

**Aspects of Nehruvian
Economic Thought:
The Post-Independence Years**

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that this dissertation entitled "*ASPECTS OF NEHRUVIAN ECONOMIC THOUGHT - THE POST INDEPENDENCE YEARS*", submitted by *Ms. Richa Chaturvedi*, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of *Master of Philosophy*, has not been previously submitted for any degree of this or any other University and this is her own work.

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INTRODUCTION

Jawaharlal Nehru's economic thought being a much researched theme, in historical writings, both Indian and foreign, might lead one to question the need for another work on similar lines. However, no historical question can be considered closed and exhausted, despite the volumes of research on it. The collapse of the economies of the former Soviet Union and East Europe has lent force to the tendency to criticize the Nehruvian programme as flawed. Fresh questions have been raised about the feasibility of his socialist programme. It is indeed easy to point out the limitations of the Nehruvian economic construct, with the advantage of hindsight. But, it does not do justice to the man, or his vision, that was shaped and conditioned by the objective circumstances under which he was operating. This dissertation is an attempt to study Nehru and his policies, in the light of his times and limitations. However, it is not a commentary on Indian planning.

The material for such an undertaking is aplenty, Nehru being a prolific writer. It is these writings and speeches, that have been used as the primary material. Attempt has been made to retain Nehru's own

language, for when it came to expression of one's views, there were few who were as powerful & clear as Nehru. Apart from Nehru's own works, use has also been made of the plan documents, in the drafting of which Nehru was closely involved. These help to study the assumptions and expectations behind the plan programme. For an assessment of Nehru, his letters to the Chief Ministers have been used to study his perception of the practical difficulties in the realization of his vision. This source, by virtue of its late compilation (1985) was not available to previous scholars working on the theme. Besides these, the works of his critics have been referred to, to indicate the differences of the Nehruvian approach vis-a-vis the two extremes.

To understand the Nehruvian stance in the post-independence years, it is important to undertake a study of the evolution of his thoughts in pre-independence years. These were the years that witnessed his transformation from a complete disciple of Gandhi, to increasing socialist leaning and radicalism, climaxing in 1936. Post 1936 however he was back again to the folds of Gandhian ideology. It was this transformation that led to charges that under Gandhian influence, Nehru

had abandoned socialism and was working as a leader of the bourgeoisie.¹ The first chapter is an attempt to show that what Nehru had actually abandoned was not socialism per se but 'Stalin-Marxism', which was being replaced by his understanding of the essentials of Gandhian strategy.² Having witnessed the success of a broad based, non-violent and mass oriented national movement, Nehru embarked upon building up a similar movement in a pro-poor direction in post-independence India. Gandhian strategy rather than blunting out his commitment to socialism gave him a potent weapon, for the realization of his socialist programme.

The second chapter, deals with the Nehruvian concept of socialism. As discussed above, Nehru had abandoned 'Stalin-Marxism' for socialism on Gandhian lines. He realized that under the circumstance of falling production and large scale post partition misery, dogmatic adherence to

¹ "Gandhi's prophecy to the effect that when he died, Nehru would speak in his language came true". R. Ulyanovsky, Three Leaders - Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi, Moscow, 1986, p.79.

² Bipan Chandra, Jawaharlal Nehru in Historical Perspective, D.D. Kosambi Memorial Lecture, Bombay, 1990, p.21.

'isms' could only be self defeating.³ This explains his differences with the Indian communists and the socialists (though of a lesser degree).⁴ Given the importance of production, Nehru tried to mobilize all the classes to fight the pervasive backwardness and to move gradually in the direction of 'socialism' by consensus. For this he relied on the Gandhian strategy of mass-based change, continuously linking the past and present and more importantly linking the ends and means. It resulted in the novel concept of 'democratic socialism'. However, such a strategy called for a degree of political mobilization and public opinion building, that was difficult to achieve, in view of the mounting rightist challenge within and outside the Congress and the erosion of the socialist ranks inside the Congress.⁵ Nehru failed to realize that mere speeches and franchise could not mobilize the masses given the inequalities and rigidities of the

³ Speech initiating the debate on Second Five Year Plan in Lok Sabha, 23 May 1956, Jawaharlal Nehru's Speeches, (Henceforth Speeches), Vol.3, p.102.

⁴ Nehru criticized the Communist tendency to stick to what he thought were "worn-out cliches", with "strange obstinacy". Speech at Hyderabad, 15 Dec 1951, S.Gopal (ed.), Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, (Second Series, Henceforth SW II), Vol.17, New Delhi, 1984, p.68.

⁵ Within the Congress the right wing came to be represented by Patel and Tandon group, while on the outside was the Swatantra Party. Meanwhile, the breakaway of Congress Socialists deprived Nehru of "progressive" support to his programme.

Indian socio-economic structure, which the economic programme failed to alleviate sufficiently.

The third chapter discusses the place of land and agriculture in the Nehruvian economic programme. Nehru was right in realizing that the primary question in India was the peasant question, which had to be addressed through a suitable programme of land reform. Nehru infact, held that agriculture is far more important than industrialization⁶ (despite charges of having neglected agriculture) and that land reforms were meant to break up the "old class structure of a society that is stagnant".⁷ This was vital, given his strategy of grass-roots changes. His controversial resolution on collective farming was also an attempt to give a certain viability to small farmers who once made secure in their economic position would act an agents of change. But Nehru could not set aside the strong rightist opposition. In the sphere of intermediary abolition, the successful abolition of zamindari ironically blocked further changes. The beneficiaries of the first wave of reform, by virtue of the

⁶ Address to Andhra Pradesh Legislature, Hyderabad, 27 July 1963, Speeches, Vol.5, p.63.

⁷ Letter dated 13 July 1958, G. Parthasarthy (ed.), Jawaharlal Nehru's Letters to the Chief Ministers (Henceforth LCM), Vol.5, Publication Division, New Delhi, 1985, p.89.

land under their control and their hold an rural society, became the new rural oligarchy,⁸ which gave a conservative character to state governments and frustrated the strategy of change from below.

The fourth chapter discusses the place of industrialization in Nehruvian economic prescription. Nehru had held that "the nation's strength and prosperity depends primarily on industrialization"⁹. In this respect two issues are vital - the place of private and public sector in the sphere of industrialization and secondly the place of heavy industry vis-a-vis cottage and small scale industry. Nehru was a man in a hurry, who wanted to skip through the various stages of the industrial revolution and bring India at par with other countries of the world. This explains the heavy-industry bias in the Nehru-Mahalanobis model. Given the importance of production, the limited state resources and above all his strategy of gradual revolution, the private sector was given much room to function. But, it had to operate within the broad outlines of his socialist programme. Thus emerged the concept of a 'mixed' economy. Within the mixed economy, a special role was defined for the small-scale

⁸ Termed "bullock-capitalists" by Rudolph & Rudolph, In Pursuit of Lakshmi - The Political Economy of the Indian State, Bombay, 1987.

⁹ Speech on 4 Nov 1959, Speeches, Vol.4, p.332.

industries,¹⁰ particularly in view of the population and unemployment factor in India. The mixed economy was however to be a 'transitional stage'. Within it, the public sector would grow and expand, till the existing disparities were removed.¹¹ But given the failure of the public sector to capture "the commanding heights" of the economy and the existing unequal distribution of economic assets, the desired shift in the socialistic direction could not materialize.

What made the Nehruvian programme distinctive was that it had its critics both on the right and the left. While the right accused him of imposing "regimentation and totalitarianism",¹² (in the context of the Nagpur resolution on cooperative farming, 1959), the left itself termed his socialism as "a hoax".¹³ Though it is true that the class nature of the state determines its economic policies,¹⁴ but given the fluid class

¹⁰ Speech at Khadi and Village Industries Board, 2 Feb 1953, Speeches, Vol.2, pp.97-8.

¹¹ Speech at New Delhi, 3 Sept 1962, Speeches, Vol.4, p.521.

¹² Charan Singh, India's Poverty and Its Solution, Bombay, 1964, p.vii.

¹³ Ajoy Ghosh, Marxism and Indian Reality, New Delhi, 1989, p.114.

¹⁴ Ashok Mitra, Terms of Trade and Class Relations - An Essay in Political Economy, London, 1977, p.5.

structure, it is difficult to attribute power to the same class for all times. Others have attempted to explain the limitations of the Nehruvian socialist task, in terms of either 'pressure-group politics' or 'implementational lapses'. While not denying these, it would be wrong to look for any single explanation, in view of the multi-dimensional and complex nature of planning. The causes lay much deeper and had a direct bearing on the strategy of grass-roots changes. The two chief instruments that Nehru had relied on for socialistic reconstruction of the economy were the Congress organisation and the development bureaucracy. But both proved unequal to the task. The rise of the Congress right wing, the increasing factionalism, the party-squabbles, limited mass contact, meant that; the Congress as a whole was not equal to Nehru's ideas and did not share his conviction in the socialist cause. The bureaucracy too proved unequal to the task of identifying with the masses and acting as facilitators of change.¹⁵ Finally, Nehru was faced with the growing conservatism of Indian states and their increasing provincialism that hindered the evolution and implementation of a uniform plan of action.

¹⁵ See, V.T. Krishnamachari, Report on Indian and State Administrative Services of India, New Delhi, 1962.

It would however be wrong to hold that the "democratic liquidation of capitalism is a utopian programme".¹⁶ What it needed for its success was a strong indoctrination of the bureaucracy, the state apparatus and even the Congress organisation with the socialist ideology. This could however not be achieved, given the absence of something like a cadre based organisation, at a time when the socialist planning had been only marginally successful in changing the socio-economic inequalities.¹⁷

Nehru was aware that the Gandhian path was "hard to traverse",¹⁸ yet he stuck to his quest for "agreed and integrated solutions with the largest measure of goodwill behind them".¹⁹ Operating within the constraints, he managed to provide a structural break to the economy and a foundation on which to build upon. What vindicates Nehru further was the fact that even the most vociferous of his critics, once faced with the constraints under which Nehru strove for the realization of his socialistic vision, could not offer any viable alternative.

¹⁶ J.N. Bhagwati and P.Desai, Planning for Industrialisation, Industrial and trade policies since 1951, London, 1970, p.146.

¹⁷ Loosening up of economic and social rigidities was essential to generate forces of change from below.

¹⁸ Speech at New Delhi, 4 Nov 1959, Speeches, Vol.4, p.334.

¹⁹ Broadcast from New Delhi, 7 Sept 1946, Speeches, Vol.1, pp.4-5.

CHAPTER I

EVOLUTION OF NEHRU'S ECONOMIC THOUGHT THE PRE-INDEPENDENCE YEARS (1920-1947)

Though only a segment of Nehru's wide vision, his economic ideas were of tremendous consequence for the Congress ideology and also for independent India. A thinking and sensitive man, open to influences that he was, his ideas too show a gradual evolution over a greater part of his life. Largely they represented a fusion of contemporary 19th - 20th century thought. From a man who talked of "Swaraj only through Gandhian means"¹ in the beginning of his political career, to one who saw socialism as "the only solution to the ills of India and indeed the world"² and then a return to the folds of Gandhian ideology, the study of the transformation of Nehruvian thought implies a survey of the Indian national struggle.

¹ Presidential address at Bundel Khand Conference, Jhansi, 13 June 1921, S.Gopal (ed.), Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, (First Series, Henceforth SWI), Vol.1, New Delhi, 1972, p.177.

² Presidential address at Lucknow Congress, 12 April 1936, SWI Vol.7, p.180.

Though Nehru had joined the United Provinces Congress organization as early as 1913, the turning point came only in 1920s. His contact with the peasants of Allahabad gave him an insight into the real India. He himself acknowledged that "In 1920 I was totally ignorant of labour conditions in factories or fields and my political outlook was entirely bourgeois"³ and " that visit was a revalation to me"⁴. He registered his feeling of "shame and sorrow" at "our petty politics of the city which ignored this vast multitude" and at the same time filled him with "a new responsibility"⁵. This sense of "responsibility" was to guide his agenda first for the national movement and then independent India. However he himself disclaimed any credit for being the first to give a socio-economic content to the national movement.⁶

The early twenties witnessed his complete involvement in the Gandhian movement. Gandhi was to him "the great leader who by God's

³ Jawaharlal Nehru, An Autobiography, (written in prison in 1933), London, 1955, p.49.

⁴ Ibid., p.51.

⁵ Ibid., p.52.

⁶ R.K. Karanjia, The Mind of Mr.Nehru, London, 1966, p.21.

goodness has been sent to lead us to victory-----⁷ The tools for this victory were "charkha and ahimsa".⁸

In his Autobiography (1933) Nehru recounts "It was all nationalism and patriotism and I was a pure nationalist. My vague socialist ideas of college days having sunk into the background---And yet fresh reading was again stirring the embers of socialist ideas in my head---more humanitarian and utopian than scientific"⁹. As early as April 1919 in his Review of Russell's "Roads to freedom", he revealed his awareness of the ills of democracy under a capitalistic system. He refers to the "interestocracy" i.e "the unholy alliance of capital, property, military and an overgrown bureaucracy-----"¹⁰. Later (in 1958) in conversation with Tibor Mende he accepted that by then (1919-20) he had not read much Marxism, though as he said "it made me think of politics much more in terms of social change"¹¹.

⁷ Address at Raebareilly, 22 Jan 1921, SWI, Vol.1, p.212.

⁸ Article in Aaj, 2 March 1922, SWI, Vol.1, p.239.

⁹ Jawaharlal Nehru, An Autobiography, p.35.

¹⁰ In a Review of Russels Road to Freedom, April 1919, SWI, Vvol.1, pp.140-41.

¹¹ Tibor Mende, Conversations with Mr.Nehru, Bombay, 1958, p.15.

At this stage however, he had not related political freedom to economic freedom and accepted that "economic issues should not hinder political activity".¹² His Presidential Address at the UP conference (1923) made the reason for it clear. He was not desirous of changing the Congress creed for, it might lead to "unnecessary debate and controversy and might narrow the Congress". What he wanted was to keep the Congress "Open for all."¹³ In his Rae Bareilly Conference Address (1923) he called for zamindar-tenant harmony till the attainment of independence.¹⁴ The stand was valid in so far as freedom from foreign yoke was a pre-condition for social reconstruction which was seen as successor of political struggle. Infact, in 1923 referring to Gandhi he said "Can there be any doubt as to who represents India today?"¹⁵

The years 1926-1930 witnessed the emergence of Nehru from the shadow of Gandhi and the development of an outlook of his own. His

¹² S.Gopal, The Formative Ideology of Nehru, in , K.N.Panikkar (ed.), National & Left Movements in India, New Delhi, 1980, p.5.

¹³ Presidential Address at UP Conference Varanasi, 13 Oct 1923, SWI, Vol.2, p.208.

¹⁴ S.Gopal, Jawaharlal Nehru - Biography, Vol.1, Bombay, 1975, p.61.

¹⁵ Presidential Address at UP Conference Varanasi, 13Oct 1923, SWI, vol.2, p.210.

sojourn in Europe and participation in the Brussels Congress proved to be a milestone in "the development of Nehru's political thought, notably his espousal of socialism & a broad international outlook."¹⁶ He left those days far behind when his mind was "befogged and no clear path was visible".¹⁷ Yet his approach to socialism was still cautious. Though he spoke of "liberty of the poor and opposed from all exploitation".¹⁸ he was not "bristling with Marxist terminology".¹⁹ Nehru himself denied any "doctrinal adherence"²⁰ to Marxism. Doubts persisted in his mind as to the coordination of national interests with labour interests abroad, particularly in view of his experience with the Communists at the Brussels Congress. He expressed his strongest objection to being "led by the nose by the Russians or anybody else".²¹

His visit to Moscow (1929) gave him an opportunity to see Maxism in its applied form. He recorded his impression in a series of articles

¹⁶ M.Brecher, Nehru - A Political Biography, New Delhi, 1959, p.90.

¹⁷ Jawaharlal Nehru, An Autobiography, p.147.

¹⁸ Report an Brussels Congress, 19 Feb 1927, SWI, Vol.2, p.287.

¹⁹ M.Brecher, Nehru - A Political Biography, p.112.

²⁰ Jawaharlal Nehru, An Autobiography, p.163.

²¹ Report on Brussels Congress, 19 Feb 1927, SWI, Vol.2, p.287.

between April-May 1928.²² He hoped that the Russian solution may make things easier for India. This was not being "incredibly naive"²³ rather indicated a mind open to learning.

He returned to India "full of energy and vitality" and "a new outlook".²⁴ The latter implied that though independence and political freedom were essential "without social freedom & a socialist structure of society neither the country nor the individual could develop much".²⁵ The culmination was attained in the resolution for complete independence that Nehru managed to carry through at the Madras Congress (1927). During 1928-30 he travelled a lot and everywhere he spoke on "political independence and social freedom and made the former a step towards the attainment of the latter".²⁶ These years also saw the crystallization of the broad outlines of his thinking.

First was the connection between imperialism and capitalism and

²² SWI, Vol.2, pp.379-451.

²³ M.Brecher, Nehru - A Political Biography, p.116.

²⁴ Jawaharlal Nehru, An Autobiography, p.166.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid., p.182.

viewing Indian misery as a part of world phenomenon under the "unholy alliance" of capitalism and imperialism. The need was for complete independence and a new basis for social reconstruction and hence he said "we must aim at the destruction of all imperialism and reconstruction of society on another basis---socialism".²⁷

Secondly, he was clearly aware of the existence of separate classes guided by their interests and this was to continue till capitalism itself ended.²⁸ He even went to the extent of accusing the intelligentsia of advancing its own interests in the name of independence, " wherever social questions affecting the masses have arisen, they have been shelved, they have been asked to wait to stand over till Swaraj has been attained".²⁹ It was these vested interests that led to the failure of non-cooperation movement.³⁰ The solution he said lay not in "our trying ostrich-like to ignore it (class conflict)", but " a new order under which the

²⁷ Presidential Address at Bombay Presidency Youth Association Congress, Poona, 12 Dec 1928, SWI, Vol.3, p.204.

²⁸ Presidential Address at AITUC, Nagpur, 30 Nov 1929, SWI, Vol.4, p.51.

²⁹ Presidential Address at Punjab Provincial Conference, Amritsar, 11 April 1928, SWI, Vol.3, p.224.

³⁰ Speech at Calicut, May 1928, SWI, Vol.3, p.243.

worker will have true freedom and opportunity of growth".³¹ For as he held, "the reformer who is afraid of radical change or of overthrowing an oppressive regime and seeks merely to eliminate some of its abuses, becomes in reality one of its defenders"³²

The years succeeding the Lahore Congress saw attempts by Nehru to popularize his socio-economic concept of freedom. At Karachi in 1931, and in "Whither India?" (an article written, in 1933) he laid down the essentials of his thought.³³ In his Presidential Address (Lucknow, 1936) he declared socialism as "the only key to the solution of world's problems", "a vital creed which I hold with all my head and heart".³⁴ In spite of this much of his practical prescription was not much different from the Congress economic programme from at least the early 1920. For example, at the UPCC in March 1930, he called for removal of

³¹ Presidential Address at AITUC Nagpur, 30 Nov 1929, SWI, Vol.4, p.51.

³² Presidential Address at Punjab Provincial Conference, Amritsar, 11 April 1928, SWI, Vol.3 p.225.

³³ Subhadra Joshi, (ed.), Nehru on Socialism, New Delhi, 1985, pp.9-28.

³⁴ Presidential Address at Lucknow Congress, 12 April 1936, SWI Vol.7, p.180.

intermediaries, reduction of land revenue.³⁵ Even the Karachi resolution (March 1931) talked only of equal rights and obligation, living wage, reduction in rents and the like.³⁶ Nehru himself was aware that these were not "revolutionary" suggestions.³⁷

His increasing radicalization coincided with a much open criticism of Gandhian ideas and strategy. In 1926, in a letter to Syed Mahmud he admitted that he was "beginning to feel restive---the suppressed energy of some months wants an outlet".³⁸ In a letter to Gandhi he asserted that, "if the country does not go ahead politically by one method, surely it is up to our leader to think of other additional methods".³⁹ In 1933, he wrote from the prison, "I'm afraid I'm drifting further and further away from him----I want to break from the lot completely"⁴⁰ Nor did he

³⁵ Economic Resolution passed at UPCCC, 1 March 1930, SWI, Vol.4, p.255.

³⁶ Karachi Resolution, 31 March 1931, (drafted by Nehru), SWI, Vol.4, pp.511-3.

³⁷ Presidential Address at UPPC, Jhansi, 27 Oct 1928, SWI, Vol.3, p.260.

³⁸ 1 Dec 1926, SWI, Vol.2, p.254.

³⁹ Jawaharlal to Gandhi, 11 Jan 1928, SWI, Vol.3, p.15.

⁴⁰ 4 June 1933, SWI, Vol.5, p.478.

totally preclude the possibility of a split, when he said "It is quite possible that some such change may take place".⁴¹

Meanwhile Nehru admitted that "the theory and practice of Marxism lightened up many a dark corner of my mind".⁴² He went on to "declare" that "I have also progressively accepted the ideology of a scientific socialism and I may claim to be now a socialist in full sense of the term".⁴³ His association with the League against Imperialism, opposition to Public Safety Bill and the defence in Meerut conspiracy case did usher in a brief phase of cooperation with the communists. 1928 onwards however communist policy towards the so - called "bourgeois nationalist parties" changed. Nehru was condemned for what Gopal calls was his "left reformism"⁴⁴ and to the communists he became "the best shield of the Congress against left-wing groups and organization" by compromising many a time much against his own earlier conviction.⁴⁵

⁴¹ London, 4 Nov 1935, SWI, Vol.7, p.34.

⁴² Jawaharlal Nehru, An Autobiography, p.362.

⁴³ Message to All India Congress Socialist Conference, Merut, 13 Jan 1936, SWI, Vol.7, p.60.

⁴⁴ S.Gopal, Nehru - A Biography, Vol.1, p.203.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p.137.

Meanwhile Nehru had come to accept the essentials of the Gandhian strategy, particularly post-1936. Even at the height of his radicalism he said "I have long felt that the Congress is far the most effective radical organization"⁴⁶ and that "the moral and practical aspect of satyagraha has always appealed to me".⁴⁷ He realised that in India and other countries similarly placed nationalism takes precedence over other sentiments "This (nationalism) is a factor of primary importance and any socialist who ignores it does so at his peril", though, "nationalism by itself offers no solution to the vast problems---".⁴⁸ He had realised that the misery of India was not so much due to operation of capitalism, rather it was due to British colonialism. In his *Discovery of India* (1944) he records that. "---nearly all our major problems today have grown up during British rule and as result of British policy". It was the cause behind the "tragic poverty of India".⁴⁹ Hence, the British had to be uprooted before any meaningful socio-economic reconstruction could be effected. Post 1936, one finds him increasingly critical of communists'

⁴⁶ 27 Nov 1933, (Article), SWI, Vol.6, p.30.

⁴⁷ Press Statement, Poona, 14 September 1933, SWI, Vol.5, P.352.

⁴⁸ Message to All India Congress Socialist Conference, Meerut, 13 Jan 1936, SWI Vol.7, p.61.

⁴⁹ Jawaharlal Nehru, Discovery of India, (written in 1944), London, 1956, p.306.

criticism of Gandhi. "To attack Gandhi's bonafide is to injure oneself and ones cause---for to the millions of India, he stands as the embodiment of truth----".⁵⁰ Gandhi, to him was a great reVolutionary who has produced, "a wonderful awakening of the masses and inspite of its vague bourgeois ideology it had served a revolutionary purpose".⁵¹

Nehru never doubted Gandhi's pro-poor credentials. In conversation with Tibor Mende (1958) he said, "Right from the beginning that social aspect was there---It was not the denial of class struggle but the approach was a friendly approach".⁵² He recognized that Gandhi had "a deep social conscience not in the socialist or class struggle sense but as reflected in the almost continuous struggle he waged against inequality"⁵³

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Infact, over the years Nehru had come to recognize the validity of Gandhian approach as suited to Indian condition.⁵⁴ He appreciated

⁵⁰ Jawaharlal Nehru, An Autobiography, p.368.

⁵¹ Ibid., p.367.

⁵² Tibor Mende, Conversations with Mr. Nehru, pp.29-31.

⁵³ R.K. Karanjia, The Mind of Mr.Nehru, p.21.

⁵⁴ At Congress Session, Karachi, 29 March 1931, SWI, Vol.3, p.506.



Gandhi's attempt to function within the Indian socio-cultural fabric and bring about revolutionary changes.⁵⁵ As early as 1930, one finds Nehru resisting the interference by the League Against Imperialism on the grounds that it had not "the least notion of condition in India" and yet it did not hesitate "to lay down the law" for India.⁵⁶ Similar were his reasons for differences with Indian Communists. "Their basic error seems to be that they judge the Indian national movement from European labour standards"⁵⁷ and had "cut itself off from the springs of national sentiments and speak in a language which finds, no echo in the hearts of the people".⁵⁸ "They failed to realize that the problem of today in India is the problem of the peasantry"⁵⁹

In his approach to the economic question, Nehru was coming closer to the Congress Socialists. But as he said, "parlour socialism" was

⁵⁵ Jawaharlal Nehru, An Autobiography, p.365. For a detailed understanding of Nehruvian perception of Gandhian strategy, see, Nehru's letter to Badenweiler, 20 Jan 1936, SWI Vol.7, p.176.

⁵⁶ Nehru's letter to the League against Imperialism Secretariat, 30 Jan 1930, SWI Vol.4, p.237.

⁵⁷ Jawaharlal Nehru, An Autobiography, p.366.

⁵⁸ Jawaharlal Nehru, Discovery of India, p.269.

⁵⁹ Jawaharlal Nehru, An Autobiography, p.368.

inadequate since, "So long as we do not speak in the same language which has India's mentality for background, we lose a great measure of our effectiveness."⁶⁰

The second major bone of contention between him and the communists was the question of non-violence. In 1928 he stated that "personally I do not agree with many of the methods of the communists--"⁶¹ Reiterating it further in 1929 he said, "with all my sympathy for the communists view point, however I must confess that I do not appreciate many of their methods. The history of the past few years in China and elsewhere has shown that these methods have failed and often brought reaction in their train".⁶² With his basic grounding in 19th century liberalism and experience under Gandhi, Nehru had begun to see ahimsa, not as a "negative and passive method" but "an active dynamic and forceful method of enforcing mass will".⁶³ He was hopeful that "if it is possible to bring about a great political change by a non-violent

⁶⁰ Faizpur Address, 20 Dec 1936, SWI Vol.7, pp.562-3.

⁶¹ Student's Conference, Calcutta, 22 Sept 1928, SWI Vol.3, p.193.

⁶² Presidential Address, AITUC Nagpur, 30 Nov 1929, SWI, Vol.3, p.54.

⁶³ Nehru in "Some Criticisms Considered" (Article), 21 Nov 1933, SWI, Vol.6, p.25.

technique, should it not be equally possible to effect a radical social change by this method?".⁶⁴ The doctrine of ahimsa he said, had not exhausted its utility yet and it was not likely to do so till the nationalistic urge gave way to a socialist one.⁶⁵

Infact, post 1936, "Gandhi loomed larger on his theoretical horizon".⁶⁶ Though his committment to socialism remained the same, "the failure of the Bolshevik model in Europe" and the successful practice in India of the Gandhian strategy, made him re-evaluate the Gandhian strategy, in the light of the realities of colonial India. Hence, he moved away not from his socialist committment but, from "Stalin Marxism".⁶⁷

Given his understanding of the operation of colonialism in India, he realized that further progress could be attained only in association with the Congress and that the Congress itself should "hold together, push together, fight together and win together".⁶⁸ He was clear that "we

⁶⁴ Jawaharlal Nehru, An Autobiography, p.547.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p.91.

⁶⁶ Bipan Chandra, Jawaharlal Nehru in Historical Perspective, p.21.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Quoted in, S.Gopal, Nehru - A Biography, Vol.1, p.219.

cannot afford to split up and break up the Congress"⁶⁹ for it will undermine the organization and strength built up over the years.⁷⁰ Rather, there was the need to broaden its base, He held that "without the support of the masses or the industrial or the agricultural workers it is inconceivable that India can achieve her freedom".⁷¹ To the workers and peasants he said, "My advice is that you should join the Congress in large numbers and bring it round to your view".⁷² He hoped, "when they (peasants and workers) have gained strength they will to a great extent control the political movement".⁷³ Till then they should cooperate with the Congress keeping their identity intact".⁷⁴

Meanwhile, he himself turned his energy towards practical steps for the realization of his socialistic vision "----I believe that without---

⁶⁹ Speech at Lucknow, 11 April 1936, SWI Vol.7, p.169.

⁷⁰ Speech at Columbo, 19 July 1939, SWI Vol.10, p.18.

⁷¹ Presidential Address, All Bengal Students Conference, Calcutta, 22 Sept 1928, SWI Vol.3, p.199.

⁷² Bombay 13 June 1931, SWI Vol.5, p.286.

⁷³ Paper by Jawaharlal at International league for women, Gland (Switzerland), Sept 1927, SWI Vol.2, p.348.

⁷⁴ Jawaharlal Nehru, An Autobiography, pp.197-8.

planning little that is worth while can be done".⁷⁵ As the Chairman of National Planning Committee (1938), he involved himself fully in its work. He was however careful not to associate planning too closely with socialism lest it should offend people. Rather, as he said, one had to "think of planning apart from socialism and thus inevitably arriving at some form of a socialism and converting many".⁷⁶ Such an approach he thought would avoid any premature conflict on class lines that would only lead to prolonged inability to build anything".⁷⁷

Though the work of the committee ended prematurely with the arrest of Nehru in October 1940 and the subsequent pace of the national movement, it touched important issues as public ownership of resources, cooperatives and collectivization action, and provided a blueprint for the economic reconstruction of independent India. The post independent India, witnessed the moulding of Gandhian political strategy to the task of economic development. As he himself realized "---- the speed of change in a democracy is obviously somewhat slower---But to bring about any

⁷⁵ Address at Allahabad, 26 Dec.1937, SWI Vol.8, p.807.

⁷⁶ Letter to K.T.Shah, 13 May 1939, SWI, Vol.9, pp.373-4.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

vital change in the life of a nation takes time".⁷⁸ Particularly because he was seeking "agreed and integrated solution with the largest measure of goodwill behind them".⁷⁹ How far he was successful in delivering the promised socialist goal, shall be discussed subsequently.

⁷⁸ Tibor Mende, Conversations with Mr Nehru, p.137.

⁷⁹ Broadcast from New Delhi, 7 Sept 1946, Speeches, Vol.1, pp.4-5.

CHAPTER - II

NEHRUVIAN SOCIALISM: THE IDEAL AND THE STRATEGY

Reiterating his quest for socialism, Nehru said on the eve of independence, "I stand for socialism and I hope India will stand for socialism and that India will go towards the constitution of a socialist state.¹ Even as late as the Third Plan, he was certain that, "If we want India to be prosperous and if we want to raise the standard of India, we want a socialistic society in India...² And yet, he admitted that "I am afraid I have no definitions to give you. Definitions tend to become dogma and slogans, which prevent clear thinking in terms of a rapidly changing world"³ Nehru seemed to be picking up from where he had left in the early 1940s, when he said that life is too complicated given the present state of our knowledge and hence it was extremely illogical to attempt to confine it within, "the corners of a fixed doctrine."⁴

¹ Objectives Resolution in the Constituent Assembly, New Delhi, 13 Dec. 1946, Speeches, Vol.1, p.11.

² Draft Outline of the Third Five Year Plan - A Symposium, AICC, New Delhi, 1960, p.224.

³ R.K. Karanjia, The Mind of Mr. Nehru, p.37.

⁴ Jawaharlal Nehru, Discovery of India, p.17.

There was a certain vagueness about his concept of socio-economic order and this arose from the fact that it was not the "theoretical words and formula" that interested him, but the "content".⁵ The content was again defined in equally vague terms, as Nehru explained, "It is a certain human approach, of humanity growing and developing",⁶ the "end being basically... human betterment, everybody having the chance to concrete development"⁷, or "to break through the barrier of poverty and bring about better life, more happiness and prosperity for the millions of our people and at the same time, try to organize a more egalitarian base for society in India."⁸ He declared his commitment to "a world in which there is the free cooperation of free people and no class or group exploits another". All of it was however too general to satisfy the more radically inclined sections, and was interpreted as a sign of his weakening commitment to the socialist cause.

Explaining his so-called weakening commitment to socialism, Nehru admitted that "After all that has happened in the course of the

⁵ Objectives Resolution in Constituent Assembly, New Delhi, 13 Dec. 1946, Speeches, Vol.1, p.12.

⁶ R.K. Karanjia, The Mind of Mr. Nehru, p.51.

⁷ Ibid., p.37.

⁸ Ibid., p.56.

last seven or eight months one has to be very careful of the steps one takes, so as not to injure the existing structure too much.. I am not brave enough to go destroying about any more."⁹ Nehru was indeed referring to the human and material loss in the wake of partition and spiralling inflation due to price de-control. Most importantly, there was a crisis in business confidence and a "strike of capital", due to the accession of a 'Socialist' Prime Minister, that was hampering any long-term investment programme, emphasis being on speculation and short - term gains. Hence as Nehru said, "It is not a question of theory of communism or socialism or capitalism".¹⁰ The question was of "hard fact", i.e. meeting the basic needs of the masses. Hence, whatever the method, as long as it delivered the goods and brought satisfaction to the masses, it was acceptable. He confessed that he was not, "enamoured of these isms"¹¹ and his and the country's approach should be a pragmatic one.

Henceforth, production became the guiding factor of Nehru's ideas, so that everything was to be judged from the point of view of "production

⁹ Speech in defence of Industrial Policy Resolution 1948, New Delhi, 7 April 1948, Speeches, Vol.1, p.123.

¹⁰ Speech at the 22nd Annual Meet of FICCI, New Delhi, 4 March 1949, Speeches, Vol.1, p.141.

¹¹ Ibid.

first of all."¹² The question of distribution was not ignored as alleged. Nehru agreed that the problem of distribution was real,¹³ but this was valid only when the question of production had been satisfactorily addressed. The Indian case, at the point was different. The economy had suffered much due to war and partition, to say nothing of the colonial experience¹⁴ In such a country, distribution could only have been that of poverty, for as Nehru recognized, "there must obviously be something substantial to distribute before we can start the process of distribution."¹⁵ This was not the same as the rightist stand, according to which "You cannot distribute anything, unless you first make a profit".¹⁶ Production and not profit was to guide distribution, according to Nehru. It becomes clear when Nehru explained his conception of a mixed economy as "... doing things in such a way as...to add not only to

¹² Speech in the Constituent Assembly, New Delhi, 17 Feb 1948, Speeches, Vol.1, p.109.

¹³ Speech at Industries Conference, New Delhi, 18 Dec. 1947, Speeches, Vol.1., p.93.

¹⁴ For details of the economic consequences of the partition, See, C.N. Vakil, Economic Consequences of Divided India, Bombay, 1950.

¹⁵ Speech at Industries Conference, New Delhi; 18, Dec. 1947, SWII, Vol.1, p.571.

¹⁶ M.R. Masani, The Congress Misrule and the Swantantra Alternative, Bombay, 1966, p.161.

the wealth of the country as a whole, but to the distribution of that wealth in the country..."¹⁷

Once production became important, it naturally meant that all possible avenues had to be tapped, including the private sector. This led to the evolution of the concept of 'mixed economy'. He agreed that he had, "deliberately kept a large field for the private sector",¹⁸ but gradually the public sector was to grow in importance. Hence, the mixed economy was merely, a 'transitional stage', till such time as "the centre of gravity of the whole economy has shifted the other way"¹⁹, i.e., an increasingly socialistic direction.

However, when Nehru spoke of development, it was not merely in economic terms. In the early pre-independence days, Nehru had held that political freedom without economic freedom was meaningless. Now, he went a step ahead of crude materialism and aimed at spiritual elevation, since to him, "Material advance without spiritual advance shall be

¹⁷ Speech in Constituent Assembly, 7 April 1948, SWII, Vol.6, p.299-300.

¹⁸ Letter dated 19 Jan 1959, LCM, Vol.5, p.201.

¹⁹ Speech in Constituent Assembly, 7 April 1948, SWII, Vol.6, p.300.

disastrous".²⁰ His concern with the spiritual elevation of man is quite evident, as early as the writing of the *Discovery of India*, where he says, "In our lives also we have to discover a balance between the body and the spirit".²¹ He felt that in the effort to ensure material prosperity, the spiritual element of the human being had been neglected.²² Echoing Gandhi, he said that while man had conquered his external conditions, yet there was a "strange spectacle" of lack of moral fibre and self control,²³ which to him was "ultimately the basis of culture and civilization and which have given some meaning to life."²⁴ He believed that "Economic policy can no longer be considered as some interpretation of nature's law, apart from human considerations and moral issues."²⁵ For, in the ultimate analysis, democracy and socialism were means to an end and not an end in itself."²⁶

²⁰ R.K. Karanjia, The Mind of Mr. Nehru, p.103.

²¹ Jawaharlal nehru, Discovery of India, p.572.

²² Jawaharlal nehru, Community Development and Panchayati Raj, New Delhi, 1963, p.55-56.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid., p.62.

²⁵ Jawaharlal Nehru, Indian Today and Tomorrow, New Delhi, 1960, p.34.

²⁶ Jawaharlal Nehru, Community Development and Panchayati Raj, p.59.

Nehru, whose own life had been one of gradual development, was perceptive enough to see that the terms socialism and capitalism could not hold their orthodox connotation in view of the developments in both.²⁷ Capitalism of the modern day had been modified and was different from the old genre of capitalism. Even in the United States of America, the bastion of capitalism, it was different from what it was 20 or 30 years ago.²⁸ The Marxist fear in the context of the Industrial revolution, that there would be greater and greater concentration of wealth and power and widespread poverty did not really materialize. Democratic and trade union pressure had limited both.²⁹ Thus as Nehru saw, "There is no proletariat of the Marxian conception in America."³⁰

Thus "...if the world has changed so much, surely, it should affect our thinking and we should try to understand and adapt ourselves to these changes".³¹ Socialism was not a dogma that could be applied to

²⁷ Speech at FICCI, New Delhi, 4th March 1949, Speeches, Vol.1., p.140.

²⁸ Speech at New Delhi, 26, Dec. 1950, Speeches, Vol.2, p.46.

²⁹ R.K. Karanjia, The Mind of Mr. Nehru, p.30.

³⁰ Ibid., p.31.

³¹ Speech at New Delhi, 4 march 1949, Speeches, Vol.1., p.133.

any country, irrespective of its unique conditions. Hence, he felt that the Russian brand of Marxism, bore little resemblance to the socialism of Marx, so much so that Marx himself would be astonished if he were to see the various interpretations of his theory"³², e.g. in China. As for India he held that "... the condition... are special and peculiar. Further we have also to understand that our background is different in many ways, particularly the Gandhian background".³³ Hence, Indian socialism need not follow the example of any other country, rather, it must, if it has to endure, be based on the genius of her people and be an outcome of her thought and culture. Rather than adopting wholesale from another country's experience, it was important to see, "how far it is possible"³⁴, in one's own country.

In this respect Nehru was very critical of the Indian Communists and to a lesser degree of the Socialists. In a speech in 1951 he said, "The world changes, India is not Europe, and we are in the middle of the twentieth century; but all these things do not seem to affect our

³² Address to Indian Chemical Association, New Delhi, 26 Dec. 1950, Speeches, Vol.2, p.47.

³³ Speech at Avadi, 22 Jan 1955, Speeches, Vol.3, p.17.

³⁴ Address to the Conference of All India Manufacturer Organisation, New Delhi, 14 April 1956, Speeches, Vol.3, p.83.

communist friends. They keep repeating their worn-out cliches. I cannot understand this strange obstinacy."³⁵ He was clear that an understanding of the Russian and other revolutions is essential to understand the fresh set of forces that one has to face. But, "... to think we will repeat the England of 17th, 18th and 19th century or the French Revolution or the Russian revolution in India, right now, is nothing but to pursue the wrong track."³⁶ The nation could just not go for a myopic policy derived from another country, like the communists prescribed in India.³⁷

Though he accepted a "certain economic interpretation of history", he was not much interested, as he said, in many things which Marx had said. In fact to him Marx was "out of date" and hence "... the communists with all their fire and fury are in some ways utterly reactionary".³⁸ To him, the failure of communists in other countries was due to their "loyalty and allegiance to a country other than their own" and the fact that "they behave as strangers in their own land".³⁹ He even did not

³⁵ Speech at Hyderabad, 15 Dec. 1951, SWII, Vol.17, p.68.

³⁶ Speech at Thiruvananthapuram, 26 Nov. 1951, Ibid., p.47.

³⁷ Speech at Cuttack, 14 Dec.1951, SWII, Vol.17, P.63.

³⁸ Press Conference, New Delhi, 28 Feb 1952, Ibid., p.168.

³⁹ Speech at Hyderabad, 15 Dec 1951, Ibid., p.68.

hesitate to call the Communist Party of India as "an enemy of real communism in India."⁴⁰ To him, it had no relation with communism and did not care for the fundamentals of the communist philosophy. Rather they were acting against communism and promoting "a dangerous cult" of "terroristic methods".⁴¹ Hence they were "completely anti-national".⁴² Compared to the communists, he appreciated the more nationalist approach of the socialists.⁴³ But they too had revealed an "amazing lack of responsibility and constructive bent of mind"⁴⁴ To the contrary they were "completely static in their outlook",⁴⁵ inspite of their revolutionary speeches.

It has been argued, that the Marxists made no attempt to suit Marxism - Leninism to Indian social reality, unlike Mao.⁴⁶ Chief, among their lapses was the failure to address the peasant question adequately.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Address to Bihar Political Conference, Muzaffarpur, 2 April 1949, SWII, Vol.10, p.222.

⁴² Letter to B.G. Kher, New Delhi, 30 Jan 1949, SWII, Vol.9, p.414.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Letter to Vallabhhhai Patel, 30 June 1949, SWII, Vol.12, p.455.

⁴⁵ Letter dated 1 July 1949, LCM, Vol.1, p.371.

⁴⁶ P.C. Joshi, Land Reforms in India - Trends & Perspective, Delhi, 1975, p.20.

In this context, the question of class struggle becomes important. Nehru accepted that, "class struggle is there always and one cannot deny it or put it aside."⁴⁷ Any attempt at reform, political or social does bring about a clash of interests. While not denying this, Nehru wanted to deal with it in a "cooperative way", lessening the conflict and winning over people⁴⁸. He believed that Marx had been "conditioned by his times", when there was no democracy, no trade union movement and no means of equalizing society and resolving conflicts, other than struggle.⁴⁹ Marxist solutions though suited to his times, could not be removed from their historical context and applied to conditions that were very different. To his critics, who held that "... the objective of overthrowing the bourgeoisie.. impose on us the militant and revolutionary forms of struggle and organization,⁵⁰ Nehru simply stated, that the concept had become 'out dated'.

The question of 'class struggle' is also closely related to the issue of 'ends and means' in Nehruvian socialist thought. Here, Gandhi and his

⁴⁷ R.K. Karanjia, The Mind of Mr. Nehru, p.76.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p.77

⁴⁹ Ibid., p.76

⁵⁰ Report adopted by CPI Polit Bureau, Dec 1948, M B Rao (ed.), Documents of the History of the CPI, Vol.7, New Delhi, 1976, pp.258-9.

method of persuasion and consensus had struck him as something very "remarkable and effective."⁵¹ Gandhi as he acknowledged, was "the only major change in life, one which came almost like a bolt."⁵² The important thing that Gandhi had insisted upon, was the importance of pure means, ends being themselves shaped by the means. They formed an organic whole so to say, so that wrong means could not lead to right ends and this Nehru held was "no longer merely an ethical doctrine but a practical proposition".⁵³ On its moral side, it implied that an ideal as noble as socialism could not be achieved by a device as crude as violence, for, "violence which is evil must have evil consequences and indeed leads to the growth of violence".⁵⁴ In the absence of good means, new problems arose that changed the objective itself.⁵⁵ Nehru admitted that the policies and philosophies that he sought to implement had been taught by Gandhi and in view of the circumstances it was indeed practical.⁵⁶ As he saw, in India it was neither possible to have both civil conflict and

⁵¹ R.K. Karanjia, The Mind of Mr. Nehru, p.20.

⁵² Tibor Mende, Conversations with Mr. Nehru, p.33.

⁵³ Letter dated 13 July 1958, LCM, Vol.5, p.84.

⁵⁴ Address at New Delhi, 29 Nov 1956, Speeches, Vol.3, p.431.

⁵⁵ Speech at New Delhi, 20 Nov 1955, Speeches, Vol.3, p.310.

⁵⁶ R.K Karanjia, The Mind of Mr. Nehru, p.13.

economic progress, nor was it possible to wait for economic progress till the resolution of civil conflicts.⁵⁷ Hence one had to strike a middle path. A course of outright violence, even if for a noble ideal, was the greatest act of treason.⁵⁸

He was aware that change (socialism), cannot be brought about by a sudden law.⁵⁹ In this context he pointed time and again to Gandhi, who though firmly rooted in the tradition of India was simultaneously acting at a "revolutionary plane"⁶⁰. Nehru was particularly impressed with his ability to link the past with the present and even the future, due to which he was able to advance step by step, without a break.⁶¹

Having seen the success of Gandhian strategy during the freedom struggle, Nehru was convinced that "...it would be folly for us in India to

⁵⁷ Speech in Lok Sabha, 22 May 1952, Speeches, Vol. 2. p.31.

⁵⁸ Address at Lucknow University, 28 Jan 1949, Speeches, Vol.1, p. 372-376.

⁵⁹ Speech at AICC Session Indore, 4 Jan, 1957, S. Gopal (ed.); Jawaharlal Nehru - An Anthology, New Delhi, 1980, p.315.

⁶⁰ AICC Economic Review, 15 March 1959, *Ibid.*, p.114.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p.115.

think in terms sudden and complete upset".⁶² Just as Gandhi had undermined the caste system, limiting the opposition by avoiding any aggressive direct attack on the practitioners of the system. Nehru too wanted to proceed towards socialism, gradually and steadily, preparing the people for its acceptance.

The means that Nehru adopted for the task of social transformation were democratic. Nehru had already perceived that democracy had indeed neutralized the acquisitive and exploitative character of capitalism. Nehru accepted it all the more because it was a peaceful method and fitted neatly into his scheme of ends and means.⁶³ Where this peaceful method was available and where there was adult suffrage, the question of violent upsurge appeared absurd to him.⁶⁴ The non-violent freedom struggle, peaceful merger of states and the success of zamindari abolition, probably led him to believe that the vested interests in India were more amenable to reason.⁶⁵ He believed that they

⁶² Speech at Central Advisory Council of Industries, New Delhi, 24 Jan 1949, SWII Vol. 9, p.54.

⁶³ Speech at Seminar of Parliamentary Democracy New Delhi, 25 Feb 1956, Speeches, Vol. 3, pp. 139-40.

⁶⁴ Speech in Lok Sabha, 25 Feb 1955, Speeches, Vol. 3, p.278.

⁶⁵ Tibor Mende, Conversations with Mr. Nehru, pp.36-7.

could be won over by changing them, without actually destroying them.⁶⁶ He accepted that the pace of change in democracy was no doubt slow, but it was not impossible, what was important was not to relent the sense of urgency. Within his ends means construct, there was no place for totalitarian methods, even though it could bring faster results.

The problem of modern civilization as he perceived was the growing concentration of power in the wake of industrialization. The big question was, "how to safeguard individual freedom, under these condition?"⁶⁷ Hence Nehruvian democracy was not the People's Democracy of China nor was it 'democratic centralism' of the Soviet Union, for as he said "If it (democracy) is not peaceful, then to my mind it is not democracy".⁶⁸

The individual was accorded the highest place, within his democratic conception. The biggest factor behind the success of any policy,

⁶⁶ Ibid., p.36.

⁶⁷ Speech in the Standing Committee, NDC, New Delhi, 7 Jan, 1956, Jawaharlal Nehru, On Planning & Development, New Delhi, 1956, p.37.

⁶⁸ Address at Seminar on Parliamentary Democracy, New Delhi, 25 Feb 1956, Speeches, Vol. 3, p.139-40.

according to him was "the human factor."⁶⁹ For it was the individual who was to feel and understand and then translate it into action.⁷⁰ True revolution he said, came from people and not the top and they had to be essentially social.⁷¹ Hence any revolution had to be preceded by adequate training for the people, so as to prepare them for its acceptance.⁷² It was not enough to have the right policy, more important was that it should be perceived as such by the masses.⁷³ Having created that confidence and having being endowed with franchise, they could then generate forces for change from below. Such changes though slow to come would nevertheless be profound, lasting and "vital"⁷⁴

Such a strategy suited the Indian conditions, not only for the reasons already discussed above, but also due "the lesson of the 1930s"

⁶⁹ Speech on No-Confidence motion against government, Lok Sabha, 22 Aug 1963, Speeches, Vol. 5, p.81.

⁷⁰ Speech at Community Project Conference, New Delhi, 7 May 1952, Speeches, Vol.2, p.54.

⁷¹ AICC Economic Review, 15 March 1959, S. Gopal (ed.), Jawaharlal Nehru - An Anthology, p.114.

⁷² Speech at AICC Session Indore, 4 Jan 1957, *Ibid.*, p.315.

⁷³ Forward to 'Mahatma' by DG Tendulkar (1951), *Ibid.*, p.117.

⁷⁴ Tibor Mende, Conversations with Mr. Nehru, p.37.

i.e. the ever present fascist danger.⁷⁵ Within the Indian society existed multiple pressure groups; the large capitalist combines, rich landowners and a very powerful middle class. Unlike the Russian Revolution, the Indian freedom movement and the accompanying transfer of power had not ended their power and influence. Any outright attack on these vested interests, could well have pushed these classes into a fascist position. To counter these powerful forces, there was a need for a very widespread revolution and not that which inspired only a minority of the radically inclined sections. As Nehru said, "The question of timing becomes highly important. A right step taken at the wrong time may lead to unfortunate consequences and even disaster."⁷⁶ Instead of a frontal attack on these vested interests, Nehru aimed to forge a complex relationship, based on "strategic support and restraint", thereby limiting their potential rate of expansion in independent India. Planning was to be used as a means of resolving conflict in India's large and heterogeneous society.

Nehru was certain that, "Socialism is not a consummation which can be brought about by mere legislative enactments. The necessary

⁷⁵ Bipan Chandra, Jawaharlal Nehru in Historical Perspective, p.54.

⁷⁶ Letter dated 3 March 1948, LCM, Vol.1, p.77.

conditions precedent for socialism must be created".⁷⁷ Chief among these pre-conditions was the building up of a strong public opinion around the concept of socialism, particularly a strong political consensus. But Nehru failed to secure the communist and socialist support for his socialist programme. The former, refused to look beyond its perception that, "The Government of India is bourgeois-landlord government...Its policies are motivated by the desire to develop India along independent capitalist lines".⁷⁸ The socialists on the other hand felt that the Congress cannot be converted into, "an instrument for the establishment of a socialist state unless it undergoes a fundamental change in its character and composition for which there is no hope".⁷⁹ But rather than strengthening Nehru's position vis-a-vis the rightists, they drifted away from him. In the absence of their support, Nehru found in his position weakened vis-a-vis the conservative Congress presidentship of Patel and Tandon.

⁷⁷ Address to Textile Labour Association, Ahmedabad, 12 Feb 1949, SWII, Vol.10, p.63.

⁷⁸ V.B. Karnik, (ed.), Indian Communist Party Documents 1930-1956. Bombay, 1957, p.292.

⁷⁹ Narendradev's letter to Gandhi, 1947, in Brahmanand (ed.), Acharya Narendra Deva - Towards Socialist Society, New Delhi, 1979, p.333.

Nehru had viewed planning as "something which leads you from one step to another and ultimately to the goal (socialism)".⁸⁰ But in view of the failure to generate strong forces in the direction of socialism, the concessions granted to the private sector appeared too magnanimous and revealed the limitations of the strategy of 'strategic support and restraint'.

⁸⁰ Speech on No-Confidence Motion in Lok Sabha, 22 Aug 1963, Speeches, Vol.5, p.81.

CHAPTER III

**LAND AND AGRICULTURE IN
NEHRUVIAN THOUGHT**

The political heritage of the national movement, led by Gandhi, Nehru and others, with its emphasis on mass participation meant that once freedom was attained, the land question had to be settled. This was so because in view of Indian agriculture based economy, a mass question was naturally one that concerned the peasants. In a country where a peasant oriented political revolution had already been realized, any attempt to take the economic revolution in a direction unfavourable to the interests of the peasants could not succeed without a reversal of the historical process.¹

Nehru's interest in the peasant question dates back to his involvement with the peasants of Oudh (early 1920s). Thereafter, it continued to develop till in 1937, he declared agriculture and hence land to be "the primary question" facing India, declaring everything else to be secondary. But little could be expected from the British government and

¹ P.C. Joshi, Institutional Aspects of Agricultural Development-India from Asian Perspective, New Delhi, 1987, pp.321-2.

hence as Nehru stated in Dec. 1948, "Our agricultural problems which ought to have been solved long ago dragged on and on till we have to face them now immediately".²

The broad outlines of the future agrarian policy had already been laid during the deliberations of the National Planning Committee (1938) and the previous AICC resolutions.³ These coupled with Nehru's own ideological leanings, defined the programme for land and agrarian reconstruction, the chief elements of which were:

- (a) tenancy reforms, ceiling and rent regulation.
- (b) abolition of intermediaries.
- (c) Community Development and Panchayati Raj.
- (d) Cooperatives.

These were accepted and approved by the Congress Economic Reforms Committee 1948 and the 55th Congress session at Jaipur in 1948 and subsequently, also by the Congress Agrarian Reforms Committee.

² Speech at the 19th Annual meet of Central Board of Irrigation at New Delhi, Speeches Vol.1, p.87.

³ See for details of the AICC economic resolutions, AM Zaidi and S.G. Zaidi (ed.), Foundations of Indian Planing, New Delhi, 1979.

Nehru recognized that "Land reforms have a peculiar significance because without them, more especially in a highly congested country like India, there can be no radical improvement in production in agriculture".⁴

From the production point of view Nehru felt that unless the peasant had a greater security of tenure and unless peasant proprietorship was widely established, there would not be an adequate incentive for higher production. On the distribution side, inequitable distribution of land caused extreme hardship. Hence Nehru favoured Zamindari abolition and worked towards security of tenure for tenants, rent reduction and ceilings.

But the objective of land reforms, was, "a deeper one", they were meant "to break up the old class structure of a society that is stagnant".⁵ To Nehru, structural changes alone were not enough, rather he wanted to change the psychology of dependence and insecurity inherent in an inequitable class structure.⁶

⁴ Note in AICC Economic Review, New Delhi, 15 Aug 1958, Speeches, Vol.4, p.122.

⁵ Nehru's fortnightly letter to the Chief Ministers, 13 July 1958, LCM, Vol.1, p.89.

⁶ Speech at Industries Conference Delhi, 18 Dec. 1947, Speeches, Vol.1, p.93.

Within six years (1951-56), despite administrative and judicial problems and opposition from the zamindars, zamindaris were virtually abolished. In view of the stiff opposition that it provoked, it is difficult to agree with Ladejinsky that it was "the weakest enemy because it was imposed by a foreign power".⁷ The system was well entrenched covering 40% of India. Its removal cleared the ground for the reconstruction of Indian agriculture. But as Nehru realized, "this by itself is no solution to the problem"⁸ and that further reforms were necessary.

The directives for security of tenure, rent reduction and ceiling, outlined in the First Five Year Plan and subsequently were however not as successful. The All India Rural Credit Report agreed that, "land reform laws passed for the benefit of the underprivileged have not basically altered India's village structure. The small minority of oligarchies have had wit and resources enough to get around these laws in which loopholes were so large as to give them ample manoeuvring ground".⁹ By early 1960s the condition of small farmers was no better.

⁷ Louis J. Walinsky (ed.), Agrarian Reforms as Unfinished Business, The Selected Papers of Wolf Ladejinsky, Cambridge, 1977, p.377.

⁸ Quoted in H.D. Malviya, Land Reforms in India, AICC, New Delhi, 1954, pp.91-92.

⁹ Quoted in Daniel Thorner, The Agricultural Prospects in India-Plan Discussion and Principles, 1956, pp.78-9.

In their attack on feudal relations the communists had been united with the Congress. However the limited success of the reforms programme, signalled to them that the Congress as the so called leader of the bourgeoisie was incapable of effecting an anti-feudal revolution and was rather perpetuating it. The CPI paper, "On the Agrarian Question in India" (1948) infact alleged that, "the bourgeoisie in the period of declining capitalism cannot liquidate feudalism, in a revolutionary way, but will save its interest... by only attacking to curb feudalism to suit its own interest".¹⁰ What they wanted was, "to develop a broad peasant movement all over the country, to put this movement progressively on the rails of armed struggle.... and direct action as in Telengana".¹¹ Above all they demanded "nationalization of land".¹²

However, Nehru saw little wisdom in imposing reforms forcefully from above, rather true to his Gandhian training, he believed in working from the grass roots.¹³ To him, "the primary matter is the human being

¹⁰ On the Agrarian Question in India, Document adopted by Dec. 1940 Polit Bureau meet, MB Rao (ed.), Documents of the History of the CPI, Vol.7, p.497.

¹¹ The 3P's Document, Ajay Ghosh, Dange, & SV Ghate, 30 Sept 1950, Ibid, p.501.

¹² Ibid., p.497.

¹³ Speech in Lok Sabha, 21 Dec. 1954, Speeches, Vol.3, p.10.

involved, the man who is going to feel it and translate that feeling into action"¹⁴ This explains his reliance on institutions of Panchayati Raj and Community Development as instruments of change from below. The objective as he saw was encouragement for voluntary constructive work and inculcating a sense of participation. It was this which made the institutions of Panchayati Raj, as he said, "more than anything else, symbols of the resurgent spirit of India. They are essentially an Indian growth, suited to Indian conditions and therefore with solid foundation in the soul and people of India"¹⁵ Nehru hoped that these would make the individual, a builder of his own village and of India in the larger sense.¹⁶ Further, given the right to franchise and training under local institutions of government, positive force for change would be generated from below, that would enable people's will to guide the socio-economic programme. This to him was "real revolution", and not those "processes in which we can perhaps break each others heads".¹⁷

¹⁴ Speech at Community Project Conference, New Delhi, 7 May 1952, Speeches, Vol.2, p.54.

¹⁵ Message to Fourth Development Commissions Conference, Shimla, 9 May 1955, Speeches, Vol.3 p.22.

¹⁶ Jawaharlal Nehru, On Cooperation, Ministry of Community Development & Panchayati Raj, New Delhi, 1962, p.9.

¹⁷ Jawaharlal Nehru, Planning & Development, p.5.

The final major prescription for agriculture, according to Nehru was cooperatives and particularly cooperative farming. As he said, "Speaking for myself I do not broadly accept collective farming. But I do believe in cooperation and I do firmly and absolutely believe in its rightness".¹⁸ The mandate for it had already been provided in Congress resolutions of 1936 and 1945. The Congress resolution at Faizpur (1936) suggested that "An effort should be made to introduce cooperative farming". The Congress Election Manifesto, 1945, explained that, "progressive agriculture as well as the creation of new social values and incentives require some system of cooperative farming suited to Indian conditions".¹⁹ The problem with Indian agriculture, he felt was the very small farms so that, "all that the farmer can do is to carry on without making much progress".²⁰ Having ruled out large efficient landlords as aggressive and exploitative for the peasantry, he proposed instead "efficient peasants working in cooperatives"²¹ To him, cooperation was "a higher form of agriculture just as the social approach in

¹⁸ Speech in Lok Sabha, 19 Feb. 1959, Jawaharlal Nehru On Cooperation, p.22.

¹⁹ AM Zaidi (ed.), A Tryst with Destiny, p.70 & 72.
Jawaharlal Nehru on Cooperation, p.130.

²¹ Ibid., p.13-4.

industrialization is better".²² His programme of cooperation was to be a gradual one. Explaining it in his fortnightly letters to the Chief Ministers he said, "..... The objective of our land policy is to build up first of all service cooperatives in every village in India, the next step being joint farming.. where people agree to it and this is feasible"²³ True to his faith in democracy and will of people, Nehru was careful to state that, "If joint farming came, it would be with the consent of the people concerned"²⁴

The Nagpur resolution (1959) outlined that "The future agrarian pattern should be that of cooperative joint farming, in which land will be pooled for joint cultivation; the farmers continuing to retain their property rights and getting share from net produce in proportion to their land".²⁵ Even this was to be attempted only "wherever possible and generally agreed to by farmers".²⁶

However, Nehru's concepts of cooperatives was confused with

²² Speech in Lok Sabha, 22 Aug 1960, Speeches, Vol.4, p.141.

²³ Letter dated 19 Jan 1959, LCM, Vol.5, p.200.

²⁴ Speech in Lok Sabha 1959, Nehru on Cooperation, p.21.

²⁵ Zaidi & Zaidi, Tryst with Destiny, p.170.

²⁶ Ibid.

Soviet and Chinese collectivization and faced vociferous criticism from the right. It was alleged that "Heedless to the lessons of the failures of collective farming in the Iron curtain countries and ignoring the magnificent achievement of small scale peasant farming in Japan, Prime Minister Nehru insists that this change would result in increased food production".²⁷ It was even stated that "cooperation can only be between free men and not between serfs"²⁸ This despite the fact that Nehru saw cooperation, as means, not of "state intrusion" but of "lessening the official element everywhere".²⁹

The beneficiaries of the first wave of land reforms, the medium-sized farmers found a voice in Ch. Charan Singh who held that "The cooperative principle...when stretched the point of merger of holdings, it violates the essence of true cooperation...Local bosses which the officials of the cooperative will degenerate into will slowly but surely undermined the very foundations of our nascent democracy."³⁰ The opposition

²⁷ M.R. Masani, Congress Misrule and the Swatantra Alternative, p.161.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Latter dated 28 May 1959, LCM, Vol.5, p.252.

³⁰ Charan Singh, India's Poverty and Its Solution, Bombay, 1964, p.vi-vii.

crystallized into the formation of Swatantra Party. But, more disturbing was the opposition within the "Congress elites".³¹ Clearly the programme of cooperatives would have threatened the rural oligarchy, whose support was vital for electoral success and hence, could not be offended.

The intense opposition to the proposals reduced any chances of it being a practical success. Even though it would have secured the position of the small farmers vis-a- vis the bigger ones, which was so vital for Nehru's strategy of grass roots changes. But Nehru managed to integrate cooperation with planning. The First Five Year Plan held out that the purpose of the plan is to change the tenor of the economy from "an individualistic to a socially regulated and cooperative basis",³² and similarly in the subsequent plans.

Despite the allegations of being blind to the Japanese miracle, Nehru in an interview said, "... broadly our agricultural policy is one of small farmers cooperatively engaged. As for production, one of the highest production in the world today is in Japan.... we intend to follow the model

³¹ F.Frankel, India's Political Economy, 1947-1977: The Gradual Revolution, p.179.

³² First Five Year Plan, GOI, 1950, pp.163-4.

as far as possible" and reserved the Russian model for the less populated areas.³³ It is possible that towards his last years, Nehru was beginning to see the practicability of Japanese model, given India's land constraint and population pressure. He was encouraged perhaps by whatever limited achievement that had been made through land legislation, in providing stability to small farmers.³⁴

A question related to the theme is that of the priority given to industries vis-a-vis agricultural by Nehru. This has been rather overstated by Nehru's critics, particularly Sh. Charan Singh, who was all for peasant economy and rural democracy.³⁵ His ideal was that of peasant proprietorship on personally cultivated moderate size holdings. He wanted agricultural development to precede industrialization and not vice versa.³⁶

³³ R.K. Karanjia, The Mind of Mr. Nehru, p.54.

³⁴ In Japan post-war inflation had led to accumulation of capital in villages by relieving small farmer of heavy indebtedness and paying for land purchase obligations in inflated currency, Louis J. Walinsky (ed.), Agrarian Reforms as Unfinished Bureau, The Selected Papers of W. Ladejinsky, p.282. Absence of any such development and colonial policy denied such viability to the small farmer in India.

³⁵ Charan Singh, Joint Farming X-Rayed: The Problem and its Solution, Bombay, 1959 p.19.

³⁶ Ibid., p.229.

It would however be wrong to say that Nehru neglected agriculture in his economic model, if we consider his letters to the Chief Ministers. Time and again he wrote to them complaining that, " I have a feeling that the Department of Agriculture of some of the states are still supposed to be relatively unimportant departments".³⁷ Nor is it fair to think that Nehru was thinking of extracting agrarian 'surplus' to finance industrialization, as held by Charan Singh, for the simple reason that after years of colonial exploitation, India's traditional agriculture had little to offer. Though in percentage terms, allocation for agriculture fell under the Second Plan (from 196 crores in the First Plan to 170 crores in the Second Plan)³⁸ in aggregate terms there was a rise. Further, keeping in view the intimate linkages between modern agriculture and heavy industries particularly in petrochemicals and agricultural machinery, much of the advances made recently in modern agriculture would not have been possible with domestic resources.

While hindsight has provided us the facts to criticize Nehruvian programme as inadequate; it has also provided us material to facilitate

³⁷ Letter dated 30 July 1958, LCM, Vol.5, p.106.

³⁸ Second Five Year Plan - A Summary, Publication Division, GOI, 1956, p.88.

a balanced criticism of Nehruvian land programme. This, by comparing the above with the programme of Nehru's critics and their achievements. In this sphere, Janta Party, the first non-Congress government did precious little.³⁹ Though their, election manifesto promised an honest implementation of land legislation,⁴⁰ to be achieved in three years according to their Economic Policy Statement (1977),⁴¹ little was done to update even the record of right of the peasants.⁴²

The only other alternative was experimented in Bengal and Kerala under their respective communist governments, where it was hailed as a show-piece of their success. But a look at the governments own records reveals a not so bright picture. E.g., the 1957 Kerala Agrarian Relation Act held that 1705 lakh acres would be redistributed, but by May 1973 only 956 acres had actually been redistributed.⁴³ Both in Kerala, as also

³⁹ Janata Party was a coalition of Congress O, Bharatiya Lok Dal, Jan Sangh and Socialists.

⁴⁰ Election Manifesto, Janata Party, New Delhi 1977, p.13.

⁴¹ Statement an Economic Policy, Janata Party, New Delhi, 1977, p.1.

⁴² Madhu Limaye, Janta Party Experience - An Insider's Account of Opposition Politics 1977-80, Vol.2, New Delhi, 1994, p.382.

⁴³ M.A. Oommen, A Study on Land Reforms in Kerala, New Delhi, 1975, p.34.

in Bengal the agricultural labourers who formed the poorest rung of society have been ignored by the reforms programme. As late as 1971, tenancy was as high as 88% in certain districts of Kerala, when an All Indian level only 23% of cultivated area was subjected to tenurial disabilities.⁴⁴ The various exemptions to private forests, plantations etc. have nullified much of the ceiling provisions.⁴⁵

Similarly in Bengal, the launching of Operation Barga (1978) has not gone beyond merely recording the share croppers rights, without actually giving them ownership.⁴⁶ Ironic indeed, coming from a party that is committed to the goal of "land to the tiller". This is a far cry from the original CPI position of "Abolition of landlordism without compensation and distribution of land to the tiller..."⁴⁷ Besides ignoring

⁴⁴ M.A. Oommen, Land Reforms and Socio-Economic Change in Kerala - An Introductory Study, Madras, 1971, p.80.

⁴⁵ M.A. Oomen, A study on Land Reform in Kerala, p.45. Also See, K.N. Raj and Michael Tharakan, Agrarian Reforms in Kerala and its impact on Rural Economy, in, A.K. Ghose (ed.), Agrarian Reform in Contemporary Development Countries, ILO Pub., 1983.

⁴⁶ Prafulla Roy Choudhary, Left Experiment in West Bengal, New Delhi, 1985, p.158. This is not to deny the significance of recording the share - croppers rights, which alone could have provided them with relief under tenancy legislation.

⁴⁷ Political Thesis adopted at the 2nd Congress Feb-March 1948, MB Rao (ed.), Documents of the History of the CPI, Vol.7, p.86.

the agricultural labourers, West Bengal also has the worst record of any state as far as agricultural wages are concerned; from 1980-82.

Infact, there is much evidence to show that the achievements were as has been argued "merely a repeat performance of an earlier Congress governments' achievements".⁴⁸

In retrospect, Nehru's critics appear to have been too harsh in judging him. What was ignored was his faith that the programme of change from below would slowly but eventually bear fruit. It is interesting to note that W. Ladejinsky who criticized Indian land reforms as inadequate in 1965,⁴⁹ was himself in 1954 convinced of the rightness of strategy of agricultural and land reforms, and was in a sense echoing Nehru when he recorded that "Persuasion and pressure may reconcile them (vested interests) to the seemingly inevitable sharing of property rights... But this will not be achieved in a year or two."⁵⁰

⁴⁸ For details See, Ross Mallick, Development Policy of a Communist Government-West Bengal Since 1977, Cambridge, 1993, p.61. Also See, A.K Ghose, Agrarian Reform in West Bengal -Objectives, achievements and limitations, in , AK Ghose (ed.), Agrarian Reform in Contemporary Developing Countries.

⁴⁹ W. Ladejinsky, Agrarian Reforms in India (1965), in Louis J. Walinsky (ed.), Agrarian Reforms as Unfinished Business, p.400.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p.203.

Paradoxically however, the grass-roots level changes were blocked by the very beneficiaries of the land reform programme. The intermediary abolition had been successful because, the ideology and policy of the Nehruvian Congress suited an interested and mobilised producer class.⁵¹ Once landlordism was abolished the agrarian reform politics was deprived of its most visible target and resulted in the "embourgeoisment of the beneficiaries".⁵² These beneficiaries termed "bullock capitalists" by Rudolph & Rudolph, by virtue of the increased amount of land they came to control and hence also the diverse social section which they represented and were in a position to control and influence, naturally gained prominence in the rural society. Due to the very nature of their agricultural operations, they evinced an inherent opposition to regulation and collectivism. As Charan Singh explained, "The peasant is an incorrigible individualist.. without the necessity of having to give order to or take order from anybody.. Further, the system of...peasant proprietorship ensures stability because...the peasant has a stake in his farm and would lose by instability."⁵³

⁵¹ Rudolph & Rudolph, In Pursuit of Lakshmi - The Political Economy of the Indian State, p.315.

⁵² Ibid., p.318.

⁵³ Charan Singh, India's Economic Policy: The Gandhian Blueprint, New Delhi, 1978, p.16.

Given the standing of the new rural elites in the rural society, their support could secure the rural 'vote-banks' for electoral success. This class of rural notable then assumed the status of 'link men' between the village and administration. The 'vote-banks' were exchanged by them for control over administration. Hence they could slow down the pace of agrarian legislation and implementation. More so because, agriculture and land reform implementation were state responsibility.

Nevertheless, the results even if limited were impressive. More significantly, it succeeded in eliminating the disruptive influence of old feudal landlords from Indian politics.⁵⁴ Something which countries like Pakistan are struggling against till date.

⁵⁴ The number of large landowner households, declined from 9% to 6% between 1954-55 and 1971-72. The land under their control fell dramatically from 53% to 39%, Rudolph & Rudolph, In Pursuit of Lakshmi-The Political Economy of the Indian State, p.336.

CHAPTER IV

INDUSTRIALIZATION IN A MIXED ECONOMY

Industrialization had been high on Nehru's agenda for post-independence economic reconstruction of India. Its limited development was seen as the main cause behind the backwardness of India. It was imperative that India was industrialized and that too at a rate which would enable her to cover up for the lost years and catch up with the industrialized nations of the world. As Nehru said in 1956 "We in India - - have to take a jump over various periods. That is to say, we have to pass through the Industrial revolution at a time when we have also to pass through what might be called the Atomic Revolution."¹

Soon after independence, Nehru had felt the need for "some means and machinery to prevent this kind of shameful traffic in human beings and profiting at the expense of the nation."² This was understood to be an indication for the introduction of socialistic policies, in view of Nehru's open espousal of socialism. Curbs on the private sector were expected.

¹ Address to the Conference of All India Manufacturers Organisation, New Delhi, 14 April 1956, Speeches, Vol.2, p.85.

² Speech at Industries Conference, New Delhi, 18 Dec 1947, Speeches, Vol.1, p.94.

But the Industrial Policy resolution (henceforth IPR) of 1948 left the Indian left disappointed.³ It was felt that "sweeping concessions" had been granted to the private sector.⁴ However, a careful reading of Nehru's writings and speeches would reveal a continuity in Nehru's ideas particularly since the late 1930's.

To Nehru, the fundamental feature of socialism was not the wholesale nationalisation of the economy, rather, it was the removal of exploitation that was inherent in capitalism. As he said, "The idea is that individuals should not be allowed to exploit any of these methods or institutions or the labour of others for their own personal advantage."⁵ And this he thought could be attained by the control of "key sectors" of the economy.

In his attitude towards private sector Nehru comes across as a realist. He believed that, "When conflict endangers the prize itself, then obviously this is an exceedingly unfortunate and foolish way of

³ The greatest concession granted by the IPR was a postponement of any talks of nationalization for a minimum of 10 years.

⁴ M. Brecher, Nehru - A Political Biography, p.511.

⁵ Jawaharlal Nehru, Glimpses of World History, (Written in 1934), London, 1949, p.543.

approaching a thing."⁶ What mattered was to get one's priorities right, for, "It is not so easy to construct. It is quite possible that in an attempt to change the economic system, you may have a period of semi-disaster, you may even stop production which we aim at."⁷ The IPR 1948 made it clear that in a country where the masses were below subsistence level, production came first. Hence nationalization was practical only when it added to production. But the state as Nehru saw, had neither the resources, nor the personnel etc. that would allow it to participate in industrialization to the desired extent.

That the state was holding back from nationalization was as he said, "Not, to be perfectly frank with you, because of love of those who control those industries, but because our resources are limited"⁸ Hence, "It is no good my preventing somebody else from doing something which I can not do myself; that is folly because thereby we lose something which might be created".⁹

⁶ Speech at Industries Conference, New Delhi, 18 Dec. 1947, Speeches, Vol.1, p.92.

⁷ Speech in the constituent Assembly addressing the resolution by Kazi Karimuddin for immediate nationalization of industries, New Delhi, 17 Feb. 1948, Speeches, Vol.1, p.110.

⁸ Speech at 22 Annual Session of ICCI, New Delhi, 4 March, 1949, SWII, Vol.10, p.17.

⁹ Speech in Lok Sabha, 21 Dec. 1954, Speeches, Vol.3, p.14.

However, there was no scope in his scheme for laissez faire. He saw, that "Modern capitalism in the United States of America is vastly different from what it was 20 or 30 or 40 years ago. The fact that one person in five is in state employment in a capitalist country shows how the nature of the capitalist state is changing"¹⁰ Even England was evidently turning to socialist policies.¹¹ The role of the state had changed so perceptibly, even in capitalist countries, as was difficult for early socialists to visualize. The First Plan thus made it clear that there was no such thing as totally unregulated and free enterprise and that private sector had to function within the conditions created by the state.¹² Within these conditions, there was plenty of room for private enterprise and it was seen as "complementary and supplementary "to public enterprise and it was as Nehru put it, to be given "a fair chance, a fair field and a fair profit."¹³ He realized that once a sphere had been assigned to the private sector, it had to be given freedom to operate and

¹⁰ Speech at New Delhi, 26 Dec. 1950, Speeches, Vol.2, p.46.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² First Five Year Plan, Publication Division, GOI, New Delhi, 1950, p.33.

¹³ Speech in Constituent Assembly, New Delhi, 7 April 1948, Speeches, Vol.1, p.130.

that it was "absurd" to deny them room to function.¹⁴ But time and again it was made clear that, "Against the background of the goal of a socialistic pattern of society, it is necessary in encouraging and approving programmes in the private sector, to guard against industrial development being concentrated in the hands of a few entrepreneurs."¹⁵

Apart from controls and regulations that were meant to control the private sector, the chief means for limiting the private sector was "the extension of public sector into fields requiring the establishment of large-scale units and heavy investments".¹⁶ The plan was to gradually overcome the resource constraint and "to make the state more and more the organiser of industrialization and not the private capitalist or anybody else".¹⁷ Above all, it was declared that "No field of activity is sacrosanct for the private owner but certain fields of activity should be

¹⁴ Speech in Lok Sabha, 21 Dec. 1954, Speeches, Vol.3, p.14.

¹⁵ Third Five Year Plan, Publication Division, GOI, New Delhi, 1961, p.458.

¹⁶ Ibid., p.13.

¹⁷ Speech in Constituent Assembly, New Delhi, 18 Dec. 1947, Speeches, Vol.1, p.124.

sacrosanct for the state."¹⁸ Nevertheless, the public sector was not to supplant the private sector. Nehru was aware of nationalisation being thought of as "a magic remedy for every ill", but he was not prepared to limit progress just to satisfy any "theoretical urge".¹⁹ There was little wisdom in spending vast sums of public money for acquiring privately owned plants and machinery that was as much as 90% obsolete.²⁰ If one considers the failure of British coal nationalization programme on the above grounds, then Nehru was indeed being pragmatic.²¹ Hence it was decided to spend the limited state resources to fill the vacuum in areas where private enterprise was not forthcoming on account of large initial costs and long gestation periods.

The next aspect of industrialization (first being the respective roles of public and private sectors), was that of the share of heavy, light and cottage industries. Among his critics, the Swatantra Party was extremely

¹⁸ Speech at the Standing Committee of National Development Council, New Delhi, 7 Nov. 1956, Speeches, Vol.3, p.80.

¹⁹ Speech in New Delhi, 23 May, 1956, Speeches, Vol.3, p.101-2.

²⁰ Speech in the Constituent Assembly, New Delhi, 18 Dec. 1947, Speeches, Vol.1, p.126.

²¹ Benudhar Pradhan, Socialist Thought of Jawaharlal Nehru, Gurgoan, 1974, p.261.

critical of what it saw as, "the false and lopsided priority given to heavy industries, to the neglect of cottage, organised and light undertakings producing consumer goods".²² Further, he was accused of "aping the stupidity of the communist parties, which they themselves have shed."²³ Though it is true that a place of pride went to heavy industries, in the Nehruvian scheme, but given his Gandhian training, he could not have ignored small scale industries. In his address to FICCI on 3 March 1947 he stated, "when I talk about industrialization, for my part, I do not see any essential conflict between the development of cottage industries in India and industrialization of India".²⁴ Rather as he said, "we have to advance all along the line" i.e. develop basic, middle and small scale industries.²⁵ This he felt, could materialize with "proper coordination".²⁶ Given his Gandhian experience and also India's population problem, he visualized a distinct role for small industries

²² M.R. Masani, Congress Misrule and the Swatantra Alternative, p.13.

²³ Ibid., p.26.

²⁴ New Delhi, SWIL, Vol.12, p.580.

²⁵ Speech at UN Seminar, New Delhi, 1 Dec 1959, Speech, Vol.4, p.132.

²⁶ Speech at Khadi Village Industries Board New Delhi, 2 Feb 1953, Speeches, Vol.3, p.97.

when he said, "If we want to use all our manpower, it is quite impossible for us to absorb it in big industries for a very long time to come..."²⁷ But the small industries had to be "receptive to new ideas and technology" and had to organize themselves on a cooperative basis to enjoy the same advantage as the big units.²⁸ Above all, the impetus for growth had to come from their own strength. The above suggestions hardly indicate a man who supposedly neglected cottage industry.

On the other hand, Nehru's stress on heavy industries had to do with ultimately reducing the dependence on foreign plants and machinery.²⁹ Replying to a No - confidence motion in the Lok Sabha he asked, "Do we keep getting them from Germany, Japan, Russia wherever you like and go on paying for them? Is this our conception of industrialization of this country."³⁰ It has now been opined that even a more pragmatically inclined politician than Nehru could well have opted for the same set of arrangements for promoting economic development"

²⁷ Address to FICCI, New Delhi, 3 March 1947, SWII, Vol.12, p.580.

²⁸ Speech in Standing Committee of NDC, New Delhi, Jan 1956, Speeches, Vol.3, p.79.

²⁹ Speech in Lok Sabha, 11 Dec. 1963, Speeches, Vol.5, p.133.

³⁰ Speech in Lok Sabha, 22 Aug. 1963, Speeches, Vol.5, p.79.

given his perception of the factors promoting structural backwardness.³¹ The chief among these were deficiency of material capital, low capacity to save, structural limitations that prevented conversion of savings into investments and finally absorption of surplus labour in industrialization to counter the operation of diminishing return in agriculture. He saw the public sector in heavy industries sector as the "starting point" of development, its profits promoting further investments and so on.³² In these areas, since private enterprise was difficult to expect, due to high establishment costs, the public sector had to fill the gap.

In their criticism of Nehruvian programme, the CPI accused him of being the "avowed enemy of the national democratic revolution", his aim being "to defend the class politics and interests of the bourgeoisie, which is now collaborating with imperialism."³³ The following points would however make Nehru's stand clear. Firstly, on the issue of raising government stakes in private sector shares, in leu of aid, he said, "Personally, I do not see why this should not be done.. when we give

³¹ S. Chakravarty, Development Planning - The Indian Experience, 1986, p.9.

³² Letter dated 3 Sept 1962, LCM, Vol.5, p.521.

³³ Political Thesis adopted at Second Congress, Feb - March 1948, M.B. Rao (ed.), Documents of the History of the CPI, Vol.7, p.55.

money which really strengthens a business, there is no reason why we should not profit by it."³⁴ Secondly, on the issue of court jurisdiction to decide compensation in case of nationalization, that often hampered socialistic legislation, he said, "No court, no system of judiciary should be allowed to function in the nature of the Third House, as a kind of third house of correction"³⁵ except in cases of "gross abuse of law". Above all, he saw the 'mixed economy' as a transitional stage and hoped that "gradually we arrive at a stage when the centre of gravity of the whole economy has shifted"³⁶ in a socialist direction. In Jan 1955, at the Avadi session he described the private sector as "something which we want to push out"³⁷ and hoped that "progressively as the socialistic pattern grows there is bound to be more and more nationalized industry".³⁸ Infact, the area exclusively reserved for the public sector was enlarged over the period of the first and second IPR. The Third Plan infact laid out

³⁴ Speech in NDC, 7 Jan 1956, Jawahar Lal Nehru, Planning and Development - Speeches 1952 - 56, p.39.

³⁵ Lok Sabha, 16 May 1951, Speeches, Vol.2, p.485.

³⁶ Speech in Constituent Assembly, 7 April, 1948, Speeches, Vol.1, p.125.

³⁷ Quoted in R.C. Dutt, Socialism of Jawaharlal Nehru, New Delhi, 1981, pp.195-6.

³⁸ Lok Sabha, Dec. 1954, Speeches, Vol.3, p.12.

detailed measures to check the private sector, which included, expansion of public sector, widening the opportunities for medium and small units on cooperative lines and government regulation and control.

The measures were however not successful to the desired extent. Studies revealed a growing income disparity and monopoly in private sector. All of it lent force to criticism, both from the right and the left. The former wanting "freedom of choice - freedom of choice for the investor, freedom of choice for the producer, for labour.. and for the consumer"³⁹ and opposing what they termed as "state monopoly" and limiting the states' role to that of an "umpire".⁴⁰ The left, even as early as 1948 was certain that, "The capitalists attack every reference, the government spokesmen make of nationalization and the government retreats. It is now becoming clear that the government is formally giving up the ten year limit and assuring the capitalists that private sector will dominate".⁴¹

³⁹ M.R. Masani, Congress Misrule and Swatantra Alternative, p.180.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p.181.

⁴¹ Report adopted by CPI Polit Bureau, Dec. 1948, M.B. Rao (ed.), Document of the History of the CPI, vol.7, p.230.

However, once again, as in the case of agrarian reorganization, Nehru's critics failed to offer a viable alternative. Industrialization not being a state subject, the various non-Congress state governments could not be expected to offer much of an alternative. But the Janata Party at the centre did raise an expectation of change. In its Economic Policy statement, it declared that it desired, "... the widest possible dispersal of ownership of property and means of production" and yet, in order to curb monopolies, it was to be carried out in terms of "national interest and in accordance with national priorities".⁴² It acknowledged "a clear role for large-scale industries",⁴³ while "offering every possible assistance to small sector".⁴⁴ As for the public sector, it was expected that "...the public sector has to use its dominant position---to set the tone of the economy".⁴⁵ A comparison of the above policy objectives of the Janata Party with Nehru's own views on the subject, some of which have been quoted above, reveals that the two differ only in their terminology, the essence remaining much the same.

⁴² Statement on Economic Policy, Janata Party, New Delhi, 1977, p.23.

⁴³ Ibid., p.51.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p.24.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p.15.

However, towards Nehru's closing years, his optimism gave way, in view of the failure of the public sector to live up to his expectations. He accepted that the private sector may not be eliminated even at a later stage, " I do not know and I am not a prophet enough to say that it will happen - 20, 30 or 40 years later".⁴⁶ All that he hoped at this stage was for a "private sector functioning...in limited ways".⁴⁷

Nehru saw the public sector as the "nucleus and starting point of the development of a socialist economy. It should gradually lessen and remove the existing concentration of private economic power".⁴⁸ The profit of the public sector would be reinvested in it and hence the cycle would continue till it had secured control of much of the industrialization process. Underlying this notion, was the assumptions that, a sharp increase in the size of the public sector financed by initial savings out of taxation, would socialize much of the income flow, through an increased productivity of the former. None of the above assumptions materialized adequately. Firstly because the state had no means to channelize rising

⁴⁶ Draft Outline of the Third Five Year Plan - Symposium, AICC, New Delhi, 1960, p.238.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Speech on 3 Sept. 1962, Speeches, Vol.4, p.521.

private income (resulting from unequal distribution of economic assets) into public savings. Secondly and more importantly because of the failure of public sector to expand and grow at a rapid pace.⁴⁹ In spite of these limitations the industrialisation programme provided a much needed structural break to India, something that not many post Colonial nations have achieved till date.

⁴⁹ S.Chakravarty, Development Planning - The Indian Experience, p.30.

CONCLUSION

In a letter to Nehru, Jai Prakash Narain had written, "You want to build socialism with the help of capitalism, you are bound to fail in that".¹ Going by the statistics, relating to the period, the achievements did indeed fall short of the expectations.² There was an ever widening income disparity, increasing concentration of resources in monopolies, the public sector was not performing as per the role envisaged for it, nor could the agrarian reforms programme be carried to its logical conclusion. The prophecy of Jai Prakash Narain seemed to be coming true.

Marxists of all hues, attempted to answer the limitations of the Nehruvian programme in terms of the 'class bias' of the Indian state. As early as March 1948, Nehru was accused of defending the class interests of the bourgeoisie and was termed as "the avowed enemy of the national

¹ Jai Prakash Narain to Nehru, March 1949, Quoted in S. Gopal, Jawaharlal Nehru - A Biography, Vol.2, p.67.

² The Mahalanobis Committee Report (1965), p.23, Quoted in Benudhar Pradhan, The Socialist Thought of Jawaharlal Nehru, p.287. It revealed a growing disparity not only in income and expenditure but also in expenditure.

democratic revolution".³ To a party committed to "militant and revolutionary form of struggle and organization", the gradualist approach of Nehru could only be "reactionary", a mere facade for collaboration with the bourgeoisie⁴.

This line of thought has been picked up and elaborated by Soviet writers on Indian post-independence socio-economic reconstruction, chiefly, R. Ulyanovsky and G.K. Shirokov.⁵ According to them, political independence of India was not accompanied by a break up of socio-economic and class relations, and the supposedly bourgeois roots of the national movement, ensured the latter's dominance in the politics as well as economy of independent India. State socialism was still operating within a capitalistic framework. This view has continued down to most recent times and it is held that "the bourgeois revolution in India had founded a form of state which was not radical enough to carry out the tasks it has

³ Political thesis adopted at the 2nd CPI Congress; Feb-March 1948, M.B. Rao (ed.), Documents of the History of the CPI, Vol.7, p.55.

⁴ Ibid., p.46. It is interesting to note here that under the party directives from Moscow Nehru was accused of "collaborating with imperialism", but the stance changed with the Soviet recognition of neutralist stance of India.

⁵ See, G.K. Shirokov, Industrialization of India, Moscow, 1973 and R. Ulyanovsky, Industrial Revolution and Social Progress in India, New Delhi, 1970.

laid before itself..."⁶ Since in the realm of practice, the state could not affect the class interests of the bourgeoisie, the only way to show that the state was moving in a socialistic direction was, through the laws, policies and forms of ideology, "radicalizing and generalizing these lofty ideals and making them look more and more mass oriented".⁷

Even an economist like D.R. Gadgil felt that, "the attitude and affiliations of most of the top leaders of the party have always favoured Indian business interests... The old socialist programme has however - receded more and more into the background".⁸ While it is true that it is not possible to study the course of economic policy in isolation from politics of class relations;⁹ the above analysis misses out the fact that economic relations are continuously evolving and it is hence difficult to have "a unique class basis of state power"¹⁰, for all times. More so, in view of the

⁶ J. Acharya, Nehru Socialism-Colonialism Capitalism & Ideology in the Making of State Policy, New Delhi, 1993, p.184.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Quoted in A.H. Hanson, The Process of Planning, London, 1966, p.236.

⁹ Ashok Mitra, Terms of Trade & Class Relations - An Essay in Political Economy, p.5.

¹⁰ A.H. Hanson, The Process of Planning, p.238.

highly complicated and fluid class structure of India. Nor does it account for the various caste, communal, occupational and linguistic groups, all striving to consolidate their position; a process which intensifies ironically, even with increasing economic growth.¹¹

Even if one were to blame the so-called failings of the Nehruvian strategy on its bourgeois bias; how does one explain the vociferous attacks that Nehru was facing from the right itself, which was opposing the so-called "state monopoly"¹² and the carrying on of the "maa-bap sarcar mentality of the British raj".¹³ Of course, such a view is an exaggeration, if one were to go by the statistics of private sector performance during the Nehruvian years.¹⁴ The collapse of the economies of the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, has lent force to the tendency to denounce Nehru's economic prescription as intrinsically flawed. Infact, Nehru is

¹¹ Myron Weiner, The Politics of Scarcity - Public pressure & Political Response in India, Chicago, 1968, p.239.

¹² M.R. Masani, The Congress Misrule and the Swatantra Alternative, p.181.

¹³ Ibid., pp.18-9.

¹⁴ Of the actual plan investment the private sector contributed 53.6% in the First Plan & 45.9% in the Second Plan. From, J. Bagwati & P. Desai, India, Planning for Industrialisation and Trade Policies Since 1951, London, 1970.

unfairly identified with developments that took place long after his death i.e., the increase in state ownership and control during Mrs. Gandhi's tenure. His gradualist model on the contrary had not only offended the orthodox Marxists, it also left the right bewildered which held that, "You, cannot have that system (communism) unless it is accompanied by a brutal and tyrannical dictatorship".¹⁵

Coming back to the fall-out of the socio-economic programme, it has been said that in India, "the distinction between political behaviour and administrative direction has been considerably eroded".¹⁶ Hence issues of economic policy are guided not so much by cost-benefit and other considerations, but, considerations of political gains. This leads us to the much talked about 'implementational lapses' in Indian planning. Compared to other developing countries, India had a fairly developed network of industrial and financial institutions to support planning, it was marred by what Desai terms as "excessive attention to detail"¹⁷ and meaningless

¹⁵ M. R. Masani, The Congress Misrule and the Swatantra Alternative, p.4.

¹⁶ S. Chakravarty, Development Planning - The Indian Experience, p.41. This is most evident in the issue of location of industries, where political calculations have over ridden cost-benefit concerns.

¹⁷ J. Bhagwati and P.Desai, India: Planning for Industrialisation and Trade Policies Since 1951, p.5.

controls, to the relative neglect of feasibility and in-depth planning. Coupled with this were delays in implementation, cost-inflation, faulty labour and personnel management, recurring public sector losses due to price control and under pricing, etc.¹⁸ A more important limiting factor was the involvement of a number of actors whose decisions could not be influenced to the desired level as per the plan proposals.¹⁹ Planning being a multi-level exercise, the coordination has not always been optimum. No doubt, faulty implementation was a major limiting factor, but it cannot sum up the whole truth. To do so would be a very one-sided projection of a multi-dimensional reality.

Speaking to Tibor Mende, Nehru had said, "I do not know whether I am now very different from those days (when he was at the peak of his socialist ideas, early 1930s). But naturally one tones down in a position of responsibility. I am constantly facing this difficulty of not being able to carry people with me".²⁰ He was frank enough to admit that "The moment we come down to earth and try to translate that ideal into reality, we have

¹⁸ For details, See, Ibid., pp.125-70 and S. Chakravarty, Development Planning - The Indian Experience, pp.39-52.

¹⁹ Particularly in the area of district and intrastate planning and resource allocation, where the centre could not do much.

²⁰ Tibor Mende, Conversations with Mr. Nehru, p.37.

to face opposition from all the static and vested interests in the country".²¹

What were these sources of opposition that Nehru was constantly referring to? Nehru's, fortnightly letters to the Chief Ministers give valuable insight into the practical difficulties that he faced, in attempting to translate his ideals into reality. Foremost among these was the Congress organization itself. His views had "outstripped the political consciousness of the Indian National Congress".²² So that, "working for the Indian National Congress, the bureaucratic hierarchy of which was controlled by the right-wing leaders....he was in no position to translate his ideas into life".²³ One might not agree with the above fully, yet, it has been proved by research that from the 1930s, there was an influx into the Congress of members belonging largely to the propertied classes and by 1949, a conservative coalition of land owners and the urban business class controlled the District and Pradesh Congress Committees. Their interests

²¹ Letter dated 28 May 1959, LCM, Vol.5, p.249.

²² R. Ulyanvosky, Three Leaders - Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi, Moscow, 1986, p.80.

²³ Ibid.

dominated the Cabinet.²⁴ The Nehru Patel rivalry was just a manifestation of an increasing right reaction, that was bent on thwarting all efforts, to commit the Congress to a socialist programme. Frustrated, Nehru wrote in a letter to Gandhi that, "the only alternative left is for either me or Sardar Patel to leave the Cabinet".²⁵ Patel was followed as Congress President by Tandon and the situation reached a boiling point with the Kidwai and A.P. Jain affair.²⁶ Nehru had all along avoided any confrontation with the conservatives, which cost him the support of Kripalani and his Democratic Front. But when A.P. Jain and Rafi Kidwai offered to resign in the wake of increasing rightist pressure, Nehru assumed the Presidentship of the Congress holding out the threat of resignation, to curb the increasing infiltration of the rightists in the Congress Working Committee.

At a time when Nehru was grappling with the right, there was an erosion of socialists within the ranks of the Congress. Nehru could no

²⁴ Stanley, A. Kochanek, The Congress Party of India, Princeton, 1968, pp.337-338.

²⁵ Nehru to Gandhi, 6 March 1948, Quoted in F. Frankel, Indian Political Economy 1947-77, The Gradual Revolution, New Delhi, 1978, p.75.

²⁶ See, *Ibid.*, pp.89-90.

longer count on a "cohesive core of socialists", and in the absence of Gandhian support, it "limited the leverage built into his dual role as leader of the Congress Party and the government".²⁷ Referring to the socialist split (1948), Nehru lamented that, "This is the first occasion when any major withdrawal of progressive elements has taken place. This is not a pleasant reflection and the thought occurs whether we still hold by our moorings or are drifting away from them".²⁸ This was followed by the breakaway of Congress Democratic Front (of Kriplani) and its merger with Krishak Praja Mazdoor Party (of a former Congressman, Dr. P.C. Ghosh). This led to the formation of Kisan Mazdar Praja Party. Under these circumstances, Nehru rightly pointed out to Jai Prakash Narain that "an attempt at premature leftism may well lead to reaction and disruption".²⁹ Any frontal attack could well have pushed the vested interests (propertied classes and the middle state) into a "fascist position", which could well lead to premature conflict at a time when the state was not equipped to handle it.³⁰

²⁷ Ibid., p.91.

²⁸ Letter dated 15 April 1948, LCM, Vol.1, p.110.

²⁹ Nehru to Jai Prakash Narain, 22 Dec. 1948, Quoted in S. Gopal, Nehru-A Biography, Vol.2, p.67.

³⁰ Bipan Chandra, Jawaharlal Nehru in Historical Perspective, p.54.

The problem was not confined to the upper echelons of the Congress hierarchy alone, rather, Nehru noted his distress at, "the cracking up with great rapidity of the noble structure that Bapu built".³¹ The Congress that had so far represented the spirit and mind of India was "simply fading away before our eyes...There is no discipline left, no sense of common effort, no cooperation, no attempt at constructive effort...."³² The fact that Nehru was writing time and again to the Presidents of the Pradesh Congress Committees, emphasizing the need for discipline, personal contact with the people, need for hardwork among the latter and above all the need to attract fresh blood to the Congress meant that all was not well with the Congress³³ Nehru accepted that the Congress, in the state that it was, was a "very feeble instrument for carrying out national work, more especially among the people", and that their electoral victories had more to do with its "past reputation".³⁴

³¹ Letter to Rajendra Prasad, 6 Dec. 1949, S. Gopal (ed.), Jawaharlal Nehru - An Anthology, Delhi, 1980, pp.89-90.

³² Ibid.

³³ Circulars to Presidents of Pradesh Congress Committees, 8 Feb. 1952 &, 26 May 1954, Ibid., pp.90-3.

³⁴ In this respect, despite the criticism of the communist techniques, he was very appreciative of their emphasis on mass contact and believed that, "we have to fight the communists more or less on their own ground" i.e. "with the masses". Note to Principal Private Secretary, 19 Feb. 1952, SWII, Vol.17, p.167.

Nehru was never, the one to impose his views on others, and he was always willing to have a Congress organized on a broad enough basis, yet there were certain 'basic principles and policies', which he thought that a Congressman must believe and act upon. Chief among these was a faith in the socialist vision. It was "disheartening" for him to see office-bearers of Congress Committees and executive members, functioning almost without any faith in the cause that they represented.³⁵ In a letter to the Chairmen of Pradesh Election Committees, he said, "I want to confess...that an examination of the lists sent to us has considerably depressed me..."³⁶ Frankel has pointed out the surprising similarity between the aggressive antagonism of the Swatantra party and the deep seated resentment within the influential sections of the Congress over the issue of Nagpur Resolution (1959)³⁷.

Congress's success in the past he thought, had been due to the fact that it had, "spoken to our people frankly and fully about the ideals that

³⁵ Circle to President of Pradesh Congress Committees, 8 Feb 1952, S. Gopal (ed.), Jawaharlal Nehru - An Anthology, pp.90-1.

³⁶ 13 Oct, 1951, Quoted in M. Brecher, Nehru - A Political Biography, p.440.

³⁷ F.Frankel, India's Political Economy 1947-77. The Gradual Revolution, p.179. The Chief proposal of the Nagpur resolution, referred to introduction of cooperative farming.

moved us. Those ideals seeped down to the people...that appreciation is sadly lacking today and without it our message cannot go far or carry conviction"³⁸ Indeed, Nehru personally, could only lay down policy objectives and "act as the voice of the party", but the machine remained in the hands of those who were interested in just winning elections and reaping the benefits of power.

The second major vehicle for the realization of Nehru's dream was the bureaucracy. But he was very clear in the role that he envisaged for the bureaucracy in new India. In his Autobiography he had noted, "... Of one thing I am quite sure, that no new order can be built up in India so long as the spirit of the ICS pervades our administration and our public service...the new India must be served by earnest, efficient workers who have an ardent faith in the cause they serve".³⁹ They were to act as facilitators of change, who had to "rid the people of... apprehensions...to make them feel that far from state intrusion in everything we (the state) want to lessen the official element everywhere".⁴⁰ But it was indeed paradoxical that an efficient and disciplined bureaucracy hindered the adaptation of the system to the needs of the new order.

³⁸ Letter dated 3 Sept 1962, LCM Vol.5, pp.517-8.

³⁹ Jawaharlal Nehru, An Autobiography, p.445.

⁴⁰ Letter dated 28 May 1959, LCM, Vol.5, p.252.

In 1953, he characterized Delhi as a jungle of experts, with administrative mazes & labyrinths.⁴¹ Studies on the bureaucracy; as late as 1960 show that 79% of the recruits came from the urban areas, while the Scheduled Caste & Scheduled Tribes formed only 2.1% & 1.5% of services respectively. In all, one-third came from the upper income bracket.⁴² It was only natural that the recruits should have carried their prejudices to their jobs. Given their urban background, they were not able to identify themselves with the rural masses and their problems, which was so essential in view of the strategy of ground level changes. As early as 5 May 1948, Nehru recorded that his experience had led him to conclude that "our present machinery is to some extent archaic and is certainly not conducive to rapid and efficient handling of matters... There are bottlenecks and the best of schemes are held up somewhere for weeks and even months."⁴³ Ten years later he was still complaining about the administrative apparatus being slack and slow - moving and the rampant

⁴¹ Speech at Central Board of Irrigation, Bombay, 27 Oct 1953, Quoted in S. Maheshwari, Indian Administration, New Delhi, 1968, p.279.

⁴² See for details, R.K. Trivedi & D.N. Rao, "Regular Recruits to the IAS", New Delhi, 1960 Also, V.T. Krishnamachari, Report on Indian & State Administrative Services of India, New Delhi, 1962.

⁴³ Letter dated 5 May, 1948, LCM, Vol.1, p.122.

corruption.⁴⁴ Clearly, the state machinery had not "eliminated the vicious vestiges of the colonial times".⁴⁵

The final major handicap, that Nehru referred to was a product of the adoption of a federal constitution, which despite having a strong unitary bias, still left a lot of scope to the provinces, at least as far as implementation of the policies was concerned. Speaking at the National Development Council meet, Nehru said, "There is sometimes an unfortunate rivalry between states over something or the other...you must look upon the whole planning and development process as one complete whole for India, with the states and the centre cooperating all the time."⁴⁶ The problem was visible to Nehru as early as April 1948, when he warned of "a narrow provincial outlook" coming in the way of all India planning and development.⁴⁷ But his constant reminders did little & voicing his anguish he said, "Is there anything in India which is more important than this mighty task (planning)?... And yet I wonder how many of our

⁴⁴ Letter dated 9 Sept 1958, LCM, Vol.5, p.127.

⁴⁵ R. Ulyyanovsky, Three Leaders - Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru & Indira Gandhi, p.80.

⁴⁶ Speech at New Delhi, 8 Nov 1963, Speeches, Vol.5, p.80.

⁴⁷ Letter dated, 1 April 1948, LCM, Vol.1, p.100.

politicians, how many of our MPs and Assemblies ...have given much thought to the plan. They are too busy with party squabbles not realizing that a government or party success may have no meaning at all, if we lose the major battle.⁴⁸

The problem was more serious in areas like agriculture and irrigation, where the states had wide powers and Nehru was finding it difficult to evolve a consensus. He complained of the wrong attitude on the part of states, to treat their agriculture departments as relatively unimportant and hence the lack of desired vitality.⁴⁹ More important was the states' opposition to the Nehruvian programme of land reform. Given the rising hold of the rural of elites and landholders over the state politics (as discussed in Chapter III), the states tended to assume a more and more conservative stance as far as the socialistic programme of the centre was concerned.

Besides there was the problem of getting the states to cooperate in the case of multi-state projects. Referring to the disputes between Madras, Mysore and Hyderabad and that between Bombay & Baroda over

⁴⁸ Letter dated 16 Sept 1958, *Ibid.*, Vol.5, p.138.

⁴⁹ Letter dated 30 July 1958, *Ibid.*, p.106.

Tungabhadra and Sabarmati river projects, respectively, he said, "Because they affect more than one provinces, the cooperation of several provinces becomes necessary, they cannot be viewed from the point of view of one province alone".⁵⁰

Again, referring to Bihar Zamindari Abolition Bill he emphasized the need to consult the centre to evolve "a certain uniformity all over India".⁵¹ Even, the Third Plan, warned against, the "Excessive emphasis on the problem of particular region and attempts to plan for their development without relating their needs to the requirements of the national economy".⁵²

All the above problems had a tremendous bearing on the outcome of the plan programme, particularly in view of the Nehruvian strategy for change. Though charged by his rightist critics of using the "method of

⁵⁰ Letter dated 17 March 1948, LCM, Vol.1, p.89.

⁵¹ Letter dated 13 July 1948, Ibid., p.158. Nehru was particularly concerned about the tendency to decide compensations at a scale that was beyond the country's resources.

⁵² Third Five Year Plan, 1961, p.153.

statism",⁵³ Nehru could see, the contradiction inherent in the communist model as it emerged historically, much before any talks of Perestroika and Glasnost. He said, "There is much talk in communism of the contradictions of capitalist society and there is much truth in that analysis. But we see the growing contradiction within the rigid framework of communism itself. Its suppression of individual freedom brings about powerful reactions...And yet the spread of education in all its forms is a tremendous liberating force, which ultimately will not tolerate that suppression of freedom..."⁵⁴ To be meaningful, socialism had to be accepted as an ideal by the majority of the people.

The Indian national movement had been a "multiclass revolution having a long - term social perspective..."⁵⁵ The main task after achieving freedom was to mobilize all productive sections of Indian society, including the bourgeoisie, against the pervasive, economic, social and cultural backwardness. The path of classical socialism of Russian variety was not

⁵³ M.R. Masani, The Congress Misrule and the Swatantra Alternative, p.18.

⁵⁴ Note in AICC Economic Review, New Delhi, 15 Aug 1958, Speeches, Vol.4, p.116.

⁵⁵ P.C. Joshi, Nehru - Legacy & Struggle for a new Society, in, D.B. Gupta, et al (eds.), Development Planning & Policy - Essays in Honour of Prof. V.K.R.V. Rao, Calcutta, 1982, p.4.

suiting to Indian conditions because of "the supreme importance of the national factor in the case of India".⁵⁶ Indian revolution, unlike the Russian Revolution was not an anti-capitalist revolution. Rather, the bourgeoisie had been very much a force in it. It was indeed a tall order to mobilize all the diverse sections around a certain common ideal. Nehru had indeed ventured on a very complex task. To achieve capitalist support for anti-imperialist unity was much simpler than to achieve their support for a socialist programme.

This could be achieved through a programme that provided enough room to the capitalists without forsaking the pro-poor orientation. This explains why Nehru never went beyond a vague definition of the programme to an enumeration of specific objectives.

Indeed, he preferred to hold out that the term socialism, socialist patterns & socialistic pattern were "exactly the same, without the slightest difference".⁵⁷ As long as there was a broad agreement on the basics, a few concessions here and there should not be allowed to stand in the way of

⁵⁶ Ibid.,

⁵⁷ Address to the Indian Manufacturers Association, New Delhi, 14 April 1956, Speeches, Vol.3, p.85.

consensus. Explaining to the Chief Ministers he wrote, "We have set before us certain values which ... might be called a national ideology. Within the framework of this ideology there exist of course differences...but our approach has always been one of synthesis. There cannot be any other approach for government or party representing a vast country of such diversities as India".⁵⁸ In attempting this, he appeared to be a contradiction to his contemporaries, who wondered that, "They (Congress) want a socialist economy & also to encourage private enterprise. They stand for large scale production & at the same time for encouragement of cottage and village industry. They want to eliminate all unemployment & yet they want to utilize the most modern techniques in production".⁵⁹

All that Nehru was attempting was to weave together several ideological strands along a common framework. Any attempts to push to the extreme would have split the tenuous unity of the national coalition. This was however, wrongly interpreted as "an instinctive playing to the gallery, a desire to please the crowd."⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Quoted from Bipan Chandra, Jawaharlal Nehru in Historical Perspective, p.53.

⁵⁹ J.B. Kriplani, Where Are We Going? (Series of Articles in 'Vigil'), Patna, 1954, p.28.

⁶⁰ M. Brecher, Nehru - A Political Biography, p.625.

Nehru also, realized the need for preparing the masses over a period of time for the acceptance of more radical ideals. He had already discarded a revolutionary socialist transformation due to possibilities of incalculable violence and destruction. Particularly in a society marked by "strong inclination to seek meaning on traditional relationships based on religion, caste & family",⁶¹ a fact that Nehru's Marxist contemporaries and later leftist writings failed to appreciate. Given his desire for 'socialism of the majority' he emphasized changes at the grass - roots. Through institutional changes at the village level and the exercise of franchise, he hoped that forces for change would be generated, that would pressurize the ruling classes to move more and more in a socialist direction. This to him was "the historical mission" of the Congress which despite the problem afflicting the Congress, "nobody else ... could fulfil".⁶² He saw the Congress as "the one major cementing factor", hence he viewed seriously the problems within the Congress which he felt could jeopardies the mission.⁶³

⁶¹ F. Frankel, Indian Political Economy 1947-77, The Gradual Revolution, p.xii.

⁶² Speech at Madras, 27 Nov 1951, SWII, Vol.17, p.50.

⁶³ Letter to Rajendra Prasad, 8 Dec 1949, S. Gopal (ed.), Jawaharlal Nehru Anthology, p.90.

But perhaps, Nehru placed too much faith in the use of vote to build mass consciousness, despite his understanding of mass poverty and widespread illiteracy that ruled out any meaningful exercise of it. Given the rigidities and inequalities of the established institutions and attitudes, the masses could hardly be expected to mobilize on their own, after perceiving where their interests lay. Had the redistributive role of the planning process been realized, then, perhaps it would have raised mass consciousness and given a push to the strategy of grass roots changes.⁶⁴ As we have discussed already (chapter II), the distribution aspect was not absent from Nehruvian thought. The third plan referred to "the essential problem" of reducing, "the spread between higher & lower incomes and to raise the level of the minimum."⁶⁵ The assumption, as it comes across through his writings was that a rapidly growing public sector, would help socialize much of the income flow (with private incomes collected through taxation being invested there). This coupled with land reforms and emphasis on village and small industries would ensure that adequate

⁶⁴ There was infact a two way relationship between the redistribution programme and institutional changes, growth in one promoting the other and vice versa.

⁶⁵ Third Five Year Plan, p.16

employment and hence incomes would be provided to a majority, over time⁶⁶. But, given the existing unequal distribution of assets, coupled with the failure of the public sector and the limitations of the land reform programme, the redistributive aspect of planning did not materialize effectively.

Paradoxically, the advent of democracy & economic planning & control, intensified the inequalities. On the one hand it increased the vulnerability of the vote seeking politicians, on the other more 'trade - offs' were now available in exchange of the vote banks, ie., jobs, licenses, permits, subsidies etc. Given the importance of the rural votes, that class was bound to grow in importance, which could guarantee these votes. This accounts for the importance of the rural oligarchy.⁶⁷ In return, they got a free hand to stifle any move to challenge their position in the rural

⁶⁶ It is hence believed that Nehru was banking on the so-called 'trickle - down' strategy of growth. See, S. Chakravarty, Development Planning - The Indian Experience, p.29.

⁶⁷ The planners were certain that "if one factor, more than any other is acting as a brake on the spread of our economic progress, it is the still near stagnant condition of our vast countryside". Problems in the Third Plan A Critical Miscellany, Publication Division, GOI, New Delhi, 1961, p.148.

society, through the institutional changes at the ground level.⁶⁸ This, at a time when, the chief instruments of Nehru's programme - the Congress organization and the development bureaucracy had, so to say, betrayed him.

It may well be questioned that; if Nehru was so articulate about his disappointment with the functioning of the Congress and the bureaucracy, why did he not do something to set it right? Here, Nehru has to take some blame for not attempting "to hegemonise the state apparatuses with socialist ... ideology"⁶⁹ Though, his writings, and speeches reveal his understanding of the Gandhian techniques, he could not practice it appreciably, in the above respect at least. Rather, he stuck to his utopian view that speeches & writings could mobilize people. Explaining the role of a leader he had written that if he (leader) allows himself to be led by the dictates of the crowd, then he is not a leader, nor is he one, "If he acts singly according to his own lights", for then "he cuts himself, off from the

⁶⁸ It was indeed rightly perceived that "the battle for India's economic development under democratic auspices will be won or lost in the fields tilled by our peasant". Ibid., p.149. India it is felt, in the present is witnessing " a duopolistic arrangement between the rural oligarchy and the industrial bourgeoisie", which is adversely affecting both agriculture and industry. See, Ashok Mitra, Terms of Trade and Class Relations, p.103, p.121 & p.141-65.

⁶⁹ Bipan Chandra, Jawaharlal Nehru in Historical Perspective, p.55.

very persons he is trying to lead."⁷⁰ It is perhaps in this regard that Nehru seems to have failed himself.

Nehru had not set for himself, the relatively easier task of assuming a "theoretically correct attitude", but it was the more difficult task, "to move large numbers of people, to make them act".⁷¹ Given the political administrative and social material with which he had to work, it is indeed surprising that India managed to get so far and why the crisis was not even deeper?⁷² Here lies the contribution of Nehru. That he had critics from both the right and the left, proves that he did succeed, even if partially, in the task he had set out for himself, namely, to take the right or at least the majority of the centre to a more and more radical position. It was this crucial and a much difficult role, which neither the orthodox rightists, nor the leftists could either understand or appreciate.

⁷⁰ Foreword to Mahatma by D.G. Tendilkar (1951), S.Gopal (ed.), Jawaharlal Nehru - An Anthology, p.117.

⁷¹ Letter to V.K.K. Menon 28 Sept 1936, SWII, Vol.7, p.471.

⁷² A.H. Hanson, The Process of Planning, p.533. It is these numerous pressures that also explain why, Nehru's most ardent critics, once placed in a position of responsibility could not offer much of an alternative.

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