

REKINDLING NEHRU'S INTERNATIONALISM

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*M*any of those who preceded me in this Memorial Series have looked back to Nehru's life and work in India and appraised their significance for India. In such a series, some measure of looking back is inevitable; but I wish to speak more of what Nehru left, than of what he did; to make my glances to the past the basis of viewing Nehru's legacy, and of glimpsing its significance for a future that will take us to another era. And, in doing so, I want to place emphasis not on his legacy to India, but to the world—though they are, of course, entwined. Such an approach may be timely; not only because Nehru's vision took in the wider world, but also because it has remained relevant to our achievements and our failures at the global level and is assuming a heightened relevance to our prospects for the future.

Even so, I am slightly daunted. Nehru was, in the words of Norman Cousins, 'not one man but a procession of men.'¹ How to assess a life, and a legacy, so rich and varied, so purposeful in striving, so lofty in inspiration, so heroic in scale, and so ennobling in achievement? That Nehru enriched India and the world, indeed contemporary civilisation as a whole, is incontestable; what his place will be in the history of our age is a more difficult question to answer, partly because we stand so close to him in time; partly also because so much of what he strove for and accomplished is inextricably linked with the problems and the challenges of today and tomorrow.

Nearly 40 years have passed since the midnight hour when India awoke 'to life and freedom',² and over 20 since the death of Jawaharlal Nehru, who led India to that moment and for the first 17 years of independence. Since 1947, freedom has come to over 100 new nations, following India's example, and often inspired by its great leaders, Nehru and Mahatma Gandhi. Nehru's gaze, however, was fixed not on the past, but the future, and his dedication was not only to India and her people but "to the still larger cause of humanity".³ It is in that spirit that I should like to look ahead, say to the year 2000—already a symbol of our

turning-point into the future, yet only 15 years away. The issue now is less the independence of nations than the interdependence of nations, and whether all nations not merely acknowledge but act upon its implications to construct a world order responsive to the needs of all the world's people. The major problems of world poverty and international security, for example, are now conjoined and in confronting them all the world's people face a tryst with destiny. It is primarily in this perspective of the modern world that I would like to look at the legacy of ideas Nehru has left us. If the ideas he championed have survived him and promise to lead towards a better, safer future for us all, constructed on surer foundations for us all, that would itself be the mightiest of memorials.

And I place the emphasis on ideas in reappraising his heritage. We must look not just to concrete achievements, or their absence, but to directions indicated; not to deeds alone but to the thought behind the deed; less to his governance of India than to the lessons of his rule there for the wider world, especially other developing countries; above all, to the relationship in which he placed India with the international community—in other words, to India's world role in the post-war world which Nehru and his India helped so powerfully to shape. I am reinforced in this approach of appraising Nehru by the value of his total achievement and, above all, of his ideas, by some remarkable words of his recent biographer, Pandey:

...throughout his life [Nehru] lived and worked in the realm of ideas. Filled as he was with the qualities of imagination, perception and intuition, he used them to identify norms and trends which were taking shape in every field of human progress. Through this exercise he acquired an idea of the world as it was going to be a vision which coincided with his concept of the world as it ought to be. He made his abode in this desired, expected world and therefore lived in a future which history had yet to bring into existence... Among the distinguished statesmen of the 20th century he alone could prophesy the future with any certainty, for he almost lived in it.⁴

If that analysis is correct, and I believe it is, it underlines just how remarkable was this man whose life was immersed in the practical details of politics, yet who could transcend the everyday to inhabit the realms of ideas and ideals and of the future. Nehru himself would have rejected such a description. As he put it, almost in defensive reflex, "We do not live in the upper stratosphere but in an imperfect world which we are trying to improve and change."⁵ Yet, as the actual political events which preoccupied him recede into history, the principles governing his conduct stand out ever more clearly, and justify our recalling him as a pathfinder. His exceptional qualities were clearly visible to his peers. For example, John Kennedy, a man of a different stamp and culture, noted admiringly Nehru's "soaring idealism".⁶ In truth, Nehru was a whole man; he constantly sought to reconcile the conflict between the practical demands of everyday affairs and more abstract ideals. The idealism grew out of the experience; the one guided the other forming, in his own words, "the realism of tomorrow".⁷ We, who are living through the initial stages of that future which he envisaged, are well placed to offer a judgement on the validity of his ideals for our times and, necessarily more tentatively but with conviction, on their validity for the years to come.

But we are well placed also to bemoan the vacuum of 'soaring idealism' in world leadership. Instead, we live with a fashion that rejects idealism as the 'soft' option and idealists as the 'wet' people. We are seeing the recrudescence of what Ted Heath in the House of Commons last Friday called "a nasty, narrow-minded nationalism"⁸—one so nasty in its manifestations that it contradicts true patriotism—like 'double-think' on apartheid South Africa and 'double-speak' on 'star wars'; one so narrow that it turns inward on itself in a mode of self-destruction—like rampant protectionism or debt crisis management that chooses Shylock over Portia.

When I was growing up there were Roosevelt and Zhou En-lai, Mahatma Gandhi and Nehru himself. Later there were Hamarskjold and Willy Brandt and, for a time, John Kennedy. Where is their 'soaring idealism' now? On no continent, in no bloc or group or alliance, does it prevail. As a world community we are bereft without it. Does its absence not fill us with fear of the warning of 'Proverbs' that 'where there is no vision, the people perish'?

If the greatest statesmen are persons who anticipate great problems, foresee them and take action to meet them, then Nehru was assuredly in that category. He strove to make politically feasible what he saw to be best in long-term realities and basic principles. He changed both the style and the shape of international relations and, in world terms, was the first truly modern political figure of our time. That is a tall claim to make, in a century which has produced so many leaders whose record was outstanding in national terms. Many have exercised greater power; some have fashioned more coherent ideologies; but Nehru stands above them all in modernity of outlook, consistency of vision and accuracy of perception rising above national horizons.

In nothing was Nehru more ahead of his time than in his internationalism, in his determination to lay the basis of an international community which would enter the 21st century with its moral and material resources greatly augmented, and with values different from those of the past. He foresaw, as long ago as 1929, the interdependence which is a fact of international life today, in his remarkable address on becoming President of the Congress Party he said:

India today is part of a world movement... Civilisation has had enough of narrow nationalism and gropes towards wider co-operation and interdependence... Having attained our freedom, I have no doubt that India will welcome all attempts at world co-operation.⁹

Here was a man who, long before India's own nationhood found fulfilment in 1947, was already warning against narrow nationalism. It was a theme to which he never tired of returning. In 1947 he warned:

Nationalism ...is a curious phenomenon which, at a certain stage in a country's history, gives life, growth, strength and unity but, at the same time, it has a tendency to limit one... one thinks of one's country as something different from the rest of the world... The result is that the same nationalism which is the symbol of growth for a people becomes a symbol of the

cessation of that growth in the mind. Nationalism, when it becomes successful, sometimes goes on spreading in an aggressive way and becomes a danger internationally. Whatever line of thought you follow you arrive at the conclusion that some kind of balance must be found.¹⁰

A balance between nationalism and internationalism. Never has the need for such a balance been more urgent than it is today. Nehru was a democrat too—he moulded India into the world's largest democracy. And his democracy and internationalism went hand in hand. He was reaching to a relationship between nations that was responsive to an aspiration for democracy at the global level. How badly needed also today is such consistency, not only because anti-internationalism flourishes in some of the world's great democracies, but because democracy itself is being so managed that it is made to work against internationalism. To be 'anti-UN' or 'anti-aid'; to be hawkish in ideology or aggressive in militarism, is made electorally appealing, and the votes that are in it make a virtue of extremism.

It was because of his perception of the dangers of unbridled nationalism that Nehru passionately espoused the cause of world order. In his thinking, the atomic bomb—that first crude weapon that was to be the tip of a nuclear iceberg—the bomb, in particular, made the quest for world order more imperative and urgent than ever before. Nehru believed that the whole structure of human society was changing; that, as a result, it was becoming more and more obvious that while countries, small or big, wish to retain 100 per cent national independence, they could hardly continue to do so in the present context of the world.¹¹

His view of the changing needs of nations in a world of disparate states, articulated even as India was attempting to wrest its own nationhood, mirrored a perception that sovereignty alone is a poor shield for a nation's security and a fragile basis for a nation's progress. He recognised that, though national independence was the first priority in the world in which colonial subjugation was the reality for many peoples, the world as a whole must move beyond national independence and sovereignty if the common interests of all its people were to be secured.

As we look to the 21st century, is there any challenge that is more central than that of adjusting our notions of sovereignty to the needs of human survival? Is our science and technology to be allowed to soar up above leaving us trapped below with increasingly archaic concepts of the nation-state? Are we to become known in history as the generation that excelled in management of everything save itself? The problems of peace and security, the problems of development, the problems of a global economy, the new challenges of the global commons—the sea and the sea-bed beyond national jurisdiction, and the still unmapped, and perhaps unmappable, frontiers of outer space—all cry out for a measure of global management that is inconsistent with unbridled sovereignty.

We speak of freedom within free societies, and recognise both a moral and a legal duty to our neighbour to take care lest he be injured by our conduct. We proclaim our world to be a society of free nations, yet we use sovereignty as a sword not as a shield. We have a long way to go in translating our perception of the world as a global village and its people as our neighbours into moral and, above all, legal obligations to other states and other people. Indeed, if anything, the trends are the other way. We are in danger of moving towards a more authoritarian world; one less constrained by principles and rules, one more prone to uncertainty and arbitrariness; a human society not governed by world order but ordered by the strong.

We have been commemorating this year the 40th anniversary of the establishment of the UN. A world community that in 1945 regarded internationalism as axiomatic, saw international cooperation as being essential to man's future, could not 40 years later even agree on a declaration commemorating the event. The Commonwealth did at Nassau and in terms which urged that even the achievements since 1945 "make the more disturbing any movement away from multilateralism and internationalism, from a world aspiring to be governed by fair and open rules towards unilateral action and growing ascendance of power in all spheres: economic, political and military."¹² "We warn," said Commonwealth leaders:

that a return to narrow nationalism, both economic and political, in a climate of tension and confrontation

between nations heightened by the nuclear arms race, invites again the dangers from which the world set out to rid itself at San Francisco in 1945. We issue that warning mindful that the nuclear menace imperils all peoples and nations and the very survival of our human species.¹³

How are we going to respond to all these challenges unless we shake ourselves out of the mental constraints of sovereignty as an end in itself and bring to the challenges of the 21st century a less crainitive spirit and a will for greater political innovation. Nehru exuded the spirit of political innovation. It followed from his great intellectual strengths. We need them now in abundance if we are to do better in the 21st century; perhaps, even to be sure that we reach it.

Perhaps this recognition of the wider compulsion of planetary existence stemmed in part from Nehru's acute consciousness of the need to reconcile many interests and divisions, many regions and peoples, in efforts to forge the Indian nation. "I belong to all states," he once said, "I am a Maharashtrian while I am in Maharashtra and a Tamilian while in Tamil Nad."¹⁴ He sensed the need for loyalties to be broadened, for narrower affiliations to be progressively submerged in wider commitments, for India as a nation to see the fulfilment of its goals in partnership with other nations, for democracy to be given a wider reach than the nation state. Again how much we need the ascendancy of that vision. Our 'balkanised' world is an ever greater contradiction as we conquer space and look back on earth to see it as a small and fragile planet in the cosmos. But our science has outstripped our wisdom; technology may be a hymn to man's genius, it offers no praise to our sentience.

Nehru's modernity is all the more remarkable if we consider him in relation not to today but to his own time. When he died in 1964 at the age of 74 there were statesmen contemporary with him who could look back on longer politically-active lives—though none perhaps who had been devoted so single-mindedly over so many years to the one political goal of national freedom. Less than a year later his great adversary in India's freedom struggle, Winston Churchill, with whom he latterly had a relationship of mutual respect, was also dead. A comparison

between the two men is instructive. Both were superb readers of the current international scene, with an extraordinary intuitive understanding of the play of political forces; both had warned vigorously against the rise of Fascism and Nazism in the 1930s; both were leaders of and for their time. Yet of the two, Nehru's we now see, was much the more forward-looking vision. In 1949, the West was outraged when Nehru supported the admission of the People's Republic of China to the United Nations.¹⁵ Over 20 years later, a similar move by the Nixon administration was adjudged a triumph of US foreign policy. That is an isolated example, but the broad sweep confirms the detail. The world of today is essentially the world as Nehru saw it, a world for which he equipped India so well, one of plurality and diversity, in which nations have their own independent existence beyond empires and blocs.

It was not enough, however, to dream dreams about the future without the instruments to shape it. Nehru's institution-building within India was, of course, a monumental achievement, but it was mirrored by a comparable endeavour at the international level: without Nehru the future of the United Nations could well have been jeopardised; the Commonwealth could hardly have existed; and the Non-Aligned Movement might also not have been born.

To Nehru the United Nations was of central importance. He was conscious, of course, of its shortcomings; critical when its judgement and activities were influenced by the prejudices of the cold war. Nonetheless, he was tireless in affirming that "the United Nations is the chief repository of our hopes for ever closer and more effective international co-operation for security as well as welfare."¹⁶ In 1952 he said:

I have ventured, in all humility, sometimes to criticise those developments at the United Nations which seemed to me to be out of keeping with its Charter and its past record and professions. Nevertheless... I do not wish this country of course to do anything which weakens the gradual development of some kind of a world structure. It may be that the real world structure will not come in our lifetime but unless that world structure comes, there is no hope for this world, because the only alternative

is world conflict on a prodigious and tremendous scale.¹⁷

It was for these reasons that Nehru's India was one of the countries which from the start sought to give practical effect to the UN's role as the guardian of international order and morality and the focus of efforts for peace. To Nehru, support of the UN was an article of faith. In words redolent with the Gandhian spirit, Nehru described himself as a "humble pilgrim" at the UN "who walked on foot in the midst of mighty charioteers."¹⁸

It was with confidence that he took the Kashmir issue to the UN; although gravely disappointed at the outcome, and the intrusion of superpower rivalry, his support of the UN remained unwavering. It was the Congo crisis of 1960-63 which above all showed the depth of Nehru's commitment to the UN, to national self-determination and to internationalism. At stake in the Congo was the right and the ability of the country to stand united and independent despite the machinations of the great powers and former colonialists. It evoked Nehru's moral commitment not only to the UN but to the people of Africa, who had suffered the worst of all from colonialism. Nehru remarked that: "In India an incident took place which has come to be known as the 'black hole of Calcutta' ... But for the African people, their entire life till now has been spent in a black hole."¹⁹ He felt profoundly at one with the "astounding revolution" of freedom from colonialism taking place in Africa.

When the UN under Hammarskjold was mandated to maintain the legal government in the Congo, Nehru fully supported the UN operation. The Secretary-General's special representative was an Indian diplomat, Rajeshwar Dayal. Nehru first despatched Indian non-combatant troops to the Congo and, when the UN operation was in difficulties, followed up with a full combatant brigade, so that the UN was ultimately able to secure the Congo's unity and continued independence. Hammarskjold's response was: "Thank God for India!"²⁰ He saw India's support as decisive, and a remarkable, even historic act of faith. That still seems an accurate judgement today. For in the difficult international climate of those times, at no political advantage to India, but only to a newly-independent African government—the integrity of an African country and the cause of world order—Nehru kept to a

truly internationalist path and maintained support for the United Nations. This meant resisting great power pressures and also resisting the pull of Afro-Asian criticism of the United Nations operation, even when he had misgivings himself. Even after the armed conflict between India and China broke out in 1962, Nehru placed India's internationalist commitment before its national need, and left the Indian troops in the Congo till their job was done.

We see here a lesson which should be both example and inspiration; a singular sensitivity to balancing national interests with important internationalist ones; a capacity not to allow disillusion with some aspects of the functioning of the world body to spill over into destructive attitudes towards the institution itself; and a concern that long-term interests are not sacrificed on the altar of political expediency. These are lessons which the world forgets at its peril; their relevance becomes more, not less, as we approach the 21st century.

Similar imagination, vision, and political creativity were in evidence in the case of the Commonwealth. The means by which it was transformed to accommodate a Republican India is now a matter of history. Many have taken credit for the London Declaration of April 1949; yet, whatever the individual roles, the final outcome would not have been possible but for Nehru. The men of 'Empire' were sorely troubled. Menzies warned that "If we spread the butter of the British association until it is too thin it may disappear altogether".²¹ Atlee was more certain of the wisdom of the change which would accommodate republics into the family of the Commonwealth and remove allegiance to the British sovereign as a badge of Commonwealth membership.²² But many in Britain's establishment—of all estates—were not. Though I was not to know it, that moment of decision for Commonwealth leaders was to be a critical moment in my life; so critical, that you will perhaps permit a personal note.

For many nationalists of internationalist learnings whose countries were not yet free, the April Declaration was a sign of hope. I was a young undergraduate of King's College, London, at the time and, with the brashness and certainty of youth (but, as it turned out, not without some justification), I wrote in the *College Law Journal* that, notwithstanding the doubters, a "second Commonwealth of nations" was coming into being

whose new bonds:

may well... prove more acceptable and so more lasting than the now rusted link of allegiance; if that is so, [I ventured] the April Declaration augurs well not only for Commonwealth harmony but for world peace as well.²³

I could little realise that I might one day have the chance to help to fulfil that promise; to help to make probable what Nehru had made possible.

Yet it could all so easily have been otherwise. Throughout the 1930s Nehru as well as the Congress Party had been committed to rejection of Dominion status and membership of the then British Commonwealth. But Nehru discerned the potential of the association and, despite political opposition within India to Commonwealth membership, insisted on finding a solution that would be responsive both to India's interests and longer-term international needs. Justifying India's continuation in the Commonwealth, Nehru said his first duty was to look "to the interests of India", but added: "I have always conceived that duty in terms of the larger good of the world."²⁴ Between Commonwealth nations, he said, there was what he called "unforeignness"—"although in a sense foreign... nevertheless, not completely foreign";²⁵ and again, "the closest ties are ties which are not ties".²⁶ He saw in the Commonwealth a valuable instrument to advance the wider causes to which he was dedicated—of peace, freedom for colonised peoples, racial equality, international co-operation and world development.

In 1960, reflecting on more than a decade of Commonwealth membership, he said:

The Commonwealth is certainly a form of free, uncommitted and non-binding association with the spirit of peaceful co-existence, a link or bridge which helps in bringing together nations for the purpose of co-operation and consolidation. Such associations are preferable to the more binding kind of alliance or blocs. We, of course, consider the problem of our association with the Commonwealth in terms of independent nations coming together without any military or other commitments. There are no conditions attached except this desire to

co-operate so far as it is consistent with the independence and sovereignty of each nation. One important factor about the Commonwealth association is that it reverses the other process of military or economic blocking together for what might be called the purposes of the 'cold war'. It has a certain warmth of approach about it, regardless of the problems that beset any such association. There may be differences. There are. Nevertheless the overall approach to such controversies is a friendly one which helps to tone down friction and difficulties. That, I think, is all to the good and a development worthy to be followed in other spheres, larger spheres, also.²⁷

Nehru not only changed the Commonwealth, he did a great deal to save it after the Suez episode of 1956 had severely strained Britain's relationship with her Commonwealth partners.²⁸ He saw beyond the immediate crisis—and beyond the contemporary policies of some Commonwealth member countries which he strongly deplored—to the wider Commonwealth which was coming into being and which could not be allowed to lapse. With Ghana's accession to Commonwealth membership, he particularly welcomed "free Asian and African nations coming together" as a development which would be "good for the world and good for race relations."²⁹ The Commonwealth of nine countries that his vision in 1949 allowed to continue and to grow is now the Commonwealth of forty-nine.

It took courage for Nehru to remain in the Commonwealth; but it took an even rarer vision to look above the immediate contentions to see that in doing so he would help to mould the Commonwealth closer to world needs. That capacity is still rare; but no less vital in the councils of the Commonwealth and of the world. For the Commonwealth, that longer view taken in 1949 has left a legacy of faith in striving for consensus consistent with principle; in reaching together towards worthy goals even if they remain for the time being beyond our grasp. It is a faith with which the world community needs to be more infused when bloc or group or mere super-power confrontation threaten a decline from division to disintegration; when difference, even exasperation, encourages a mood of 'walking away'.

Passionately devoted to the cause of world-wide decolonisation and the elimination of racism, Nehru shaped the Commonwealth to serving as an instrument for the achievement of these objectives. He felt as well as saw the contradictions between Britain's profession of belief in multi-racialism and human rights and its actual policies in Africa. He spoke out:

We are all for the multiracial society, but I am getting a little tired of the repetition of this phrase when the African is being kicked, hounded and shot down....³⁰

How many Commonwealth leaders at Nassau must have felt a similar vexation? Yet what prevailed was that capacity to persist, not to give up the effort of persuading even when it seemed to be a process of harmonising contrariness to principle. The legacy still held—and to the world's betterment.

Nehru's India was the first country to launch international questioning and criticism of South African racism at the United Nations. It did not even wait for full independence to do so: the issue was raised by the self-governing interim administration in 1946. And India was also the very first country to impose sanctions against South Africa when it terminated its trade and diplomatic relations with Pretoria in 1954—in advance of any international recommendations to that effect. This was the start of a campaign which has continued with increasing momentum to the present day. The current effort to rid the world of apartheid is thus partly the legacy of Nehru; but, of course, also of Nehru's guide and mentor, Mahatma Gandhi, whose practice of non-violent resistance was initiated on behalf of the Indian of Natal early this century.

In the Commonwealth forum, though at first the principle of non-interference in domestic affairs muted Nehru's criticism, his position quickly hardened to the point where he felt inaction over apartheid would rob the Commonwealth of meaning—as the Commonwealth itself was later to feel in relation to Amin's abuses in Uganda. He therefore insisted on the issue being raised at the 1960 Summit and formally mentioned in the Communiqué.³¹ He saw, rightly, that the future of the Commonwealth depended on how the issue was settled. The following year he was instrumental in mobilising the strength of Commonwealth

feeling against South Africa to the point where it was forced to leave the association. The Commonwealth thus became the first international organisation to ostracise South Africa—a full 13 years before its suspension from the UN.

To those who still harbour notions that it would have been better to keep South Africa within the Commonwealth and argue with her, the answer is two-fold. The Commonwealth itself would have succumbed, infected by the canker of apartheid. But, more pointedly, Washington's current policy of "constructive engagement"—which may be little more than a new name given to an old process—has shown beyond contention that only apartheid would have benefited from such Commonwealth 'engagement'. What has been deficient over the years, and remains lacking now, lies not within the concepts of ostracism and pressure but the failure of many Western Governments to make ostracism complete or pressure real. Now, their own national interests are beginning to be seen as victims of the reprieve they have given Pretoria.

At the Commonwealth Summit last month,³² the standing of the Commonwealth was seen no less clearly than 25 years ago to depend upon its attitude to the intensified struggle to end apartheid. This time, the voice of Nehru's grandson, Rajiv Gandhi, was among the clearest insisting that the Commonwealth had a special responsibility to hasten its demise. No one at Nassau bridged the years between 1961 and 1985; but one did not need to span the generations to hear in India's new Prime Minister echoes of Nehru's controlled passion or to see in his determined efforts to find common ground the sustained traditions of a great ancestor. The legacy continues to be both relevant and strengthening.

In the Commonwealth Accord on Southern Africa that was reached at Nassau,³³ Commonwealth leaders—all of them—representing a quarter of the world's people and a third of the world's states, issued clarion calls on the Pretoria regime. They called on it to declare that apartheid would be dismantled; to end the state of emergency; to unconditionally free Nelson Mandela and others imprisoned for opposition to apartheid; to lift the ban on his Party and others; and, in the context of a suspension of violence on all sides (including, therefore, a suspension of the violence of apartheid itself) to begin a process of dialogue to

establish a non-racial representative government. Commonwealth leaders agreed on a programme of common action,³⁴ including a series of economic measures, to increase the pressure on the apartheid regime; and they undertook to consider further economic measures if sufficient progress is not made within six months. But the Commonwealth went further. Taking up a proposal first made by the Prime Minister of Australia, Bob Hawke—a proposal much in the Nehru tradition—Commonwealth leaders set up a Group of Eminent Persons to act as a catalyst in encouraging a process of dialogue for democracy in South Africa.

Earlier today I announced the composition of that Group. It is to be chaired jointly by the former Australian Prime Minister, Malcolm Fraser, and General Olusegun Obasanjo, the former Head of Government of Nigeria who in 1979 returned his country to civilian rule. And it includes Sardar Swaran Singh, one of Nehru's colleagues in the Indian Government. The Prime Minister of India, Rajiv Gandhi, is one of the seven leaders entrusted with developing the modalities of this initiative, in conjunction with myself; and once the six months have elapsed these seven leaders will review the situation.³⁵ How appropriate it somehow seems that Nehru's own grandson should be at the centre of Commonwealth action within the international effort to end apartheid which began with Nehru's India raising the issue at the UN in 1946.³⁶ The Commonwealth, for its part, is keeping faith with Nehru by its collective stand on behalf of the 25 million dispossessed and disenfranchised non-white people of South Africa.

Only the co-operation of all concerned in South Africa—black and white alike, Afrikaaner and English-speaking, Coloured and Indian, the nationalist movement, the political parties, the churches, the businessmen, the women's organisations, the trade unions, all who speak in the name of the people of South Africa—only their co-operation can make this effort succeed. I hope there are none who do not wish it to succeed; because this is a most genuine effort to help to bring about meaningful change in South Africa through discussion, negotiation and consensus. The future does not seem to offer too many other chances of doing so.

The eminence of the Group is incontestable. So is their commitment to the objective of the Accord. Certainly, they will

have the confidence not only of the Commonwealth but of the wider world community. Together, they represent a vast range of experience and awareness of Southern African realities. They constitute the Commonwealth's offer of help, and they will work to encourage and facilitate the process of peaceful change—with co-operation if it is forthcoming; but, of course, without it (and with greater difficulty) if it is not.

I would like to think that when, one day, a South Africa released from the bondage of apartheid, and with the structures of a non-racial democracy in place, returns to the Commonwealth, it will look back on Nassau remembering any uncertainties about the process promoted there, but grateful that they were promoted—and that they did not reject them out of hand.

As we approach the year 2000, the elimination of racism must be seen as a prerequisite to Commonwealth effort to contribute a more just international society. The issue does not only concern South Africa. Apartheid is simply the worst manifestation of racism, which is an evil found in many places in one form or another, often compounding other injustices. When refugees, for example, are forced to move from one country or region to another, sometimes as a result of racial or religious persecution, their attempt at settlement is often seen as an alien intrusion, and becomes the trigger of further discrimination against them. Racism is also found far from frontiers, in the great cities of the modern world which have become test cases for the multiracial ethic which must inform the global society of the future. All too often it simply resides in our hearts—even of those who are themselves its victims. Yet, the setbacks to multiracialism which occur in truth underline the steady progress which has been made in the great experiment of living together in genuine brotherhood on which mankind is now embarked and upon which the future depends. Racial harmony will be achieved, I am sure, however difficult the road; interdependence demands it, commonsense and common humanity both urge it. It will be accomplished the more readily if we remember Nehru's wise advice:

Greatness [he said] comes from vision, the tolerance of the spirit, compassion and an even temper which is not ruffled by ill fortune or good fortune. It is not through

hatred and violence or internal discord that we make real progress. As in the world today, so also in our country, the philosophy of force can no longer pay and our progress must be based on peaceful co-operation and tolerance of each other.³⁷

Last, but by no means least, Nehru inspired the Non-Aligned Movement. He was its prime mover and intellectual mainstay. Early during his Prime Ministership he remarked:

...it does not surprise me how the Great Powers of the world behave to each other. Quite apart from the principles involved, there is an extraordinary crudity about their utterances and activities... anything may happen to this unhappy world when the men in charge of its destiny function in the way they have been doing.³⁸

Nehru saw clearly that over and above the existential needs of the new nations lay the awesome logic of nuclear war for rich and poor nations alike. The message of non-violence, which reflected the voice of Indian civilisation over the ages, was particularly relevant in the nuclear age, when humanity was threatened with annihilation. He, therefore, reinterpreted Gandhi's revolutionary notion of moral mediation between antagonists and extracted from it the concept of a third force in world affairs. He saw in non-alignment a means of ensuring an environment of peace in which India and other newly-free countries could promote a life of dignity and creativity for their citizens. But he saw it as a positive influence in the world, not as sterile neutralism.

Non-alignment as a philosophy was not easily understood or accepted in the early days of the Cold War, but Nehru held to it steadfastly. From those difficult beginnings it gradually acquired a world-wide following, and remains one of Nehru's most enduring gifts to our time. The movement may have lost some of its integrity by deviating from time to time from the narrow and often hazardous path laid down by its founders; but these wanderings have been occasional and non-alignment is resuming its standing in world affairs; it has never lost its validity.

It is right, in the context of equidistance from the military alliances, that we should recall Nehru's staunch opposition to nuclear weapons, and his international initiatives on nuclear disarmament. It is especially apposite to do so in the week following the Gorbachev-Reagan Summit in Geneva. It is too early to assess the results of last week's meeting; but that it took place at all is a gain in itself. Yet, if the super-powers treat it simply as a pause that refreshes their adversary relationships—a release of the lid to let off the steam so that the simmering may continue—we may all be the worse off for it. Similar hopes had been placed upon previous East-West Summits, including, in Nehru's time, the Eisenhower-Khrushchev Summit of 1959; yet the net result has been that the nuclear arms race has continued and intensified, with world armaments expenditure now running at some 1,000 billion dollars per annum—over 2 million dollars a minute. That obscenity explains the vast weight of the world's hope which rested upon the Geneva Summit and continues to rest on a positive follow-up to its conclusion.

Nehru the internationalist practitioner would have welcomed Geneva, but his ethic of internationalism would have led him to assert as he did 30 years ago that discussions on control, reduction and elimination of nuclear arms concerned the whole world, not simply the nuclear weapons powers. In 1953, India took the lead in registering the right of the non-nuclear countries to be involved in the negotiations.³⁹ In 1954, after the US explosion of a hydrogen bomb at Bikini Atoll, Nehru denounced this new and yet more terrible weapon in the Lok Sabha and made concrete proposals which included a stand-still on testing.⁴⁰

Despite little immediate success at the United Nations, India's assertion of the legitimate concern of the non-nuclear countries was taken up by other non-aligned nations, and eventually led in 1962 to the inclusion of eight non-aligned countries together with nuclear-weapons powers in the 18-Nation Disarmament Committee, where the non-aligned group immediately pressed for an effective ban on tests. The following year their efforts were robbed of meaning both by the resumption of testing and the initiation of bilateral negotiations: which brings us back to Geneva. Nehru's legacy lives on in the hearts of all who worry not just about their future or their children's future but about the

future of our planet. And that living legacy finds embodiment today in the Six Continent Peace Initiative and in the role that India plays within it—the role that Nehru moulded for her.

Although I have spoken at length about the political aspects of Nehru's international legacy, there was as well an underlying economic dimension. Indeed, he had devoted much thought to the economic aspects of a free India long before 1947; and at the international economic level he was again to set down markers for the rest of the century. He was quick to recognise that, despite the cold war, the major division in the world was not between the United States and the Soviet Union, but the developed and the undeveloped countries. In this way he was among the first to discern the outlines of what we speak of today as North-South issues.⁴¹ More than 30 years before the Brandt Report, with its emphasis on interdependence and mutual economic benefit, he foreshadowed it all in his address to the Canadian Parliament in 1949:

There can be no security or real peace if vast numbers of people in various parts of the world live in poverty and misery. Nor, can there be a balanced economy for the world as a whole if the undeveloped parts continue to upset that balance and drag down even the more prosperous nations.⁴²

No developing country has played a more vigorous or more sustained role on development issues than has India; and in time both the Commonwealth and the Non-Aligned Movement were to make that role their own. The legacy has remained valid even if the returns from quite monumental efforts have been minuscule. Nehru's ideas persist and built into them is the conviction that they will one day prevail.

I have kept to my promise not to look to Nehru's domestic legacy; but there are some elements of it that touch his wider influence as one of the greatest of nation builders. He not only visualised a great future for India, but gave it form. He spear-headed India's political, economic and social transformation: democratic institutions and the politics of national consensus; strong industrial foundations; the creation of a buoyant agricultural economy in place of a stagnant one; the harnessing of

science and technology on an epic scale and the awareness that moral values must underline economic and social development. Few statesmen presided over changes as great as those brought about by Nehru. And through it all shone his modernity.

When asked towards the end of his life what he regarded as the greatest real advance achieved under his leadership, he had no hesitation in pinpointing the improvement in the condition of Hindu women. Decades before feminism was in vogue (as far back as 1928), Nehru had asserted that the test of a country's progress was the status of its women;⁴³ after 1947, when he had the opportunity, he more than lived up to that long-expressed belief. He did so despite hostility and opposition from important sections of the Congress Party, refusing once more to sacrifice or subordinate fundamental principles to political convenience.

There is one final aspect of Nehru's legacy which must also command our attention, and admiration—his character and style. He set an example which, however difficult, the Third World must endeavour to emulate. He was democratic to the core. He believed in the exercise not of power, but of influence; and he laboured mightily for the good of his people and his country, without thought of personal benefit or reward. His integrity was total. When a wealth tax was introduced in India, the Allahabad Municipality put a value on Nehru's ancestral home which the Prime Minister regarded as a gross under-estimate. He protested and saw to it that the valuation was increased five-fold.

Most endearing of all, Nehru remained free from dogma and refused to be type-cast. He had the honesty to proclaim that he did not have all the answers. When, in 1960, he last addressed the United Nations General Assembly, he said:

I am no man of wisdom. I am only a person who has dabbled in public affairs for nearly half a century and learnt something from them and what I have learnt mostly is how wise men often behave in a very foolish manner. That thought makes me often doubt my own wisdom. I question myself: 'am I right'?⁴⁴

Intellectual humility and intellectual tolerance; how much better a place our world would be if its leaders displayed these qualities in even small measure.

Once, when Nehru was inaugurating a dam in South India, a worker approached him and said: "Here you have lighted a lamp." Nehru was moved by this comment as a judgement of work well done, and reflected on its symbolism. He asked himself: "Do we, in the course of our lives, light lamps, or do we snuff out the lamps or candles that exist?"⁴⁵ Nehru did light lamps not only in India but in the hearts of men and women throughout the world. They may not everywhere burn brightly; but they will never be snuffed out while they kindle in their turn the human conscience.

Notes and References

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4. B. N. Pandey, *Nehru* (Macmillan, London, 1976), pp. 438, 439-440.
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13. Ibid., p.265, para. 2.
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21. Robert Menzies, then leader of the opposition in Australia addressing the Canadian Club in Ottawa on 21 October 1948. He also stated that he did not think a formula by which a Republic could be included with the Dominions in one political organisation could be devised. Shridath S. Ramphal, "The Second Commonwealth of Nations", (1950: April) *King's Counsel* (Journal of the Faculty of Laws Society King's College, London), pp. 20-26, at p.21. Sir Robert Menzies, Prime Minister of Australia, 1939 to 1941, and continuously from 1952 to 1966, had a vision of Empire and Commonwealth which belonged to the days when it was British in name, in loyalties, largely in composition and in its united purposes. Nicholas Mansergh, *The Commonwealth Experience Volume Two: From British to Multiracial Commonwealth*, 2nd Edition (Macmillan, London, 1982), p.253.
22. Professor Mansergh concludes; "it was to two men—Jawaharlal Nehru and Clement Atlee—that chief credit for the settlement belonged". Nicholas Mansergh, *The Commonwealth Experience* (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1969), p.337.
23. Shridath S. Ramphal, "The Second Commonwealth of Nations", op. cit., pp.20-26, at p.26.
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26. Jawaharlal Nehru, talk to Journalists in New York, 15 October 1949, *National Herald* of 16 October 1949, quoted in Sarvepalli Gopal, "The Shaping of Foreign Policy", *Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography*, Vol. II: 1947-1956, (Jonathan Cape, London, 1979), pp. 43-65, at p.61.

27. As Jawaharlal Nehru explained his thinking in the course of an interview published in 1960, R.K. Karanjia, *The Mind of Mr. Nehru: An Interview by R.K. Karanjia* (Allen and Unwin, London, 1960), pp.90-91.
28. The nature of the crisis faced by the Commonwealth on the occasion of the Suez Crisis comes out vividly in Lord Pethick-Lawrence's letter to Nehru of 5 November 1950: "A rumour has reached me that there is a possibility that in view of your profound disapproval of what our United Kingdom Government is doing in the Middle East you may be considering withdrawal from the Commonwealth. As one who is equally an out-and-out opponent of Sir Anthony Eden's policy, may I say that I should regard any such decision as a disaster. There is as you know a great number of people here in the United Kingdom whose views are similar to yours, and we hope you will not desert us in our struggle to rescue the Commonwealth from the disgrace which our Prime Minister has put upon it." Sarvepalli Gopal, "Suez", *Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography*, Vol. II: 1947-1956, op. cit, pp. 272-290, at p. 288.
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34. Ibid., at pp. 268-269.
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39. Bhabani Sen Gupta, "India and Disarmament", in B.R. Nanda, *Indian Foreign Policy: The Nehru Years*, op. cit., pp. 228-251, at pp. 237-238. Also G.A. Resolutions Nos. 1660 (XVI) of 28 November 1961, and 1722 (XVI) of 20 December 1961 which enabled eight non-aligned countries to take part in nuclear power politics. Also G.A. Resolution No. 914 (X) of 16 December 1955 on Disarmament (Regulation, Limitation and Balanced Reduction of All Armed Forces and All Armaments; Conclusion of an International Convention (Treaty) on the Reduction of Armaments and the Prohibition of Atomic, Hydrogen and Other weapons of Mass Destruction).

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