











# MEMOIRS OF A CIVIL SERVANT

Dharma Vira



**VIKAS PUBLISHING HOUSE PVT LTD**  
**DELHI BOMBAY BANGALORE KANPUR**

**VIKAS PUBLISHING HOUSE PVT LTD**  
**5 Daryaganj, Ansari Road Delhi 110006**  
**Savoy Chambers, 5 Wallace Street, Bombay 400001**  
**10 First Main Road, Gandhi Nagar, Bangalore 560009**  
**80 Canning Road, Kanpur 208004**

**First published, 1975**  
**Reprinted, 1975**

**PRINTED IN INDIA**

**At Skylark Printers, Idgah Road, New Delhi, and published by**  
**Mrs Sharda Chawla, Vikas Publishing House Pvt Ltd,**  
**5 Daryaganj, Ansari Road, Delhi 110006.**

# Preface

When early in 1972 I returned to Delhi after relinquishing charge of my assignment as the Governor of Karnataka I received persistent suggestions from kind friends that I should write my memoirs. Presumably they considered my memoirs to be of some use as I had not only served as a civil servant both during the times of the British government and after independence but had the unique privilege of working directly under all the three Prime Ministers since independence, during very thrilling and sometimes difficult times. The period from the year 1930, when I joined the service, to 1947 was a period of transition and the Indian member of the Indian Civil Service was during this period in a somewhat invidious position. As an Indian he was naturally attracted to the independence movement but as a member of the Indian Civil Service, the steel-frame of the British imperialism, he had diametrically opposed functions. The interplay of these differing emotions and tasks resulted in peculiar compromises and adjustments which sometimes led to unforeseen situations.

- Since independence I have had the good fortune to be associated with practically all the important events such as the rehabilitation of the displaced persons from Pakistan, the Kashmir operations, the police action in Hyderabad, war with China, the Kutch incident, Indo-Pak war in 1965, the partition of Punjab, the political situation in West Bengal, etc. During the long period of 42 years of service I had also the privilege of meeting a large number of distinguished politicians and persons who have left the imprints of their personalities on the history of modern India.

On account of my own strong feelings and views in regard to



the discharge of my duties and responsibilities I have also sometimes become an object of controversy and dispute. It might be useful for the reader to know my side of the case in regard to these controversies.

I have however in trying to write these memoirs laboured under some grave handicaps. I had kept no record or diary of the events and the times through which I have passed and hence had to rely entirely on my memory. I was anxious that all that I write should be scrupulously correct and authentic and hence I had to omit many events which I would have otherwise put into these memoirs. The other great difficulty was about eliminating the writer's ego. Most memoirs are so full of the writer's ego that they very often bore the readers. How to relate and portray events, impressions, and views without bringing in my ego, was a great problem. I have conscientiously tried to narrate events and matters as objectively as possible and only the reader will be able to judge as to how far I have succeeded in eliminating my ego.

This is no life history. Nor is it a full account of every thing that happened during my lifetime. It is only a brief narration of some of the experiences and events through which I have passed. In this I have truly behaved like a child picking pebbles on the seashore. One never knows which pebble will attract the attention of the child and he will pick it up and add to his collection. The same I have done with the seashore of my memory. I hope that the reader likes it.

9 April 1975

DIHARMA VIRA

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# 1. Education and Influences

I was born on 20 January 1906 at Patiala where my father then worked as the state engineer on deputation to the then Patiala state.

My parents belonged to a middle-rank zamindar family of Mandawar town in Bijnore district of Uttar Pradesh. While we are of the trading community, my ancestors, I am told, took service under the Mughal emperors as tax-collectors. Hence, our family has had a tradition of civil service spread over a period of over 300 years.

My father, Raja Jwala Prasad, was a distinguished engineer of his time. He took his degree in civil engineering from Thompson Civil Engineering College, Roorkee, in 1900 securing a first position and carrying away practically all the prizes—he set a record which stood unbeaten for the following two decades. Then he joined the Indian Service of Engineers in the Irrigation Department of the then United Province of Agra and Oudh.

While he was primarily an irrigation engineer, he was greatly interested in architecture, particularly in ancient Hindu architecture. On account of his special interest, his services were requisitioned by the Patiala state in 1905 and later by the Banaras Hindu University in 1916. A number of palaces and buildings in Patiala and the buildings of the Banaras Hindu University, with which he was connected right up to his death in 1944, bear testimony to his keen interest in contemporary Indian architecture.

In his department he rose to the position of chief engineer, a post of which he was the first Indian occupant during the British regime in India. As the chief engineer (irrigation), he was responsible for the introduction of two pioneering schemes in North

India: the tube-well irrigation scheme and a scheme to generate hydro-electric power from the falls of the canals in Uttar Pradesh.

Early in life, he came under the influence of the reformist Hindu movement, the Arya Samaj, started by Swami Dayanand Saraswati who, besides being a religious reformer, was also a staunch nationalist. His teachings encouraged and ignited the national movement which became suspect in the eyes of the British government.

In Patiala, my father was the president of the local branch of the Arya Samaj. The British Inspector-General of Police of the Patiala state, one Warburton, did not like the Arya Samaj as he considered it to be a seditious movement. Accordingly, the Arya Samaj headquarters in Patiala, and the houses of all its leaders, including my father's, were raided and cases against them for seditious activities registered. My father was arrested and bailed out with great difficulty. The whole thing became a matter of all-India interest. The Arya Samaj got worked up and came to the support of the accused. The nationalist leaders also rallied for them. Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, Motilal Nehru, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, and Sir Sundar Lal offered their full support my father and assisted him in his defence free of cost. The investigations lasted nearly two years and in the end, my father was exonerated and restored to service.

At first my father was no seditious, the Arya Samaj influence through his contacts with the political leaders during the period he was in the Government of India. The charge of sedition confirmed in him the nationalist tendencies. He was squat and short, quite fair with an aquiline nose and a very pleasant nature and the young were naturally attracted to him for counsel and guidance. The younger generation of the time was waking up to the realization that the country could not progress till it remained under the subjugation of a foreign power. The urge for freedom was every day becoming stronger and urgent. I still remember as a child that large numbers of young people used to visit my father to seek his advice and to discuss national affairs.

A close friend of my father, Bhagavan Das, a school teacher, died at an early age in a bathing accident in the Ganga. His sons lived with us and received their education under my father's guidance. The eldest, Vishwa Mitra, who later took an active part in the non-cooperation movement in Uttar Pradesh, had a

large circle of nationalist-minded friends who were revolutionaries. Therefore, at an early age, he was attracted to terrorist activities. I recollect very mysterious goings-on with all sorts of people coming to his room. One such visitor was Amin Chand who came to see him just a day before he threw a bomb in Delhi on Lord Chelmsford, the then Viceroy of India. These people would also sometimes visit my father. But so far as I know, he was not aware of their revolutionary activities.

My early education was entirely at home. Father was a touring officer and for the major part of the year was on tour. It was a nomadic kind of existence. Every alternate day we would break camp and the whole paraphernalia of tents, bullock-carts, horses, and camp-followers would march on to the next halting place. We would dwell at the canal rest houses, where available, otherwise in tents. Father was very fond of riding and had provided a small riding pony for me also. We two, father and son, would ride on the march and the family moved by a horse tonga. The camp-followers, including the teacher of the children, would move by all sorts of vehicles including bullock-carts. Sometimes in the cavalcade would be included religious preachers and learned men of whom father had considerable respect. A frequent visitor was Jain *muni* who always stayed in a separate tent and whose of lessly white and clean attire used to impress us children. We would go to him after our lessons and he would read fascinating stories from the Jain scriptures.

We were six, three brothers and three sisters. I had elder to me, but one of them died at an early age that he was a boy of considerable promise and untimely death was a great blow to my parents. In fact, it left an everlasting mark on them. He died in 1911 and I have only vague memories of him. One sister was elder to me and the other two were younger.

I was a sickly child. As two of my brothers had died, I was, to some extent, a pampered one. My parents were unwilling to put me in a boarding house and that was one reason for my early education being at home through private tutors. The earliest education, however, I received from my mother Bhagyavati who hailed from Najibabad in Bijnore District. In the camp by the side of the canals, she would spread the sand on the ground and with her first

finger would write on it Devanagari characters for us children to copy. It was great fun doing so—making and unmaking letters and words in sand.

It was a very pleasant and carefree existence. Life by the side of the canals in open air was picturesque as well as healthy. I have no doubt that it laid a very sound base for the good health I subsequently enjoyed in life. Achievement of good health by a sickly child was, however, a laborious task which took a few years through considerable and conscious application to games and sports which I had decided upon at an early age. Besides being a weakling, I was also short-statured like my father and the only way to get over this inferiority complex was to excel the tall people in games and sports. The result was that I never suffered in subsequent life from the consciousness of inferiority in the company of people much taller than myself.

The idyllic existence among the canals ended at the end of 1916 when my father was deputed to the Banaras Hindu University to take charge of the construction of its buildings. The university campus was situated outside the city, near Nagwa, and father had to live nearby.

In a locality close by, called Lanka, there was the kothi near the Ganga of the Raja Sahib of Amethi which he had placed at the disposal of the university for father's residence. A neighbour, Dr Gyanendra Nath Chakravarti, whose residence was also close to the Ganga, was an active theosophist and very soon my mother and Mrs. Chakravarti became great friends with the result that we came in considerable contact with theosophists. Dr Chakravarti subsequently left for Lucknow as the Vice-Chancellor of the then newly founded Lucknow University. His house was purchased by Shiv Prasad Gupta, a great nationalist and one of the leading citizens of Banaras. He was an admirer and friend of Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, the founder of the Banaras Hindu University. Gupta spent princely funds not only on the university but also in the cause of furthering the freedom movement. As a mouthpiece of the national movement, he started the Hindi daily *Aaj* which in its early days had to be heavily subsidized by him. He also founded a Bharat Mata Mandir which had a huge relief map of India, in sculpture as the presiding deity, and paintings depicting stirring scenes from India's history, in the galleries around the main hall. He also gave large sums to found the national university which sub-

sequently produced leaders such as Dr Sampurnanand, Lal Bahadur Shastri, and others. To his house used to come as guests all the leading national leaders of those times and we, children of the neighbourhood, had the unique advantage of coming in contact with them.

To this very house once, I think in 1919, came Mahatma Gandhi. While staying there, he fell ill and we youngsters were placed on duty to attend on him. It was a unique opportunity and this was the first time, at the age of 13, that I came in contact with that great man of India's destiny.

After father's posting to Banaras, for the first time we had a settled existence. The question of our education on a stable basis was taken in hand. I was admitted to the Central Hindu High School and my sisters were put in the nearby Theosophical Girls' School. Both these institutions were at a distance of about four to five miles from our house. Father believed in the Spartan upbringing of the boys. Whilst the girls used to go to their school in a horse-drawn carriage, we boys as a part of our Spartan training were expected to walk all the way to our school. This was galling to start with but became very interesting and exciting as we collected friends on the route. It was made still more exciting by two guava gardens on the way. Stolen guavas tasted very sweet indeed!

To make us hardy and self-reliant, the servants were instructed not to do any work for boys. We had to make our own beds, tidy the rooms, and bathe either by drawing the water ourselves from a well or have a dip in the Ganga. There were no water taps in the house. Winter or summer, cold baths were the order of the day.

After getting ready early in the morning we had *sandhya* and *havan* before settling down to our studies. The house had a large compound where in the evenings we played hockey, cricket, and football. There was no difficulty in organizing our own teams because in the compound lived a number of other university employees who along with their children participated in the games. Very soon our club had friendly matches with the neighbouring clubs and educational institutions. Periodically we had our own sports tournaments in athletics.

The Central Hindu School was a school different from the normal schools of those days. It was started by Dr Annie Beasant and in the early stages functioned more or less on the lines of a public school. The first headmaster was G.S. Arundale who later became



the head of the Theosophical Society. When I joined the school, the headmaster was Dr I.J.S. Taraporewala, an eminent Sānskrit scholar and a firm believer in theosophy. Sometime later, he left to become the head of the Sanskrit Department of the Calcutta University. The relations between the teachers and the taught were most informal with considerable personal contact. It was not unusual during the recess periods to see teachers and students playing together in the grounds and the teachers giving informal lessons to students, in riding a cycle for instance. Corporal punishment was banned and it was sought to correct faults by informal contacts and advice. There was a strong undercurrent of nationalism and we had frequent visits and speeches by leaders such as Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Lajpat Rai, Mahatma Gandhi, Madan Mohan Malaviya, Dr Annie Beasant, and others. There was considerable stress on extra-curricular activities such as scouting, swimming, drill, and excursions. Saraswati Puja used to be an occasion for great activity. For days prior to the date of the puja, boys used to be engaged in making and bedecking the idol of the deity. On the puja day, there was great rejoicing and the procession and immersion ceremony was attended by a large number of students. We were also encouraged to work as volunteers on important festivals such as the Shivaratri at the celebrated Vishwanath Temple. The whole thing was great fun.

Dr Taraporewala left but the school activities went on. He was succeeded by another very fine headmaster, Rati Lal Desai, a Gujarati. He was a young man, had been to England, and was imbued with high ideals. He, however, stayed in the school only for a short while.

Thereafter, a senior deputy collector, Pandit Gursevak Singh Upadhyaya, was made the headmaster. He had considerable religious zeal but, in my opinion, was a complete misfit owing to the liberal traditions of our school. As soon as he came in, he started tightening up what he called discipline. He did not approve of informal relations between students and teachers. He wanted to run the school on rigid disciplinarian lines and even introduced corporal punishment. The result was that there was a lot of trouble and the boys naturally rebelled against the new system which changed the atmosphere of the school from one of friendship to that of regimentation. At that time I was in the ninth class. We were all very much agitated. The matter went right up to Pandit Madan Mohan Mala-

viya and ultimately Upadhyaya had to go. By the time he went, I had also left the school.

One more important event which took place during my student days was the inauguration of the Banaras Hindu University by the then Prince of Wales (who later became King Edward VIII and after abdication, Duke of Windsor). On account of the political situation, Mahatma Gandhi and other national leaders were opposed to the inauguration of the university by one who symbolized imperialism. It was apprehended that if he came to the function he may be faced with demonstration of black flags, meetings, and so on. Malaviyaji, who had inadvertently walked into this unhappy situation, was in a quandary because cancellation of an accepted invitation by the heir to the British throne would have been an insult to the Crown. The students of the university and its constituent institutions were also very much worked up. Luckily no untoward incident took place and the inauguration ceremony, though not as grand as was originally intended, passed off peacefully. It was, of course, boycotted by most of the students.

I passed my matriculation examination from the Hindu School in 1921. Normally I would have joined the Hindu University but an unexpected difficulty arose. At the time of matriculation my age was 15 and for admission to the Hindu University the minimum age limit was 16. I was therefore underage. Luckily, at the Allahabad University there was no such restriction. Further, my father had studied at the Muir Central College, Allahabad, so for sentimental reasons also I finally joined it for further education.

This was the first time in my life when I left my home and went out alone in the world. As a boarder I got admitted to the Muir Hostel, a small select hostel of about 50 students only. The number of boarders being small, corporate life was intimate because of which many close friendships were formed which lasted throughout life. To mention only a few, they were Atma Charan who entered the ICS and later became a High Court judge—he tried the Mahatma Gandhi murder case; A.K. Roy who later became the Comptroller and Auditor-General of India; R.L. Gupta another member of the ICS who retired as a secretary to the Government of India (he passed away recently); K.B. Bhatia, a very bright member of the ICS, who unfortunately died prematurely; and Dr. Din Dayal Gupta, later on Head of the Hindi Department of the Lucknow University.

In the university other life-long friendships were also formed. Of them Vishnu Sahay got into the ICS and later became the Governor of Assam; his brother Bhagwan Sahay, also of the ICS, who till recently was the Governor of Jammu and Kashmir; Shankar Prasad, ICS, who retired as Secretary to the Government of India; A.N. Jha, ICS, who died recently as the Lt-Governor of Delhi; and J.P. Singh who later became Chairman of the Central Board of Revenue.

I did not particularly distinguish myself as a student. A good second class was all I aspired for and that was not too difficult to get. But I fully availed of the extracurricular life of the university. Games, outdoor and indoor, took most of my time. I excelled in long-distance races, tennis, hockey, football, and cricket. I became the tennis and sports captain of the hostel, its senior prefect, students' representative in the university, and a member of the hockey, football, and cricket teams. I also became a university colours-holder in cross-country race. The result of all this has been that I have never since had any complex about being short-statured.

After passing my Intermediate from the Muir Central College, I went to Lucknow for B.Sc. Father had become chief engineer of U.P. with headquarters at Lucknow and he thought that it would be better if I could be near him. I, however, did not like the atmosphere of the Lucknow University and after taking my B.Sc. returned to Allahabad for M.Sc.—and back to the Muir Hostel. I took my M.Sc. degree in 1927. For having nothing better to do, I joined M.A. in economics to acquire further knowledge as in any case I was still underage to appear in any competitive examination. But I never finished the course.

In 1927, the turning point of my life occurred. That year our family decided to holiday in Kashmir. I was quite excited. As I was a keen photographer by then, I was made the "family photographer." I equipped myself with all that was necessary—camera plates, photographic paper, darkroom equipment, etc—and planned to convert a tent into a dark room which in fact I did. The photographs taken by me then—nearly half a century ago—are still with me and in good condition.

On our way to Kashmir, we halted at Lahore at the house of my father's great friend; Sir Ganga Ram, a reputed engineer who had become a self-made millionaire. He had very humble beginnings but he was one of the first Indian engineers to come out of

the Roorkee Engineering College. He joined the Imperial Service of Engineers. He had much to do with irrigation in Punjab. In fact, he pioneered lift irrigation in North India. After retirement he went into business and became a millionaire. He gave away large amounts of money to charities. It used to be said of him that "he earned like a lion and gave away like a saint."

It was this Sir Ganga Ram who turned the course of my life. While staying in his house, in the course of a discussion about my future, I suggested that as he was on the Board of Directors of the Imperial Bank of India (which later became the State Bank of India), he could possibly nominate me as an executive officer in the bank. He was upset by my suggestion and remarked: "Your father never stood second in studies and service. And you, his son, talk about being nominated to a post. You must sit in a competitive examination like the civil service and qualify yourself."

I confessed, "I have not distinguished myself as a student. I never got more than a second class. How do you expect me to get into the ICS. There is so much stiff competition for the ICS."

Sir Ganga Ram replied: "Now, look, when I retired from service I had barely fifty thousand rupees. I decided that I will die a millionaire. With those fifty thousand rupees I started all over again and worked. Today I am rich enough to give away lakhs of rupees in charity. All because I tried hard—and worked hard. There is no reason why by working hard you cannot succeed in life." He left it at that.

While holidaying in Kashmir, the Grand Old Man's words rangled in my mind. After about eight or ten days of hard thinking, I mustered enough courage and went to my father. I told him, "Now you better send me to England. I want to sit for the Indian Civil Service. I am determined to face the competition."

"Are you serious?" my father asked.

"Yes," I insisted.

"All right," my father agreed.

And so, the next year, in 1928, I was off to England by boat from Bombay. Anand Mohan, a boyhood friend and a son of an old friend of my father, was also travelling by the same boat. So I had a nice companion to while away the time. By then I was quite well versed with the English way of life—table manners, deportment, etiquette, etc.

In London I stayed in fairly comfortable digs. My tutor was one

Maddeley, a genial and helpful man. I studied at the celebrated London School of Economics under Harold J. Laski, Joan Robinson, Gregory (who had been the finance member of the Viceroy's Council), and others.

The London School of Economics under the direction of Laski had become the home of radical thinking in England and even in Europe. Students from all over Europe, Asia, and Africa flocked to the LSE (as it was called in short) to sit at the feet of Laski and his colleagues and to imbibe socialism and radical thinking. Many of these students were in the future to be the leaders of independence movements in Asia and Africa.

One of the students from India those days was V. K. Krishna Menon who later, after independence, became the High Commissioner in London and thereafter the Defence Minister. Immersed as I was in my preparations for the competitive examination, I did not see much of Krishna Menon those days. I could not anticipate then that after 23 years we would be working together at the India House and come in active conflict with each other. Another contemporary was Jagan Nath Khosla who, after a spell as a professor of economics, joined the Indian Foreign Service and was my colleague in London and my successor as India's Ambassador in Czechoslovakia.

Joan Robinson, though young, was the best teacher of economics at the LSE. Her lectures were also always very popular and well attended. Gregory was a fine teacher of public finance but the Indian students did not like him as he was a conservative and had proved to be a reactionary when he was the Finance Member of the Viceroy's Council in India.

With determined effort and concentrated studies I passed out of the ICS examination and was placed in the School of the Oriental Studies for the training period of the service. One of my contemporaries was K. R. Damle who later became Chairman of the Union Public Service Commission. Another was R.L. Gupta who later was in charge of food and agriculture, shipping and transport, and the Administrative Staff College.

After a year of probation, I returned to India in November 1930 and joined the much coveted Indian Civil Service.

## 2. Indian Civil Service in Retrospect

Before the start of the ICS, the East India Company was administered by assistants who were half servants of the company and half traders. But as the British became more and more dominant the need for a proper civil service with total dedication to good administration of the country was increasingly felt. It was obvious that civil servants who were traders in their own right could not fulfil this role. Only people who had administration as a wholetime task and who were guided by some norms of conduct and integrity could be found suitable for the task of administering a whole subcontinent and also to maintain the prestige of the empire.

It was to be a paternal type of government for the Indian people who, though they had a glorious past and an ancient civilization, lagged far behind in progress due to chaotic times and neglect and had thus become backward in the technical sense. The aims were mainly to provide a good and efficient government by strict maintenance of law and order to utilize the abundant resources of India for the growth, prestige, and prosperity of the British empire. Every care was taken to choose and train the best possible people for the service, and gradually around it grew a tradition and an aura which presumably no other service in the world has ever had.

It was a matter of great honour to belong to the ICS, and its every member was actuated by the desire and determination never to do anything which will detract from its good name and tradition. Unsuitable people were speedily and without much fuss sent out so that the service could always be a well-knit body of men who could perform their onerous tasks efficiently and unitedly.

• In the early stages, the ICS was naturally manned entirely by the

British. Its members were assisted in their work by junior services manned by Indians but top jobs involving decision and direction of policy were exclusively handled by its members. It operated as a closed coterie of top executives which was the exclusive domain of the British for the governance of India.

As political consciousness in India grew, the pressure on the British for associating Indians in the top administration increased. The result was the Indian element was introduced in the service though grudgingly and slowly. Being in a very small minority and the spirit of nationalism being dormant in the early period of the twentieth century when the Indian element was introduced, the Indian members of the service were for all practical purposes only Brown copies of their White British counterparts.

They were selected mainly through an open competitive examination held in London. A few, after World War I, were nominated directly to the service by the Secretary of State for India. It was only in 1923 that a competitive examination was started in India for the direct recruitment of Indians. Some Indians however entered the service through the competitive examination in London and a few through nomination by the Secretary of State to provide representation to minority communities—scheduled castes and tribes.

From 1923 onwards the proportion of Indians in the service increased steadily and consequently their outlook and attitudes became progressively more nationalistic. This was bound to have an effect on the homogeneity of the service and by 1930, when I joined the service, there was definitely an undercurrent of racialism and nationalism. While on the whole, the government was fair in matters of appointments, postings, and promotions in the service, it preferred the British for manning the more important and responsible posts. If an Indian got any of these posts, he was either much too good to be ignored without appearing to be blatantly partial or his loyalty to the government had to be absolutely total and exemplary.

When I joined the service, I was first posted in Aligarh where Percy Marsh was the District Magistrate. He took great interest in me because, like my father, his father had been in the engineering service, and that too in U.P. He took me in hand and gave much useful advice.

One day, Marsh told me: "Now, listen carefully. Two things you must always do. One is to take a decision and to take it quick-

ly, right or wrong. Most often you are likely to be right in your decision. But, even if you are wrong, less damage will be done than by not taking a decision. And, the second thing is that you are an executive officer. You should keep your mouth shut as far as possible. The less you speak the less trouble you will get into." He added: "Talking is the task of politicians. You will be judged by your actions and not by your talks. So you better speak less and act more."

This was a very good piece of advice. I wish officers would even now follow it as much damage is being done by delayed decision or no decision at all. Anyway, what I wish to emphasize is that in those days, the senior civil servants took the freshers in hand and talked to them like uncles or elder brothers as they were genuinely interested in shaping their careers.

Things have changed considerably since. Senior officers are so busy looking after themselves that they have no time to devote to young officers. The question of taking interest or of giving advice does not arise at all since senior officers seldom mix with junior officers nowadays. The atmosphere in which we were trained was entirely different from what exists now.

Aligarh, the seat of the Muslim University, was a very interesting posting to have. The university was the hotbed of Muslim communalism and provided the bulk of leadership to the Muslim League. It was established by the late Sir Syed Ahmed under the inspiration of the British to combat the rising Indian nationalism on the pretext of safeguarding Muslim culture in India and of protecting the interests of the Muslim community. While the general outlook of the university was markedly communal, one could not help being impressed by the cultural outlook and sophistication of most of its teachers.

I found in the educational and social life of the university a refuge from the purely official atmosphere of the service and made many lasting friendships. Notable amongst them were Professor and Mrs Habeeb, Professor Haider Khan, and Ashfaq Hussain. They were staunch nationalists in this fort of communalism and in spite of the troubles of Hindu-Muslim relations they never swerved from the path of nationalism.

Mrs Habeeb was a granddaughter of the great nationalist leader Abbas Tyabji. Haider Khan later married a friend of mine, Mumtaz Abdulla, daughter of Khan Bhadur Sheikh Abdulla, a leading



lawyer of Delhi and a social reformer who had done a lot to further the cause of education of the Muslim women. In the house of the Abdullas I found a home away from home and I can never forget their cordial and affectionate treatment. We used to call Mumtaz by the respectful name of Ale Bi.

Nearly two years after I joined the service, in 1932, I married Dayawati, granddaughter of Sir Ganga Ram, the Grand Old Man who had provoked me into sitting for the ICS examination. Unfortunately he did not live to witness our wedding. But I am sure that had he been alive it would have gladdened his heart to see me well set in my career and married to his own son Hariram's daughter.

Dayawati was a staunch nationalist. She had courted imprisonment during the civil disobedience along with her mother. Both did a spell in the Lahore jail. I have always wondered why of all persons she married me—a civil servant, a symbol of the much-hated British raj. However, her marriage did not interfere with her beliefs. Till we attained independence, Dayawati always wore khadi. Wherever we resided, our home had impressive pictures of Gandhi and other leaders, complete with garlands. My fellow civil servants knew of this and even smelt anti-imperialist trends in the family. Besides being a Punjabi my wife was outspoken in her views. My attitude towards her was one of sympathy since I had from birth been in touch with the leaders of the national movement. We were a happy couple, though in the beginning there were periods of agonizing adjustment.

A few months after my marriage, Dayawati fell very ill. My father attributed her illness to the bad climate of Aligarh. He got so worried that on his own he requested the Chief Secretary to transfer me to some other place. I was not even aware of this. Soon after I went on a visit to Lucknow. As was the custom those days, I called on the Chief Secretary. He announced that I had been transferred to Meerut. I did not show any enthusiasm because I had not asked for it. Noting this, he remarked, "You don't seem to have reacted at all! This is rather strange."

I replied, "Why should I react. You have transferred me and I accept it. What else. . ."

He interrupted: "Don't you know your father had specially requested me to transfer you. And I have done it."

"No, I didn't know," I said and added: "If that is the case, then

I would like the transfer order to be cancelled.”

“But, why?” the Chief Secretary asked.

“I don’t want that I should be spoon-fed by an influential father. I can look after myself. Certainly I will not have a transfer at his request.”

The Chief Secretary concurred: “Yes, my boy, that precisely is the impression I gained. I am glad you told me this. But tell me why did your father want you to be transferred. I have not the faintest idea.”

I said: “Probably because my wife has not been keeping well in Aligarh. My father must have thought her health would improve if I was transferred elsewhere.”

Understanding the situation, the Chief Secretary said, “In that case, why Meerut of all places. You should go to a hill station.”

In my presence he cancelled the transfer order. And in a few months he transferred me to Almora as a Joint Magistrate. This was in 1934. It was here that I first came in contact with Jawaharlal Nehru as a prisoner in the Almora jail. Little did I anticipate then that he would be free India’s first Prime Minister and I would be working as his Principal Secretary.

It was part of my duty as the Joint Magistrate to look after the distinguished “A” class prisoners in Almora. Two distinguished prisoners at that time were Nehru and M.N. Roy. During the year or so when Nehru was in Almora jail, I made it a point to see him quite often, and what struck me greatly was his love for beauty and his complete sense of discipline. Beautiful things entranced him. He strictly abided by the rules and regulations of the jail and devoted much of his time to writing. He managed to devote some time to gardening too. He created a beautiful flower garden around his cell. In fact, he used to show it to me with a sense of pride every time I went to the jail. He used to remark, “Look, what I have done in my leisure time.” I was deeply impressed to see this man of eminence taking so much interest in his surroundings and making the best of bad circumstances.

During his stay at Almora, his wife, Kamala, fell very ill and the doctors advised that she should be taken to Switzerland for treatment. The British authorities were then faced with the problem whether or not to free Nehru to accompany Kamala to Switzerland to look after her treatment. One day, the Chief Secretary of the U.P. government rang up the District Magistrate in this con-

nection. Since he was out of station on tour I was contacted being the next senior officer. His instructions were that they would set Nehru free to go abroad provided he gave an assurance that he would not indulge in political activities during the period of parole. I conveyed this to Nehru and he replied tersely: "I can give no such assurance. They should, however, know by now that besides being a politician, I am also a gentleman."

I contacted the Chief Secretary and conveyed the message expressing my own view that what Nehru had stated should be deemed as sufficient assurance. He commented: "Yes, I agree. We need not insist on a positive assurance. His very remark that he is also a gentleman can be taken as sufficient assurance." Soon after Nehru was released unconditionally.

While Nehru was a very easy person to get on with, M.N. Roy was an entirely different proposition. As a prisoner, he gave no trouble and scrupulously observed the jail rules and discipline. But his upbringing as a communist and as a revolutionary made him very reserved and tight-lipped. It was practically impossible to overcome his restraint. My contact with him produced no lasting relationship. He probably thought that there could be no meeting ground between him, an international revolutionary that he was, and me, a member of the so-called steel-frame of India created by the British.

I was in Almora till 1936. Life followed the usual routine of official existence. My next posting was in Bareilly as the officiating District Magistrate and Collector. The people had got so much used to being ruled by the British that the first impact of Indians being appointed to high posts—Collectors, Commissioners, and Secretaries to the government—was that of disbelief and lack of comprehension. I was the first Indian collector in Bareilly and the local people as well as the British officials found it very difficult to adjust themselves to the new situation. The local population still behaved as if a Britisher was the District Magistrate. They were apt to forget that an Indian was occupying the chair. On one occasion, a local grandee started talking against Indians generally without realizing who he was talking to. Ultimately, he had to be rudely reminded of the changing time and the extent of his degradation.

The British army officers also found it difficult to accept an Indian at the head of the administration. As the District Magistrate

the Indian was not only the *ex-officio* President of the Club—the fort of high officialdom in the district—but was also the recipient of all honours at the time of parades and celebrations. It was a bitter pill to swallow for the army officials who protested to the higher authorities against my continuance in Bareilly as the District Magistrate. It was to the credit of the British element in the ICS that the Commissioner and the Chief Secretary resisted this move. However, finally the old prejudices prevailed and at the level of the governor the decision was taken to transfer me to the small district of Etah—with profuse apologies all round. After about a year at Etah, I was sent back to Almora, possibly as an atonement. They knew I liked Almora immensely for the possibilities it offered for work and for mountaineering which I had developed as a hobby.

The Indian civil servant was all the time on trial. The Indians compared him with his British colleagues in regard to competence and dignity while the British closely watched his loyalty to the Crown. To them he was the Trojan Horse in the outfit. The Indian nationalists, on the other hand, while happy at the advent of Indians on the high administrative scene, did not quite know what to make of these highly-paid minions of the government who though Indians by nationality were expected to serve the British loyally.

However, as time passed, and more and more political power passed into the hands of Indians and the Indianization of the service also progressed, a sort of equilibrium got created. The Indian civil servant got more and more involved with nationalism and purely Indian interests and the British began to realize that in the circumstances it was the natural thing to happen. The Indian public also came gradually to look upon him as their own.

It was not unusual during the period of national ferment from 1930 to 1947 for the political leaders to be in close touch with some senior Indian civil servants who, within the limits of the discipline of the service, did their best to further the national cause. Some like my friend H.V. Kamath even left the service and joined the national struggle for freedom.

All these were emerging trends in the late thirties. In my own career in the U.P. cadre of the service, I had come in touch with the nationalist leaders in jail and otherwise. During my first posting in Almora, I made the acquaintance of Jawaharlal Nehru and M.N.

Roy. When I was the officiating District Magistrate of Bareilly, the veteran Pakhtoonistan leader, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, was in prison there. I used to visit him occasionally and was deeply impressed by his simplicity and sincerity. When I was posted in Almora second time, the Almora jail was turned into a sanatorium, for the national leaders from U.P. including Govind Ballabh Pant were imprisoned there.

The Congress ministry which came to power in 1937 resigned in protest in 1939 in pursuance of the Congress policy which was against India's involvement in World War II without her express consent. Gandhi had started the individual civil disobedience movement—satyagraha—according to which individual leaders after giving advance notice to the authorities used to denounce India's participation in the war by reading out a set statement publicly. After summary trial, they were sentenced to varying terms of imprisonment.

In this manner, Govind Ballabh Pant, Chief Minister of U.P. in the Congress government, and other leaders were arrested and incarcerated in Almora. As I was the Deputy Commissioner there, they became my wards. Pant happened to be an old friend of my father and had considerable personal affection for me. Besides, when he was the Chief Minister, we had occasions to meet each other officially. Pant was quite at home in Almora as his mother had belonged to that town and he had been brought up by his maternal grandfather there.

The token satyagraha movement somehow appeared to me to be an exercise in futility from the points of view of both the satyagrahis and the government. The jails were getting overcrowded with a large number of people imprisoned for what appeared to be a technical offence. So, I suggested to my Commissioner that it would be a good idea to ignore the reading out of the set formula by the satyagrahis and not to arrest them. He, however, disagreed with me. I therefore took up the matter with the Chief Secretary Frank Mudie (who later became the Government of India's Home Secretary and was knighted). I told him that my own view was that by arresting people and putting them in jail we were unnecessarily creating martyrs out of them. Actually, they were doing them nothing much by way of disturbing or endangering law and order. If they were not arrested, an interesting situation might arise. The satyagrahis would come with considerable fanfare with

full expectation of being arrested. Then if they go back without being arrested and imprisoned, they would look ridiculous. The whole purpose of the demonstration would be defeated. Frank Mudie after pondering over the matter agreed with me. He directed me to try it and report after a month.

So, after my return to Almora, the satyagrahis were ignored and not arrested. As expected this created a difficult situation for the movement and it started collapsing. Pant, who was in the jail, sent for me and said, "Look, I thought you were a friend of all of us—and of the Congress. But right now you are killing the movement."

I protested and said, "I am not killing the movement. I am not arresting anybody. That's all."

Pant continued: "That is precisely how you are killing the movement. It's true that you are not arresting anybody. But they are returning home looking silly. They are all getting demoralized."

"But Pantji, I have told the government that I will not arrest anybody and now I cannot withdraw," I replied.

Pant insisted, "But you must do something about this."

After thinking a while, I suggested an alternative: "I can do one thing. You give me a list of the important people to be arrested. I will arrest them only and not everybody. Let the leadership be kept alive in the people's minds."

He agreed and gave me a list and it was acted upon.

In the list was an old college-mate of mine, Krishna Chandra Joshi, who was one of the prominent leaders of the Congress in the district. He visited my home one night. He was very upset and told me that his name in the district was in the mud. He said that people were saying that the District Magistrate was not arresting him as he was a class-mate and a friend of his. This had caused considerable embarrassment to him. He insisted that to save his reputation I must arrest him. As his name was in the list, there was no difficulty in my obliging him.

The new strategy produced good results. The Congress leaders were happy that the movement had been saved and the authorities were satisfied that their objectives had been fulfilled. The jails were no longer overcrowded and the intensity of the movement had been considerably reduced.

This is just one instance of the behind-the-scene goings-on between the nationalist leaders and the civil servants. There was an undercurrent of contact between the two camps and most of the

Indian members of the civil service acted in the interests of the national movement whenever possible. All these goings-on naturally created a suspicion about my motives in the government and I was ordered to be transferred to Sultanpur. In my place the government brought an Indian civil servant with strong pro-British views.

But as luck would have it, just when the time came for me to leave Almora for Sultanpur, the then officiating Chief Secretary, Barron, who had been my District Magistrate in Aligarh, rang me up. He asked me whether I would like to go to Delhi, to a post in the Centre. I had a premonition that storm clouds were gathering on the political horizon and that much more trouble between the government and the Congress was brewing. With my leanings in favour of the Congress, if really big trouble occurred in the districts, it might become difficult for me even to continue to remain in the service. Safety, therefore, appeared to lie, if I desired to continue in the service, to get away from the district administration and seek a position in the Secretariat, as far away from the district as possible. Barron's offer in the circumstances appeared to be a god-sent opportunity which I promptly accepted. He sent my name to the Centre and I was selected. Thus instead of going to Sultanpur in October 1941, I landed in Delhi.

I was appointed as the Deputy Chief Controller of Imports in the newly set up department under Ram Chandra who was the Chief Controller of Imports. A senior member of the civil service, he had been at one time the Finance Secretary of Punjab. A disciplinarian, he had collected a band of young officers like myself—R.L. Gupta (subsequently a secretary to the Government of India), the late P.C. Choudhury (who retired as a secretary to the Government of India), Y.R. Parpia, J.A. Rahim (who later became the Foreign Affairs Secretary of Pakistan), and an Englishman called Elwin.

The staff selected was inadequate to handle the thousands of applications that were pouring in. When I arrived on the scene, even telegrams, tied up in bundles, were lying neglected in corners. The department had been started suddenly without much preparation and could not cope with the quantum of work. It was in this department that we young officers of the service were let loose. It was hard going indeed. When we pressed for more staff, the Chief Controller's reaction, owing to his finance background, was nega-

tive. He just asked us to do our best with the available staff.

Being new to the Secretariat I was not conversant with its procedures and methods. Ram Chandra, a very efficient and methodical civil servant, realized my problem and explained to me in great detail how to make notings on files, how to submit them, how to number the pages and even in which corner to put down the number, and so on. It was a very revealing lecture and I was grateful for it. Such was the keen interest the senior officers took in the new entrants. When they discovered some promise in them, they took them in hand and guided them properly.

In war-time Delhi, there was neither time nor opportunity for the outdoor exercises I was fond of. But some exercise and diversion from the heavy pressure of work was necessary for us young officers. So we took to golf. At the crack of dawn, Vishnu Sahay (subsequently the Governor of Assam), his brother, Bhagwan Sahay (who recently retired as the Governor of Jammu and Kashmir), N.N. Wanchoo (at present, the Governor of Kerala), M.S. Bhatnagar, and myself used to go to the golf course on our bicycles loaded with our golf clubs. After playing for a couple of hours we would return to our respective residences, have a quick breakfast, and proceed to work. In the evenings there was no question of leisure or relaxation. We had to work till late in the night.

This was the beginning of my career in Delhi. I was in the Import Control Department till 1944. Thereafter, I was transferred to the Industries and Civil Supplies Department as a Deputy Secretary under Akbar Hydari (who after independence was made the Governor of Assam and died prematurely there). He was a remarkable Secretary to work under. He was action-oriented and did not believe in long and learned notings on files. His method of work was to call the officers, discuss the files with them, and pass orders immediately. He would add: "Now write down the orders and if necessary get me to sign them." That was the end of the matter. This method resulted in very quick disposal of work.

It was my good fortune that Akbar Hydari got personally interested in me. He gave me the pet name of "Ball-weevil"—a worm that gathers wool. Whenever there was anything to be settled with other ministries, he would say, "Call that Ball-weevil. I think he will be able to get it done." So, the Ball-weevil was sent out on inter-ministerial errands. It proved to be a very good grounding in the art of negotiations and also it considerably enlarged the circle of



my friends and acquaintances in the Government of India.

Akbar Hydari, after trying me for three or four months, told me not to come any more to him for instructions while attending meetings unless I had some particular points to be cleared. Otherwise, I could act at my discretion—and if necessary invoking his name as my authority. Only if I anticipated any trouble I was to inform him so that he could then attend to it. In all other cases I could go ahead and do what I considered best. The trust he reposed in me was not only gratifying but also generated considerable sense of self-confidence. Certainly a very good way of building up young and promising officers.

I vividly recall an incident that was an offshoot of his instructions. During the war, there was a great shortage of newsprint. Newspapers and magazines had to work on a quota basis. The power of granting quotas was sometimes misused for pressurizing or punishing newspapers for political reasons. Pandit Ravi Shankar Shukla, the Madhya Pradesh (which was then called the central provinces) leader who later became its Chief Minister, was running some Hindi papers with strong Congress views. Because of their pronounced nationalist views, the newsprint quota for his papers was refused. I was then dealing with these quotas. Shuklaji came to me and told me that his newspapers' quota had been refused, which would mean the death of his papers. It would also result in a setback to the national movement in the central provinces. He insisted that I should therefore do something to restore the quota.

I looked into the papers and concluded that the quota had been wrongly withheld. I therefore allotted a fresh quota. The Home Department, however, was dead set against the grant of a quota to Shuklaji's papers. Francis Mudie, who was then the Home Member of the Government of India, called a meeting to discuss this matter. I attended it on behalf of my Secretary, Akbar Hydari.

Francis Mudie asked me to explain why the quota had been given. My reply was that under the rules the papers were entitled to it and so it was granted. Mudie, however, disagreed with me. His contention was that since the papers were indulging in subversive and seditious writings the quota should have been withheld. I countered by saying that there were no government orders to this effect in regard to the grant of newsprint quotas. In fairness therefore they could not be withheld for extraneous reasons. Mudie was very angry. He threatened to take it up with my Secretary. Promptly I

replied that I was acting under my Secretary's instructions. The meeting ended in a stalemate.

On my return to office, I informed Akbar Hydari of what had transpired at the meeting with Francis Mudie. I added that I anticipated real big trouble even though I had stood my ground. Hydari asked me not to worry and said that he would deal with the trouble when it would crop up.

The case was sent up to the Viceroy, Lord Wavell, who finally upheld my decision noting: "As there are no instructions to the contrary, the Deputy Secretary was justified in giving the quota."

This was the sort of support given by the seniors to their juniors in those days. My Secretary stood up for me and did not panic even when the matter went up to the Viceroy.

Only for one year, during 1944-45, I was a Deputy Secretary under Akbar Hydari. Then I became officiating Joint Secretary. One day, Hydari suggested that I should go to Bombay as the Textile Commissioner with the rank of a Joint Secretary. I was a junior for the post since there were others in the service, both British and Indian, senior to me by a year or more, who were still to get the joint secretary's rank. So, though happy at the offer I asked him if he was not inviting trouble for himself? He brushed aside my objections remarking: "Are you afraid? If you are not afraid, then I am not afraid. I will handle the situation. You go and take up the job."

I therefore left for Bombay. But the anticipated trouble did arise. Hydari again went right up to the Viceroy contending that though he did not want to do any damage to the seniors involved, if it came to a point he would have to put down in writing that they were not fit enough to be the Joint Secretaries. This stand settled the issue.

The Textile Commissioner's job was very interesting but an onerous one. There was acute shortage of both cloth and yarn in the country and strict rationing had to be enforced. The Textile Commissioner was helped in his task by a Textile Advisory Board consisting of some of the leading industrialists like Sir Purushottamdas Thakurdas, Sir Shri Ram, Sir Ness Wadia, Kasturbhai Lalbhai, Krishandas Thackersey, and others. It was a unique experience to work with them.

In this posting, too, something could be done to help the nationalists. Rafi Ahmed Kidwai, the U.P. leader, was the princi-

pal intermediary in this matter. A number of Congress workers were weavers and with the shortage of yarn they were in difficulty. Kidwai would communicate about deserving cases to me and relief was provided in an unostentatious manner. Sometimes Nehru would also write drawing my attention to particular cases and I would do the needful.

In June 1946, as a preparatory step towards the grant of dominion status to India, Lord Mountbatten (who had succeeded Lord Wavell as the Viceroy) installed the Interim Government in Delhi consisting of representatives of the Congress and the Muslim League. It was also in the nature of a last attempt to bring the two contending political parties—the Congress and the Muslim League—together with a view to preventing the partition of India.

The experiment, however, proved to be a total failure. The ministers belonging to the two camps operated in water-tight compartments with no communication between them and on a basis of mutual hostility. The Hindu and Muslim civil servants in Delhi also broke up into two opposing camps, one supporting the Congress group of ministers and the other the Muslim League group. There were, of course, a few honourable exceptions. But the canker of communalism had also entered the civil service. The Muslim elements were generally supported by the British who by the practice of divide and rule were hoping to prolong their hold over the subcontinent.

The resultant deterioration in administration was steep. At every step the Congress ministers came up against active opposition from their Muslim League colleagues. There were virtually two parallel governments running at the Centre. Most of the Muslim officers were taking orders from the Muslim League minister and the Hindu officers were functioning under the directions of the Ministers for Home Affairs, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, and the Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru.

The famous Liaquat Ali Budget of 1947 was directed clearly against all the interests which had helped the Congress in the past. It was the culminating act of this uneasy partnership. The share market crashed and it took a few years for the economy of the country to recover from the evil effects of the budget. By then, several other economic disasters had happened.

Gradually a stage came when even the greatest opponents of partition came to the conclusion that if the country was at all to

be independent, there was no escape from partition. Otherwise the Hindus and Muslims would have continued to act at cross-purposes delaying independence, playing into the hands of the British, and hindering the social and economic progress of the country. It was also hoped that with the partition, the communal passions would cool down and it would be possible for them to live thereafter in a state of mutual amity and tolerance.

This last hope was however to be rudely belied by the events which occurred just before and after the actual partition in 1947. Widespread riots followed by inhuman bestial acts—rape, arson, looting, and murder—occurred throughout the North-West Frontier Province, Punjab, Sind, Delhi, U.P., Bihar, and Bengal, followed by mass evacuation of minorities of the two newly created countries of Pakistan and India. India alone received over nine million displaced persons whose reception and rehabilitation posed an enormous problem. More about it later.

For the Ministry of Industries and Civil Supplies, in which I was working as the Textile Commissioner, the Minister in the Interim Government was C. Rajagopalachari, popularly known as Rajaji. A front-rank leader of the national movement, he was reputed to be an astute and sharp politician. As such I was naturally nervous at my first meeting with him. The reality, however, was very reassuring. With his pleasant paternalistic manners, he quickly put me at ease and I found discussing matters with him not only exhilarating but also educative. He encouraged his officers to express their views fearlessly and if he did not agree with them he did not try to coerce or browbeat them but convinced them through discussion and reasoning.

I considered myself most fortunate to have started in free India with an understanding minister such as Rajaji. We quickly established an intimate and informal relationship which, even though Rajaji left soon after to become the first Governor-General of free India, lasted right up to the end of his life. Soon after he became the Minister, Rajaji wanted to decontrol textiles. This was in early 1947 when the textile situation was very acute. I was summoned to Delhi to discuss this matter. Rajaji desired me to prepare a note on the issue of decontrol. Accordingly I prepared a note setting out the pros and cons of decontrol but advising against decontrol.

After reading the note, Rajaji said, "Dharma Vira, I called you to Delhi because I wanted you to take this burden off my shoulder

and now you say that you do not advise decontrol. Please think it over again." The next day I went to him after a certain amount of rethinking but still sticking to my view. I told him that I had thought over the problem but I could not conscientiously advise him to decontrol.

Rajaji persisted in inducing me to change my views. Finally, I had to say that if he desired a contrary advice he would have to find another Textile Commissioner as I could not tender advice I did not believe in. On this, Rajaji softened up and said: "No, no! Whoever suggested another Textile Commissioner?"

We left it at that. And, there was no decontrol of cloth just then. Later on, after I had relinquished the post to join the Cabinet Secretariat at Delhi, Rajaji did prevail on my successor to agree to decontrol. As I apprehended, the prices of cloth and yarn shot up causing considerable hardship to the poor consumers. In conditions of shortage such a rise in prices was inevitable.

Soon after independence, Rajaji left the Central Cabinet to become the Governor of Bengal. I could not imagine then that after 18 years I would be following in his illustrious footsteps as the Governor of that state.

At the first anniversary of independence Rajaji, quite naturally as an old freedom fighter and a man of the people, decided to open the Raj Phawan for the people to see. The result was disastrous. It was literally invaded by thousands of people and everything of value removed. Paintings of the ex-Viceroy and Governors, which were of considerable historical value, were slashed and mutilated. The damage done was beyond repair. The pedestal of Tippoo Sultan's throne was removed and never found again. This shows that even the wisest of people can sometimes go hopelessly wrong while acting on purely ideological and emotional impulses.

After Lord Mountbatten left India, Rajaji succeeded him as the first Indian Governor-General of India and remained there till 1950 when Dr Rajendra Prasad became the first president of the Republic of India. But many in the country had expected Rajaji to be the country's first President and not having been chosen for this highest post was naturally a great disappointment to Rajaji. Nehru, as I know, strongly favoured Rajaji, but the party High Command was generally against him. Some of them considered him to be far too clever. This great disappointment was later to be reflected in Rajaji's disillusionment with the Congress Party and in his encouraging the

formation of the Swatantra Party as well as in his going back on Hindi becoming the national language. Rajaji as the first Chief Minister of the then Madras state had made Hindi compulsory as a subject of education in schools. The same Rajaji, after India became a Republic, actively opposed Hindi as the national language of the country.

### 3. Partition and Integration of Princely States

Lord Louis Mountbatten of Burma, who succeeded Lord Wavell as the Viceroy and Governor-General of India, came to India with tremendous reputation and prestige. Besides being a member of the British royal family, his deeds and achievements during World War II had endowed him with an aura of glory. A remarkably intelligent and attractive personality, he had a special charm to overcome the opposition of practically everybody whom he met. Probably the only two people in India who did not succumb to his charm were Mahatma Gandhi and Mohammed Ali Jinnah. Lord Mountbatten had the unique fortune of having an equally intelligent and charming wife in Lady Mountbatten. The two formed an ideal team to conclude successfully the very difficult and intricate task of settling the issue of India's independence.

Mountbatten had come to India charged by the British Cabinet to settle the future constitution of India with the agreement of the Indian leaders. He took up this onerous task with his characteristic zeal and vigour. At first, he tried to convince everybody concerned that the partition should be avoided. He had, however, come on the scene very late and by that time things had gone so far that the partition had become unavoidable. The details of the partition were therefore speedily worked out through teams of officials on both sides working according to a time-schedule. The problem of the princely states, which on independence would have been freed from the paramountcy of the British Crown, had also to be solved. It was obvious that they could not be left free to create confusion in the newly-formed countries. These states were, therefore, advised by Mountbatten to accede to India or Pakistan on the basis of

geographical contiguity and the composition of the population. This overall method worked well except in the cases of Kashmir, Junagadh, and Hyderabad which had to be settled otherwise. More about this later.

A couple, such as the Mountbattens, with their charismatic personalities and the aura of the royal family, was bound to hit off extremely well with Jawaharlal Nehru. Nehru, even though he rebelled against the British Crown for so long, had just the ideal background for being impressed by the Mountbattens. His public school and Cambridge education, attachment to the parliamentary democratic system, and upbringing as the scion of a rich and cultured family were bound to have an effect on his reaction to the personalities of the Mountbattens. At the same time, the Mountbattens were also greatly impressed by this attractive, cultured, and dreamer-rebel about whom they had already heard a lot. Therefore a life-long and intimate friendship grew between them.

Whilst it would be wrong to say that the advice that they gave to Nehru from time to time was not actuated by the best of motives there is no doubt that in doing so they were invariably guided by the interests of the British Commonwealth of Nations and of their own country. For example, in Kashmir and Hyderabad the advice given by Lord Mountbatten was, to say the least, faulty. In Kashmir it was only on his advice that the hostilities against the "raiders" were terminated and the case was taken to the United Nations. At that time the raiders and their supporter, the Pakistan army, were on the run and a few days more of operations would have resulted in the total liberation of Kashmir. Then there would have been no problem to be taken to the UN and we would not have unnecessarily got involved in the meshes of international intrigues and horsetrading. One therefore cannot help suspecting that Mountbatten was guided not solely by the interests of India but also those of the Commonwealth for which it was unseemly that two of its members should be in armed conflict.

Similarly in the case of Hyderabad even though it was obvious that India could not afford a hostile pocket in the heart of the country, Mountbatten, because of the British weakness for the Nizam, advised Nehru not to take any punitive action. Fortunately however, the overwhelming majority in the cabinet was in favour of the police action. Otherwise one never knows in what further difficulties we would have got involved in regard to Hyderabad.



There is, however, no doubt that the Mountbattens had genuine love for India. Lord Mountbatten actively advised in the Kashmir operations and the speed with which they could be undertaken was mainly due to his guidance and advice. Lady Mountbatten actively engaged herself in the relief operations consequent to the refugee influx into India. She worked untiringly and unceasingly, particularly to bring relief and solace to the women who were affected more by the riots and subsequent displacement. Their love for India and interest in it was so widely acknowledged that after independence there was complete unanimity on Lord Mountbatten being requested to continue as the Governor-General of independent India, a development which could never have been even dreamt of before independence. It is unfortunate that Lady Mountbatten died so soon after leaving India. Lord Mountbatten's interest in India, however, continues and in him we have a genuine well-wisher and lover of India.

The partition of India has been a great tragedy to our subcontinent because it has left a legacy of hate which has more or less permanently vitiated the relations between India and Pakistan and did not even succeed in finally settling the question of Hindu-Muslim relations which was its main purpose. Mahatma Gandhi was consistently opposed to partition. He was prepared to go to any extent to placate the Muslim sentiment in order to retain the entity of India and all his overtures to Jinnah and the Muslim League were actuated by this motive. It was, however, a tragedy that his followers committed a succession of errors which ultimately led to a situation where no alternative except partition was left, if India was to be independent.

The slogan of Pakistan was first started as a bargaining counter with the Indian National Congress. I still remember a discussion I had in 1940 with Dr Ziauddin, a leader of the Muslim League, who frankly confessed that Pakistan was only a bargaining slogan and that there could be no question of the Muslims ever desiring the partition of India. They only aspired to have sufficient safeguards for themselves being in minority so that they could continue to occupy a place of honour and not be overwhelmed by the Hindu majority. I got a similar impression during my talks with Liaquat Ali Khan who subsequently became the first Prime Minister of Pakistan and with whom I was on friendly terms. However, the brinkmanship of the leaders of the League led by Jinnah and 'the

lack of foresight by the Congress leaders steadily brought things to a head ultimately leading to the final tragedy of the partition of India.

Jinnah, to start with, was an ardent nationalist and was totally opposed to the League's views which he considered to be anti-national and against the interests of the country. The first serious trouble started in U.P. where the Congress refused the League a share in the government even though there was a tacit, though not explicit, understanding between them. The Congress attitude was that as it had obtained the overwhelming verdict of the people in the elections, it represented everybody including the Muslims and hence no Muslim other than a Congress Muslim could find a place in the government. As such the League representatives had no place in it. This amounted to a direct confrontation and, according to the League, a going back by the Congress on an agreement. Thereafter, matters went from bad to worse.

The leader of the League in U.P. at that time was Nawabzada Liaquat Ali Khan. A scion of the family of the Nawabs of Karnal, he was a big landlord in Muzaffarnagar district. His education was entirely in England and he was a person of considerable charm of manner and friendliness. Like Jinnah he also started as a staunch nationalist and I have no doubt that if the Congress had played fair with him in U.P. the political and communal trends at that time would not have inevitably moved in the direction of the partition. While Jinnah was a very gruff and taciturn person to deal with, Liaquat was suave and mild. In Liaquat, Jinnah found an able lieutenant who could implement his policies and decisions smoothly. He was later assassinated by the Muslim zealots of Panjab who could not stomach a Prime Minister hailing from U.P.

During the war years he was residing in Delhi. He and his *begum* were extremely fond of bridge and since I also played bridge it became a great common bond between them and me. Another bond curiously was gin. Liaquat was very fond of gin and as an aristocrat would have only the best of the imported kind. During the war years imported liquor was very difficult to get but with my contacts I could get that for him. He was naturally grateful.

British politicians as well as the British and Muslim civil servants eagerly snatched this god-sent opportunity to fan the flames of communalism in India. They more or less openly encouraged the League's demands which gradually and steadily grew more and

more exacting and onerous. The Congress leaders, on the other hand, continued to remain under the influence of paper idealism. To them democracy meant majority rule and as it was the firm resolve of the Congress to establish secular democracy in India the Muslims had nothing to fear in free India. They also grossly over-rated the influence of the Muslims who continued to remain in the Congress and thus became more and more opposed to the League's demands. They did not realize that with the Muslim masses the call of "Islam in danger" had a great force. Idealism and secularism against such elemental passions had not much force.

Gradually the atmosphere became more and more vitiated and what started as only a bargaining slogan began assuming a positive shape. Ironically, the greatest support to the concept of Pakistan came from the Muslims of areas such as U.P. and Bihar which under no circumstances could have gone to Pakistan, if created. The Muslims of the NWFP, Punjab, Sind, and Bengal, who were secure in their majority, were up to the end not much enamoured of the concept of Pakistan. There were extreme communalists as well but the majority was against partition. It was only in areas where the Muslims were in a minority the support to the idea of Pakistan was more positive. We cannot therefore escape the conclusion that Pakistan was more the creation of a fear complex than the demand of the so-called homeland for separate nation.

Subsequent happenings in Bangladesh, 25 years after the partition, were to give the lie to the two-nation theory. But in the forties, the British, the Muslim civil servants, and the communal Muslim politicians did succeed in creating an atmosphere as if Hindus and Muslims belonged to two different nations. They forgot that the Indian people, though belonging to different religions, coming from the same stock, had co-existed for over a thousand years. They also took no account of the complete impracticability and suffering involved in the total transfer of population. In fact, the Congress right up to the end and even thereafter had very rightly never accepted the two-nation theory and even the League leaders did not contemplate a transfer of population. Very naively they thought that all will be well after the partition and thereafter the Hindu minority in Pakistan and the Muslim minority in India will live for all times in amity and friendship.

By 1946, when the Interim Government at Delhi with Congress-League partnership was formed, the chips were already down..

The experiment was undertaken too late. The differences had got so crystallized that the partition had become more or less inevitable. Had it been undertaken in 1938 in U.P., the subsequent history of India might have been different.

The Interim Government was a total failure. The Government of India got firmly divided into two opposing camps—the Congress Camp and the Muslim Camp—which operated solely on communal lines. Jawaharlal Nehru who was the Prime Minister was a helpless spectator of the activities of the League ministers who were actively supported and encouraged in their intransigence by the then Viceroy, Lord Wavell, and by the British civil servants in India. The administration of the Government of India soon got into a state of chaos and the country was engulfed by communal disturbances, particularly in Punjab, Bengal, U.P., and Bihar. It became very clear even to the Congress leaders that if India was ever to be independent and was to make orderly progress the demand for partition will have to be conceded.

At this time appeared the impressive figure of Lord Mountbatten on the scene. He too saw no alternative except partition and with his charisma and persuasive powers he did not take much time to convince the Congress as well as the League about the inevitability of this solution. Only the Mahatma remained unreconciled but his was a cry in the wilderness and the die was finally cast on 15 August 1947, when India was divided into Pakistan and India.

All the hopes of the majority and the minority communities in Pakistan and India settling down to an existence in peace and amity in the two newly-formed countries were immediately shattered. There were large-scale riots in West Pakistan and East Bengal in Pakistan and in East Punjab, U.P., Bihar, and West Bengal in India resulting in mass migration of minorities from these areas. West Pakistan was practically denuded of non-Muslims and over 40 lakhs of Hindus migrated from East Pakistan. From East Punjab practically all the Muslims had to evacuate to West Pakistan. Some Muslims also left U.P. and Bihar and migrated to Pakistan. The sufferings, hardships, and tortures which the minorities in the two countries suffered in the process had only to be seen to be believed. Overnight the homes of centuries had to be abandoned. There was no respect for women and no compassion for children. If a person belonged to the other religion,

the woman had to be despoiled or abducted and the children killed. A number of families lost their bread-winners and there was invariably a total loss of property. They were lucky if they escaped alive and there simply was no question of retrieving any property. Human beings who were friendly neighbours till the day before became inhuman and cruel enemies in the communal frenzy which was generated.

It was only to be expected that the countries which were born amidst so much violence and hatred could not settle down to live in peace and friendship with each other. In the course of the past 25 years we already had four wars thrust by Pakistan and we do not know when this enmity will cease. Even the generations on both sides which knew each other and had once worked together have passed and now we only have those left who have been nurtured and have grown in hatred and distrust of each other. Gandhi has been as ever fully proved right. The partition of India has solved nothing and has only succeeded in creating many more problems which we wonder if they will ever be solved.

India during British rule consisted of British India administered directly by the British as provinces and the Indian states, the states ruled by hundreds of Indian princes under the paramountcy of the British Crown. All these princes had in the past, under treaties with the British, accepted the suzerainty of the British Crown. And the Crown, in its turn, had assured them of security in their territories and safety from external aggression. Whilst on paper these princes were semi-independent autocrats, in reality they were totally subservient to the Crown and its representative in India, the Viceroy and Governor-General of India. The Indian states occupied nearly two-fifths of the total area of the Indian sub-continent. The rulers of the states, with a few honourable exceptions, were degenerate autocrats, and had no regard for their subjects.

When India and Pakistan were created, the status of the Indian states posed a problem. The paramountcy of the British Crown could obviously not continue. Nor could these principalities, some of which were not bigger than even a village, be allowed to become independent, even though on the lapse of paramountcy that would have been their status on paper.

Lord Mountbatten, the then Viceroy of India, in the circumstances suggested a solution: that the states should elect to accede

to either of the two newly-formed countries. Whilst technically the rulers were free to exercise their choice, they were bound by the compulsions of geography and the composition of the population of their respective states. The rulers after some initial vacillation saw the logic of Lord Mountbatten's advice and their accession to India and Pakistan followed smoothly except in the case of Kashmir, Junagadh, and Hyderabad.

Kashmir though ruled by a Hindu ruler was a Muslim-majority state. It was adjoining, both India and Pakistan. Taking advantage of this situation, the then ruler of Kashmir, Maharaja Hari Singh, tried to play India and Pakistan against one another to secure for himself the best terms possible. Whilst the negotiations were still on, Jinnah decided on another method to settle the issue. He organized an invasion of Kashmir by tribal raiders from the NWFP to overrun Kashmir. The idea was to follow up the raiders with the Pakistan army and to occupy Kashmir. The raiders were trained, armed, and led by officers of the Pakistan army. They were tempted with enormous loot, beautiful women, and above all by the call of jihad. The Maharaja was caught completely on the wrong foot and his small militia melted away rapidly before the onslaught of the raiders. Being placed in an impossible position, he quickly acceded to India, packed up his valuables and left Srinagar in a hurry. Kashmir, however, had a strong nationalist and secular base in Sheikh Abdullah, Bakshi Ghulam Moltammed, and their followers. They rallied the people of Kashmir against the raiders who certainly did not endear themselves to the Kashmiris by their behaviour. Nothing was spared by them. The houses and property of the people were looted and burnt and women were abducted or raped. Men were killed indiscriminately.

The Indian government was itself taken by surprise by the speed of the events. The raiders were making fast progress and were assisted by the Pakistan army and ex-soldiers settled in Muzaffarabad district of Kashmir. There was no time to send armed forces to Kashmir by land as the raiders were not far from Srinagar and the only air-strip near Srinagar was in danger of falling into the hands of the raiders. The Indian Air Force then was a small unit and did not have enough transport planes. If Kashmir was to be saved a massive air-lift of troops, ammunition, and fighting material had to be organized.

Overnight practically the entire civil air fleet was requisitioned,

loaded with troops and fighting equipment, and flown to Srinagar. In organizing this lift and the relevant arrangements, India was fortunate in having the advice and guidance of Lord Mountbatten. Indian troops could reach Srinagar just at the nick of time. Even a few hours' delay would have been fatal because the Srinagar air-strip would have fallen to the raiders and then nothing could have been possible.

In keeping the air-strip safe and checking the advance of the raiders from Baramula towards Srinagar, Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed played a leading part. He displayed great courage and organizing ability and it would be no exaggeration to say that but for the crusading zeal of Sheikh Abdullah and the organizing genius of Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed, Kashmir could not have been saved.

The Indian army and the air force also played a valiant role in the operations. Many officers and men covered themselves with glory and some of them even made the supreme sacrifice in the cause of India. The bombing of the Kohala bridge by the Indian Air Force, the defence of Srinagar by Major Sharma, the skill and determination shown by Brigadier Usman, the scaling of Jojila Pass by the Indian tanks are events which can be written in letters of gold in the annals of any armed force in the world. The Indian troops were ably led by Generals Thimmayya and Kulwant Singh.

The raiders, though actively led and assisted by the Pakistan army, were after all an undisciplined rabble. Once an organized and disciplined armed force came in opposition to them, they were disorganized and lost heart. They received severe drubbing and started falling back in a state of disarray. Pakistan could not permit the opportunity to slip away and hence had to come out openly in support of the raiders. The last phase of the first Kashmir invasion then became a direct confrontation between the Pakistan and Indian armed forces. In spite of the Pakistan army coming into action, the Indian armed forces continued to push the raiders further and further back and there was every reason to believe that if the operations had continued for a few days more, the entire area of Kashmir would have been liberated. Lord Mountbatten, however, did not like an open armed conflict between the members of the British Commonwealth of Nations. He advised Nehru to agree to a cease-fire and to take the case of aggression on a territory which through accession was Indian to the United Nations.

Sardar Patal was opposed to this advice. He was of the opinion that as the Pakistan forces were already on the run there was no point in our stopping the operations abruptly and complaining to the United Nations. We, he felt, should complete the job, throw the Pakistanis out of the entire area of Kashmir, and if Pakistan was aggrieved it could go to the United Nations.

Nehru was then new to the actual working of international diplomacy. As an idealist, he had great faith in the United Nations. He was a firm believer in settling disputes by negotiations rather than by war. Further, he was greatly influenced by the charismatic figure of Mountbatten. The net result was that we agreed to a cease-fire and thereafter took the case to the United Nations, with disastrous consequences. We were to find much to our dismay that in the United Nations, cases are not decided on merit but through a peculiar system of international horse-trading, blocs, and extraneous considerations.

Since then we have had three more wars with Pakistan and our complaint to the United Nations is still to be decided. We, the complainants who were aggrieved by the Pakistani aggression in Kashmir, have been reduced on occasions to the position of defendants and have been accused of occupying Kashmir—a Muslim-majority area—against the wishes of the people of Kashmir. Forgotten are the atrocities of the raiders on the people of Kashmir, the defilement and dishonour of women, the naked aggression of Pakistan, and the democratic system of government prevailing in Kashmir through free elections as against the autocratic rule in the Pakistan-occupied area of Kashmir. The whole case got bogged down in the morass of international horse-trading and politics.

The emergence of Bangladesh has, however, helped in clearing the air considerably. The two-nation theory has been completely exposed. It is clear that affinities of history and culture and economic interests rather than religion are the dominant considerations in human relations. The people of Bangladesh, who have nothing in common with West Pakistanis culturally or historically, soon discovered that only a common religion was not enough to save them from blatant economic exploitation by West Pakistan. Nor, when the struggle started, the common bond of religion prevented the West Pakistanis from perpetrating wholesale genocide of their brothers in religion, large-scale and cold-blooded despoila-



tion of their women, and murder of their children. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi recently had talks with Sheikh Abdullah and it is hoped that in the not distant future a solution of Kashmir, acceptable to the people of Kashmir and India, will be found. Pakistan and the UN will then fade out of the picture.

Junagadh was a small coastal state in Saurashtra. Its ruler, the Nawab, had earned the unenviable reputation of having no other interest but dogs. His dogs were housed in the most luxurious palaces with kennels furnished profusely with the costliest materials. Once he married one of his dogs to a bitch with considerable pomp and show, with military bands playing and the entire state militia turning up. This degenerate scion of the princely order decided inexplicably to accede to Pakistan. There were no valid reasons for his doing so. Over 90 per cent of the population of the state was Hindu; it was not contiguous to Pakistan and could only have been an enclave of Pakistan in India. This would have obviously been an impossible situation which was not acceptable to India. It was also not acceptable to the people of Junagadh who made their opposition to the Nawab's move known unmistakably.

The Government of India had to see that the popular sentiments were not crushed by the Nawab through the use of brute force. Minor police action was, therefore, organized and soon the Nawab, taking his dogs with him in preference to his *begums*, fled to Pakistan and Junagadh became an Indian territory.

Pakistan tried to use the accession of Junagadh to Pakistan as a counterblast to the accession of Kashmir to India. But the conditions in the two cases were not similar. Kashmir was contiguous to India while Junagadh was not contiguous to Pakistan. Moreover, in Kashmir the accession had the approval of the people led by Sheikh Abdullah and Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed whilst in Junagadh the people were totally opposed to the state's accession to Pakistan.

Hyderabad was the largest princely state in India, as large as some of the provinces of British India. Ruled by the Muslim dynasty of Asaf Jahis it had more than 90 per cent Hindu population. Being deep down in the south of India, with no outlet to the sea, it was a land-locked state in the heart of India, far away from Pakistan. As soon as the British paramountcy lapsed, the Nizam, the ruler of Hyderabad, started having dreams of establishing an independent kingdom in the heart of India. He made matters

worse by showing clear signs of favouring Pakistan and by encouraging a Muslim fascist organization, the Razakars, led by Kasim Rizvi to unleash terrorism and oppression on the population of the state. He also started importing arms in large quantities to build up an army of Hyderabad to resist the Indian armed forces, if India decided to invade Hyderabad.

All remonstrations from the Government of India and the advice by Lord Mountbatten were ignored by the Nizam who persevered on his mad course. Lord Mountbatten, though fully convinced that the Nizam's actions were misguided and that Hyderabad should accede to India, was at the same time totally opposed to the use of force by India to secure Hyderabad's accession. He felt that the use of force will expose India to international criticism as Hyderabad was a Muslim state and the use of force against a Muslim state may be construed as an act of aggression against the Muslim minority in India. He managed to a great extent to bring the Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru to his views and hence Nehru also was reluctant to agree to the use of force to settle the matter. Behind his reluctance was also the apprehension that the operations against Hyderabad might be prolonged resulting in considerable bloodshed and suffering to the people.

Sardar Patel on the other hand was very definitely of the opposite view. He felt that if Hyderabad was allowed to remain independent, with its bias in favour of Pakistan, it will become a "tumour in the stomach of India," the poison of which might endanger the very health of the whole of India. He considered it intolerable for India to watch helplessly the atrocities being perpetrated by the Razakars on the population of Hyderabad. He had no fears of the paper-tiger of Hyderabad and was in favour of the police action. In this view he was strengthened by the wishes of the overwhelming majority of the people of Hyderabad who ardently desired to join India. Moreover, when all the other princes in India had acceded to the Indian Union there was no reason at all of according Hyderabad a different treatment simply because of the intransigence of its ruler.

The whole issue was discussed threadbare at a number of cabinet meetings. On many occasions the discussions were hot, disclosing divergent and diametrically opposed views. The Prime Minister ultimately had to agree to the police action proposed by Sardar Patel when he found himself in a minority in the cabinet.

Ultimately the die was cast and the decision was taken to take action against Hyderabad. The decision was, however, kept a very closely guarded secret and all the preparations for the police action were made under a strict cloak of secrecy. The reasons were two-fold: to ensure speedy conclusion it was essential to have an element of surprise; and if the information about the police action had leaked out, the atrocities of the Razakars would have increased resulting in considerable avoidable suffering to the people of Hyderabad. One fine morning the country was electrified by reading in the newspapers that the Indian troops had moved into Hyderabad. The action was, as predicted by the Sardar, sharp and swift. The Hyderabad forces barely put up any organized resistance and the Razakars who had shown so much bravado against the helpless masses just melted away. Their leader Kasim Rizvi abandoned the helpless Nizam and found safe refuge in Pakistan. The Nizam capitulated abjectly and Hyderabad's accession to India was an accomplished fact.

The accession of the princely states to the Indian Union could not be the end of the matter. Most of the states were backward and badly administered. In the new resurgent India there was hardly any scope for these backwaters of reaction and mal-administration. Nor could India progress if it was dotted all over with semi-independent princely states. It had therefore to be united under a uniform and progressive system of administration.

Sardar Patel, the Deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister of the new India, was very clear in his mind on the subject. It was not enough for the states to accede to India. They had to merge and the princes had to shed their sovereignty in favour of the Indian Union. In this task the Sardar was very ably supported by the Secretary of the Ministry of States, V.P. Menon, and his supporting band of officers. V.P. Menon in the book he wrote subsequently on the merger of the princely states has described in detail the delicate and intricate discussions with the princes which led to their signing the articles of merger with India. It must, however, also be said that there were some patriotic princes who realized that in the new India the princely states were an anachronism and had no place. The Sardar during the negotiations displayed remarkable tact, patience, and understanding but for which these negotiations could not have been brought to successful conclusion. The country will be in everlast-

ing debt to the Sardar for this achievement. India was fully united and the princes were induced to shed their powers and territories in favour of the Union of India in return for an agreed privy purse and certain minor privileges. In the case of Hyderabad and Junagadh only, force had to be used due to the intransigence and stupidity of their rulers. But theirs were only houses of cards which toppled in no time with the slightest push.

In the early stages of our independence it was fortunate that the country had the benefit of being led by persons of the standing and vision of Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar Patel. Nehru was a visionary who had for decades dreamt of India's independence and the steps he would take after independence to tackle the numerous ills of the Indian society: its illiteracy, its deficiency in health services, its poor agriculture, and above all the ignorance and the appalling poverty of its masses. He visualized an India where people would be healthy, literate, and free from want and where every citizen would have the opportunity to develop to the full extent of his or her genius. He was a man of vision who could think and act big. But he had no patience for details. He was understandably a man in hurry and hence details which appeared to be obstacles in the path of speedy progress were irksome to him. Nehru was also an idealist who hoped to create a world of love and understanding where nations instead of forming groups to act against each other will learn to eschew war and strife and to settle their disputes in a peaceful manner. He felt that India with its philosophy and idealistic past could provide a lead in this direction. That is why he pinned considerable faith in the United Nations and also in the good intentions of China, both of which unfortunately were to prove him wrong later on.

On the other hand, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel was a realist, a person of great commonsense, shrewdness, and clear thinking. He was not interested in visions and ideals. To him the first prerequisite was a strong, united, and prosperous India. It was only after this was achieved that India could afford to have visions or ideals. To him whatever was to the benefit of India was more important than any ideals or visions. After independence he successfully consolidated the territory of India by integrating the princely states. The law and order situation and the administration of the country was also in a state of disarray. The Sardar with his practical approach to problems and his understanding of the difficulties

of the administration and the administrators immediately set about bringing order out of chaos. The first task was to create a sense of security in the services. The Sardar realized that a workman could not quarrel with his tools. The service men were the tools of administration. If they were distracted and had no sense of security they could not be expected to work with confidence and dedication. It was true that the services had been inherited from the British and hence the service men were suspect to the nationalists. But they were Indians first and there was no reason to believe that in a free India they will continue to be slaves of Britain and would not be actuated by a sense of patriotism and devotion to the country. The Sardar by giving confidence and security to the services nurtured the flame of patriotism and devotion in the hearts of the service men with the result that in the early stages of independence the attenuated ranks of the services worked devotedly and with great dedication. It will not be an exaggeration to say that but for their dedication and devotion the country would have been faced with considerable difficulty. The credit for enthusing the services goes principally to the Sardar.

Thus, in a manner of speaking, the Sardar and Nehru were complementary to each other. They made a perfect team and for some time the team worked well in spite of minor differences which were bound to crop up in the case of two such towering personalities. Unfortunately, as time passed the differences got accentuated and before the death of Patel a situation had developed which was fraught with danger to the harmonious working of the team. The differences had even started to affect the functioning of the administration as in the services as well as in the cabinet there were signs of two distinct groups developing. However, with the Sardar's death, the strife ended and Nehru's authority in the government as well as in the country became supreme and it remained undisputed right up to the Chinese invasion in 1962.

## 4. Working with Nehru

The advent of independence threw a specially heavy burden on the civil services. Overnight their strength was reduced practically to one-third—most of the British and Muslim members having quit. This heavily-depleted cadre of the service had to take charge of the administration of the country alongwith a host of new problems of a serious nature which had arisen.

There were severe riots in North India followed by the influx of over 9 million refugees into Punjab and West Bengal from both sides of our borders with Pakistan. The task of rehabilitating this huge mass of humanity, far in excess of the population of many countries of the world, was an enormous one. Then there was also the problem of liquidating the princely states.

The new Government of India was sworn to bring fairplay and equality of opportunity to every citizen. The legacy it inherited was an exceedingly poor one. Only 10 per cent of the people of India were literate; agriculture was in a poor state; and the health services were in a state of disarray. In industries, we were exceedingly backward and even the smallest requirements had to be imported. The leeway of centuries had to be made up speedily to win for our country its rightful place in the comity of nations.

The services got down to the task of tackling these enormous tasks under the charismatic leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru. Without his leadership and the understanding and support that the services received from the then Home Minister, Sardar Patel, it would have been difficult for the services to achieve anything. Being a legacy from the British, they were understandably suspect. There was also the problem of adjustment from working

under a colonial government to working under a free democracy. That this adjustment was speedily achieved reflects the understanding between the political leaders and the civil servants.

In October 1947, Nehru called me from Bombay to join the Cabinet Secretariat as a Joint Secretary. At that time, there was no Secretary to the Cabinet. As such, the Joint Secretary to the Cabinet was the *de facto* Secretary. Along with that, Panditji directed me to deal with the refugees who were coming in hundreds to him with their problems.

Handling Panditji's Refugee Section was a tough task indeed. They were naturally a very angry people, besides being distressed. With people in that frame of mind, it was a difficult time that we had. They would barge into the room full of anger and spleen. Before one could utter a word, they would pour out a torrent of abuse. We could not protest or get angry because they had suffered greatly. They were practically unhinged and hence needed understanding and patience. Ultimately we decided on a strategy for handling them. As they would come in, they would be allowed sufficient time to abuse us and everybody else—the government, the petty officials, and even the politicians. After they would run out of their invectives, we would say: "Yes, we perfectly understand you all have suffered a lot. If you abuse us, we understand that also. Now, tell us what exactly you want us to do for you!" Then we would sit down for a serious talk and arrive at some sort of solutions to their problems. One would want housing facility; a second, clothing; a third, just food; a fourth, educational facilities for his children; and so on. The worst and most difficult to manage was the restoration of their womenfolk who had been abducted in Pakistan. It was heart-rending to hear their endless tales of suffering.

I still remember how on a number of occasions when I used to go home for lunch, these refugees would be there too, waiting for me. I would listen to them patiently and then go in for lunch. But their tales of woe would take away whatever hunger for food I had. And, when the lunch would be served, I would apologetically tell my wife, "I am sorry, but I cannot eat!" How could I have heart—and appetite—to eat after hearing their tales of misery.

It all seems unimaginable now but we who have been through these times cannot forget the amount of suffering these refugees had gone through—their distress and privations. Somebody's

daughter snatched away; another person's wife dishonoured; their property gone; most of them living an uprooted life; and not knowing what was going to happen the next day. It was not easy to deal with these people. Nevertheless, the job had to be done. They had to be looked after and rehabilitated.

During the time I was the Joint Secretary to the Cabinet, two major events, besides the refugee problem, which preoccupied us were the Kashmir and Hyderabad operations. The third one with which I was not directly concerned was the integration of the princely states. This was mainly dealt with by the then Ministry of States which was looked after by Sardar Patel, ably assisted by V.P. Menon. The Sardar's Private Secretary was Vidya Shankar, a good friend of mine. (We continue even now to maintain cordial relations.)

Since I was more or less in the position of an unofficial Private Secretary to Panditji (ultimately I did become his Principal Private Secretary in 1950), it was important for me to maintain close and personal contact with Shankar as that helped in keeping things moving smoothly. Though Panditji and the Sardar were complementary to each other in various ways, there were also various points of acute disagreement between them. On such occasions, the understanding between Shankar and myself helped to smoothen things out and to reduce the areas of disagreement.

I remember one instance very vividly. One day some proposals in connection with the appointment of judges had come to Panditji from the Sardar for approval. On these proposals I had given to Panditji my advice in the shape of a routine note. I might clarify that routine notes were expected to be personal to the person to whom they were addressed and were not expected to go in the file. Panditji in his inimitable manner passed on that note to the Sardar in the original. By sending it on to the Sardar, Panditji placed me in a very embarrassing position. The Sardar was naturally indignant. He is reported to have remarked: "This boy has become too big for his boots. He gives advice even against my recommendations. This is funny indeed!" He later complained about this to a number of people.

When Shankar learnt about it, he rang me up and informed me that the Sardar was very upset about it. I requested him to fix up an appointment with the Sardar so that I could sort out the problem. An appointment was accordingly fixed.



When I met the Sardar, I greeted him with the customary *namaskar*, but his response was very cold.

Politely I broke the ice by saying, "Sir, I believe you are angry with me!"

"Yes, I am very angry with you," he replied and narrated to me my inequities.

Then I said, "May I make a submission? Shankar is your Private Secretary. He advises you on various matters—sometimes against the recommendations of the ministers. Isn't he doing his duty?"

The Sardar relented a bit and said, "Yes."

Quickly I remarked, "What else did I do, sir?" And, added: "I want to make another submission. If you were angry with me, why didn't you call me? Why did you complain to others? Even if you had pulled my ears, I wouldn't have minded. But I have been greatly pained by your complaining to others."

The Sardar then laughingly said, "*Tum bade badnash ho. Tumne mera munh bandh kardiya. Jao, achha, aisa kuchh hoga to yahi karoonga. Kaan khainchungu tumhare.*" The matter ended there. Right up to his death, the Sardar treated me with considerable warmth and affection.

This was the sort of relations we had to establish at that time with the bigwigs to make things move smoothly. It was in a way fortunate that Shankar and myself were very good friends and we could manage things between ourselves. Sometimes, of course, we could not do much, but it helped greatly to have a good friend in the other camp.

During the Kashmir and Hyderabad operations, we were intimately connected with the making of decisions, the issue of orders, and the scrutiny of follow-up action. Even though the decisions were taken at the highest level, the preparatory and follow-up processes were the responsibility of the officials. Ours was a young democracy then and the ministers were unused to the ways of the government and the working of the official machinery. At one stage there was much leakage of Cabinet decisions. Panditji naturally was very agitated and he asked me to look into this matter and attempt to stop the leakage.

After making careful private enquiries I reported to him that the leakages were not from the Cabinet Secretariat but from one of his own colleagues in the Cabinet.

Panditji's first reaction was explosive as on all such occasions. He burst out by saying, "You are talking nonsense!"

Undeterred I added: "No, sir. I am not talking nonsense. I can prove it to you!"

He asked me how. And, I said: "Tomorrow, we have a Cabinet meeting. After the meeting, I will not dictate the minutes. I will collect all the papers, take them home and lock them up in my almirah. Let us see what happens after that."

He agreed and I proceeded to act as I had told him. The Cabinet meeting was held. Nobody else was present except the ministers and myself. Certain decisions were taken. Then the papers were collected, taken home, and locked up. And, I did not dictate the minutes. Next morning the papers carried on the front pages some of the decisions of the Cabinet meeting.

When I went up to Panditji, he enquired from me as to how it all happened.

I explained: "Frankly sir, I can give you the names of the ministers—particularly of one minister who gave out the secrets to the members of the press. But I do not wish to do so and create unnecessary misunderstandings." Then I suggested that what possibly could be done was the sending out of a confidential circular from the Prime Minister to all the ministers stressing upon them the necessity of maintaining secrecy to which they were sworn to.

This was done without any delay. Sad to say that this did not produce any effect. Subsequently the Prime Minister came to know who among the ministers in the Cabinet was principally responsible for the leakage of information. Sometime later he was dropped out from the Cabinet. But I had not disclosed his name.

At the time I was in the Cabinet Secretariat, a number of miscellaneous jobs used to be passed on to it. One of them was the construction of a market for the displaced persons near Chandni Chowk. This was built at Panditji's behest. Now, the original temporary structures have been replaced by permanent buildings. In those days, when the displaced persons came in large numbers, they had to be provided with shops as many of them were shopkeepers. This was a matter of great urgency. When the engineers were consulted they figured it would take six months to a year to construct even a temporary market. Panditji, however, was anxious that this should be done as expeditiously as possible.

\* On behalf of the Cabinet Secretariat I offered: "Sir, if you

assign the job to us, we will get it done in just three weeks. But on two conditions—first, that you send out a circular to all the departments concerned to cooperate with us, and second that if people complain about any high-handedness on my part, you will not listen to them.” Panditji agreed and gave me the go-ahead signal.

So, I took over the assignment. A circular was sent out to all the offices concerned to help in this high-priority job. It was found that timber for it had to be collected from somewhere in Punjab, steel from somewhere else, and other materials from other places. All these items had to be procured and transported expeditiously if the work was to be completed in time.

The official machinery was, however, used to a routine and hence found it difficult to cope with the hustling tactics adopted by me. When the officer concerned in the supply department was asked to procure timber, he gave the routine reply that he would write to the supplier and then let us know. He had to be firmly told that there was no point in his writing in the routine manner in the case of an emergency project. He was asked to go personally and arrange for the timber to be delivered the next day. His reaction was that under the departmental procedures, materials were not to be procured in that manner. He was informed that these were the Prime Minister’s orders, and if the timber was not delivered in time he would be in trouble, and that he should not blame if that happened. The timber was then delivered in time as desired.

This was the only way to get the job done as scheduled and I had planned my strategy accordingly. Some people did go to Panditji complaining about my threatening them. Panditji, however, stood by me. He is reported to have remarked: “Yes, he has been instructed by me to threaten you all if necessary to get the work done in time.” The market was ready within three weeks as promised.

I had to resort to similar strategy to get ready seven airstrips in various parts of India after the Chinese debacle—again under the orders of Panditji. I was the Works Secretary at that time. The Military Engineering Service had informed the government that they would take at least two years to construct seven airstrips. But the Prime Minister wanted them to be ready for use within six months. He called for me and enquired whether it would be possible. I replied in the affirmative and added that I should be empowered with the same authority which I had been given to get

the market ready in time. He agreed.

I handled this matter personally. The contractors were hand-picked and directed to get on with the job, and to get it completed as scheduled. They were promised full assistance in regard to the materials required by them and their movement in the sites. Being a rush job there was necessarily some haggling about the cost. But when told that this was a work for national security, the contractors enthusiastically accepted the challenge. Early release of materials like cement and steel was arranged and rushed to the sites. The work was constantly supervised by me personally by visits to the sites. At this speed the airstrips were ready within five months—one month ahead of schedule.

These instances are mentioned not for self-glorification but to show that in our country there is enough of initiative and experience. These days if there is slackness all round it is only because people do not exert themselves and those in authority do not extend support to them. Nothing could have been done in the above two instances if the Prime Minister's total support and trust were not there.

Working with Panditji was quite an exciting experience. We had been brought up on the lore of Nehruism. When we were young, he had fascinated us all with his dynamism and patriotism. When we came to work with him in close contact, it was an inspiring prospect. He was full of idealism and enthusiasm when he started as the Prime Minister. He wanted to do good to the masses, to build up the country, and to make it hold its head high in the comity of nations. Besides, as a person, Panditji was a very lovable individual. Working with him was easy because he insisted on regular hours since he himself had regular habits. Contrary to what people thought of him, he was responsive to ideas though he did have strong views on many matters.

When one had to differ from him, to start with, it was somewhat difficult. His method was to practically rush one off one's feet with his enthusiasm and vehemence. But if you could stand up to that vehement rush then you could have your say. If, however, you got carried away by the initial impact, then there was no chance of saying anything. If you succeeded in standing your ground, he would listen patiently and very often, if your point of view was correct, he would accept it.

A number of times, it happened that when I differed from him,

his first reaction was fairly violent. Once he even remarked, "You are not so intelligent as you think you are!" But I did not give in. I retorted, "After all, why does the government pay me four thousand rupees a month? It is for my considered opinion. You must at least listen to me." With that he relented and asked me to proceed. If ultimately he came to the conclusion that what his adviser was saying was correct, he would accept it. Otherwise, he was the boss and his orders were naturally carried out. But he was never unreasonable and never very difficult. Though he had acquired a reputation of being a very difficult man to work with, in fact, he was a very easy Prime Minister to work with—much easier than most of the other ministers. All because he was not self-opinionated and was willing to listen to the other person.

I had the privilege of working with Panditji for four years. During that period a new orientation was given to the administration by bringing about sweeping changes. From being a purely law and order administration, it was deliberately converted into a welfare administration. This in itself required a complete overhaul of the outlook of the administrators. They had to look at the problems not so much from the point of view of the administration as from the point of view of the good of the people. For some of the civil servants, who for a very appreciable period in their lives were trained to work for the law and order system of administration, it was not easy to get adjusted. In certain cases the process of adjustment was a painful one.

But on the whole the civil servants were able to adjust themselves to the changed circumstances and requirements. The role of the Sardar in this process of readjustment was very important. Most of the Congress leaders who had come to the helm of affairs were very suspicious of the bona fides of the civil servants. In fact, they had come with much prejudice against the civil servants because in the period of conflict with the British many of them had to suffer at the hands of the civil servants. Whatever sufferings or humiliations the leaders underwent during that period, the responsibility was attributed to the civil service. When I say this, I am not excluding even Nehru. He too had a certain amount of bias against the civil service in the early days of independence.

It was the foresight of Sardar Patel that helped the civil servants to adapt themselves to the changed circumstances. He very rightly

thought that it would be wrong to quarrel with the tools of administration. He realized there was no point in stultifying them by treating them with either suspicion or contempt. So, he proceeded to inculcate a sense of confidence among the civil servants. He produced a belief in their minds that they would receive fair-play and treatment according to their merit. As a result there was no demoralization and the governmental machinery did not break down.

The normal working hours of senior civil servants during the early days of independence were anything from early in the morning to late in the evening. Even then quite a large amount of work remained unfinished and files used to be carried home to be dealt with late in the night or early in the morning. But we did not mind all that hard work because we were conscious that we were all engaged in a very exciting phase of work—the work of building a new India. It certainly gave an exhilarating feeling and we all felt very enthusiastic about it.

Panditji also soon realized that working with a prejudiced mind would not help and he himself began to repose considerable confidence in a number of senior civil servants. I was in the Cabinet Secretariat from October 1947 to April 1950 as the Cabinet Joint Secretary and thereafter up to April 1951 as the Principal Private Secretary to the Prime Minister. In both capacities I was required to attend the Cabinet meetings.

The Union Cabinet for the administration of the country not only meets regularly to discuss and decide on the various matters referred to it by the ministries but also functions through a number of committees of the Cabinet—the more important of them being the Political Affairs Committee, the Economic Committee, the Defence Committee, and the External Affairs Committee. To examine and advise on some specific problems, sometimes *ad hoc* committees of the Cabinet are created. To submit papers to the Cabinet and its committees and prior to submission to ensure that they are in order and contain all the required information, to record the minutes, and to follow up the decisions taken are the functions of the Cabinet Secretariat.

The head of the Cabinet Secretariat is the Cabinet Secretary. He is one of the seniormost members of the civil service selected on merit. Besides being the Secretary of the Cabinet and the Council of Ministers, he is the head of the services and the principal adviser

to the government in all service matters including senior appointments, promotions, postings, and transfers. To the civil servants he is expected to be a friend and a counsellor and to him all of them look up for the protection of their rights and for fairplay.

One of the most important functions of the Cabinet Secretariat is to coordinate the functioning of the government at the Centre. This is done through the committees of senior secretaries such as the Scientific Advisory Committee, the Economic Committee of Secretaries, and the Committee of Senior Secretaries which advise on special and urgent problems which arise from time to time.

The Cabinet Secretary presides over all these committees. The speed and clarity of decisions on the matters considered by these committees depend very much on the lead and direction given by the Cabinet Secretary in their deliberations. He has also to play an active role in the smoothening and removing of differences between the ministries and thereby helping the smooth functioning of the administration.

The role of the Cabinet Secretary in our government has always been an important one and it becomes much more important during times of emergency such as war when an emergency machinery comprising senior secretaries to the government and senior officers is set up under the chairmanship of the Cabinet Secretary. This Committee meets every morning when the previous day's problems are discussed and snap decisions taken which have the effect of orders of the government. These have to be implemented immediately. At the meeting the following morning those responsible have to report on the action taken on the decisions. In this manner, all red tape is eliminated and the machinery of the government moves very fast to meet the emergent situations arising from time to time. This was the arrangement which operated in all the war situations and it has proved most effective.

Recently the functions of the Cabinet Secretariat have been enlarged by adding to it the entire Personnel Department of the Home Ministry and the Central Bureau of Investigation. At the same time, there has been a certain amount of dilution of the strength of the Cabinet Secretariat—and of the Cabinet Secretary—by strengthening the Prime Minister's secretariat greatly. The Cabinet Secretariat being the secretariat of the entire Council of Ministers has always been an impersonal body. With the P.M.'s secretariat gradually assuming the shape of a miniature government within

the Government of India, there is a danger of this impersonal aspect being dimmed and a bottleneck being created through most decisions being centralized in the P.M.'s secretariat. This centralization is already showing signs of delaying decision-making processes at the Centre, a development which is fraught with danger to the smooth and efficient working of the administration.

Nearly 25 years ago when I was the Joint Cabinet Secretary, the Cabinet Secretariat was in the process of evolution. I was privileged indeed to have been associated with it in those early days, and having been privy to the Cabinet discussions.

In the Cabinet from 1947 till the Sardar's death there were two distinct lobbies—Panditji's lobby and the Sardar's lobby. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Rafi Ahmed Kidwai, and Rajaji were very much in Panditji's lobby while Kaka Saheb Gadgil, C.H. Bhabha, and R.K. Shanmukham Chetty were in the Sardar's lobby. There was a certain amount of polarization in the inner councils of the Cabinet. There were different points of view when subjects like the refugees, secularism, the Kashmir problem, the Hyderabad operation, etc., were discussed. Ultimately decisions were taken in the Cabinet on the basis of joint responsibility and thereafter there could be no question of differences in views. Even on matters on which animated discussions took place, decorum was always maintained and voices were never raised. And there never was any scuffle as some have alleged. At least not till 1951 when I left this post and went to the United Kingdom.

Cabinet decisions were always made by the process of consensus after threadbare discussions. Contrary to general belief, there is no voting in the Cabinet—and there should not be decisions by voting because the responsibility of the members of the Cabinet is joint. Ministers cannot claim that they voted against a particular issue and therefore were not responsible for the decision. If a minister feels strongly against any decision and does not want to take responsibility for it, there is no alternative for him except to resign on that issue.

My active association with the Cabinet Secretariat ceased in 1950 when I succeeded Vithal Pai as the Principal Private Secretary to the Prime Minister. In that capacity too I was required to attend the Cabinet meetings till April 1951 when I was transferred to London as the Minister (Commercial) in the High Commission there.



This transfer came about in somewhat strange circumstances. The country was passing through a period of financial stringency and the then Finance Minister, C.D. Deshmukh, desired to economize in administration. During his discussions with the Prime Minister, he had suggested that it would be possible to economize only if the Prime Minister himself gave a lead in the matter. He, therefore, suggested that the post of Principal Private Secretary to the Prime Minister should be downgraded to that of a Joint Secretary to the Government of India. Panditji sent for me and informed me of his discussion with Deshmukh. I told him that if that was the case I would be happy to work for him even as a Joint Secretary. Panditji did not agree. He said: "No, there is no reason why you should suffer because of the desire of the government to economize." Then he himself suggested that I should go to London to assist Krishna Menon who was having some difficulty in getting along with his colleagues.

My friends strongly advised me against accepting this post. They said Krishna Menon was a very difficult person to work with and that nothing but trouble to me would result if I went and joined him. However, I felt confident that I could get on with any human being and therefore decided to take the risk. Besides, there were some personal reasons also. My wife was not keeping well and the prospect of her treatment abroad was an inducement. My son had also reached the university-going age and I thought that if I went abroad it would facilitate his education. My faith in my ability to get on well with any human being, however, was to be rudely shattered, as subsequent events in London showed.

The night before I left for England in April 1951, Panditji asked me to come to his house and finish the pending files. I had a dinner engagement and so it was agreed that I would drop in after dinner. Accordingly I reached his house at about 10.30 P.M. He was working as usual at his desk in his office. On my arrival, he took out his despatch box in which he always kept the pending papers. Then he said: "Look, we have had a very good partnership. I would like you to feel that you had left nothing undone. So let's finish the papers in this box. There should be no paper left. Then you can go with the satisfaction of finishing everything you undertook with me." There were quite a few papers to be disposed of, so we had to work till long past midnight. When the last paper was finished, he got up, shook hands with me, and said, "Well, it

is a job well done. I wish you all the best and hope you will be equally successful wherever you go." With that we parted. It was an unforgettably gracious gesture which I have cherished all my life.

## 5. Krishna Menon and the Jeep Scandal

I went to London in April 1951 against the advice of many of my friends. As the Minister (Commercial) at our High Commission, I had a very unpleasant year and a half with the late Krishna Menon, the High Commissioner. This was the most unpleasant period in my service life because it was not satisfactory at all. I just could not get along with Krishna Menon. Even after he left and was succeeded by the late Balasaheb Kher, the situation did not improve much. Some important people, whose names I would not like to disclose as they are good friends of mine now, mistakenly mixed me up with Krishna Menon's actions and poisoned Kher's mind against me. So, Kher started with considerable misgivings about me. Even though later on our personal relations improved and he even offered me the revived post of Deputy High Commissioner under him, I declined and preferred to go away as India's Ambassador to Czechoslovakia.

I am, however, jumping ahead of the story and would get back to the chronological narration. As I had gone to London with special recommendation from the Prime Minister, Krishna Menon was very cordial to start with. He went all out to please me—even in small matters like the furnishing of my residence which he himself supervised.

Krishna Menon had a great reputation for his consciousness of the high dignity of the office he held. He was always conscious of his own dignity too. He had the best of cars (a Rolls Royce for himself), the best of furniture, the best of suits, and the best of everything as far as the ultra trappings of office were concerned. But when it came to personal behaviour, he could not change. He failed

**In London, 1929**



**Dr Rajendra Prasad being sworn in as  
the first President, 26 January 1950.  
The author is on the extreme right**





Being sworn in as the Governor of West Bengal



**As the Governor of Punjab**



**With Nehru, 1949**



**With the late King of Bhutan, Jigme Wangchuck**

**Nehru at the wedding reception of the author's son**



**Indira Gandhi at  
the wedding of the  
author's son**



**The author with  
Ajoy Mukherji,  
former Chief Minister  
of West Bengal**



**The author with his mother**



**Nehru after signing as the first Prime Minister, 1947**

**As the Governor of Mysore**





**With the  
Chogyal  
of Sikkim**

**With Sir Akbar Hydari (second from left) and friends**





**With Lal Bahadur Shastri**

because he had got grooved into a certain type of behaviour and could not adapt himself to his changed circumstances and duties.

Within six months of my arrival, clashes began to develop between us. Krishna Menon had the unusual habit of ringing up officers at about one or two in the morning. He did not sleep much and being a confirmed bachelor, it probably never struck him that to those who were family men and liked to sleep in the night, this could be a most annoying habit. Not long after my arrival, he rang me up at about three in the morning for something which was not at all important. I did not particularly like being disturbed at that unearthly hour. The conversation on the telephone was therefore far from cordial. Next morning, he met me and remarked, "You seemed to be very grumpy on the phone last night!" I replied coolly, "What else do you expect to happen if you discuss something which was not at all important at that hour?" He, it appeared, took the hint because thereafter he never rang me up at late hours in the night.

Krishna Menon was not only suspicious of civil servants, he had contempt and antipathy towards them. This may have been partly due to what he may have suffered at the hands of the British civil servants in the pre-independence days—in the days when he was promoting the pro-India movement in Britain. He was certainly a very intelligent man—a man with a sharp intellect who could speak well and work hard. But he had a tremendous ego and an inflated notion about himself. He moved with a certain section of Left politicians in Britain. He looked after Panditji's interests and affairs in Britain—his contacts and publications. He did all this with scrupulous honesty and integrity. Prior to independence, sometimes he had to suffer considerable hardships and even indignities, but he persevered and kept his favourite India League and its hostels for Indian students going. Panditji was aware of all the good work that Krishna Menon had done in the pre-independence period for and on behalf of India's freedom.

All the same, Krishna Menon was a complex character. This became apparent in my official dealings with him. In his view one who did not agree with him was either a fool or a knave—more often a fool than a knave. He expected the officers to anticipate his wishes and to put up proposals accordingly. My view on the duties of a civil servant was somewhat different. My understanding was that a civil servant is paid to advise according to his conscience, to

take orders thereafter and then carry them out conscientiously. In this respect, Krishna Menon thought that I was being difficult. I explained that I was being just what a civil servant should be. My duty was to advise him according to my understanding. Then he was the boss to pass the orders. And, once the orders were passed they would be carried out scrupulously. But, I insisted that he could not expect me to give advice which I did not consider to be correct.

I remember once he fell ill and was incapacitated for work for about a fortnight. As Number Two at the India House, I had to take charge of his work. During that fortnight I, naturally, took decisions on matters that came up for consideration. We just could not afford to wait for his return because it was uncertain when he would be well again. However, when he resumed work, he was very indignant at my having assumed charge of his office. He called for me and said: "Mr Dharma Vira, you know very well that I am still the High Commissioner. Yet, you took so many decisions on your own in my absence. How could you do that?"

My answer was: "Of course, you are the High Commissioner. You never allow anyone to forget that. But, tell me how else is the work of the state to be carried on if the High Commissioner is out of action for a fortnight? As a senior civil servant, as a responsible officer, did you expect me to allow the work to suffer because you were indisposed?"

Still he insisted on saying, "No, no. . . ." He was not mollified and kept on grumbling.

It was not unusual for him to tell civil servants to their face that they were an utterly useless lot and then expect them to agree with him. Once while talking in this strain about somebody else he asked me: "Don't you think, Mr Dharma Vira, I am correct?"

I was frank in my reply: "You are not at all correct. You have no conception of the duties and functions of a civil servant!"

Krishna Menon then remarked, "But, you have got angry."

I replied, "No, I did not get angry. You asked for my opinion and I have given it with frankness."

This was the sort of thing that went on with Krishna Menon all the time. Within six months of my arrival, we were hardly on speaking terms with each other. Things got so bad that he gave instructions to the staff in the India House that no files should be sent to me and I had practically nothing to do. I passed my time in the India House getting old books on history such as *Jehangir*

*Nama* and *Ain-e-Akbari* out of the library and reading them.

The differences between us naturally affected the work in the High Commission adversely. The junior officers were not only denied the benefit of guidance and advice but were also deprived of the cushion which an intermediate officer provided between them and an intractable High Commissioner. Therefore, they worked out an artifice to circumvent the High Commissioner's orders about submission of papers to me. Whenever an officer was worried about submission of a case to the High Commissioner direct, he would inform me and I would then send a written note to him to send the file to me. The officials even while complying with the High Commissioner's orders not to submit files to me could not disobey a written demand from me to show a file to me. This would have amounted to an act of grave indiscipline. On receipt of the file I would record in it my views in regard to the matter under consideration and send it to the High Commissioner. It might interest readers to know that Krishna Menon neither protested against my notings in the files in this manner nor did he ever in writing disagree with me.

I wrote to the Secretary to the Prime Minister requesting him to inform the P.M. of the situation and suggesting that under the circumstances in which I was placed, it would be better for me to get shifted somewhere else. Promptly came the reply: "No. You are serving a useful purpose. Stay on!" I did not then know what the Prime Minister had in mind at that time. I wondered what useful purpose could I serve when I was not even on talking terms with the High Commissioner. Probably he thought that I would operate as some restraint on his activities. By then, the jeep scandal hit the headlines.

When I came to the India House, questions about the purchase of jeeps had been raised by the audit and accounts people and the Public Accounts Committee. Questions and answers were flying to and fro between Delhi and London. Being the Minister (Commercial) and being in charge of the India Stores Department in London, I had something to do with the answers. Krishna Menon was not satisfied with my answers. But then we could not have suggested wrong replies. This enquiry further clouded my relations with Krishna Menon.

The purchase of jeeps was made long before I arrived at the India House. The Indian army required a number of jeeps for the

defence services. Because of the trouble with Pakistan the British and American governments had banned the supply of jeeps to India and Pakistan. They were not easily available elsewhere. It was then that a friend of Krishna Menon, Cleminson, proposed that he could supply jeeps, as good as new, from disposal sources in Europe. Krishna Menon entered into an agreement with this person on behalf of the Government of India for the supply of about 1,000 jeeps. They were to be inspected and certified by the inspectors of our army before payment could be made. But Cleminson had no resources of his own. His company had a modest capital of about £100. So he wanted an advance to procure the jeeps from the disposal sources. The advance was to be offset against supplies made. This was tantamount to financing an objectionable deal but all the same the advance was given.

Some jeeps were delivered but the rub came when the army inspectors turned them down as unsuitable. How could the jeeps be as good as new when they were secured from the disposal dump? But Krishna Menon's view was that the inspectors did not like the deal because they were prejudiced against it since they were not probably looked after properly during their stay in London.

Sometime later, in order to retrieve the position and to set things right, Krishna Menon entered into another deal with one Group Captain Searle and another associate of his. They assured that they would procure new jeeps from Belgium provided they were also given orders for the supply of spare parts for these jeeps. They also agreed to adjust the infructuous advance given to the previous contractor in this deal. If I remember correctly some five jeeps were all that were delivered and then the supplies stopped. On account of objections from Delhi orders for spare parts could not be placed with this firm. Moreover this firm also did not have adequate resources as in the case of the previous firm. Its capital too was about £100 or so. The net result was that a considerable amount of government money got locked up and was ultimately lost. That is why the jeep transactions came to be known as the "Jeep Scandal."

Before the decision to shift Krishna Menon from High Commissionership was taken the Prime Minister had asked me to make certain enquiries about these deals. On one occasion, the enquiry was to be made when Krishna Menon was in Delhi. Soon after I received the cable about the enquiry to be made, I wired back that

since the enquiry was to be made about the High Commissioner who was away in Delhi, I needed further advice and authorization. Pat came the reply: "You should enquire into the matter and send the report." Then there was no other alternative for me but to enquire into the matter and to send the report which did contain some adverse material in regard to the deal. It indicated that as a *quid pro quo* for the first deal, Krishna Menon had received a substantial cheque from Cleminson, presumably for his India League activities. Krishna Menon's personal integrity had always been considered to be above reproach, but he was always needing funds for the India League, the India Club, the Students' Hostel, etc.

After Krishna Menon returned from India, I showed all the papers of the enquiry to him as I thought that till such time he was the High Commissioner anything happening in the High Commission could not be kept back from him. He was as was to be expected, very upset and blamed me for his removal from the post of High Commissioner. This, of course, was not true. I had never intrigued against him and even when the P.M. had ordered me to hold the enquiry in his absence, I had pointed out the awkwardness of the situation to the P.M. When, however, specific orders from the P.M. were received, the orders of the person to whom constitutionally as well as personally I owed higher loyalty had to be obeyed. Even then I did not keep Krishna Menon in the dark and took the earliest opportunity to inform him of the situation. Soon after the receipt of that report, Krishna Menon was asked to relinquish the post of High Commissioner in London. The "jeep scandal" enquiry went on for some time, then it languished and was finally forgotten.

The Prime Minister, who continued to have great affection and regard for Krishna Menon, presumably to assuage his ruffled feelings, offered him ambassadorship in Moscow and when he refused it, a ministership without portfolio in the Cabinet. But Krishna Menon was so angry about the treatment meted out to him that he did not accept anything at that time. He decided to stay on in London. This he did for a couple of years. More about it later.

When B.G. Kher, sometime Chief Minister of Bombay, succeeded Krishna Menon, he arrived in London with a prejudice against me. He did not know the background. He did not know that I did not get along well with Krishna Menon. He was not aware that I had conducted an enquiry into the matter which went



against Krishna Menon. But he had heard in India from some important persons that I was a lieutenant of Krishna Menon. He had accordingly been advised to beware of me.

With his cool behaviour towards me, it became clear very soon that he was not happy with me. After a while, I accosted him and asked him point-blank: "What is wrong with me? If I can know what is wrong then, maybe, I can provide the answers!"

Kher was an honest man. He truthfully replied: "I have been told that I should be beware of you. You have been responsible for this jeep business and you have been supporting Krishna Menon in this."

Now the reason for his strange behaviour was clear, I replied: "Well, you are not aware of all the facts. Number One: The jeep deal was entered into long before I arrived in London. So, I had no hand in it. Second: As for my advising Krishna Menon against the interests of the country, there are enough records in the High Commission for you to read and come to your own conclusions."

Then I informed him about the papers he should see. He read them all and thereafter called me and said: "I am sorry I was completely misinformed. I can only say sorry because there is no other way to make amends."

After this we became very good friends and remained so till the end of his life. He was always kind and considerate towards me.

During the period Kher was the High Commissioner and Krishna Menon was in London, it was unfortunate that Kher's position was constantly undermined by Krishna Menon. He was still advising the Prime Minister behind Kher's back on Indo-British relations. Whether Krishna Menon did this gratuitously or he was encouraged by the Prime Minister to do so, I do not know. But it was unfortunate that Kher's position in London—and in India too—was being eroded. Kher was understandably unhappy about this.

Krishna Menon would insist on attending every function at the India House. As the ex-High Commissioner, he was, as was proper, invited and extended the honour due to his former position. Kher did not like this. One day, Kher was quite upset by this. He bluntly asked me: "Why do you thrust that man forward all the time. You know I don't like him."

I replied: "It is the chair that you sit on which I honour when I invite him. If you go away and later whenever you come to London

and the India House, you have to be treated with respect and honour. Similarly, he deserves it for he had also occupied the chair.”

Then again, Kher's innate goodness came to surface. He remarked: “You have indeed taught me a lesson. I would never have understood this situation and it would have continued to rankle my mind !”

Krishna Menon continued to be a source of embarrassment to Kher. Anyway Kher did not stay long in London. His wife's health deteriorated. And, he was not keeping good health either. So he decided to quit the post and return to India. Some time thereafter he passed away. In him died a great son of India, who had served it honestly, loyally, and diligently in the true Gandhian traditions. He was a thorough gentleman and an essentially good person.

Krishna Menon was preoccupied with his India League and the hostels. These hostels for Indian students and a restaurant which provided food cheaply engaged his attention. He did a certain amount of political work too. He was a self-appointed adviser to the Ministry of External Affairs on various international matters.

Krishna Menon had a special knack of anticipating Pandit Nehru's views on economic, political, and international affairs. He put them forward as his own and thereby created an impression in Panditji's mind that he was a very intelligent person who had the right approach on all matters pertaining to India and the world affairs. As his views coincided with Panditji's views, they were also acceptable.

Krishna Menon always knew which side of the bread was buttered. When he wanted to please somebody, he could lay the grease on by shovels. I remember very well how Krishna Menon used to kowtow M.O. Matthai who was just a private secretary of Panditji and not a high dignitary of the state. But the amount of fuss that Krishna Menon made of Matthai was nobody's business. One would have thought that Matthai was his superior in status.

Reflecting on the events of those times, I feel that the Prime Minister was disappointed with me as I did not help to exonerate Krishna Menon in my report. Of course, the facts could not be disputed nor my conclusions controverted. The Prime Minister had no option but to act on the findings which I had submitted. Anyway, as a result of this, when I returned to India, he was somewhat cool towards me. His personal affection for me never wavered but

I could sense that the old warmth was not there. This warmth returned later—four or five years later. I suspect that the temporary coolness was a reaction to those reports of mine which led to Krishna Menon's recall, and which Panditji would probably have liked to avoid. But that is my own reading. Maybe I am quite wrong.

## 6. Ambassadorship in Czechoslovakia

At the end of 1953, I was asked to proceed to Prague as India's Ambassador to Czechoslovakia. The High Commissioner, B.G. Kher, did not want me to leave London. He said to me: "Now that the Deputy High Commissioner's post, with the status of an ambassador, has been sanctioned, why don't you stay with me and be the Deputy High Commissioner in London rather than go to Prague?" I had, however, still not got over the previous misunderstanding with him over the jeep affair which had taken nearly six months to be cleared. Moreover, Czechoslovakia had the attraction of my being in independent charge with the opportunity of gaining experience of the working of a communist regime. So, I thankfully declined his offer, which I considered to be a mark of confidence in me.

I went to Czechoslovakia in April 1954. My wife and I decided to travel by car. It was snowing and we stayed overnight in Belgium with my friend, P.A. Menon, who was the Ambassador there. The next day we crossed into Czechoslovakia. It was soon after the Slanski affair and things were pretty grim in that country at that time.

The first experience of the grim conditions in Czechoslovakia was at the very border. When I reached the border, the First Secretary of the Indian embassy, K.L. Dalal, had come to receive me. At the border checkpost, when my papers were being scrutinized, I had the strange experience of finding my car surrounded on all sides by soldiers with guns on the ready. This, I felt, was certainly overdoing things, particularly with the Ambassador of a very friendly country like India.

• It took about three quarters of an hour for the papers to be scru-

tinized. We sat there freezing in the cold with the shivering soldiers holding on to their guns. I was all the time worried that inadvertently a gun might go off because the soldiers with the guns were really shivering. It was very cold with sleet and snow falling all round. Somehow, the scrutiny ended and we resumed our journey. It was now dark and from the border right up to Prague we saw hardly any soul. The whole countryside was blacked out and desolate. I said to Dalal: "It is very cold. Can't we stop somewhere and have a cup of coffee?"

Pat came his reply: "Coffee, sir? You just can't have it. There are no restaurants on the way and the question of having coffee simply does not arise. You can get coffee only when we reach our embassy."

We ultimately reached our embassy at Prague and immediately helped ourselves to cheering cups of hot coffee.

I took charge of the embassy, did my usual rounds of calls, and, of course, on my very first visit to the Czechoslovak External Affairs Minister, David, lodged a protest about the reception at the frontier. I told him that it was unjustified to treat ambassadors of friendly countries in the manner they did. It appeared that the protest went home because soon thereafter things somewhat improved at the border checkpoints.

The Diplomatic Corps in Czechoslovakia was at that time classified into two categories—the friendly countries and the unfriendly countries. The friendly countries were all the communist countries. The unfriendly countries were the rest. Somehow, India at that time managed to occupy a middle position. We were considered to be not so unfriendly. So, the Indian Ambassador was a sort of bridge between the communist countries and the other countries. This was a very interesting situation. Whenever the non-communist countries wanted to know something, they would put the feelers to the Indian Ambassador and request him to find out. The Indian Ambassador would then get busy, of course, very discreetly. Sometimes he would find the answers and other times he just could not.

In the Diplomatic Corps, the ambassador who has been in the country longest is the doyen. But in Czechoslovakia, the Russian Ambassador, whether he was the seniormost or not, was for all practical purposes treated as the doyen. He was treated really as an overlord. When he arrived everybody, except the diplomats of the non-communist countries, got up and respectfully made way for

him. He was the kingpin and was treated with great deference. Whatever he said was almost the law. The Czechs were at that time following the Soviet line completely. In fact, they were more forward in their communistic thinking than their Russian masters.

The relations with Yugoslavia were naturally very bad because of Tito and the Soviet leaders having fallen out, and in fact for a certain period of my stay in Czechoslovakia, there was no ambassador from Yugoslavia. Later, an ambassador did arrive but prior to his arrival for a long time Yugoslavia was represented only by a *chargé-d'affaires*.

It was a very unique experience being in Czechoslovakia and seeing at first hand a communist country actually functioning. Most of the foreign diplomats were subjected to a considerable restraint amounting practically to surveillance. In the case of the Indian Ambassador, however, the restrictions were less rigid. Even if my movements were watched, which I am sure was the case, it was done discreetly and not openly.

Usually what was done was that whenever I wanted to go somewhere a couple of persons would be tagged on to me on the pleas of language barrier and avoidance of inconvenience. These interpreters, of course, kept a complete account of my movements and activities and reported to the authorities concerned. Of course, all this was done very politely and discreetly.

But in the case of others, the police followed them openly and sometimes much fun ensued. Some of the younger diplomats, when being followed, would give the police a merry chase, zigzagging from one alley to another. Then they would take a sharp turn at some convenient place and suddenly disappear leaving the police flabbergasted. In the evening, the story as to how the police were befooled would be doing the rounds of the entire Diplomatic Corps, along with embellishments.

A strict watch was kept on those coming into and going out of any embassy. At my residence, there was no police guard apparently but there was a man we knew was taking note of every car coming and going, its number and its occupants.

Even the Czech servants in the households of the diplomats were expected to send in reports to the police regularly. I got direct evidence of this procedure once in a somewhat strange manner. I had gone to a shop in Prague to make some purchases. It happened that the Austrian minister was also visiting that very

shop. My car was parked on the road behind the Austrian minister's car. We both left the shop more or less at the same time. As the Austrian minister's car moved, I noticed a bunch of papers being dropped from his car. I thought that it had fallen out accidentally and accordingly I asked my driver to pick up the bundle. The papers were in Czech language. By that time, the Austrian minister's car had gone out of sight. When I got someone at the embassy to look into the papers, it was found to be a report from the driver of the Austrian minister to the police on the movements of the Austrian minister during the previous one week. I sent the papers to the minister with my compliments and he came round to see me the next day. He said: "Do you know this is a very interesting document?" When I made further enquiries, he replied: "Because, while this man has given a routine report, he has avoided reporting the incriminating movements!"

This was not surprising because employees do sometimes acquire a sense of loyalty to those for whom they work, especially for a long time. So, while they did what they are required to do by the state like sending periodical reports, they avoided mention of incidents which might create difficulties.

In Czechoslovakia, at that time one had to be very careful as to what one did or said. I was quite certain that we had recording devices installed in practically every room of our residence and even in the office. The Czech workers were coming into these buildings all the time for repairs and other reasons and they could easily instal these recording devices whenever and wherever they liked and also remove them after recording.

After I got wise to this situation, I made it a point to use it to my advantage. When I got annoyed or exasperated with the Czech authorities about some thing or the other, I would proclaim clearly and loudly my grievances with the hope that they were being recorded. And, on a number of occasions, after some days, somebody would come up and say, "Ambassador, we hear that you are having some difficulties. Can we do something to resolve them?" It was obvious that they got to know of the difficulties I had conveyed to them only through the recording devices.

Under such conditions, it was not surprising that you could not talk to any Czech citizen without the person addressed looking back over his shoulder to ascertain if he was being watched or

overheard. Therefore, if you really wanted to talk to a Czech, it was best to make the meeting appear accidental in some out of the way place and even then pretend as if he was a stranger.

I became friendly with a big Czech official who used to accompany me on my tours. One day, after the end of a tour, I invited him to come to my residence and have a drink. He hesitated and then enquired if I had a radio in my place. I said, "Yes, but why?" Then he said, "I would request you to put on the radio. You know, Mr Ambassador, walls have ears." He was obviously referring to the listening devices. With the radio on, the conversation would naturally get jumbled and there can be no intelligible recording. So we put the radio on and then sat down and had a long chat.

A young Czech—an engineer—had got very much attached to me. He used to come and see me at my residence very often. He had become friendly with my son too. After some time he was called up by the police and warned. They told him that they did not like his visiting me so frequently. He came to me very perturbed and sought my advice. I told him: "You have to live here. So better abide by their instructions. Don't be a fool!"

Gradually as conditions improved, I did a considerable amount of travelling in Czechoslovakia. Towards the end of my stay (early in 1956), a definite thaw could be noticed. From the rigidity of communistic insularism, they were becoming more humane. You could meet people and you could talk to them more openly. In fact, I was the first non-communist ambassador to be invited to Czech homes. Till then, if a diplomat had to be entertained, he would be invited to some hotel, but never to the homes of the hosts. When I was invited to Czech homes, it led to considerable speculation in the diplomatic circles. The diplomats were intrigued as to why I had been singled out for the special treatment of being invited to the homes of ministers and officers. The visits to the homes of Czech dignitaries gave me an insight into the standards of living of top functionaries of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. While for the general population the availability of consumer goods and housing was difficult, these high dignitaries lived in spacious houses. In addition, they had *dachaus*—country houses—for relaxation during weekends. In their homes they had the best of cutlery, crockery, table linen, and food served by immaculately clad waiters.

Anyway, the fact was that the thaw had set in. The Czechs were gradually coming out of their shells. Towards the end of my stay,



even in the towns things brightened up somewhat. More restaurants had opened. And, there were more things available in the shops.

Previously it had been difficult to get vegetables, flowers, and even meat and chicken in the market. Most of the non-communist diplomats including myself used to get the supplies from Holland by air. It might sound strange, but by air the consumer goods used to be cheaper than in the local markets—and the quality definitely better. The suppliers in Holland would pack chicken, meat, flowers, etc. in dry ice and they would be supplied by air the morning after the order was placed. It would appear *prima facie* that this was an extravagant way of doing things. But the flowers were fresh and the meat was of better quality. And they were less than half the cost. In Czechoslovakia, the prices were high and availability was practically nil. If we had not obtained our requirements from outside the country, we could not have entertained nor could we have lived within our allowances.

Personally, my relations with the Czech Government were very cordial. Many of the subsequent Czech ambassadors to India were ministers and officials with whom I had established cordial relations during my stay in Czechoslovakia. I used to have very lively discussions with them on communism. I presume they reported my talks to their government. But somehow we had established an equation and I think the communist government, to a certain extent, was using me to ascertain the views of non-communist countries about various matters.

When I left, the Prime Minister of Czechoslovakia surprised me by remarking: "You know, Mr Ambassador, we are sorry that you are going away because we used to get to know a lot of things from you, which were for our good."

During my tenure in Czechoslovakia, I took steps to increase our trade and commerce with that country. Till then, the total trade we had with Czechoslovakia was less than Rs 2 crores per year. Today, it is over Rs 200 crores.

My stay in Czechoslovakia was short. I was there only for a little less than a couple of years. During this period, Jawaharlal Nehru visited Czechoslovakia. This was his first visit and everybody was very excited, especially the Czechs, because Panditji at that time was in the forefront of international affairs. He was at the height of his celebrity and the leading figure on the international scene. The Czechs were very interested in seeing the great man at close

quarters. One could see that they were mightily interested in him because for the party that I threw in his honour, everybody of importance turned up. And, not only the invitees, I had numerous requests from officials and non-officials to bring along their wives or friends. This could not have been possible unless the Czech Government had given complete freedom to everyone to attend the party. I had mangoes specially flown in from Bombay for that party. Most of the Czechs had never seen a mango. So instead of eating them, most of them pocketed one each openly. They said: "Mr Ambassador, I hope you won't mind. We want to show the mango to our children. They have never seen it. And they do not know how a mango tasted." Of course, I had no objection. My job was to establish good relations with the Czechs and the mango helped me in this task.

During my stay, my wife held an exhibition of Indian women's costumes and jewellery. I asked our government to sanction some money for it but the authorities did not agree. But I had a lot of friends back home in India. I asked them to send the exhibits by air at my cost. The exhibition was held at my residence. Literally, thousands of people turned up to see the exhibition. Long queues—about a mile long—could be seen throughout the day. The Czechs had never seen anything like that till then. They were curious to see anything from the outside since their own country was like a big prison. They could not get out of their country easily. Even foreigners, once they came into the country, had to secure an exit permit to get out. Among the Czechs, only officials who went on diplomatic and international assignments could travel a bit. Nobody else could get out. Foreign travel for pleasure and sight-seeing was out of question for the majority of Czechs.

Fortunately for me, I travelled all over Czechoslovakia and practically saw the whole of the countryside and all the towns. I made some very good friends. Even now they are my friends. On the whole, it was a very interesting experience.

Normally the tenure of an ambassador in Czechoslovakia was for three years. But I left earlier at my own request. This was because for the first and only time I fell ill seriously.

During 1953-55, I was nominated as India's representative to the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. The sessions of the Council used to be held in Geneva and lasted nearly

six weeks. It used to be a very exacting period. Heaps of papers had to be read and assimilated every day followed by preparations for the next day's session. Social life was also intense with cocktail parties and dinners practically every day. On top of all this, in 1955, the Secretary of our delegation was quite useless. His work too had to be done by me. My load of work was quite heavy. When the 1955 session ended, I had to write the report also as the Secretary was incapable of writing it.

For the last few days of our stay in Geneva, my wife and I shifted to the residence of our friends, the Dasturs of Air India, which was on the outskirts of Geneva. One night I got up from my bed to go to the bathroom and suddenly I just fainted. After sometime I regained consciousness. Quietly I went back to bed without disturbing my wife. The next morning I had to complete the report. Besides, there was a lot of work about winding up our temporary office in Geneva. I went to the office as usual, completed the report, wound up the office, and returned to the Dasturs' residence.

It was only then I told my wife what had happened the night before and then I decided to go to a doctor. My hosts immediately took me to a heart specialist. The doctor suspected coronary thrombosis. So, he confined me to bed for a week. The more medicines I took the worse I felt.

Finally I came to the conclusion that the diagnosis of the Geneva doctor was wrong. So I decided to go to London and consult the doctors there for two reasons. At least I could converse with them in English. Besides, I had many friends there. If there was any serious turn in my health, I thought, it would be better to be among my friends.

In London, I consulted one of the leading heart specialists, Sir Geoffrey Bourne, and quite a few other specialists. Their unanimous opinion was that the diagnosis of the Geneva doctor was wrong and that probably I had a vaso vegal attack on account of too much work and strain. They advised me rest and less strenuous work. If I did not overstrain myself I could lead normal life, they said. This illness and absence from India for over five years impelled me to ask the Government of India for a transfer from Prague. The government agreed. In December 1955 I returned to Delhi on four months' leave.

## 7. Rehabilitating the Refugees

The intention of the Government of India at that time was to send me after the expiry of my leave to Australia as the High Commissioner at Canberra. But on coming to India, I decided to stay back rather than continue in the foreign service. The External Affairs Ministry was naturally perturbed about my decision.

On my being adamant, they produced me before Pandit Nehru. The then Foreign Secretary, Subimal Dutt, took me to Panditji's room and told him, "Dharma Vira refuses to go to Australia!"

So, Panditji asked me: "Tell me, why are you not willing to go?"

I explained to him the fact was there was very little to do in a small diplomatic mission. I preferred to work in India rather than go abroad.

Panditji's reaction was: "Don't be ridiculous!"

But I insisted: "Maybe many people will pray for your good health for sending them abroad on foreign service. But here is one who prefers to stay here and work here. Why must there be insistence on his going?"

After this, he said, "Well, that is another matter!"

So, it was decided that I should stay on in India.

Having worked with Pandit Nehru rather intimately for nearly four years from 1947 to 1951, I had naturally incurred some displeasure and envy of some colleagues and others, even though I personally thought I had not displeased anybody. It all came to the surface when the question of my reposting in India arose. There were all sorts of obstructions. The then Cabinet Secretary, Y.N. Sukthankar, informed me that I was not senior enough

6-a to be a secretary to the government. This was strange when right

then a person junior to me by a year was actually working as a secretary to the government. I was offered various odd propositions, including the chief commissionership of Andaman-Nicobar Islands but not the secretaryship to the government to which post, I thought, I was entitled.

I could have gone and made a representation to Panditji but I was disinclined to do so. He, however, got to know of it, presumably through his Private Secretary M.O. Matthai. Panditji is reported to have called Sukthankar and told him that this was unfair to me as I had enjoyed the status of a secretary to the government even before I had gone abroad. He, therefore, directed that I should be given a post commensurate with my seniority and my previous standing in the service.

Thereafter, Sukthankar called me and informed me that there was a chance of secretaryship in the Ministry of Rehabilitation. Chandra, the then Secretary, was due to retire in a short while and I could understudy him by going there as a special secretary.

Rehabilitation at that time was considered to be a rather difficult post to take up and there were not many takers. I had acquired some experience of the work of rehabilitation of displaced persons during the period I worked with the Prime Minister. Hence, I accepted the posting. The ministry was not in a good shape and there was much to do. There were many complaints, particularly from the refugees from East Bengal, in regard to the manner in which they were being looked after. I had, however, one great advantage in this ministry. The Minister, the late Mehr Chand Khanna, was a very fine person to work with. He was also a personal friend.

The first thing to be done was to pay a visit to Calcutta to see all the refugee camps in Bengal to ascertain the situation. It appeared that those camps had not been visited by any officer either from the Centre or from the State for a number of years. Therefore, they had become hotbeds of dissatisfaction. When I suggested to the officers in Bengal that I would like to pay a visit to these camps, there was complete consternation. They said, "You can't visit them. You will be mobbed. There would be trouble and we will be held responsible for it. We won't advise you to do this."

Nevertheless we went. There was no trouble. In fact, the displaced persons in the camps were very happy that somebody from Delhi had at last visited them and that somebody was anxious to

know about their problems. At the Cooper's Camp, there was so much enthusiasm that they surrounded me and we sat down for a frank talk. While I was having a cordial talk with them, I looked back and found that all the officers accompanying me had disappeared. They thought that I was being mobbed and they had rushed to get police assistance.

After a while, they came back looking very sheepish and told me that as they anticipated trouble they had gone to ring up the police. The main difficulty in the rehabilitation of displaced persons from East Pakistan was that because of the Nehru-Liaquat Ali Pact, there was always a feeling in the minds of the officials of the state government that these displaced persons would return to East Bengal sooner or later. Therefore, they had concluded there was no point in spending much money on permanently rehabilitating them in India.

The result was that they were given help in small dollops which the refugees used up towards their daily needs and thus were never thought of settling down. So, the first thing we did was to take a decision that thereafter there will be only economic rehabilitation of the displaced persons from East Bengal and money will not be frittered away on mere temporary relief. Accordingly, we decided that monetary assistance should be given to them in such amounts that it can be utilized immediately towards permanent rehabilitation and so there would be no danger of its being used to meet day-to-day expenses.

Another decision we took was that all capital work in regard to the refugees in Bengal would be carried out by the refugees themselves and not by contractors and other agencies. We started cooperative societies of refugees which were provided with adequate funds for initial expenses to enable them to take over the contract work of supplies and of construction. By this system they could earn to meet their daily needs and at the same time be actively associated with the schemes directed towards their permanent rehabilitation. The next step was to acquire large areas of land in Bihar, U.P., and M.P. to settle them. West Bengal was already over-populated and there was no chance of getting surplus land in that state.

The shortage of land gave birth to the idea of the Dandakaranya Project. Dandakaranya happened to be a large tract of afforested land in the heart of India comprising mainly the districts of

Koraput, Bastar, and Chanda. Lord Rama is said to have passed his period of exile in this area. Many places and rivers in this area bear names associated with the epic travels of Rama, Sita, and Lakshman. The population of this area is very sparse and consists principally of Adivasis. The originator of the Dandakaranya Project was the late Sir S.V. Ramamurti, an eminent civil servant. It received enthusiastic support and encouragement from the then Finance Minister, T.T. Krishnamachari. Here was a large tract of land lying practically unoccupied. It had considerable mineral wealth. But as somebody picturesquely described, "the wealth of the area was zealously guarded by a two-winged fairy called Mosquito." Malaria, yellow fever, and similar health hazards kept people away from this inhospitable region over the past thousands of years. In spite of the high incidence of rainfall, there is acute scarcity of water in the area because of the physical conditions. The rainwater was drained out through deep ravines, rivers, and channels.

So a team of experts and officials under the leadership of H.M. Patel proceeded to the Dandakaranya area. I accompanied them in my capacity as the rehabilitation secretary. We wanted to explore the possibilities of utilizing Dandakaranya for the rehabilitation of the refugees from East Bengal. We covered a large area and practically went all over the place. Conditions, as expected, were very difficult. There were practically no roads. We had to go through forest tracts, sometimes by jeeps and sometimes on foot. But it was well worth it. Ultimately we came to the conclusion that the area could be utilized advantageously with the help of science, technology, and engineering.

Another important reason why we were anxious to open up this area was its rich mineral wealth. In Bailadilla, the Dandakaranya had probably one of the biggest and richest iron ore deposits in the world. Iron ore of 60 to 70 per cent purity, which is practically pig iron, just lying overground to be picked up. It was not used at all because there were no roads, no communications. Hence utilization was impossible.

To me it was important to open up Dandakaranya and to tap these rich mineral resources in the interest of the future development and progress of India. The scheme which was initially considered for the rehabilitation of the displaced persons from East Bengal finally took shape as a major scheme to develop that area

by tapping its rich mineral deposits. Refugee rehabilitation became merely a lever for the main purpose.

As soon as it was decided to open up the area, Japan indicated active interest in the iron ore from the Bailadilla area and soon after entered into an agreement with the Government of India for the export of four million tons of iron ore annually to Japan. To facilitate this supply, the Japanese agreed to help in the development of the port facilities at Visakhapatnam and in the construction of the railway line from Bailadilla to Visakhapatnam. This work was soon executed. And, Dandakaranya, which was once tenanted by wild animals and Adivasis, is now humming with activity. Considerable quantities of iron are being mined and exported from there. It has also been possible to rehabilitate more than 150,000 refugees in that area so far. More are going there every year.

The water supply problem was tackled by building dams across some of the rivers to conserve the water and also by constructing several tanks and smaller dams to conserve as much water as possible. We also tried tube-wells, but they were not very successful because during summer most of them tended to dry up. Much work had to be done in the reclamation of land with machinery. A very large number of tractors and bulldozers had to be procured for the purpose.

When we were negotiating for these tractors and bulldozers, Krishna Menon was the Defence Minister. The Defence Ministry had entered into a deal with a Japanese firm called Komatsu for the manufacture of tractors and bulldozers in our ordnance factories with their collaboration. The Ministry of Rehabilitation was reluctant to take these tractors as they were untried and they did not have a very good reputation. Krishna Menon, however, influenced Panditji and forced us to accept these tractors.

The tractors arrived and immediately we ran into difficulties. These were untried tractors. They had various teething difficulties and the result was that most of them came to a standstill soon after we started to use them. Complaints to the Defence Ministry only led to their displaying a considerable amount of annoyance and impatience against us. We were blamed for wanting to buy tractors elsewhere and, therefore, deliberately trying to discredit what was to be manufactured in India.

Ultimately, the matter came to a head and an enquiry commit-



tee was appointed to go into the working of these tractors. The committee, consisting of technicians which went into their working, came to the conclusion that there were several manufacturing defects in the Komatsu tractors and as a result of these, they were unsuitable for use unless the defects were removed.

Later we had a very stormy meeting in Panditji's room at which Krishna Menon roundly accused me of sabotaging the tractors and I accused him of just trying to pass them on to us. Panditji listened patiently with my Minister, Mehr Chand Khanna, a helpless spectator to this dispute. The Defence Ministry had to repair these tractors and some of them even had to be replaced by new ones. But for a long time they gave a lot of trouble. Most of the work was done mainly with the old tractors which had been received from the Central Tractors' Organization. If these tractors were not there, probably we would not have been able to make much headway.

The work in the Rehabilitation Ministry again brought me in contact with Panditji. He was much interested in the rehabilitation of refugees and would often send for us and enquire about the progress. When things got stuck up he would even extend his good offices to overcome our difficulties, particularly in regard to funds and other matters. He was very enthusiastic about the Dandakaranya Scheme—and so was the then Finance Minister, T.T. Krishnamachari. Without their assistance and active encouragement, we could not have gone forward with Dandakaranya and even if we had gone forward, the scheme would have been still-born.

After the 1962 elections, the Ministry of Works, Housing and Supply was added to the Rehabilitation Ministry. So I became the combined Secretary for Rehabilitation, Works, Housing and Supply. The work in rehabilitation by that time had gone down considerably. The West Pakistan refugees had been more or less rehabilitated. There were only a few cases of compensation left, but on the whole, there was no major problem left so far as the Punjabi refugees were concerned.

So far as the Bengali refugees were concerned, we continued to encounter difficulties and most of these difficulties were due to complete inefficiency prevailing in the West Bengal State Rehabilitation Department. There was considerable amount of corruption and I am not sure as to how much money which had been allotted for the rehabilitation of refugees actually reached them. •

There was considerable amount of callousness prevailing in regard to the refugees and sometimes, one felt as if the state government and the local officers were really not seriously interested in their rehabilitation. On the one hand, they went on saying that there was no land in Bengal, that it was already over-saturated, and that the refugees should be rehabilitated outside Bengal. On the other, when they were rehabilitated outside, they did not cooperate and criticized the location of and conditions in the areas acquired for rehabilitation. They did not seem to realize that the refugees could not be rehabilitated by uprooting others. Only virgin and uninhabited areas could be given to them, and these had to be developed. These lands could obviously not be in the heart of populated areas. Initially the settlements of the displaced persons had a look of isolation but as time passed and more and more settlers got accepted, contact with the rest of the population was established and the feeling of isolation diminished.

I remember about the Nizamuddin colony in New Delhi. It was established in an untenanted area outside Delhi which was overgrown with scrub and forest and inhabited by wild animals. When Mehr Chandji and I took the first batch of displaced persons, we were subjected to a full round of angry abuses. They shouted at us: "You expect us to live here where not even dogs can exist. This is a haunt of wild animals. We will be looted by dacoits at night. We will be murdered. Then, who will be held responsible?"

At that time, we were giving them land in Nizamuddin for less than Rs 3 per sq. yd. Today, it is worth nearly Rs 300 per sq. yd. In fact, no land is available for purchase. Those very refugees who mistakenly abused us came back four years later and said: "We are sorry. We were so rude to you. We never realized what a gold mine you were giving to us."

This is necessarily and understandably what happens when new colonies are established involving a large number of people in unfamiliar areas. The initial difficulties are, however, gradually overcome by the perseverance and work of those who have been put there and also through governmental assistance.

This, however, did not happen in Bengal and hence the Bengal problem of refugees continues to be unresolved. Even today, it is a live issue mainly because of insufficient attention having been devoted to it by the state government. There had been a constant demand from the East Bengal refugees that they should also be paid

compensation in the same manner as was paid to the displaced persons from West Pakistan. This matter was considered in detail by the Centre. On account of the Nehru-Liaquat Ali Pact even though it has been observed by the Pakistan Government more in breach than in observance, it was found difficult to treat these people as permanently uprooted entitling them to compensation. I did, however, prevail upon the Finance Minister, T.T. Krishnamachari, to write off outstanding loans to the extent of about Rs 40 crores in order to provide relief to the displaced persons. This was done sometime in 1964. The incompetence of the government in Bengal can be judged from the fact that while the Government of India had given sanction for writing off these loans so long ago, when I went to Bengal in 1967 as Governor and asked as to how much had been written off, I was told that only Rs 1.5 crores has been written off during all these years.

The officials in West Bengal were just not interested. The fact was that the small officer in West Bengal was not keen on writing off these loans for if he wrote them off, a major source of extorting money from the refugees would have disappeared. So long as the loans remained outstanding, every alternate month the official could go to the displaced persons who were obviously in no position to pay and had therefore to purchase time by offering illicit gratification. Once the loans were written off, how could they continue to extort money out of the displaced persons? It was only in 1968 during the President's Rule in West Bengal that active steps were taken to write off these loans. I left West Bengal soon after and hence cannot say whether the work has been completed. It is not that the work cannot be finished but the trouble is that nobody had been interested. It was just a case of deliberate callousness and lack of interest on the part of the officials as well as the politicians in the fate of the displaced persons from East Pakistan. This has been one factor which has been very greatly responsible for the present plight of the displaced persons in Bengal. There has been no serious effort to rehabilitate them.

There is in West Bengal a floating population of about ten to fifteen lakhs which is completely without any moorings. The resultant crime and human degradation are natural consequences. These people have become a foci of criminal activities and seething discontent. Smuggling of goods and breaking of wagons, railway thefts, and similar other anti-social acts are indulged in by these unsettled

people who have no other ostensible means of livelihood. All this could have been avoided if the work of rehabilitation had been taken in hand in an earnest manner.

The Centre is blamed constantly by the West Bengal Government for not providing sufficient funds for the purpose. But the question is whether even the money that was given was utilized—and utilized properly? How could they expect the Centre to go on pouring money into the pockets of officials and others in West Bengal without doing any good to the refugees?

In this context it will be of interest to cite an instance. Every year about Rs 20 lakhs used to be claimed for the cleaning of silt deposited in the drains in the refugee colonies in West Bengal. When we enquired as to how it was possible for the drains to be silted up so frequently and regularly if they had been laid well when the colonies were built, they had no answer. They had not even made arrangement for the regular upkeep of these drains and one even had doubts about their having been laid at all. So, we had to tell them that this state of affairs could no longer be tolerated. We agreed to give them funds for cleaning up drains again only on the condition that thereafter the local bodies would be made responsible for their maintenance and no further demands would be made on this account in the future. I have no doubt in my mind that the whole thing was a racket. It is well known that earth-work is the easiest item to cheat and cash in. Most of this money must have passed into the pockets of the officials without any benefit to the displaced persons.

In 1962, I was placed in charge of the Works Ministry also. The same year occurred the Chinese incident. It was a great blow to Prime Minister Nehru because it completely cut at the roots of all his notions about foreign policy in Asia. His entire policy was based on the sheet-anchor that so far as China was concerned, we would never have any conflict with it. Therefore, with China as our friend we could go forward and deal with the other problems in Asia in collaboration with that country.

When China attacked us in 1962, it shattered a number of our dreams. The debacle of our arms and men in the eastern sector was a great blow to Panditji's prestige. Of course, the main responsibility for the debacle was of Krishna Menon, because during his tenure as the Defence Minister, he greatly neglected the training and equipment of our armed forces.

When the time of trial came, we were found wanting in training as well as in equipment. Our forces did not have the requisite leadership too. They did not have the equipment. Not even shoes of the type required in mountain warfare. Nor the requisite clothing for the cold climate. There is no wonder that there was complete demoralization in the ranks of our armed forces because Krishna Menon was functioning in the Defence Ministry according to his own whims and fancies. Even senior promotions and appointments were determined by his whims and fancies, with the result that there were a large number of disgruntled officers in the armed forces.

However, it should be said to Krishna Menon's credit that he was the first Defence Minister to lay the foundation of our armament production to make us more independent in regard to our requirements for arms. But in his inimitable manner, he succeeded in neutralizing this advantage. The ordnance factories were utilized to produce pressure cookers and similar domestic wares whilst they should legitimately have been utilized for producing defence equipment. Even such equipment that was produced was very costly. Under such conditions, it was no wonder that we were caught on the wrong foot when the time of trial came. We had to ask for assistance in arms as well as in other ways from the UK, the USA, and other countries. Numerous advisers poured in from various countries into Delhi and the immediate problem that arose was one of housing them all.

This situation gave birth to what is now known as the Lodhi Hotel. It was originally built as the Lodhi Hostel to accommodate the numerous advisers who landed at Delhi from the USA and the UK. Nehru wanted this job to be completed within six months and it was executed in a shorter period, by adopting the same procedure which was followed in the construction of the seven airstrips referred to in a previous chapter. To start with, the foreign advisers lived in the hostel, but gradually they tapered off and the building was converted first into a hostel for government servants and thereafter into Lodhi Hotel for the middle-class and lower middle-class tourists.

## 8. Indo-Pakistan War and Tashkent

In 1964, Bhagwan Sahay, who was the Chief Commissioner of Delhi, was transferred to Himachal Pradesh as the Lieutenant-Governor. And, Lal Bahadur Shastri, who was then the Home Minister, asked me to take over as the Chief Commissioner of Delhi. I was very reluctant to take up this assignment for I had been in the Central Secretariat for nearly 24 years, from 1941 onwards, and I had lost touch with the district administration. I was, therefore, somewhat apprehensive that I may not be able to do the job properly. But Lal Bahadurji insisted. He said: "This is my wish. And, it is also the wish of the Prime Minister!" As it was the P.M.'s wish, backed by the wish of the Home Minister, whom I greatly admired, there was no further question of the offer being turned down and I took over as the Chief Commissioner of Delhi. It turned out to be a pretty exciting job.

One of the first tasks entrusted to me was to try and root out malpractices such as adulteration and black-marketing. The Prime Minister had promised complete support to me in this task. Even though I remained in Delhi for about a year only as the Chief Commissioner, during this period I was able to put into operation various schemes which ultimately did help in cleaning Delhi quite a bit in more than one sense.

The area on the Jamuna side of the Red Fort was completely cleared of squatters. The area in and around the Purana Quila and the Red Fort was also cleared. There was considerable opposition to this clearing-up operation from vested interests, particularly from the local Congressmen. These Congressmen were utilizing the squatters for political and personal ends and as such had a vested

interest in their continuation. When I removed them, representations were made against me to the Home Minister as well as the Prime Minister. Some of the local Congressmen (I shall not name them!) even reported to the Prime Minister that he had let loose a new Nadir Shah in Delhi! But the Prime Minister stood by his word. He turned a deaf ear to them and supported me strongly. In fact, the very day before he died, he turned them all out from his residence where they had gone on a deputation against me. He told them candidly: "Dharma Vira will not go, but you people will have to go, because I have sent him to set things right in Delhi." During this period, the old warmth that existed between Panditji and myself returned to a considerable extent.

Next came the problems of black-marketing, hoarding, and adulteration. Here again, a drive to round up the malpractitioners was made. This also had a salutary effect on the market as in the drive no one was spared—not even the most influential in Delhi.

Thereafter, with the Prime Minister's concurrence, the traffic problem of Delhi was taken in hand. Traffic in Delhi used to be very chaotic—and it is, unfortunately, once again so now. The rules of the road were never observed. So a drive was undertaken to hammer into the people's mind the basic road rules. Checkposts were put up along the roads, all over the city, with magistrates manning them. People who were caught contravening road rules were tried on the spot and fined. The result was very salutary as the people of Delhi testified later. For once, Delhi traffic started moving according to the rules and regulations. During the period I was the Chief Commissioner periodically we had these drives to make people aware that the road rules had to be observed and that the administration was keen about it. The Prime Minister gave us his whole-hearted support. In fact, he not only supported us, he fully approved the measures adopted and encouraged us to go forward and do better each time.

Similarly special attention was paid to the roads. Old residents of Delhi might remember that the road between the Safdarjang Tomb and what is now the All India Institute of Medical Science complex, which was about a mile's stretch, used to be known as the "murder mile." It used to be a narrow road with considerable amount of traffic and everyday there used to be some accident or the other and quite often fatal accidents. The problem was gone into thoroughly and it was decided to introduce a four-lane traffic arrange-

ment in this area. The present road was projected and constructed during my tenure. Besides, the little road connecting the Link Road with the main Mathura Road by the side of the Oberoi Intercontinental was also constructed at that time to provide direct access to the Link Road. We could not have done all these things without the help of the Prime Minister who got us the funds required and encouraged us in every possible manner.

The Prime Minister was deeply interested in the developmental work in and around Delhi. He was anxious that the traffic congestion in Delhi should be reduced. That was how the Jumna Bridge project came to be taken up. Only one bridge was available for vehicular traffic across the river. It was used by all manner of traffic ranging from bullockcarts and donkeys to tongas, trucks, and cars. There was no arrangement for one-way traffic. The resultant confusion was inevitable. Sometimes it used to take hours to get across the river. To reduce this congestion, it was decided to utilize the Wazirabad Bridge, which was on the Wazirabad Barrage, by taking it to the road from Shahdara via the Loni village and connecting it thereafter to the Mall Road. All through the truck traffic to Punjab was diverted to the Wazirabad Bridge. In addition, a temporary bridge was put up near the Jumna Bridge to reduce the load of traffic on that bridge. The Jumna Bridge was converted to one-way traffic, with the left-side bridge for getting out of Delhi and the right-side for getting into Delhi.

Water supply to Delhi, with its increasing population, was posing a big problem. To meet these requirements, the water impounded at the Wazirabad Barrage was found insufficient. Another barrage further down the river was felt to be necessary. So the Indraprastha Barrage was planned. Advantage was also taken of the barrage to provide another bridge over the river. It was decided to make the barrage broad enough to take four-way traffic, with two lanes going out of Delhi and two lanes coming into it. The bridge was to be connected by a new road to the Grand Trunk Road beyond Shahdara so that all the traffic coming from Ghaziabad to New Delhi instead of coming over the old bridge could now come directly to New Delhi. I am glad that this work has been completed.

Many schemes for the betterment and beautification of Delhi could be initiated during that period and the momentum of the same is continuing up to now because of the active follow-up by



the succeeding Lt-Governors, particularly by the late Aditya Nath Jha and the former Chairman of the New Delhi Municipal Committee, S.C. Chhabra.

As mentioned earlier, but for Panditji's active association and support, none of the schemes could have been worked out. In fact, his and Lal Bahadurji's support made my one year's stay as Chief Commissioner of Delhi most fruitful.

Panditji took keen personal interest in all matters concerning the development of the capital. He would sit down with us all, pore over the maps, remove his glasses, and then say: "*Haan*, why don't you do this?" That was his characteristic way. He would get excited with developmental plans and it was quite an inspiration to all of us to have a Prime Minister who was so genuinely interested in all these matters.

During this second period of my close association with Panditji, I noticed a considerable change in him. In 1947, when he became India's first Prime Minister, he was full of fire and zeal. He had this fire and zeal in 1951 also when I left India and went abroad. At that time, anything that was ethically wrong produced in him a considerable feeling of annoyance amounting to fierce anger and a desire to punish the wrong-doers. I had known of several instances when an erring politician or a corrupt official was subjected to severe condemnation and punishment. But when I returned from abroad in 1956, I sensed a perceptible change in him. The old fire had gone out to a considerable extent. It was presumably because of the pressure of politics and exigencies of circumstances. Be that as it may, I found a different Prime Minister who was willing to compromise on certain matters on which he would never have compromised earlier. Maybe politics makes one more tolerant. But this had disappointed certain ardent admirers of Panditji—including myself.

With the Congress Party continuing to be in power, malpractices in administration, because of politicians as well as others, were increasing. Panditji's sincere admirers expected him to set his face against all this. But that was not forthcoming. Nevertheless, Nehru, because of his personal qualities and integrity, continued to be the most admired and beloved leader of India. It was expected that at some time or the other, he would take up this matter of rooting out malpractices and corruption in hand. But that was not to be so.

When I was the Chief Commissioner, I made it a custom to

have an open audience every Wednesday morning to enable people to come and see me with their problems and grievances without any hindrance. I used to sit out in the garden of my residence for about an hour or so. Anybody could then come and see me with their complaints and petitions. And, it was on one such Wednesday in May 1964, as I was listening to someone's troubles that a phone call came from the Prime Minister's house with the alarming news that the P.M. was seriously ill. Without losing any time, I rushed to the Teen Murti House. All the best doctors of Delhi were there. I talked to them. They said there was no hope. Panditji lay unconscious. I was told that the inner line of his aorta had burst—and there was no way of mending it. The end was only a question of time.

It was then that the question arose as to where this great son of India could be cremated in a befitting manner. And, I thought of the big stretch of land between Rajghat and the railway bridge. At that time it was a low-lying area which collected a lot of water and bred mosquitoes. As Chief Commissioner, I had got the area between the Ring Road and the Red Fort cleared of squatters. It was converted into playing fields for children. I had been planning to develop the area across the Ring Road right up to the Jumna and to convert it into a beautiful park with a promenade along the river. I had been wondering as to how to induce the government to allot funds for the considerable amount of filling and developing of land that had to be done to achieve this objective.

Now that a sizeable site for Panditji's cremation was needed, here was my opportunity to develop this area. It was large enough to accommodate the immense crowd which was expected to turn up at the cremation.

Curiously enough certain Congressmen—particularly Shriman Narayan who later became the Governor of Gujarat—vehemently opposed my idea. They observed: "This is a low-lying area. It is marshy. Millions of people will gather and there will be no place for them to stand or sit. How can you think of cremating Panditji in such an unsuitable place?"

Late in the evening, Gulzarilal Nanda, the acting Prime Minister, rang me up and informed that there was a lot of controversy and even trouble because of the site I had chosen. I simply said that in the morning they could come and inspect the site and if after personal inspection they were still not convinced then we

could think of another site.

The work on the site, which had been already started, was speeded up. Throughout the night a number of bulldozers worked on the area levelling, flattening, and filling. I myself inspected the site more than once in the night and supervised the work. The result was that by the morning the entire prospect of the place had changed. When we all gathered at the spot, Shriman Narayan turned to me and said: "But this is not the place I was thinking of!" I insisted that it was the same place. "But it has changed beyond recognition," remarked Shriman Narayan.

I replied: "Yes, it has changed. It had to be changed. Do you think that I would have got Panditji cremated in a swamp? As the Chief Commissioner, I have a special responsibility in this matter."

Everybody then approved of the site and Panditji was cremated there. The vast crowds which collected to watch the cremation and to pay the last homage to their beloved leader were easily contained and the entire ceremony passed off without any difficulty or inconvenience to any one.

Later, a beautiful park, which was named Shantivana, was developed there and for time to come it will be a fitting memorial to Panditji who loved roses, flowers, trees, and open areas. It will be also a source of pleasure to the people of Delhi and those who come from all corners of the world to visit the place sanctified by the cremation of one of the greatest and noblest sons of India.

After Panditji's demise and Gulzarilal Nanda's acting Prime Ministership for a few days, Lal Bahadurji became India's second Prime Minister. I had known him since he had been the Minister for Commerce and Industry. At that time he had wanted me to join him as the Secretary in his ministry. For various reasons, even after orders had been passed, it did not materialize. But he had always wanted me to work with him. So, when he became the Prime Minister and Sucha Singh Khera, the then Cabinet Secretary, retired, Lal Bahadurji selected me to succeed Khera as the Cabinet Secretary.

Lal Bahadurji unfortunately did not live long. But the short period during which we worked together I consider to be one of the most memorable periods of my service. It was a great pity that just when he was coming to grips with the problems of the country, he was snatched away under tragic circumstances.

During his short tenure of office as the P.M., the Kutch episode,

the Indo-Pakistan war, and the signing of the Tashkent Pact were the main events. The Kutch dispute though only a minor war was all the same an important episode in Indo-Pakistan relations. As soon as the trouble started, the British and others intervened and tried to patch up matters before it developed into a full-scale war. As a result of their mediation, a cease-fire was agreed to and it was decided to refer the dispute to an international tribunal—the first time the two countries agreed to this method to settle their differences.

There have been various views as to whether this was the right course to adopt or not. But it must be remembered that the Rann of Kutch was an inhospitable area which consisted mostly of salt marshes with practically no population and, as far as known, with no mineral or any other kind of wealth. Fighting in that area was fraught with considerable disadvantages so much so that even water for our fighting forces had to be transported by water tanks over a distance of about 40 miles.

Thinking retrospectively, I do not think that we lost much by referring the case to a tribunal even though we were somewhat disappointed with the decision of the tribunal giving away about 320 sq. miles of our territory to Pakistan, after substantially accepting our stand. But the ways of international tribunals are such that they never reject anyone's claim outright. They always try to find a *via media* solution. The total area in dispute amounted to a few thousand square miles of territory. The fact that they gave only 320 sq. miles out of it to Pakistan substantially endorsed our contention. It appears that the tribunal did not want to indicate that Pakistan was entirely in the wrong. Such are the ways of international tribunals. Their decisions are always a mixture of justice and political expediency.

Every inch of Indian territory is sacred to us and we cannot and should not part with it easily. But then as a nation we have also to carefully weigh every situation and act in a manner most beneficial to our national interests. In the circumstances in which we were placed I am convinced that the decision to refer the dispute to an international tribunal rather than to fight it out was a sound one.

The negotiations during this period were mainly conducted by the External Affairs Ministry but as the Cabinet Secretary I also very often had to take a hand in them. To a certain extent, there-

fore, I share the responsibility for referring this matter to the international tribunal.

The Kutch incident, as subsequent events showed, was only a test fight by Pakistan. It was really preparing the way for a major war and Kutch was only a diversion, a preliminary test. In 1965, infiltrators from Pakistan started coming in large numbers. This infiltration soon developed into an attack by Pakistan in the Poonch-Rajouri area and thereafter in a full-scale war on all fronts. This war could be fought successfully only because Lal Bahadurji placed complete reliance on the machinery of the government and the fighting forces which were to execute the war. He, of course, as was his duty as the Prime Minister provided guidance and unstinted support. His complete trust in the two arms of the government was a decisive factor. We were also fortunate in having Y.B. Chavan as the Defence Minister. One could discuss matters with him and come to quick conclusions and decisions. When a war is being fought it is only by quick and firm decisions and their speedy implementation that success can be achieved.

The procedure we adopted was that every morning the Cabinet Secretary had a meeting with the concerned secretaries in a control room set up in the Defence Ministry. The preceding day's problems would be brought up for discussion and decisions. Everybody concerned, including the Finance Secretary, would discuss matters threadbare. Decisions would be taken on the spot, recorded, and orders issued. Implementation was required to be reported on the following morning. This was the daily routine. Every morning matters such as the availability of transport, ammunition, finance, etc., were discussed and the previous day's decisions and their implementation were reviewed. Thereafter, orders for the next day were issued.

The meeting of secretaries was followed by a meeting in the Defence Minister's room to discuss problems mainly concerned with defence matters which could not be discussed in the open meetings. Here too the procedure was the same as in the Secretaries' Committee. The Defence Minister presided as the chiefs of three services (army, navy, and air force), the Defence Secretary, and the Cabinet Secretary were the only participants at these meetings. Others were called in as and when required.

I remember vividly how one day we were discussing the question of scrapping certain outmoded aircraft in the air force. I was

opposed to the proposal as I felt that in the difficult times we were passing through we could not know which aircraft would be needed when and where. At such a stage we just could not afford to scrap anything. We could think about this later—certainly not just then. This was my contention. Just as I had finished speaking my mind, in marched General J.N. Chaudhuri announcing that the Pakistanis had opened a new front at Rajouri and that they were moving in very fast. "We must have air support immediately. Whatever aircraft is available should be put to use," he insisted. Air action was immediately approved and the wonderful part of it was that the very aircraft which we were thinking of scrapping were the only ones immediately available for use. These planes went into attack and stopped the advance of the Pakistan army. They destroyed a number of enemy's tanks and in this process a number of our planes were also destroyed. Anyway they served a useful purpose. Such were the quirks and turns of life.

The Indo-Pakistan war was of short duration. It lasted only three weeks. But like in all Indo-Pakistan wars fighting was fierce resulting in considerable casualties and destruction of armaments and property. The number of dead and wounded was considerable and I think on the other side the number was even larger.

There was, however, one major achievement to our credit. We were able to destroy practically their armour and also inflicted much damage to their air force. That, we felt, would to a certain extent bring home to Pakistan the futility of taking us on single-handed in combat. I also thought at that time that it will be some time before they would embark on another foolhardy venture of this nature. This, however, was not to be so. Again in 1971, Pakistan unleashed another war on us. Dictators, it appears, learn nothing from experience and in any case they have to take such risks to divert the attention of their people from problems at home.

The one regret I had during the 1965 conflict was that we did not take any of the major towns of Pakistan. I felt that we could have taken either Sialkot or Lahore or both. In fact, I was constantly pressing the armed forces to take at least Sialkot so as to make it absolutely clear to the world that Pakistan had been licked. The claim that Pakistan subsequently made that the war was at best a draw was really the result of our not taking any of their towns. So much so that the Pakistani authorities deluded their people into believing that they had actually won the war.

General Chaudhuri, who was the Chief of the Army Staff, was of the opinion that we would be unnecessarily frittering our forces and resources by occupying big towns. So he devised ways of bypassing towns by surrounding them and moving forward. There was a point there. If we had occupied any of the towns, there would have been severe fighting with much damage which might have left bitter lasting memories behind. There were thus two sides to the question whether we should have taken the big towns or not. But I am confident that the decisiveness of our victory would have been established only if we had taken a town or two. Pakistan went about boasting that it was not much of a victory for India since only a few square miles of territory was lost.

This boast was further boosted up and exaggerated by the foreign correspondents who were all the time giving reports in such a manner that it looked as if we were getting the worst of it in the fight. Why they did so is a matter for conjecture. However, some foreign correspondents told me that this was mainly because of their ignorance and because of our armed forces' poor liaison with the press. While Pakistan was taking the foreign press correspondents into the forward areas and looking after them well, we were doing nothing of that kind. We were fighting shy of foreign correspondents. Not only that, it appeared that even such correspondents who managed to go to the front on our side were not looked after properly. So it could be that their adverse reporting was the result of our neglecting them. The press expects to be treated handsomely with a lot of wining and dining. But the attitude of our army brass hats was that they had enough problems fighting the war and they had neither time nor inclination to look after the press correspondents. In this, Pakistan scored over us and they got good propaganda value. Much later the truth was out but by then some damage had been done to our cause.

Well, the war ended. Russia used its good offices for arranging a meeting at Tashkent, a neutral territory, where India and Pakistan could meet to discuss peace. The meeting resulted in what is now known as the Tashkent Pact. But it was followed by a tragedy of infinite magnitude. The same night it was signed Lal Bahadurji died of heart failure.

The Tashkent Pact, in my opinion, was inevitable in the circumstances of that time. If we had to live together with Pakistan as neighbours and if there was to be any rapprochement, then the

pact of that kind was the obvious answer. The only question that agitated our minds was that having known Pakistan as we had done over the years, could we be sure that there could ever be an honest pact and consequent peace with that country—with or without Russian mediation. That was an important consideration. But in international affairs, in matters pertaining to relations between countries, certain chances in the interest of peace and amity have to be taken. Sometimes, such deliberate, cool, calculated chances come off; sometimes they misfire. Subsequent events showed that this had misfired.

There is no doubt that if Lal Bahadurji had returned to India alive, he would have encountered considerable opposition in the country in connection with the pact. The fact of his death in tragic circumstances blunted the opposition and criticism considerably. People did not have the heart to criticize the pact signed by one who had served India so well during difficult times and who had died in harness—in alien territory and in the cause of peace. Only history will tell as to whether this was a wise pact or not. But personally I think that placed as we were at that time, we had no other alternative but to accept an agreement of that nature.

Lal Bahadurji, before he went to Tashkent, had various ideas in his mind in regard to the solution of the economic problems facing the country at that time. In fact, he had, before going, directed us to study these problems so that on return he could sit down to tackle them in an earnest manner. That was, however, not to be. He died and with him died a number of schemes which he was contemplating for the economic rehabilitation and progress of India.

In recalling the events of that period when Lal Bahadurji was the Prime Minister, I must mention about the exit of T.T. Krishnamachari as the Finance Minister and the coming in of Sachin Chaudhuri as his successor for I was a witness to these events.

When Lal Bahadurji became the Prime Minister, somehow T.T. Krishnamachari, the then Finance Minister, and valued colleague of Panditji, never fully approved of it. He was, it appears, not in favour of Lal Bahadurji being made the Prime Minister. And, when he did become the P.M., Krishnamachari found it difficult to reconcile himself to work with him—and under him. From Lal Bahadurji's point of view also, Krishnamachari was rather an



awkward and thorny person to work with.

No doubt, Krishnamachari was a very intelligent and extremely shrewd politician who was decisive and who could take important decisions and stand by them. But then, he had a great drawback in his personal make-up. He had a tendency to start personal vendettas against people whom he did not like. Unfortunately national policies got mixed up with personal likes and dislikes of the Finance Minister with the result that they got misdirected and even misused. This was something which to a person of Lal Bahadurji's frame of mind was unwelcome. Time and again, Lal Bahadurji was getting embarrassed and even irritated by some of the actions of the Finance Minister.

Krishnamachari, popularly known as TTK, had a curious pastime. He used to hold a sort of durbar every evening at his residence at which all sorts of people—politicians and officials—gathered to discuss men and matters. Sometimes, high personalities were discussed in an uncomplimentary and even disparaging manner. I do not know whether TTK was aware or not, but there were people in his durbar who had the habit of carrying tales beyond the four walls of TTK's residence. The ultimate result was that the relations between TTK and the Prime Minister began to cool to such an extent that they could not work together.

There was also the problem that at that time we were getting into a lot of difficulties as a result of our economic policies, particularly in regard to company law administration. Lal Bahadurji was anxious to bring in somebody as the Finance Minister who was of his way of thinking and who had better background of the company law administration.

Therefore, when TTK submitted his resignation on a disagreement on action to be taken on certain personal complaints against him, Lal Bahadurji was only too willing to accept it. The acceptance came as a surprise to Krishnamachari. He had believed that the Prime Minister far from accepting his resignation would request him to reconsider his decision and continue.

From Krishnamachari's point of view it was a little unfortunate that his resignation was tendered just a little before Lal Bahadurji died. Probably if it had not come about then, Krishnamachari might have continued as the Finance Minister for a long time. The ways of God are inscrutable and nobody can alter them.

Lal Bahadurji after accepting TTK's resignation lost no time in

appointing Sachin Chaudhuri as the Finance Minister. He was selected because of his immense knowledge of company law and also because as a member of Parliament he had shown considerable interest in economic affairs of the country. Besides, there was need for a cabinet minister from Bengal and Sachin Chaudhuri fulfilled the requirement. He was the sort of man with whom Lal Bahadurji could get on. Lal Bahadurji's intention was to use Sachin Chaudhuri's knowledge of company law to bring about various changes in the working of the company law with a view to removing a lot of anomalies and also to clear the ground for economic and industrial progress of the country.

As we all know, the economic and industrial progress in this country has been impeded greatly owing to a multiplicity of rules and regulations. In some cases they have become nightmares to those affected by them. Even minor decisions in regard to industrial and trade matters take much time. When we are being faced with increasing number of educated unemployed and we want rapid industrialization to create more employment opportunities, we cannot afford to waste time on too meticulous examination of various matters and on splitting hair. What is important today is greater and greater production and creation of more and more employment opportunities so that people who are educated are put to use in productive enterprises. This is one of the great weaknesses of our economic system at present.

Lal Bahadurji was very conscious of this weakness in our body economic and he was most desirous of taking energetic measures for rapid industrialization which could generate more employment and increase the national wealth. With greater employment opportunities more and more of our young men could be weaned away from propaganda of a subversive nature and put to creative and productive use. Increased national wealth could be employed towards giving our people a fairer deal about which we all talk so much these days and do little because of lack of resources. It was a tragedy for the nation that whatever plans and schemes for the amelioration of the country's ills Lal Bahadurji had in his mind died with him at Tashkent.

## 9. Partition of Punjab

Indira Gandhi succeeded Lal Bahadurji as the Prime Minister. Amongst the three Prime Ministers, who came to this post in our country, she was the youngest. Politically she was more or less unknown. She had led a sheltered existence under her distinguished father and was then known as a very shy and retiring person. It is true that she had also been for some time the President of the Congress, but her appointment itself was taken by most people as a gift of a fond father rather than as an appointment on consideration of merit. In fact, quite a lot of people had resented the appointment but they could do nothing that would displease the all-powerful Panditji. The doubters, however, if they had liked to see would have even then noticed that she was no coy and indecisive person. Her handling of the crisis in Kerala was firm and resolute. It could have easily warned those who had eyes to observe that behind her shy and coy appearance was hidden a resolute and firm will. In the government, she had only a brief spell as the Minister for Information and Broadcasting in the Lal Bahadur Shastri Cabinet. As a Minister, she was considered to be moderately competent.

That this comparatively obscure young lady came to be elected as the Prime Minister of the country looks like one of those queer accidents in history which though apparently strange happen in actual life so often. The Congress at that time was run by a small group of big leaders, known as the High Command, headed by Kamaraj. The main contender for the post of the Prime Minister was Morarji Desai. He had proved himself to be an able administrator with experience in administration spreading over a period of decades.

He was, however, much too strong a personality for the liking of the High Command. They were afraid that they would not be able to control him. The High Command desired to run the country, as the power behind the throne, with a mild and pliable Prime Minister theoretically in power. This "pliable and docile tool," they thought, they had in Indira Gandhi. She had the aura of the only child of Jawaharlal Nehru around her and as such was acceptable to the people. Her being a woman was a further advantage as her choice clothed the High Command with an illusion of liberalism it did not possess. They only wanted a person who would be acceptable to the people as an alternative to Morarji Desai and would not prove troublesome. They were to discover in the not too distant future how wrong they were in their judgment. Morarji Desai resolutely contested the election to the Congress Parliamentary Party for its leadership but had practically no chance against a candidate backed by the High Command. In the election, Indira Gandhi received solid support from the Congress MPs from U.P., the largest state in the country and the state to which she belongs.

Indira Gandhi had the enthusiasm of the young to bring a better social order in the country. Therefore, when she formed her government, she brought in a considerable amount of young blood—particularly people like C. Subramaniam and Asoka Mehta who were also desirous of ushering in rapidly a type of socialism suited to this country. The allocation of portfolios went to people who were like-minded in regard to the introduction of socialism and socialist measures. All this aroused considerable expectations and great enthusiasm among the masses.

As soon as the ministry was formed, it was faced with two major problems: devaluation and the Punjabi Suba agitation. Our currency was then under great pressure from countries which professed interest in our well-being. The idea was that if we devalued our currency, our exports would increase by becoming competitive and our dependence on foreign assistance for our imports would correspondingly be reduced. When Subramaniam and Asoka Mehta went to the United States, they were both pressed very hard by the economists there and by the World Bank and the Government of the United States of America to go in for devaluation. In fact, it was even suggested that if we could not devalue as advised there was no point in friendly countries continuing to assist us. Our economy was in a bad shape and if we would not listen to friendly

advice where was the point in their helping us. Not only our economic situation was bad at that time, but our food situation as well. We were practically cornered and hence devaluation was agreed upon.

Unfortunately, devaluation was done without taking in hand simultaneously the various preparatory and follow-up measures. The whole thing was kept so secret that even those who were concerned with the economic administration of the country were given no warning either to prepare for the impact of devaluation or to have ready follow-up action. Consequently, the immediate effect of devaluation instead of being beneficial was adverse to our economy. And, we got into a mess. Our import bill increased considerably and the value of our traditional exports, which were our main exports, was dampened. This created serious foreign exchange difficulties for us. On top of that, even those who had advised us to devalue did not assist us as much as was expected in terms of credits and loans. It was a very trying period and the administration and the government of the time were subjected to considerable justifiable criticism.

This could have been avoided if there had been adequate preparations prior to devaluation. Unfortunately, the decision was such that it was kept a secret even from me, the Cabinet Secretary. It is the function of the Cabinet Secretary to coordinate the working of the economic ministries in order to ensure that economic processes set in motion do not have adverse repercussions. But the machinery was never utilized and inevitably we got involved in trouble. As a result of this, it took us nearly three years to get out of the woods. Only recently the true impact of devaluation has been realized in our favour. However, we did pass through a very difficult period which we could have avoided.

The second problem was of equally alarming nature. Sant Fateh Singh, the Sikh leader, was demanding a Punjabi suba. The agitation in its favour gathered momentum and grew in intensity. Ultimately, a decision was taken in Delhi agreeing in principle to the creation of a Punjabi suba. But it was obvious that there had to be an interim period during which the division of Punjab and the mechanics of partition could be worked out.

A commission headed by Justice Shah of the Supreme Court was appointed to work out the details of partition and to make recommendations to the government. These recommendations are

now well known and I need not dilate upon them. But, as soon as the recommendations were made known, the question arose about their implementation. Both the parties—the Sikhs and the non-Sikhs in Punjab—were anxious that the implementation should be carried out by someone who was completely above party considerations and in whom both the sides had confidence.

For some reason or the other, the choice fell on me. The proposal that I should go to Punjab was mooted to me first by the Prime Minister. I disliked the idea because I thought I could perform a more useful purpose to the government as the Cabinet Secretary than as the Governor of Punjab. Therefore, I suggested that somebody else may be sent there as the Governor and I offered to assist him fully in the task of partition and any other problem that may arise. Arguments went back and forth for some time, but ultimately the Prime Minister informed me that she had thought over the matter carefully and had come to the conclusion that it would be best if I went to Punjab as the Governor.

So, I went to Punjab on 1 June 1966. Soon after my arrival there, the then Government of Punjab, headed by Comrade Ram Kishen, resigned and the President's rule was imposed for the interim period to make the transition smooth and also to facilitate the work of partition. We got busy with the work of partitioning the already partitioned Punjab (in 1947, when Pakistan was created). It took a little over six months to complete the task. During this period, the unpartitioned Punjab was administered by me as the Governor, the representative of the President of India.

Besides the task of partition, the administration had also to be run. There was considerable amount of black-marketing, hoarding, and adulteration prevalent in Punjab at that time. In a number of meetings with the traders, I had warned them that unless they worked out schemes whereby these evils could be eradicated, strong action would be taken. But as is always the case with the traders, they would not listen. They made promises but they never kept them.

So, it was decided to clean up the place and weed out the malpractices. I met the District Magistrates and the Superintendents of Police and had detailed consultations with them. A date was fixed to go into action. The date was kept a secret and one fine morning, we struck all over Punjab. We swooped on all places where adulteration was suspected, about which a careful survey had been made earlier. Large quantities of adulterated goods were recovered and

extensive arrests of those responsible were made. At a number of places whole factories for adulteration of goods were unearthed. As a warning to others, those arrested were handcuffed and paraded through the streets from the places of their arrest to the lock-up. Regardless of status or wealth, nobody was spared.

The result was electrifying and beyond our wildest expectations. The people for once became convinced that the government meant business. There was much of public cooperation with the administration's efforts to unearth malpractices. The wrong-doers got so panicky that large quantities of adulterated goods were found abandoned in the streets, tanks, wells, and other out of the way places. Prices fell sharply. Hoarded goods came out in the open market. Shortages disappeared. And, the goods supplied to the people were no longer adulterated. This minor miracle lasted till the end of the President's rule. For, by then, the politicians went about telling businessmen that the President's rule was only transitory. Hence they should not worry unduly. And, true to promise, as soon as the so-called popular government came to power, everybody went back to the old, bad ways. The cases which were started during the President's rule against the wrong-doers were practically shelved.

The drastic action taken against wrong-doers in Punjab had repercussions all over the country because people started asking that if this could be done in Punjab, why it could not be done likewise in other parts of India. The public outcry did stir some governments into action. Some round-ups on a minor scale were made in Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra. But they were half-hearted attempts without much impact on the actual problem. These attempts could not but be half-hearted because vested interests were always there to sabotage the attempts of the government. So long as the vested interests were heard and given consideration, any cleansing-up operation on the lines of what was done in Punjab was quite futile and even impossible.

During the President's rule we had the advantage of not having to consult political and other interests. Therefore, we could go forward and carry out what we wanted to do. But in a democratic set-up where the support of individuals and parties is a very important consideration, it is not so easy unless the governments concerned are prepared to run the risk of losing the support of well-entrenched interests.

Personally, I am of the opinion that if the administration acts in the interests of the people and spurns the support of the vested interests, the danger of being voted out of power is nil. In fact, if a party acts courageously and tries conscientiously to remove the ills of the society, that party will get more votes than any other party. Somehow, politicians have the mistaken notion that if they took strong action against vested interests, they would lose votes. This fear of losing votes makes them helpless in dealing with them and malpractices and malpractitioners flourish.

The partition of Punjab was completed as recommended by the Shah Commission, with some modifications by the central government, particularly in regard to Chandigarh. Sant Fateh Singh, the leader of the Sikhs, however, was not satisfied. He announced that unless Chandigarh and a few other areas were given to Punjab, he would immolate himself. Some of his followers were ready to follow suit. This created a first-class crisis. The date for self-immolation by the Sant was fixed. And tension mounted as the date drew nearer and nearer. The government would not make up its mind and take a decision either on Chandigarh going to Punjab or in regard to the other matters raised by the Sant. The matter soon came to a boiling point.

Then the fateful day arrived. The Sant and his followers, dressed in traditional robes, performed puja at the Akal Takht, took leave of their near and dear ones, and prepared themselves for self-immolation. Some *kunds* had been set up on the roof of the Akal Takht for the self-immolation to be carried out in the presence of thousands of followers of the Sant. There was a danger of serious disturbances following if this event actually took place.

The government was no doubt fully aware of the implications and it was giving careful consideration to all aspects of the problem. Once it accepted the principle of giving in simply because an individual threatened to burn himself up, then it would have started a new political process of intimidation, which could be copied in other parts of the country, creating more difficulties. Hence, this sort of threat could not be accepted at any cost. On the other hand, there was no doubt that if a person of Sant Fateh Singh's standing was driven to self-immolation, it would deeply offend the susceptibilities of the Sikhs and might result in considerable disorder, including bloodshed. Brisk negotiations went on all the time but it had not been possible to arrive at any agreement.



We, as the Government of Punjab, had necessarily to take measures to ensure that if the self-immolation actually did take place, the law and order situation did not get out of hand. For this purpose, elaborate arrangements were made. Amritsar was ringed with steel as it were to make sure that any disorders that might break out there did not spread to the countryside and to the other towns. Strict precautions were taken in other towns. The police was kept on the alert everywhere. All the known bad characters were rounded up and put in the lock-up since goondas and their like are apt to take advantage of such occasions and reap a rich harvest. Some trouble was inevitable if the immolation had actually taken place. Whether it would have been as much as apprehended is a matter of conjecture. Personally, I was of the view that the trouble would not have been as much as apprehended. But, maybe I might have been proved wrong.

At the last moment, Sardar Hukam Singh, the former Speaker of the Lok Sabha, was sent by the central government to talk things over with Sant Fateh Singh. It was arranged that he would fly from Delhi to Amritsar by a special plane and arrive at the Akal Takht in the nick of time. Hukam Singh was then to dissuade the Sant from taking the fateful plunge into the fire. For some reason or the other the plane could not take off at the scheduled time. But the delay in the arrival of Hukam Singh showed that not only the government was anxious to avoid the self-immolation threat, but the Sant and his followers were equally anxious not to go through self-immolation. So, when the plane got delayed, we started getting frantic telephone calls from Amritsar inquiring as to what had happened and why Sardar Hukam Singh had not arrived at Amritsar.

When we explained that due to mechanical trouble, the plane had been held up, a drama came to be enacted. The Sant and his followers, who were to immolate themselves at a particular time, appeared on the balcony of the Akal Takht and with folded hands they requested the permission of the assemblage to permit them to postpone the time of immolation pending the arrival of Sardar Hukam Singh. The permission was naturally granted with great acclaim and also relief on the part of everybody. It became apparent to us that they like the government were also anxious that the Sant should not die.

Sardar Hukam Singh arrived ultimately. He met Sant Fateh

Singh and had closed-door discussions. There is still some dispute as to what exactly transpired between them. But the result was that the immolation ritual was cancelled and the crisis was tided over. The disputes, which had occasioned the crisis, however remained unsettled and they were to create further difficulties later on.

There is still a certain amount of controversy as to what Sardar Hukam Singh promised or what he undertook to get done. He has maintained discreet silence since then. He has neither contradicted what the Sant had claimed he was told nor has he confirmed it. The Government of India, naturally, has also said nothing about this. And, Sant Fateh Singh is dead now.

However, it was understood that all the disputed matters were to be arbitrated upon by the Prime Minister personally. But before the the Prime Minister arbitrated, the Government of India's attitude was that the two parties must categorically agree to accept her award. That agreement has not been forthcoming. Punjab's claim is that Haryana had also agreed to arbitration by the Prime Minister. Haryana's assertion is that it had never agreed to arbitration by the PM. Thus the matter has been going on. The arbitration has never been attempted. From time to time, rude noises are heard from one party to the dispute that if the arbitration is not done a sequence of events would take place, whilst the other party has asserted that if any award is given a more drastic sequence of events would result. So, the central government, it appears, decided to bide its time.

Personally, I feel that these matters cannot be decided by arbitration. The two parties involved in the dispute must sit down across the table and hammer out a solution. It should be possible for the states in the unified India of today to come to agreement on small matters like the disposal of a town or of a few villages. The present tendency whereby each state has started behaving as if it was not part of an integrated India can only have unfortunate repercussions on the integral unity of the country.

The right-thinking people and the state government should try and stop this tendency from gathering further momentum. On every little matter of dispute we behave as if we are at war. What does it matter if some amount of water in a river or a few villages go here or there. But unfortunately every state stands up as if its entire existence depends on these trivial matters. They behave as if they are not integral parts of a big county and one nation, and as

if the loss of a few villages or some amount of water from a river was something on which their very future depended. After all, if a few villages remained in one part of India or in the other, it is immaterial, since they still remained within India. Whether this happens in Maharashtra or Gujarat or Mysore or Punjab or Himachal or any other state, does it matter much? For, all of them are part of India that is Bharat. It should be possible for politicians, if they are devoted to ensure the integrity of the country, to arrive at working solutions. The fact that they do not arrive at working agreements indicates that they place regional interests above the interests of the country as a whole. This is the surest way for the break-up of the country to say the least.

Regarding Punjab and Haryana, the Prime Minister did after all give an award in the matter. She allotted Chandigarh to Punjab and to mollify Haryana gave it Fazilka. This was a typical political solution which did not satisfy either party and the dispute has remained unsettled.

Surprisingly, the greatest beneficiary of the partition of Punjab was Himachal. Himachal, which wanted only Simla to be given as its capital, suddenly found itself with not only Simla but the whole of Kulu, Chamba, Lahaul and Spiti. This entire area fell literally into the lap of Himachal. Overnight, the area and the population of Himachal were more than doubled.

Punjab became a truncated state of 11 districts and Haryana got nine districts. This was a far cry from the Punjab of the pre-partition days which spread from the banks of the Sindhu river to the Yamuna. The first partition of 1947 reduced Punjab to half its original size and the second partition of 1966-67 almost 20 years later reduced it to a mere fraction of the great Punjab that it once was.

All that happened came as a shock to the Punjabi leaders. When they were agitating for the Punjabi suba, these leaders, I still feel, had not really realized the full implications. In the United Punjab, which included parts which have now gone to Himachal and Haryana, whatever anybody may say, it was the Punjabis who ruled. The others were people of no consequence. By their insistence on a Punjabi suba, they got only the shadow after losing the substance. They only succeeded in reducing the great land of the five rivers to what the Punjabis later described as a "subi"—and not a suba!

I personally believe that it did not benefit them in any way at all. I also believe that a number of thinking people among them have since regretted the second partition very much. But the surprising thing is that when the agitation was on, these very people were as vocal as anybody else in asserting that if the government would not agree to the creation of a Punjabi suba, it would be most unjust to the Punjabis.

It appears that slogans are more important than realities in the Indian political scene these days. If a person can come out with a sufficiently attractive slogan, then the people are apt to forget the implications and follow the slogan blindly, as if mesmerized. They may regret later, but at the time of agitation, the slogan seems to be the only solution. This has been amply proved by the agitation for the Punjabi suba.

In fact, the people who benefited most by the partition of Punjab in 1966-67 were the Himachalis and the Haryanvis. Surprisingly they were not vocal in their demands. The Punjabis helped them to benefit out of the partition. Over-satiety in the case of Himachal, however, created another problem. Himachal became as big as many other states and naturally it demanded full statehood. This had to be ultimately granted. Himachal achieved its ambition easily.

Haryana was a small state when it came into existence and it was faced with a number of problems. It was obvious that as part of Punjab, it had received step-motherly treatment and very little was done to develop it. It had a lot of arid areas with sparse population and hardly any industries. It was viable only in a very limited manner. It needed considerable developmental effort before it could become prosperous. To start with, this was not forthcoming because of the unsteady political set-up of Haryana. The early governments could not settle down to administering the state properly. With the creation of a new state, the ambitions of the politicians got inflated and led to what may be called as political gymnastics. Consequently, the administration suffered. I am happy, however, that with a stable government during the past few years under the leadership of Bansi Lal, Haryana has made rapid progress. This may be a pointer to the desirability of having small administrative areas in the interest of rapid development in various regions.

Punjab had a much better start at the time of partition. It had

been rich in agriculture and it also had an industrial base. The Punjabis are by nature hard-working and industrious. Therefore, in spite of becoming a truncated state, it began making rapid progress in a balanced way, both in agriculture and in industry. Only sometime back I was talking things over with the Chief Minister of Punjab, Giani Zail Singh, and I was glad to learn that he was taking suitable measures for the continued development of the state on the correct lines.

## 10. In West Bengal—Two Years of Turmoil

With the setting in motion of the constitutional machinery in Punjab and Haryana, my task of forming the two states was completed. Then I started approaching the Prime Minister about the next assignment. My request was that I should be relieved of the post and given some other work which should be more exciting and exacting. Life as a constitutional Governor was a bit too dull for me. I had suggested that I may be sent to Assam where in NEFA and the other directly administered areas there was a lot of work for a Governor to get involved in. I had been always interested in tribals, and in moving about in remote areas. Assam interested me greatly for I felt that there was much to do there.

Just then, politics in West Bengal came to a boiling point. A United Front Government had come into office there. It consisted of elements which represented a broad spectrum extending from the CPI(M) to the Bangla Congress. Outwardly they were working together but actually there were deep dissensions among them with the result that the administration was in a state of complete chaos.

The central government was naturally getting worried about the developments in West Bengal. But I was not aware that it was thinking of sending me there. One fine morning, the Prime Minister rang me up and asked me to make a dash from Chandigarh to Delhi that very day for some urgent consultations. Accordingly I reached Delhi the same evening and met the Prime Minister at the appointed time. She informed me that though she was aware of my keen desire to go to Assam, she would like me to go to Bengal as there was much to be done there. I accepted the offer

as I anticipated work there that was likely to have a bearing on the future of the country. On 1 June 1967—exactly a year after my appointment as the Governor of Punjab—I moved over to Calcutta.

Before speaking to me, it appears that the Prime Minister had mentioned to the then Chief Minister of West Bengal, Ajoy Mukherjee, about her desire to send me to Bengal. Ajoy Mukherjee was cautious and had neither endorsed nor disagreed with the PM's choice. He had also not discussed the matter with his colleagues, as I learnt later. So, when my appointment was announced, the news was received with mixed feelings by the constituents of the United Front. Some were cautious; others were critical; but there was no active opposition when I took over as the Governor.

The United Front Government was going through a period of considerable stress and strain due to factions and dissensions. Dr P.C. Ghosh and his followers were getting alarmed at the lawlessness in the state and the industrial indiscipline was growing fast. Ajoy Mukherjee himself appeared to be quite worried and his counsels of moderation to the extremist sections of his ministry were going unheeded. Dr Ghosh desired to walk out of the ministry along with his followers sometime in August or September 1967, but he was advised by Ajoy Mukherjee not to do so. It was his view that if any walking out was to be done, both of them should do it together rather than separately.

What happened on 2 October 1967 has become part of contemporary history and well known to most people in the country. Ajoy Mukherjee had got so alarmed with the developments in the state that he had decided that on that day—Gandhiji's birthday—he would submit the resignation of his ministry and ask for a new ministry to be formed in collaboration with the Congress.

At that time, the strength of the Congress in the Assembly of 280 was 127 and with the followers of Ajoy Mukherjee and those of Dr Ghosh, they could have formed a comfortable majority. Ajoy Mukherjee had prepared a statement to be issued by him on the evening of 2 October after the submission of his resignation. In fact, copies of the statement had got into the hands of the leaders of the Congress and other parties.

Ajoy Mukherjee's resignation was, however, dependent on the reorganization of the Congress Party in Bengal on a mutually agreed basis. Gulzarilal Nanda, who had paid a visit to Calcutta,

on behalf of the Congress High Command, had suggested the formation of the ad hoc Pradesh Congress Committee after excluding some of the members of the old guard and thus giving a new look to the Congress Party in Bengal. This was felt necessary as there was strong resentment in Bengal against the old guard of the Congress, dominated by Atulya Ghosh. Even some leading members of the Congress were greatly dissatisfied with the old guard. They ascribed most of the ills of Bengal either to the apathy or to the incompetence of the members of the old guard. Even deliberate mismanagement was attributed to them.

Ajoy Mukherjee had agreed to walk out of the government only on the understanding that the recommendations of Nanda in regard to the WBPCC would be implemented. At the very last moment unexpected opposition developed.

The then President of the Congress, Kamaraj Nadar, was not available to give his blessing to the Nanda Plan of reorganization—or more correctly, he was not prepared to approve the plan. Some other members of the High Command also were actively opposed to it with the result that the Nanda Plan was not immediately approved and the matter dragged on.

This made Ajoy Mukherjee very suspicious of the intentions of the Congress in regard to himself. He had strong differences of opinion with Atulya Ghosh, the *de facto* boss of the Congress in West Bengal. He was apprehensive that without a change in the leadership of the Congress in Bengal, if he threw in his lot with the Congress, he may once again be thrown to the mercy of Atulya Ghosh.

Simultaneously, as the news of his proposed resignation leaked out, he was subjected to pressures from the United Front. The parties, which were openly advocating industrial unrest, gheraos, strikes, and so on, came together and hastened to reassure Ajoy Mukherjee that they would behave better in future and that the situation could only improve if he would give them enough time. Heavy pressure was also brought to bear on Ajoy Mukherjee by his younger brother, Biswanath Mukherjee, the leader of the CPI in Bengal, the latter's wife, Geeta Mukherjee, and an elder sister-in-law, whom Ajoy Mukherjee greatly respected. An intimate personal friend of his, Satish Samant, also intervened strongly against his decision to resign.

By the evening of 2 October, when Ajoy Mukherjee came to dis-



cuss his anticipated resignation with me at Raj Bhavan, he had already made up his mind not to resign and his visit to me was only a formality. However, we had a long discussion on the pros and cons of his resigning. He was adamant that he should wait longer to see what the Congress would ultimately do. He said he would wait till 5 October and then make up his mind. It is pertinent to mention here that Ajoy Mukherjee had come to Raj Bhavan accompanied by his sister-in-law and Satish Samant. Both of them were waiting in the car when Ajoy Mukherjee was talking to me.

About the same time, the WBPC was in session at Congress Bhavan, and waiting anxiously for the news of Ajoy Mukherjee's resignation. Of course, there could be no such news and the meeting ended in confusion sometime late in the night. Even though Ajoy Mukherjee fixed the date, 5 October, for his final decision on the question of resignation he had really made up his mind already not to resign. Subsequent developments confirmed this surmise and when on 5 October he did not resign, it was no surprise to me.

After this *volte face* by Ajoy Mukherjee, it became clear to Dr Ghosh and his followers that if they were to get rid of the United Front Ministry they would have to go at it alone and that they could not expect any cooperation from Ajoy Mukherjee and his group in this matter.

At the same time, some of Ajoy Mukherjee's followers, dissatisfied with his vacillation and with the steadily deteriorating conditions in the state, decided to join hands with Dr Ghosh. They were disillusioned with the United Front and hoped to bring about a change in the political scene by aligning themselves with Dr Ghosh and the Congress.

So, after waiting for about a month, in November Dr Ghosh, followed by a number of members of the Bangla Congress and some independents, walked out of the United Front. They claimed that with the Congress support they were in a majority. Hence, they communicated to me in writing that the ministry in power had lost its majority and that they should be called to form a government with Dr Ghosh as the leader. The leader of the Congress Party also sent to me a communication expressing his party's full support to Dr Ghosh and his group.

I showed these communications to Ajoy Mukherjee and suggested to him that since he had lost the majority he should resign and allow a new ministry to be formed. I also suggested the alter-

native that if he felt otherwise, he should summon the Assembly at an early date to obtain its verdict.

Initially it appeared to me that Ajoy Mukherjee was willing to resign as he reckoned that he had lost the support of the majority. But after he had consulted his colleagues, he was prevailed upon not to resign and to prevaricate. He told me that he would prefer to obtain the verdict of the Assembly. This was all right as far as I was concerned as the constitutional Governor. But I felt that the prevailing state of uncertainty should end soon. For this it was necessary to obtain the verdict of the Assembly as early as possible. Hence, I suggested that the Assembly should be summoned within a week or ten days at the most. But Ajoy Mukherjee after consultations with his colleagues suggested a date more than six weeks beyond the date I had suggested.

According to the constitution, the Assembly should be summoned, though it is done at the behest of the Governor, on the advice of his ministers. The Governor is expected to be guided by the advice of the Chief Minister and his ministers in respect of the date and time for the summoning of the Assembly. The constitution also has a provision that the Assembly must in any case be called within six months of the date on which it was last prorogued.

The date suggested by Ajoy Mukherjee was just six months from the date on which the Assembly was prorogued. It was, therefore, clear that he was in no hurry to call the Assembly. He was obviously desiring to take advantage of the provision of the constitution under which the Governor would not summon the Assembly except on the advice of his ministers or after the expiry of the six months from the date on which it was prorogued. He wanted to benefit unfairly by delaying the summoning of the Assembly to the maximum extent possible.

This, to my mind, was not in accord with the spirit of the constitution. When a government seemingly ceases to enjoy the confidence of the majority, it should, according to the proper parliamentary practice, either resign or seek the verdict of the Assembly as soon as possible. Unfair advantage of certain lacunae in the constitution should not be taken and the correct parliamentary practices must be adhered to under all circumstances.

Apart from the undesirability of a government continuing in office after it has ceased to enjoy the confidence of the majority,

there is also another danger with which we are now very familiar in Indian parliamentary life. The interregnum is utilized for the unsavoury practice of trying to win over members of the Assembly by coercion, bribery, and corruption of various types. Such unsavoury practices certainly do no good to the parliamentary life of the country.

The framers of the constitution could not have anticipated that its followers would deviate from well-known parliamentary practices by exploiting certain lacunae for deriving unfair advantages. If they could have foreseen this, I am sure, they would have made special provisions for the early calling of the Assembly or Parliament by the Governor or the President as the case may be. But in as much as there is no such provision in Bengal and in other parts of the country, this loophole in our constitution has been misused and exploited by governments and parties to the extent of almost killing the spirit of the constitution.

It is about time that the political parties came together to work out either a constitutional practice by consensus or by a change in the constitutional provision, so that in the event of any doubt in regard to the majority of the ruling party in Parliament (or the Assembly as the case may be), the President or the Governor should be enabled to summon Parliament (or the Assembly) within a certain specified period regardless of the advice of the Prime Minister (or the Chief Minister).

Within the scope of this provision should be a stipulation that this should be done by the President or the Governor only if a requisite percentage of the total membership of the House demands the settling of the issue of majority by calling Parliament or the Assembly. Such a safeguard is desirable to ensure that the President or the Governor does not use this power arbitrarily.

In Bengal, I was faced with a rather difficult situation. On the one hand, a ministry that had *prime facie* lost its majority was trying to drag on its existence by taking shelter behind a loophole in the constitution. It was also evident to me that the prolonged period was to be utilized for coercing, cajoling, and tempting legislators to change sides and to switch their loyalties which would have further vitiated the atmosphere.

Under these circumstances, the Governor, I thought, had only two alternatives. One was to allow matters to drift from bad to worse. And, the other was to exercise the discretionary power vested

by the constitution in him to withdraw the pleasure of the Governor from the ministry and to remove it from office on account of its having lost the confidence of the majority and failing to face the Assembly within a reasonable time.

In the then prevailing atmosphere in Bengal, it was obvious that any delay in the calling of the Assembly would be misused for purposes other than democratic. Practically a sort of hysteria was being built up among certain sections of the population against Dr Ghosh and his followers who had walked out of the United Front. It was pretty obvious that if the calling of the Assembly was delayed by another six weeks, there would be no clear verdict of the Assembly. Either the Opposition would be prevented from voting or if they came to vote, there would be very unseemly incidents, probably to the extent of the use of physical violence against the Opposition MLAs.

The question of the constitutional powers of the Governor was carefully examined in consultation with eminent jurists and experts in constitutional law. After much deliberation I finally decided to dismiss the United Front Government and to install a coalition ministry of the Congress and Dr Ghosh's followers.

This action as everyone knows now resulted in a big controversy. There were two definite views in regard to the constitutionality of my action. While the communist parties and their supporters in the United Front were vociferously expounding the view that my action was unconstitutional if not actual murder of democracy, there were others who held an entirely different view. The vociferous expression of a view however does not mean that it is by any means correct.

The question was whether what I did was constitutionally correct or not. This matter was taken to the Calcutta High Court by some people on behalf of the United Front. The High Court upheld my action and ruled that the Governor was competent under his discretionary powers to remove a ministry under the circumstances in which the United Front Ministry was dismissed.

A subsequent verdict of the Supreme Court in a matter relating to Punjab which was brought before it also indirectly supported the view of the Calcutta High Court. Up to now these views and verdicts have not been questioned. So it is of no use for anybody to claim that my action was unconstitutional. Further an action does not become unconstitutional just because a few interested persons

strongly feel otherwise. In any case, these very persons who were so vociferously shouting about the murder of the constitution did not have much respect for it. Times without number they had been openly expressing their determination to wreck the constitution from within by using democratic processes.

Whatever may be the rights or wrongs of the matter, and I think there were more rights than wrongs, the Ghosh government came into office. Soon after being sworn in, Dr Ghosh advised me to summon the Assembly and settle the matter about the majority support that he enjoyed. Accordingly, the Assembly was summoned within a week of the formation of the government. This was a welcome change from the dilatory tactics adopted by Ajoy Mukherjee.

However, when the Assembly was called, a fresh difficulty of greater magnitude arose. The Speaker of the Assembly, Bijoy Banerjee, seemed to be thoroughly dissatisfied with the manner in which the previous government was dismissed. This was understandable. Bijoy Banerjee belonged to the United Front before he became the Speaker and it was with the support of the United Front that he was elected the Speaker. As such he might have owed a certain amount of loyalty to the United Front though in his capacity as the Speaker he was expected to be strictly impartial according to correct parliamentary practice. He did not object to the Assembly being called because the right of the Governor to summon the Assembly could not be questioned.

But when the Assembly did actually meet, certain unexpected developments took place suddenly, one leading to the other with snowball effect. Firstly, when I went to address the Assembly, there were rowdy demonstrations. The Opposition, which consisted of the United Front, made it practically impossible for me to deliver my address. According to constitutional law and practice, in the event of disorder, if the Governor reads only a certain part of the address and leaves the remaining unread, it is considered sufficient to fulfil the statutory requirements. This is precisely what I did that day. I went into the House amidst much noise and disorder and read out certain important passages from the address and retired. As far as I was concerned, the constitutional requirements had been fulfilled.

But after my departure, the Speaker declared the government in power as illegal and adjourned the House without permitting any further transaction. He held that the Ghosh government had been

installed illegally by the Governor without ascertaining the verdict of the Assembly against the previous United Front Government. It was his contention that the Governor had no right to dismiss a ministry and that it should be removed only by a verdict of the Assembly. With this ruling he was actually usurping the rights of the Assembly. He was contradicting himself by deciding on a matter which, according to him, the Assembly was competent to decide. Much worse, he obstructed the Assembly which was in session from deciding whether the government installed by the Governor was legally constituted or not and whether it had the support of the majority or not. He arrogated to himself the right of giving a verdict which only the Assembly was competent to give. He adopted a practice which had no support in constitutional law.

The Governor at least had the verdicts of the law courts in his favour but there was no verdict in the Speaker's favour. After all, the Speaker is only a presiding officer whose function is to conduct the affairs of the Assembly. He has no right to decide whether a government which had been duly installed by the Governor was legal or not. That right was absolutely beyond his purview.

The Assembly was then adjourned under the Speaker's extraordinary ruling but the verdict of the Assembly on the government enjoying the support of the majority in the Assembly, which was the main purpose of its being called, could not be obtained. The Ghosh government, however, continued in office. The United Front launched a big campaign against it with demonstrations all over the place and resorted to lawlessness. These were dealt with firmly and courageously by the new government under very difficult and trying circumstances.

Soon after, the new government was faced with the problem of getting the budget passed. It could not continue to work without getting the budget passed by the Assembly. Even though the Governor could authorize the government to draw from the appropriation accounts for some time, the sanction of the Assembly for the budget and taxation measures was obligatory. So, the Assembly had to be summoned again for passing the budget and taxation measures and immediately a first-class constitutional crisis arose.

The Speaker allowed the Assembly to meet but as on the previous occasion he adjourned it again on the plea that the government in power was illegal. It was obvious that the Speaker would repeat

the tactics over and over again and would prevent the government from securing money sanctions from the Assembly without which it could not last long. The Governor had no power to remove him except on an adverse verdict against him by the Assembly. The Speaker's action was patently illegal but recourse to the court in this matter would have taken much time. And there is no provision in the constitution for removing a Speaker by anybody except by the Assembly for misdemeanour.

Such being the case, it became impossible for Dr Ghosh to run the government in a constitutional manner. Realizing the complexity of the situation, he tendered the resignation of his government. Even before Dr Ghosh tendered his resignation, another development took place which complicated the matter further. Certain disgruntled elements in Dr Ghosh's party had decided to walk out of the party at the crucial moment. They were led by Ashu Ghosh who had played a vital role in getting Dr Ghosh out of the United Front Government. Ashu Ghosh, it appears, had fondly looked forward for a ministerial post not only for himself but for one or two of his followers as reward in recognition of his services. Dr Ghosh, however, could not include him in his ministry because there were certain criminal cases pending against him just then. Therefore, Dr Ghosh, very rightly did not include him in his ministry as it would have been very wrong to have a person as a minister who was facing criminal prosecution till such time as his name was cleared. Meanwhile, Dr Ghosh's government went out of office for two reasons: first, it could not function in a constitutional manner without the money sanction from the Assembly and, second, its majority in the Assembly had also become doubtful with Ashu Ghosh and his supporters walking out.

After accepting the resignation of the Ghosh ministry, I was faced with two alternatives. First, to get another government formed by some combination or permutation from among the various groups and parties and, second, to have the President's rule imposed till such time as the political situation improved and thereafter have fresh elections.

To ascertain whether a government could be formed, Ajoy Mukherjee and P.C. Sen, the leaders of United Front and the Congress respectively, were invited to form a ministry. But both of them declined. Even if they had agreed it was clear that in the conditions prevailing only unstable governments could have been

formed. It was quite on the card that the legislators would have frequently switched loyalties for personal gains producing a most unhealthy political climate which could have only done harm to the state. In these circumstances the reluctance of both the parties to form a government was understandable. Moreover, the United Front wanted to cash in on their allegation that they had been removed from office in a high manner. If they had formed a government on the invitation of the Governor, then the grievance would have lapsed. Undivided as they were internally, they would have been only discredited.

With the political parties declining to form a government, there was no other alternative for me but to have the President's rule imposed, at least for some time. A recommendation was accordingly made to the President and it was accepted by him. With the imposition of the President's rule the Assembly was dissolved.

Initially the intention was that the President's rule should not last more than six months and then in the winter fresh elections should be held—possibly in October 1968. This, however, could not materialize as early in October there were devastating floods in north Bengal. Communications were disrupted and there was considerable loss of property. Under these conditions, it was impossible to hold elections in the northern parts of Bengal. In the southern parts of Bengal also, there were floods earlier in June. Even though the conditions had improved considerably by October, the situation even there was not ideal for holding elections. So, it was decided to postpone the elections to February 1969.

The President's rule lasted nearly a year. During this period the first priorities were to bring the law and order situation under control, to eradicate labour unrest, and to get the wheels of industry moving. Similar attention was required to be given to trade and commerce.

The next priority was food, a problem which had become more or less endemic in Bengal. For some decades the food situation had continued to be precarious. It was difficult for the common people to get sufficient food at reasonable prices. The blackmarketeers, hoarders, and smugglers were thriving by doing a roaring business, taking advantage of prevailing shortages.

During the few months' rule of the United Front, the price of rice touched the all-time high level of about Rs 5 per kilo. For the poor and for those with limited means it was becoming increasing-



ly difficult to buy food in adequate quantities at such high prices. Luckily, in 1968, India had sufficient quantities of wheat available in the country. The then Food Minister, Jagjivan Ram, was very sympathetic to our requirements. He promised us large quantities of wheat, but was unable to provide as much of rice as we required. Rice was available neither within the country nor in international markets. In spite of the acute shortage, the Food Minister was good enough to allocate more rice to Bengal than had been allocated in the previous year. It was fortunate that wheat as an alternative was available in adequate quantity.

Even though Bengal has been traditionally a rice-eating area, during the last two decades or so there had been a slow change in the food habits of the Bengalis. Wheat had come to be accepted as an article of food in Bengal. So, with abundant supplies of wheat, with maize and barley freely available in the market and with the limited supplies of rice, during the year of the President's rule we were able to control the situation so well that for the first time in 20 years the prices of foodgrains declined sharply. Every year during the lean period—between June and November—there was inevitable steep rise in the prices. But in the year of the President's rule rice was available everywhere at prices ranging between Re 1 to Rs 1.50 against Rs 4 to Rs 5 of the previous year.

We did not resort to any magic nor did we perform any miracle. All that we did was to make judicious use of the available supplies. In order to curb questionable practices, we pumped food supplies in areas where there was genuine shortage. Official meetings were held every day to watch the movement of prices in various areas. The then Chief Secretary of West Bengal worked indefatigably and proved to be a most efficient Food Secretary. Supplies were diverted to the scarcity pockets as soon as shortages were noticed. In a very short time confidence about food supplies being sufficient came to be restored amongst the people. Most of the price rises are caused more through scare than through actual scarcity. Once the people become confident that food is available and at a reasonable price, the scare disappears. Blackmarketeers and hoarders cannot flourish in such circumstances.

Simultaneously, a number of schemes were launched to augment food production in the state. It required about seven million tonnes, but produced only 4.8 million tonnes, leaving a gap of 2.2 million tonnes to be filled. As everybody knows, the soil of Bengal is very

rich for food production. But unfortunately the previous governments in their anxiety to go in for rapid industrial development neglected agriculture and did not take advantage of the rich soil of Bengal to increase food production. With so many rivers and rivulets in Bengal and with so much water above ground and underground, agriculture with assured irrigation is the lowest in West Bengal. Most people are happy with one crop under rainfed conditions. Hardly any attempts had been made to have two or three crops a year by better use of the rich soil through assured irrigation.

Schemes to increase the cultivated area under irrigation were expedited by speeding up the irrigation projects on hand. More tube-wells were commissioned and those lying unenergized were energized. Cultivators were encouraged to go in for at least two crops a year. High-yielding varieties of seeds and fertilizers were made available for them. To begin with we concentrated on 800,000 acres of land for which all the requisite inputs were provided. In another 200,000 acres wheat production was introduced as an additional crop after the rice harvest. The results were quite heartening in spite of the devastating floods in the southern and northern parts of Bengal. Even in the flooded areas, through energetic action, large areas of land were reclaimed for replanting, thus avoiding total loss of production.

The net result was that with the crop of November 1968, we got an estimated yield of six million tonnes as against 4.8 million tonnes of the previous years. It also comforted us to know that another four to five hundred thousand tonnes of wheat out of the second crop was on the field waiting to be harvested. Thus, within a year, the food production in Bengal was improved considerably. In 1969, our programme was to have two million acres of land under high-yielding varieties. This, however, was to be the task of the elected government which was expected to come into office in February 1969.

The United Front Government, which followed the President's rule, however did not follow up this programme that had the potential of solving the food problem of West Bengal. Once when I met Jyoti Basu accidentally after I had left Bengal, he informed me that this was the only programme of mine which his government was implementing. This might have been their intention but the United Front was so much lost in its policy of inconsistencies that it could not have either the time or the drive and energy for

such beneficent activities. This was a real pity for I have no doubt that if the programme had been followed vigorously, Bengal could have become self-sufficient in food by 1970 or at the most by 1971.

The President's rule ended in February 1969, after the elections. As was expected during the President's rule the political parties devoted all their attention and energy to the preparations for the elections. The United Front went about the task in a methodical manner with the result that it did even better than in the previous elections. In 1967, the United Front was not really united in as much as it did not put up candidates unitedly with the result that there was considerable amount of cross-voting in their ranks. But in 1969, the United Front was truly united. The candidates it put up were the candidates of the entire United Front and not of the constituent parties. And, all the votes of the United Front went to the candidates put up by it regardless of his being a Marxist, a communist, a member of the Bangla Congress, or of the Forward Bloc, SSP, RSP, or SUC.

In contrast, the other parties, including the Congress, remained as disunited as before. Riven by dissensions, they presented a sorry spectacle. They did not heed the repeated warnings of their well-wishers that their votes would get spilt. In this matter, the Congress was the greatest defaulter. Not only did it fail to assume leadership of a united opposition to the United Front, it continued to be disunited. The prevalent feeling among the populace was that unless the Congress Party put up a new face with fresh and vigorous young leadership, it could not be trusted to solve the problems of Bengal. The electorate was not prepared to vote the old Congress back into power, after having backed it for over 20 years, unless it was assured of a new deal.

I had occasions to talk to various sections of the public in Bengal in this regard and there was more or less unanimity that the old guard of the Congress could not be trusted any more. At the same time there were enough indications that if the Congress was only willing to change its outlook and to look into the problems of Bengal afresh, the people would vote it into power in the interest of the state. The United Front, during the ten months of its rule, had succeeded in bringing about considerable chaos and confusion and the people were naturally not happy with it. Unfortunately, the Congress failed miserably to take advantage of this feeling of the people or to see the writing on the wall. Smugly

confident, it went on assuring the High Command that the Congress would be returned at the hustings without making any effort to win the confidence of the electorate.

The empty claims of the old guard of the Congress were bolstered up by the meetings addressed by the Prime Minister and other Congress leaders during the electioneering period. It gave to most of the Congress leaders the feeling that the tide had turned in their favour and that the claims of the old guard that the Congress could go at it alone without any alliances or changes were substantially correct.

The dispassionate observers, however, felt differently. They were almost unanimous in their view that unless the Congress brought about changes there were no possibility of its winning a majority. But there was a hope that the Congress may emerge as the largest single group in the Assembly. Thereafter there was a possibility that it might be able to form a government by roping in other groups.

Ultimately, when the elections were over and the results were made known, there was a jolt in store for everybody. As a group, the Congress came only as a very poor second with just 55 seats in an Assembly of 280. In contrast, the United Front secured over 200 seats and the largest single group in it was the CPI(M) with nearly 80 members. There was no splitting of its votes. The votes went to their nominees in a block. As against that, the Congress, the Jana Sangh, the Lok Dal, the PSP, and other groups were disunited. In the case of the Congress, several of its members worked against their own party candidates because of factionalism and petty jealousies.

It must also be stated that the United Front, organizationally, was much better than the Congress. During the election campaign, every individual voter was approached. The meetings were held in every nook and corner of the state. Great care was taken to ensure that the names of their supporters were in the electoral rolls. The electoral machinery, in short, worked in an orderly manner.

It is to be remembered that the main plank of the Congress campaign was in itself wrong. The Congress came forward with no programme. It made no promises. It simply went about shouting that the United Front meant chaos and that the Congress meant stability. The United Front, in contrast, made 32 promises, though some of them were wild, and put out a positive programme. It

managed to win the sympathy of the working class, the unemployed, and the middle class. The electorate was faced with the choice of predicted chaos followed up by prospects of improved living standards or just stability as promised by the Congress. Even though the electorate was aware that the United Front in its regime had made great mistakes, it decided to give it a second chance to enable it to carry out its impressive programme.

As far as I was concerned, long before elections, in October 1968, I had indicated to the central government that regardless of the results of the elections, I would like to move over from Beñgal. I had two reasons: first, after a prolonged period of the President's rule, it would have been somewhat embarrassing for me to function as a constitutional Governor and second, life as a Governor after what I had been through would have been insipid. I was quite convinced that one of the two parties would be back with an absolute majority which would mean a stable government. Once a stable government is established, the Governor's role becomes limited.

So, after the elections, when the new government was installed, I was expecting news about my new assignment. But then the position was complicated by the United Front demanding my recall. This peremptory demand no government at the Centre could have accepted. For, if Governors were to be recalled or removed at the behest of the state governments, instead of being the representatives of the President with the responsibility of looking after the requirements of the constitution, they would become mere tools in the hands of the political parties of the states. The purposes for which the post of the Governor was created would thus be nullified.

By demanding my recall, the United Front Government compelled the central government to prolong my stay in Bengal. The Prime Minister conveyed to the United Front Government that I had already expressed the desire to leave Bengal and that my request was being considered by the central government. It was also made clear in emphatic terms that I could not be recalled peremptorily. Such a demand could not be conceded under any circumstances. Nevertheless I continued to stay in Bengal and in circumstances which were, to say the least, difficult.

A piquant situation emerged when the joint session of the Assembly and the Council had to be addressed by the Governor as provided for in the constitution. Firstly, the United Front Government insisted that the joint session should not be addressed by me

as I was responsible for its removal in 1967. Secondly, the address, drafted by the United Front Government, contained references condemnatory of the role played by me and the central government. And, they were fully aware that these references would not be acceptable to me.

I made it known clearly to Ajoy Mukherjee, who was again elected the Chief Minister, that I would not accept the condemnatory remarks. The ministry was in a quandary because it wanted the offending passages to be read out. My own attitude was simple and clear: Parliamentary government, with all its practices and conventions, has been in existence for centuries. But never in its history has any head of the government been faced with the problem of having to read self-condemnatory material. To my mind, therefore, neither according to the constitution nor according to parliamentary practices was I obliged to read all that the United Front Government had put in the address. However, I consulted eminent lawyers before deciding not to read the incriminating passages. They were also of the view that I could not be compelled to read them.

The date of the joint session was fixed. And I was threatened that if I did not read the offending passages I would be gheraoed in the Assembly and that I would not be allowed to leave the premises till I had read them. Probably as a final try-out, Jyoti Basu came to see me as a friend to advise me against addressing the joint session. On my expressing my determination to do my duty and face the consequences he remarked that I was making things difficult for everybody. Anyway, wiser counsel prevailed at the last moment. They realized the impropriety, unconstitutionality, and futility of such a move. So they decided not to do anything rash. It was brinkmanship of a high order.

I went to the Assembly at the appointed time. The United Front had posted a large number of their followers and volunteers to manage the crowds. The police was conspicuous by its absence. When I entered the Assembly Hall, the members of the United Front did not stand up as a mark of protest. The other members, of course, stood up according to the normal practice. I read the address omitting the incriminating passages. Just as I was skipping over the incriminating passages, Ajoy Mukherjee stood up and reminded me that I had omitted some passages. I told him that earlier I had informed him that I would not be reading those passages. On that

count, he said that he would like to record a protest. Probably the protest was recorded by the Speaker in the minutes of the Assembly. But I have no knowledge of it. For a little while there was an uproar in the House but it died down on the appeals of Ajoy Mukherjee and the Minister for Parliamentary Affairs, Jiten Chakravarty.

As soon as I finished reading the address I left the Hall. There were loud protests. Slogans rent the air. I ignored them and calmly entered my car. Thus the whole drama ended.

After the joint session, I pressed the central government again to shift me from Bengal. I was serving no useful purpose there owing to the estranged relations between me and the government. In those circumstances there was no point in my continuing there. The high honour of the post of Governor had been maintained. I had not been recalled on the date the United Front had demanded my recall. Ultimately the Centre agreed to my handing over the charge of my office to the Chief Justice as an interim measure.

I left Calcutta on 29 March 1969. The ministers of the United Front Government were, as expected, absent from the railway station at the time of my departure. Most of the officials, industrialists, and public men too were absent, presumably because of the fear of offending the ministry in power. The exception were personal friends such as Sir Biren Mukherji, Bhaskar Mitter, C.L. Bhajoria, Dilip Bose, R. Gupta, M.M. Basu, and others. All the same, much to my surprise, Howrah Station was jam-packed with people—ordinary people who had come to see me off. They were shouting slogans. But these slogans were pleasant ones: “We have come to see you off in spite of the United Front,” “We are not forgetful of what you did for us,” “We are not ungrateful,” etc.

I was touched by the warmth of this popular send-off. I was happy that I decided to leave by train and not by plane even though I was warned by the state government that violence may break out if I travelled by train. But there was no violence either at Howrah or anywhere else along the route. On the other hand, practically at every station there were large crowds to meet me and I had to keep awake to acknowledge the people’s greetings till the train had crossed the borders of Bengal. This popular and affectionate send-off convinced me that whatever the United Front

might claim, the results of the elections were not in protest against me as an individual or as the Governor.

During the short interregnum between my governorship of West Bengal and of Mysore (now Karnataka) I had some time to reflect on the role of Governors under our constitution. And I would like to share my views with the reader.

The role of a Governor under our constitution is very aptly summarized in the Governor's oath of office reading as follows:

I . . . do swear in the name of God/solemnly affirm that I will faithfully execute the office of Governor (or discharge the functions of the Governor) . . . and will to the best of my ability preserve, protect and defend the Constitution and the Law and that I shall devote myself to the service and well being of the people . . . .

Under this oath a Governor is required to faithfully carry out his functions, to devote himself to the service and well-being of the people of the state entrusted to his charge, and to the best of his ability to preserve, protect, and defend the constitution and the law.

Normally in the discharge of his functions he has a Council of Ministers to aid and advise him and he is expected, except in so far as he is by or under the constitution required to exercise his functions or any of them in his discretion, to accept the advice of his ministers. Article 163(2), however, provides that if a question arises whether any matter is or is not a matter in respect of which a Governor is by or under the constitution required to act in his discretion, his decision shall be final and the validity of anything done by him shall not be called in question on the ground that he ought or ought not to have acted in his discretion.

It is clear that the framers of the constitution whilst they normally expected the Governor, in accordance with the spirit of democratic practices, to act according to the advice of his ministers, did envisage situations under which, to enable him to be true to his oath of office, he would be required to exercise his discretion regardless of the advice of the ministers.

In the early stages of independence when the entire country, at



the Centre as well in the states, was ruled by a single party with a comfortable majority acting in accordance with the traditions of parliamentary democracy, the office of the Governor did not come into much prominence. An erroneous impression got created that this office was purely ornamental and hence could be utilized as a post of patronage for the benefit of old and infirm politicians, party men, and others. The only matter in which a Governor could and did exercise discretion was in the matter of calling in the leader of the majority party after an election to form the government. In this matter he could obviously not seek the advice of any minister. Here also, his discretion was limited as the leader of the majority party, when the majority was clear, was obviously the person to be invited to form a ministry.

It was only in 1967 when the majority of the Congress Party at the Centre as well as in the states received a set-back—in some states numerous parties put in their appearance; in some states no clear majority in favour of any single party emerged and consequently two or more parties came together to form governments—that the true role of a Governor came to the surface. The situation was further complicated by the legislators changing sides repeatedly either through lure of office or through other temptations, making unstable conditions more unstable. In such conditions not only the exercise of discretion by a Governor to invite the leader of a party to form the government became more complicated but other factors also came in for his consideration and exercise of discretion.

If a government becomes unstable or loses majority through defections or otherwise what is a Governor to do to ensure that only a government enjoying majority support remains in power? Under the constitution in the matter of summoning of the Legislature a Governor acts on the advice of his ministers. Under Article 174(1) not more than six months shall intervene between the last sitting of the Legislature in one session and the date appointed for the first sitting in the next session.

If a Chief Minister taking advantage of this provision in the constitution attempts to prolong the life of his ministry, seemingly even after losing majority support, what should the Governor do in the interests of the spirit of the constitution and the traditions of parliamentary democracy? Should he be a helpless spectator of the violation of democratic practices or should he, after giving

sufficient time to the Chief Minister to advise him to call the legislature, dismiss the ministry and call the leader of the new majority to form the government? While raising these questions it must be remembered that normally the matter of a government enjoying majority support should be settled on the floor of the House and not anywhere else.

A Governor who tries to settle this ticklish question at his discretion takes the great risk of getting involved in party politics, which he normally should not. He should, therefore, act in his discretion in this matter only in extreme circumstances and only in the true interests of the constitution and democratic practices. It would really be desirable to get this lacuna in the constitution remedied. Instead of subjecting a Governor to the necessity of exercising his discretion in this matter, he should under certain circumstances be enabled to summon the Legislature at his discretion, regardless of the advice of the Chief Minister, to settle the question of majority support.

As stated earlier, a Governor in normal times, with a ministry firmly in saddle, has nothing more than routine functions to discharge. If, however, he has considerable experience of men and matters he can be of great help and assistance to his ministers by giving *them* advice and guidance.

A Governor has been given a positive role and place in the Constitution of India. He is a creature of the constitution and the general belief that he is a representative of the President or the Centre in the state is an erroneous one. In fact, it is because of this erroneous belief, and even some Governors acting under this belief, that most difficulties in regard to the role of Governors have arisen recently. The authorities in the Centre consider them to be subservient to their orders and the ministries in the states distrust them as agents of the President or the Centre.

In this context, the exercise of great care and thought in the selection of people for the post of Governor is very important. Times have gone when any old decrepit and doddering person could be made a Governor. A Governor should be sagacious and wide-experienced to discharge effectively his onerous and intricate functions in the changing times.

In normal times we find that a Governor's functions mainly relate to: (i) selection of the Chief Minister; (ii) performing his statutory duties and functions as Head of a state; (iii) establishing such

relations with the ministry so as to be able to advise and guide it in its tasks; and (iv) generally acting as the bridge between the state and the Centre. The uncertain and tricky period comes when the ministry in the state becomes unstable. At this juncture he becomes the true custodian of the constitution and must act in the true spirit of the constitution and parliamentary democratic practices. It is a difficult task but it is to perform only such tasks that people are raised to such exalted positions.

A stage comes when a Governor finds that a situation has arisen under which the government cannot be carried on in accordance with the provisions of the constitution. This position can arise in either of the two conditions: (a) The party position in the Legislature becomes so fluid that no stable government can be formed; or (b) administrative conditions in a state deteriorate to such an extent that the ministry is unable to control them resulting in the government not being carried on in accordance with the provisions of the constitution.

Article 356 of the constitution provides for this contingency. That the situation for action under the Article has arisen would be solely for a Governor to decide and he cannot be advised in this matter either by his ministers or by the Centre. Once, however, he has made up his mind he is required to report to the President on the situation along with his recommendations on the action to be taken. The President on receipt of his report can either agree with him or take all or any of the following actions by a proclamation:

(a) Assume to himself all or any of the functions of the government and all or any of the powers vested in or exercisable by the Governor or anybody or authority in the state other than the Legislature.

(b) Declare that the powers of the Legislature shall be exercisable by or under the authority of Parliament.

(c) Make such incidental and consequential provisions which appear to the President to be necessary or desirable for giving effect to the objects of the proclamation including provisions for suspending in whole or in part the operation of any provisions of the constitution relating to any body or authority in the state.

**When the President takes over the administration of a state under**

Article 356, the ministry ceases to function and the Governor is required to administer the state on behalf of the President. He, in fact, becomes the Governor and the ministry rolled into one and his work, functions, and duties increase considerably. For legislative purposes, during President's rule, recourse has to be taken either to the issue of ordinances by the President or legislation through Parliament. All proposals involving legislation are sent to the central government which either after consulting the Consultative Committee of the state or otherwise takes appropriate action.

A Governor has a specific place in the constitution. He is neither expected to be an agent of the President nor a subordinate of the central government. Does that situation change during President's rule? Is a Governor during President's rule expected to subordinate himself to the ministries at the Centre and take instructions from them in important matters? During President's rule the central government is answerable to Parliament for the government of a state. But that is not sufficient reason for a Governor to lose his constitutional status and become subservient to the ministries at the Centre? In matters requiring legislation the position is clear. Such proposals have to be sent to the Centre for appropriate action. In day-to-day administration, however, a Governor should be free to act independently. If for all important administrative acts central directions and approval were necessary, an impossible situation involving fatal delays might develop, besides embarrassing the Governor constitutionally. In practice, however, with goodwill on both sides, no difficulty need arise and the work should proceed smoothly without any friction or irritation on either side.

Another important matter is that of safeguarding the interests of the state during President's rule. When a ministry is in office, it is the guardian of the interests of the state vis-a-vis the Centre and other states. During President's rule, there is no ministry. What then is the duty of a Governor when he is not only Head of a state but also is the *de facto* ministry? If he feels that in some matters the state is being unfairly treated, should he keep quiet on the plea that ultimately it is really the President's concern or should he be satisfied only by bringing matters to the notice of the President? Here again the oath of office of the Governor comes into operation. According to the oath a Governor undertakes "to devote himself to the service and well being of the people entrusted

to his charge to the best of his ability." In the face of this oath a Governor worth his salt cannot and should not keep quiet if he genuinely feels that the interests of the state entrusted to his charge are being jeopardized. It would not be enough to shift his responsibility by merely drawing the attention of the President to the matter. He has a constitutional duty, particularly in the absence of a ministry, to discharge and, if need be, he must speak out even at the risk of incurring the displeasure of the powers that be at the Centre.

We are living through dynamic times. The constitution-makers made some provisions in the constitution for a Governor to discharge his functions, but in parliamentary democracy the written word is not the last word. The written word is supplemented by traditions and conventions which get established in the process of time. The process of time is in action in the case of our constitution and as time goes certain traditions, conventions, and practices emerge. In evolving these practices and conventions Governors will have a big role to play and I do hope that they would have the courage and sagacity to play this role in the service of the people and parliamentary democracy without fear or favour.

## 11. Witnessing Centre-State Politics

With the return of the United Front to power in West Bengal, my staying on in that state became embarrassing to everybody including myself. When I dismissed the United Front Government it amounted to a direct confrontation with the Front. If I had stayed on, there would have been hardly any communication between the new ministers and myself, a situation which would have been administratively as well as politically undesirable. Further, I had the feeling that the new thinking at the Centre was to mollify the United Front and, if possible, to come to an understanding with it. This could not have been possible if I had stayed on because my stand was that the United Front was anti-national and I could therefore have no compromise with it.

To resolve the tangle I offered either to resign or to take leave so that a new man could take my place much, I felt, to the relief of the Centre. Some people in the Centre might have been happy to see me resign but after what had transpired in West Bengal, it would have been an unpopular move. So I was asked to take leave for four months to enable the government to post me elsewhere during that period and I acted accordingly.

The four months' period of leave soon expired but there were no signs of another posting as Governor. In fact, it appeared that there was marked reluctance to do so. The first inkling of this I got when I met the Prime Minister soon after my return from Calcutta. She disposed of all that I did in Calcutta by a short sentence, "I must say you did very well under extremely difficult circumstances." It was said casually without any warmth or feeling. The leftist lobby which opposed my policies and actions in

West Bengal was gaining strength with the powers that be at the Centre.

Soon after came the announcement of the name of my successor in Bengal. It was obvious that he was chosen with the definite aim of rapprochement with the United Front. I was offered the High Commissionership in London in his place which post I declined.

After the expiry of my leave suggestions were made to extend it. This I considered to be highly undignified. There are no rules for leave to Governors nor have they any leave entitlement. Therefore, for a Governor to be on leave for an indefinite period, simply awaiting further posting, did not fit in with the dignity of the post. My leave salary was being charged to the West Bengal government which, I felt, was unfair. So I resigned and the resignation was accepted, perhaps with some sense of relief.

A couple of months after my resignation, I was sounded for appointment as the Governor of Mysore to which offer I conveyed my agreement. Many hurdles, however, had to be crossed before it materialized. A hoodoo had somehow got attached to my name. I went to Punjab as the Governor and my advent was followed by the President's rule in that state. The happenings in West Bengal, dismissal of the ministry and the imposition of the President's rule, were still fresh in the minds of everybody and the then Chief Minister of Mysore was naturally apprehensive about having me as the Governor of his state. Somehow they felt that I was "Indira Gandhi's man" and they being in the Nijalingappa group were not enthusiastic about me. Their misgivings were, however, resolved and a formal announcement of my appointment as the Governor of Mysore was duly made.

As stated earlier, I had already resigned from my post as the Governor of West Bengal and hence my appointment as the Governor of Mysore was in fact a fresh appointment which normally should have run for five years. But this was not to be so. Along with the communication from the President appointing me as the Governor of Mysore, I received another communication from his Secretary informing me that whilst the normal tenure was five years my appointment was to be treated as a continuation of my previous term. The remaining period of that term was two years and three months and hence the President desired me to resign after the expiry of that period. The implications were obvious.

The government was discharging an unwelcome obligation to me and was not prepared to do more than due to me. I could have embarrassed the government at that stage by making a fuss or by leaking out the information. But civil servants are not expected to do such things. So that was that. The situation was accepted, if for nothing else, to frustrate my detractors.

In the context of the circumstances of my appointment, my intention was not to stay too long in Mysore unless I found the work agreeable and interesting. Having been used to a very active life, there was no point in vegetating as a mere constitutional Governor. I had, however, soon to give up any such ideas. In the ministry, headed by a very young and energetic Chief Minister, Veerendra Patil, ably assisted by his Finance Minister, Ramakrishna Hegde, I found a young team keen to work for the good of the people and willing to learn from experience.

Very soon rapport was established with the ministry and as the work became interesting, the idea of leaving Mysore before my term receded. I helped the state in various ways in its development programmes—industrial, economic, and agricultural—with advice, guidance and assistance. The idyll, however, did not last long. The political horizon was becoming clouded and the ministry inevitably got involved in the storm which was gathering in the country. Being progressively inclined they were attracted towards the Indira section of the Congress, but they found it very difficult to break away from Nijalingappa, their political father. They went on vacillating between their inclinations and loyalty when suddenly Indira Gandhi dissolved Parliament and announced fresh elections. The cleavage was final and Veerendra Patil and his colleagues remained stranded on the Congress (O) platform. They got another chance to break away when the Congress (O) made a pact with the Jana Sangh and other parties but even that chance was not availed of.

Meantime, signs of cracking of the structure of the ministry came to the surface. Two of the senior ministers, Mohammed Ali and Puttaswamy, and one junior minister, Pawar, resigned to join the Congress (I) and others showed signs of following their example. The results of the election of MPs, when they came, were a total surprise. Whilst it was expected that the majority of the members elected will be from the Congress (O) camp, actually the Congress (I) made a clean sweep by winning all the



25 seats and that too by comfortable majorities. The direction of the wind was clear. The people had decided overwhelmingly in favour of Indira Gandhi.

Immediately total demoralization set in the Congress (O) camp and the ministry in Mysore which only a few days back appeared to be very stable started tottering. Veerendra Patil and his colleagues liked to go over to the Congress (I) at this stage, but the crucial moment had passed and they were no longer welcome. Defections started in the party and very soon it became obvious that the ministry was in danger of collapsing. As is usual in such times, the game of defections and counter-defections started and a situation developed under which neither the ministry nor the opposition which consisted mainly of Congress (I) MLAs could be sure of a majority. Having failed to establish a stable majority Veerendra Patil decided to resign and, accordingly, sent his letter of resignation to me. I immediately contacted the leader of the main opposition party, Congress (I), but he also expressed his inability to form a government. In fact he would have liked to form a government but was advised against it by his High Command which very rightly refused to place much trust in defectors. Seeing no prospects of forming a stable government I reported to the President, recommending that the Assembly be dissolved and the state be taken under the President's rule till such time as fresh elections could take place.

So again, for the third time, I was landed with the President's rule in a state on my hands. In Mysore it was totally unexpected as when I joined, the ministry had a very comfortable majority and nobody could have even dreamt that within a year the majority will evaporate. But this is what happened. The pace of political developments in the country during the past two years had been extremely rapid and the entire country was being swept with the "Indira wave." She had given a new hope to the masses and it was evident that they had decided to place her firmly in the saddle to give her a chance to implement her promises.

I had, as stated earlier, established very good relations with the outgoing ministry, particularly with the Chief Minister, Veerendra Patil. I was sorry to see them go but this is part of the political game. The newly elected MPs and MLAs of the Congress (I) were aware of my liking for Veerendra Patil and Ramakrishna Hegde and hence started immediately looking at everything I did with a jaundi-

ced eye. They expected me to totally ignore the members of the departed Ministry and, if possible, also to persecute them and to show them up for alleged misgovernment in the past. I did not agree with them as I considered this to be a total negation of the spirit and principles of President's rule.

I was not a new hand at administering the President's rule as I had already experienced it in Punjab and West Bengal. In both these states there were many political parties but they were not interested in individuals or political persecution. They expected the President's rule to be non-partisan, as a caretaker pending the coming in of a new ministry. In Punjab and West Bengal this position was understood by the political parties and I had no trouble.

But in Mysore where democratic working was comparatively in its infancy, they had different ideas and immediately trouble started. In addition to political immaturity, there was intense caste and creed consciousness. The important communities amongst Hindus are Lingayats, Vokkaligas, Harijans, and Brahmins. Even Harijans are divided into "Right-hand" and "Left-hand" Harijans, a division I had never encountered before.

Soon after the advent of the President's rule, some appointments had to be made to some committees. The various departments put up proposals which were scrutinized for the fitness of individuals. Some of them even belonged to the defeated Congress (O) party. It never struck me that the appointment to committees of some Congress (O) people will lay me open to a charge of partisanship for the Congress (O). Nor did I examine these cases from caste and creed angle. I thought a mixture of all political parties with due representation of minority interests would be good for membership of committees. These committees were generally advisory committees with no executive functions and a broad cross-section of public opinion on them would have been an advantage. This practice was followed by me in Punjab and West Bengal and nobody had objected. But in Mysore I was taken aback by the vehemence of the objection of the members of the Congress (I), particularly of the MPs. I was openly accused of being partisan to the Congress (O) and deputations and representations were made against me to the Prime Minister and the President. There were even demands for my recall and replacement by some other person. There was another background also to this outcry against me. My experience in Punjab and West Bengal was that the politicians seldom came to me for

personal or individual cases. They came mainly to discuss the problems of people in their respective areas and it was, therefore, easy to deal with such impersonal matters.

In Mysore it was the reverse. The politicians were interested only in personal and individual cases and seldom mentioned the problems of the people. On top of that, being elected by the people, they more or less demanded compliance of their requests. Once an MP came to see me on an urgent mission, accompanied by a lawyer, with the request that a criminal case which was pending before a law court for defalcation of monies of a trust be withdrawn. When I told him that it was impossible, he was quite incensed and told me that I did not realize that he was an MP, elected by the people. Another MP sought an urgent interview with me. At that time his area was suffering from acute drought conditions. I expected that he would discuss the relief arrangements with me. But that was not so. He brought out a case of transfer of a minor official and did not utter a word about the drought!

It is my habit to get completely involved in anything that I do. And when what I am doing is exciting in as much as it affects the people and I can see the visible results of my efforts the involvement is more intense. The eleven months of the President's rule in Mysore passed rapidly. The response of the officials and the people alike was admirable. On an average two to three hundred letters were received by me personally every day from the people. These included complaints and requests of all kinds—complaints against officials and individuals and requests of all kinds including requests from indigent students for financial assistance and retired officials regarding delay in the receipt of their pension, provident fund, etc. Throughout my career as a civil servant, it has been my practice to read all letters addressed to me, by name, myself and then to initiate the necessary action. A special section in the Governor's Secretariat was set up for follow-up action on these letters and no official was allowed peace till action ordered had been completed. This procedure had the dual advantage of keeping me in personal touch with the people, to get a feel of what was happening in the state, and also to keep the officials on their toes.

My personal involvement with Mysore was, however, soon to involve me in a clash which, it appears, I will take some time to live down. Like many other states in India Mysore had worked up a huge overdraft account with the Reserve Bank. The central

government very naturally desired to stop this financial indiscipline and to have the overdraft cleared as soon as possible. For this purpose, the then Minister for Planning, C. Subramaniam, initiated discussions with the state governments, with which the Ministry of Finance also was associated. Such discussions took place with the Mysore government also.

In this context it will be useful to give the background of the circumstances under which the Mysore state ran into an overdraft. The first trouble started with the Finance Commission. In reckoning the requirements of the Mysore state, the Fourth Finance Commission had failed to take into account certain commitments of the Mysore state such as its expenditure of giving additional relief to the state government servants and non-plan expenditure such as expenditure on the Cauvery Water Schemes. It appeared that the Finance Commission had been unduly influenced by the seeming affluence of Mysore and its ability to raise additional resources and had, therefore, denied to it even what was due to it. In the event, states which had made no efforts whatsoever to raise additional resources had been given a better deal than Mysore which had more than fulfilled its allotted task of raising additional resources.

Mysore had represented to the Centre in this regard and, as the representation had been considered to be justified, the state was promised a special accommodation of Rs 105 crores (Rs 45 crores plan and Rs 60 crores non-plan) for the fourth five-year plan period. The Ministry of Finance had repeatedly reassured the state government about this special accommodation and no less a person than the Prime Minister, in one of her speeches at the Mysore Chamber of Commerce, had reiterated the central government's resolve to afford this special accommodation to the state. Therefore, the talks with the Planning Commission were held keeping in view the promised special accommodation.

Mysore's plea was that the Finance Commission award had created a situation under which if the state was to go forward with its normal development programme it was left with no option but to work with an overdraft. The state had raised more than the amount of resources that the Planning Commission had asked it to raise and it strongly felt that the Centre in the circumstances had an obligation to abide by its promise to provide the special accommodation of Rs 105 crores.

I told the Planning Minister and the Minister for Finance that whilst I was anxious to bring the Mysore state within the discipline of finance desired by the Centre, the state should not be given an impossible task. It was obvious that no government in Mysore could either put the clock back in development or to stop prestigious works such as the Cauvery project. As such I promised that if the special accommodation which had been announced by no less a person than the Prime Minister was given, the state government would wipe out the overdraft within the fourth plan period even if it had to raise further resources to enable it to do so. The Planning Minister at a meeting appreciated this position and stated that the special accommodation as promised will be provided.

Working on this understanding, immediately after return to Bangalore, I set about the task of raising further resources to fulfil my promise to the Planning Minister. Severe cuts on expenditure were imposed and proposals were sent to the Ministry of Finance for the levying of fresh taxes. It must be realized that in the President's rule such levies can be imposed only with the approval of the central government. The Finance Ministry sat on this proposal and did not approve them at all during the President's rule. Had the Ministry been serious about the financial discipline, we would have thought that it would welcome efforts to clear the overdraft and abide by its undertakings. But this was not to be and much to my surprise and to the state's consternation, I received a letter from the Minister of Finance informing me that the Centre would provide special accommodation of Rs 45 crores only and was unable to agree to the accommodation of another Rs 60 crores which had been indicated over the previous three years. At the same time we were expected to clear the overdraft within the period of the fourth five-year plan. This was clearly an impossible proposition. The overdraft without the full accommodation could be cleared only by stopping all development work in the state causing incalculable damage to its progress. This no government could have agreed to. It was all the more impracticable and impolitic during the President's rule. The entire agreement to clear the overdraft was based on the receipt of the special accommodation and with that prop gone, the arrangement became impracticable and inoperative.

Somehow the news that the Finance Minister had not agreed to

the full accommodation being given to Mysore leaked out. I was at that time busy packing up for leaving Mysore on the termination of my tenure. A lot of things had to be attended to before I left and consequently I had to work under tremendous pressure. The press met me at Raj Bhawan and inquired about this matter. I was, as stated before, somewhat distressed about it as I had tried to settle this vexing problem sincerely. So I gave vent to my feelings and stated that the arrangement of clearance of the overdraft which was based on the receipt of the special accommodation could in the circumstances not operate as it would be impossible for the state to repay that huge amount without the accommodation. I perhaps stated the case somewhat firmly but there was never any statement to deny the state's responsibility for repayment or any attempt for confrontation with the Centre. The press, however, overplayed my statement and an impression was created in Delhi that my statement amounted to defiance of the Centre. I am told that one senior officer, very close to the Prime Minister, described it as a "rebellion."

Here the question arises as to what is the duty of a Governor during the President's rule. Is he just a mouthpiece of the Centre or has he the duty and the right to speak out if the state's and its people's interests are jeopardized? I am clearly of the view that in such circumstances, regardless of the consequences, it is the moral duty of a Governor to take the cudgels on behalf of the state and its people. A Governor who does not do so would not be "worth his salt."

The people in Delhi, however, thought differently and, therefore, were greatly incensed by my statement. They forgot all my past as an experienced administrator and whatever little achievements I had to my credit. This incident wiped out everything and the President was advised to call me and to place me on the mat. I had gone to Udipi in Mangalore district on tour when I received an urgent telephone call from the then President's Secretary, Dr Nagendra Singh, to proceed to see the President in connection with my statement.

Accordingly, after cancelling all engagements, I proceeded to Delhi to meet the President. I have had the greatest regard for the President who has always been most affectionate and understanding with me throughout our acquaintance, spread over a period of over 25 years. Naturally I felt unhappy that anything done by me

should cause distress or embarrassment to him and I expressed this to him in the most uncertain manner. I, however, reiterated that I had never said that the state government will not repay the overdraft and that in this respect I had been misreported. The President appeared to be satisfied with my "explanation" but suggested that I might see the Prime Minister also to clear the matter with her too. Accordingly, two days before the Republic Day I sought an interview with the Prime Minister. I was much pressed for time and in any case had to be back in Bangalore by 25 January for the Republic Day function. Repeated inquiries from the Prime Minister's Secretariat about the interview elicited no reply. On the morning of the 24th the Prime Minister left for UP and was to return some time in the night. With time running out and receiving no response from the Prime Minister, I wrote a long personal letter to the Prime Minister explaining the entire incident and left for Bangalore in the morning of 25 January. My letter was delivered to the Prime Minister in the night of the 24th and had she desired to meet me I could have been asked in time to stay on. This, however, was not done and my departure without waiting for the Prime Minister's reply was made a further cause of displeasure.

Here, the question of propriety arises. How long is a senior and busy functionary expected to await even the Prime Minister's pleasure? Is the Prime Minister entitled to treat high dignitaries such as a Governor with scant courtesy and expect him to cool his heels in Delhi for days on end? Does a Governor owe nothing to the maintenance of the dignity of the high office he holds? In any case, was the offence, even if it was one, so great as to deserve such a shabby treatment? The answers to all these questions will have to be found. To me they were obvious and I acted accordingly.

Immediately on my return to Bangalore I received a telephone call from Dr Nagendra Singh informing me that the Prime Minister had taken my departure from Delhi without waiting for her reply as a personal affront. In any case, the entire episode had somewhat embarrassed the President whose representative I was under the President's rule. Was it not proper for me to express my regret to the President for having done something which might seemingly be considered as a constitutional impropriety?

I was by this time sick and tired of the entire controversy. I had only tried to serve loyally the state which had been entrusted to

my charge. I had tried to get nothing for myself. I had only expressed publicly the helplessness of the state to fulfil its obligations, in the context of the Centre's attitude. As a disciplined civil servant, I saw no harm in expressing my regret to the President to whom I owed allegiance as his representative if any action of mine was considered by him to have embarrassed him. So I wrote a letter expressing my regret to the President and so far as I was concerned, the matter ended there.

On January 30, I left Bangalore by train after the completion of my tenure in that state. It is customary on such occasions for the departing Governor to leave by a saloon so as to enable him to carry his luggage, dependents, etc., and also to maintain the dignity of the office. When I left Bengal all difficulties in the way of attachment of the saloon to fast-moving trains were waived by the government. This time, however, these restrictions were refused to be waived by the then Railway Minister. I, however, made no issue of the matter and left Bangalore by train like a normal passenger. Probably it was just as well. In being unobliging and inconsiderate, the Minister unwittingly made me follow the path of democracy. I do hope, however, that this would now be the normal practice and not an isolated instance for the benefit of an individual.

When the constitution of the newly independent India was being framed, the framers were firmly convinced that it should be such as would ensure the territorial integrity of the country. They realized that if the Centre became weak, the country would fall apart. The lessons of our past history corroborated this realization. Under a federal form of government, they therefore set about ensuring that the Centre's authority in the ultimate should be over-riding.

The present constitution is applicable to the whole of India and has been described as quasi-federal and quasi-unitary. Let us examine some constitutional aspects of the Centre-state relationship. Laws passed by the state units are subject to disallowance by the President on the advice of state Governors. There is only one



single citizenship. The Centre has exclusive jurisdiction in the Union List of subjects and its laws prevail over those of the state units in the Concurrent List.

The Centre can assume to itself the legislative and executive powers of the state units in an emergency. Also there is only one single judicial hierarchy and not two—federal and states—as in the American Federation. The constitution can be amended only by the Centre, at times even without reference to the state units. Its superior power is unfettered by the state units. It was never the intention that the state units should be sovereign. In fact, every care was taken to emphasize that they were not so. But, to what extent the Centre was to exercise its superior powers was a question to be decided in the light of the situation obtaining at the time. It was however always to be within the four corners of the constitution.

It should be borne in mind that the framework of the constitution was designed to counteract any divisive forces that might jeopardize the solidarity of the nation. In the light of that consideration three legislative lists were provided which have a rational basis.

The Union or Federal list comprised subjects of wide and general interest such as defence, currency, taxation, communications, foreign affairs, and the like, subjects which are necessary for the preservation of the integrity of the country from external as well as internal pressures and to give a predominant voice to the Centre in matters of all-India interest.

The State List related to subjects of local importance such as education, health, developmental activities, law and order, industry, etc. In these matters the states have the fullest measure of autonomy.

The third list, the Concurrent List, was intended to cover matters which were countrywide in character, of interest both to the states and the Centre, and in which from time to time in the interest of uniformity of action, central direction or even legislation was desirable.

Between these three Lists was found the entire gamut of legislative activity in the country. But the basic fact underlying it all was the necessity for a strong central government, without any intention to smother the state's power, initiative or progress, provided the units functioned within the framework of the constitution. It is important to realize here that the third list—the Concurrent List—

was intended to emphasize the need for cooperation, adjustment, and accommodation between the Centre and the states. Upon this understanding alone depend the successful carrying out of the functions and obligations under the constitution, not only in ensuring economic and social justice but also in preserving internal amity and maintaining external security.

The framers of the constitution realized that there might be the possibility of the functioning of governments of different political complexions in different states, and the consequent probability of differences of opinion. It was for this very reason that careful provision was made for the settlement of such differences. Article 131 of the constitution and the entire part of the constitution consisting of Articles 256 to 263 are relevant in this connection.

The core of the Centre-state relationship is, however, cooperation. In fact, the Indian constitution may well be described as Cooperative Federalism. The states would ensure absolute compliance with the laws of Parliament and avoidance of any activity aimed at obstructing the executive power of the Centre (Articles 256 and 257). Article 257 even authorizes the Union to issue directions to state governments in this and in some other matters. The Centre, in its turn, would guarantee protection to every state against internal disorder and external aggression and would arm itself with the necessary powers to ensure this.

Here experience has shown that with law and order being exclusively state subject, the Centre has some difficulty in discharging its obligations in regard to internal disorder. Some sort of readjustment between the Centre and states in regard to this matter is called for. The constitution has also made provision for the Centre to entrust to state governments functions in respect of certain matters to which the former's executive power extended (Article 258). Correspondingly, Article 258 authorizes the states, with the consent of the Union government, to entrust functions to the Union.

Article 261 ensures that full faith and credit shall be given throughout the country to public acts, records and judicial proceedings of the Union and of every state, and that the final judgments or orders delivered or passed by civil courts in any part of the territory of India shall be capable of execution anywhere within the territory. Articles 262 and 263 enable the President to provide for adjudication of disputes relating to river waters and for setting up of a Council to enquire into, investigate and advise upon disputed

matters between states and between the Union and the states.

Save in matters like safeguarding the security of the country, internal disorder, and preserving a balance between region and region in respect of finance, communications, and the like, the states enjoy a considerable measure of autonomy and there is no reason why mutual consultations should not be helpful in solving any problems that arise in regard to any particular state or region either between the Centre and the states or between state and state. The important thing is to strike a balance between centralized control and the initiative of the states.

Thus, it is seen that there should be really no conflict either in ideology or actual functioning. Consultations and negotiations between the Centre and the states form the base on which national solidarity is to be built. What is called for is an abiding faith in and steadfast loyalty to the constitution.

A Governor, as a representative of the President and Head of a state, acts as a link with the Centre, although there are also direct dealings between the Union and the state governments. A Governor has a special responsibility to keep the President informed if there is a threat to the security and order of the state or if there is a breakdown of the constitution so that the Union may discharge its functions of "protecting every state against external aggression and internal disturbance and to ensure that the government of the state is carried on in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution."

Let us now examine how, in practice, the relationship between the Union and the states can be defined. Let us think of the country as a big joint family where the Centre is the head and the states are all the other members of the family. We cannot expect that there will be uniformity in the thoughts and actions of every member of the family. There may be differences of approach, and even disagreements but, when in the interest of the continuance of the family as an entity, the father or the oldest member counsels a particular course of action, this advice has to be followed.

If any member who is a partner is determined to disagree unreasonably to derive advantage for himself or even perversely to the detriment of the family interests, we see the first cracks in the facade of the structure of the family and, if misunderstandings and suspicions develop to a very large extent, we find the cracks becoming deeper. If this develops further to the state of one or

the other member threatening to secede or to be independent, there will come a stage when the facade will collapse.

Again, when a particular member of the family refuses to be influenced by the advice of the older member and acts in a manner prejudicial to the prestige, honour, and security of the family, the only course of action for him, if the family structure is to be preserved with the cooperation of the other members, would be to assume to himself the conduct of the affairs of the recalcitrant. This is an emergency and the Centre has similar powers in respect of the state. To deal with emergencies of this kind, the constitution has certain built-in safeguards intended to ensure that the state units function with a sense of responsibility to the constitution as established by law.

I would like to repeat that our constitution-makers very rightly decided to form a constitution under which the Centre will be strong. We can weaken the Centre only at the risk of jeopardizing the integrity, solidarity, and strength of the nation. All talks of amending the constitution to give more power to the states are only directed towards weakening the Centre and should not be countenanced. Our past history is a warning against any such procedure.

There are adequate provisions in the constitution for settling disputes provided there is cooperation, goodwill, and a spirit of give-and-take between the constituent parties. No number of fresh provisions would help if that spirit is lacking. I would, however, like to re-emphasize that this is strictly a two-way traffic. Just as the states are expected to work with a sense of responsibility and cooperation, similarly the Centre is also expected to function in an objective and impartial manner. No considerations other than the overall interests of the country can be permitted to operate in the Centre-state relations, if the unity of the country is to be preserved. It would be very unfortunate indeed if the faith in the impartiality and objectivity of the Centre is destroyed, because that would endanger the very foundation of the structure of our constitution.

# Epilogue

Two years have passed since the last chapter of these reminiscences was written. To me these years have been years of adjustment to a new way of life. Having been a civil servant for 42 years, in which the last ten years were very trying and exacting, the sudden breaking away from that way of life has not been easy.

The first thing I needed was some rest and recuperation. This was not difficult as I had no obligations. Loving relations and friends, particularly my youngest sister, Sumitra Charat Ram, made it easy and agreeable.

I had already decided that I would not any more accept any paid employment. But, after the rest, some occupation for a person of my active nature was essential. I had always been greatly interested in the arts, music, education, health services, and cultural activities. Now was the time to get actively engaged in these pursuits. The Bharatiya Kala Kendra, the Ganga Ram Hospital, the Ramakrishna Mission, the Aurobindo Society, and some colleges and educational institutions in Delhi and my home town, Bijnore, provided the required occupation.

Bharat Ram of the Delhi Cloth Mills, one of the largest group of industries in India, invited me to be the Adviser to that group, which I accepted in an honorary capacity. He is a very dear friend and also a relation. I could hardly turn down his request even though the industrial field was entirely new for me. This, however, had a somewhat snowball effect because a number of friends invited me to join their Boards of Directors either as Chairman or as a Director—and some of the invitations could not be refused. One of the Boards which I have joined is not

really of an industry but of the Fourth Estate—the Press Trust of India.

I had been a member of the Court of Governors of the Administrative Staff College of Hyderabad for a number of years. Management and administration have been my special interests throughout my active life. And, this is the top college of administration and management in India. Chintaman Deshmukh was its President till last year. On account of his failing health, he desired to retire and suggested that I take over from him. I, accordingly, was elected as the Chairman of the Court of Governors of the college. As expected this work is very interesting. It affords occupation for me in a field of work I like most. The Principal of the College, N.P. Sen, has an active mind. His predecessors, General Srinagesh and R.L. Gupta, were also extremely able people and hence it is not surprising that the college had already established a reputation for itself both nationally and internationally.

Another nation-building activity in which I have always been greatly interested is that of the Boy Scouts and Girl Guides. I became a scout myself at the early age of 12 and can truthfully say that its training and teaching have had a life-long imprint on my character. The government spends crores of rupees on the NCC and other similar activities for inculcating discipline and social consciousness among the youth. But this very important movement of Scouts and Guides, which at a comparatively less cost puts these very ideas in the minds of the adolescents, receives very little support from the government. I do hope that the government will pay more attention to this truly national character-building movement, particularly during the present days when signs of failure of character are becoming so visible in our national life.

I have been a member of the National Council of the Bharat Scouts and Guides for a number of years. Last year on the retirement of C.M. Trivedi I was elected the President of this body, an honour which I cherish, because this gives me an opportunity to serve this august body which I consider to be of great importance to the upbringing of the future generations of our nation.

When I was busy settling down to my new way of life, it appears that my detractors were busy trying to find material to tarnish my public image. About 11 years ago I purchased a car out of

the government's quota. My only son, Indu Vira, who is a senior officer in the Indian Oil Corporation, a Government of India Undertaking, needed a car badly in the interest of his official work. As he could not get a car early I allowed him to use my car thinking that there is nothing wrong in it since everyday, government officials, politicians, and ministers get cars out of the government's quota and there are no restrictions on their use by members of their families.

After the lapse of some time, during which the car was used by my son, I wrote officially to the then Secretary of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry detailing the circumstances under which I had allowed my son to use my car. And, as he still needed the car, I sought permission to formally transfer it to him. This request was duly agreed to by the ministry and a formal permit to transfer was issued by the Controller of Vehicles.

One fine morning I was surprised to read in the papers that a Member of Parliament had raised in Parliament the question of the alleged misuse of a government quota car by me. The government spokesman had replied that the matter was being investigated by the Central Bureau of Investigation. The only so-called evidence against me was my own letter written over ten years ago to the Secretary of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. They looked through practically all the cases dealt by me over the past few years but they could find only this laughable "incriminating" piece of material. In a way, as remarked by a politician friend of mine, it was a great tribute to my personal integrity that after such a painstaking search only this "incriminating" evidence could be found against me.

The news that a CBI enquiry had been launched against me was splashed out boldly on the front pages of most Indian dailies. They did not even care to ascertain my side of the story. And, when ultimately the government, after careful laborious enquiries spread over a period of over a year, declared in Parliament that no case against me could be instituted, they did not show fair-mindedness by displaying the government's statement exonerating me as prominently as they did the news of the CBI enquiry. This shows the degeneration and decline which have set in in the reporting standards of our newspapers.

Soon after the question regarding the car transaction was raised in Parliament, the Deputy Director-General of the CBI, Ramachan-

dran, came to see me. He showed me the letter I had written to the Secretary of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and asked me if it was authentic and also whether I had anything further to say in the matter. I readily verified the authenticity of the letter and added that I had nothing more to say since the letter was self-explanatory. He told me that my alleged offence was not in transferring the car to my son, but in allowing him to use it without obtaining prior permission of the government. It was a technical offence entailing a modest fine as penalty and it was suggested that I should plead guilty.

I questioned whether I had committed even a technical offence. There is no provision forbidding the use of vehicles purchased out of the government quota by the members of the family of the purchaser. Such use, in fact, is common. If I had committed this technical offence, so had many others including ministers, politicians, and officials. I presume the CBI would prosecute them also. I was however quite sure that no court of law would find me guilty of this absurd charge. I was anxious to make publicly a monkey of those who had the meanness and audacity to give wide publicity to such a trumped up and frivolous charge against me, obviously to tarnish my public image. The opportunity was however denied to me because the government ultimately found—what I was confident about—that no charge could be proved against me.

During the period of suspense I was greatly sustained by the generous support and understanding of my friends who made it clear that they considered the charge against me quite unsustainable in a court of law. In fact, a large number of eminent lawyers and jurists volunteered to appear for me, free of charge, if the matter ever came to the court as they felt that an attempt like this to besmirch a person's character cold-bloodedly was a matter that deserved to be contested by all right-thinking people.

Before I conclude I must say that I have been approached during the last few years by some political parties to join them. In fact, at one stage it even came out in the papers that I had joined the Congress (O). The fact is that politics is a game which I do not understand—and I have not much taste for it. I have always prized greatly my independence of thought and action. Throughout my life I have cherished certain values of conduct which I fear will be greatly compromised if I joined any political party. The compro-



mises in conduct and the manoeuvrings to remain in positions of power which political life involves are repugnant to my way of thinking. This independence of mine is often misunderstood and I consider it to be my misfortune.

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