that in spite of conflicts that continually threaten the world, our relations with every country, except one, are friendly. We have endeavoured in our own small way to throw our weight on the side of peace and to keep ourselves out of military and like commitments. Naturally, such a policy is often criticised. There has been, however, all over the world, a basic appreciation of our sincerity in this matter as also of the soundness of our policy, even though it may not fall in line with the wishes of many others.

With the nations of the east, and more especially our neighbour countries, except again unfortunately one, our

relations are exceedingly friendly and cooperative. Inevitably, with the coming of independence, the centre of gravity of our political interest has shifted to our neighbour countries and to Asia. Our foreign service has grown up rapidly and rather spasmodically during all these years. We have endeavoured to limit its growth, but the mere fact of India's importance in the modern world and the desire of other countries to have diplomatic relations with India, compelled us to grow. In the circumstances, it was natural that this growth should not be uniform and the necessary experience and traditions should take time to grow up. We have had difficulties and troubles in some of our missions. But, on the whole, our Foreign Service has done good work and is highly thought of in foreign countries. In particular, during this critical period, our representatives in the principal capitals have performed their functions with ability and brought credit to our country.

Congress has repeatedly approved of our foreign policy. It is necessary, however, that there should be no doubt in the public mind in this country or other countries that this policy represents the wishes of the great majority of our people, in spite of some criticism here and there. In its foreign policy, the nation should speak with a firm and, as far as possible, with a united voice, if it has to carry weight.

Even after the establishment of the Republic, it was decided to continue, in a somewhat more attenuated form in keeping with our republican status, our association with the Commonwealth. For sentimental reasons, derived from the past, some of our countrymen have objected to this. I am convinced, however, that this was a right step. It is perfectly clear and events have shown this, that this does not lessen our complete independence in any way or to the slightest extent. It has been of help to us in the past and it has made India's influence felt in the wider circles of the world. I think, therefore, that this association should continue.

Unfortunately, the passion and manoeuvres that led to the partition did not die away and subsequent events rather added to them. It is said that Kashmir is the basic difficulty which come in the way of cooperative relations between India and Pakistan. It would be more correct to say that the

problem of Kashmir is the resultant of that basic inner conflict between the two countries. India stands for a secular state and for freedom of its component parts to live their autonomous lives. Pakistan continues to be a communal state which by the very nature of its objectives and ideology, is aggressive in its outlook. Such an ideology appears strange in the world today and it is difficult to conceive of a modern state which makes a large number of its citizens feel that they are inferior citizens and cannot be treated as equals.

In India there are some people who in their unwisdom and lack of vision represent the communal policy of Pakistan in reverse. In doing so, they support that policy and weaken the basic conception of the Indian state. They have even stated that they want to put an end to the partition. This is the height of folly. Fortunately such people are few and have little influence and our state policy as well as the wishes of the great majority of people are quite clear on this subject. We desire no ending of the partition for that can only bring infinite trouble to all concerned. This has been repeatedly stated and must be clearly affirmed again, so that there remains no shadow of doubt about it.

In Pakistan it is the state policy that represents the old two-nation theory and the same narrow communalism which the Muslim League did. While we have no desire to interfere with the inner working of Pakistan, we cannot ignore the effect of this on millions of people in Pakistan and indirectly in India. It is a disruptive and subversive policy.

In Eastern Pakistan and West Bengal a very grave situation arose early in 1950. Fortunately an agreement arrived at with the Prime Minister of Pakistan was of great help in resolving that immediate crisis. That, of course, was no solution of the basic problem. But it brought relief to millions of peoples and vast numbers of migrants returned to their original homes. Nevertheless, the fact remains that the position of the minority community in Eastern Pakistan (in Western Pakistan it hardly exists) is one of peculiar difficulty. The middle-class elements, which were the backbone of education and trade and the professions, have practically been driven out, and the others remain full of fear and apprehension about their future. Recently the flow of non-Muslim



migrants from Eastern Pakistan to West Bengal has increased substantially and created a grave problem.

Kashmir has been wrongly looked upon as a prize for India or Pakistan. People seem to forget that Kashmir is not a commodity for sale or to be bartered. It has an individual existence and its people must be the final arbiters of their future. It is here today that a struggle is being fought, not in the battlefield, but in the minds of men. That struggle started many years before partition. As the communal movement grew in India under the leadership of the Muslim League and the two-nation theory was propounded, attempts were made to capture this beautiful valley of Kashmir by the proponents of that theory. They failed then and Kashmir developed a strong nationalist movement with a certain ideology which was socially advanced. The National Conference of Kashmir led this movement and it found common ground in many matters with the National Congress and the Indian States People's movement. So, in the thirties and in the forties, the link of common ideals and the bond of comradeship in a common cause bound us together, whether we were Hindus or Muslims or Sikhs or others. It was natural, therefore, for the people of Kashmir to resist later the narrow communalism of Pakistan which sought to thrust itself by violence and force upon them. It was natural and inevitable for the people of India to stand by them in their agony.

Thus this question of Kashmir is of deep significance to India as it is to Pakistan. But its significance is felt most of all by the people of Kashmir who wish to live their lives according to the ideology and nationalist feeling that they have themselves developed. During the past three and a half years of conflict and continuous tension, it is surprising to note the progress that the state of Jammu and Kashmir has made. In some matters, such as agrarian legislation, it has gone ahead of India, and brought about a change in the economy of the great majority of people, which is truly revolutionary. How can the people of this state, with their socially advanced ideology, look forward except with dismay towards the communal, reactionary and authoritarian regime of Pakistan. India's position in regard to Kashmir has been repeatedly and firmly stated and we stand by it.

In this connection our minds naturally go to one of the finest men that India has produced, a great leader in our struggle for freedom and a man whose whole life was dedicated to this struggle and to the service of the common man. This man is Abdul Ghaffar Khan. He and his brave comrades continue their lives in prison in Pakistan year after year, even though it is said that freedom has come to their country. This is not only significant but also symbolic of the type of freedom which awaits brave and freedom-loving spirits of Pakistan.

It is not Kashmir, therefore, but rather a much deeper conflict that comes in the way of friendly relations between India and Pakistan and the situation is grave one. We cannot give up the basic ideals which we have held so long and on which the whole conception of our state is founded. We cannot encourage anything which breaks up the national unity of India. We cannot submit to a continuation of the old policy of disintegration and aggression. This must be clearly understood. We realise the necessity of friendly relations with Pakistan and we shall continue to strive for them, but that friendship can only come if the spirit of aggression is given up by Pakistan.

The AICC is meeting at a critical moment and has to come to vital decisions in regard to national policies and the future of the Congress. The coming elections are important but it is far more important to know exactly what we stand for and how we want to function in the future. It is better to keep our soul and to lose an election than to win that election in the wrong way and with wrong methods. There has been a deep searching of hearts among Congressmen and some of our old colleagues have left us. It matters little to argue as to whose fault this has been. There is something lacking in us if any old comrade and colleague finds that the Congress is no longer a place for him. We have to find out the reason why.

Some people criticise us for desiring what is called a single party rule and point out the necessity of an effective opposition. I do not understand this criticism and I entirely agree that a democratic legislature should have an effective opposition. But it is equally true that in times of crisis a large

measure of unity and national purpose is essential. When disruptive and disintegrating forces are at work, it becomes every man's duty to combat them the best way he can. The Congress still remains the most potent weapon to combat these forces. It would be a tragedy if a large number of good people with excellent ideals indirectly help these disruptive and anti-social forces.

It is natural for a large country like India to have numerous groups and parties with various objectives and ways of thinking. Let us analyse some of these. On the one side there are the Communists and the communalists, very different from each other, and yet both essentially disruptive. The Communists whatever the ideology, have followed a path of violence and open warfare against the state. No state can tolerate that. Their object appears to have been to create chaos and disruption out of which perhaps something might come. To some extent they have varied their policies and tactics recently, but basically their approach continues to be the same as before.

The communalists are essentially reactionary. They have no social theory and seek inspiration from a certain form of revivalism and a narrow and bigoted nationalism which excluded large parts of the nationalisation, although they represent forces which are entirely opposed to these. We cannot be taken in by these phrases and we must remember that communalism has already done great injury to India and will, no doubt, do greater injury if it is given a chance. We cannot, therefore, have anything in common with them.

There are other groups which are definitely anti-social and represent certain deep-rooted vested interests in the country, especially in the land. As a rule they look to the communal organisations. With them also we have nothing in common.

We now come to the Socialist Party and the newly formed Praja Party, consisting of many of our old colleagues. It is not clear wherein, in policy or programme, the Praja Party differs from the Congress. Where there is no clear difference in ideology, personal conflicts arise. This is most unfortunate and cannot but lower our standards. We should try to avoid this at all cost and invite our old colleagues of the Praja

Party to do likewise. The Socialist Party perhaps does not differ very greatly in regard to final objectives from the Congress. But it certainly does differ in so far as immediate objectives and methods are concerned. We have no quarrel with them, though we differ, and there should be the possibility of a large measure of agreement in regard to certain common programmes.

Thus in regard to the Socialist Party or the Praja Party or any like organisation, we should endeavour to have as much of cooperation in working common programmes as possible. The Congress must stand on its programmes and methods and must keep its doors open to all who agree with it. Even those who disagree with it and follow a different course, should be invited to cooperate in some of the larger issues on which we think alike.

The Congress has been in the past something much more than a narrow party. It functioned as a national forum. The coming of independence has naturally made a difference and we cannot quite function as of old. But there is still plenty of room for the Congress to be a platform to achieve many common purposes. It should, therefore, keep its doors open and welcome back those of its old members who have, in a spirit of distrust or frustration, left it. The situation in the country and the world demands this larger outlook and wider vision. The Congress must also seek to remedy the weaknesses and evils that have crept into the organisation and more particularly discourage any particular group from considering this great organisation, or any of its numerous branches, as its private preserve. Any charges of irregularity or worse in its working should be investigated.

All this is necessary, but at best it is a negative approach. What is required is an active faith in its mission and the cause and the capacity to work for it. What is also required is service of our people and throwing our lot with them. We are not a sect apart but are of the people and we should function as such. If we ourselves have faith, we can convince others.

The coming elections are a test for us not merely in the winning of seats but in something which is of far greater importance. Are we to function as the ordinary run of politicians, whose sole aim is somehow to win an election, or

as votaries of a cause for whom our principles and objectives are more important than seats in a Legislative Assembly or Parliament? I hope that in choosing of candidates great care will be exercised in selecting men and women of integrity who, by their past record, have shown that they believe in and act up to the principles we proclaim. It will be more honourable for us, and will be of greater service to the cause we serve, if we do this and even lose an election than to win with the help of dubious candidates. Our choice should not be restricted to a narrow circle or group but should extend to any who fulfil the qualifications laid down. In particular, we have to take special care that an adequate number of candidates of minority communities, as well as from women, are chosen.

## VIII

### WELFARE STATE\*

*"Our national aim is a Welfare State and a socialist economy. Neither of these can be attained without a considerable increase in national income and neither is possible without a much greater volume of goods and services and full employment.*

*"I have, thus grown up with the Congress and shared in its wide fold the comradeship of innumerable persons. What I owe to the Congress, I can never repay, for the Congress has made me what I am and has given me opportunities of service such as are very rarely given to any individual. I look back with pride and thankfulness to these long years of my association with the Congress. That association has been, through the Congress, with the people of India. I have been blessed by the affection of our people and I have found that there is nothing more wonderful in the wide world than the love of the Indian people."*

On my relinquishing the office of Congress President, I venture to submit this report to the AICC. I am very happy that my successor in this high office is Shri U.N. Dhebar, who is eminently fit for it by his high integrity, ability and experience, both in the organisation and in governmental activities. I think that under his leadership the Congress will prosper. So far as I am concerned, I need not say that my relinquishing the office of President will in no way affect my deep interest in the work of the Congress.

Over fifty years ago, as a boy, I attended a session of the Congress. Over forty-two years ago, I became a delegate to the Congress for the first time. Ever since then, I have been intimately connected with this great organisation. About thirty years ago, I became General Secretary for the first

\*Report presented to the 60th Session of the Indian National Congress, Avadi, January 21-23, 1955.

time. Since then, I have repeatedly held the offices of General Secretary or President.

I have thus grown up with the Congress and shared in its wide fold the comradeship of innumerable persons. What I owe to the Congress, I can never repay, for the Congress has made me what I am and has given me opportunities of service such as are very rarely given to any individual. I look back with pride and thankfulness to these long years of my association with the Congress. That association has been, through the Congress, with the people of India. I have been blessed by the affection of our people and I have found that there is nothing more wonderful in the wide world than the love of the Indian people.

The long years of struggle and feverish activity, with repeated periods of enforced inactivity in prison, pass before me. During these years, I was a soldier in a great army of freedom and I shared my experiences with innumerable others. It was our high privilege to work for a great cause under a great leader, and though we failed him often, yet, even to the extent that we proved true to him, we were ennobled. The vision of freedom that we saw warmed us and lighted us up and made us better than we were. It was given to us not only to dream but to see the realisation of our dreams. We saw great sons and daughters of India and drew our strength from them. Above all, two magnificent sons of India, Gandhiji and Rabindranath Tagore, showed us the right path and inspired us.

Success came to us, but not in the manner that we had envisaged, and with the joy it brought, there was sorrow and trouble also. Suddenly we were faced with mighty and unexpected problems.

For these seven and a half years we have struggled with these problems; and the record of our struggles is the story of India during this dynamic period of our history. I cannot here deal with our successes or failures, for that will be a long story and it is known to all of us. But I think I am justified in saying that these seven and a half years have seen the growth of India to a remarkable degree and in many ways. Her prestige has risen high in the world and strong foundations have been laid for the progress of her people. That is due not

merely to governmental activity but rather to the work of innumerable persons who have laboured to this end. Today there is a feeling throughout the country of self-reliance which comes from great tasks undertaken and fulfilled and faith in the future destiny of our country and people.

I realise that we are very far indeed from the realisation of our objective. There is a great deal of unemployment, both explicit and disguised. Our standards are low and we cannot provide even the necessaries of life to all our countrymen. But the progress we have already made and the strength we have developed fills us with hope for the future.

We inherited the great problems following Partition, the old Princely States, relics of feudalism, and a backward and stagnating economy with its concomitants of poverty and unemployment. While many of us talked of economic development and even of socialism, we were governed by social attitudes and historical survivals which came in our way. Even the maintenance of the unity of India was not something to be taken for granted as disruptive forces were continually at work. Partition, the result of communalism, led to a growth of a narrow communal spirit amongst some of our people also, divisions, petrified by caste, came in the way of unity and social progress, a narrow provincial spirit prevented the emotional and psychological integration of India.

We succeeded, through the genius of a great leader and our old comrade Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, in bringing about the political integration of India by the merger of hundreds of the old Princely States. That was a surprising and magnificent achievement brought about peacefully and with the cooperation of all concerned. We took a big step towards land reform by putting an end to the big zamindari, jagirdari and talukdari estates which were relics of a feudal order. That too was done peacefully and cooperatively.

Nowhere else in the world, to my knowledge, have these great changes been brought about through peaceful and cooperative processes. It has been the genius of India to do so. Our freedom itself, as a result of Gandhiji's teachings and techniques of action, was achieved peacefully and brought friendship with our old adversary England. So also in the great steps that we have taken in regard to the Princely States



and the land system. The recent movement of Bhoodan and Sampattidan started by Acharya Vinoba Bhave is typical of the old Indian spirit and approach. In regard to industry, we have moved towards a socialised pattern of society without breaking with those who represented the older order. We have sought their help and cooperation and received it in some measure.

We have been criticised by some of our countrymen for moving slowly and not declaring boldly that we must have a revolutionary change immediately. But revolutionary changes have come to our country, in the political, the economic and the social spheres without the usual accompaniment of war, conflict and blood. Some people do not realise this because they cannot conceive of any great changes without bloodshed and, therefore, they seek ways of conflict and violence. Other countries have waded through blood towards their objectives. They have done so because of historical accidents and the compulsion of events. They have paid a very heavy price for them and have been pursued by trails of bitterness and conflict.

The historical background and conditions are fortunately lacking in India and our development has been different and, what is more, we are making good. It is folly, therefore, to try to copy the undesirable features of other countries merely because they have sometimes been associated with good motives and right objectives.

The basic lesson that Mahatma Gandhi taught us was that means govern ends and that we should never adopt wrong means for right ends. Perhaps many of the troubles of the world today are due to the fact that no importance is attached to means. I do believe in the fundamental rightness of the principle that Gandhiji laid before us, even though we may not always be able to live up to it. But, apart from ethical theory, even practical wisdom and self-interest in the widest sense have demonstrated the worth of following the path laid down for us by Gandhiji. We have done so in the international field to the best of our ability, and India has been, I believe, a healing influence in a world which is torn by discord and has been living on the brink of catastrophe. Incidentally, we have prospered by following this path and

respect for India has grown in other countries.

We have tried to do so also in our domestic sphere. We know that there are class divisions and struggles and that vested interests resist any change to their disadvantage. Any attempt at reform, whether political or social, brings about a clash of these conflicting interests. It is not by denial or non-recognition of these conflicting interests that we proceed. But at the same time, we do not encourage and intensify these conflicts because we are convinced that ultimately the surest and best way of solving them is through peaceful methods and by a friendly approach. Where there is a conflict of interest, the good of the people as a whole must prevail. While this must be so, it is not necessary to aim at injuring others or to spread the spirit of hatred and violence. Out of hatred and violence no good can ultimately come.

A significant instance of the success of our peaceful methods was the solution of the problem of the French possessions in India. We were patient and, in spite of difficulties, we preserved and aimed at a negotiated settlement. Thus we gained the goodwill of the French Republic and attained our objective, at the same time retaining the friendship of the people of France.

I am mentioning these matters because they are basic to our conception of international as well as domestic policy. We must be clear about these in our minds. While our policy has necessarily to adapt itself to changing circumstances, it is based on this strong foundation which does not change. Because of that, there has been a certain continuity in our policy and it has brought good results to us and has at the same time strengthened our people. It is important that there should be a full realisation of the springs' of our policy among our people so that we might not be led astray by momentary passion and prejudice into wrong action.

It is for this basic policy that the Congress has stood and I earnestly hope that it will adhere to it, whatever the future might hold. That policy means the development of India as a great cooperative commonwealth with equality for opportunity and social justice for all. It means equality for all classes and religions in India. India has many religions, but it is a secular State giving freedom to all religions to function and

favouring none. Any narrow communalism or provincialism must, therefore, be repressed and the evil of caste rooted out.

At the moment when the countries of the world become increasingly intolerant towards each other, we have to remember that tolerance is not only a virtue but the only practical approach to the problems of today, whether national or international. Every other approach brings conflict and degradation. In the international field, this may be called co-existence and the application of the Panch Shila, the five principles which we have agreed to in common with some other countries. This co-existence is not merely an absence of war and conflict but a recognition that each country should live its own life and not interfere with others and should have a friendly approach to other countries, even though they differ from it in many ways.

In the world today we look on no country as an enemy and no people as hostile to us. We are friendly with all countries, even though they may be opposed to each other. We are prepared to cooperate with them and learn from them, but we shall follow the policy of our own choice. The only country with which unfortunately our relations have not been cooperative is Pakistan. Partition left us many problems and a legacy of suspicion and bitterness. I believe we have got over this to a large extent and there is no longer any bitterness between the people of India and the people of Pakistan. Problems, however, remain but they will no doubt be solved, even though this might take some time. It is inevitable that India and Pakistan should live in friendship with each other.

The only other countries with which we have major problems are the Union of South Africa and Portugal. We have no enmity with South Africa, nor do we wish to interfere with their internal affairs. But we can never agree to the policy of a master race and of racial discrimination which South Africa has pursued openly and aggressively. So also we have no hostility towards Portugal. But it is clear that the Portuguese possessions in India must come to India. They are a part of India and nothing can make them foreign to us. The Indian revolution will not be complete till Goa and the other Portuguese possessions are integrated into the Union of India

We desire no territory outside India, but we cannot tolerate a part of India to be under the domination of a colonial power. Once Goa also becomes a part of India, then our political revolution will be complete.

India is finding herself again. She is learning a great deal from other countries, but, as of old, her roots remain deep in her own soil and find sustenance from it. We believe in no narrow nationalism and realise that, in the world today, this is out of place. We have, therefore, encouraged in every way our friendly contacts with other countries, but we realise that, if India is to advance, she must be true to herself and not be a pale copy of some other country. During the past few centuries, we became static and fell away from the current of human progress. But we still have the experience and wisdom of an ancient race behind us and the ability to make up for lost time. Perhaps the most heartening feature in India today is the revival of our arts and sciences, the new spirit in the literatures of our national languages and the widespread interest in music, song and dance. This rapid growth of interest in our beautiful folk dances from all over India, in their infinite variety, is significant evidence of our masses participating in the new freedom and sharing in the joy in life that this has brought. Their drab lives are slowly becoming better and fuller.

Even as it has been in India, so it has been, in greater or less degree, in many of the other countries of Asia. This awakening of Asia is one of the striking features of the age we live in. It has inevitably taken, first, a political aspect. But from a political awakening we now proceed to a social awakening and every country in Asia is astir with a new social consciousness. Nationalism still plays a dominant role. It is not an aggressive nationalism, but a strong urge to recover one's own soul and to be rid of outside control and interference. Recently the five Colombo countries decided to convene an Asian-African Conference in Indonesia in the month of April. This conference is not aimed against any other country or group of nations and is not intended to form any bloc. It represents an urge for self-expression and the desire to know each other better and to cooperate with each other in the tremendous tasks which these countries

have in common. In order to succeed in these tasks, peace is an imperative necessity.

The world is said to be in a state of continuing crisis — the crisis of civilization, the crisis of the industrial revolution, which has found its ultimate fulfilment in the release of atomic energy for peaceful or warlike purposes. There is no escape for any country from this crisis which, though common for all of us, takes a different form in various countries. In the countries of the West, which are highly industrialised, the crisis is the most acute. In under-developed countries, like those of Asia, we are on the eve of an industrial revolution.

Many of us dislike the consequences of the industrial revolution as we see them and are, therefore, apprehensive of its development in our own country. The evils of industrialism are obvious, even as its magnificent achievements are patent. Can we have those achievements without the evils?

Though we may find our own way to industrialise India, we have no choice but to go ahead in the rapid development of industry and all that it means. The alternative is to remain a backward, under-developed, poverty-stricken and weak country. We cannot even retain our freedom without industrial growth. An agrarian economy might have been adequate in an earlier age when our population was much smaller than it is now and technology was less advanced. Today it means living on starvation level and perhaps worse.

Therefore it has become an urgent necessity for us to industrialise as rapidly as possible. This means the development of industries which would lay the foundations for future growth. In the First Five-Year Plan we laid special stress on agriculture and food production. That was not only the most urgent of our problems then but it was necessary for us to have a stable agricultural basis for the build up of our industry. We have now achieved a considerable measure of success in agriculture and food production and the time has come to advance rapidly on the industrial front. The Second Five-Year Plan will undoubtedly lay far greater stress on industry and employment.

We are on the eve of formulating our policies and programmes for the Second Five-Year Plan. We are now in a

better position to plan both because of our experience and the data available to us. It may be said that real planning will begin now on a physical level, taking into consideration the needs of our people and not merely financial resources. This requires a different approach from the previous one. The principal considerations will have to be greater production and progressively fuller employment leading to full employment.

It has been stated that the social purpose governing our planning will be to establish a socialist pattern of society. This has been implicit all along in our Congress objective. It is right that we should make this clear now and keep this picture in view at all stages of our planning. Socialism has many connotations. It is neither necessary nor desirable for us to have a rigid and dogmatic approach in this matter; it is still less desirable for us to imitate what has been said or done in the name of socialism in other countries, where conditions were wholly different. There are bound to be common features and certain common principles which can be applied everywhere. But every country must proceed on its own lines and according to its own genius. More especially so in the case of India which has a very strong personality and historical background and tradition. It was out of that background and tradition that our freedom movement arose and this struggle itself has conditioned us today.

It is not for us to criticise other countries which have followed different paths and which have had different circumstances to face. But it surprises me that some of our people should think and talk continuously in terms of what has happened in other countries and try to make that a model for their own. It surprises and distresses me to see these people run down their own country without knowing it, while they sing and chant the praises of others. They adopt not only the slogans but also the emblems of other countries. I am convinced that this is a wrong approach and further that it is not even a correct socialist approach, as it ignores the objective conditions and social attitudes prevailing in a country. We have to take 360 million people with us to our goal and not merely to proclaim a doctrine after our heart. In the circumstances of India today, a false step,

however good the motive, may well lead to conflict, violence and disruption, thus stopping progress for a long time.

It is of the first importance to rule out violence, both because it is bad in itself and because it is disruptive and evil in its consequences. We have always to remember that the Congress is not just a political party seeking entry into the legislatures, but a great national movement marching with the millions of India towards our destined goal. We are fellow-travellers with them and cannot go ahead by ourselves, though we should seek to lead them in the right direction. We have to balance the overall view of this great country with the intimate views of millions of individuals and homes whose welfare we seek. We have to bring both peace and freedom to them because one of these without the other has little meaning. All this means our understanding the present with its multitude of problems and at the same time looking at it in the perspective of history.

Our national aim is a Welfare State and a socialist economy. Neither of these can be attained without considerable increase in national income and neither is possible without a much greater volume of goods and services and full employment. In order to attain this Welfare State of a socialist pattern, it is not enough to pass a resolution or even law or to limit our thinking to nationalisation of existing industries. We have to increase production and aim at an economy of plenty. We have to see that there is equitable distribution and that the privileged position of individuals and groups is not favoured.

Everything, therefore, that leads to fuller production and fuller employment is to be encouraged, provided it does not take us away from the ultimate objective of a socialist pattern of society. If we cannot have fuller production and fuller employment, then there will be neither welfare nor socialism, even though we might nationalise some industries or pass brave laws and decrees. If we aim at mass production, this is only possible if this production is for the masses and the masses have the purchasing power to consume it. We have to introduce a certain dynamism in every sector of our economic and national life in order to achieve this goal. The test must always be the results to be achieved and not some

theoretical formula.

This test should be applied to the argument that has been going on as to the relative importance of the public or state sector and the private sector or non-state and voluntary enterprise. It is obvious that, in a socialised economy, there will be social control of the means of production and distribution. It is equally obvious that in any planned approach to a socialised economy the public sector must grow and become the dominant feature of the landscape. But, in our present state, to limit resources to the public sector means restriction of our opportunities of production and growth. The main purpose of a socialised pattern of society is to remove the fetters to production and distribution. If, however, we adopt a policy, in the name of socialism, which actually maintains some fetters or encourages them, then we are moving away from our objective and preventing the growth of full dynamism. It becomes necessary, therefore, to have a private sector also and to give it full play within its field, provided always that it is coordinated with our planned approach. Many of us, because of past fears or comparisons with some other countries, are afraid of a private sector functioning. There need be no such fear if we are vigilant and keep our objective in view. Planning will necessarily have strategic controls and, as I have said, the public sector will inevitably grow, more especially in the basic industries. But there is a wide field which the public sector cannot touch for a considerable time and growth in that field will therefore, have to be left to public enterprise. In the present state of our development, there is, or should be, an integral and essential relationship between the public sector and the field of private enterprise. This does not at all mean our accepting the out-of-date and discredited policy of laissez-faire as that is opposed to the very conception of planning. In present circumstances, the public sector itself will fail to function adequately if it is not helped by private enterprise in many ways, chiefly in the consumption of power and the products of heavy, medium and light industries. We shall require a network of well-spread out industries of all levels and types. It will, of course, always be open to the state to enter into any field for economic or social reasons, but in no event will it be



in a position for a long time to come to cover the entire field of the nation's economy. As a matter of fact, land, which is the biggest industry of all in India, will remain essentially in the private sector. Small-scale and cottage industries will also remain largely in the private sector, though it is highly desirable to organise them on a cooperative basis. So also most of the lighter industries. It may be advantageous to allow some heavier industries to be organised by private enterprise, if the state is not prepared to assume that burden.

If this is so, then we must adopt a healthy attitude towards the private sector, keeping always in view the main objective of achieving a socialist pattern and preventing the growth of any tendency which might come in our way later. The existence of state enterprise side by side with private enterprise may also prove healthy in the present circumstances as providing some kind of a competition between the two. We have to remember always that within the large framework that we lay down, the test always is fuller production and fuller employment.

We are, I believe, on the eve of a great expansion in our industry. This will require a straining of all our resources to the utmost and we cannot afford to waste any. The financial aspect is important, but far more important is the training of personnel for the industrial revolution which is coming our way. The danger is that we may have to slacken our pace for lack of trained personnel. We have manpower enough and sometimes manpower can take the place even of capital. But, without trained manpower, we cannot go far. We have, therefore, in our planning, to think ahead and train an adequate number of persons for all branches of national activity.

However vast we may develop our big industries, it is inevitable that great emphasis should be laid on the widespread development of small-scale and cottage industries. The Congress has always stood for cottage industries. Today the need for their growth is even more important as in no other way can we absorb the unemployed and add substantially to our production. I see no basic conflict between big industry and cottage industry provided our approach is a balanced and planned one.

I have ventured to put forward some observations which

do not cover the whole field. What I wish to emphasise is that we have to think deeply about all these problems and not allow ourselves merely to repeat some slogans of the past. The world today is in a state of flux. Even in the 'cold war' we have arrived at a stage of deadlock when neither party can make a major move. Some way will have to be found out of this deadlock and that can only be by recognising facts as they are today and not living in the world of yesterday. All of us in India have to give fresh thought to these national and international problems. I am afraid that perhaps few of us do so in any creative way. Even the Congress thinking is apt to be static. The other parties have become tied up with cobwebs of their own making. The communal parties think and talk in terms of a medieval age and have no relevance today, though they have some capacity for mischief. The Praja Socialist Party appears to have lost its moorings and tends to disintegrate. Instead of facing the problems of today, it spends its energy in empty argument and the repetition of some phrases as if they were some powerful mantras of old. The Communist Party of India can only repeat what it has read or heard from others and, though brave and fierce in its talk, has been wholly reactionary and anti-national in its approach to India's problems. The world and its problems change, but not so the Communist Party of India which lives firmly and rather romantically entrenched in a past age. It thinks still in terms of violence and disruption, hoping that something good might come out of this. It is a surprising example of how reliance on others leads to incapacity to see or think for oneself. It has not yet quite realised that India is an independent country and till a year or two ago our national Republic Day demonstrations were actively opposed by the Communist Party of India. Anything more absurd and more anti-national I cannot imagine. And yet, because of its continuous shouting and apparently brave words, it deludes some people. More and more it appears that they have no adequate or constructive approach to India's problems. They can only bring disruption and reaction in India.

All these parties have one common feature, that is condemnation of the Congress and of the Congress controlled Governments in India. Lack of positive and constructive

thinking has led them to confusion and frustration and they become more and more unrealistic from day to day. The burden thus falls on the Congress, and the Congress must, therefore, think hard and creatively. It has to face the problems of today and solve them and not merely, as others do, take up a negative approach. We have to rely on ourselves both in our thinking, our plans and our action. In this way only can the nation grow in strength and self-reliance and achieve its objective. This has been the historic mission of the Congress in the past and it continues to be so today. It is the Congress that has proved a cementing force in India and largely helped in bringing about unity in this country. That unity is by no means complete yet in the minds of men. We have to complete that process and in doing so we have to fight every separatist tendency, whether it is communalism, provincialism, or caste. There can be no compromise with these basic evils. But we have to do something far more, and that is to give a creative lead to the country and to march hand in hand with the millions of our countrymen and countrywomen to our destined goal. We have now to be the pioneers in the industrial and social revolution which is coming to this country and to bring about that revolution peacefully and democratically and with the goodwill of as large a number of persons as possible, in accordance with the genius of India.

This is a high and tremendous task worthy of this great country. It requires many qualities in our people and, more especially, in those who take pride in calling themselves members of this mighty organisation. Above all, it requires a dynamic and fearless approach. Fear today encompasses the world and the mightiest and most powerful of countries suffer from fear and apprehension of what might happen. Fear leads to frustration and hatred and the spirit of violence. In the old days in India the sovereign virtue was said to be fearlessness, *abhaya*. Gandhiji spoke to us about this in his gentle but firm language. When he started his great movements in India, his voice penetrated to distant hamlets and had a magical effect on our country. A weak, fear-stricken and demoralised people, who had been dominated over by a foreign authority for many generations, suddenly and

amazingly shed that fear and faced the might of a proud empire.

But the Congress, if it is to perform its true function effectively and worthily, must not only remain true to its ideals and must also maintain high moral standards of behaviour. It has distressed me greatly to see that those standards have fallen and many a person who calls himself a Congressman has not hesitated to behave in a manner which bring discredit to him and the Congress. If we cannot maintain our high standards, then we have lost our function and the spark that lighted our path has gone out within us. The Congress never measured its strength by mere numbers. It was by the quality of its membership and the service that they rendered that it grew in strength and in the affection of our people. It is of the utmost importance that every Congressman should search his heart and seek an answer to the question as to how far he has kept up to the standards of old. Little men cannot work for great causes.

I am happy that this Congress is being held after a long interval in Tamil Nad, which played such a brave part in our struggle for freedom and which has been the respository for many centuries of some of the basic elements of Indian culture. Its great and ancient language is a proud possession of India. Here also the classical dance and music of India have found their home and are now spreading out again to the rest of India. I trust that the Avadi Session of the Congress will send out to the four corners of our ancient land a life-giving message to our people.



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