N. V. GADGIL

GOVERNMENT FROM INSIDE


MEENAKSHI PRAKASHAN
BEGUM BRIDGE MEERUT

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Dr. N. V. Gadgil promised to write his reminiscences of the first Cabinet of Free India in March 1965, and sent his manuscript in December. At that time nobody knew that he was going so soon. In the early hours of Jan. 12, 1966, he suddenly passed away. Therefore, the present manuscript may have the shortcomings which are removed by the author at the proof-stage.

The author has put certain names in abbreviated form. The following is being given to assist the reader in that respect :

Ambedkar	Dr B. R. Ambedkar
Bhulabhai	Sri Bhulabhai Desai
Gandhiji	Mahatma Gandhi
I.N.A.	Indian National Army
Jinnah	Mr M. A. Jinnah
Kher	Sri B. G. Kher
Liaquat	Mr Liaquat Ali Khan
Maulana	Maulana Abul Kalam Azad
Mavlankar	Sri G. V. Mavlankar
Morarji	Sri Morarji Desai
Nehru	Sri Jawaharlal Nehru
Rafi	Sri Rafi Ahmad Kidwai
Rajaji	Sri C. Rajagopalachari
Rajendrababu	Dr Rajendra Prasad
Sarat Bose	Sri Sarat Chandra Bose
Vallabhbhai	Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel

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CHAPTER ONE

THE BRITISH CITADEL BREAKS

THE CONGRESS had boycotted the legislatures since 1940 and launched the Satyagraha movement. Bhulabhai Desai did not participate in the 1942 movement. That movement with its motto of 'do or die' could not accommodate his liberal recipe of 'enter the Councils'. The Congressmen of his way of thinking who were members of the Central Legislature and had kept aloof from the 1942 movement were pressing Bhulabhai to permit them to attend the session of the Legislature and proclaim their opposition to Government measures. I believed then, as I still do, that Bhulabhai committed a great mistake in yielding to this pressure. Some Congressmen attended the session and Bhulabhai, in consultation with Gandhiji, carried on negotiations with Liaquat Ali. This encouraged the Muslims to believe that they could dictate their terms to the Congress and have their way. Their cry for Pakistan became all the more vociferous. Jinnah and his League simply refused to be placated.

This appeasement had the natural effect; it whetted the edge of Muslim obstinacy. The Hindus were fighting for freedom and the Muslims were ready to pick up the fruit the moment it fell down. The Muslims in India had long become habituated to garner the fruits of the sacrifices made and the agonies suffered by the Hindus. This they were not slow to repeat in 1945, too. Even Rajaji, the most shrewd brain in India, fell a victim to this historic tendency and devised a scheme to satisfy the Muslims. He tried to reconcile self-determination with India's unity. He brought about a meeting between Gandhiji and Jinnah. Of course, nothing came out of

it, because Jinnah was confident that an obstinate 'No' then, would ultimately give him Pakistan.

Ever since our release from jail in August 1944, some of us had begun to visit the British Tommies in Poona Cantonment. A majority of them was drawn from the middle class and showed interest in India's problems. We used to meet behind a bookshop in the Cantonment once or twice a week. Some of them used to tell us that the British were ready to quit India provided Hindu-Muslim question was settled. Otherwise, there would be anarchy and chaos after they left. We used to argue that the Hindu-Muslim problem was a British creation; once they left, it would solve itself. They used to counter it by suggesting that it should be settled by a plebiscite and if a majority of Muslims asked for Pakistan, they should get it. When the war ended, we asked them, as to for whom they would vote. They replied that they would not vote for Churchill: 'He is no good for Peace.' When the British elections were held, it was seen that the majority of the British soldiers stationed abroad had voted for the Labour.

On May 8, 1945, the War ended. The Congress Working Committee members were released in the first week of June. We welcomed Vallabhbhai and Shankarrao Deo at the jail gate. Vallabhbhai came to my residence and was there for about an hour. During that short time, Vallabhbhai asked me why I had made so much propaganda about Rajaji formula. I replied that it was generally acceptable to Gandhiji and, if cautiously handled, was not bad. I realised that he was annoyed with Bhulabhai. When asked about the future, his reply implied: 'Be ready; self-Government is round the corner.'

The Congress Working Committee met in July 1945 at Poona. It was known at the time that elections for the Central and Provincial Legislatures were drawing near. The British politics is based on democracy and they refer their problems and succession to power to the arbitrament of the ballot. The Working Committee met in the bungalow of a

capitalist in the Koregaon Park. Most of the leaders were also put up there. I was the President of the Provincial Congress Committee and as such responsible for hospitality to the guests. I met Bhulabhai and asked whether I should contest the elections, and if so, for which seat, Provincial or Central. Bhulabhai replied, 'Within two years the British would transfer power and leave India,' and sarcastically remarked, 'whether they leave a united or a divided India depends on your leaders.' He told me that although my work in the Central Legislature was commended by the Congress high ups, I would not get into the Central Cabinet, 'because all those people are hungry for power and once they occupy seats of power, they would not leave them till death.' Therefore, he advised me to stand for the Provincial Legislature. I (N.V.G.) would definitely be a Minister, if not something higher. 'I myself am not going to stand for any election.' It was obvious Bhulabhai had got very sour over the developments of the last few months. I weighed his advice. Vallabhbhai also was in Poona for the same meeting and I discussed the matter with him also. He suggested that my place was in Delhi.

In February 1946 the Congress Legislature Party members gathered in Delhi and Vallabhbhai called me to give directions regarding the election of the leader, deputy leader, whips, and secretary of the Party. To be frank, it was my turn to be the Party leader after Bhulabhai and quite a few party members told Vallabhbhai that way. I told my friends that the hour of transfer of power was approaching. At such a time, the Party had to be united and we must all follow Vallabhbhai's advice.

Asaf Ali aspired to be the Speaker of the Assembly; but Vallabhbhai suggested Sarat Babu as the leader, Asaf Ali as the deputy leader, and myself as general secretary. This dispensation was accepted. There was also the question of the chief whip for which Sardar Joginder Singh and Satyanarain Sinha were contending. Vallabhbhai left the choice to me. Rajendrababu wanted Sinha as the chief whip and he told me so. I conveyed this to Vallabhbhai and with his consent

Satyanarain Sinha became the chief whip.

The choice of Sarat Chandra as the leader had been largely motivated by the desire to please Bengal. I could appreciate this political manoeuvre. Dada Mavalankar was chosen as a candidate for Speakership and all of us bended all our energies to see that he was elected. Vallabhbhai himself came up to Delhi for it. Mavalankar's opponent was Kavasji Jehangir. About 30 to 35 votes were guaranteed to the candidate supported by Government. The Muslim League had captured all except one or two Muslim seats on the issue of Pakistan; and Jinnah, their leader, had ruled that any one but a Congressman was preferable as the Speaker; this meant support to Kavasji Jehangir. The Viceroy's Executive Council met twice before the election of the Speaker and was divided on whether Government nominees in the Assembly should remain neutral or oppose the Congress. Dr Ambedkar was a member of the Council at the time and was opposed to Mavalankar because the police report was unfavourable to him! Messrs Dalal and Bewoor also were members of the Executive Council at the time. Mr Dalal was for neutrality and said that the police report on Mavalankar was incorrect. By chance, Mr Knight, the Chief Adviser of the Bombay Government, happened to be in Delhi at the time. When consulted, Mr Knight expressed very favourable views regarding Mavalankar. But in the end, Government decided to vote against the Congress candidate and we had to exert ourselves strenuously to obtain a majority.

The Marshal of the Assembly at the time was Captain Noor Mohammad who admired the Congress for its sacrifices. He had two Muslim votes in his pocket. We were not confident if the Indian members of the Viceroy's Executive Council would vote for Mavalankar. I had canvassed Bewoor and all he could say was that the expected will happen. On the eve of the election day, I phoned Mavalankar to tell him that he would win at least by two votes. He remarked, rather stoically, that man's duty was only action and reward should not be his concern. He sounded a bit pessimistic. I had hopes of Lieut.-General Himmatsingji voting for the Congress. But when the

voting began, Dalal declared that he would not exercise his vote and Himmatsingji followed suit. I felt slightly nervous. The first vote cast was by Shrimati Ammu Swaminathan. When the voting was over, Captain Noor Mohammad told me, 'I have done my duty.'

Mavalankar was elected by a majority of three votes. This meant two Muslims had voted for him. Jinnah walked out of the House when the result was announced. This, I thought was ominous ; this was the first beat on the war drums.

The Legislative business during 1946 had two undercurrents. One was the pride in the exploits of the Indian National Army of Subhas Bose and the other was the deep anxiety about the demand for Pakistan. We were operating the present between the past and the future. The trial of Sehgal, Shahnawaz and Dhillon, the three heroes of the I.N.A., held in the Red Fort, had ended. Bhulabhai had won international repute by his forensic skill at the trial. About the same time, the naval ratings mutinied against their British masters ; this was a very significant development. This became the subject of an adjournment motion in the Assembly. As a result, Fazli Hussain was appointed to investigate into the incident. General Bhonsale whose trial was yet to begin, was still in custody. It was, however, clear that the British had decided to quit. Consequently, a great deal of political horse-trading was going on.

On the advice of Vallabhbhai, I met the Defence Secretary, Menon, who arranged my meeting with General Bhonsale. I met him in Military custody and also arranged for Mrs Bhonsale to meet him. General Bhonsale was released later when the political atmosphere changed. I was greatly impressed by his calm and balanced temperament at the very first meeting and the friendship I formed at the time lasted till his death.

Jayaprakash Narain was in detention and efforts were being made to secure his release. I met Sir John Thorne, the Home Member, to discuss the problem of the political de-

tenues. I had a long conversation with him about Jayaprakash and perhaps it was due to it that he decided to see him in jail. Jayaprakash Narain, Achyut Patwardhan and I were together for a year in the Nasik Jail in 1932, and the friendship then formed has continued and deepened during the last thirty-three years.

Mr Thorne met me after his meeting with Jayaprakash and said, 'Whatever the Government's decision, he is a great personality.' I said, 'Times are changing rapidly and foresighted people are constructively generous.' I reported the gist of my conversation to Jayaprakash's friends. Within a few days he was released. The citadel of imperialism in India was cracking up.

We were working in the Legislature with more understanding. The House had before it a bill recommending that India should join and be one of the founder members of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. To the Select Commitee, to which the bill was referred, the Congress Party nominated Asaf Ali, Manu Subedar, Diwan Chamanlal, Anantasayanam Aiyengar and myself. My opinion was that in view of the expected developments, India should join those bodies. Anantasayanam and Manu Subedar opposed and it seemed that the Party would not present a united front. I managed to get the Committee meeting postponed and brought up the question before the Executive of the Party. The leader of the Party, Sarat Babu, was somewhat confused about fiscal matters and saw some sinister British conspiracy behind the proposal. I said that the British were leaving and even if there was any conspiracy, we would defeat it. In the end, it was agreed on my suggestion that the matter was of great importance and both Manu Subedar and I should consult the Chairman of the Parliamentary Board, Vallabhbhai. Eventually, Manu Subedar received a telegram from Shantilal Shah, Secretary of the Parliamentary Board, that my view should be accepted unless it was a matter of conscience. When the Report of the Committee came up for signature, all of us signed, Manu Subedar remarking, 'I would not even look into

what is written above, but would sign after you.' And that is exactly what he did. All this shows that some of us were finding it difficult to shed away the prejudices against the British rulers.

An important business before the session was the appointment of the Central Pay Commission. The Finance Member, Sir Archibald Rowlands, was friendly to me because my speeches were free from the old bitterness. Instead of a challenge, I gave a call to duty. Unconsciously, my speeches were after the style of Gokhale. As a consequence, quite a few thought that I was rapidly turning moderate, whereas all that was happening was only that I was acquiring a greater sense of responsibility and Vallabhbhai was encouraging me with particular intent, which, however, I could not grasp at that time. The Finance Member asked me if I would serve on the Pay Commission. I said I would consult the leader of the Party. When asked, Saratbabu did not seem very happy. He was still living in the old mental climate of non-co-operation. I pointed out that within a year or so, we would ourselves have to take up that question. In view of this, if he could think of a more qualified Congressman, I would suggest his name to the Finance Member. Ultimately he agreed to my nomination. Kasturbhai Lalbhai was nominated on the Commission as Millowners' representative. He declined and the Finance Member again asked me and I gave the name of Vadilal Lallubhai of our Party, who was nominated. We reported within eight months. Varadachari was the Chairman of the Commission and it had a dozen or so members. But the burden of work was borne by the Chairman, Secretary, Aiyangar, Rau and me. The late N. M. Joshi also helped.

It will be clear from the above that that Session was a historic one. On March 15, 1946, the British Prime Minister, Mr Attlee, announced that His Majesty's Government recognised India's right to independence and that no minority shall be allowed to place a veto on the advance of majority. I was in the room of Sir Archibald Rowland, the Finance Member, when the message was received. He showed it to

me and asked: 'Will you succeed to this chair?' I replied, 'I am not sufficiently disqualified for this.' He did not know that the Congress politics did not care for fitness and traditions as much as the British politics! He wanted to know what I thought of Attlee's announcement in general. I said, 'Attlee is an honest man and he says what he means and he means what he says,' and added mischievously, 'He is rather un-English in this respect.' Sir Archibald said, 'He will see that it is done.'

The future began to unfold itself as indicated by Attlee. The Cabinet Mission arrived soon thereafter and negotiations began. Vallabhbhai, with his foresight, understood that there was no possibility of a compromise with the Muslims through negotiations.

I have already said that the 1946 session of the Assembly was a historic one. It was so in other ways too. The month of March found large parts of India in the flames of the communal conflagration. The Provincial elections were held in February-March 1946 and I toured Maharashtra for ten days for canvassing. The Congress won by a majority in all Provinces except in the Punjab and Bengal. The Muslim League became active in the Punjab. Lahore was the venue for the meeting of the Punjab Congress Legislature Party to elect its leader. I was asked to preside over it. There were two candidates. Dr Gopichand Bhargava supported by Vallabhbhai, and Diwan Chamanlal supported by Maulana Azad. Just when I was boarding the train for Lahore, I received a message that I need not proceed, as the election had been postponed.

I did not go and the result was that the Congress pusillanimity drove many members into the lap of the League which was not in a majority then. The Jat Party leader Surajmal Jat had succeeded in getting many Muslims elected to the Legislature on his Rural Party ticket in 1946. If the Congress had shown some accommodation to that Party, Punjab would have got a coalition Ministry. In the end, when Khizar Hayat Khan formed the Ministry, he had only about a dozen

Muslims with him. The Congress High Command imposed Sachar as the leader on its Legislature Party. The result was indignation. Thus the shortsighted Congress leadership in the Punjab became responsible for the future disaster and massacre in that unfortunate province. The lesson of Indian politics is that about 15 to 20 per cent people are of the Mir Jafar species, ready to jump on to the winning side. The Congress party already had nationalist Sikhs within it. There were 30 non-League Muslims elected to the Punjab Legislature. If the Congress had joined hands with them, there was every chance of their forming a Ministry with the help of non-Congress Hindus. But Maulana Azad ruled otherwise and the Congress did not try to form a Ministry in the Punjab. The Khizar Ministry found it impossible to function. In April 1946, the Punjab found itself in a grave communal turmoil. It is said that the then Governor of Punjab was ready to take drastic steps against the Muslim League. He was waiting for the excuse of a Hindu-Muslim riot. It is widely believed in the Punjab that Khizar Hayat Khan took the Hindu and Sikh leaders in confidence. Even a minor disturbance would have been a sufficient excuse for declaring the League unlawful. But the Congress cult of non-violence and lack of courage on the part of the Sikhs came in the way. As a result, Khizar found it difficult to carry on with the support of only six or seven Muslims. The whole Muslim community in the Punjab became desperate. The atmosphere of partition was strengthened by the riots and massacres which occurred on 16 August 1946, which was observed by the Muslims as 'Direct Action Day'. It is said that the old mother of Khizar Hayat Khan warned him that as the Hindus and Sikhs were unwilling to help, he would not last long. Ultimately he resigned.

The entire India was aflame with communal disturbances amongst Hindus and Muslims and none could foresee the future.

I have referred above to Attlee's announcement of March 1946. Some Labour Party leaders and Ministers arrived in

India in April 1946. But discussions with them were infructuous. The negotiations were resumed and the Congress showed more anxiety for immediate transfer of power rather than any future promise. Vallabhbhai thought that in view of the fast deteriorating law-and-order situation in the country, it had became all the more imperative that the effective power must be transferred immediately whatever the future Constituent Assembly might do.

The British proposals may be divided into two parts : a long term plan and a short term one. The first part envisaged a Constituent Assembly to frame the Constitution. It was stipulated that all the provinces of British India would be grouped into three regions, A, B, and C, each of them having its own government in addition to the provincial government below and the Central government above it. The Central government was to be entrusted only with Defence, Foreign Affairs and Communications. The immediate step to be taken was to Indianise the Viceroy's Executive Council by giving to the Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians and the Harijans representation in a certain proportion. After some procrastination, the Congress accepted the scheme in toto. Jinnah again proved obstinate in the hope of winning whatever he asked for and rejected the long term proposals. Vallabhbhai considered that the proposals hung together and those who rejected a part had no place in the immediate future also.

By the end of May, it was clear that an Interim Government was in the offing and its date too was almost settled. Maulana Azad was the Congress President at that time. His being the President at the time is due to an interesting sequence of events. He was elected President of the Ramgarh Congress Session in 1940. But that session was washed off by the Damodar river floods. The Congress had to finish its session within two hours. This was followed by individual Satyagraha and later by the 'do or die' chapter of the Quit India Movement. There was, therefore, no Congress session for years and that is how the Maulana found himself as the President in May 1946!

The fateful day of the assumption of power was approaching and the formation of the new Government, it was evident, would be the responsibility of the Congress. Therefore, Gandhiji suggested to the Maulana that the Congress should elect its President anew. Maulana Azad did not want Vallabhbhai as the President and proposed Nehru. The All-India Congress Committee (AICC) met in Bombay in July 1946. Some of us had planned to propose Vallabhbhai's name for the Congress Presidentship. But some 'Gandhians' told us that Gandhiji wanted Jawaharlal as the President. Because, if he were not the President of the Congress, he would not be the Prime Minister and none knew how he would behave then. Consequently, Gandhiji called upon his disciplined soldier, Vallabhbhai, to desist from the temptation.

We did not pursue our plan. Jawaharlal was elected President and in his very first speech in the Constituent Assembly, he declared that the Assembly was a sovereign body and no limits could be placed upon it. This gave a different turn to events and made it well nigh impossible to entertain any hope of the League joining the Interim Government. The Central Executive Council had resigned in July 1946. That included Dr Ambedkar and Dr Khare. Dr Ambedkar declared that the British had gone back on their pledge to the untouchables. Dr Khare expressed disappointment at his term as a Member of the Executive Council being cut short.

It was my function as Secretary of the Congress Party to report to Vallabhbhai, who was President of the Congress Parliamentary Board, the happenings in the Legislature and I used to meet him frequently. One day the conversation turned to Saratbabu and he expressed his dissatisfaction at the way Saratbabu had handled his responsibility as Leader of the Party. He also sympathised with me for the great burden I had to carry. Obviously, he was foreseeing that the Interim Cabinet would be established in a month or two. I told him although, as the oldest and the most experienced Congress member in the Legislature, I had a claim on the leadership of the Party, I had not uttered a word. On the other hand, I had helped

the men of his choice to get elected as leader and deputy leader. I understood what was in his mind, but if Saratbabu were to be dropped, the reaction in Bengal would be adverse and sharp. I was young and could afford to wait. Besides, I was not that much enamoured of power. Both Vallabhbhai and his daughter Maniben were moved by my frankness. Since this conversation, I became confident that when the time came for Vallabhbhai to form a Cabinet, I would be included therein. Besides, whenever difficulties arose, he used to say, 'We will straighten it up when we get into Government.' He used the word 'we' in such a way that I could not fail to get what he meant.

Sardar Vallabhbhai was an openhearted, farsighted, thoughtful and shrewd political leader. It was vital to know how the Viceroy's mind worked in view of the prospective Interim Government, and he asked me to see Mr Godbole. Mr Yeshwantrao Godbole, I.C.S., was the Viceroy's Secretary and knew of whatever political discussions the Viceroy had. Mr Godbole belonged to Poona. I knew him. He was related to me, though distantly. Mr Godbole assured me that he would do all that was possible subject to the limitations of his moral obligations, and he did help considerably.

By the end of July, discussions had begun regarding the likely nominees for the Cabinet. By the first fortnight of August, the list was finalised. Jagjivan Ram was the Harijan representative. Shafaat Ahmad Khan was selected from amongst the Muslims. In addition, Asaf Ali was a 'must' in the Congress list. There were persons who thought that the Direct Action (16 August, 1946) threat by the Muslim League might lead to the postponement of the transfer of power. I, however, did not share this view. As the formation of an Interim Government became certain, non-League Muslims began to draw nearer to the Congress. Maulana Azad should have mobilised them ; it was his duty. There was no compeer to him as an effective orator. But he seemed indifferent. He had not whole-heartedly accepted the Congress decision to join the Interim Government. That is why he had put Asaf Ali's name in the Congress list of nominees to the Govern-

ment. Azad had great influence with the thoughtful Muslims; but they too were being alienated from the Congress because of his indifference. The strange tribe of 'nationalist Muslims' which had arisen in our politics, was slowly dying. Vallabhbhai once jocularly, but most poignantly, observed that there was only one nationalist Muslim left in the country and he was Jawaharlal Nehru!

Lord Wavell, the Viceroy, was trying till the last moment to persuade the Muslim League to join the Government. Jinnah, however, wanted to capitalize over the communal frenzy among the Muslims, further inflamed by the Direct Action Day and its aftermath. Many of us thought that the Calcutta massacre in the wake of the Direct Action would somewhat chasten and mellow him down. But they did not understand Jinnah. He was egotism incarnate. His obduracy was further fortified by the British Tories.

Jinnah, who dreamt of ruling over the whole of India, asked for parity between the caste Hindus and Muslims. His demand was 40 per cent seats to the caste Hindus, 40 per cent to Muslims and the remaining 20 per cent to be divided between Sikhs, Christians, Harijans and tribal communities. This meant the domination over India by dividing the Hindus and the Sikhs, the caste Hindus and the Harijans, the Hindus and the tribals, and the Hindus and the Christians. Jinnah had not forgotten Mahatma Gandhi's desperate words asking the British to quit even, if necessary, after handing over power to the Muslims alone. It is not that Gandhiji's generosity had no political undertones or was devoid of common sense or lacked foresight. It is not altogether foolish to try to win the opponent by generosity and love. It, however, evoked only a charge of hypocrisy from the Indian Muslims led by Jinnah and the Hindus construed Gandhiji's offer as betrayal of the Hindu interests and the British did not even entertain it.

The situation in the whole of India became extremely tense from 16 August 1946 onward. There were no Congress Ministries in Bengal and Punjab and the Hindus had no protection there. Bihar and Uttar Pradesh had Congress Ministries. But the Congress wanted to prove its impartiality even by

acting contrary to Hindu interests. They fell backwards to prove that they could stand straight. The displaced Hindus of Punjab, particularly from the Gujarat and Rawalpindi districts and from the North-West Frontier Province, began to pour into Delhi in large numbers. In South India the Muslims were in small numbers and there was no trouble. But even there the local Ministries were unable to check their arrogance. Bombay was ruled by a Ministry presided over by the 'gentlemanly' Kher. The Muslims did create some trouble, but were controlled. But there was widespread anxiety amongst the Hindus all over India. The Hindu temples mostly remained unaffected by the prevailing atmosphere, but the mosques and Dargahs became the hotbeds of Muslim communalism. The Mullahs and Maulavis openly incited the Muslims against the Hindus. In such circumstances dawned the 2nd of September 1946, the day when Congress assumed power. All the Ministers-designate and members of the Working Committee gathered in the Birla Bhawan. I was present as the Secretary of the Party. We went to see Gandhiji at the Bhangi Colony first and reached the Viceroy's Palace from there at 8-30 A.M. For the first time in my life, I entered the palace on Sardar's invitation and waited near the car in the square below the Cabinet room. I saw messengers arriving every fifteen minutes bringing news of destruction in the city. I watched Lord Wavell coming down the grand staircase after the swearing-in ceremony. He looked tense. The thought crossed my mind that his descent was symbolic of the British descent from Imperial power.

This reminded me of an incident in the Irish history. When the British signed a treaty with the Irish patriots and surrendered power to them, Michael Colline remarked, 'The Dublin Castle has fallen.' I asked a friend standing nearby, 'Do you realise the significance of what has happened?' He said 'No' and I exclaimed, 'Rezina has fallen.' The area in which the Viceregal Palace and the Secretariat are situated was the old village Raiseena, a name corrupted into Rezina by the British. The fall of Rezina meant the end of British power.

Events gathered momentum from 2 November, 1946,

onward. There was no Cabinet and no Prime Minister at the time. The Viceroy presided over his Council and Nehru was designated its Deputy President. Vallabhbhai became the Home Minister and Sarat Chandra Bose, taken in on his advice, the Member for Works, Mines and Power. The bureaucracy was apprehensive about its own future under the new dispensation, as its members recognised that 2 September, 1946, presaged the dawn of freedom. The facade was the same, but everything had changed behind it.

The main political force in the country was the Indian National Congress and its leaders were tired old man. They were not quite sure of the gains of four decades of incessant struggle nor were they confident of what the future had in store for them. They were afraid to stretch too much lest it should break and all be lost. The result was that even the old and valiant fighters were inclined to compromise rather than stake their all.

The situation in Britain clearly indicated that India should grasp whatever was offered while the Labour Party was in power. Nowhere in the country the minority community was safe. The condition of Hindus in the Punjab and Bengal was pitiable. Jinnah and his followers had made life impossible in Delhi itself. All the Muslim seats in the Constituent Assembly were won by the Muslim League. Almost all the Hindu seats were won by the Congress or by candidates supported by the Congress. Even Ambedkar, the great scheduled castes leader, had to go to Bengal to get elected. The leader of the Interim Cabinet was Nehru who was gradually unfolding his infinite capacity for procrastination. The Delhi Muslims used to go to Vallabhbhai Patel and press him to have no truck with the Muslim League. A firm policy towards the League, they said, would sap its power and a majority of Muslims would gravitate towards the Congress, because it would be in power. Some of us had begun efforts in this direction under Vallabhbhai's instructions. Those League Muslims whom we had known since long, pressed us to strike some compromise. Otherwise, they said the British would divide India before leaving. They knew well enough that the

creation of Pakistan was no solution of the Hindu-Muslim problem. The day of the division of the country might be the day of Id to the Muslims falling within Pakistan; but to those living in the rest of India it would be the occasion of Moharram. But they lacked the courage to say so publicly. The average Muslim was incensed against the Hindus. Every incident was exaggerated. In the Punjab and the North-West Frontier Provinces, animal bones were being displayed as bones of Muslims massacred in Bihar. Vallabhbhai was powerless to act as Law and Order were the responsibility of the Provincial Governments. The irony of the situation was that while the Muslims in the Congress-ruled Provinces got full and unreserved protection from the Government, the Hindus in the League-ruled Provinces were left to the mercies of the fanatic Muslim mobs. As a consequence the Council of Ministers at the Centre lacked unity of purpose and meeting of minds for the first two or three months of its existence.

A few days after the assumption of office by the Interim Government, Sir Gurunath Bewoor, a senior I.C.S. member of the erstwhile Viceroy's Council, who had retired a few days earlier, saw me and said that some senior Hindu I.C.S. officers had asked him to arrange a private meeting between themselves and Nehru. They desired to give him some vital information. They said that the Muslim I.C.S. officers had been meeting the League leaders for long and supplying them the inside information. They wanted to disabuse Nehru of his prejudice against them. They, too, were Indians and welcomed the advent of freedom and would like to convince Nehru of it. They desired me to arrange an informal meeting over a cup of tea. I told Bewoor that I could do it only after consulting Vallabhbhai. I did so the same evening and was asked to see Nehru and place before him what the officers had in mind. Vallabhbhai was not content with giving advice only. He asked Vedilal, a member of the Legislature from Gujarat, to arrange such a party so that I should not be burdened with the expenses. I made an appointment with Nehru the next day at his residence and told him what the I.C.S. officers wanted. Nehru's reaction was characteristic.

He flew into one of his tempers and said that nothing prevented them from seeing him in his office. I tried to persuade him and to explain that a meeting in office would not serve the purpose the officers had in view. But he refused to be persuaded. As I was leaving in disgust, he called me back and said that he would think about it and give me a date and time for the meeting. The date and time never came ! I reported to Vallabhbhai and as an alternative I met some of them at Sir Gurunath's residence. Vallabhbhai also saw a few of them at his residence and won them over, allaying their fears with his usual statesmanship.

Nehru was the leader of the party and as such had the moral obligation to consult his colleagues before committing himself to the Viceroy. On October 27, 1946 Lord Wavell invited the League to enter the Interim Government in a broadcast speech. He said that he had consulted Nehru before issuing that open invitation. I was stunned and immediately phoned Vallabhbhai. He said he was equally shocked ! There was a fatal contradiction between the firm policy which we had decided upon in dealing with the League and the advice given to the Viceroy by Nehru. This became evident within a week or so. The leaders of the League soon realised that without power, they would lose their hold on the Muslims. On the other hand, if they entered the Government, they would achieve Pakistan by sabotage inside and disorders outside. In the end, the League entered the Interim Cabinet and got the portfolios they had demanded. Amongst those who had to be deleted from the Cabinet to make way for the Leaguers was Sarat Chandra Bose. This had unfortunate repercussions on the Bengal politics.

Even before the League entered the Cabinet officially, the Viceroy had no dearth of advisers who pleaded its cause. In fact, every Muslim officer was an advance guard of the League. After the League joined the Government, India's administration began to be openly balanced in favour of the Muslims. Liaquat Ali became the Finance Member and exercised a virtual veto on all demands for money. He played the part of Shukracharya, a sage of the antiquity. The gods

were willing to give, but the ancient sage obstructed the actual gift. Lord Wavell acted the part of the mediator, trying somehow to keep the two rival groups together in the Executive Council. Rajaji tried to conciliate the League Members and the combination of Rajaji and Nehru in this respect was insurmountable even for the mighty Sardar. He never discussed internal differences outside as a matter of principle. But this principle, otherwise so admirable, became a handicap when carried to extremes. Often he would let himself go in sheer exasperation.

The Congress members of the Executive Council were subjected to open criticism by the League in the Assembly and it was obvious that Jinnah encouraged them. The Congress Party was overwhelmed by the thought that it was responsible for the administration and handicapped by feeble leadership. Its lot was unenviable indeed. As a remedy to this state of affairs, I prepared a note and showed it to Rajaji. Its main theme was that the Congress would consider each question on merits, and not only as a party responsible for the administration. This would have helped in carrying out our policies and prevented the League taking advantage of the sense of party discipline in the Congress. The leaders of either party could not then command an automatic passage of their bills and would have to work through mental adjustments. I had given illustrations from various systems of Government to prove that both politically and constitutionally what I suggested was permissible. I gave this note to Rajaji as he was considered an expert on such matters. Rajaji argued that it is the Congress Party which had formed the 'Cabinet'. The League was only a junior partner. As such it was the responsibility of the Congress Party to see that Government proposals went through. There was some logic in his argument too. I discussed my viewpoint with Vallabhbhai and he said that the coalition Government was a temporary one and it was advisible to take things a bit cautiously.

The League entered the Interim Government in November 1946, but the massacres in the country did not stop. The Constituent Assembly met in December. The League boycott-

ed it despite its assurances while entering the Government that its members would attend it. Earlier in November, the Congress had met in Meerut and directed that if the League boycotted the Constituent Assembly, the Congress should quit the Executive Council.

Attlee called a meeting (in London) of the Indian leaders in the first week of December (1946) to try to reconcile the differences amongst them. Jawaharlal Nehru, Baldev Singh, Jinnah, Ambedkar and others accepted the invitation. Our leaders had gone to London with the intention to have some plain talks with the British Government and to warn them that there could be no Congress-League joint Cabinet if the Muslim League failed to fulfil its promises. But Attlee announced the British plan for the future of India in the very first meeting without giving any one a chance to speak. His plan clearly indicated that the country was going to be partitioned.

Attlee had reports of how the Executive Council was functioning, of the near anarchy in the Punjab and Bengal, and of the deteriorating situation all over the country. His experience was that the Indian leaders were incapable of taking and carrying out a firm decision. In my opinion, there were two exceptions to this : Sardar Vallabhbhai and Jinnah. But the Sardar was a disciplined Congressman. On the other hand, Jinnah's principle was : 'With you if you come with me, without you and even against you if needs be, but I shall go the way I want.' Not that he did not want Pakistan, but what he had in view was to turn the whole of India into Pakistan. His picture of future India was parity between the Hindus and the Muslims in 80%, the remaining 20% to be divided among the Sikhs, the tribals, the Christians. This arrangement assured the dominance of the Muslims at the Centre.

The Cabinet Mission Plan had been devised in such a way as to give the Muslims complete dominance over Assam, Bengal, Punjab, Sind and the N.W.F.P.; they could also exert a great pressure on the Centre. Sardar Vallabhbhai offered stern opposition to this Plan. On becoming the

President of the Congress, Jawaharlal also had declared that the Constituent Assembly was not bound by the Plan. Azad was in favour of it. Gandhiji hoped to avoid partition by the Plan. The Sardar wanted freedom and Nehru was overwhelmed by the thought of the poverty of the people and eager to seize power to remove it even at the cost of partition. In brief, every one was impatient, except Jinnah. This divergence between the attitudes of the Congress and the League leadership had a good deal to do with determining the destiny of India. The British wanted to rid themselves of the Indian burden. They had no desire to linger on in India on the pretext of the growing anarchy in India. At least Attlee clearly seemed eager to quit India. The December Conference was like a court in which the parties concerned were summoned to hear the judgment.

December 9, 1946 saw the opening of the Constituent Assembly. The Congress Party had taken into the Constituent Assembly experienced politicians and lawyers. It was decided to elect Sachchidanand Sinha as the interim President. The question of the permanent President was being debated since August. Vallabhbhai was inclined to prefer Gopalaswamy. I suggested that it would be appropriate to elect Rajendra Babu. Besides, it would please the Party. He discussed this with me more than once. But as the Chief Secretary of the Party I had already gauged the members' feelings in this matter.

The main resolution before the Constituent Assembly was moved by Nehru and seconded by Dr Radhakrishnan. Both of them spoke eloquently. I was the third speaker. 'Constituent Assembly', I said, 'is the nation in action on the march to freedom. This freedom has to be of a sovereign republican nature.' This speech was highly appreciated, and Vijayalakshmi Pandit congratulated me on it. The Constituent Assembly began well. All the League Muslims were absent. The constitution to be framed by the Assembly could, however, not be adopted without the agreement of the Muslims and other minorities. The British were reluctant to leave the minorities to the mercies of the majority. There were also the

representatives of some six hundred princes, some of whom could look ahead and see the writing on the wall. But some of them were pretty obstinate and resolute in their opposition to any change. It seemed, however, that the great upsurge of feelings and the tremendous popular will would carry them forward. It was quite clear that those who would not swim with the current would be swept off into the oblivion.

Amongst the speakers next day was M. R. Jayakar, who completely overlooked the historic import of the events. The Congress had fought its battle as a political party but in the elections to the Constituent Assembly, it took a broad outlook and placed the interest of the country above that of the party. Jayakar was unable to appreciate this and made a courtroom speech full of ironic references to the Congress. We were greatly disappointed as we had expected something better from him. In the light of this, Shankarrao Deo suggested that we should meet Dr Ambedkar. It was a good suggestion and along with a few Maharastrian friends, I invited him to tea at my house. I knew Dr Ambedkar of old. We had spent many an hour at the 'Vividh-Vritta' office gossiping over a cup of tea. Every one was serious, earnest and concerned about the situation in the country. The London Conference had convinced Dr Ambedkar that partition was inevitable and he was pre-occupied with its possible effects on the position of the Harijans. In an interview after his return from the London Conference, he had said that the promises given by the British to the Harijans would prove futile. 'The sand is crumbling under my feet.' He was farsighted and willing enough to sacrifice his self-esteem for the love of his people.

He spoke in the Constituent Assembly a day after the meeting in my house. His speech was so statesmanlike, so devoid of bitterness and so earnestly challenging that the whole Assembly listened to it in abrupt silence. His main points were that the Constitution must be framed in the interest of the nation as a whole and that it should be acceptable to the generations to come and should unify the country. The speech was greeted with a tremendous ovation and he was smothered with congratulations in the lobby. Quite a few

asked him how and why the change had taken place. The members were surprised because he had every reason to be bitter. He had to go to Bengal for his election to the Assembly and could not succeed in Bombay. The surprise was, therefore, all the greater. When questioned again, he said, 'It is the result of Kaka's (N.V.G.) tea.' This reply could show his generosity. Within a few months both of us became colleagues in the Cabinet.

I had known Jinnah since 1918 when, as a student of law, I had worked under him in the movement against the presentation of an address to Lord Willingdon, then Governor of Bombay. I had contacts with him during the boycott of the Simon Commission. After my election to the Legislative Assembly in 1934, we came closer still. He looked upon me as a socialist and as such a champion of the have-nots. Nawabzada Liaquat Ali Khan was his devoted follower. I knew Liaquat Ali well and he used to consult me frequently on economic matters during the old Assembly days. In fact, Jinnah had advised him to do so. Jinnah understood his followers well. Their moral weaknesses and financial flexibility had induced in him an attitude of superiority towards them. N. Sarkar, who was the Law Member from 1934 to 1940, once told me that he had a list of the price of each Muslim legislator. Only Jinnah was not on the list. Jinnah was impatient of criticism and rude when charged with ignorance of any subject. Compromise with him meant surrender to him. The followers of the Muslim League had accepted the League more with an eye on power to come rather than for any ideological sympathy with its aims. Quite often, Government could shepherd Jinnah's Swatantra Party followers into their lobby during 1934–40. It was often said that they were (Swatantra) free inasmuch as they were free from their leader and free from each other ! But all this changed after the elections of 1945. The Muslim masses got drunk with the ambition of Pakistan and did not worry about its consequences. They were willing to make any sacrifice for the Millat (the Muslim brotherbood) and Jinnah was their master. He was, therefore, inspired

awe into and obeyed by the League members whose obsequity to him was remarkable.

There were only two exceptions to this : Nawabzada Liaquat Ali Khan and Abdul Sattar Seth. Liaquat was now the Finance Member. His integrity was irreproachable in the context of the general run of the Muslim members. Abdul Sattar was a Kachhi Memon and although he was not a religious fanatic, he had the same characteristic Kachhi obstinacy of Jinnah. He had his business in Kerala and was elected from there. He came to me one evening in mid-December, 1946. He said that the British had definitely promised Pakistan to Jinnah and it was imperative that the Congress should come to some agreement with Jinnah at whatever cost. Sattar was the Secretary of the League Party and a confidant of Jinnah. I said that it was now Jinnah's turn to take the initiative. The Congress would gladly respond. The experience so far showed that the Congress would make some proposals. Jinnah would reject them and ask for more and if the Congress accepted the inflated demands, he would break off negotiations. He had succeeded in his strategy and Pakistan had come within his reach. Sattar was greatly disappointed. He did not want partition which was advantageous only to the Muslims in the Muslim majority areas; Muslims in the rest of India would have to live with the Hindus and adjust themselves to Hindu majority rule. His apprehension was that the Muslims in India would be hostages for the good treatment of Hindus in Pakistan. The secular democracy of India proved how puerile the idea was.

Thus dawned 1947, without any hope of conciliation, with Pakistan inevitable, with a disturbed country, despirited Ministers, powerless legislature and overshadowed by an atmosphere heavy with anxiety, forebodings and even despair. In Britain, India became the main topic. The Conservative opposition slowly gathered strength against Attlee's plan. Lord Wavell, the one-eyed but farsighted Viceroy, advised Britain that the only solution to India's problem was for the British to announce the day of its departure from India and failing any agreement between the Hindus and the Muslims

to impose its own solution. The well-wishing British statesmen desired to avoid anarchy and hoped for an agreed solution before the transfer of power. Attlee gave a deadline and Jinnah took advantage of it. According to him, there was only one way to avoid chaos and that was partition.

Lord Wavell had asked to be relieved. He had seen the reasonableness of the Congress viewpoint, but could not persuade the Muslim League to accept it. The country was getting into increasing anarchy and normal administration was becoming impossible. In the Congress provinces, the non-fulfilment of expectations of the people made public opinion sternly critical. The Communists were in favour of partition. In consequence the desperate sentiment in favour of cutting the gordian knot became vocal. Gandhiji had said that Pakistan would come over his dead body but now he, too, had become helpless. The tragic events of 16 August 1946 and onward had hurt him deeply. He saw Ahimsa—the first article of his faith and the last article of his creed—being trampled under foot by his very people. Was the Hindu-Muslim unity for which he had ceaselessly worked for decades merely a chimera, a will o'the wisp? He also saw the end of the ideal 'life is service' and the mad race for power amongst his colleagues and followers.

The new budget was to be presented to the Assembly by the end of February. Normally new taxation proposals are not discussed with all the Ministers, but the Ministers directly concerned are given an opportunity to present their views, only the Finance Minister and the Prime Minister discuss it and the outline of the budget is revealed to the Cabinet which does discuss it but usually does not make any material changes. That year, Liaquat had made revolutionary proposals. Nehru was given a rough idea of them. He seemed to have considered the proposals socialistic and agreed. Lord Wavell did not object because Nehru had agreed. As far as I know, Vallabhbhai was not consulted. Liaquat Ali presented the budget on the evening of February 28, and its impact shocked even the common man. The share market crashed and the capitalist class felt as if the sky had fallen. I did not think so. The

dose was rather heavy, but I was of the opinion that a dose was necessary. When interviewed, I told the press that the proposals did sound the death-knell of capitalists, but they offered nothing much for the poor either.

The first week of March saw a tremendous outcry in the country. The leftists welcomed the budget. The Muslim capitalists were as unhappy as the Hindu ones. The outcry made even Liaquat Ali a bit nervous and he announced during his budget speech that it was his first and last budget. It was an indication that partition was coming within a year. Liaquat Ali did not follow the same taxation policy in Pakistan. On the contrary, he accommodated the industrialists and the financiers comfortably. Shanmukham Chetty described it well. It was, he said, like sending a neighbour's child down in a disused well to gauge its depth. If he came out alive, you knew the depth. If he died, after all he was not yours ! As a consequence, even the Hindu capitalists began to think favourably of partition. Liaquat Ali levied the taxes knowing well that they would not hit the Muslims, who were mostly poor, but the rich Hindus. He was quite willing to be generously socialist at somebody else's cost.

The capitalist class in India felt the pinch and joined the chorus of those selfless people who felt that the country's economy would never progress unless the Coalition Government was dissolved. Men like me were in a quandry. The poor Muslim was welcome, but the intolerant Muslim was a danger to national unity. Therefore, we felt that if partition could rid us of this danger, it was worth giving a trial. India had 30% Muslims and they were spread all over the country. They were in majority in the Punjab, Bengal, Sind and the N.W.F.P. But we were not persuaded intellectually that partition would solve the problem. A number of intellectuals—Achyut Patwardhan, Dr B. R. Ambedkar, Dr Rajendra Prasad—had written about this problem, but none could suggest a practical solution.

Lord Mountbatten arrived in India in March 1947. He was preceded by a reputation of extraordinary executive

ability. He set a tremendous pace from the day he arrived and saw a large number of leaders. In April, he gave the usual garden party to the members of the Assembly. It was the first time that the Congress members were allowed to attend a party at the Viceroy's Palace. As I was presented to him by the A.D.C., Lord Mountbatten said, 'I want to talk to you after some time.' I wondered why he wanted to talk to me. I was wary as I was aware of his reputation. I had read somewhere that, 'he has a dangerous smile.' My mind could not enjoy the tea, but was engaged in speculating what Lord Mountbatten would discuss with me. I was anxious to avoid being unconsciously indiscreet and began to rehearse in my mind the probable questions and their proper answers. I was called after some time. Lord Mountbatten was sitting in a comfortable chair placed under a beautiful tree in the Mughal Gardens. I drew a chair near him and he began to discuss politics without any polite preliminaries. I was somewhat taken aback. A singer would first see that the accompanying instruments were properly tuned; a speaker would make a few introductory remarks; even lovers would come to the main point after some casual talk about the weather etc. But this was an entirely new approach. We talked for about ten minutes. His talk indirectly indicated partition. I was prepared for it and cautiously gave my reactions. After ten minutes he said, 'We shall pursue our talks later on.' I gave almost a verbatim report of this talk in writing to Vallabhbhai.

Mountbatten completed his round of such talks during April and May. He visited some parts of India also. He finalised the partition plan in Simla. It is now well known that V. P. Menon gave valuable assistance to him in this work. The Mountbatten Plan altered the Cabinet Mission Plan radically. His plan did not contemplate a Central Government nor did it give the whole of the Punjab and Bengal to Pakistan. Its main features were the division of these two provinces as well as a referendum in the North West Frontier Province and the Sylhet Valley. This was V. P. Menon's suggestion. Mountbatten took the Plan to London and discussed it with the

British Cabinet. He had discussed it with Jinnah also before going to London. Jinnah was asked to let him know within twenty four hours if he disapproved. Otherwise, he was told it would be assumed that he approved. Jinnah sent no communication to Mountbatten within the time. The Plan envisaged immediate transfer of power and even fixed the date of transfer—August 15. This was its greatest attraction. Jinnah was an old man. The Calcutta massacre of August 16, 1946 had affected him greatly. Perhaps he thought waiting too long might produce unexpected consequences and destroy his life's work. Probably this made him to abandon his earlier demand. His chief lieutenants were hungry for power. The people, particularly the Muslims in Punjab and Bengal, had become desperate and Mountbatten was not far wrong when he warned that if something was not done soon, the country would go to dogs. The Congress leadership too had become impatient. The Coalition Cabinet had become a three-legged race, only hampering each runner. The Hindus had the consolation that the Punjab and Bengal were being divided. It was like losing the mother to save the child. It can be presumed that V. P. Menon's plan had Vallabhbhai's support. It was better to separate than to live amidst continuous turmoil. That was how most of the people were reacting.

The British cabinet accepted the Mountbatten Plan when it was told that both the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League had approved of it. Mountbatten returned to India by the end of May and announced the Plan on June 3. The Muslims as well as the Hindus went through the ritual of disapproval. Attlee was correct in his judgement that the Hindu leaders were unwilling to take a firm decision but if a reasonable decision were to be imposed on them they would willy nilly accept it.

Besides, the provision for the future of the Princely States was a welcome aspect of the Plan. The Princes had treaty relations with the British Crown and were guaranteed protection by it. The Plan abrogated all these treaties and declared that henceforth the Princes were sovereign as before the British hegemony. At the same time, they were advised to

co-operate with the Central Government of India. Those Princes whose States lay within the boundaries of Pakistan were given similar advice regarding the Pakistan Government. The meaning of this advice was unmistakable. The British umbrella under which the Princes could defy their people had been taken off. It was also clear that if a conflict arose between the people and the Princes, the future Indian Government could not protect the rulers. Hence they could no longer continue to rule their people autocratically.

The 3 June announcement had a mixed reception in the country. Those who had relied on Gandhiji's 'Pakistan—over my dead body' declaration were stunned. The Hindu Sabha raised an outcry. But the Congress had the agreement of the Punjab and Bengal Hindus who were most vitally concerned and were to suffer the most due to Partition. The Sikhs also had agreed and their fiery leader, Master Tarasingh, had sheathed his sword (unsheathed in May 1947).

The Sikhs began immigrating to the Indian side of the Punjab the moment they realised that partition was inevitable. They tried to carry as much as possible. The story of that saga will follow later in this book. The Punjab Hindus agreed to the partition because it had become simply inevitable. An enormous stream of Hindus began to flow from West Punjab to East Punjab. The Bengal Hindus recalled the historic and great movement against the partition of Bengal in 1905 which had succeeded in getting the partition imposed by the imperious Curzon annulled. And now Bengal was being partitioned with their so-called consent. It would have been unrealistic to oppose it. The Attlee Plan would have given the whole of Bengal to the Muslims. The 3 June Plan partitioned Bengal into the East and the West Bengals and gave the latter to India. A majority of the Hindus were thus going to be saved from the Muslim domination. This was the argument advanced to persuade them to accept partition. The Congress Hindus would accept it as disciplined members of the Indian National Congress which had accepted partition. The Hindu Sabha leaders proved difficult to begin with. Vallabhbhai had meetings with leaders like Shyama Prasad Mukerjee. Directed to do so

by Vallabhbhai, I also met them more than once. In the end Shyama Prasad also agreed. Half a loaf is better than no loaf.

June and July 1947 saw the country on fire. Jinnah was attacked by enraged Muslims while on his way to attend a meeting of the League at the Imperial Hotel in Delhi. Muslims who had never known what Pakistan was, got some idea of it from the conflagration that had engulfed the country. The Muslims in Sind, Punjab and North West Frontier Province were already rulers, they would be free ; similarly the Muslims in East Bengal would be still more powerful, but what would be the lot of the Muslims in the rest of India. This realisation of the consequences of Pakistan had enraged them greatly. The loudest demand for Pakistan had come from Muslims in the areas which could not go to Pakistan, and these Muslims themselves could not migrate to Pakistan. And if they did, they would lose what they had, without any guarantee of any recompense there. The horse of Pakistan, promised by Jinnah, turned out a donkey and his kicks began to be felt. Jinnah had assured the League meeting that Pakistan would look after the interests of Muslims left in India. As I have said above, his plan was to rule India with the support of the Christian, Sikh and Harijan minorities. Vallabhbhai had spoiled this grand design and Jinnah was left with no choice but to accept the Mountbatten plan as an inescapable alternative. The Punjab and Bengal had to be divided precisely on the same principles on which India would be divided. Jinnah had no answer to this argument. The Id moon had arisen, but its Muslim devotees felt no joy. The League accepted the Plan after a great deal of acrimonious arguments and ultimately the work of putting together the ramshackle structure of Pakistan began. The shrewd amongst the Muslims in India were not keen on migrating but Jinnah dragged them along. Almost all the Muslim civil servants went willingly and a few were made to go. The *fez* was no longer an honoured headgear, it had become a headache. The place of pride had been taken by the *Gandhi Cap*.

The plan needed the approval of the All-India Congress Committee. A meeting was held at the Constitution Club

in New Delhi in the third week of June and a resolution recommending the acceptance of the Mountbatten Plan was placed before it. Three or four speeches were made. But it was of the nature of going through a formula. All sang the same tune : 'Accept whatever is available (प्राप्तं प्राप्तं उपासीत)'. The speeches of the Hindu members from Bengal reflected the anguish and darkness of despair. They showed the painful awareness of the destiny which was taking Bengal to the slaughter house. But Dr Choithram Gidwani's speech was historic and heartbreaking. Many of us sobbed unashamedly while he was speaking. He described graphically the tragic neglect of Sindhi Hindus by the Congress and their ultimate sacrifice on the altar of political expediency. He rejected the idea that what was happening was destined and unalterable. To accept it, he said, was to betray one's manhood. His speech was extraordinarily emotional, yet it did not lack in thought and wisdom. For him, surrender to injustice was no part of wisdom.

That the resolution would be approved was a foregone conclusion. And so it was. But it was the only resolution, which, though not a condolence resolution, was approved in total silence during my forty years in the Congress organisation.

The Maharashtra Hindu Sabha was campaigning against partition all over the province. Some opportunists were using their weeklies to abuse us in unprintable words. They had thrown all the canons of decency to the winds. I spoke often in the public meetings on the inevitability of the 3 June Plan and the events leading to it, and of the fact that its rejection would postpone freedom for a generation more. Partition would lead to rapid progress in economic growth and modernisation. In one meeting I said that my generation had redeemed the pledge to achieve freedom and challenged my critics to fill in whatever lacuna was left in that freedom. This challenge has not been accepted by the Congress critics for the last sixteen years. All that they have done is to earn the credit of casandras in politics by consistent disparagement and hooliganism. The *Kesari* of Tilak in Maharashtra took the admirable stand that although freedom was truncated and

unsatisfactory, still whatever had been achieved should be properly administered and guarded.

The moment the 3 June Plan was out, public kites began to fly in Delhi in newspapers and gossip corners prophesying who would and would not be in the first Cabinet of Independent India. The restaurants and cafes of Delhi became the centre of wild speculations. The daily visitors to Gandhiji became the yardsticks to measure the shape of the future Cabinet and dozens of 'engineers' who used this yardstick flourished in Delhi at the time. This was the main topic of discussion in the Congress lobbies, and quite a few Congressmen were busy mobilizing their forces to brighten their prospects.

Shankarrao Deo came to me one day and said he would speak about me to Vallabhbhai. I told him not to do anything of the kind, but to leave everything to Vallabhbhai's discretion. But Shankarrao would not listen and did see Vallabhbhai one day to speak about me. In his usual manner Vallabhbhai told him not to worry and assured him that everything would be all right. Shankarrao was somewhat unhappy and told me that he was not sure of what Vallabhbhai had in mind. I said that he should not trouble himself about these matters. What was vital was that freedom was at hand and not as to who would be in the Cabinet. But he did not relent. The most amusing thing was that a few days later some correspondents who claimed to possess secret information came to me and said, 'Your horse is being bypassed and Shankarrao's seems to be winning !' I did not know whether to laugh or cry at these speculations. I had not gone to Vallabhbhai's residence since June 3, although it was my duty to report to him everyday as Chief Secretary of the Congress Party. This I used to do in his room at the Council Hall every day since the Plan was announced.

Similarly, I had refrained from going to Gandhiji from the same date in order to avoid gossip regarding my motives in seeing him. Many members, who had grown old in Congress politics, had made Delhi their headquarters, continued to make daily pilgrimages to the doors of Gandhiji, Patel, Nehru and occasionally the Maulana. All these visits were duly reported

in the press. I did not see even Nehru at his residence. In fact, with the exception of his birth-day, I have never been to his residence without invitation. The Congress Socialist Party members were also agitated. Diwan Chamanlal led a section which wanted to claim as a right a Ministership, and failing that at least a Deputy Ministership for a representative of the C.S.P. I found that quite a few members, including Prof Ranga and Mohanlal Saxena, were in favour of such a demand.

When asked, I told Dewan Chamanlal that it would be better not to indulge in such a demand. But I heard later that he did put forth such a claim, although not through a group. Raosaheb Patwardhan, who happened to meet me at the A.I.C.C. session congratulated me that I was one of the certainties for the Cabinet. I requested him to defer the congratulations to the appropriate time, lest it should all prove to be a mere wishful thinking. Nagindas Master congratulated me in almost identical words and said that I should remember him in future. I told him that I really did not know anything. Nagindas said that Gandhiji had said in the Working Committee that Acharya Kripalani, who was then President of the Congress, had insisted that the Cabinet must be formed on his advice. Vallabhbhai had said that as he and his colleagues in Government had ten months' experience, the formation of the Cabinet should be left to them, otherwise they would not participate in it. He said that they were already nine and had decided upon the tenth (ten was to be the strength of the Cabinet on the first day of freedom). Rajaji remarked that he (the tenth) was such that he would never ask anything for himself. Gandhiji said that he knew it and suggested the inclusion of Amrit Kaur also. He said it did not matter if the number went up to eleven. While discussing the composition of the Cabinet, some members wanted the first Cabinet of Free India to contain members from outside the Congress too. The names of Dr Shyama Prasad Mookerji (Hindu Mahasabha), Dr B. R. Ambedkar (Sheduled Castes Federation), and Shanmukham Chetty (Independent) were mentioned in this connection. No final decision, however, could be taken till the end of July.

The Constituent Assembly was in session, but only a few had any interest in its proceedings. The Congress Party met every evening to consider the clauses coming up for discussion the next day. Nehru had been much perturbed by the growing unrest and riots in the country and had become somewhat irritable. At one time he clashed with Pattabhi Sitaramiah, who was presiding, and left the hall in a huff. Satyanarain Sinha and I ran after him and said that a Captain should not abandon the ship if annoyed with any sailor. 'Everything is in tatters' he said. I said that it was for him to stitch it together. And Sinha and I practically dragged him back. This illustrates the tension and mental agonies through which Congress leaders were passing at the time. Not that they themselves could not be blamed for it. But the times were extremely abnormal and due allowance should have been made accordingly. The Legislative Assembly also was in session in July but hardly anyone was interested in it.

I was entrusted with the work of writing the report of the Prison Reforms Committee of the Bombay Government. Members of the Committee had visited all the jails in the Bombay Province and it was decided to meet in August-September for preparing the outlines of the report. The Chairman of the Committee was Mangaldas Pakwasa and the members were Karmarkar from Dharwar, Indumati Seth, R. B. Ghorpade and Advani, who was then the Inspector-General of Prisons. According to the normal practice, Advani should have written the report after discussions with the Committee. But Pakwasa wanted me to draft it. By the middle of July, it became common talk that Pakwasa would go as the Governor of Madhya Pradesh and I would join the Central Cabinet. Pakwasa wrote to me vaguely about this and suggested that I should not wait for discussions in the Committee, but prepare a draft, which could be discussed and the report could be submitted to the Bombay Government by August 10.

I wanted to read all the papers as well as previous papers connected with such Committees. After accepting membership of the Committee I had purchased about a dozen books on

prison reforms, which I had already read. So it was not difficult for me to draft a report. As a member of the Pay Commission, I had one Mr. Chopra as my stenographer. I took his help and working three hours a day for ten days, prepared the draft report. The Committee met on August 1 in Bombay and approved it without much discussion. I met the Inspector General of Prisons again at Poona on August 3, to check some figures and the report was signed, sealed and delivered.

Before I took the plane for Bombay, Nehru had called me to see him on July 31. His private Secretary, Mathai, had phoned me on the 30th evening to make the appointment. I could guess that Nehru would ask me to join his Cabinet. The thought kept me awake for a long time in the night. I recollected where the journey had begun and thought of where it was leading to. Sorrow and joy mingled in my thoughts. Freedom had come, but at a very high cost. The joy of freedom was just a promise, but the cost of sorrow was being paid here and now in blood and tears The atmosphere was thick with riots and atrocities and I could see no immediate light ahead.

The nation was driven on the destined path irresistibly and faith in the future had become a moral necessity. I got up early on July 31, rehearsing in my mind the replies to be given to possible questions by Nehru. I arrived at 3, York Road, exactly at 8.45 A.M. Mathai received me and jokingly said, 'Remember me !' I understood what he meant. Nehru came down exactly at 9 A.M. and without wasting time in preliminaries, straightway said, 'I want you to join the Cabinet.' I was not surprised, nor was I saddened and must confess to a feeling of elation. I was aware of the intrigues in the Party and the organisation. I also knew who was backing which horse. Throughout my public career, I have, by temperament, kept away from political jealousies. I told Nehru that I was grateful to him for the offer. But for me the achievement of freedom was a sufficient reward. Life's great ambition had been fulfilled, and I would not misunderstand if he preferred someone else for national or political

considerations. I would still continue to work for the Party. He replied, 'You have to accept it. I want you to look after the Party organization and to be my Economic Adviser along with Rafi.' I said, 'I am an humble servant and soldier of the Congress. I accept and thank you.' Nehru then asked me what portfolio I would prefer. I replied, 'You are the captain. You are to tell me whether I should be in the forward line or in the centre or back or keep the goal. I feel I will do my best wherever I am placed.' We parted after coffee and a shakehand. I then crossed over to Sardar Vallabhbhai's residence which was just across the street and reported to him. He exclaimed that it was good that I was called. In our conversation I got the impression that Nehru was in two minds about taking me in the Cabinet. Later I knew that that impression was false.

The next day's newspapers announced that the Cabinet had been almost finalised and published what they thought was the final list of ministers. There were slight variations in different papers, but all included my name.

The publicity which I had received as a probable Cabinet member naturally brought to me many visitors whom I warned not to take anything as definite until the Government Gazette was published. A Marathi paper in Bombay published that I myself had given the news of my appointment and criticised me in its usual style. I ignored it. On the whole, I have been successful in adhering to my resolve not to take notice of personal criticism. Generally, it is futile to expect responsible criticism in a democratic set-up. Democracy means party politics, its dough does not rise without the yeast of criticism and most of the time the criticism is aggressive and offensive. Twenty-five years in politics had shown me that papers published in the English language wrote with restraint, reported accurately and gave the facts. But their comments showed party bias. On the other hand, Marathi newspapers never report a speaker fully and intersperse the report with personal reactions. Even today the same is true with a few exceptions. Very few Marathi reporters know shorthand and their report is in fact a summary. This summary often carries a flavour not present

in the original speech. I, therefore, refused all interviews and receptions but discussed some of my personal difficulties which might arise with my wife.

The life as a Minister is, after all, temporary and it is wise for a politician to carry his home on his back like the snail. Sheer foresight dictates it. The policy of never to decide anything firmly and finally (which became so characteristic of the Government of India later) was also followed by me in my personal life in those days. Therefore, I arranged that my wife and children should stay in Delhi for a few days before and after the swearing-in ceremony and then return home. We left Poona on the 8th August reaching Delhi on the 9th.

Till then the allocation of portfolios had not been decided. At least I was not informed of any. Sir Gurunath Bewoor met me at this time and gave me valuable hints. He advised me not to take a Private Secretary from the I.C.S. cadre because that would isolate me from the people. Nor should I want him to prepare my speeches. He also gave me many hints on the working of the Secretariat and the Cabinet. I had met (in Bombay) Mr N. M. Joshi of the Servants of India Society. He, like my friends Bakhale, Tatnis etc., was happy at my inclusion in the Cabinet. I spent an hour or so with Mr Joshi, who gave me the details of how a Cabinet with collective responsibility functioned and illustrated it with the example of the British Cabinet. He impressed upon me the need for caution, hard work and the proper use of authority for the good of the common man. I met Balasaheb Kher also and he warned me earnestly to be aware of pressmen. I guessed what particular person he had in view and told him that I had given no political secrets to him. And whatever he knew, it was not from me. I said I was going by Gandhiji's precept that there should be no personal animosities in politics.

I had to look into the question of appointing a Private Secretary as soon as I reached Delhi on August 9. Mr Borkar used to see me every evening at my residence at 3, Electric Lane since early June and say that I was certain to be in the Cabinet and that I should take him as my Private Secretary. I used to tell him not to believe cafe rumours. Mr Borkar

was educated in England, was trained in civil defence and was an officer in the Secretariat. As the Civil Defence Department was to be closed on August 15, he was in search of a job. The temporary Secretary of that Department, Mr Majumdar, met me at some function on the 10 or 11 August and said that I was to be the Minister in charge of that Department. The names of future Cabinet Members were published in a press note from the Viceroy's palace. I was one of them. I told Mr Borkar the same day that I would take him as my Private Secretary.

On August 14, I went to the airport to see Rajaji off to Calcutta where he was going as the Governor of West Bengal. He had been in the Interim Cabinet since 2 September 1946 and was to have continued as a member of the Cabinet, but had agreed to go to Bengal where the conditions were critical. Rajaji took me aside and said, 'Your main task in the Cabinet will be to see that the two important persons do not fall out.' I said I was aware of the situation and would do my best.

Shanmukham Chetty was taken in his place. I had not forgotten his bitter attacks on the Congress and told Nehru that his inclusion was unwise. Nehru said he knew little about him and was not sure if he would accept. I said, 'Who would decline such an honour! But the offer is unfortunate.' It needs hardly be told that Shanmukham Chetty had to resign from the Cabinet under a cloud within a year.

On my return from the airport, I found an urgent summons from Nehru awaiting me. I went immediately and saw him in the Secretariat. There Nehru said, 'Both Vallabhbhai and I feel that you should take over Public Works and Power, as that Department is rotten with corruption. We hope you will tidy up the things.' I reminded him that I had already said that I would go and give of my very best wherever and to whatever position he asked me to. I was immediately designated Member for Public Works, Mines and Power. I returned and like a bride waiting before the household goddess for the auspicious moment of marriage waited for the auspicious moment of August 15.

The transfer of power was to take place at the stroke of

mid-night on the 14th of August. My wife and I went to the Central Hall in the Viceroy's Palace. Lord Mountbatten announced that the transfer of power was now a reality and that from that moment he was not the Viceroy of the Emperor of India, but the Governor-General of the Dominion of India. He also made it clear that thenceforth his statements and speeches would have the prior approval of Prime Minister Nehru.

The Central Hall was glittering with lights. When Lord Brabourne, the then Governor of Bombay, was in Delhi in 1906, he had asked me to see him in the Council Hall. At the time he had pointed to the portraits of Viceroys hung on the wall and said that there was still room for five more. 'Another twenty-five years of British rule !' I said, 'we will end it sooner.' His Military A.D.C. was offended by my retort. I recalled this incident and also Lord Brabourne's reply : 'In that case your pictures will appear there.' A new chapter in the history of India had opened up ; a new era had begun. Naturally, I was elated to think that I was to be one of those who would shape the destiny of New India. I shared this feeling of joy with my wife. The next morning would be the dawn of freedom and herald the new era. In this state of exultation, I passed the last night of slavery.

FREEDOM AT LAST

15 AUGUST 1947 dawned. We had to be at the Viceroy's Palace at 8 A.M. on that day. Upto that day all the cars I had used belonged either to friends or the Police. But Vallabhbhai had arranged a car for me in anticipation and from August 13, a car loaned by the Birlas was in attendance on me. My wife, I and my future Private Secretary Borkar took our seats in the car taking care to see that we had the appropriate invitation cards and other papers with us. We reached the Viceroy's Palace at ten minutes to 8 and reached the Durbar Hall. We were received by officers and conducted to the Hall. I and my wife ascended forty steps (I counted them) to reach the grand Hall ! I had been to other parts of the Palace in previous visits but never to the Durbar Hall. I wondered how my Poona chappals would feel on the highpiled soft carpets. I had made little change in my usual dress, except a long coat. In view of the auspicious occasion, I wore the long, goldbordered cotton scarf typical of Poona, across my shoulders.

As soon as we entered, my wife was taken to a seat among the spectators and I was conducted to the row reserved for those who were to be sworn in as Ministers. Mr and Mrs Mavlankar were sitting just to my right and they asked me where Mrs Gadgil was. I told them that she was sitting somewhere in the back row. Immediately Mr Mavlankar got up and drew the attention of Banerji, the Secretary of the Home Department, to it. Banerji then arranged for my wife to sit near Mrs Mavlankar.

All the fourteen Ministers-designate had taken their seats a few minutes before eight. Our dresses reflected the mosaic

of the culture of India. Vallabhbhai and I were in our everyday dress. Jagjivanram, Shyama Prasad, Nehru and Baldev Singh were in the formal north Indian dress. Dr Mathai, Shanmukham Chetty and Dr Ambedkar were in western suits. Amrit Kaur was decked like a bridesmaid. But even a casual observer could have seen that with all that variegated dress, we were all Indians at heart. The fourteen had a majority of Congressmen, but they also included representatives of the Hindu Maha Sabha, the Sikhs, the Christians and the scheduled castes. The intention was to lay the foundations of freedom firmly on a broad four-square basis.

The trumpets sounded, the ushers and the mace bearers called us to attention. The assembled guests stood up. Amongst the spectators who had gathered to witness this auspicious and historic event, were many foreign diplomats, judges of the Supreme Court and legislators. The wisdom of the country, its wealth, power and its glory were, as it were, present to witness that marvellous drama.

As we waited, the Viceroy and Lady Mountbatten entered, followed by a procession of his military aides, and Mr Banerji, the Home Secretary. They took their seats on two golden thrones placed at the centre of the semi-circular hall. The future Ministers were distributed seven at each side of the Viceroy. Mr Banerji read out the King's message and asked the Viceroy's permission to begin the proceedings. Nehru was sworn in first, followed by all the thirteen of us. This took about fifteen minutes. Each one of us went up to the Viceroy on being called and took two oaths, the Oath of Loyalty to India and the Oath of Secrecy. After taking these oaths, the person concerned took two steps backwards, turned and immortalised himself by signing a historic book in the presence of the Cabinet Secretary nearby. It took about ten minutes for my turn to come and by that time about a dozen signatures were already in the book. I noticed that up till then everyone, including the Maulana, had signed in English. I signed as usual in the *Modi* script and paid a tribute, as it were, to the memory of the great Maharashtrian scholar, Hemadpant, who is credited with its invention.

When all this had been gone through, Banerji again asked the Viceroy's permission to announce the end of the ceremony and the Viceroy having nodded in assent, declared the function over. The Viceroy left the hall in the same ceremonial procession. As he had said the previous night, he was the last Viceroy to walk over that red carpet.

After this ceremony, as per programme, we went to the Central Hall. I took Mrs Gadgil to the place reserved for the honoured guests and took my seat amongst the Ministers. We were being overwhelmed with congratulations, some polite, some sincere. The rise in politics is always accompanied by new friends as well as new enemies. Under a despotic monarchy or dictatorship jealousy often manifests in violence; a sharp dagger proves more efficacious than a sharp argument. In a democracy, however, jealousy has open ways of expression and the ballot can topple the high and mighty. There were quite a few amongst those who had gathered there who were elected with me in 1935. I was the only one among them to enter the Cabinet. I accepted the congratulations of everybody, read the messages of blessings from elders and asked for the good wishes of my contemporaries.

The Cabinet held a formal meeting immediately thereafter. No business was transacted. On reaching home at about 11 A.M., I realised that in the excitement of the moment, I had left Mrs Gadgil behind ! She reached home after about half an hour with some friends. Of course she was very annoyed, but her annoyance was short-lived, as usual.

We had a lunch engagement that day but the crowds on the streets were so thick that we were unable to reach there. The entire area round India Gate appeared to be a boundless sea of humanity resounding with cheers for Nehru and Mountbatten : 'Pandit Nehru ki Jai', 'Mountbatten ki Jai'.

That evening the Viceroy gave a banquet to his new Cabinet. Both of us were invited. On arrival we were shown a map of the seating arrangement. In western dinners or banquets, husband and wife are not seated near each other. Drinks are served before dinner, soft or alcoholic according to your preference. The Viceregal hosts enter with a ceremonial

flourish, trumpets and all that. Then everyone is introduced and this happens all over again every time. We went in to dinner at 9 P.M. Mrs Gadgil was seated sixth from the Viceroy, flanked by the Maharaja of Baroda and the French Ambassador. Guests had been asked in advance if they were vegetarians or non-vegetarians and their places marked accordingly. This avoided confusion and embarrassment. Mrs Gadgil had learnt table manners to some extent and had the shrewdness to follow her neighbour when in doubt. And although she could not converse in English, she understood a lot. During the Youth League Movement, young men like S. M. Joshi, Gore, Meher Ali, A. R. Bhat, Chikerur, Khadilkar used to frequent my house and she had picked up enough English from them to understand the general drift of conversation. As a result she did not experience any awkward moments.

There were the usual toasts at the end of the banquet. News of the massacre in Lahore awaited us at home. Gurudwaras were being burnt, Hindu temples being destroyed. Every Sikh and every Hindu was a target of murderous attack. The gold of freedom was being literally tested in fire. The ecstacy of freedom was marred by the lament of partition and the thought occurred to me that if things did not improve in time, history shall mark me as one of those guilty for the holocaust. To-day's Cabinet room may prove tomorrow's cage for the accused.

All the members of the Cabinet gathered at Nehru's residence the next day, August 16, and discussed the draft of a proclamation of policy and a call to the public, Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Sikh, Harijan, rich and poor, to join us in the adventure of fulfilling the responsibility taken up by the government of Free India. It was decided that the proclamation should include an assurance that the freedom won with such sacrifice would be used for the good of the common man. It was necessary to express our deepest sympathies for those who had suffered due to the partition. We also pledged jointly and severally to devote ourselves fully to achieve the goals set in the proclamation.

A proclamation on these lines was approved in the meeting and published the next day as a Cabinet Proclamation. Although this meeting was a formal one, the atmosphere was informal and Vallabhbhai remarked that a failure would mean that India was incapable of governing itself. History will not say that a particular Minister failed. It will say that the country as a whole failed. 'Therefore everyone of us must exert himself to the utmost and give the best in him freely to the cause.' I do not know what effect Vallabhbhai's words had on others, but they moved me greatly and even today their impact on me is equally great.

The first few meetings of the Cabinet discussed mainly the massacres on the new frontiers. The division of assets was going on and the representatives of Pakistan were creating as many difficulties as they could. Hindus all over the country were enraged. The influx of refugees into Delhi was continuously on the increase. The houses left vacant by the Muslim Government servants who had gone over to Pakistan were taken over by these refugees as they came, without so much as 'by your leave'. I had suggested that Government should have a definite policy and plan for the resettlement of the refugees. The core of the plan I had in view was that refugees from each Pakistan district should be conducted to certain predestined districts in India and that refugees from Lahore should be sent to cities like Amritsar, Delhi etc.

The Government of East Punjab was located in Jullunder for a few days, after which it shifted to Simla which was the pre-partition summer capital of the undivided Punjab. It had some accommodation for the Government offices and officers. As Public Works Minister, I provided to them additional accommodation in offices and bungalows belonging to the Government of India. But there was such a rush of people that the civic amenities and accommodation could not cope with them. In the end the town had to be declared as 'Non-Refugee Town'. But the tension in both the Punjabs and the consequent riots were unabated. Almost all Punjabi Muslims from the Indian part of the province went over to the

Pakistani part and every Sikh and Hindu from Pakistani Punjab crossed over to the Indian Punjab. In all this tremendous migration of the whole population both ways, countless women were abducted and raped and countless persons massacred. According to Khosla, the Hindus and Muslims killed during this short period would come to a million souls.

An elaborate organisation was set up to rescue the abducted women and rehabilitate them in their families. It continued its work for many years. But thousands of helpless women were never found and resigned themselves to their fate wherever they were. A large number of Muslims have now Hindu wives and the same is the case in reverse with Punjabi Hindus and Sikhs. In all this great migration, immovable property had to be left behind, people carried with them as much of their movables as they could. The money left in the Banks could be transferred both ways later through negotiations. But the settlement of claims for immovable property left behind by the lakhs was not completely satisfactory due to the obstructive tactics of Pakistan.

Huge refugee camps like the one at Kurukshetra were organised by us. New townships were created. Hindu refugees were given between one-fifth to one-fourth of the value of property left behind by Muslims. The Government of India has spent more than 10,000 million rupees on refugees. A large number of them were absorbed in the services. Compared with the treatment which Pakistan has given to its refugees, India has done quite well to her refugees. However, if there had been careful planning from the beginning, the impact this enormous expenditure has had on India's economy could have been cushioned. Similarly, the soft policy towards Muslim refugees followed by the Government has resulted in creating evils like the large illegal immigration of Muslims in Assam. My suggestion that immigration of refugees into Delhi should be prohibited was rejected and my Ministry had to arrange accommodation for literally hundreds of thousands of the refugees who had already occupied about three thousand Government quarters illegally.

A new ministry called the Rehabilitation Ministry was created. A plan to accommodate forty thousand families in ten years was made and completed within the period. But more could have been achieved with less cost and labour by being firm. Lack of firmness and resolute discipline resulted in lack of efficiency. An example of this was provided by the way the refugees had turned the roads in front of the Delhi railway station into a rickety market. An uptodate market had been built for them, but they would not occupy it. If the police intervened to move them to the new market, they ran crying to Nehru, who ordered the police to postpone evictions. The sight of these ugly shops right in the middle of the roads was hardly a recommendation of the efficiency of the administration of Free India to the many V.I.P.s who had begun to visit Delhi in large numbers after we became free. I had therefore planned to shift them to another suitable place. In the end, I took advantage of Nehru's absence from the capital for a week and ordered the police to remove the roadside 'market.' Within a fortnight, those who had resisted the move were reconciled and happy in the new location. The curetting of a wound is painful but without it, it would not heal.

The police organisation in Delhi showed the same lack of planning. Everyday some lonely Muslim would be found murdered. The Sikh refugees were particularly guilty in this respect. It was usual for them to accost anyone with a beard, and if he turned out to be a Muslim to stab and kill him. Hundreds of Muslim refugees from the Alwar State had camped in the open ground in front of the Red Fort. Hundreds of others were streaming into Delhi from the villages of Uttar Pradesh to save themselves from the fury of their neighbours. Many of them were massacred in the trains. The Delhi junction platform was a witness to this ghastly drama. The Delhi Muslims were a mixed crowd, some fanatics, some sober. In those localities in which they were in large numbers, they had organised themselves for self-protection and in some places they got themselves armed. The whole of September, therefore, was a month of chaos in

Delhi. Both Muslims and Hindus were being killed. Stories of the cruel massacres of Hindus in Pakistan were coming in incessantly. Calcutta was saved from this tragedy at the transfer of power because Gandhiji was present in the city, but the brutalities which occurred in Noakhali were a blot on humanity. Gandhiji had, therefore, gone there. Bihar was aflame with vengeance for the crimes against Hindus. The newspapers made a Roman holiday of all such incidents and fed the flames in Delhi, making it difficult for the Government to do its primary duty of protecting the lives and property of the people.

There were rumours that fifty thousand Muslims were going to march to the Secretariat from the Idgah Square of Delhi which had become the refuge of those Muslims whose houses were isolated amongst Hindu localities. The blood of Hindu youths was up and boiling. The Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh (RSS) had taken the lead in the Punjab to protect and save Hindus and Sikhs. Some Muslims in Delhi had plans of retaliation. Not a day passed without anxiety. No one knew what would happen next and where a riot would be sparked. The grand post-freedom plans were shelved and these Law and Order situations in Delhi, the Capital of India, became a mockery.

The Delhi police was mainly Muslim. Quite a few of them had opted and left for Pakistan. Those that stayed behind became suspect. The Army had been called in to help. But the poison of communal hatred had infected the Army also. Mountbatten had created a Joint Border Force of India and Pakistan to protect immigrants on the way in both directions. But it had proved futile. In Lahore, the Baluch members of this Force had massacred the Hindu immigrants. Security on the border in the Punjab and in Delhi itself had become precarious.

In the first week of September, Dr Ambedkar and I wanted that the full Cabinet should discuss the situation. I told Vallabhbhai, who as the Home Minister was in charge of Law and Order in the country, that if necessary, Martial Law should be proclaimed. A special meeting of the Cabinet was

called on the 27th of September. It was feared that a proclamation of Martial Law would lower our prestige in the world. I said that Martial Law was urgently called for to stop the massacres and that I did not feel it would lower our prestige. The Commander-in-Chief said that the decision to proclaim it or not was the Cabinet's, but once it was proclaimed, the Cabinet would be powerless to interfere till it was withdrawn. Both Ambedkar and I said that such a proclamation would itself prove salutary and the situation would improve in a day or two. In the end, the meeting adjourned after deciding to take all steps possible short of Martial Law and the Army was entrusted with the control of the next day's projected march of Muslims from the Idgah. The Hindus in that area were warned not to leave their houses on the day. A number of magistrates were stationed at strategic places in case occasion arose to take the drastic measure of firing on the crowd. It was decided to shepherd the marching crowd straight to the Purana Qila where a camp was opened for them to stay in safety till they could be sent to Pakistan.

The march began from the Idgah as anticipated and was halted at the road turning into New Delhi. The crowd resisted and firing had to be resorted to. The Army shepherded more than a lakh of people to the Purana Qila in perfect order. The firing wounded about four hundred and killed a similar number, but it averted the stabbings and killings on a much larger scale. Special trains were arranged to take the hundreds of thousands of Muslims gathered in the Purana Qila to Lahore in Pakistan.

Two days after, Vallabhbhai proposed that the Joint Border Force should be disbanded. The proposal was opposed because the force was Mountbatten's pet. But in the end, it was disbanded and a Brigade of the Indian Army was stationed at the border. Its commander was Brigadier Mohite. After this arrangement, the atrocities which were so common on the border were checked to a very great extent.

Hindu-Muslim fights had become a feature of Delhi lanes and bylanes since August 15, and continued till the end of September. These were fed by the stories of atrocities against

Hindus in Pakistan which enraged the Hindus in India. The Government was caught in the delicate situation where its primary duty of keeping Law and Order revolved round the protection of the Muslim minorities in various places and at the same time it had to meet the mounting fury of the Hindus at the terrible things happening to their brethren in Pakistan. In addition, it had to look after millions of Hindu and Muslim refugees. It was thus like the two-headed drum which was being beaten at both ends and still had to produce sweet rhythms. Cooperation from the Hindus was not satisfactory, and none could blame them for it. The Muslims as a whole distrusted the Government to a large extent and some even hated it. And they too could not be blamed. As I have said before, the police force was not adequate and it was difficult to import police from other States. The nearest States were Punjab and Uttar Pradesh and the situation in both of them was equally critical. Similar was the condition in Alwar. Conversion to Islam could not purchase safety for many Hindus and Sikhs in Pakistan. In India too, it seemed, a similar fate awaited many who tried it in reverse. It seemed as if Man had relapsed into his primeval beast lines. It is true that proportionately only a minority showed this aweful relapse. Whatever people may plan in their minds, if they could not control their public actions, it becomes the primary duty of the Government to teach them self-control.

Lord Mountbatten created a body for the control of Delhi and named John Mathai, Bhabha and a senior officer as its members. The Committee opened an office in the Delhi Town Hall. The Central Committee was presided over by Mountbatten himself. Being a man steeped in naval discipline, he wasted little time in discussions. He took instant decisions and saw to it that they were carried out. When it was noticed that the Sikh and Punjab regiments were somewhat tardy in controlling the lawless elements in Delhi, it was arranged to replace them with Mahar and Maratha regiments. Their efficiency and impartiality soon put a stop to the lootings. The control room kept watch on the slightest hint of disturbance in the city and despatched police and army personnel to

the spot immediately. As a result, deserted streets began to show signs of life. It was arranged that those who desired to migrate to Pakistan should go to the camp in the Purana Qila where all arrangements for their repatriation were made. I was in the Central Committee in charge of these movements and noticed that the Maulana was not happy to hear the report, after a fortnight, that nearly two hundred thousand Muslims had left for Pakistan. He even hinted that some of them might have been forced to leave. It had to be explained to him that the Committee which was mainly responsible for their arrangement was composed of a Christian, Dr John Mathai, and a Parsee, Dr Bhabha. This Committee also arranged to send back to their homes in Alwar those Muslims who had come away and were squatting in front of the Red Fort.

While all this was happening, the Prime Minister of Alwar had changed and those Muslims of the State who had gone to Pakistan, later returned to India *mouthing* the pious sentiments made familiar by Vinoba. The territory of Alwar is now partly in Punjab and partly in Rajasthan and one cannot be quite confident that all these Muslims on a sensitive border are loyal to India. In fact, barring a small percentage of the Nationalist Muslims and those who are in villages, the loyalty of Muslims to India in times of danger is doubtful. The experience in Assam for the last few years is not reassuring on this point.

The control of the law and order situation in Delhi and in the country as a whole had become precarious during August-October, 1947 and the nation passed through very critical days. Hindus in Pakistan became the victims of Muslim frenzy and even the news of the atrocities perpetrated over them was not allowed to reach India. The Indian Cabinet became aware of the magnitude of these atrocities and the beastliness with which the Hindus were massacred only after Lady Mountbatten went to Pakistan as a Red Cross worker and brought with her a few photos of the actual happenings! The enormity of these killings could have been somewhat abated had Mountbatten remained the Governor-General of both the

Dominions as originally stipulated. But it was not to be.

In India, those who preached restraint and tolerance were regarded as enemies of the Hindus. Nehru was the severest critic of the Hindus and constantly accused the Hindu Maha Sabha and the R.S.S. of having the designs to turn India into a Hindu theocracy. Since 15th August, I had followed the practice of sending him a weekly report on the situation in the country. There were quite a few matters which could not be mentioned in the Cabinet meetings as they were likely to lead to the accusation that I was encouraging communal bitterness. These weekly reports were more frank and plain. In one of these notes I had suggested that his charges against the Hindus were not correct. The Hindus were a majority community in India and a democratic election would give them automatic power. There was no need for them to agitate for it. On the other hand, his speeches were creating unnecessary bitterness amongst the Hindus. The reply was that the Cabinet worked on the principle of joint responsibility and what he was saying was the correct assessment of the situation. I took the hint and said that his attitude would lead to disaster and if he desired it, I was ready to resign. Nehru replied immediately that he did not want me to go. All he wanted was a general agreement on common policies. This frank exchange of views between the Prime Minister and myself took place in September 1947.

The tone of Nehru's speeches did not improve. The Punjab Hindus were getting more and more restive and did not appreciate the tremendous effort made and the huge expenditure incurred by the government. What was done was felt to fall far short of what was needed and infinitesimal in comparison to expectations. Unlike many of us, Nehru did not use the words which would soothe and soften the agonised hearts of the people who had passed through indescribable calamities. Thus the background for the January disaster was being prepared. The police used to carry on raids in the Muslim localities of Delhi and the ancient arms they found were magnified into the caches of modern arms. The stream of Hindu refugees had flowed over vast areas in North India

from Kurukshetra to Varanasi. Just when our plans to settle them were maturing, news came in that the Pakistan officers themselves had looted Hindu homes and raped Hindu women in Karachi in broad daylight. About a million additional Hindus from Sindh joined the stream of refugees through the deserts of Rajasthan and Kutch, and by sea. Pakistani policy was crystal clear. They wanted to drive out the Hindus of Sind also and grab their vast wealth. The success of this policy in Punjab had encouraged the Sind Muslims.

The Hindus of Sind were middle class men or merchants. They were unaccustomed to work with their hands. They sacrificed their immovable property and came over to India between September 1947 and January 1948 bringing with them whatever they could carry in cash and jewellery. They also brought with them their great business talent. The Hindus and Sikhs from the Punjab brought with them courage and faith. When they crossed the river Ravi they did not leave behind their capacity to face and overcome difficulties. Today's Punjab is witness to their industry and ingenuity. The Punjab is prosperous both in agriculture and industry. Manual labour comes naturally to a Punjabi man and woman. They are proud of it. The Sindhis are the opposite. They are good at business and service and in fact they have revolutionised the business world of India during the last decade. They do not believe in creating shortages or hoarding for profit like the Gujarati merchant. To sell fast for immediate profit is their business motto. Today their tiny wooden shacks of shops have become a feature of all big cities in Rajasthan, Maharashtra and Gujarat. These are neither a sign of the cities' poverty or riches, but a way of life, as it were.

Like the forest fire following the wind, the problem of the refugees was not confined to the West only. West Pakistan had been emptied of Hindus and Sikhs. Of the six million non-Muslims of that area the Pakistanis prevented the sweepers and other Harijans from coming over. The reason for this was obvious. The weak-kneed policy of the Indian Government indirectly sanctioned their slavery in Pakistan.

Perhaps the events which happened in both the halves of

the Punjab cancel each other. But the happenings in the East were unique and unparalleled. And the sorry tale is not finished yet. After partition, a few Bihari Muslims migrated to East Bengal, and hardly ten per cent of West Bengal Muslims migrated to East Pakistan. On the other hand, of nearly eighteen million Hindus in East Pakistan, about eight millions have taken refuge in India during the last fifteen years. Almost all of them are upper and middle class white collar people, unaccustomed to manual labour. They have no tradition of fighting with the Muslims either through jealousy or hatred. A vast majority of Bengal Muslims are the descendants of Hindus. The Hindu religion has kept certain lower class people outside the circle of respectable society. As a result, many of them have accepted Islam during the last four centuries. When Mahadu becomes Mohammad, the Hindus accept him as a respectable member of society. Coming as they did from the lowest class of the Hindu society, a majority of these Muslims are workers or farmers. The main agricultural product of East Bengal is jute and rice, the planting of which requires hours of work in kneedeep water. The upper and middle class Hindus had never done it. They sing with devotion the great national song of Bankimchandra describing the beauties of their fertile motherland. But none of them have the capacity or habit of working to create such a beauty. The upper class Bengali does not subscribe to the tenet that wealth is the offspring of labour. The East India Company had created this landlord class in Bengal and this class in its turn created some lopsided values. The identification of a Bengali Babu with a clean white dhoti and a finely ironed white shawl remains still unchanged.

After 15 August, the Noakhali district of East Bengal witnessed brutalities which would shame even the beasts. Gandhiji tried hard to stop them, but his efforts produced only temporary results. Since then the technique of attacking Hindus, frightening them to migrate to India and, after they have left, taking over their properties is followed in East Bengal without let or hindrance. The Hindus had boycotted the referendum whether to opt for Pakistan or India in the

Sylhat district at the time of partition. The result was inevitable. The Muslims came out as a majority and the district went to Pakistan. Hundreds of thousands of Muslims have entered Assam from the valley of Sylhat during the last ten years and have changed the complexion of Assamese life. For the last ten years I have been warning the Government about this, although I am not in the Cabinet now. All in vain. The Hindus of East Pakistan are being driven into India and the Muslims from there are entering Assam. The economic life of Bengal is in chaos. As a matter of fact, the economic difficulties of India today can be traced to the influx of these millions of refugees into India in addition to the natural growth in population.

As a Minister, I had tried to settle them in the Andamans. But they would not stay there. Today there are few Bengalis in the Andamans, but thousands of Keralities. The Bengali is good at office work; he cannot do business, even at a small scale. A north Indian writer has described the life of a Bengali well, in these words: 'To go to office leisurely and late, to leave it early, to gossip and create annoyance for others and, in the evening, watch a football match.' Even today, all the hard work in Bengal is done by the Bihari or the Oriya; business and trade are in the hands of the Marwari and the clerical jobs are crowded by the Madrasi, who are happy to live on a meagre salary and scant sustenance. The '*Sonar Bangla*' (Golden Bengal) has remained in the imagination of poets.

Between August 1947 and January 1948, Babu Prafulla Chandra Ghose was the Chief Minister of Bengal. He tried to curb the capitalists. As a consequence, he had to leave. He was followed by Dr Bidhan Chandra Roy. Dr Roy was a man of great ability. He asserted that the first claim on the great wealth of Bengal was of the Bengalis. He insisted on this priority in business and industry. He was a man of great prestige and would not allow schemes disapproved by him in his State, the Central Government's insistence notwithstanding. During my five years in the Cabinet, I had many occa-

sions to meet and discuss things with him and found that while his love or loyalty for India was unquestioned, his heart lay in the welfare and progress of Bengal. He respected ideas but followed the practical course. He was a proud man and did not mince words. Whatever stability Bengal has today is due to the fact that he was its Chief Minister in the early years of the post-Independence era.

The refugee problem has become somewhat manageable. The Dandkaranya Scheme is now in operation. As Governor of Punjab, I had suggested that five hundred Hindu and Sikh families from Punjab should also be allowed to settle there. But it was not accepted. It was said that not one Punjabi family should be allowed there and it should be reserved for Bengali refugees only. Clearing a jungle and preparing land for cultivation is hard work. It is beyond the Bengali, particularly the middle class Bengali. So far, nearly eight million Hindus have migrated to West Bengal from East Pakistan and there is no let-up in the stream. I had once suggested in the Assembly that a reallocation of the country should be made in proportion to the Hindus and Muslims in each country—India and Pakistan. The picture today is that West Pakistan has no problem, because no Hindus or Sikhs are left there. As for East Pakistan, they are being systematically driven out. As the Bengali Hindu is a meek and suffering tribe, the East Pakistan too has no such problem. On the other hand, even the grim price of partition has not relieved India of the Hindu-Muslim problem. In addition, every now and then communal trouble crops up and some emergency or other is created. The question of rehabilitation was acute in the first five years of partition, when refugees were streaming in from both East and West. But even now it is by no means solved.

When India became free hundreds of thousands of Indians were living in various countries abroad. Burma had three million, Ceylon a million and half. Similarly millions of them were in South, East and other parts of Africa. There are Indians in Mauritius, Trinidad and other places. The question of the treatment of Indians in South Africa has been

debated for seventy years now. The position of Indians in all these countries has become critical and they are being denied the rights of citizenship in the countries where they have settled for generations, or things are being made impossible for them. This problem of Indians abroad threatens to become as acute as the refugee problem. The South African Government argues that if Indians there are citizens of India, they should be repatriated to their motherland and if they are the citizens of South Africa, India has no business to interfere in their affairs. Since the last war the British have changed their policy towards the colonies and gradually freed them. In the British colonies the Indians had certain rights as British citizens. But for the last half a century, and particularly since the last war, the trend of thought in these colonies has been that as the British were foreigners, those who came into the country with them are equally so. When the question of India becoming a member of the Commonwealth was discussed in the Cabinet in half a dozen meetings, one of the arguments in favour of staying within the Commonwealth was the belief that India's membership of the Commonwealth might do some good to the Indian citizens scattered in various colonies abroad. It was said that as India was becoming a sovereign democratic state, such a membership would in no way affect its full sovereignty. I objected on the ground that like the oath of loyalty, we may be tied to the foreign policy of Great Britain. I was not satisfied, in spite of the discussion in more than one meeting. Vallabhbhai spoke for an hour trying to persuade me not to oppose India's staying in the Commonwealth. I did not agree, and recorded my dissent. Experience has proved that the decision to remain within the Commonwealth was advantageous. The British friendship has been useful to us, excepting a few situations. The Englishman is shrewd and practical; as a result, the Commonwealth now contains monarchies as well as republics. It is now an interesting mixture of different political systems.

During the last sixteen years Britain has helped India in the economic and industrial fields. India has supported Britain in the international field only when its policies were approved by

us and has even opposed them whenever necessary. This is gratifying. However, the future of Indians abroad has become dark. More than a million people may return to India in the next ten years. Few Indians are left in Burma now. Ceylon has presented us with such a dilemma regarding the Ceylonese Indians that we are completely stumped there. It would not be fair to say that these difficulties are due to our membership of the Commonwealth. But it is fair to say also that Britain has not moved its little finger to help in this delicate matter. The refugee problem of twelve million souls who migrated from Pakistan has recently been aggravated by some three hundred thousands who have returned from the colonies which have since become free. More will come in the next ten year . It is quite obvious that these eventualities were not anticipated at the time the decision to stay in the Commonwealth was taken. It is also obvious that we have to accept the situation as it is and as it will develop and find ways and means to meet it. I feel that Indian leadership failed to realise the problems that might confront a newly freed nation. Partition did not solve the Hindu-Muslim problem, membership of the Commonwealth has not solved the problem of the Indians residing in the former British colonies abroad. On the contrary, it has become more acute. Freedom's face was marred by these ugly spots, but they had to be accepted.

A TATTERED ROBE OF HONOUR

THE INDEPENDENCE of India Act of July 1947 abrogated all the treaties between the Princes of the native states and the King of Great Britain. Thus all the Princes from the pettiest one to the Nizam of Hyderabad became sovereign in theory. Some of them began to assume airs as if they were sovereign in practice also. They were represented in the Constituent Assembly and began intriguing there too. It was necessary to persuade them to sign an Instrument of Accession to the Indian Union before the 15th of August. Merger was only a remote thought in the minds of some of us then. The time-table for signing the Instrument had been already published. A draft of the Instrument of Accession had been prepared which made the Government of India responsible for foreign affairs, defence, customs, foreign trade and currency. It was stipulated that in return the Government of India would guarantee to protect the rights and privileges of the Princes. It was obvious that the autocratic rule could not continue in these 600 states unchecked for long after a democratic Government responsible to the people began functioning in the rest of India. Sardar Patel had begun the acceptance of these Instruments through the States Department. Sayajirao Gaikwad, the farsighted Maharaja of Baroda, had anticipated this development when he said in 1925-26 that the Indian Government should be a federal one. The Princes signed the Instrument of Accession in rapid succession, except the rulers of Junagarh, Kashmir, Bhopal and Hyderabed, who raised all sorts of objections. At the time the proclamation regarding

the transfer of power was made, some fears had been expressed that these 'sovereign' states would negate India's sovereignty. Many leftists had declared that Congress leadership had been duped. Freedom had dawned, but Indian unity was nowhere in sight. I had said at the time that freedom looked like the robe of honour given to a learned man. On opening the gift it was found to have five to six hundred holes. How these holes were darned and repaired makes interesting and instructive history.

Lord Mountbatten had advised the Princes that they should join India or Pakistan according to geographic necessity. But some of them were unwilling to accept this sane advice. The Nawab of Bhopal was an impressive personality in the Chamber of Princes before freedom. He had the original idea of creating a third State by the creation of a federated Princely India. August 14 was the final date for the signing of the Instrument of Accession. Bhopal had an understanding with Holkar, the Maharaja of Indore, and some other Central India Princes that they would not sign the Instrument. The Sardar told me on August 9, that Indore had declined to sign. We arranged, thereafter, to send the rulers of Gwalior, Baroda and Dewas by plane to Indore to put sense in him. The Maharaja had left Indore for hunting somewhere in Central India. They caught him there. Holkar pleaded his inability to sign as he was bound by his promise to Bhopal. He was told that Bhopal had signed and secretly handed it over to Mountbatten. He signed then. He had to pay for his recalcitrance later, and Sardar had to send N. C. Mehta as an administrator to Indore, in succession to Justice Bhide of the Lahore High Court. This arrangement ended with the birth of the State of Madhya Bharat. The Nawab of Junagarh not only declined to join India but joined Pakistan. He was within his rights in doing so. But Junagarh was situated in the heart of Kathiawad. By the terms of the agreement, Pakistan was under a legal obligation to come to the assistance of Junagarh in case of an attack on it. Pakistan could not have done it without violating Indian territory.

Vallabhbhai was in sole charge of the affairs pertaining to

the Princely States and was approached by the people of Junagarh who desired to accede to India. Discussions were held in the Taj Mahal Hotel in Bombay and Samaldas Gandhi, a veteran and popular leader of Junagarh, collected a hundred or so citizens of Junagarh in Rajkot and took over the Junagarh House there. From there thousands of people began a march on foot to capture the State of Junagarh. The Indian Army was asked to protect the marchers. The march reached Junagarh town in about a week. On its arrival the Nawab of Junagarh fled to Pakistan in a plane filled with his wives and favourite dogs, leaving behind a British Officer as Administrator. This officer appreciated the situation and invited Samaldas Gandhi and the Commander of the Indian Army to take over. Thus Junagarh was taken over without a bullet being fired and without any violence.

A great crisis was thus avoided. All this happened in the third week of October 1947. On October 31, Sardar and I went to Junagarh and addressed a mammoth meeting. We asked the audience, 'Do you want to join India or not?' Thousands of hands were raised in favour of joining India. Not one was raised against. The Indian Government accepted the verdict of the people and created a precedent that the State belonged to the people and not to a person or a dynasty. We had to do so because we had in mind Hyderabad and Kashmir too.

On November 1, 1947 Sardar and I went to Somnath, the temple destroyed by the Muslims many centuries ago. There I thought of rebuilding it and mentioned it to the Sardar, who approved of it. Standing at the main entrance of the temple I announced Government of India's decision to rebuild the temple. I said our freedom was constructive and not destructive and I quoted the Bible, 'I have come to fulfil and not to destroy.' Thousands of the assembled devotees welcomed this announcement with acclamation. An hour later Vallabhbhai made a similar announcement in the temple hall built by Devi Ahalyabai Holkar. A million rupees were promised on the spot and what is more significant, the idea of a federated Saurashtra State was born. The Jamsaheb of Navanagar nego-

tiated with the Sardar and within two months the State of Saurashtra was constituted with the merger of 342 states of various sizes. The first Saurashtra Cabinet was formed by Shri U. N. Dhebar. The State had no constitution and Shri V. P. Menon and I framed a temporary constitution as directed by Vallabhbhai.

Thus I had the good fortune of having nursed the birth of Saurashtra. The Mahatma was very happy. The hard-headed Hindu Princes were moved by the joyous cry of 'Hail Somnath' (Jai Somnath) and joined the new State. Thus, to me this historic event had a spiritual background. Sardar's action about Junagarh was based on foresight. If we had acquiesced in Junagarh's accession to Pakistan, the Nizam would have done the same and the very heart of India would have been affected by that cancer. Nehru expressed disapproval of the developments in Junagarh and said it had created international difficulties. I told him that he was wrong. But the Junagarh affair led Nehru to retain Kashmir in his External Affairs Ministry, although it was legitimately the concern of the States Ministry under Vallabhbhai. The sorry tale of how Nehru handled Kashmir follows.

As I have said above, Lord Mountbatten had advised the Princes in India to come to terms with India. He gave similar advice to the Princes whose territories lay within Pakistan. Kashmir was between the two and the Maharaja of Kashmir was told by Mountbatten to decide as he thought best. In June that year Vallabhbhai had written to the Maharaja on the same lines and said that if he decided to join Pakistan, we would not consider it as an act of hostility. Nehru had gone to Kashmir before the 3rd June 1947 plan was made public and created, as usual, further complications in an already complicated situation. He was at the time Vice-President of the interim government.

His activities and speeches had a very adverse effect on the Hindus there and had complicated a simple situation. Sheikh Abdullah was in jail on account of his activities in behalf of the States People's Conference. The National Conference

members, both Hindus and Muslims, expressed themselves in favour of joining India when the 3rd June Plan was published. The Sheikh had been a student of the Aligarh Muslim University. He was a nationalist and had no sympathy for the League. However, he wanted Kashmir as an Independent State, free and neutral like Switzerland. Not everyone in the National Conference, whose leader he was, agreed with him. It is said that while he was in jail Jinnah had offered him self-Government if he joined Pakistan. He refused.

The Khizr Hayat followers formed a powerful group of landlords in Punjab. This group or Party was against partition. Members of this group argued that if Kashmir became independent or joined India, future Pakistan would be denied full use of the waters of the Sind, Jhelum and Chenab rivers all flowing from Kashmir, because Kashmir itself, or India, would utilise their waters for herself. In the interest of the people, they thought partition undesirable. The reply to their argument was to control Kashmir by hook or crook. That is exactly what Jinnah tried to do. He encouraged the Pathan tribals to attack Kashmir and led them to believe that they would celebrate the next Id, which fell in October, in Srinagar.

The tribesmen entered Kashmir from the North-West carrying loot, arson, murder and rape with them. The Maharaja turned to India for protection and was willing to sign the Instrument of Accession. But Nehru told him that it must have the sanction of the people. In truth, Nehru did not show much enthusiasm for Kashmir's accession at the time. The Maharaja released Sheikh Abdullah and other political prisoners in deference to the wishes of Nehru. Pandit Kak, who was the premier of Kashmir was removed and Meharchand Mahajan, who later became a Supreme Court Judge, was appointed in his place. Both the Maharaja and Mahajan pressed for the acceptance of Kashmir's Accession, but Nehru would not move. He knew the mind of Abdullah. In the end, Abdullah appealed to him to accept the Accession. He told Nehru, 'As a friend, you have to help us when we are overwhelmed by an enemy. On behalf of the National Conference, I agree to Accession to make your help possible and

legal.' It was then decided that Sheikh Abdullah should be made the head of Government and the constitution of the State should be framed after elections. The Maharaja did everything that Nehru asked for. On October 20–21, popular rule was established in Kashmir.

The very first task that faced Abdullah was the defence of the Kashmir Valley. The tribals, armed, encouraged and supported fully by Pakistan had reached Baramullah. They were hardly a mile or so from the Srinagar airport. Maharaja Hari Singh was advised to leave Srinagar and he left it with his wife for Jammu. This was later twisted to mean he had fled Kashmir leaving his subjects to their fate in the hour of mortal danger. What is most regrettable is that Nehru, knowing the facts himself, joined in this calumny.

Srinagar was in danger of falling within a day or two and Sheikh Abdullah came to Delhi to seek military help. The Cabinet met at 9.30 in the night and within fifteen minutes approved the plan prepared by Mountbatten for the movement of troops to Srinagar. All of us were enthusiastic supporters of this plan except Dr Ambedkar, who never uttered a word. Later he expressed his frank opinion that India should not have got into the Kashmir tangle. Everyone of us set to our allotted task in support of the Cabinet decision to help Kashmir immediately. Rafi and I did not sleep that night. At 8.00 a.m. next day, the first Indian plane carrying troops touched down at Srinagar airport. This continued every ten minutes till the evening. The soldiers dug themselves in immediately on landing. Had they been late by two hours the airport would have fallen to the invaders and Srinagar besieged.

In Srinagar and in Kashmir, the Indian Army was welcomed with joy. Thousands of soldiers with armour and transport reached Pathankot and crossing the Ravi travelled 250 miles through high mountain ranges to enter the Kashmir Valley. The invaders were checked. We were then faced with the problem of the coming rains. If the Jammu-Pathankot road were not to be ready for heavy army traffic by monsoon, and Jammu had fallen to the invaders, our army in the Valley would be cut off. The solution of the problem became my

responsibility.

In the last week of October 1947, a day after the Cabinet meeting was over, Vallabhbhai took out a map and pointing to the Jammu-Pathankot area said that the sixtyfive mile road between the two towns had to be made capable of carrying the heavy army traffic before July 1948, *i.e.*, within eight months. 'You *must* do it' he said. I said 'You do not feel the rivers and rivulets, hills and mountains on the map. This is one of the mountainous part of India and besides a number of rivers flow through it. This is Defence Ministry's work. They should undertake it.' The Sardar said, 'We are not giving it to the army. You have to do it.' True to my nature, I said, 'All right, if you say so, it is done.'

I returned home at 7.00 p.m. that day and immediately called a meeting of the Secretary, the Chief Engineer and other officers concerned at my residence at 9.30 p.m. I placed the map before them and told them what was wanted. All of them protested. 'The rivers in this area' I was told, 'are flooded in winter. This task cannot be completed within the stipulated time. Please do not accept it.' I told them it was a Cabinet decision and all that we had to do was to carry it out. 'Besides, I have promised to do it,' I added. Within an hour, we had prepared a plan, a time table and a scheme cutting through all red tape. We got a budget of twenty million rupees sanctioned and appointed a special financial adviser for the job. I nominated Mr. Puri as the Engineer-in-charge and the work was started. The necessary steel parts for the bridges were obtained from all over the country within a fortnight. Seventy special goods trains reached Pathankot, which is a rail head. Three long bridges, a few somewhat shorter, and numerous culverts came to eleven miles of bridge building in a road of sixtyfive miles. I promised myself to travel on the new road in the first week of July and dine in the Jammu Palace. The road, as planned, ran within four or five miles of the Pakistan border. Thousands of refugees were squatting in this area to whom I promised a daily wage of three rupees per person. But none of them was willing to work in that area So I arranged for the hiring of ten thousand labourers from

Marwar and brought them over in special trains. In order to allay their fears, I asked the Army to provide a security force for them. The Army officers said they would provide mobile units who will patrol throughout the day. I told them that it would not do. I wanted an armed sentry every hundred yards, and a picket post of twentyfive each mile. The Army agreed and the work began on a twentyfour hour basis. Floodlights were arranged for the night shift. We erected labour camps, dispensaries, mobile cinemas and markets for the daily necessities of the huge labour force. For some weeks this force amounted to forty thousand! As is usual in such works, attempts were made to obtain contracts through contacts. The Chief Engineer awarded a small contract of about ten thousand to a fellow because he was in Khadi and Gandhi cap. It only brought him trouble and on my direction he cancelled it. He took the lesson and never again gave contracts for such considerations. This naturally led to dissatisfaction amongst the busybodies in Pathankot who saw me to complain against the Chief Engineer and other officers. They went so far as to warn me that the people were restive because of these officers.

I went to Pathankot and addressed a public meeting. I told the people, 'The work on this road is vital to the defence of the country. If any of you have grievances, a complaint box has been kept for anyone to put his complaint in. I shall open it on July 8, and investigate each grievance. Those found guilty will be punished, but the work on the road must not be interrupted now. A wise traveller does not fight with the boatman in midstream. Let us cross the river and then we can take care of the boatman.' There was a thunderous applause by the audience and the so-called leaders of the people realised the meaning of public opinion. I did not rest with this. I arranged with the local magistrate to declare the area in which work was going on as a 'protected area'. Work proceeded smoothly. Hills after hills were levelled down, vales were filled in and unruly rivers were tamed by bridges. In the third week of May, the pillars erected in the bed of the river Ravi as supports for the bridge arches were washed

away. I went to Pathankot again, called in the officers and engineers for consultation, congratulated them on the work done so far and said, 'The final victory is near. Only a hundred feet of bridge over the Ravi is needed. You are experts, inventive and efficient. Find a way to complete it before the 1st of July.' At the end of my speech, Shri Puri got up and said that they planned to build a hanging bridge for the time being and complete the masonary bridge after the rains, but they would fulfil the pledge given by me. Major General Williams of the M.E.S. was present in the meeting and he asked permission to speak for two minutes. I told him to go ahead and he said, 'Your boys have done it. They have done the impossible. I had said earlier that the work cannot be completed within the stipulated time. I take back my words.' The meeting ended on an optimistic note.

We fixed July 7 as the inauguration day. The programme was for Nehru and me to arrive by plane at Pathankot at 9.00 a.m., perform the opening ceremony and go to Jammu for lunch. The Commander-in-Chief advised that Nehru should open the bridge on the Ravi only and should not go all the way to Jammu by road. This meant opening the road upto Madhavpur only. Nehru asked for my opinion. I said that his life belonged to the nation and should not be risked in any way. Nehru therefore ceremonially opened the road and the bridge on July 7, in the presence of thousands of people. He flew to Srinagar and I went by jeep to Jammu by the new road. On my way up, I opened two big bridges as well as a commemorative stone tablet bearing my name. I fulfilled the promise I had given to myself by lunching in the Jammu palace that day.

The driver of the jeep was the Commander-in-Chief himself. I had a body-guard dressed in civilian clothes. That is all the protection we had on the way. This road became famous all over the world and the American newspapers publicised it with illustrated articles under the heading, 'India Can Do It'. Vallabhbhai congratulated me personally as well as in writing. I entertained the engineers and other officers responsible for the project to tea on the spacious lawns of the

Parliament House. The accounts were presented to the Parliament in due time and even the experts declared that it was rare for a project of this magnitude to be executed in such a short time and so economically. Of course, the credit for this goes to the devotion and diligence of the officers in-charge of the project. This road secured the life line of our army in Kashmir. The traffic on this road for the last fifteen years has strengthened the ties between Kashmir and India, encouraged trade and commerce, and introduced thousands of tourists to the beauties of Kashmir.

The Kashmir problem came up in October 1947 and has proved a constant headache to India since then.

Lord Mountbatten went to England in November 1947 for the marriage of his nephew to Princess Elizabeth, the present Queen of Great Britain. After his return from there, I felt that his attitude to the Kashmir problem had changed. In fact, the Kashmir campaign was planned with his advice and consent. It was he who had accepted the Instrument of Accession from the Maharaja of Kashmir. It was because he felt that the Indian side was just and correct that he had agreed and actively helped to send our army into Kashmir to repel the invaders. He had seen Liaquat Ali before leaving for England. He wanted to take Nehru with him to see Liaquat Ali, but the Cabinet vetoed it as improper. The change in his opinion after his visit to Britain was probably due to his conviction that the accession of Kashmir to India was not consistent with the international policies of Britain. Perhaps he felt that a running dispute between two members of the Commonwealth which was likely to lead to war was undesirable. The help which Pakistan was giving to the tribal invaders had now become public. The British C-in-C had advised the Pakistan Government that India's control of Kashmir would mean a noose round Pakistan's neck; hence the raiders had to be helped. This advice was accepted by Pakistan. To get out of his dilemma, Mountbatten made the pious suggestion to Nehru to refer the matter to the U.N.O. Nehru and Mountbatten had gone to Lahore to meet Liaquat Ali after the latter's return from Britain. When it was seen

that the two Prime Ministers could not come to an agreement, Mountbatten made this suggestion in his usual charming way and Nehru acted upon it after his return to Delhi. Thus Kashmir was referred to the U.N.O. by India herself.

The Instrument of Accession said in clear terms that the people of Kashmir would be permitted to choose their future status themselves after certain conditions were fulfilled. The fear that if the Kashmiris were not given this choice, the Nizam may accede to Pakistan was at the root of this proviso. The fundamental principle that the State belonged to the people and not to the Ruler was, in fact, the basis of it. The U.N.O. took up the question in December 1947 and discussed it from January 1948 to January 1949. Pakistan was represented by its Foreign Minister, Sir Mohamad Zafrullah. India was represented by B. N. Rao, who was our permanent representative at the U.N.O. and Gopalaswamy Aiyangar, who was appointed Leader of the Indian Delegation. Gopalaswamy had been for some years the Prime Minister of Kashmir and was a seasoned and able administrator, but Vallabhbhai was not quite happy at his selection, being aware of the oratorical fire-works and intrigues so characteristic of the U.N.O. He wanted to send me and had suggested it also to the Cabinet. I supported Gopalaswamy's selection in the Cabinet, believing that ultimately truth and gentlemanliness would triumph in the U.N.O. I was confident that Gopalaswamy would present that aspect of our case ably.

The fate of the Kashmir question in the U.N.O. is now known to everyone. It is as if the police should advise the complainant in a case of burglary that both the owner of the house and the burglar should stay in amity in the house! This is exactly what happened in Kashmir. The ceasefire became effective on the 1st of January 1949. If our Army had not received instructions to stop fighting before that date, it would have cleared the raiders from the whole of Kashmir and the passage to friendship between Pakistan and China would have been blocked. The ceasefire also created 'Azad' Kashmir, and made possible an U.S. airbase in Gilgit to checkmate the Communist China. Many foreign policy experts

believe that the Ladakh adventure of China is a direct result of this. This, they say, is a chain of events and I do not think they are far off the point.

The restraint imposed upon our Army was motivated by the hope that Pakistan would be satisfied with the bit of Kashmir occupied by it. Of course, some of us opposed this viewpoint in the Cabinet. But many of us treated Kashmir as the personal affair of Nehru. I was not one of them. But all my efforts to try to give independent suggestions were in vain. I was of the view, all through my membership of the Cabinet, *i.e.* till 1952, that Sheikh Abdullah was an ordinary person elevated to an extraordinary position by the Government of India. India never interfered in the Kashmir administration, kept a huge army there and spent crores of rupees, and still continues to do so. Nothing has been left undone for the progress of Kashmir. The Ceasefire Agreement made it clear that Pakistan was the aggressor and that the referendum in Kashmir would take place only after it vacates its aggression. Pakistan has not honoured a single provision, and in fact it has never considered it necessary to honour any of the promises or conditions accepted by it in its various agreements with India. This is due to the fact that Pakistan knows full well that no one is going to call it to account for its breaches of faith. Kashmir continues to be a problem to India to this day. Perhaps the referendum would have gone in our favour if we had taken the risk in 1951.

Not that the political situation and the death of Democracy in Pakistan have not influenced the thoughtful in Kashmir. When I was in Kashmir in 1951, I found that, when asked, many people did say that they want to be with India. 'Go to Pakistan if you want to fast, but for your daily bread, stay with India' sums up the philosophy of the Kashmiris. But one can never be sure of the volatile temper of the Kashmiri Muslims. Many of us had come to believe that the ceasefire line would be the legal international frontier. Many Englishmen also thought so. But the Chinese aggression has dug up the old corpse of the Kashmir question. As one, who was intimately connected with the beginning of the

problem, I am of the opinion that India may negotiate with Pakistan but should be firm enough to see that the present frontiers are made permanent. I am afraid that Nehru is responsible for the prolongation of the problem through his willingness to compromise at every stage during the first five years. Quite a few believe that had Vallabhbhai been the man to handle the Kashmir question, he would have settled it long ago. At least he would have never stopped with a partial control of the Jammu and Kashmir State. He would have occupied the whole of the State and would have never allowed it to be elevated to international importance. But leadership is never faultless and there is yet to be a statesman who never had a reverse. Otherwise, the pathetic phrase 'If it had been so' would not have been a permenant feature of history.

The problem of Hyderabad was more complicated than Bhopal, Junagarh or even Kashmir. I have described how the Nawab of Junagarh fled from his State after acceding to Pakistan. From the very beginning, all of us believed that the Nizam might do likewise, but would not run away. He would stay and make it difficult to settle the Hyderabad problem without violence and bloodshed. The question was kept pending long after August 15, and began to create serious complications. The Maharaja of Gwalior once said to me that we had taken advantage of their reasonableness, but seemed to be powerless before the recalcitrant Nizam. I told him to wait and see.

The British plan of 3rd June 1947 for quitting India, started a strange chain of events in Hyderabad. The Nizam spurned Mountbatten's advice because some of his advisers began to hold before him the idea of capturing the throne of Delhi! Things began to deteriorate rapidly after August 15. The Razakar atrocities increased, although the appointment of K. M. Munshi as India's Agent at the Nizam's Court gave some kind of confidence to the Hindus. The Hyderabad State Congress had already begun an organised movement for accession to India. Their leader, Swami Ramanand Tirth, met me in September 1947 when I advised him to see that the Hindus

made no compromise or came to no agreement with the Nizam. 'They should be ready', I told him, 'to face oppression and atrocities for two years. The Nizam would be brought to heel by that time.'

The idea of merger was suggested by some Orissa Princes to Vallabhbhai when he visited them in November 1947. As it came from the Princes themselves, we welcomed it and a rapid process of mergers began. I shall describe it presently. The Nizam of Hyderabad, however, stood fast on his claim that his was an independent sovereign State. Not content with it, he claimed that the question was an international one and began propaganda to that effect abroad. He planned to appoint emissaries abroad too. The State of Hyderabad was a landlocked one and the Nizam sought an outlet to the sea. He was, therefore, trying to acquire Goa. All this and more made it clear by February-March 1948 that there was no easy solution to this problem. The Nizam had appointed Monkton a friend of Mountbatten as his Legal Adviser, who spent the whole of March and April in futile discussions and negotiations. Mountbatten used to get detailed information of the individual opinions of the members of the Cabinet. I was of the opinion that Hyderabad should be partitioned and I made no secret of it. After freedom, it became a convention that each Minister should see the Governor-General once a fortnight. In these meetings we discussed only very important matters but Mountbatten merely stated and never insisted on his point of view. He called me one day. I knew it was not the usual fortnightly call, but a special one. I was not told in advance what he wanted to discuss. Over a cup of coffee he asked me why I was so much against the Nizam. He said, 'The State will fall into your lap like a ripe fruit.' I said, 'But we must have a lap by the time it falls. The atrocities in Hyderabad have crossed all limits. That State is a historic perversion and a dagger in the heart of India.' Mountbatten did not say anything in reply. On return, I gave a report of this conversation to Vallabhbhai.

Vallabhbhai used to work at home since the heart attack

he had in March that year and I used to look after his Parliamentary duties, like replying to questions, moving Bills, making statements, etc., for the Home and State Ministries. I had, therefore, perforce to study the problems connected with the States. The Matsya-Sangh of the Himalayan States was inaugurated by me. Similarly, the States of Vindhya-Pradesh and Rajasthan were also inaugurated by me. Vallabhbhai was pleased with the constitutions of these States and with my speeches on the occasion. As a consequence, he called me to Mussoorie, where he was resting in May 1948, for consultations regarding Hyderabad. Defence Minister Baldev Singh, Major-General Chaudhari and Defence Secretary H. M. Patel were also invited. We reached Mussoorie at 10.30 in the morning of May 5, 1948. Vallabhbhai was resting under a tree. I reported to him the general trend of opinion in the Cabinet and also expressed my fear that Mountbatten wanted the Nizam to continue as Head of the Hyderabad State. I gave him my opinion that in the case of Hyderabad a compromise solution would only perpetuate the problem and we would never be free from worry. 'This problem, therefore, must be tackled with despatch. The atrocities against the Hindus have become intolerable and, if not checked in time, will lead to communal riots all over India, endangering law and order in the country. Action against Hyderabad is urgent.'

The other invitees were then called in to join the discussion. Under instructions from the Sardar, I told General Chaudhari : 'We will have to move the army into Hyderabad. Give us what you consider the appropriate date.' He said that ten days would be required for preparations. The action had to be completed before the 1st of July otherwise it would have to be undertaken after September. We then discussed the arrangements necessary after the army had entered the State. Names of suitable officers for administration of the State from the Bombay, Madras and Madhya Pradesh cadres were also discussed. We reminded the officers of the grave consequences which would follow if the action did not end speedily. We returned to Delhi in high spirits.

The newspapers in Maharashtra continued their bitter and perverted criticism of Congress as usual. They had done the same in the case of Junagarh. At a meeting held under the presidentship of N. C. Kelkar to congratulate me in the Shivaji Mandir in Poona I had said that Juna (meaning old) Garh (meaning fort) would soon be 'old fort', and the Hyderabad problem would also be solved speedily at the proper time. On this, Mr. Kelkar had remarked in his concluding speech: 'Gadgil is a man of his word. He is now in the Government and promises us that something would be done. We must rely on his word.' Within a month and a half of this speech, Junagarh became indeed an old story. Because of this experience, I used to suggest in my speeches that the Hyderabad question too would be settled soon and that the date too had been determined. In a speech in Varanasi I had said, 'The engagement has been announced, the marriage would be performed on a suitable date. No one need come for the wedding.' Despite this, strong and bitter attacks on us continued in the Marathi press which often transgressed all bounds of decency. The Hindi press was not far behind. Letters from Hyderabad were couched in the same offensive words and sometimes I received bangles through the post.

But both Vallabhbhai and I did not allow it to affect our patience. A plan was suggested in June of that year which proposed equal representation to the Hindus and the Muslims, the transfer of some departments to elected ministers and permission to keep an army of 20,000 in the State. In the Cabinet I voted against its acceptance. Efforts were made to persuade me to accept it by telling me that the Sardar was in favour of it. I said I would not accept it whatever the opinion of Vallabhbhai. I opposed the idea of allowing the Nizam to keep any army whatsoever. He had an 'army' of only two thousand before the war. That too, I said, was unnecessary. I thought the political arrangement a joke. None of the other ministers would speak up and it was clear to me that the plan was inspired by Mountbatten.

Mountbatten ceased to be the Governor-General within a fortnight of this Cabinet meeting and was succeeded by Rajaji.

The plan mentioned above was taken to the Nizam by his representative, Nawab Zain Yar Jung, and the Nizam accepted it. But the Razakars opposed it. Their leader, Qasim Rizvi, told the Nizam that he would unfurl the flag of the Asafjahi Dynasty on the Red Fort in Delhi and pressed him to reject the plan. The Nizam recalled the papers and tore them off. He had to pay dearly for this foolhardiness soon. I was very happy at this development. I knew that the gordian knot of this problem was to be cut after September 1.

The atrocities in the Nizam's State were on the increase. The Hindus in Maharashtra were enraged. The reckless oratory of Qasim Rizvi had reached unprecedented heights. In one of my speeches at Indore I told the people that Qasim Rizvi would certainly enter the Red Fort in Delhi, but as a prisoner and that the rejection of the compromise by the Nizam was good for India. Hyderabad had undertaken three-fold activities in its anti-Indian campaign, the suppression of the Hindus in the State, incitement to the Muslims in India, and abuse and misrepresentation of India abroad. Mountbatten was no longer in India, but he was in correspondence with Nehru, urging him constantly that the perpetuation of the Nizam's State would tend to produce some kind of equilibrium in India. Rajaji, who had become the Governor-General in July was also in favour of the continuance of the Nizam. He knew that I was the sternest opponent of it. He called me one day and said that all that the old Nizam wanted was a guarantee that his State would be kept on. He would agree to any compromise if assured of it. He also asked what objection there could be if he himself went to Hyderabad and gave such an assurance. I told him in the plainest possible terms that as the Governor General of India he could not go to Hyderabad; he could go there as 'Rajaji', but that too after vacating his office. He said that he had anticipated my reaction as well as my reply. As was my practice, I also reported all this to Vallabhbhai.

By the end of August 1948, preparations for the Hyderabad action had been set on foot. Secrecy in this respect was so thorough that the question was not brought even before the

Cabinet after June. I was informed of all these developments as I was looking after Vallabhbhai's work. The first week of September saw the peak of Razakar activities in the State. It also saw the beginning of Hindu migration into India from it.

Workers and leaders of the Hyderabad State Peoples Congress like Ramanand Tirth and others were in jail, but the Congress had begun an agitation for the State's accession to India. Lootings and killings had begun. Reports began to appear in the press that the proposed action against Hyderabad would not begin on September 8-9, but would be postponed in view of the Nizam's reference of his case to the U.N.O. and that India had nominated Ramaswami Mudaliar as its representative to argue its case when it came up before the U.N.O. on September 3. Pakistan's representatives had already reached Paris where the case was going to be argued. I asked Vallabhbhai about these reports and wondered whether the action proposed was going to be postponed. He said that there would be no change in the programme of action. But he too was not sure of what Nehru would do at the last moment. The Marathi and Hindi newspapers had reached the peak of their frenzy at the same time. I sent a resume of the situation to Nehru and attached thereto all the clippings from the press. The clippings, I said, would give him an idea of the intensity of public feeling on that question and suggested that there should be no change in the plan of action against Hyderabad. Any change at the time, I suggested, would make it difficult for many of us to continue in the Cabinet as his colleagues. Nehru, of course, never acknowledged the receipt of the report and the clippings.

The late Shri Purushottam Dass Tandon was to speak on 'Hyderabad' at the Gandhi Maidan in Delhi on September 11, 1948, under the auspices of the Civil Liberties Union. Maulichand Sharma, a Delhi leader, came to request me to preside over the meeting. I said that I thought it would not be proper, but that I would give my final answer after consulting Vallabhbhai. He said that it was the Sardar who had sent him to me. On this, I readily agreed to preside. The meeting began at 6.00 p.m. and was attended by more than a

hundred thousand people. Tandon spoke for two and a quarter hours. To meet his points would have meant to reveal Government plans in the matter which would have been not only improper but harmful too. I, therefore, said that the Government was seized of the matter and thenceforth no one should indulge in personal recriminations. Government would take care of aggressive and violent Muslims. They should go by what the Government said from the next day and not believe rumours. I ended my speech with the Sanskrit quotation : 'Even Lord Rama does not know what tomorrow would bring.'

I reached home at nine in the night and almost immediately got a phone from Vallabhbhai who told me that he had a call from Rajaji to see him at 9 30 and said that probably my fears might prove correct. I said that our army was poised to enter Hyderabad within a few hours. A last minute cancellation would make us look like fools in the eyes of the world. And if something untoward happened in the U.N.O. meeting scheduled a few days after, the whole affair could turn into a tragedy. At the same time I gave him a gist of my letter to Nehru written a few days earlier and requested him to give me a ring after his return from the Governor-General's Palace. He rang up at about 11.00 p.m. Till then I was restlessly pacing the veranda, boiling with rage within but powerless to do anything.

Vallabhbhai rang up to say that there was a proposal to cancel the police action on account of the death of Jinnah which had occurred the same day. The Sardar told me on phone that he had made it absolutely plain in unmistakable terms that the death of Jinnah and the Hyderabad action had no connection whatsoever and the proposed march into Hyderabad would go ahead as scheduled. The radio announced in a special bulletin next morning that the Indian Army had made a four-pronged entry into the State from Sholapur, Manmad, Nangaon, Ballarshah, Hospet, etc. The Hyderabadis had planned to blow up the bridges at Hospet and Ballarshah to cut communications between North and South. The Nizam's army surrendered on the 15th of

September. During the campaign, India's Agent in Hyderabad, K. M. Munshi, was detained by the Nizam and communications between him and India were cut. Isolated, Munshi came to an understanding with the Nizam. The Indian Army was to have entered the City of Hyderabad a few hours later, but Munshi's blunder delayed the State's complete integration with India by eight years. I went to Hyderabad a few days after its surrender and met the temporary Council of Ministers. The officers selected at the Mussoorie meeting arrived a few days later and took over the administration.

The Nizam was treated with the utmost generosity. Many Razakars were killed and many captured. Qasim Rizvi was tried in a regular court, convicted and sentenced. I was to have gone to Poona on the 16th September and met Nehru before leaving. He advised me to take things a little less harshly. As a result I said in a public meeting in Poona on September 18, that although the Hyderabad question had been settled militarily, it would take a long time to settle it politically. Events proved my prophecy correct. The Hyderabad session of the Congress had approved the redistribution of the States on linguistic lines. But at the same session it was decided to postpone it for five years. The motive was to allow the Nizam to enjoy his status as Head of the Hyderabad State during his lifetime. I believe Maulana Azad had the same purpose in mind. However, I continued to press for a speedy decision. After the constitution of the Andhra State on linguistic considerations, Hyderabad could not escape long and, in the end, it was divided between Andhra, Mysore and Maharashtra on November 1, 1956. Let alone flying over the Red Fort of Delhi, the Asafjahi flag disappeared from Hyderabad itself! But for Munshi's unwise agreement with the Nizam, it would have disappeared in September 1948.

The beginning of 1948 saw trouble in another Princely State, that of Kolhapur. Latthe was then the Adviser to the State. In May 1947, the Kolhapur State Peoples' Conference held its session in Gargoti which both Keshavrao Jedhe and I attended. We had succeeded at the time to compose the differences between the followers of Bagal and

Ratnappa, the two most powerful leaders of the State. It was precisely this unity which Latthe did not want. The session had asked unanimously for a responsible government in the State. When I went to Kolhapur after the session, Latthe met me and said that the unity brought about in Gargoti would not last. I told him that such unity was ultimately in the interest of the Princes themselves. Otherwise it was the year of dissolution for them. Freedom was round the corner and once it arrived, the States would disappear. A few, which would have popular governments, may survive for some years more. However, I gathered from him that the Marathas themselves were not keen on having a popular government. All their efforts and intrigues were directed to continuing the dynasty in power. A month after, in June 1947, some of the political workers of Kolhapur met me in Delhi. I told them that the Central Government could be induced to intervene in the State if daily 500 people went to jail or half a dozen were killed in firing. Only then would their demand be met. The Maharajah of Kolhapur had at about this time approached the Government of India with his proposal for adoption of a boy as heir to the State. Latthe had seen Vallabhbhai during this visit. A few days after, Kolhapur had a popular Ministry with Vasantrao Bagal as the Chief Minister. Referring to my advice mentioned above, Ratnappa sent a telegram to me, 'Without firing a shot or striking a lathi, we have won responsible government.' I congratulated him. He resigned from the Ministry the next day! Some Kolhapur leaders were boasting that the State would not accede. It would remain independent! Hints were given that Kolhapur had many brave heroes and it was even suggested that the State Army would resist integration. I advised the Sardar that the leaders of the common people, including Jedhe and More, the leaders of the Maratha community, were in favour of accession, but that Kolhapur should be tackled after Hyderabad. And it was so. The history of the events which took place in the State after the assassination of Gandhiji is well known. This led to Captain Nanjappa taking over the administration of the State. A number of people were jailed who were

released gradually later. In January 1950, both the Maharaja of Kolhapur and the Administrator had come to Delhi and I advised them that merger would be advantageous to the Maharaja as well as to his people. Both of them had discussions long into the night with the States Ministry Secretary, V. P. Menon; ultimately a draft for merger was prepared. But Maharaja Shahaji postponed his signature till the next day. Nanjappa informed me of this on the phone. I told him that the Prince would sign next day as promised, but the fact that he had given such a promise must appear in the press the next day, particularly in the Kolhapur and Poona press. Accordingly, the news did appear in the papers next morning. The Maharaja signed as promised and within a week the State of Kolhapur merged in Bombay. I was invited to the ceremonies connected with the merger, but I did not attend intentionally.

The *Kesari* of Poona had published some correspondence between the then Maharaja of Kolhapur and the Governor of Bombay when I was in the Fergusson College in 1916–17. I had told some friends at the time that if at any time we won freedom and if I were around then, I would see that both the Hyderabad and Kolhapur States disappeared. I had clashed with Kolhapur in the movement of 1920–21. I knew thoroughly how things moved in Kolhapur, as I was associated with the Deccan States Peoples organisation and agitation. I had participated in the agitations of the peoples of the States of Bhor, Jamkhindi, Sangli, Budhgaon, Aundh, Kolhapur, etc. During that time, that is between 1920 and 1947, Mr. N. C. Kelkar and his party were in favour of the perpetuation of the States. All they asked for was some powers to the people's representatives. On the other hand, I had always maintained that the Indian States were obstructions on the road to freedom and progress, not monuments of a glorious past and that they should be abolished. I had a list of obstructions to progress which was: first, the British Government, secondly, the Indian States, thirdly, the Jagirdars and Zamindars and fourthly, the capitalists. The latter three depended for their life on the first. Once it was destroyed, the

disappearance of the other three would follow in due course.

After the publication of the 3rd June 1947 plan, some friends, who thought on the lines of Kelkar and Shankarrao Deo, proposed a plan for a Deccan States Union. I was against it, but kept quiet in deference to Shankarrao. But I expressed my opinion to one of the rulers who had consulted me, that the times were changing and the march could not be halted by such small and separate Unions. Time proved me correct. The small states of Miraj, Sangli, Bhor, Aundh and Phaltan one after the other merged into Bombay. Thus the holes in the freedom's robe of honour were darned and repaired. I was but a humble assistant sewing buttons in the shop of the great tailor, Vallabhbhai. A Hindi poet says :

> The thirsty traveller was given a pot
> With nine holes, without a neck
> And no bottom to boot.

But by great good fortune, India had a master potter like Vallabhbhai, who made it whole and stored in it the nectar of freedom and unity.

CHAPTER FOUR

OF OUR OWN MAKING

INDIA's freedom brought with it innumerable problems and anxieties. We felt like the bird released from the cage described by an Urdu poet: 'I am free and out of the cage, but the night is dark and long and the sheltering nest nowhere in sight.' Freedom was vague and had to be defined precisely. It had to be felt in the daily life of the common man. There was tremendous increase in communal hatred and enmity due to the massacres which preceded and followed the creation of Pakistan. The people hoped for great things after freedom and expected ease and comfort as its fruits. They had not anticipated, and consequently, were unprepared for the tremendous difficulties which we had to face as a free people. Labour expected more wages; women expected more rights through changes in the Hindu law, and divorce; the cry of 'land to the tiller' had already been raised. In addition, we had yet to define the content of freedom. In other words, we had to draw up a constitution for the governance of the country. The Constituent Assembly had begun its sessions in December 1946. But the partition and freedom had changed its character fundamentally. The Cabinet had to guide it even in that respect. In short, problems from constitution-making to the defence of the country were facing us in the first months of freedom.

I have already described the Kashmir aggression. It led to a rethinking about the needs of defence, the strength of army required for the safety of the country and consideration of a programme for its modernisation. Defence is as much

dependent on a country's neighbours and their attitudes as it is on its own size and population. We have Pakistan to our East and West. And from its inception Pakistan raised the slogan, 'We have won Pakistan in effortless ease, now we will win India in war.' The exploits of the Indian army in Kashmir had further aggravated its hatred for India and its policies began to be oriented with one and only one object : to obtain from the U.S.A. as much modern weapons as possible and to attack India at an opportune moment. Of course, it is not to be found laid down in any State Paper, but it is the most powerful motive underlining all its policies. Many people believe that India's foreign policy is revolving round Kashmir, because Nehru himself is a Kashmiri. We referred the Kashmir dispute to the U.N. and our efforts to win over other nations to our side there have only led to misunderstanding of our policies, however correct they may be. Non-alignment is proper, but the way it has been exercised in international affairs has only created prejudices against India. It is obvious that a country's foreign policy has to be in its own interest and the highest interest is its safety and protection.

According to the working rules of the Cabinet, the detailed working of our defences was the responsibility of a sub-Committee of the Cabinet. Its members were the Prime Minister, Vallabhbhai, Gopalswami Aiyangar and the Defence Minister. Similarly another sub-Committee was in charge of foreign policy. Nehru, Vallabhbhai and Aiyangar were its members. Later, Maulana Azad was also included. However, it was the experience in both the sub-committees that whatever Nehru said was accepted. When these decisions came up for discussion before the full Cabinet, except for one or two ministers like me, none would oppose Nehru, who disliked opposition and, if opposed, often exchanged sharp words. Being non-aligned, none could be sure of what position India would take on particular issues in the U.N. or with what group she would vote. Vallabhbhai was afraid that this would create difficulties for India. When the Cabinet first discussed planning, I suggested that our defence needs should also be considered as part of it. Nehru did not approve of the idea.

Nevertheless, he did desire to modernise our army and equip it with uptodate arms and transport. He initiated some action for it, but a considerable part of it created scandals like the Jeep scandal and progress was tardy and unsatisfactory. Our restraint vis-a-vis Pakistan was mistaken for weakness and it was clear that we failed to prepare ourselves in the context of that country's military preparations and aggressive posture.

The Kashmir ceasefire became effective from 1st January 1949. But there has not been a single day since then when Pakistan has not indulged in provocative actions. The world had come to know that Pakistan had illegally sent its armed forces into Kashmir which was legally a part of India. Pakistani lies in this respect had been exposed. Pakistan has never forgotten this defeat and has been planning to avenge it ever since. India could successfully defend Kashmir at the time because of its superior Air Force. Pakistan has considerably improved its Air Force since then and at the time of this writing, almost a parity has been established between India and Pakistan. India has utilised its material and economic resources for industrialisation. We did make progress in that direction, but the progress in the production for defence purposes has not been satisfactory. Whatever we purchased in the world market was insufficient and inadequate. It has to be acknowledged that those who were put in charge of this programme were not competent. Several crores of rupees were wasted. Attempts were made to build factories for the production of defence material, but controversies regarding which Sector, Public or Private, should be given the job has hampered its progress. As a result, both the quality and quantity of defence production has lagged far behind the national needs. The Chinese aggression has thoroughly exposed our weakness in this respect.

Our border defences were neglected because of the firm conviction of Nehru that since we had no quarrel with any one, no one would attack us. Our foreign policy, so well conceived from the standpoint of national security, failed in the end, because of this fatal weakness. After freedom in 1947, we sent our representatives to numerous countries. It

cannot be said that all of them were selected with due care or that all of them were fit for the job given to them. In the beginning, Nehru used to 'mention' such appointments in the cabinet, but did not ask for its approval. I recall an incident in the case of Mirza Ismail. The Cabinet meeting was over and while we were dispersing, Nehru mentioned that he had appointed Mirza Ismail to such and such a country. I asked whether it was a matter for discussion or information. This annoyed him. He resumed his seat and said that it was for discussion. I then gave him my opinion of the foreign appointments made upto that time and told him frankly that some of them were not proper from the standpoint of India's interest and honour. My five years experience in the Cabinet is that no one would say a word against Nehru. While Vallabhbhai was alive, he (Nehru) used to consult him. After that he consulted the Maulana occasionally. But the Maulana rarely contradicted him. Gopalswami said only what Nehru wanted him to say, others used to keep their own counsel. I was the only exception. I said that none of us approved of the appointment of Mirza, but no one would say so in his presence. Even after this no one opened his mouth, for or against. I was the only person who continued arguing.

The meeting was over after about half an hour and I returned home. At about 9.30 Vallabhbhai phoned me to say that Nehru had told him about the discussion in the Cabinet about Mirza. He said that he (Vallabhbhai) had expressed his agreement with my views and the appointment had been cancelled and added: 'Congratulations.' After this I began to know of the ambassadorial appointments only through the newspapers. The principle of Cabinet responsibility assumes the right of each Minister to hold and express one's opinion frankly before a decision is taken because each was responsible for every action taken by his colleagues. Until the incident described above, I used to receive copies of the fortnightly reports sent by various foreign posts. I read them carefully and often questioned Nehru about some of the points involved in them. After the Mirza incident, a quarterly gist of these reports began to be circulated to us and sugges-

tions from us became futile. I wrote to Nehru that the new procedure was not just to his colleagues in the Cabinet, but it produced no effect. He was unwilling to listen to anyone in international affairs and his two colleagues on the Cabinet sub-committee dealing with the subject would not change even a dot or a comma of his proposals.

The question of Tibet came up in 1950. Rajaji was then in the Cabinet and he opposed Nehru's Tibet policy. I said that the Chinese would not be satisfied with the occupation of Tibet. Our Ambassador in China at the time, Dr Pannikar, analysed the situation as inevitable, just and proper. Our military officers were opposed to the developments in Tibet. Nehru asked Pannikar to persuade them. The Army officers asked him only one question, 'What purpose has China in coming over to the Himalayas in spite of so many difficulties?' Instead of giving a straight answer, this learned doctor accused them of 'thinking like British military officers'. What could they do in the face of such logic, except to keep silent.

Some English missionaries had sent a note to the Ministry of External Affairs interpreting the significance of the Chinese moves in Tibet. Unfortunately, none in the Ministry paid any attention to that note. I do not contend that we could have taken military action when Tibet was swallowed and China arrived on the peaks of the Himalayas. But some firmness at the time might have avoided today's tragic situation, at least mitigated its acuteness to some extent. Similarly, we could have built roads in Ladakh in view of the Chinese moves. In fact, our military officers had submitted a plan to that effect in 1951–52, but it was pigeonholed. The reason for this was known only to God above and Nehru below.

I have already described how systematically Pakistan drove out its Hindus and how they encouraged Bengali Muslims to enter and occupy some areas in Assam. The Indian Government took no notice of these. On the other hand, Nehru was greatly annoyed when once Vallabhbhai suggested mutual exchange of Hindu and Muslim populations and a proportional division of land between India and Pakistan. But

one has to confess that such an exchange would have been beneficial in the long run. We are a secular country and our faith in secularism is fundamental, but that too must be tampered by hard realities of the situation. The Indian Muslim remained, on the whole, aloof from the main stream of Indian life after partition, but in almost all cities communal Muslim organisations continued their poisonous propaganda. Thousands of Muslims who had gone to Pakistan returned and were given back their properties. The Hindus received no such justice. It is true that they became objects of charity and received monetary assistance. But the self-respect and religious faith for which they made such sacrifices were not honoured. India is the only great Hindu nation in the world, which has many Christian and Muslim nationals. Few realise the chaos that would follow if citizenship were to be based on religion. Religion is losing its importance in the modern world although religious tendencies have not vanished. Quite a few nations, and particularly democratic nations, have constitutions which are secular and it is good and proper that India should recognise secularism as a basic principle in its constitution. A secular government means the government of all religions, which permits each to observe his or her own particular faith without let or hindrance. But this privilege has certain limitations and breach of these limitations should be punishable by law. We have freedom of speech but within limits, so have we freedom of association, but that too within limits. Where we went wrong was that we failed to punish those who transgressed these limits. The British treated the Muslims as a favourite wife. And we overlooked many of their transgressions because they were a minority. Our difficulties today spring from this weakness. We feared that a stern treatment of Muslims in India would recoil adversely on Hindus in Pakistan. As a result, West Pakistan became a land without a single Hindu and of the twenty million Hindus in East Pakistan only about a half still remain. In contrast, migration of Muslims from India to Pakistan after 1949 was negligible. On the contrary a large number returned to India under some legal pretext or the other. The addition of this

tremendous number of refugees has strained our already meagre finances to the extreme. The accepted policy towards Pakistan was correct, but the officials in Delhi did not help in executing it properly. Today, Pakistan has become a powerful enemy on both of our frontiers. The mistake in not taking over the whole of Kashmir has enabled Pakistan to meet China through the Gilgit corridor and conspire against our interests. I have to record with regret that whenever I made proposals concerning Pakistan, Nehru reacted as if I were an enemy of Muslims. I always pressed him to take a firm stand in regard to Kashmir at some point and said we were all behind him. The other Ministers never said a word as will be seen later in this narrative. Nehru used to say that politics should always be flexible. I used to tell him that if he did not take a firm stand somewhere, he would get no time even to admit his mistakes.

This temperament of Nehru made simple problems complex and gave cause for anxiety, particularly in the matter of the defence of the country. 1949 saw such unspeakable atrocities against Hindus in East Pakistan that it became almost imperative for India to go to their help. The Cabinet discussed the situation at great length and decided that some action should be initiated. But Nehru did not want it and the Hindu-Muslim riots in Howrah came timely to his rescue. In addition, the Military authorities reported, or were persuaded to report, that any action against Pakistan in those circumstances would be undesirable. Pakistan too started negotiations, with the British as the mediators. Liaquat Ali came to Delhi in March 1950, had discussions with Nehru and one fine morning at 10 o'clock Nehru placed before the Cabinet a draft of his agreement with him. I am not sure if Vallabhbhai was consulted before the draft was agreed to. The final two paragraphs in the agreement accepted the principle of reservation for Muslims in proportion to their population in all the services and representative bodies in the constituent States of India. Similar provisions were suggested for the Central Government also. Each one of us got a copy of the draft, but no one would open his mouth ! I said, 'These two para-

graphs nullify the whole philosophy of the Congress. The country had to pay the price of division as a result of its acceptance of separate electorates. You are asking it to drink the same poison again. This is a betrayal, forgetful of the last forty years of history.' Nehru was displeased. The others were pleased. But not one of them dared support me. The discussion went on for half an hour. Gopalswami Aiyangar said, 'There is substance in Gadgil's objections' and volunteered to redraft the two provisos. I said, 'These two paragraphs must go lock, stock and barrel and no South Indian cleverness would do.' On this Nehru replied in anger, 'I have agreed to this with Liaquat Ali Khan.' I said, 'You must have told him that the agreement can be finalised only after the Cabinet's approval. I cannot speak of the other Cabinet members, but I am opposed to it hundred per cent.' On this Vallabhbhai quietly suggested that the discussion should be postponed to the next day and the meeting was adjourned.

Vallabhbhai called me for discussion on return home. I told him, figuratively speaking, 'The marriage must not take place simply because the father wants it. The bride is not approved. You must speak plainly now, otherwise complications will follow and we may have to repent. We have decided upon a secular Government. This agreement destroys that conception.' The same night I received from him the papers regarding the revisions suggested by Gopalswami and his disapproval of them. I noted on them my agreement with him. When the Cabinet met the next day, the last two paragraphs were omitted. I wanted to say something about the remaining paragraphs also. But Vallabhbhai said that there need be no more discussion as he had seen them. Thus, if I took credit for saving India from the evil of the repetition of separate electorates, reservation in services, reservation in ministries, etc., it is justifiable.

Of course, I was fully aware of what Nehru must have thought about me as a consequence. The Constitution had come into operation. India had become a Republic and the Cabinet was to be reconstituted. It was rumoured that Nehru would drop me and I was prepared for it. That I stayed two

years more was obviously due to Vallabhbhai. The other Ministers congratulated me, but it has to be sadly recorded that at the time of the discussion on the draft, none of them opposed Nehru. Later, Shyama Prasad Mukherji and Nehru fell out on the question of the refugees and the concerned Cabinet meeting ended in loud recriminations. He and Niyogi resigned, because Nehru had decided to omit them from the new Cabinet. The Nehru-Liaquat Pact met with strong opposition in the country and it was I who had to go round explaining it to the people. If we had taken action against East Pakistan in 1949, considerable future difficulties would have been avoided. Pakistan was encouraged in its policies by this Pact. Communal Muslims in India got a strong shot in the arm because of it. I felt at the time that it was injurious to the security of the country and I still feel so.

It was not in the nature of Nehru to carry out sternly policies determined after long and careful thought. This was clear from my experience of the first five or six months in the Cabinet. This may be illustrated by an incident in 1949. The currencies of India and Pakistan began to differ in value after partition. At the time both the currencies were tagged on to the sterling. The pound was in a precarious condition in 1948-49 and Great Britain was giving serious thought to the advisability of devaluing it. I have already mentioned that two institutions, the International Bank and the International Monetary Fund, were organised after the World War. India is a founder Director of both. Although the British Chancellor of Exchequer publicly affirmed that the pound would not be devalued, his Government had already secretly decided upon devaluation. The Governor of the Reserve Bank, C. D. Deshmukh, was in Washington at the time for the annual meetings of the Bank and the Fund. So was Ghulam Mohammad as representative of Pakistan. The Cabinet had not discussed the effects of devaluation of the pound on rupee, but papers in the country were speculating on the advantages of devaluation in the interest of our export trade. The common man was not worried about this, but financial circles expressed anxiety about our policy. On a day in

August, I got a message from the Cabinet Secretary that an emergency meeting of the Cabinet would be held at the Prime Minister's residence the same night at 10 o'clock. At the meeting, John Mathai who was then the Finance Minister told us that a message had been received from Deshmukh recommending the devaluation of the rupee by 20 per cent because the pound sterling was being devalued to that extent.

Contrary to usual practice, we were given no points or notes, but were told that it was necessary to give a decision and convey it to Deshmukh in Washington by midnight. No one had studied that complicated question. I knew a bit because I was on the Select Committee on the Finance Bill in 1946 when the rupee valuation was discussed. I asked Mathai if Pakistan was ready to devalue its currency, otherwise India would lose heavily. Pakistan was to have paid 300 crore rupees to India as part of the partition settlement. If Pakistan did not devalue its rupee, it could purchase 100 Indian rupees for 80 Pakistani rupees, thus at once benefiting to the tune of 60 crores. Dr Mathai said that Deshmukh had informed him that Ghulam Mohammad had agreed to devalue. I said that I was doubtful as Pakistan would hardly lose such a golden opportunity ; Mathai dryly remarked that he had informed us of what he was told. I said that the Brettonwood Convention allowed a constituent country to devalue its currency upto 10 per cent on its own. Beyond that, it can only be done after informing the Bank and the Fund. Dr Mathai could see my point. Nehru was in a hurry to leave on a tour at 11.00 p.m. and in the end it was recorded that the Cabinet decided not unanimously, but without opposition, that the rupee should be devalued by 20 per cent.

The next day, I, along with Gopalswami Aiyangar, was in the midst of a press conference on the division of the waters of the Punjab rivers when a message was received from the Finance Minister calling us to a meeting immediately. We found other members of the Cabinet, except the Prime Minister, in his room. Dr Mathai told us that Dr Deshmukh was now asking for a 30 per cent devaluation of the rupee. I expressed my disapproval of such a cavalier treatment of so

important a problem. The Finance Minister again told me that Pakistan had agreed to similar devaluation. I told him that I did not believe it. However, again, devaluation to the extent of 30 per cent was approved 'without opposition'. Immediately, a two days moratorium for all Banking transactions was declared. Within two hours the news came that Pakistan had declined to devalue its currency on pretext that India had done so without consulting her. This created chaos in all our financial dealings with Pakistan. It became evident that the prices of the properties of the refugees would be adversely affected for India. The next day, John Mathai confessed, 'Dear Kaka, you are proved correct.' Of the 300 crores due from Pakistan, India lost 90 crores immediately. I then told Mathai a Hindi couplet which expressed the position aptly : *Sauke bhaye sath, usake dene hai adh, das denge, das dilayenge, daski kya hai bat,* meaning 'The hundred have turned into sixty, of these payment of thirty is suggested as a compromise, of these again, we will pay ten immediately and try to ask someone to pay ten more and surely you would not fight for the remaining paltry ten !' The future proved my words prophetic. We have not received even the interest on those 300 crores. There is, of course, no word about the principal. Pakistan faithfully follows the code of conduct laid down by Jinnah. Procrastinate in all negotiations and decline to accept any suggestion by India.

The devaluation brought about in its trail many undesirable results in the Indo-Pak trade. Partition had created an extraordinary situation between us. While large cotton producing tracts went to Pakistan, of 450 cotton mills 445 were situated in India ; East Pakistan produced 80 per cent of undivided India's jute while not one Jute Mill was situated there. They were all in India's West Bengal. 'The division of assets gave the carriage to one, the horse to the other and the passenger to none.' This was not quite so bad when the currencies of both the countries were at par. But devaluation created a situation where India had to pay Rs. 130 for Pakistan's Rs. 100. The Jute millowners in particular were unwilling to carry on business under these conditions. We had

discussions on the situation with the Jute Millowners Association whose President was a Scotchman. The meeting was held in the room of the Finance Minister and it was decided that in no case would we purchase jute from Pakistan. One or two of us, including myself, suggested reduction by an hour daily in the working hours of jute mills and a six day week to meet the temporary shortage. We also suggested that cultivation of jute in India should be increased immediately and in no circumstances should India purchase any jute from Pakistan.

I advocated that our politics and economics should eliminate consideration of Pakistan completely. Nehru said we should not take any such decision, but agreed to the ban on the purchase of jute from Pakistan. The following few months saw the violation of this decision by the millowners who had themselves agreed to it, and the smuggling of millions of tons of jute into India. Pakistan authorities which considered jute as gold had become alarmed at India's decision not to purchase jute from them. But within two months they knew that the Indian people, the Indian Government, and the Indian merchant community in particular were not firm in their decisions. Even today, experience tells the same sad tale. We would have brought Pakistan to book, had we carried out the boycott of Pakistan jute. Besides, the gap could have been filled by indigenous production soon. It is true that we are now producing much more jute, but our pusillanimity and selfishness continuously weaken our freedom.

Pakistan was short of coal and at the time I was in charge of Mining, we had fixed our price of coal two or three per cent lower than the C.O.D. price of South African coal at the Chittagong harbour and Pakistan was buying it from us at that price. We had given the same condition to Australia. Devaluation changed this and I informed Pakistan that the price of coal had been enhanced proportionately and it was free to take it or not. The price was accepted by those countries which had to. Nehru made casual inquiry about this and I told him that the goods were ours, if the customer could afford the price, he should purchase it, but I was not the shop-

keeper to sell my goods at a loss. I sold coal at that price as long as I was in charge of the Department. There is no point in recording what happened after I left.

The point I want to make is that the country has to be defended as much through economic policy and action as through military policy and action and in both India failed to show the requisite firmness.

All the world knows us as a peace loving nation believing in peaceful methods in international affairs. Because of Gandhiji we have come to assume that we are specially chosen to hold the peace line in the world. India has taken an independent line right from the creation of the United Nations. In fact, promotion of international peace and security and settlement of international disputes by arbitration have been incorporated in our Constitution as Directive Principles. Our policies and position in the U.N.O. were therefore logical. During these years the U.N. was faced with many a crisis—Korea, Viet-Nam, Arab-Israel. In all these we maintained our non-aligned position despite the pleasure or displeasure of one or the other group. But many believe that our non-alignment was somewhat partial to the Communist nations, because it was they who had given firm support to India in the Kashmir dispute. Russia had put us under an obligation by rescuing us many a time by the use of her veto in the Security Council. Sometimes our desire to mediate overpowers us so much that often we rush where angels fear to tread. We invite many difficulties through our attempts to reconcile our policies with our ideals. It is true that world's progress can be assured only through world peace, but India alone is not charged with the duty of keeping peace The question of Korea became critical in 1950. The North Koreans occupied almost the whole of South Korea, and had not the Americans stepped in, the whole of Korea would have gone communist. The United Nations was responsible for the frontier between the two Koreas and the Americans had gone there as part of the U.N. Forces. England sent a nominal Force and obtained the maximum benefit from the Americans out of it. Pakistan did likewise and obtained enough military hardware from the

U.S.A. to make it dream of avenging its defeat in Kashmir. The time was such that if India had sent a few battalions and tried to modernise her army, we might have succeeded. Vallabhbhai, in fact, was in favour of such a policy. India recognised its obligations to help the U.N. Forces in Korea and sent a few ambulances. Nehru was accused at the time of creating difficulties in the way of the defence of South Korea by his repeated warnings against the crossing of the 38th parallel. The Indian attitute to the Korean question was not the result of detailed discussions in the Cabinet. As a matter of fact, I do not recollect Nehru having given us any chance of discussing the foreign affairs during my five years in the Cabinet. India's readiness to offer its services for mediation was proper and we did mediate with credit in Korea, in the Arab-Isreal dispute and in Viet-Nam. But Nehru did not seem to welcome similar offers of mediation between India and Pakistan, and India and China.

There is no doubt that India's representatives at the annual sessions of the U.N. put forward our position fairly ably. Nehru himself attended the U.N. and his speeches there did enhance his reputation. Girja Shankar Bajpai, a civil servant, was his adviser in foreign affairs. He had ample experience of it during the British regime. He was shrewd and skilful and Nehru generally listened to him. After his death no one with equal experience and with an all round and broad view of the world situation was available and India's foreign policy tended to be identified with Nehru's personal predilections and prejudices. The Cabinet rarely got an opportunity to discuss it and when it did so, Nehru was intolerant of difference of opinion. Gradually he came to believe that he was infallible. The blame for this rests with our tendency to deify leaders and the general inability of political leaders to think independently.

India gained little economically by staying within the Commonwealth, but there can be no doubt that India's freedom gave an impetus to the freedom of other British colonies. Adlai Stevenson, the 1952 presidential candidate in U.S.A., visited India in 1953 and about a dozen of us met him at B. Shiv Rao's place. The question of French overseas terri-

tories had become acute at the time and Stevenson explained his country's position. I asked him why the USA took it for granted that the newly free colonies would go into the communist camp. What about India, Pakistan and Burma. In all these three countries, nationalism triumphed and National States came into existence. Why should it not be assumed that the same would happen in the French colonies ? Stevenson said that the risk was too great and if those colonies did not follow the Indian pattern, the world would fall a sure victim to communism. The English thought otherwise. They found it impossible to control their worldwide colonial Empire and wisely decided to relinquish gracefully what they could not hold forcibly. They preferred to safeguard their commercial interests rather than await a revolt and lose all before leaving a country. The scales instead of the sword was their choice and their policy was to give up political power for economic benefit. As a result, colony after colony in Africa became free. In this respect the achievement of Nehru is great and due credit must be given to him for recognising that a country can be a Republic and control its own foreign policy while remaining within the Commonwealth. His example influenced many a freedom fighter in Africa who took their countries into the Commonwealth following him. This achievement of India, as also its work at the U.N., led to the peaceful solution of the problem of French territories in India. The French are lovers of equality and liberty. In fact, most of the modern thought on these has been influenced by the French philosophers who saw its fruition in the French Revolution. The present day European Nation States owe their existence to that revolution. The French, therefore, gave India *de facto* possession of their Indian colonies with the minimum of trouble and have recently made it *de jure*.

Nehru hoped that the problem of the Portuguese colonies in India, Goa, Div and Daman, would also be solved equally amicably, particularly after India attained freedom or when Indian freedom was assured. The freedom struggle in Goa gathered strength, but I do not intend to recall all that history. It is true that Dr Ram Manohar Lohia took the lead in this

respect, but he was unable to give the movement direction and coherence. The Portuguese maintained that Goa was an integral part of metropolitan Portugal and not a colony. Nehru used to say that Goa was a pimple on India's face. He could have removed it easily at any time. But for Sardar Patel, the Hyderabad question would have remained unsolved and I feel that the question of Goa too could have been solved by the same means and within a few hours. But Goa was dealt with by the Foreign Affairs Ministry and for five years it was never brought up in the Cabinet. Nehru believed that the Portuguese too would behave as sensibly as the French. They did nothing of the kind. Nehru had created the image of a peaceful and nonviolent India in the world and Salazar had once said that Portugal could be militarily defeated by India easily, but that would once for all destroy the image of a peace-loving India and that would mean a moral victory for Portugal.

As for recent history, I am told by some Goans that on the eve of our action, negotiations were proceeding with Portugal for the grant of freedom to Goa. It is not true that all questions are solved if kept pending long enough. Goa could have been liberated along with Hyderabad. The repression and agitation in Goa were justification enough for India to take military action. But I believe Nehru did not act because of the fear of losing his reputation as a peacemaker. In the end, the inevitable happened and the world has been accusing India of hypocrisy for the last few years and our international prestige has suffered.

In truth, a country's foreign policy has to be moulded primarily to suit its interests. It should not be brutally selfish nor should it be so altruistic as to sacrifice its own interests for the advantage of others. At the beginning of this century someone asked the then Prime Minister of England what his foreign policy was. He replied, 'England has no foreign policy, but foreign interests only.' Other nations in the world have been guided by the same principle in the past. The atom bomb has now radically changed international relations and no nation would welcome an atomic war. It is also clear that new groups and alliances have been formed in

the world which, instead of preventing such a war, may bring it nearer. Peace in the world would lead to progress and may also reduce inequalities between nations. Therefore, peace should be the central theme of the foreign policy. But peace cannot be preserved through intrigues or alliances nor should its main support come from weapons but from a firm belief in humanity and civilization. Indian tradition teaches us not to go to war if the enemy is ready to concede even a fraction of what is due. Peace is fundamental to India because only world peace can enable us to complete our plans and projects. But political principles do not grow in a vacuum and have to be considered in the context of prevailing circumstances. The world is so situated today that international policies are being trimmed to suit the big nations and national policies have to be adjusted to international trends and tendencies. From this viewpoint, it has to be admitted that the outline of our foreign policy accepted by the first Cabinet was correct. But the world is changing all the time and India too should have changed accordingly.

The Chiang Kai-Sheik regime in China ended and Communist regime took over which raked up the Tibet problem and has now made our border situation acute. I have already discussed Tibet. Still, India is right in pressing for the admission of China into the U.N. If China had been in the U.N. in 1950-51, Korea tragedy might have been averted and the question of Tibet might have been settled in a different manner. But because the Chinese Government is a communist Government and U.S.A. is anti-communist, it supported Chiang Kai-Sheik and still continues to do so. Russia, a communist nation, is already in the U.N. and nothing could have been lost by a communist China coming in. But shortsighted U.S.A. did not allow it and China has thus remained outside the pale of international law, an outlaw nation. The Chinese leaders came to India and accepted the principles of Panchsheel. India thus helped China to attain international prestige and China repaid by attacking us in October 1962 ! Nehru's prestige also was enhanced when China accepted Panchsheel and its repudiation now has lowered it. What I mean is that although

our policy of peace and non-alignment was not fundamentally wrong, we did not know how to adapt it from time to time to changing circumstances. The picture today is that all our neighbours are either hostile or indifferent to us, while distant nations content themselves with expressions of sympathy. Our refusal to join any of the contending sides has increased our value, but the increased value has made it difficult to get a customer! Even if not our own, the neighbouring territory has to be under our influence for the sake of security, or it has to be ensured that a self-governing neighbour is at least neutral. The British followed this principle in the case of Nepal, Tibet and Afghanistan. Free India should have seen its wisdom. In short, non-alignment was all right, but India has been often accused of expressing her non-alignment in favour of one particular camp. The charge that India's non-alignment in practice has not been impartial is not altogether baseless. Besides, we tomtomed our non-alignment and our consideration of each problem on merits so much that many found it insufferable.

The turn taken by the Kashmir problem now could have been avoided if India had made her position crystal clear well in time. We ought to have told the world that the promise of plebiscite had been made infructuous by Pakistan's refusal to vacate her aggression from Kashmir. The world does not go merely by the letter of the law when considering the freedom of a country and the world today does believe that India has imposed her rule on the Kashmiris without their consent. Thus this should have been finally disposed off in 1950 or '51. Unfortunately, indecision was taken for wisdom and procrastination for diplomacy in the External Affairs Ministry of India. The same was in evidence in our dealings with Nepal. From all standpoints, Nepal is a nation nearest to India, but the way our External Affairs Ministry treated Nepal showed neither propriety nor friendship. Our Ambassador there would ask for direction and no decision would be taken for years. The result has been that Nepal has not remained a firm friend of India. We did not help the democratic forces there, nor did we encourage the Royal family. We claim to

accept the democratic system as the best and respect socialism. Therefore, it should be the normal course for India to encourage, at least, sympathise with the forces which are trying to introduce democracy and socialism wherever both are non-existent. But when an open dictatorship was established in Pakistan, we recognised it promptly. The argument then was that such a Government would be more successful in settling Indo-Pakistan problems. Nothing of the kind has happened. On the other hand, Pakistan has followed a consistent policy of refusing to accept any agreement, of aggression, of negotiations with the sole purpose of defeating them, of fresh agression to consolidate and legalise the old one. This is the Jinnah policy and the only reply to it is the determined resistance to smash it. This was the advice of some of us from the beginning. It was disregarded and today India is encompassed on both sides by hostile Pakistan and China. But this situation is of our own making.

FOUNDATIONS OF PROSPERITY

LORD ACTON has said that freedom cannot be the ultimate end, it is only the means to fulfil national ambitions. The Indian National Congress has always thus viewed national freedom. Our leaders have always claimed, even since before the Congress was established in the late nineties, that the most reprehensible aspect of the British rule was that it had aggravated India's poverty. After the establishment of the Indian National Congress, the economic condition of India was one of the most potent factors in political agitations; India had been robbed; 25% of the Indians were semi-starved, and an equal number were poverty-stricken; the average income of an Indian was the lowest in the world, while its administrative and defence expenditure was unbearable. These arguments formed the burden of the resolutions passed by the Congress in session after session. The Congress held that even if political slavery could be tolerated, economic emasculation of the nation was simply unbearable. People hoped that freedom would bring plenty and lighten the burden of expenditure on defence and administration.

After a long and determined struggle, involving immense privations and sacrifices, freedom was won. We had now to set on the course for prosperity. The Congress had appointed a Planning Committee at its Haripura session in 1938. Earlier, in 1931 at Karachi, the Congress, through a resolution, had broadly outlined its idea of how society would be organised after attaining independence. In the 1936 Congress in Faizpur, I had moved a resolution on the reorganisation of agriculture. In 1944, some industrialists like the Tatas had published a

plan involving an expenditure of ten thousand crores. A similar plan was prepared under the guidance of Manavendra Nath Roy. In brief, the idea of planning had been accepted by thinking Indians but it was clear that in the modern world planning cannot be done without political power. All of us were inspired by the success of the plans in Soviet Russia. It was, therefore, inevitable that we should think about the economic problems of the country after the attainment of freedom. If newborn freedom did not get the nutrition of prosperity, it would be stunted.

Shri Niyogi was appointed in 1946 by the Government of India to prepare an outline of a Plan for India. During the War also, the British administrators had given thought to the future economy of India. Various plans were being considered. No modern Government can do without some plans to give guidelines for the future and it has to be gratefully acknowledged that although they knew that they were to leave India, the British Government were planning for the future, collecting data and drawing up schemes. I have already described the dark clouds which overshadowed the dawn of freedom and the way they were dispelled. At the same time, we began to think of the ways and means to bring prosperity to the country. Some schemes were on paper only, some were in the early stages of development and some were still born. Everything was topsyturvy and it would take time to settle down. But the expectations of the people were so high that for some time we felt simply overwhelmed. There was a day in 1947 November, when in the whole of the Punjab, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh the petrol supply was not sufficient for even twentyfour hours! The fact was that the foreign oil companies had their stores at Karachi, Calcutta, Bombay and Madras. After the Partition the supply from Karachi was cut off because Pakistan refused to provide the necessary wagons. We had an emergency meeting in my room with the Railway officials, my secretary Gokhale and Mazumdar, the head of the department concerned, Mahendra and representatives of the Oil Companies. There was no question of begging from Pakistan.

Rajasthan, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh used to be supplied

with petrol from Karachi which had been cut off. We decided to arrange for special trains from Bombay. They would, however, take three days to reach places like Lucknow etc. We overcame this crisis by borrowing petrol from the local Military stock. At the time of the partition, the railway engines, bogies and wagons were divided in proportion of three to one, but we had not got the actual possession of our share as more wagons than their due were in Pakistan. There was little hope of getting them back easily. Some delay was inevitable and some, we knew, would be intentional.

The Punjab, some part of Uttar Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh were accustomed to rock salt. 90% of this came from Punjab. Special trains for salt also had to be arranged. Kashmir also was used to the same kind of salt and they were not willing to eat salt from Pakistan nor would they eat salt made from the sea. We had therefore to obtain rocksalt from Italy for them !

The business community was not willing to accept the principle that controls on distribution were inevitable in the event of shortage and scarcity. The Cabinet too at the time was not of one mind on this point. The business community agitated for the removal of all controls. I opposed it, but controls were lifted due to Gandhiji's intervention. The prices of foodgrains shot up to such an extent that food riots were feared and controls had to be reimposed. Similar immediate difficulties plagued us whenever we thought of long-term plans. The newspapers were unrestrained in their criticism. Few of them felt the need to study the problem before criticising and after independence the fear of punishment had almost disappeared. Even in these circumstances we decided to go ahead with some projects and the first of it was the Damodar Valley Project. We were sworn in on the 15th August and somewhere about 20th or 21st August I received a phone call from the first Chief Minister of Bengal, Dr. Prafulla Ghosh, requesting me to take in hand the Damodar Valley Project. I said 'Yes'. Next day I called for the relevant papers in which I found the observations of Dr. Ambedkar, Bhabha and Sarat Babu.

The Damodar Valley Project was a threefold one—the pro-

duction of electricity through water power and coal, irrigation and increase in employment by industrialisation of the Valley. The project was to have benefited Bihar and Bengal. The Damodar river problem had come up before the Government in 1943 on account of the tremendous floods and subsequent destruction. The expenditure on the scheme was to have been divided into three departments: electricity, irrigation and flood control. Of these, Bihar asked that Bengal should bear the cost of flood control. The flood of words on this was unable to push the project forward. In 1943, Bengal was undivided and that was the main point.

The picture was different in 1947. Bengal was divided and the Damodar Valley Project was going to benefit only Indian Bengal. I presented a statement on the project to the Cabinet within eight days. The Accountant-General of India, Narahari Rao, was present at the Cabinet meeting which considered my report. He made a lengthy statement on how to account for the expenditure on flood control. I told him that the Project had to be taken in hand. The question as to which department or Ministry would pay for it could be sorted out in due course. Whoever paid for it, the benefits would be shared by all. Whether the sweets were served in a cup or a saucer, made no difference to the stomach. Perhaps it was at this remark, that Nehru and other members of the Cabinet agreed to the Project. I drafted the Damodar Valley Corporation Bill and moved it in the November session of the Parliament which referred it to a Select Committee. The Committee reported in January and by March the Bill became the Damodar Valley Corporation Act. The members of Parliament, in particular the members from Bengal, were pleased with my various speeches on the Bill. After the third reading, the Bengali and Bihari members autographed a copy of the Bill and presented it to me as a memento. The Board of Management of the Corporation was to have been finalised by the first week of April and Nehru suggested that I should select the members. I suggested that it was not proper that the selection of officers for such an important project should be made by a single Minister. Instead, it should be

made by the Prime Minister, the Home Minister and the Minister of the Department concerned. The Cabinet should then consider it formally. This would also be a good precedent for similar selections. Nehru approved of the idea and we considered a few names for the Chairmanship and selected Mr Majumdar, I.C.S. There was unanimity for the other two names. Thus 1948 April saw the inauguration of the Damodar Valley Corporation. Its achievements are before the country.

The *Blitz* of Bombay wrote that Mr Majumdar had been selected because he was a cousin of Mrs Sucheta Kripalani. I wrote to the editor explaining the method of his selection and *Blitz* printed the letter with an apology. In fact, I was not aware of Mr Majumdar's relationship with Mrs Kripalani until it was revealed by the *Blitz*. But the irresponsible habit of publishing allegations without sufficient investigation, so characteristic of our press after independence, shows no sign of abating despite the responsibilities of freedom.

Freedom becomes real to individual citizen through an improvement in his or her standard of life. Economic planning and economic programmes are therefore important. Unfortunately, it became evident that free India was not free even as regards foodgrains. We had two urgent matters before us, increase in agricultural produce and industrialisation. Power was the primary need for industrialization. It was the experience of the West that industries grew rapidly in countries which were rich in coal, oil or electric power. India produced only a million KW of electricity in 1947 and therefore hydro-electric schemes were of great importance. Production of electricity through water-power, power and irrigation for agriculture were my responsibilities and in November 1947, we considered what programme could be undertaken. It was agreed that each State should have at least one big project. Accordingly, it was decided that Hirakud in Orissa, Damodar in Bengal and Bihar, if possible Kosi in Bihar, Bhakra in the Punjab, Koyna in Maharashtra, Tapi in Gujarat, Nagarjunsagar in the then Madras, Tungbhadra in Mysore, Chambal in Madhyapradesh should be undertaken without delay. Accordingly, the Central Power and Water Commission was

reorganised and work began in right earnest. Matters, like the preliminary survey, the preparation of maps, estimates, were not easy. I have given the story of the Damodar Valley Project above. The Chief Minister of Orissa, Hare Krishna Mehtab, proposed that the Mahanadi should be dammed at Hirakud and the water utilised for the production of electricity as well as for irrigation. Orissa was at the time dotted with numerous small princely states. I called a meeting in Delhi of all the states likely to be affected by the dam. The meeting was attended by Mehtab, Government experts and representatives of the Finance Ministry. The Secretary of my Ministry, Gokhale, expected the conference to last for two days and had made arrangements accordingly. Every member was given notes on all aspects of the project, the experts' opinion on it, as well as various statements. I presided and made three points: (1) whether the scheme should be accepted or not, (2) who should execute it, and (3) how should it be financed? I then asked those who were not in favour to speak first as the Project itself had been discussed threadbare. No one spoke. I then took up the next question and suggested that the Project was a huge one and it should be the responsibility of a Committee working under the direct control of the concerned department of the Government of India. Mehtab accepted the suggestion and said that it could not be undertaken by a small state like Orissa and the princely states which were even smaller. So the second question was out of the way. I immediately gave an outline of the probable constitution of the Hirakud Consultative/Advisory Board/Committee, which was generally accepted. Those who were affected by the scheme were given representation on it. The third point remained and I asked Narahari Rao, the Accountant-General of the Government of India whether the Government would loan the amount necessary on the usual terms of interest. He said they would and I wound up the proceedings. I said that all the three points raised at the meeting had been answered and asked the Chief Engineer of the Government of India, Khosla, to take the work in hand without delay. All this was over literally in an hour. The attendance was

sixty. After my speech, Narahari Rao asked permission to say a few words. He said that during his service of thirty years he had attended numerous meetings and conferences in India and abroad, but it was a unique experience to him to see so quick a disposal of such a big conference considering a Project costing the huge amount of hundred crores. 'I had expected that two days would be insufficient. I congratulate the Minister.' The torrent of congratulations continued during the coffee which followed. The work was urgent and all my attention was concentrated on it.

I then decided to proceed with the Bhakra Project and visited the proposed site of the dam with Gokhale and Khosla. The Project was first mooted in 1914. It was to have provided water for the fields in five districts of Punjab, Karnal, Rohtak, Hissar, Gurgaon and Mahendragarh. Irrigation had been provided for the West Punjab in 1906 and that had changed the face of the land. This change had affected recruitment to the Army also. With the prosperity brought about by irrigation, the sons of the farmers showed less enthusiasm for joining the army. The then Punjab Government thought that the damming of the Satlaj at Bhakra would have similar effect on the recruitment of Jats from the Haryana area and did not support the Project at the time. A bit of work had begun before the Partition which was confined to the building of a road from Nangal to Bhakra. This six mile road was progressing at a snail's pace. After independence, the Project became a challange to Punjab and Khosla in particular was very anxious to take it up. Therefore both of us went to the site and climbed the hill in November 1947 to the point where the present dam is built. The Satlaj whose source was in the Manas lake (Mansarovar) in distant Tibet flows through two hills. A small float was trying to gauge the depth of the water at the place. We sat down and discussed the Project for two hours.

It was planned to bring a railway line from Rupar to Nangal and to extend it to the dam site also. A temporary dam for two diversionery canals to enable workers to reach the foundations of the main dam was also planned. The

height of the dam would be 760 feet, the breadth at bottom 165 feet and at the apex 35 feet. Seven galleries were to be built inside the dam whose length was calculated to be 1,300 feet. Sitting there amidst the enchanting surroundings, the whole magnificent picture of the grand project rose before my mind. I hoped to complete the project by 1953–54. The Government of India would finance it and the cost was estimated at about 120 crores of rupees. I planned to get special experts and advisers from abroad. In short, the Project grew into my mind as a colossal enterprise. Besides Patiala and Bikaner, many smaller princely states in the Himalayas were involved in the project. We had to sort out the financial interests of all of them. It was not a simple task, but my officers, Gokhale and Khosla, were shrewd, farsighted, honest and efficient. They used to draft the plans after discussion with me. My contribution was prompt decision.

It was decided to create a Bhakra Control Board and to make the then Governor of Punjab, C. M. Trivedi, its president. I obtained his consent to take up the responsibility when he was on a visit to Delhi. This Board has now been administering the project for the last fifteen years and Bhakra is today the pride of India. Three million acres of land are under irrigation and half a million killowatt electricity is being produced. Punjab has been transformed. It has become truly the land of lifegiving water and fertile fields. By a sheer coincidence, I became the Governor of Punjab and during my tenure another big dam, this time on the river Beas, was planned and the work is proceeding on it now. This would be an earth dam and its height would be 365 feet and length about a mile. It will produce 150,000 KW. of electricity. The waters of the lake thus formed will be taken to the Satlaj near Pong through a canal. We dream of taking the waters of the Satlaj, which itself brings them from the sacred Manas lake in Tibet, by a bigger canal through Rajasthan and Saurashtra to join the Arabian Sea to the west of the holy shrine of Somnath. Another part of the same project is to dam the Beas at Mandi and feed the Bhakra lake through a 21 mile canal and, with Soviet collaboration, build a hydro-electric

plant on the right of the Bhakra dam to produce a further half million killowatt electricity. Two underground tunnels, one of nine miles and the other of one mile, are a part of the 21 mile canal from Beas to Bhakra. Thus the Satlaj and the Beas will unite at the Bhakra dam. Nature brought about their union on the plains at Harike. The Punjab engineers will now unite them amidst the Himalayan mountains. The first was a love marriage. This would be a marriage arranged by the parents!

The distribution of water was one of the most difficult problems facing us when Punjab was partitioned in 1947. The Madhopur headworks on the Ravi came to India according to the Radcliffe Award and those who control the headworks control the river. But Pakistan would not accept it. In November 1947, the engineers of both the Punjabs had come to a temporary agreement which was signed by an English and a Muslim engineer on behalf of Pakistan. According to that agreement the waters of the Satlaj and the Ravi belonged exclusively to India. One of the canals from Ferozpur Barrage ran into Pakistan. This canal is called the Dipalpur Canal. India had the right to close it by the end of March 1948. Feeding it from the Ferozpur Barrage was a purely temporary arrangement to accommodate Pakistan. Pakistan had got 80% of the waters of Punjab while India had some part of the river Ravi and the Beas and the Satlaj rivers. Pakistan was informed in April that the supply of water to the Dipalpur canal would be curtailed. The Satlaj enters Pakistan near Ferozpur, and the Barrage there with its administration on both banks of the river had been awarded to India. The Ganga canal flows into Rajasthan from the left of the Ferozpur Barrage, that is, from the right bank of the Satlaj and the plan was to use the Dipalpur canal water for the Ganga canal to irrigate the parched land of Rajasthan. The moment Pakistan was given notice that the Dipalpur supply would be curtailed it began to protest and suggested that a conference should be held to discuss the matter. When Nehru asked me about this, I said : 'We are acting strictly in accordance with the agreement. Notice of stoppage of water has been given because

Pakistan has not paid the arrears.' He asked what was the objection to a conference and I said that there was no objection provided we adhered to the Agreement. The conference met in my room in the Secretariat on May 3, 1948. I was the chief delegate and Gopalaswamy Aiyangar and Dr Ambedkar were nominated as my advisers. Experts like Khosla and Gokhale were also present. Pakistan was represented by its Finance Minister, Ghulam Mohammad, assisted by two Ministers of Pakistani Punjab, one of whom was Nawab Mamdot and an expert adviser. The discussions dragged on till 12.30. The burden of their argument was that the Agreement was not binding. I knew Ghulam Mohammad well through Gurunath Bewoor. Besides, he was in the Central Assembly as a Government nominee before partition. He had a sweet and suave manner and used to say that he was a slave of the British. He rang me up on the morning of the conference and said, 'We must come to some agreement. I have full confidence in your sense of justice.' I replied : 'If it is so, there shall be an agreement.'

The discussion upto 12.30 did not reveal any common ground between us and I said : 'The economic consequences of partition must be accepted.' The conference was going to break up. Therefore I made an offer to Ghulam Mohammad. I said : 'I am ready to accommodate you for five years. During these five years we would gradually reduce the supply of water from the Satlaj. You should be able to make alternative arrangements during this period.' On hearing this Dr Ambedkar whispered in my ear that he did not like the proposal. Khosla said there should have been prior discussion among ourselves on the suggestion. Gokhale said that I had confronted Pakistan with a moral dilemma. Aiyangar congratulated me on my statesmanship. I began to feel that although my proposal was proper, I should withdraw it. After waiting for five minutes I told Ghulam Mohammad that as it seemed the offer was unacceptable to them, it was withdrawn, the draft of a joint statement would be sent to him and declared the meeting terminated.

Lord Mountbatten gave us lunch that day. He was keen

on some kind of an agreement in this dispute and asked me how the conference had gone as soon as I reached the Governor-General's Palace. I said that it was carried on in a friendly atmosphere, but that day at least there was no agreement. Ghulam Mohammad and two other Ministers of Pakistan were also at the lunch. On return I got a phone from Nehru inquiring why the conference had broken up. I told him that my offer of five years was not acceptable to them. He said they were agreeable now and asked me to send Khosla to him.

The resultant draft of the agreement contained the words that India had the right to curtail the supply of water to Pakistan in the interest of her own people and that it would be so curtailed gradually. But no time limit was indicated. It also said that the agreement was subject to considerations of our interests. I was called in after the draft had been prepared. I objected to the omission of time limit and to the mention of our rights to withdraw water. Unfortunately, Nehru was bent on arriving at an agreement and thought the draft, as it was, satisfactory. I said that I would not sign it. I also expressed my disapproval of the proposal to deposit the amount of arrears owed by Pakistan in a Lahore bank in the name of Nehru. He said if water were to be stopped, the people of Pakistan would suffer and we had no quarrel with them. I said that was true but the Pakistan people would realise that their Government was responsible for their miseries only after the water was stopped. Nehru said that he too would not sign if I did not sign. I was then subjected to much pressure and I did sign in the end and the agreement was finalised. It was signed by Nehru and me on behalf of India and Ghulam Mohammad and Mamdot on behalf of Pakistan. At the same time it was agreed that another meeting should be held in about six months to work out the details.

On the completion of the Agreement, Mr Gokhale suggested that as it was an agreement between two sovereign nations and as both of them were members of the United Nations, it should be registered with the U.N. There is provision for such registration of international agreements in the U.N. Charter. Accordingly I sent a note to Nehru, but he did not approve of

the idea at the time. Two years later, he sent the Agreement for registration to the U.N., and Pakistan opposed it. It was possible that Pakistan would not have opposed registration of it had it been done immediately because the Indian interpretation of the Agreement was not a matter of dispute at that time.

As agreed, in July 1948, I went to Lahore with Gopalaswamy Aiyangar and our engineers. I came to know there that the Pakistan Foreign Minister, Mohammad Zafrullah, was opposed to the Agreement. I made it clear in the discussions that the arrangement for the distribution of water agreed upon was purely a temporary one and that although no time limit was mentioned in the Agreement, it would not continue after five years. They said that the period might have to be prolonged by a year or two. I said it was all right with me, but said that it should be so recorded. And again my adviser, Gopalaswamy, said that there was no need to record it. Nothing was decided at the conference and we returned.

A few days after this I was faced with a serious decision and if I had not acted on my own responsibility India would have lost the waters of Satlaj to Pakistan. This river enters Pakistan at Ferozpur. The Pakistan-India frontier is about twenty miles north of Ferozpur. Above this, Indian territory extends to both the banks of the river. But about ten miles north of Ferozpur a small chunk of land ten by half a mile had been awarded to Pakistan in the Radcliffe Award. Precisely in this area Pakistan chose to build a barrage on the Satlaj. The completion of the barrage would have meant the diversion of the whole of Satlaj waters to Pakistan. This would have made the Ferozpur Barrage useless and the Ganga canal a mockery. It was clear that Pakistan planned to divert the Satlaj waters by a canal on the west of the new barrage into the Dipalpur canal. Gokhale and Khosla came to me one day and gave me a warning of the impending danger. I said, 'The danger is great, but we cannot prevent Pakistan building the barrage as it is within her rights. Suggest some effective countermove.' Dr Khosla said that ten miles above the site of the Pakistan barrage is Harike where the Satlaj and the Beas meet. We

could build a barrage there and join the Ganga canal with it by a new canal. We could also dig a new Rajasthan canal and give water to three million acres of land in Rajasthan. I approved the plan, ordered that work should begin the next day and sanctioned a crore of rupees to begin with from my Ministry. I told them to 'inform' the Finance Ministry of our plans and to obtain its formal sanction but not to 'ask' for any funds at the time. I suggested that they should take the Finance Ministry officials into confidence and tactfully convince them of the importance and urgency of the work. Gokhale accomplished this within an hour and work on the barrage began within eight days. Pakistan newspapers kicked up a lot of dust, but we were not doing anything illegal. Thus we countered their move effectively. It is believed that Harike marks the site where sage Vyas completed the *Mahabharat*, one of world's great epics. Centuries after a chapter in the epic of India's struggle for prosperity was being written at the same place.

Some months after, Nehru asked me casually as to what this Harike Barrage project was? I explained to him the project and its background. He asked why he was not told earlier. I replied : 'It would have been proper to consult you if we had any difficulties. I did not think it proper to trouble you unnecessarily.'

The Bhakra project saga did not end there. The Harike Barrage checkmate enraged Pakistan. We, on our part, reduced the water supply in 1949 according to the Agreement and also informed Pakistan that a further reduction would be effected in 1950. During these two years Pakistan had made no alternative plans. The project contemplated was to divert the waters of the Jhelam to Chenab and of the Chenab into the Ravi which would then supply the Dipalpur canal. But Pakistan did not move a finger in the matter. In fact, the way the Government functioned in Pakistan made it impossible for any constructive work being undertaken there. They, therefore, undertook blackmail and sent a note to us demanding the restoration of the supply of water, failing which, Pakistan warned, the relations between the two countries would dete-

riorate and create a danger to the peace of the world. Therefore, if no settlement was arrived at within fifteen days, Pakistan would take the matter to the Security Council.

On receipt of the note Nehru called a meeting in his office on 11 September. The Governor of Punjab and the concerned Punjab Ministers and officials as well as I, along with Gokhale, Khosla and our experts, were invited to this meeting to consider what reply should be sent to Pakistan. Gokhale, Khosla and I prepared a draft which made it clear that the reduction in the supply of water was in accordance with the Agreement and could not threaten world peace. Nehru had no draft ready, but was displeased that we had reduced the supply. My draft was discussed at length. I argued that all that Pakistan wanted was to break the previous Agreement which gave them certain concessions because of our weakness. During the discussion Nehru said that we should be generous. I retorted that generosity grows through gratitude and said '*What is the good of casting pearls.....*' I intentionally left the sentence incomplete. The Punjab Ministers agreed with me but had to accept the Centre's decisions every time in futile rage. None was willing to speak firmly. My statement provoked Nehru to ask whether he had any rights as the Prime Minister. I quietly said : 'You have all the rights given to you under the Constitution and I have nothing to say against them. But as a member of the Cabinet working on the principle of joint responsibility, I too have a right to say what I feel about the matter under discussion and that is what I am doing.' This exchange of words suddenly electrified the atmosphere in the room. Nehru got angrier and asked whether he had the right to ask for my resignation. I calmly said that he definitely had that right. 'Ask for it upto tomorrow evening and I shall give it but I am not ready to be anybody's yesman. I will resign without anger and my cooperation with you will be constant. But I shall not fail to act on the principle of joint responsibility as I understand it.' I was perfectly calm and serious while making this statement.

As a result, Nehru's temper cooled suddenly. He gave my draft to Gopalaswamy who changed some of my words to

make the draft even sterner. I accepted the change gladly and the draft was approved. Just as I was leaving the room, Rajaji asked me to wait.

Three of us remained, Rajaji, Nehru and I. Rajaji asked me why I was so contentious and I replied : 'Let Panditji cite one example of my having done anything against the Cabinet policy during the last three years. On the contrary, I had supported some decisions although I did not approve of them. But I cannot compromise where the question of national interest or principle is involved. I am nobody's yesman. Panditji should make up his mind till tomorrow. I shall send in my resignation.' Nehru said quarrels happened because of differences in temperaments. I said that the Cabinet brought together men of different temperaments. They come together to discuss and decide. Even if the decision were a majority one, it was considered as that of all. The proper course for anyone who did not agree was to resign.

Rajaji said that he did not want me to go. I did not say anything and came out. The Governor of Punjab and other officials were waiting on the green outside. I told them what had happened and all of them congratulated me saying that I alone could be so outspoken. I told them that there was nothing personal about it and returned to my office, wrote a letter home and another to Sardar Patel who was in Bombay, giving him an account of what had happened. I asked him for his direction before 12 the next day either by phone or by telegram. On my return to office after lunch, my private secretary gave me a message that Nehru wanted to see me in his office at 4 p.m. that day. I began to think of a draft of resignation. When I went to Nehru's office at 4 in the afternoon, he himself came out and putting his arm round my shoulder said : 'I apologise for all that happened this morning.' I said, 'You are like my elder brother and I have so regarded you since 1924. Please don't apologise. I am ready to do whatever you wish.' We then went into his room and he said that he had informed the Sardar of having accepted my draft. We had tea and I returned to my office. Then I went to Rajaji and on entering his room said : 'It is all your work.

I would have been free today, but have been caught again.' He said that after I had left, he had told Nehru that what had happened was not creditable to him and had humiliated me. Nehru had said that he had certainly not meant to humiliate me. Rajaji had said that all that could have been avoided. Nehru had replied : 'Gadgil did not seem inclined that way.' Rajaji had then said that if it were so, circumstances came about which were humiliating to me and suggested that Nehru should apologise to me. I have narrated this incident in such detail to show how large-hearted and free from personal rancour Nehru was.

The Ministries were reorganised in 1951 and 'Power' was no longer my responsibility. Instead, I got 'Industrial production.' However, as long as I was a member of the Cabinet, Nehru sent me all papers regarding the distribution of the waters of the Panjab rivers whenever the question came up. In the end, Pakistan kept the dispute alive for twelve years and then again made a ten year agreement and that too with the intervention of the World Bank. This agreement gave India the exclusive use of the waters of the rivers Ravi, Beas and Satlaj. But in the observance of this agreement too Pakistan continues its obstreperous tactics. The Satlaj project made Punjab prosperous.

The river Kosi is called the curse of Bihar. This river also flows from the Himalayas. Seven Kosis make one big Kosi. It is believed that different metals are found in these seven Kosis. Their names are indicative of these : the brass Kosi, the golden Kosi etc. All these join together near the Varah-Kshetra in Nepal. From there the river enters north Bihar and later joins the Ganga. The people of Bihar wanted a dam on the Kosi and I visited the Varah-Kshetra with Dr Khosla and other officials. I was astonished by the huge expanse of the river bed. On our way back I saw the site of the Chatta Barrage and returned via Viratnagar. It was found that the site of the barrage was subject to periodic earthquakes. The trial pits revealed that wood coal was present below 300 feet, which confirmed its proneness to earthquakes. It was difficult to convince the people of Bihar of

this. Everyone was anxious for progress and prosperity and the Damodar Project did not benefit Bihar much. Its main beneficiary was Bengal. We therefore decided to build the dam at Chatta and bring water by canal from Nepal into Bihar. The river Kosi changes its course every year. Ganga does the same. In fact, all these north Indian rivers are erratic and would flood one side one year and the other the next. This has made miles of acres on both sides of these rivers unreliable for agriculture. This huge tract of land from Punjab to Bengal in the heartland of India is a vast plain and makes it easy for rivers to change their course during floods. In consideration of all this, it was decided to build the dam at Chatta and tame the Kosi by lining its banks with packed earth. The work is going on still but the beginning was made by the first Cabinet.

India is a Union of various States and although prosperity is indivisible, there has to be some balance of development amongst them. With this in view, a special officer was appointed as early as 1948 to survey the Krishna, Godavari, Tapti and Narmada valleys. I was in Poona in September, 1947, and found time to visit the site of the proposed Koyna dam. Quite a few people were present at the time and as is usual with Maharashtrians, the burden of their song was that Government was doing nothing for the project. I assured them that the project would be completed and that I would do everything within my power to help it. On reaching Delhi I wrote to the Bombay Government to undertake a preliminary survey and to prepare a rough plan. The Bombay Government appointed engineers for the work, one of whom was Mr Gupchup. My Ministry gave these experts whatever information and papers were available with us and Mr Gupchup sent me a report in early 1950. I immediately asked our engineers and the Adviser of Electricity, Mr Gadkari, to prepare a note on it. Mr Gadkari was at the time the Chief Electrical Engineer of Punjab and I had managed to get him for the Central Government. He submitted his note within a month, a copy of which was sent to the Bombay Government asking them to hurry up with their report and to send me six

copies of Gupchup's report. It took six months for those six copies to reach Delhi from Bombay, because they were despatched as a goods parcel by train. The people were agitating for the immediate start on the Koyna project and the then Bombay Government displayed such 'promptitude' about it !

The Planning Commission called a conference of the concerned State Governments to consider the Krishna and Godavari valley projects. I was not invited to this conference, but I told them that I was going to attend. The engineers placed before us a scheme for the distribution of waters of these rivers at the very start of the conference. The scheme envisaged, as far as the waters of the Krishna were concerned, 19% to Bombay, ½% to Mysore, 11% to Hyderabad and the remaining to Madras which at the time included Andhra. A day before the conference some Andhra members of the Parliament like Satyanarayan met me and said that a 200 mile canal would take the waters of the Krishna to the Pennar which would carry it to Tamilnad and Andhra would get a dry Krishna. I told them that my way of looking at all these problems was that everyone should get the utmost possible justice. In the discussion I pressed for at least 30% of the water for Maharashtra, 5% for Mysore and the remaining to Hyderabad and Andhra. Krishnamachari said that it meant the breakup of the conference. I said that it need not be so. The proposed division of waters was wrong and did scant justice to Mysore and Maharashtra. Jivarajbhai, the then Chief Minister of Bombay, and Nimbalkar came to me and pressed me not to oppose the scheme, otherwise they were afraid that the Koyna project would be shelved. I said that that would not mean utter ruin, nor would it mean Koyna going dry, but I would not agree to any scheme which will be ruinous to the future generations. I suggested that Dr Khosla, Nawab Zain Yar Jung and the engineers of Madras, Mysore and Maharashtra should consult together and give us a revised scheme next day. The suggestion was accepted and next day they proposed 24% to Maharashtra, 2% to Mysore, 9% to Hyderabad and the rest to Madras. I said that Maharashtra should get still some more water, but if the Maharashtra Government, agreed I

would raise no objection. The unfortunate part of it is that the Maharashtra Government agreed to this division. The agreement was to last for 25 years and the Bombay Government failed to realise its full implications. Later, it was suggested that the work should be entrusted to an American Company on certain conditions, which should administer it for ten years under Government supervision. The plan envisaged part of the money to come from India and part of it from the Company. It was proposed that the work should be completed within five years, but the Bombay Government would not agree to it. There was nothing novel in the proposal. A similar arrangement existed between the Tata Hydro-Electric Company in regard to the Khopoli and other power stations which they have built. The Koyna Project, approved in 1951, was completed in 1962, that is, the first part of it. During these ten years and particularly at the beginning the project was opposed by many. A well known economist of Maharashtra, a popular Congress leader and a now dead Bombay Minister believed that the power produced by Koyna would go to Bombay and would not be useful to Maharashtra. The Gujarati Ministers planned to produce electricity in Surat and provide it to Bombay to circumvent Maharashtra's claim to that city. My interest was to strengthen Maharashtra's claim to Bombay through this project. Some Maharashtrian newspapers went so far as to ask what was the use of so much electricity and papers like the '*Vivek*' and '*Vyapari*' even crossed the bounds of decency in their criticism. The industrialists of Maharashtra, like the Kirloskars, the Maratha Chamber of Commerce and others were in favour but often behaved like obstructionists. I told them that I would not leave Delhi unless Koyna and a united Maharashtra were achieved. Both these promises have been fulfilled.

The Government of India appointed a Commission to review all the river valley projects under my chairmanship. I recommended in its report that the second stage of the Koyna Project should also be taken in hand. The Koyna Project is an important pillar of the prosperity of Maharashtra and I thought it proper to narrate my part in it.

I have already referred to the Kakrapara Project which consisted of a barrage on the Tapi and a canal from it to irrigate the Surat district. Work on it began in 1948. Another project proposed by our Gujarati friends was the Ukai Barrage. I tried to persuade them, in view of the average rainfall in Surat, that the project was not practicable. Instead, I suggested four dams to be built on the Narmada for irrigation and power, but they did not approve of it. The area which Ukai was to serve is well served by rains, the average being 40 inches. It was a two-crop area. This proposal did not get much encouragement as long as I was in the Cabinet and later in 1957 when I was asked to assess the Irrigation and Power Projects in the country, the Engineers Committee appointed to advise us also supported my view on the Ukai project. The then Bombay Government's plan gave the waters of these projects to Gujarat and Maharashtra in proportion of 10 : 1 respectively. Jivarajbhai hustled his colleagues into sanctioning fifty lakhs of rupees for it and despite my warnings to be wary through letters and personal talks, the Maharashtrian members of the Bombay Cabinet did nothing to oppose it. As a result two hundred villages in Maharashtra will go under water without any benefit to us. Now the Narmada project is also coming up. I had then suggested to Jivarajbhai that he should press for the Narmada project which I would support fully, but he was impervious to my advice. He believed that the Narmada project would take time, while the Ukai project could be executed early. Experience has shown otherwise.

The well-known Gujarat engineer, Bhai Patel had opposed the Ukai project. My proposals were not inspired by provincial prejudices but by the desire to do justice to everyone and to give Maharashtra too its due. It is simply impossible for me to remain silent in the face of injustice. From the day of freedom, the Maharashtrian members of the Bombay Cabinet were neglecting the real and lasting interests of Maharashtra under a mistaken notion of party discipline. On the other hand, other provinces, Madras for instance, utilised their water resources to the utmost. The engineers of that State had utilised 80% of the available water. In the sphere

of power and irrigation, engineers from Madras and Punjab were alert, studious and ingenious. Therefore the Madras engineers had hit upon the plan to divert the waters of the Krishna to the Pennar. They pressed for the Tungbhadra project also and work on it had begun.

But the site of the dam on Tungbhadra was on the border of Madras, Hyderabad and Andhra and all the three States were of the same mind regarding the project. The Chief engineer of Hyderabad, Nawab Zain Yar Jung, was a knowledgeable and competent officer. He knew how to get on with people. The question there was whether the dam should be a cement one or a stone and mortar one. Stone was available in the bed of the river near the site of the dam. Besides, stone and mortar dam would have been much cheaper. I went to the spot to dispose of this question and discussed the matter literally standing in the sandy bed of the river. I suggested a compromise that the work in the main stream of the river should be in cement and the sides in stone and mortar. Something like this compromise was effected in the case of Hirakud where the central dam is built in cement and the sides in earth. There too the decision was taken on the site. The Hirakud dam was completed in record time. In particular, the foundation and the inauguration ceremonies of the bridge on the Mahanadi were performed by me within a year. The bridge carries now the north-south national highway. The Hirakud experience suggested the Tungbhadra compromise, which was accepted. Later when the Hyderabad State merged with the neighbouring States, a Board was appointed to supervise all the construction work. The project has been completed but the canals remain to be built. The concerned States were anxious enough to press for the dam but did not show the same anxiety to complete the ancilliary works. As a result, 40% of the stored water remains unutilised.

I wanted to do something for Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh. At the time, *i.e.*, in 1947, Madhya Pradesh was not in existence. The source of the river Chambal is in the Patalpani Ghat. It flows north through the then Indore State and passing Ujjain and my birthplace Malhargarh, where she takes

a turn, leaves Malwa and enters Rajasthan, touching Mewar on the way. Flowing by the right of Kotah town, through the old Gwalior State, it enters Uttar Pradesh to join Yamuna near Etawa. The Chambal project was surveyed by the officers of four princely states—Udaipur, Indore, Kotah and Gwalior. The dispute was about the site of the dam and the distribution of the impounded waters. History decreed that I should get the credit of resolving this dispute also. I went to Udaipur accompanied by Gokhale and Khosla and met the Rana of Udaipur. Mr Sriram, an ICS and a former Adviser to the Madras Government during world war II who was for a short while Governor of Bombay also, was then the Dewan of Udaipur. We met and prepared a scheme which we took to the Rana who accepted it. From there we went to Indore and Indore too accepted it immediately.

One of the reasons for this prompt agreement was that the scheme for the creation of the State of Madhyabharat by the merger of all these princely states had been finalised by that time. A few days after, the state of Rajasthan was also inaugurated and the Chambal Project became the joint project of Madhybharat and Rajasthan. Of this project, the Chambal dam has been completed. Work on the Rana Pratap Sagar has begun and the plans of the Kotah dam are being worked out. The Kotah barrage has been completed and the canals on both of its banks have been opened.

The lands in Madhyabharat and Rajasthan have now come under irrigation and the electricity produced at Gandhi Sagar is serving the areas of Neemuch, Indore and Malhargarh. The dacoit-infested Chambal area is being gradually freed from that menace and green, fertile fields now gladden the hearts of the people.

Thus the first Cabinet initiated work for the production of electricity so vital for the industrialisation of the country. All these projects, some new, some in the process of completion and some on the draughtsman's board demanded coordination and, as I have indicated above, I had been thinking about a control board ever since I joined the Cabinet. At the end of 1948, Mr Stone, an internationally known planning

expert, was asked to prepare a plan for the whole of India. He produced a draft within six months and had long discussions on it in the Cabinet. I spoke for an hour. Mr Stone recommended a Central Control Commission composed of one engineer, one economist and a director with supreme powers to take decisions which would be binding on the administration. I pointed out that the proposal embodied suggestions which excluded the authority of the Government, which meant the Cabinet and the people. The Commission's dictatorship would last at least for ten years and there was no guarantee as to the quantum of production, or the rise in the standard of living. No one had anything to say after my hour-long speech and the report was pigeonholed.

Till then our thinking had been confined to departmental plans, their coordination, and then the creation of an administrative unit as also of a board of four or five expert economists to consider the broader aspects of the projects. This would have been a natural development. It would also have brought about coordination of the various development schemes in the country, made them more efficient and would have led to new schemes. This was a pragmatic approach. But some members of the Congress Working Committee, which to some extent 'supervised' the working of the Cabinet, insisted that the creation of the Planning Commission should be taken in hand first. Nehru was the link between the Working Committee and the Cabinet and many a time he took advantage of this position to impose his will or viewpoint on the Cabinet. He would succeed in persuading us by arguing that the plans or schemes approved by the Cabinet were not acceptable to the Working Committee, and schemes which the Cabinet rejected but the Working Committee favoured would be presented to the Committee with all the administrative difficulties involved in their execution. These manoeuvres enabled him to get through whatever he wanted. This was possible because there were no joint meetings of the Cabinet and the Working Committee. Occasionally a Minister got an opportunity to give his views to the Working Committee, but

because of Nehru's presence in the Committee, frank expression of opinion was rare. Nehru wanted a Planning Commission. So a Planning Commission was appointed in May 1950. When the resolution regarding its terms of reference came before the Cabinet, it contained no provision whatsoever for consultation between the Commission and the concerned Ministries or departments. I pointed out this lacuna and said : 'Those who are to carry out the decisions of the Commission have a right of prior consultation.' This was then provided for by an amendment. The creation of the Planning Commission resulted in a tendency to avoid original thinking in the Ministries and departments which began to refer everything to it for advice. The enthusiasm of the Central Ministries, so conspicuous in 1948 and 1949, to do something for the progress and prosperity of the country gradually waned. The Planning Commission became a fifth wheel of the administration. It no longer remained the catalyst for thinking on the broader economic problems of the country, but became another Department of the Government. It now displays the same horrendous ladder of officials, as in other departments.

Planning is not an easy matter. It has to take into account the far reaching effects of every action and then select men and material. The planner for this has to have almost an omniscient intellect and a master mind. Experience of the last twelve years shows that this expectation has not been fulfilled. The draft plans and the books and statements regarding them are very attractive and readable. But paper flowers give no fragrance and the Commission's various schemes have failed to live up to their expectations through execution. All that can be said is that the first Cabinet settled the theoretical basis of planning and brought together all the scattered projects. In short, the first Five Year Plan was the coordination of the present for future plans.

All the various schemes for power and irrigation were brought together and coordinated during my regime as Minister and the Planning Commission did not interfere with them. In fact, I did not send everything to the Commission "for advice". On the other hand, I created a precedent. Normally

the Ministries functioned through various Departments under them. For instance, my Ministry controlled the Public Works Department, Power, Oil and Mining. Orders for action used to go to them from the Ministry's Secretariat. The officials in the secretariat were administrators and not executives. They had their own viewpoint regarding the schemes sent up to them by the Departments. It often happened that an under-secretary would raise questions regarding schemes submitted by experts and then the expert had to spend his time to enlighten the under-secretary. This was a time-consuming process. To avoid this I obtained the sanction of the Cabinet to appoint Dr Khosla as Additional Secretary. As a result, bottlenecks were removed rapidly.

Each Department has a financial adviser from the Ministry of Finance. My secretary, Mr Gokhale, arranged to meet him along with the Chief Engineer to discuss every proposal. He then used to give me a gist of their discussion. Sometimes we discussed again and then Gokhale used to take the case himself to the Ministry of Finance. This made it easy to get financial sanctions speedily, which resulted in getting my Ministry's schemes through promptly.

The devaluation of the rupee had resulted in the increase in the price of all industrial oils like petrol, diesel and even kerosene. I invited the representatives of the Oil Companies, that is the Burma Oil, Caltex, Standard, etc. and requested them not to raise the price of kerosene. I said that surely they valued the friendship of India more than what little loss they would suffer as a consequence. This had the desired effect and the price of kerosene was not raised. Our oil supply was dependent on imports, as the oil from Assam could not be brought to the rest of India due to the difficulties created by partition.

The Oil Companies suggested that Assam oil should be brought to the Chittagong harbour by a pipeline through East Bengal and from there carried to India. My Ministry did not approve of the idea. Instead it was suggested that crude oil should be imported from abroad and refined in India. This would save foreign exchange and also create an important

industry, oil refining, in the country. At first, the companies were reluctant to accept the suggestion. I then discussed the matter in detail with Gokhale and he again met the representatives of the oil industries the next day. They agreed to investigate and report if refineries could be built in India. They submitted a report within a year which said that it was feasible to erect refineries at Bombay, Madras and Calcutta. I suggested that the devaluation of the rupee would add enormously to the cost of such refineries and that the matter should be kept pending for the time. This report was sent to the Cabinet with a note by me that I would move a resolution on it in the Cabinet at the proper time. However, these companies came in trouble with the rulers of Iran and Iraq in 1951, and revised their opinion regarding building refineries in India. We had further discussions. The foreign companies were unwilling to include in the agreement any reference to eventual nationalisation. Not for fifty years at least. They had some other conditions also. We appointed a committee of three secretaries N. R. Pillai, C. C. Desai, and Dr Bhatnagar to discuss the conditions of the contract with them. C. C. Desai had then become my secretary. He knew how far to go and at what point to break off. He was a shrewd and capable civil servant and persuaded the companies to agree to those very conditions with modifications. But they were unwilling to agree to the condition of nationalisation before fifty years and we were not ready to go beyond twenty years. We were about six people in my office and I told them that Indian public opinion would never agree to allow private ownership of such an industry for more than twenty years. The discussions were on the breaking point when I suggested the consideration of twentyfive years. They asked for half an hour to ponder over my suggestion and went into Desai's room for further discussion. Desai asked me on the phone if 35 years would be acceptable to me and I said 'No'. After some time he rang up again to say that there was a possibility of an agreement on thirty years. I told him to suggest it and if they did not agree to terminate the discussions. Ultimately, in the conflict between the joint Anglo-

American business acumen and Gujarati business shrewdness, the latter won.

In due course, I gave a note on the contract to the Cabinet. Rafi Ahmed Kidwai was not happy at it, but in the end, I did succeed in obtaining the Cabinet's approval. In December 1951, I went to Delhi by plane in the midst of two elections to sign the agreement. Today, the Refinery in Bombay is providing employment to thousands besides saving crores in exchange, adding to national wealth and supplying petrol, diesel, etc. to India's industries and transport so essential to their progress. The ten years that followed this agreement brought about some changes in policy in this regard, but a discussion of it is not germane to these reminiscences.

Nehru decided to reorganise the Cabinet in January 1951. On 26th January 1950 was inaugurated the Sovereign Democratic Republic of India and many changes took place in the Cabinet. Dr Mathai resigned and Messrs Niyogi and Shyamaprasad Mookerji left because of some differences regarding Bengal. C. D. Deshmukh, Munshi, Sri Prakasa and Mehtab came in as new members. C. D. Deshmukh was invited to join the Cabinet in 1948 after Shanmukham Chetty's resignation, but he had declined. I too had pressed him to join at the time on a suggestion from Sardar Patel, but he had said 'no'. However, he joined us in 1950 and became the Finance Minister. Sri Prakasa was India's first High Commissioner in Pakistan and then Governor of Assam. Mr Munshi was somewhat isolated after the Hyderabad action. Besides, Sardar Patel was displeased with him. Perhaps it was because of it or because of the intervention of Rajaji, that he too was included in the Cabinet. Mehtab was the Chief Minister in Orissa and was made to resign to join the Central Cabinet. This greatly shook the Orissa Ministry and the politics of the State.

I found later in a discussion with Sardar Patel that he was not happy at the appointment of Mehtab. He thought that to disturb the Chief Minister of a constituent State in order to take him in the Central Cabinet was to unsettle the political

life of the State. Similarly, it was his desire and direction that no Central Minister should interfere in the politics of his State. I believe, I am probably the only Minister to accept this self-denial faithfully. The wisdom of this restraint is evident even today.

The election of the Congress President was due within about four months of the events described above. Tandon and Kripalani were the contestants and it meant that the differences between Nehru and Sardar Patel had come into the open. Tempers became frayed and the Nasik session of the Congress brought this unhappy situation before the public. I felt that the delicate thread of affection and regard for each other in the Cabinet had been rent asunder. Sardar Patel left for Bombay on the 12th of December and died three days after. A day before he left Delhi, that is on the 11th, he called me and took a promise from me that I would never desert Nehru whatever my differences with him. This promise profoundly influenced my future political conduct. But never did I refrain from stating my frank opinion, and where such differences touched fundamental values, I stepped aside.

Nehru decided to reorganise the Cabinet after Sardar's death and quite a few came to tell me that I was being dropped. I said: 'It would be welcome. I shall be free to indulge in blank verse.' But nothing of the kind happened. On the other hand, the first week of January saw Nehru, Secretary-General Menon, V. P. Menon, Cabinet Secretary Pillai and I gathered at the residence of the Home Minister, Rajaji. Nehru said I should take up the proposed new Production Ministry which was to comprise of the Public Works Department, Production Department and Supply Department. I observed that I was being given a package of unsuccessful departments and would prefer to continue in my old position. Rajaji said that it was planned to increase nationalised industries and none of them could find a better person than I to take up that responsibility. He therefore pressed me to accept the new assignment. I thanked him, but refused to change over. Nehru then asked me to sleep over it and give

my decision the next day. I met Deshmukh in the afternoon and he also tried to persuade me to accept the new Ministry. He said that great confusion prevailed in the Government mines, the Sindri Fertiliser Factory and other Government concerns and only I could do something to clear up the mess. I was persuaded and Nehru was informed accordingly the next day.

As a member of the Standing Finance Committee in the pre-independence days, I knew all about the Sindri Fertilizer Factory. As soon as the new Department was created, I sent Gokhale to Sindri. He brought back a report that the General Manager of the Factory did not have authority to spend even a rupee and had to get permission from Delhi every time. I called in the Manager of the Factory, Mukerji I.C.S., immediately. I told Desai, who was then the Secretary, to dispose of all the 192 cases of the Factory pending in the Ministry within twenty-four hours in consultation with Mukerji. I also ordered that the Manager should be authorised to spend upto 100,000 rupees within the limits sanctioned and policies approved. Sanction for expenditure between 100,000 and 500,000 should be asked for from the Ministry and if no reply were received within eight days, he should go ahead with the expenditure.

All the 192 cases were disposed of by the evening of the next day and I told Mukerji that his factory must be operative before Diwali, *i.e.*, October next. Within eight months, while I was on an election tour in Poona, Desai sent me a wire that the factory had begun to produce fertilisers. Good administration means the choice of the right man for the right job and then trust him to the utmost. It also means timely reports by him, full confidence in him and sensitivity to his self-respect. I learnt this secret of successful leadership from Sardar Patel and utilised it successfully for five years.

The Government coal mines were losing thirty lakhs of rupees every year. As soon as I was placed in charge, I called the officials concerned and asked them in confidence the reason for this loss. I was told that in the allocation of wagons for the transport of coal, Government mines were treated on par with private owners. As a consequence, coal accumulated on the ground and it resulted into losses. I

issued orders immediately that Government coal was to have priority in the movement of wagons and within a year the mines wiped out the losses and showed a profit of eleven lakhs of rupees.

The establishment of a Machine Tools Factory was being discussed with foreign experts for months when it became my charge. I called in the concerned officials and the foreign advisers and asked them what was wrong. The foreign advisers said that they were not sure if Government was serious about the venture. I asked them what they wanted and gave orders to meet their requirements. Within two years the factory became operative and is now earning a million rupees of profit every year. Two more factories were also established and I was responsible for the appointment of the managers whom I gave my full trust. The Bangalore Machine Tools Factory stands first in the successful ventures of Government in the public sector. Somewhat similar is the story of the Antibiotics factory at Pimpri. As soon as it came within my authority, I called a meeting at which the members of the old Committee were present. This committee had recommended that the factory should be erected with American collaboration. The W.H.O. had suggested that it would provide the experts provided the Organization was given a proportion of the medicines produced at Pimpri at the cost price for use in the under-developed countries. The members of the committee were the leading industrialists of the country and believed that American collaboration would be more profitable. Neither Nehru nor I could agree with them. I said to Nehru that the Americans were thinking of a profit even in such humanitarian business and suggested that we should undertake the venture in the public sector with the help of the World Health Organisation. He agreed and we decided accordingly at the same meeting. Within a month, in March 1951, I laid the foundation stone of the Pimpri Antibiotics Factory. This was the first industrial establishment in the Poona-Lonavla area. Now this whole area bustles with industrial complexes. Quick disposal, I realised, was necessary if the country were to be industrialised and people were

to realise that freedom meant prosperity. This method of work always means treading on some toes. I took care to hurt or offend as few as possible, but if despite it, some did feel hurt or offended, I did not allow it to disturb my sleep.

India was not self-sufficient in food grains and depended on imports from Burma for rice. I have described earlier how our economic and industrial life was snailed after partition. This was illustrated no better than when we purchased rice in Saigon, Viet-Nam, in 1951. Gunnybags were needed for this and as I was the Minister of Supply, the task fell on me to procure them. In the normal course, I sent two officers to Calcutta who consulted the Government Jute Adviser and contracted to purchase 1/4 of our requirements at Rs. 262 per ton. When they approached the open market for the remaining, they were flatly asked for Rs. 270 per ton. Otherwise, they were threatened, Government would not get a single bag and, not only that, but even the contract already signed would not be fulfilled. Both the officers became nervous because the moment it was known that Government was in the market for the purchase of a huge quantity of gunnybags, prices began to soar skyhigh. On being informed of this the Secretary of the Department, Mr Pai, rushed to me. I prepared a note immediately and placed it before the Cabinet, which was to have met that day at 12, as an urgent matter. When he came to know that 99 per cent of the country's businessmen would make profit out of the country's difficulties, Nehru became furious. He said that their throats should be cut. Of course, this is not to be taken literally, but it shows how sharply and strongly he reacted to the businessmen's avarice. Rajaji dryly observed, 'Gadgil would do what you want, but how would that give us the gunnybags?' and he turned to me and asked if I could suggest a way out. I suggested that one of us should be given full powers to deal with the situation and his actions should be backed up by the Cabinet. Rajaji asked why I could not undertake it and I said that if I were to be given such powers I would certainly do.

I was given the necessary powers and I immediately asked Pai to phone up the person in Calcutta who had given him the

enhanced price and ask him to come over to Delhi immediately. He arrived next day by plane, but it was not the old man but his son. I sent my car to fetch him, asked him what he would prefer, tea or coffee. He agreed to take tea in my house although he was a Marwari. Then I asked him whether he realised with whom he was talking. He said: 'Yes, with a Minister.' I said: 'Not only a Minister. Today I have been given dictatorial powers to deal with you. I am a Gandhian. The country is in difficulties and we have purchased rice in Saigon with considerable difficulty and manoeuvering. You must not take undue advantage of the country's ill fortune to make profits. On the other hand, you should cooperate with the Government.' He said they wished nothing better. I told him: 'Rs. 270 per ton of gunnybags is a fantastic rate. Even Rs. 262 agreed by us was a blackmail rate.' He replied that he would accept whatever I suggested. I asked him in Hindi if he was firm in what he said and he said he was. I had carefully gone through the year's price list for gunnies and had decided what would be the proper price. I offered him Rs. 240 per ton and asked him to sell me whatever quantity I wanted. He was taken aback and said that what I had asked for was impossible. I reminded him that he had given me a firm promise to accept whatever I suggested. I also added: 'Government has given me full powers to deal with you. Neither of us will leave this room till this question is finally settled.' I said the last sentence with such solemnity that he felt overawed. He argued for some time more that the rate was too low and would ruin him. I advised him to listen to the Government once at least. It would be ultimately beneficial to him. We sat there and after about fifteen minutes I again told him in Hindi: 'There is no escape for either of us till the bargain is struck.' The poor chap was frightened. There was I sitting staring at him like a beast of prey watching its victim! Exactly after an hour and a quarter the Marwari young man accepted my offer. Mr Pai was waiting in the adjoining room. I called him in and said, 'We must congratulate this young man for his patriotism. He has agreed to accept the rate of Rs. 242 per ton.' Pai was surprised. A

rupee less meant a saving of 100,000 rupees and this meant a saving of twenty lakhs. I asked him to draw up the contract which took about fifteen minutes during which I kept on preaching Gandhism to the young man! The contract was signed. I signed it as a witness and then rang up Rajaji who invited us both to his room. As soon as we entered his room, he said to the young man: 'You have pocketed our toughest colleague so soon!' This must have consoled the poor chap somewhat. I reported to Nehru in the evening who felt relieved. Thus, we overcame a difficult period in the country's life.

The question of the administrative setup for electric power and production as well as oil production and distribution was engaging our attention at the time. We had one administrative setup for the Damodar Valley Project, another for the Bhakra Project and a similiar one for Hirakud. The Sindri Factory was 99 per cent owned by Government and the rest by private shareholders. I was considering the advisability of creating uniform administration for such projects in the light of the experience of foreign countries. With this in view, I drafted an 'Indian Electricity Supply Act'. This was a technical subject which also involved some financial principles and administrative arrangements. Therefore it took us six months to draft the Bill. The Bill put a ceiling of 6 per cent on profits and provided that any profits over and above should be used to reduce the rate of supply to the consumer. It also provided for the creation of an Electricity Board in every State, its structure and powers, as also the principles of the acquisition of private electric companies. The moment the Bill came before the Parliament, capitalists' opposition to it began. This was particularly vehement because of the ceiling on profits. The Bill was referred to a Select Committee. In the meantime, a number of capitalists interested in electric supply companies met Vallabhbhai. The draft of the Bill was approved by the Cabinet where I had explained its provisions, in detail. Vallabhbhai asked them to see me. I met them along with my experts. Many of their objections and doubts were met satisfactorily. As for the ceiling on profits, I refused

to compromise. In the end, it was decided that profits above six per cent should be divided three ways. One to go to augment the capital of the industry, one to be used for rebate to the consumers. If the remaining third amounted to only two per cent, it would go to the companies concerned. All profit above two per cent would go to the Government. This meant that the principle of limitations on profit was accepted. At the same time some incentive to good management was also provided. After the agreement they went to Vallabhbhai and told him that they were treated well by me and were satisfied. There was no question of ill-treatment. As was normal with me, I had decided what was essential and what non-essential. My principle was to make no compromise on essentials but on all other points to accommodate others and obtain their co-operation and push on with the work in hand. In this case also I acted on these lines and the Bill was passed by the Parliament with the minimum of discussion.

The Indian Mines Act was an old one and out of date in modern conditions. I drafted a new Bill which was accepted and passed into law. The Bureau of Mines came into existence under this Act. The Government of India had issued a statement in 1948 embodying the principles and policies it would follow in regard to the industries. The draft of this Industrial Policy Resolution had been discussed threadbare before it was approved and I had tried hard to embody the principle of Socialism in it without success. However, it did state that industries vital to the national interests would be State-owned. This statement was approved with some amendments after a great deal of discussion in a conference of the Indian industrialists and the Government in 1948.

This statement led to the cry that foreign capital had become shy of entering the Indian market because of it. As chance would have it, some representatives of U.S. industries had come to see me at about that time. Their viewpoint was that the State should start industries and hand them over to private management. They believed that the State should not keep ownership and management both to itself. This viewpoint has influenced the economy of India for the last ten

years. It cannot be denied that the import of foreign capital leads to the import of foreign economic trends and theories. However, upto 1952 the Cabinet approved my plans to establish half a dozen more factories. These included an explosives factory and a D.D.T. factory.

Housing in our country has not kept pace with the increasing population. Besides, there had been tremendous growth in the cities after Partition. For instance, Delhi had a population of two lakhs before the world war, it went up to four and a half lakh by January 1947 because of the numerous new offices which were concentrated there during the war. After partition, tremendous streams of refugees flowed into Delhi and even New Delhi became a vast refugee camp. By January 1948, Delhi had a population of ten lakhs. The refugees occupied all open spaces and vacant Government buildings. As a consequence, the Municipal administration broke down. There were eleven municipalities involved in refugee work and I called a meeting of all these in the last week of September, 1947. A scheme for greater Delhi was placed before them and approved within an hour. The sub-committees for roads, water, electricity and housing were formed and work was taken in hand immediately. The water supply was inadequate for the growing population and I personally investigated possible sources of water and arranged to divert water from the Ganga canal into the Yamuna near Okhla. This water was supplied to the new localities which had sprung up to the south of Delhi. By the time I left the Cabinet, nine thousand units for Government servants and about thirty thousand for the public, amounting to accommodation for three hundred thousand people, had been provided. A Water and Sewage Board was established to look after the supply of water and disposal of waste.

In the first meeting quite a few said that the population of Delhi would not go beyond fifteen lakhs. I said that as soon as it was realised that Delhi would provide amenities, more and more refugees would concentrate in it and within ten years the city would have a quarter of a crore population. Our plans for Greater Delhi should be framed to meet this

eventuality. Events have shown that even that estimate fell short of the reality and the arrangements made have proved inadequate. Delhi has now a population exceeding thirty lakhs. My suggestion that Delhi should be administered by a Corporation and not given the status of a State was accepted in 1957. Names like Man Nagar, Shan Nagar, Vinaya Nagar were chosen for the new localities by me. The residents of Delhi expressed their appreciation and gratitude after I had left the Cabinet by naming one of the localities 'Kaka Nagar' and a Park in north Delhi 'Gadgil Park'.

At about this time, Mr Nehru placed before the Cabinet the idea of pre-fabricated houses in order to meet expeditiously the tremendous need for housing. I opposed it on the advice of my engineers. These houses can have only one floor which means they are suitable only if you have a vast area to spare for housing. Large cities cannot afford them. Buildings in big modern cities, cramped for space, tend to go skyward, ten, fifteen, twenty floors. The traditional brick and mud or brick and mortar houses are cheaper than the pre-fabricated ones in villages where space is no problem. But Nehru's mind was set on the new idea and it was decided to build a factory in Delhi to manufacture such houses. I declined to be responsible for it and the Health Minister, Amrit Kaur, took it over. The saga of its sorry tale echoed in the Parliament for four years. A Swiss, who was an excellent architect but knew nothing of how to produce pre-fabricated house, was appointed the Manager of this new factory. At last it had to be closed in 1951. My Ministry was given the task of utilising it somehow and I gave it on a temporary lease to a private company. For the last few years it has now been showing some profit.

It was our common experience with Nehru to see some foreigner come, put ideas in his mind and with his backing, create difficulties for others. This was my experience for the five years I spent in the Cabinet. Something like this happened in the case of what can be called the Ria Project. This consisted of making the walls of necessary length and breadth by pouring concrete in a mould and then attaching doors and

windows to them. It was obvious that this method would expedite building work, but it required the building of thousands of houses to make it profitable. One fine evening Rajkumari Amrit Kaur invited Dr Mathai and me to dinner and placed this scheme before us. She also added that she had committed herself to the company concerned. I said she should not have done so without consulting the Works Ministry. Dr Mathai supported me. I told Amrit Kaur that I would consult my engineers and give my opinion to the Cabinet next day. If the plan was to build thousands of houses, I would accept it, otherwise not. In the end, I agreed to give the company a contract for building a hospital in North Delhi and the Government of India purchased some wisdom at the cost of ten lakhs of rupees.

Similar awkwardness was created by Rafi Ahmad Kidwai. Kidwai, personally a scrupulously honest man, had great compassion for the poor and was generous in outlook. But he did not hesitate to exploit the rich for the benefit of the Congress Party, its activities, institutions and needy Congressmen. Quite often he would bring pressure on the Supply Department to favour one or the other contractor, but I rarely obliged. Fortunately, he never misunderstood me.

An illustration of this was provided when Government decided to erect a huge building for the telephone exchange in Bombay. Kidwai, who was then the Communications Minister, proposed that the building work should be undertaken by his Ministry. He argued that the Central P.W.D. was inefficient and notorious for corruption. I recounted for the benefit of the Cabinet the checks put on corruption during the previous two years and the number of prosecutions launched against dishonest officers. As for efficiency, I pointed out that the accommodation for Government offices and servants in Delhi was ready within the time stipulated and argued that Kidwai had raised a fundamental issue which should be examined. Administration meant nothing more than the disposal of Government business. For this purpose Departments and Ministries were formed for different types of work. If the Post and Telegraph Department were to undertake erection

of its own buildings, which rightfully belonged to the Works Ministry, should I undertake to administer my own post and telegraphs, keep my own police and raise my own revenue? And I added, settle my own foreign policy? Kidwai withdrew his proposal after my remarks and said to me : 'Kaka, you will never understand my purpose.' He had no personal axe to grind in making the proposal. But you do not change the rules of grammar to suit the speaking idiosyncrasies of one person.

During the regime of the first Cabinet, there was an increase in the production of electricity, oil, irrigation, mines and machine tools. But the increase was not confined to these only. It was spread over other spheres also. As a matter of fact, quite a few believe that the intensity of the earnestness and resolution for progress which characterised the first Cabinet, is lacking in its successors. Indians had been given the responsibility to manage their own affairs after two centuries. The Government of two hundred years ago was fundamentally different from to-day's Government. The Government of old was nothing but a policeman. It was unconcerned beyond the maintenance of law and order. Defence was its most important function. Now the Government touches the life of the citizen at all points and, therefore, has greater responsibility to see that it is made rich and satisfied. In ancient times, patronage of the learned was all that could be called educational activities. It is no longer so. Government to-day is a people's government, welfare government. The Indian Constitution has assured fundamental rights to every citizen. He no longer begs for them, he claims them as a right. He is conscious that he is the master. Unfortunately, he is not equally alert and responsible. He was not so during those five years and he is not so yet. He is yet to realise that laws made by his own government have to be obeyed and plans and projects of his government require his wholehearted cooperation.

The first Cabinet tried honestly and sincerely to create a new atmosphere of earnest and noble endeavour. The road to prosperity was chalked out. But each step was beset with obstructions. The obstructions of the princely states were

removed and centuries after the vast lands of India were brought under one law, one flag, one seal for the first time. We began the task of demonstrating that freedom meant prosperity, prosperity of the individual as well as of the society. The pace of our progress was slowed down by many events. The difficulties of Kashmir, the intransigence of Pakistan, Gandhiji's assassination were internal events which came in our way. So did international events like Korea, Tibet, the enmity between U.S.A. and Russia. In addition, planning for India's economy was not approved by the capitalists and the business community. They were stoutly opposed even to the diluted socialism we were preaching. They wanted no change in the existing and the traditional. They were unwilling to give up their privileges. They had accumulated enormous profits during the Second World War, and foreign companies in India, expecting chaos after the Partition, had sold their interests to Indian capitalists. They had thus obtained a stranglehold on India's economy and the Congress Party was not anxious to check their power promptly or ruthlessly. The reins of the Congress warhorse were invisibly in the hands of non-Congress capitalists. Under the circumstances, it is no wonder that the march to prosperity was not as fast as expected. Peaceful or non-violent methods could never succeed in overthrowing in three or four years a centuries old and entrenched pattern of economy. Other ways were taboo. Even then, if the transfer of power had been really peaceful, a different picture would have been presented. But the marriage procession turned into a battlefield at the time of the partition. The strain on the country's economy in providing for more than ten million refugees was crippling and slowed down our progress greatly. But all said and done, an impartial observer would have to say that the first Cabinet not only laid the foundations of prosperity but filled in the floor upto ground-level. I was fortunate in being given the opportunity to lend a hand in that work.

'JOINT RESPONSIBILITY'—AT WORK

WE WERE sworn in as Cabinet Ministers on the 15th August, 1947. A policy statement was issued on behalf of the Cabinet the next day. We were fourteen to begin with. In the following September, Gopalaswamy Aiyangar was taken in to look after Kashmir. Niyogi followed him by the middle of October to head the newly created Rehabilitation Ministry. The meetings of the Cabinet were usually held on Wednesdays and barring the days when Parliament met, began at 10 a.m. and went on till 1 p.m. They were held in the Cabinet Room of the President's Palace. This room has a huge map of the world hung on the wall. The Ministers sat round an oblong table. The concerned secretaries and departmental officers waited in an adjacent room and were called in whenever required. Nehru presided as the Prime Minister and, in his absence, Vallabhbhai. After the latter's death, Rajaji took the chair a few times. When the Parliament is in session these meetings are held in a special room in the Parliament House. Meetings have also been held at the residence of Nehru and of Vallabhbhai due to his illness. Although the normal practice was to hold a meeting every Wednesday, in the first two years even three or four meetings were held each week.

There was no fixed rule about notice regarding the meetings. Sometimes we got a two days' advance notice, sometimes a day's. On occassions, meetings have been called even at a couple of hours' notice. Each Minister was expected to give the Cabinet Secretary his weekly engagements, particularly if he had to leave the Capital. The notice of a Cabinet meeting

was accompanied with notes and memoranda on the items on the agenda. All Cabinet papers were treated as secret and were sent to us in a sealed cover. On retirement from the Cabinet, a minister is expected to list and return all such papers carefully. When I relinquished charge I returned a lorryload of papers accumulated during five years of my tenure. Of course, papers which are not secret can be kept. These include reports of numerous Commissions, statements, Government publications, etc. The remarkable thing was that during all this time no Cabinet meeting started even one minute late, although often such meetings lasted till midnight. Often I have left my house at nine in the morning and returned late at midnight. I remember a time when we had met in Nehru's office and found at nine in the night that the liftman had gone off as his duty hours were over. As a consequence, he had to be ordered to stay on till the meetings were over and provision was made for the payment for overtime to him.

The ministers, of course, did not have any such hours of duty and never received overtime wages! So also, they were not punished for not doing their work or for shirking it. That punishment was reserved for the election time! The electorate at the time knew little of what the ministers were doing and were largely indifferent. If freedom is to be preserved in a democracy, the electorate must be alert, discriminating, critical and organised. Ministers also try to educate the public by informing it of Government activities and policies. As far as I am concerned, during my five years as a minister at the Centre, I toured all the States in the Union and visited all the districts in my own State, Maharashtra, at least twice. I must have delivered hundreds of speeches to clear up the people's misunderstandings regarding Government policies. As a matter of fact, Keshavrao Jedhe and I were continuously engaged in educating the people from 1935. Both of us used to tour the villages almost without respite in between sessions of the Legislative Assembly before freedom. I continued the practice during the time I was a minister. Government's policies are rarely understood by the public through statements and resolutions. Only speeches and lectures can do that. An

instance was provided by the Nehru-Liaquat Pact. There was tremendous prejudice against it. But an hour and a half's speech in a huge meeting before the Peshwa's palace (Shanwar Wada) in Poona removed much of it and the newspapers published afterwards seemed to believe that the Pact was not as bad as it was feared to be. Real contact with the people is comparable to the milkman going to the customer and not to the customer going to the dairy.

All Cabinet proceedings are secret and each minister is sworn to keep its secrets until they are made public. The details of the discussions in the Cabinet can also be revealed later only if it is in public interest to do so. Normally the first item on the Cabinet's agenda used to be a weekly digest of important events and achievements of each ministry during the previous week. Such a digest, brought upto week ending the previous Saturday, was prepared by each of us and sent to the Cabinet Secretary. These were circulated amongst the ministers who were free to ask questions regarding them. Cabinet means joint responsibility. The merits and demerits of the action of each minister become the responsibility of all. A minister has no individual policy. Once his opinion or viewpoint is accepted by the Cabinet, it becomes the opinion and the viewpoint of all of them. If anyone differs, he has either to resign or to accept the majority view. The convention is that he is not entitled to public protest. He has every right to try and get the decision revised, but that too by a resolution in the Cabinet. What emerges from the discussions in the Cabinet might not be the original proposal. Hence, its parenthood is joint and not individual. These weekly digests help the ministers to know how decisions taken previously are carried out.

My experience is that it was rare for a Minister to take any interest in what the other Ministers did. In fact, the Minister who read all these digests was an exception. I took particular care to read them. As I have already said the late Mr N. M. Joshi had briefed me well on the meaning of joint responsibility and there were occasions when my interest in their Ministries failed to be appreciated by my colleagues. But I could succeed

in proving that the action taken was not according to the policy of the Cabinet and they had to acknowledge it. The discussion of the digest used to be the first item on the agenda, after which the other items were taken up. Each Minister explained items which concerned his charge and replied to the querries raised by his colleagues. Occasionally, the secretary of the Ministry was also called in to explain certain points.

At the beginning, it was the secretary of the Ministry who explained items concerning his department, but this was discontinued after a few months. Some of us felt happy at the change; some were not so happy. The flourishes of public oratory or the eloquent arguments of a courtroom were of little use in the Cabinet. A thorough and full grasp of the subject in hand was essential. Sometimes you are subjected to searching cross questions and if the subject concerns a mass of statistics, one may have to face embarrassing moments.

After the preliminary statement and questions are over, the Prime Minister asks his colleagues anticlockwise if they have anything to say. After gauging the opinion of all his colleagues, he sums up the consensus of the meeting. Individual Ministers are free to add to the summation or suggest amendments. The Cabinet Secretary records all this, but a verbatim report of the discussions is never recorded. Only the most salient points are noted and the decision of the Cabinet recorded on each item. A copy of the proceedings of the Cabinet meeting is sent to each Minister within twenty-four hours. Any corrections or amendments have to be conveyed within twentyfour hours of the receipt of the report. The Prime Minister is the final authority as to whether the suggested corrections are to be accepted or not. The matter does not come before the Cabinet again.

With the Ministers, Secretary and Deputy Secretary, the number does not exceed twenty. Coffee or cold drink, according to the season, is provided for the morning meetings. If a meeting is held in the evening, tea, coffee and cakes, etc., are available. So even the most silent member of the Cabinet gets an opportunity to open his mouth! All members of the Cabinet are equal, but in the first Indian Cabinet, Nehru and,

even more than him, Vallabhbhai were more equal. Next to them, the Maulana was regarded as the older statesman. All the rest of us were on the same level. Although it was difficult to know what we really thought of each other, it can be said that we did not entertain disrespect for each ether. Perhaps we were a little jealous of some. Discussions rarely led to angry arguments, but sometimes we did speak with desperate sincerity. But that only meant that the person concerned felt deeply about the subject. Comments and criticisms were harsh but they were expressed generally in polite language. Nehru was considerably annoyed at the discussion on the Nehru-Liaquat Pact, but spoke with restraint. Similarly, there was much heated exchange between him and Shyama Prasad Mukerji on the problems of West Bengal. Vallabhbhai left the meeting. I tried to pacify both Nehru and Shyama Prasad and requested them to resume their seats. Both of them had stood up surcharged with emotion and I was afraid something untoward might happen. Therefore, I suggested that the meeting be adjourned and resumed next day in a calmer atmosphere. My suggestion was accepted.

Unfortunately, that meeting never took place as Shyama Prasad resigned the next day. Vallabhbhai asked me to go and try to persuade him to reconsider his decision. But Shyama Prasad was adamant. He said that Nehru's policies had ruined Bengal. Nehru, he thought, was not interested in justice for the Hindus. Besides, he planned to reconstitute the Cabinet in a fortnight or so and was going to drop him. 'Perhaps you will suffer the same fate,' he said, 'Under the circumstances, it was better to resign first.' He declined to change his decision and when Nehru reconstituted the Cabinet both Shyama Prasad and Niyogi were dropped as they had already resigned. I was retained. Later I came to know that my retention was due mainly to Vallabhbhai.

Barring this solitary incident, there was no resignation from the Cabinet as a result of harsh personal recriminations. Shanmukham Chetty resigned on August 15, 1948, *i.e.*, exactly a year after the formation of free India's first Cabinet. The

incident which led to that resignation is worth recounting. The Cabinet had taken a decision to appoint a Commission to inquire into the evasion of incometax and the fraudulent returns of income suspected of big capitalists and industrialists during the war. The names suggested for this Commission were not acceptable to me and when asked by Vallabhbhai what names would be acceptable to the public, I suggested the names of ex-Justice Varadachari of the Federal Court and Justice Rajyadhyaksh of the Bombay High Court, which were approved. The list of names of the persons, whose affairs were to be investigated, omitted some big names and Chetty was held responsible for the omission. I had come closer to Chetty during our first year together in the Cabinet and although we did not agree on economic and political policies, he was a thorough gentleman in his behaviour. In fact, but for my wife's illness I was to have accompanied him to London for the discussions of the sterling balances. T. T. Krishnamachari went with him instead. Chetty's performance in London at the time was outstanding. The omission of certain names from the list given to the Commission was questioned in the Select Committee and Chetty could not satisfy the members. All this he told me when we gathered at the Red Fort for the Independence Day flag salutation ceremony. I told him that I thought him innocent in the matter, but that he should act in a way that would establish a healthy precedent. I advised him to consult Vallabhbhai and Rajaji in the matter. At the big reception in the President's Palace that evening he said that Vallabhbhai had advised him to explain his position and to resign if Rajaji advised it. Rajaji had advised him that it would be better to resign. He did so and felt greatly relieved. I congratulated him and a few of us gave him a farewell party.

The Constitution gives an outgoing Minister the right to make a statement in the Parliament. Chetty's statement was dignified and restrained. There was not a word out of tune in it. The House cheered him when he stated that he had unintentionally committed an error and was resigning in order to establish healthy precedents in India. The statement of

Shyama Prasad after his resignation too was equally dignified, but every word of it expressed his deep emotion and concern. Niyogi did not make any statement. In March 1948, Bhabha also resigned. Bhabha was not a politician. Besides, the Parsis were displeased with him because he was taken in the Cabinet in preference to many an eminent politician amongst them. In addition, he had large business interests which he could not attend to while in the Cabinet. Bhabha too did not make any statement. Dr Mathai should be included amongst those who resigned on a matter of policy. He came into the Government in September 1946 as a member of the Interim Government. He was not a Congressman but was appointed Finance Member by Government. When the League entered the Interim Government, he was shifted to the Railways Portfolio and after Chetty resigned he was again given Finance. He was not a socialist. Even the Congress socialism was not acceptable to him and his differences with Nehru grew as time went on. At last he offered his resignation in December, 1949, and insisted that it should be accepted without delay and before relations between him and Nehru worsened.

He gave me an account of what actually happened. Early in December 1949, Nehru had called Mathai to dinner and they had an amiable talk for nearly two and a half hours. Nehru said to him that differences of opinion need not lead to resignation. 'After all I and Gadgil differ and still work together.' Dr Mathai said that Nehru and I belonged to same political party and party loyalty subordinated personal differences. It was not so with him. However, he accepted Nehru's advice to him not to resign. But, according to Dr Mathai, Nehru called him in March 1950 and suddenly told him that he was ready to relieve him. Mathai was stunned. He resigned and left the Cabinet in April that year. I had dinner with him before he left and I found him very bitter about Nehru. The resignation was discussed widely in the press also. I had known Dr Mathai since 1937 as a nominated nember of the Central Assembly when I too was there. I knew him as a great economist and a thoughtful and equable gentleman. He was one of those colleagues of mine whom I had come to know

rather intimately in the Cabinet. Mrs Mathai also was a sincere social worker. The work she and Mrs Kripalani did for the refugee women after Partition has no parallel. I felt that the circumstances in which Dr Mathai left the Cabinet did not create a healthy precedent.

Dr Rajendra Prasad was in the Cabinet which was formed on 15th August, 1947. He succeeded Kripalani as Congress President in November, 1947 when the latter resigned and the vacancy created by him was filled by Jairamdas Daulatram. He in his turn was succeeded by Munshi in June, 1950. As time went on the unity and solidarity of the Cabinet became more apparent than real.

As I have said above, although the differences amongst the Cabinet members were not brought up forcefully, the schism between the viewpoint of Vallabhbhai and Nehru began to come to surface gradually. Nehru was displeased with a speech made by Vallabhbhai in Varanasi. The speech did not contradict the Cabinet policy as such, but nor did it show any overmuch indulgence for the Muslims. Vallabhbhai believed in justice for all and was stoutly opposed to injustice or truculence. The differences between them became sharper as time went on. Nehru was not pleased by the action taken in Junagarh by Vallabhbhai. He was equally displeased at the firmness displayed by Vallabhbhai in the Hyderabad affair. It was rumoured then that Nehru had given a hint to Vallabhbhai through one of his confidants that he might have to go if he did not behave. I do not believe there could have been any such hint. But I know for certain that Nehru's favourites and sycophants were quite capable of creating such mischief. Nehru became the President of the Congress in July, 1948 and appointed Mridula Sarabhai as the General Secretary. The same week she came to me and asked that I report to her on the work of the Congress Party in the Legislature as she had received many complaints about our work there. I was then the General Secretary of the Congress Legislature Party. I told her that the constitution of the Party enjoined me to send such reports to the Chairman of the Congress Parliamentary Board. I would not send any report

to anybody else without his orders. 'If you have received any complaints about our work, send them on to me,' I told her. That curbed her but she became one of my opponents. As she was one of Nehru's hangers on, I do not know what reports she carried to Nehru, nor did I care for that.

Quite often some Cabinet members behaved against the policy of the Ministry. An illustration of this was the news of the gift of mangoes to Dr Lohia by Nehru when he was arrested for leading a march on the Nepal Embassy. The Chief Commissioner of Delhi complained that this kind of thing would have undesirable influence on the magistrate trying Lohia. When I mentioned this to Vallabhbhai he said in joke that I should send a similar gift to Golwalkar who was then in detention. I said two wrongs did not make one right. Next day it was reported in the papers that the mangoes were sent by Mathai, Nehru's Private Secretary and not by Nehru. This explanation did not diminish the sweetness of the mangoes or the indirect pressure on the trying magistrate.

I have described earlier how the speeches of Nehru on the Muslim problem incited them and infuriated the Hindus. The abandoned mosques in Delhi were occupied by many refugee Hindus who had no place to go. The Muslims went on agitating for their evacuation and the Maulana continued to press me for their repairs. I told him that I would certainly get them repaired, but if they were not used for prayers, would it be all right to use them for schools? I asked. He said 'no'. Of course, this was due to anger. We needed money to build houses for the refugees and wanted to utilise all vacant places. The houses abandoned by Muslims who had migrated to Pakistan were occupied by those who stayed behind and the refugee Hindus had no place to go. They were squatting in filthy tents near gutters and in slums. In some cases, they were actually living in open spaces under the sky. They saw empty Muslim houses being used by other Muslims. Naturally, they occupied vacant mosques. I had already permitted them to occupy vacant government quarters. But they were greatly irritated by the indifference and the inconveniences to which

they were subjected. We paid fifty crores of rupees to Pakistan because of Gandhiji's fast, although Pakistan owed us three hundred crores. Our philosophy is one-sided goodness. We do not believe in tit for tat, but in pat for tat. This too contributed to inflame the refugees from Pakistan. One of them, a Punjabi youth, had thrown a bomb at Gandhiji's prayer meeting in the third week of January.

The differences between Nehru and Patel on how to deal with the Muslims continued to grow. The Delhi Muslims made it a practice to go to Birla Bhavan in the evening and instead of their usual evening prayers tell Gandhiji exaggerated tales of the injustices done to them and Gandhiji would send them on to us. The atmosphere was getting tenser and the risk to Gandhiji's life grew. Of course, every precaution was being taken at Birla Bhavan. But Gandhiji rejected the suggestion that everyone attending the prayers should be searched. On January 30, he was assassinated. I reached the place within fifteen minutes of the outrage. Mountbatten, Nehru, Patel, Shankarrao Deo had already gathered there. Mountbatten suggested that the body of Gandhiji should be preserved like Lenin's. I said that the idea was repugnant to the Hindu religious practices and that the body must be cremated before 12 noon the next day. Someone suggested that it should be kept at least for three days. Strangely enough Gandhiji's son, Devadas, supported Mountbatten's idea. Fortunately, Pyarelal arrived and said that Gandhiji had expressed the desire that he should be cremated without delay in whatever town he died. This ended the discussion. I told Vallabhbhai that the funeral procession should start as early as possible the next day, otherwise millions would flock to Delhi and the situation would become unmanageable. He agreed. We then decided upon the cremation ground. I issued orders to the P.W.D. concerning the arrangements to be made at the place. Deo had inquired at Birla Bhavan who Nathu Ram, the assassin, was. I said that the name sounded like a Punjabi one. Deo thought otherwise. I returned home and there Jedhe came and said that Nathu Ram was none else than Godse. Jedhe was informed that Godse was given a ceremonial

send-off from Poona when he left for Delhi. I said that he should have told it to me earlier. He said that Balukaka Kanitkar had given all the information to the Bombay Government. I kept silent. Jedhe said : 'With his three bullets Godse has killed the Brahmins, Maharashtra and the Hindus.' I could understand his feelings. A few hours later, Tatnis and Dr Deshmukh phoned from Bombay that the goondas were picking out Brahmins in Dadar and beating them up. I assured them that it could not be so. But I rang up Vallabhbhai and gave him the news who assured me that he would take care of it. Dr Ambedkar phoned to say that the Gujaratis would take advantage of the event to destroy Maharashtra. I told him that nothing of the kind would happen as long as Nehru and Patel were alive. Of course, for some time prejudices would linger on.

The funeral of Gandhiji took place the next day. Ambedkar and I walked to the cremation ground. But the crowd was so thick that we were lost in the ocean of humanity.

A Governors' Conference was called on the 2nd and 3rd February. Among the Governors who attended was Rajaji, Aney, Governors of Bengal and Bihar respectively and the Governor of Bombay. Nehru, Vallabhbhai and I attended on behalf of the Cabinet. The consensus of the conference was that those individuals and institutions which had a hand in the assassination of Gandhiji should be dealt with sternly. This was discussed in the Cabinet also after the Conference. Shyama Prasad was unable to give any opinion. The previous day I had suggested to him to issue a statement stating that Communal parties had no place in a democracy. He did issue such a statement a day or two later. In the Cabinet discussion I took the view that any action against the Hindu Mahasabha at the time would be subject to the charge of political animus and suggested that action should be taken only in the case of individuals and institutions against whom we had irrefutable proof. Vallabhbhai supported my view. What followed is well known and requires no detailed recounting here. The Delhi Maharashtrians were considerably worried after Gandhiji's murder. In northern India at that time any woman

going in a Maharashtrian sari was accused of belonging to 'Godse's community'. In Maharashtra itself there were widespread atrocities. A few persons were killed, many injured. Property worth lakhs was burnt and destroyed. At a meeting held in the Bombay Council Hall I observed at the time: 'Remembering old sores is to invite new ones. We must show a spirit of forgiveness. Those who repent should be released and those who have suffered in the riots should be helped by Government.' Jedhe too spoke in the same vein. The Bombay Government accepted this line of thought and this wise policy was crowned by Yashwantrao Chavan who remitted all debts incurred by the sufferers in the 1948 riots on the auspicious day of the inauguration of the State of Maharashtra.

The twelfth day after Gandhiji's death was the immersion day and the ashes were to have been immersed in the sacred confluence of Ganga and Yamuna at Allahabad. This was the main religious function and I wanted to go to this religious ceremony and asked Vallabhbhai what the arrangements were. He said that I should be in Delhi for the immersion ceremony in Yamuna, because the Delhi Congressmen wanted someone else. I told him that I should not be imposed on them and he said: 'I want to show that we have nothing against Maharashtrians as such.' Thus I came to preside over the immersion ceremony in Delhi in the presence of more than hundred thousand people. Half an hour later, I spoke at the Rajghat. All this created an excellent atmosphere and gave proof of Vallabhbhai's foresight.

My Ministry was responsible for the arrangements in the Red Fort where the case of Gandhiji's assassins was tried. I was also given the responsibility to give the public prosecutor whatever information he required. The judgement showed that no innocent was convicted. On the other hand, it is possible that one or two guilty persons escaped conviction. The Government scrupulously refrained from introducing any feeling of hatred in the case which was conducted strictly on legal grounds. The fears and anxieties of the Maharashtrians also proved unfounded. It was not a small gain that the Maharashtrians learnt from this the lesson that violence solves

nothing in a democracy. As a result, all the violence that happened in the Sanyukt (United) Maharashtra agitation was confined to the throwing of stones and shoes.

A consequence of Gandhiji's assassination was large scale arrests in Poona and other places. The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (R.S.S.) was also declared unlawful. This step was taken on the basis of available information and investigation. Some arson took place in Poona and some innocent persons were arrested. Still the stern steps were confined to the minimum necessary. I received a large number of letters from my Poona friends and was instrumental in the release of quite a few people. The main controversy was regarding the ban on the R.S.S. I did not consider the ban unjust in view of the reports we had about the activities of its various centres in the country. But that did not mean that we considered every one in the R.S.S. as guilty. Sardar and I knew that during the transitional period of the transfer of power to India the R.S.S. had done great public service in the Punjab. But it was our national duty to see that violence was not introduced in the country's internal affairs. Often it was necessary to enlarge the scope of the prohibitory orders to make the preventive action effective. But all of us were unanimous that the emergency measures should not last a moment longer than necessary. The friends and supporters of the R.S.S. in Delhi used to meet Vallabhbhai and me often. In 1949, one of them, Maulichand Sharma, saw me and I told him to go and see Vallabhbhai who was then at Dehradun. He went and saw him accordingly. He saw Mr D. P. Mishra, the Home Minister of the Central Provinces (now Madhya Pradesh) also. There was some correspondence between the head of the R.S.S., Golwalkar and the Government of India. The ban on the R.S.S. was lifted later on and many detenus were released. Golwalkar wrote to me and also met me when he was in Delhi. I told him that the steps taken by the Government were not inspired by any personal animus or against any particular person as such. Why would anyone oppose the organisation of the Hindu society? But it was vital that democratic limits should not be transgressed. Thus ended the Godse affair.

I have described in the previous chapter how we used the opportunities offered by freedom in efforts to increase the prosperity of the country. Efforts were also made at the same time to increase the efficiency of the administration. A large cut was made in the redundant civilian employees of the Defence Ministry. As expected, threats of a strike in protest were received. The strength of the fighting forces was also drastically cut, but they bore it with patience. It was decided to terminate the services of those who were not necessary. Some compensation for the termination of their services was promised, but the ten thousand strong Calcutta Clerical Staff Union gave notice of strike. The matter was discussed in the Cabinet. One staunch Gandhian Minister was afraid that the strike would take place and that firing might become inevitable. I argued that the Government was not a charitable institution and it would not be worth its name if it continued to employ people who were obviously redundant. If firing became necessary, it should be resorted to without any hesitation, which could only worsen the situation and in the end not only would firing become imperative, but might have to be more severe and the result would be more deaths, and loss of Government's prestige. A stitch in time saves nine and timely resort to firing preserves law and order better. I urged that the Government should stand firm and Nehru should make a statement to that effect on the radio. In the end, he did make such a statement.

In my own Ministry, I found that it was the practice of the workers in the Government Press to time their strike just at the beginning of the Parliamentary session. This naturally resulted in their grievances receiving out of proportion notice in the Parliament. In fact, before freedom, we ourselves participated in that kind of publicity of their grievances. In January 1948, the workers of the Government Press in Delhi went on strike and I was informed of it at 10.30 in the morning by the secretary concerned. I told him: 'All those who do not return to work before 10 next morning would be dismissed and would have to vacate their quarters. Ask the Manager of the Press to notify the workers.' The same even-

ing about a dozen leaders of the workers came to my residence. I welcomed them, gave them tea, but declined to hear their grievances. I told them that I had welcomed them as citizens of India, not as labour leaders. They had gone on strike without giving the Minister a chance to look into their grievances. Let them join work the next day and I would listen to them.

Next day I received a phone from the Secretary that they wanted a day more. I told him that ten o'clock meant 10 o'clock. The manager could informally give them half an hour more, but should hold out no promises. All the workers joined duty at 10 a.m. As soon as I heard about it, I sent word that I would meet twelve of their leaders in the Secretariat the next day. They should prepare a statement and send it on to me immediately. I got it by the evening and asked the officers concerned to be present at the next day's discussions. The same night I classified their demands: (1) those which could be immediately accepted, (2) those which required careful examination, and (3) those which were unacceptable. We met the next day round a table. I told them that such and such demands were accepted and would be acted upon immediately. One such demand was for a lunch room for the workers. I asked the engineer why a room was not provided. He could not give a satisfactory answer and I told him that a lunch room must be provided before 4 p.m. the next day and that I would come and have my tea there. And that is exactly what I did. I frankly told them of such demands as were unacceptable on principle. About the demand for an increase in their pay scales, I said that I would consult the Ministry of Finance and would give a decision within three months. The fact was that they were asking an increase in wages similar to that given to the Railway Printing Press workers. The Railways had their independent press and the Rajyadhyaksh Committee had given an award increasing their pay.

At the end of the discussion, I gave them coffee and asked the Secretary, Mr Gokhale, to discuss the matter with Finance Minister within a fortnight. As a result all those receiving less than Rs. 300 per month got an increase similar to those in

the Railway Printing Press. Those above Rs. 300 also got some rise in salary and the problem was solved. Since then, there was no strike in the Government Press till I was the Minister. I never treated labour leaders indifferently.

I had felt for long that there ought to be some organisation as a bridge between the workers and the management. I prepared a plan for improving the relations between the administration and its workers and decided to try it in my Ministry. The plan consisted of calling together two representatives of each class of non-gazetted staff and two of the officers for a sort of Round Table. About forty people attended. Coffee was served as usual. In my inaugural speech I said that now the Government was of the people and for the people and we must all serve it. If all of us worked honestly and diligently, we would create a fine mixture of self-government and good government which would be like sugar added to milk. I told them that that type of meeting would be held every month and that everyone was free to make suggestions for the improvement of the administration in it. Even criticism or complaints about officers would not be held against anyone. However, no personal complaints, unless they involved some principle, would be allowed. Everyone was invited to speak with frankness. After my speech there was silence for five minutes and I felt let down. Then an old Bengali got up and said: 'Hon. Minister, I am now old and on the verge of retirement. I have served in this secretariat for thirtyfive years and have now been promoted as Superintendent. Till today we have had no chance of even seeing the secretary of the department from near quarters. What we have seen of the members of the Viceroy's Executive Council was from their photos in the newspapers or while they passed through the Secretariat. Speaking to any of them was beyond our dreams. Today, I do not know whether I am standing on my feet or on my head. A Minister of the Government has called us for a conference, offered us hospitality, treated us honourably and inquired about our sorrows. We are baffled and feel that something new is taking shape in India.' Others also felt the same. Only the officers felt that by treating the lower staff on par with

others, I was endangering the discipline and efficiency of their departments. Some of them said so to me later.

These monthly meetings became a regular feature in my Ministry and produced some good effect. These meetings were attended even by the representatives of the peons. After a year, I sent a note on this activity to Nehru who sent a copy of it to all the other Ministries. Sometimes, these meetings were attended by officers from other Ministries as observers and once the then Labour Minister of the Bombay Government, Nanda, who later became the Labour and then the Home Minister at the Centre, was also present. My plan was based on the principles of the Whitley Councils. A similar suggestion was made by the Pay Commission also, of which I was a member. I continued to keep in touch with the various organisations of the various employees of the Ministry, which helped in avoiding and clearing many misunderstandings.

Thus I tried to obtain the cooperation of the workers in the Ministry through these monthly conferences. I believe they did help. But there was no let-up in the all pervading corruption. On the other hand, it was increasing. The Departments I was in charge of were reputed to be the most corrupt. In fact, I was given charge of them because it was believed that I would be able to cleanse up the augean stables, at least, to some extent. As is my practice, I first discussed the problem with the officials of the Departments and then prepared a scheme as to who should deal with tenders. According to this plan, all tenders above five lakhs of rupees were to be dealt with by a committee composed of the Joint Secretary, the Financial Adviser and an Engineer not directly concerned with the work. The decision of these three when endorsed by me, was final. Whenever I felt that there was some underhand deal, I consulted some other engineer and then gave my final decision. The result was that corruption was considerably checked. Similarly I took cognisance of all written complaints, confidential oral reports and anonymous communications. Cases were started against some officers after considering the charges against them impartially. More than a dozen officers were suspended and enquiries started

against them. On the one hand, I put the officials and workers of the Ministry on their honour ; on the other, I continued to take action under the law. Pressure was brought on me, but I did not bend under it. At the same time, I was conscious that police inquiries could also err and might not reveal what was straightforward and true. Once a young officer brought a report from the police that a certain case would not stand up in a court of law. I knew that the suspected person had somehow managed to square the police. While going through the papers I was struck by an idea. I called the officer involved. He had no idea what the matter was. I praised his intelligence and told him that whatever the police report, my legal knowledge told me that he was guilty and I would send the case to the court. If he were acquitted, he would be reinstated in his job. But I wanted to give him a chance. The country was now free and was engaged in a noble task which required men of character. If he swore by whatever gods he held sacred that he would mend his ways, I would take no action. He was young and I had no desire to ruin his life. My words moved him. He got up and touching my feet said that he had done wrong and swore by his mother that he would not do so again. I told him that I was satisfied and he could go. I sent the case back with the remark that a report should be made about him six months later. The report then was that not only had he improved, but that he had persuaded others to mend their ways. I gave him promotion.

There was a great scandal in the supply of fertilizers and many high officials were involved in it. Influenced by provincial considerations, even members of the Central Cabinet were trying to save one or the other official. In the Cabinet, I took the view that although we claimed to be so much concerned about corruption, we punished only small fries like the clerks and the peons. Conviction of guilty officers in such cases would teach a lesson to that class. Nehru then insisted on taking the matter to the court. In the prosecution, all the accused were convicted in the lower court. One or two of them were acquitted in appeal, but the prosecution created an excellent moral effect.

I also possessed experience of how clever and shrewd the business community is. My practice was to meet people on business in the Secretariat. I had thus met the agent of a concern who came to see me at my residence the next day with a Maharashtrian gentleman. I told the Maharashtrian that my memory was sound and that I had already seen the gentleman who had accompanied him and discussed with him whatever was to be discussed. He could go. The tender o that particular concern was high and I rejected it and, at th same time, sent a note to the Department to be careful in dealing with that particular firm in future.

This kind of experience multiplied after 1951 when the Supply Department was transferred to me. The auction of government goods often involved cheating and conspiracy to give low monopoly bids. In all this some officers were also involved. Therefore, I transferred some and prosecuted some others. Some rules were also changed. But corruption was not eradicated lock, stock and barrel. Members of Parliament were conspicuous in asking questions about the prevalence of corruption, but often they themselves brought pressure to save some one or the other from prosecution. I issued an order that no official below the rank of a secretary should see an M.P. and also told the secretaries to send such M.P.s to me. When they came to me I gave them hospitality and bade them goodbye. Some M.P.s were practising lawyers and asked to be allowed to argue such cases before me. I did not approve of this and made a rule that appeals of certain type should be referred directly to the Law Ministry. I generally accepted that Ministry's decisions, which saved me from considerable embarrassment. The lawyer M.P.s were not going to argue the cases before me, but were going to put pressure on me and there was a possibility that I might have lent myself to injustice. Hence I found the way out referred to above.

Nothing substantial happened in spite of the repeated discussions in the Cabinet against corruption. I have already described what happened in the case of those who were notorious in evading incometax. I framed the rules for the investigation of

cases of corruption, but in five years, there was no substantial check on corruption. What little improvement was seen in my Ministry did not satisfy me. The various purchase missions in foreign countries came under me with the Supply Department. When Krishna Menon, as Indian High Commissioner in the U.K., began to place orders without consulting my officers in the Supply and Purchase Departments, they complained to me. Menon used to finalise the deal and call in my officers to sign on the dotted line. I was responsible to the Parliament for that Department and I wrote to Menon suggesting that he should take into confidence my officers in the U.K. from the start of discussions as they were experts in their respective fields. Later, that became a great scandal and Menon returned to India. The Finance Minister, C. D. Deshmukh, also took a firm stand against this irregularity. The Defence Ministry had reported in the first instance that the transaction was irregular. But they withdrew the report and submitted another. I was not present when the matter was discussed with Krishna Menon. When Deshmukh began to ask him some questions, he curtly replied : 'I have not come here to be cross-examined by you.' Deshmukh told me that he had sent in his resignation on this, but on being told by Nehru that Krishna Menon would no longer remain the High Commissioner, withdrew it. This was followed by the notorious Jeep Scandal. The Public Accounts Committee had recommended that a public inquiry should be held in the affair. This did not take place. On the other hand C. D. Deshmukh himself defended Menon in the Parliament by stating that he was not responsible for the deal. This statement spread the red carpet, as it were, on Menon's road to the Cabinet. Nehru's manoeuvres used to be devious, but many of us realised it too late !

The Cabinet often discussed, as I have said, the ways and means to improve efficiency. Three reports on this were produced in five years. All these stressed the fact that changes were made to accommodate individuals rather than improve administration. For instance, as recorded earlier, it was decided that the appointment of an officer to any post drawing

more than Rs. 2000 p.m. should be made on the recommendation of a Cabinet sub-committee. Similarly, the appointment of a Secretary, Additional Secretary and Joint Secretary was to have been made on the recommendation of a Committee for the Civil Services. I found that, like the singer asking for a particular *tabalchi*, some Ministers insisted on having a particular secretary. This tended to violate the accepted service rules and regulations. When the Ministries were reorganised in 1951, Nehru asked me to take a particular officer as Secretary. Just a few months earlier, he was furious with the same officer. I told him that I would accept him, if recommended by the Cabinet Committee. I also added that it was undesirable to allow pressures to influence the choice for such important office. Rajaji agreed with me. The same evening eight senior civil servants had come to me on behalf of the person suggested by Nehru. I told them that if his name were included even amongst ten by the Committee, I would appoint him. This was because I wanted to strengthen the Committee. The Committee recommended his name alone and I accepted it. This system of appointment continued for some time. What is happening today, needs no elucidation from me!

Each Department has a promotion committee. There too I found that cliques, caste, community and province play considerable part. In some cases, favourable or unfavourable reports are arranged far in advance of the expected higher vacancy. To counter this, I suggested that monthly reports of each officer's efficiency should be submitted. This somewhat softened the edge of injustice. Later, a plan was prepared for the employees in the Secretariat. But the success or failure of a plan is dependent on how it is operated. In this case too, it was found that appointments and promotions were largely a matter of 'pull'.

Sometimes irregularities start from the University stage. Here is an illustration. Some Universities keep track of the number of annual vacancies in each department and manage to pass quite ordinary students in first class. There were five vacancies in the Geological Survey of India in 1948 and the

Public Service Commission had recommended five names for them. In the meantime, we received an anonymous letter saying that one of the recommended candidates, a Muslim, was M.A. in Geography and not in Geology. I inquired of the U.P.S.C. and found that in his application this gentleman had put the letters 'Geo.' after 'M.A.', thus trying to mislead the Commission to assume that he held a Master's degree in Geology. He was an Aligarh graduate. I decided to reject him but I was told that the U.P.S.C.'s recommendations had to be accepted. I referred the case back to the Commission which suggested that he should be appointed on condition that he took his degree in geology within two years! I decided not to fill in the vacancies at all at the time and advertised the posts again after six months. The persons appointed then did not include this Muslim 'gentleman', because he was not recommended by the Commission. Even the Public Service Commission is not free from such 'deals'. A candidate who has done well in the written, finds himself 'cut down' in the interview. Nor is the charge that members are influenced by considerations of caste and province altogether without substance. Once Pattabhi Sitaramayya, the then Congress President, congratulated me on the way I was working and said that it would be difficult to find another Minister like me. I said that there were some others too, but he was sceptical about them. Many Ministers believe today that the essence of their function is to appoint their own people to high positions. Other things being equal, such appointments may be excusable, otherwise not. We were inspired by the ideal of checking corruption, of giving the people good government after self-government. At least I never forgot that ideal. That was the primary duty of all of us. Even today the great truth enunciated by the *Geeta*, that the common people follow the lead of the great men is true. The members of the first Cabinet were inspired by ideals and lived more or less simply. They observed certain unwritten limitations both in dress and in conduct. But that too did not satisfy the critics. After one year of my ministership I stopped using the railway saloon for my travels. I also resolved not to stay with rich hosts and, with few exceptions, did not deviate

from it.

Delhi was crammed with correspondents from great newspapers and agencies and each one was anxious to get the news of what happened in the Cabinet discussions first. Some members of the Parliament were themselves also correspondents. The papers like the *Hindu*, the *Times of India*, the *Amrit Bazar Patrika*, the *Statesman* etc., had highly educated and able correspondents in Delhi who behaved with a sense of responsibility. But all were not of the same calibre and as some of them were imaginative enough to create a mountain out of a molehill, we had to be pretty careful in dealing with them. The Marathi papers did not have their special correspondents in Delhi at the time. Some of them were in the confidence of one or the other Minister. Quite a few of this corps of Delhi correspondents had known me well since 1937 and upto 1947 I used to take them into confidence in the interest of the Congress cause. These contacts ceased after 1947, because that task was taken over by the Government Publicity Department. Besides, each Ministry was given a Publicity Officer who was responsible for such contacts. Of course, this did not mean that I never met correspondents or that they did not call on me. They did and I treated them to tea, innocuous gossip and political discussions as of old. But they found that I talked a lot but said nothing! It was noticed that correspondents from Madras went to Ministers from their area and sometimes got advance news. Similar advantages were given to other regional correspondents by their Ministers. An instance was the publication of a part of the Government of India's note to the U.N. in January 1948. A majority of the stenoes in the secretariat were from the Punjab or the South and it is possible that some of them were amenable to 'persuasion'. The Cabinet discussed this leak and an inquiry was also held. As the result of the inquiry was likely to involve some senior Cabinet Ministers, Nehru suppressed it. This was followed by a few more leaks. The Cabinet again discussed them and I suggested that the best way to keep a secret is to take people into confidence. Nehru should, therefore, hold a weekly or fortnightly press conference. He accepted this

suggestion. Once a Minister was explaining to the Cabinet a plan prepared by him. I showed him the morning issue of the *Times of India* and jocularly said : 'The newspaper offices know in advance more about what happens or is likely to happen in the Cabinet.' He was taken aback at the revelations in the paper. He found later that many stenoes and private secretaries made a business of such leaks.

I remember a Maharashtrian correspondent who was my guest at dinner on the eve of the Hyderabad police action. On hearing the news the next day on the radio he came to me and expressed his pique at my silence on the matter the previous evening. I told him that if I had revealed the secret to him, I would have betrayed my trust and proved unworthy of holding the high position of a Minister of Government. No one gets important news straight in advance, but there are shrewd correspondents who can, from a stray, unwary word, build up a scoop of great importance and splash it all over their front page next day as a sensation.

On occasions, the matter is so secret that the notes given to the Ministers for discussion are taken back after the meeting. Even the scribblings on notepapers are taken away by the Cabinet Secretary. One such day is the 28th of February. This is when the budget is presented to the Parliament in the evening at 5 p.m. New taxes are also announced at the same time. The secrecy of the budget is of utmost importance. In almost all countries leakages of the budget proposals are not unknown and India too had experience of it. But the first Cabinet took extraordinary precautions to keep it secret. The end of November each year is the time to submit estimates of expenditure for the next year by each Ministry. Discussions on it go on till the first day of the next February. A note is then prepared in the first week of February on the income and expenditure in the previous year. This includes the final figures of the income and expenditure of the previous year ending 31st march as well as of the current year's ten months and estimate of the expected position at the end of the financial year. The Ministry of Finance and the Finance Minister suggest ways and means to meet any deficit or to

distribute any surplus, as the case may be. Taxation proposals are also made in consultation with the concerned Minister. The final decision is that of the Finance Minister and the Prime Minister. Of course, both have to keep in mind the policies of the Party to which they belong as well as the possible public reaction to the proposals. The Cabinet meets on the 28th of February at 10 in the morning to consider the budget. Detailed notes on the budget are given to every Minister and then the discussion starts. Naturally, it is rare at that stage to have a thorough discussion, particularly about new taxation proposals. The Finance Minister had carefully prepared the full plan and last minute changes could only upset the whole picture. Many of his proposals would be dropped and there is hardly any time to frame the new ones, for the budget and his speech introducing it has to be finalised and sent to the top secret section of the Government Printing Press before one in the noon. This method of work preserves the secrecy all right, but destroys the conception of joint responsibility. When we discussed the budget for 1949, I pointed out that the taxation proposals would displease the public and suggested that they should be sent to a Select Committee where all their pros and cons would be thoroughly discussed. I referred to the notorious 1947 budget of Liaquat Ali Khan, when his taxation proposals were referred to a Select Committee. Nehru did not express any opinion at the time and we returned all the papers at the end of the meeting. As usual the Congress Parliamentary Party met on March 2, to consider the budget and I opposed the new tax proposals. Nehru admonished me at the time that I must support the decision of the Cabinet. I said that I agreed with the principle but the decision taken was without any discussion and therefore it could not be the joint decision of the Cabinet. This angered him and he said that I should be 'loyal' to the Cabinet. I replied that he had raised an important point. 'To whom should I be loyal? To the Cabinet or to the Party? In my opinion loyalty to the party was more fundamental.' This led to a lot of discussion and opinion among the Ministers was divided. Some Ministers supported me while others were

with Nehru. I said that it was wrong to think that other Ministers did not know finance. They were in contact with the public, at least I was, and they should be allowed to state their views in the Party meeting. Vallabhbhai interrupted to ask: 'Would it not be possible to suggest amendments to the taxation proposals if the Bill were to be referred to a Select Committee.' I said it would be so and gave my suggestions also. However, the fundamental question of loyalty to the Party or to the Cabinet was not discussed in the meeting. In other countries the budget and new taxation proposals are informally discussed between the senior Cabinet members but it seemed that Nehru was not in favour of that convention. The result, during the last ten years, has been that brave statements and proposals are made from the top, new taxes are imposed and when they are met with resistance and agitation, credit is taken for bowing to public opinion by making changes in the proposals. Secrecy is important, but equally important, if not more so, is the correct observance of the principle of joint responsibility.

The principle of joint responsibility assumes that the Minister concerned would faithfully carry out the policy settled by the whole of the Cabinet. He is expected to consult the Prime Minister if any action created policy difficulties. The Prime Minister is only the 'first among equals'. However extraordinarily gifted a person, he becomes Prime Minister through public support. I do not mean by this that such a person is a man of ordinary intellect or abilities. In countries where democracy is of long standing and properly understood and where considerations of caste or creed do not operate, an ignoramus has little chance of attaining the heights. The members of the Cabinet too are not quite ordinary people, even if they might not be extraordinary. Under the circumstances, when a colleague goes to the Prime Minister for consultation, it is not so much his guidance as his popularity that he seeks as a prop. Similarly, when two people come together, differences are bound to arise. Two brass pots cannot touch each other without making some sound. Once a Minister assumes a position of power, he begins to think of himself as

infallible and his opinions as if divinely inspired. In the circumstances, when a dispute arises between two Ministries, they go to the Prime Minister whose word is final. But occasionally the dispute is referred to the Cabinet. Many junior Ministers who are in independent charge of a Department often go to the Prime Minister for consultation. In fact, some do so frequently without rhyme or reason as a ritual to 'keep themselves in the eye' of the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister has many eyes and his ears are almost like a telephone exchange. If the Prime Minister is a man with 'light ears' easily influenced by certain type of persons, the Cabinet atmosphere gets poisonous with suspicion and jealousies and work suffers. Nehru normally listened to all and sundry, and if the same thing was repeated to him by many, his suppressed prejudices came to the surface and were expressed in his talk and behaviour. I did not go to him for advice even once and sent only one case to him in five years. That case concerned the acceptance of a tender from an Italian firm by my Ministry although it was a bit higher than others. Amongst the rejected lower tenders was one from a British firm. That firm complained to the British High Commission and one of its senior officers asked C. C. Desai about it in a somewhat angry manner. Desai referred him to me as the final decision was mine. This officer came to me and began to speak in a rather imperative tone. I told him to remember that he was talking to a Minister of free India. If he had any complaints, the proper course for him was to take them to the Ministry of External Affairs. India was a free country and took decisions in her own interest. I spoke calmly and without excitement. He apologised for his behaviour.

I made a detailed record of the conversation and sent the whole case to Nehru with a note saying that if the action were to be considered unjustifiable, it would be immediately corrected. The decision was taken on the recommendation of the special committee which examined the tenders. Nehru wrote back the next day: 'You have acted correctly.' Quite often people approached Nehru complaining about accommodation and he used to write to me. I never failed to reply and

not once did he tell me to change my decision. He knew that I would not change it. In contrast, Vallabhbhai refused even to listen to complaints about me, let alone ask me about them.

Munshi joined the Cabinet in June, 1950. I knew him of old. I had also heard from his colleagues regarding his behaviour while he was a Minister in Bombay. He was used to hustle and bustle about and get his proposals accepted. On the other hand, I never made up my mind unless I had taken into account all the hidden and suppressed motives behind a proposal. Munshi was the Food Minister. That Ministry was considered to be the graveyard of Ministers and it still continues to be so. India was self-sufficient in food till Burma was a part of it. After the partition the situation had become desparate. We could somehow manage to pull through the Second World War by controls and rationing. We were determined not to allow a repetition of the 1943 Bengal famine in the country after freedom. That famine was the result of the collapse of the distribution system although there were enough stocks in the country. Thousands died at that time near warehouses chokeful of foodgrains. The business community in those days reached the nethermost depth of greed. Freedom has in no way diminished or curbed the greed of this community, but they had tried to create a liasion with the Government stronger than what they had before freedom. Munshi was against controls, although the experience of 1948 when controls were lifted was bad. Some kind of controls were then in operation in the principal cities and towns of the country. Sometimes, Munshi's policies were beyond comprehension. As a result, bitter differences had sprung up between him and the Bombay Government with regard to rationing and supply of foodgrains. I was deputed to Bombay by the Cabinet to straighten this out. The first thing I did was to see the Bombay Minister of Supply, Dinkar Rao Desai, at his residence and have a frank discussion with him. In the afternoon, I attended a meeting of the Bombay Cabinet and was successful in bringing about a complete understanding.

The constituent states of the Union were unhappy about

the distribution of foodgrains and many of them were against controls. But India is one country and its food policies should be uniform. This, to me, was a fundamental principle. At the same time it was imperative that the Union Government should function in cooperation with the State Governments. The Constitution of India was a Federal one and the constituent States were more or less autonomous. To bring about uniformity and understanding amongst all of them required political skill of high order. Inexperienced as we were, we went on improvising in the light of experience. The Constitution had come into operation in 1950, and like a new shoe it did pinch a bit as we went ahead. At the same time the pride of having a new shoe was not lacking! In brief, distribution of foodgrains had come to be a vital matter. It still continues to be so. Even today some of our politicians entertain a fond hope to triumph over hard experience. As a consequence, they stumble. Often we want to do something revolutionary, but at the same time cannot rid ourselves of the traditional way of thinking. I shall recount below some of my experiences arising out of this dilemma.

It is natural for a Minister who assumes a new charge to desire to do something spectacular in his Ministry. I have already recorded what I felt and did for Housing, Local Self-Government and in other fields. I do not claim that I was entirely free from a sense of 'self', but I always welcomed constructive criticism. I cannot say that everyone welcomed it. Some took public support for granted. For instance, it was decided to abolish landlordism (zamindari). Some States had already passed some laws to curb it. The Supreme Court ruled that a few of them were ultra vires of the Constitution and it was decided to amend the Constitution. The Zamindari system was entrenched mostly in Bihar and Gokhale and I discussed the problem with the President who was from Bihar. The opponents to the legislation claimed that the expectation that the abolition of Zamindari would lead to an increase in revenue was not correct. One view was that as long as dues were regularly paid, only some protection should be given to the tenant and a provision for

equitable sharing of expenses on land improvement between the landlord and the tenant should also be made.

I, along with many others, was inspired by the heady wine of socialism. The landlord was not powerful only as regards his lands alone. He was practically a dictator in his own area. We wanted to diminish his importance and influence not only in the economic but in the political and social spheres also. The constitutional amendment was approved and was effective in that direction. Thus, the landlords followed the Princes into oblivion. Unfortunately, their place seems to have been taken by the blackmarketeers who have become too powerful in the rural life of our country. The class which had a traditionally inherited social position was destroyed. Along with it was also destroyed the loyalty to certain high values. Today social and political positions have become a commodity of the market place, to be purchased by the highest bidder. At the time, when we made the changes, one has to confess, we did not foresee these unfortunate developments. What happened was avoidable. But it meant an equally determined fight against capitalism, which we did not undertake. As a consequence, the politics of the country has become a handmaid of the moneybags.

Maulana Azad did not show enough enthusiasm to carry out the constitutional obligation regarding the propagation of Hindi. I had suggested to him in 1952 that all employees of the Union Government should be asked to acquire a knowledge of the Devanagari script within six months, to be followed by knowledge of Hindi upto the matriculation standard within two years, upto B.A. in the next two years and upto M.A. in the following two years. Promotions of those who fail to pass the departmental examinations for Hindi should be held up. This scheme was not only not accepted, but no thought was ever given to it. On the contrary, the English language was encouraged and what could have been achieved by now, seems to have been postponed indefinitely. The Muslims were displeased because the Constitution had decreed Hindi to be the official language. In fact, the Hindi language is not anti-Urdu, but the Constitution defined Hindi as the language

written in the Devanagari script. Before 1947, a majority of students whose mother-tongue was not Hindi but who were learning it, was in the South. The public was not against it, but the bureaucracy was. The English civil servant had to learn the language of the province he was sent to within six months of his posting there and he did learn it. The old civil servants knew the language of the place they had served in. Our civil servants realised that the new Government was afraid of collective blackmail and we are now witnessing the evil effects of it.

In 1950, the Maulana placed before the Cabinet a bill for the reorganisation of Universities. The bill sought to curtail their autonomy. I had talked it over with Munshi a day before it came up for discussion in the Cabinet and he showed his opposition to it. I too was opposed to it but said that we should first gauge public opinion and then proceed. To my surprise, Munshi supported it in the Cabinet. I said that the intent and purpose of the bill was similar to a bill which Curzon had proposed long ago. We were trying through the bill practically to governmentalise the academic life of the country. I opposed it and after a great deal of discussion the Maulana said that he would not press it. Maulana Azad was a learned, broadminded man, alive to public opinion. The charge that he was a secret Pakistani is utterly false. It is true that he was convinced that the Muslims did not get their due in India. He never pressed his point to the bitter end in the Cabinet, but had his way through private meetings with the Prime Minister. In a discussion he immediately went to the heart of the matter. He was somewhat displeased with me in some matters, but occasionally expressed his appreciation too.

My five years in the Cabinet brought me in contact with people of various types. It can be said that on the whole decisions taken during the lifetime of Vallabhbhai were broadbased and equitable. Differences between Vallabhbhai and Nehru had begun to grow towards the end, but both of them tried to accommodate each other to the utmost. Once I had asked for 26 crores of rupees for the river valley projects and the Finance Minister, Dr Mathai, was not willing to give

me more than 3 crores. Discussion in the Cabinet ended with the suggestion that both of us should place our views before the Sardar and abide by his decision. Vallabhbhai who was then ill did not attend Cabinet meetings. We went to his residence and I urged my viewpoint for an hour. Dr Mathai said: 'I am convinced but I have no money'. And Vallabhbhai had to accept it. A break of even a year in projects like Hirakud, Damodar Valley, Bhakra would lead to a delay of two to three years in their completion and would hit the progress of the country hard. I explained this to Nehru in a lengthy letter and suggested that if the projects were not proceeded with, the country would suffer greatly. I also suggested that Deshmukh, who had just retired from the Reserve Bank, should be asked to find a way out. Nehru asked me to get Vallabhbhai's approval to the suggestion. I went to him immediately and like an importunate pleader again urged my case. He agreed to refer the matter to Deshmukh. Later, I had discussions with Deshmukh and accepted 13 crores instead of 26 crores on his suggestion.

It was freely said that the Cabinet was divided between two groups, one led by Vallabhbhai and the other by Nehru and that after the former's death there would be a thorough reshuffle of the Cabinet. In fact, there were no such groups. I agreed with Vallabhbhai on the Hindu-Muslim question and some other political matters, but I was nearer to Nehru in economic matters as I was a socialist. Vallabhbhai had completely subordinated his self to his public life. He took work out of his followers sometimes with the use of his authority, sometimes with persuasion and statesmanship. His achievement in the unification of India by the merger of the princely States is phenomenal. But all this was done through others. He supplied the inspiration and the advice. Good work was always rewarded by a congratulatory letter. Nehru's temperament was different. Here is an example of Vallabhbhai's foresight. He was to have flown to Bombay for treatment on December 12, 1950. On December 11, while I was working in the Secretariat, I got a phone call from Shankar (Sardar Patel's P.A.) that Vallabhbhai wanted me immediately. I went

and found him in bed. He called me near and said : 'Now I am going'. I reminded him that he was going to make me the Home Minister after the elections and that I was to have 'detained' him in the Bardoli Ashram ! He smiled and said : 'I am not going to live. Give me a promise that you will do whatever I ask you to do'. I said : 'First tell me what the promise is about.' He insisted that I should promise first and looked at me in such a way that I could not but promise. Dahyabhai was listening to all this standing at the door of the room. As soon as I said 'yes', Vallabhbhai took my hand in his and said : 'Whatever may be your differences with Panditji, do not leave him.' I again said 'yes' and he seemed relieved. At the airport the next day he reminded me of my promise and I again promised him to abide by it. He went up aboard the plane and after three days died in Bombay on 15th December 1950. With him India lost political firmness.

I found after his death that Vallabhbhai had advised Jagjivan Ram, Munshi and Baldev Singh to be guided by my advice. Accordingly, Baldev Singh used to consult me. Munshi came to me and said that Vallabhbhai had asked him to consult me and what our group was. I told him that we never had or have any group. I believed in placing my views before the Cabinet fearlessly and frankly and in resigning if a decision were not acceptable and if the differences were fundamental. I consulted Vallabhbhai often and often differed with him too. We had only one goal and that was to do everything to assure the security and progress of the country. Munshi did not argue further and I found that during the next year and half he supported Nehru completely and unconditionally. I knew his opinions but by some miracle he always accommodated himself to Nehru's viewpoint during Cabinet meetings. In fact, this became the common mode of behaviour in the Cabinet after Vallabhbhai's death. The result was that the Prime Minister began to think of himself as omniscient. Ambedkar resigned in March 1951. Rajaji too went out at about the same time and Dr. Katju came in as the Home Minister. To be frank, only the sense of stern duty made me stay in the Cabinet after Vallabhbhai's death. Nehru never hurt me

openly, but the differences between our viewpoints were not overcome. When Niyogi resigned in April 1950, I was asked to move almost all the important bills in the Parliament. Accordingly, I piloted the Tariff Bill as well as the Life Insurance Bill. Nehru had no doubts about my capacity, but he disliked opposition to his policies, especially his policy towards the Muslims. This was shown when the new Cabinet was formed in 1952. The Prime Minister after being elected Leader of the Party has the right to choose his own colleagues in the Cabinet, but this right too is circumscribed by some conventions in Great Britain. These were thrown overboard in our country. One of the reasons was our proneness to the personality cult. This has its advantages as well as disadvantages. But the proper place for the discussion of it is in a book on politics and not here. I feel it significant in my life that I got an opportunity to be in the Cabinet for five years. I also feel that the fact that this Cabinet lasted for five years was more due to the peculiar circumstances in the country and the people's faith in the Congress rather than to any person's abilities.

MORE REMINISCENCES

I STILL remember many amusing as well as serious incidents during these five years and some of them are worth recounting. For instance, although I was sworn in as a Minister on the 15th of August, I did not 'occupy' my chair in the office room till the 17th. Till then I worked at 9, Electric Lane. My predecessor was Bhabha who was a firm believer in astrology. He found some 'auspicious' day and time and then took me to the office and gave me the chair. After all, it was not the heavenly stars which had given me the chair. However, some earthly stars deprived me of it later. My residence was 26, Ferozshah Road. This house was a palace and I told Vallabhbhai that I did not require such a huge mansion. He said that my house would be the Maharashtra Nivas in Delhi and therefore I was given such a big house. He also added, 'You have stayed in jail for long, now stay in *Mahal* (palace).' I recollect with pleasure that my house became truly a home for the Maharashtrians (Maharashtra Nivas) in Delhi.

To start with, our salary was paid according to old rules, Rs. 5,500/- P.M. After deduction of income-tax, house-rent, electricity charges etc., we got in hand the sum of Rs. 2,900/-. This continued till December 1947. Similarly the old rules allowed each Minister Rs. 3,500/- as equipment allowance. When the bill for this came to me, I asked Vallabhbhai what it was all about and he said that while any odd dress would do in a Congress regime, Ministers get V.I.P. visitors, both Indian and foreign, which require them to have crockery and other

appurtenances for offering hospitality to them and that I should accept the allowance. Out of this amount I purchased cutlery costing about Rs. 800/-. Of these a few knives and forks are still left, and they too are rusting in the cupboard.

26th January 1950 was fixed for the inauguration of India as a Republic and Nehru issued a circular, after having a discussion with some of us, giving directions regarding the proper ceremonial dress for such occasions. It consisted of the *Sherwani*, white or silken cream in daytime and black during the night, *Churidar* and a cap. I showed this to Vallabhbhai and asked him what he was going to do and he said : 'Ask Governor-General Rajaji'. I did so and he said that it was enough for old men like him to have any odd dress, but that I should dress according to rules. I therefore spent two hundred rupees to make this affluent society dress. On the day I went to the Parliament in the new dress, the special correspondent of the *Hindustan Times* reported : 'Mr. Gadgil looked the smartest in his new dress.' Nehru showed it to me the next day and I said : 'This is the first time in fifty four years that I have been so complimented for my dress and it is going to be the last. I have disturbed your monopoly for a day only !' I used this dress only when I had to dine in the President's Palace or with foreign ambassadors. Otherwise my dress continued to be the old, somewhat untidy one.

Those early days in Delhi were ration days. I had guests who had come to Delhi to see the 15th August ceremonies. However, ration cards were available within a few minutes and my private secretary Borkar expertly managed this. On September 2, 1947, I sent Mrs Gadgil and the children back home to Poona. Riots in Delhi were on the increase and the atmosphere was extremely tense. In fact, my family passed nearly a dozen corpses on their way to the station. During those days the Ministerial palaces became jails and the Pahari Nepali boy who was with me from 1946 became the keeper.

The freedom struggle and my legal practice had left little leisure for me to enjoy family life. The years between 1930 and 1934 were spent in jail, and from 1935 to 1939, eight

months in the year were spent either in Simla or in Delhi. Mrs Gadgil had to stay in Poona for the education of the children. Thus we were a family without the family life. 1940 to 1944 the inevitable jail again. Passing through all this, I had just begun to think of my responsibilities as a family man when orders came regarding the 1945 elections. I came to Delhi again in January, 1946. Time was rushing ahead in my individual life as in the life of the country, destiny and misfortune were at loggerheads. The hard days of slavery ended, the country became free and I joined the Cabinet. Keshavrao Jedhe used to say that we had only two days of happiness, the 14th and the 15th August. This is true of my own life also.

We carefully chose an auspicious day to occupy my official residence at 26, Ferozshah Road and went there on the 18th or 19th of August 1947. Almost from that day my wife fell ill and took to her bed. She left it on her death on 13th April 1948. Lord Rama had his years of suffering before he ascended the throne of Ayodhya. I had the opposite experience. My days of suffering started after I had ascended the seat of power. On 2 September, 1957, I saw her off in the train and my mind could not rid itself of its inauspicious premonitions. I had disciplined myself not to worry about things which were beyond my control and this discipline came to my rescue during those days. Thus I lived at 26, Ferozshah Road as I had lived in jail according to a time-table. I ate whatever was served whether I was hungry or not. I received visitors, whether I wanted to meet them or not at the fixed hours. The distinction between the natural and the forced was lost and continues to be lost till today.

The atmosphere in Delhi in the first week of September 1947 was so tense and fearful that shopkeepers found it difficult to keep their shops open. The flour mills were closed and for a few days my guests and I cooked bajra straight and ate it mixed with some pepper and gur. Then one day, Maniben, Vallabhbhai's daughter, phoned to enquire whether we had any flour or not. I told her that the family was away and I could somehow manage, and that I was eating cooked

bajra. She sent some flour and some jaggery immediately.

My personal relations with my colleagues in the Cabinet were good, but with Vallabhbhai they were close. On his suggestion, I used to meet him in the evening once a week with all my family. I had similar relations with Dr Ambedkar. In brief, Cabinet acquaintances did not acquire the sweet aroma of friendship. We used to meet in the Cabinet, in the Legislature and at numerous functions. These functions were mainly inaugurations, tea parties and receptions and were held in hundreds each year. I have kept a note of such invitations for 1948–49 and they came to 361. I attended 102 of these! I found the largest crowd at the Russian Embassy receptions because wine flowed freely there. Delhi was not dry then, nor is it so now and it is true today, as it has always been, that which is not freely accepted by the heart, shall not be found in practice elsewhere. This is true of prohibition also. Sardar Vallabhbhai rarely attended such functions. He had his first heart attack a few weeks after the assassination of Gandhiji, *i.e.*, in the second week of March 1948. Since then he avoided such programmes.

The month of March in 1948 saw the intensification of the knotty problem of the Princely States in India. The first step in its solution was taken by the Matsya Union. This was inaugurated by me at Bharatpur on March 8, 1948. This occasion was accompanied by considerable hullabaloo. Thousands of Jats had gathered round the fort in which the ceremony was to have taken place. The brother of the ruler of Bharatpur had gone to the jail the previous day and freed a lot of criminals. We had arrested him and sent him to Delhi. The Maharaja of Dholpur, as the Rajpramukh of the new Union, was to have hoisted the new flag at 8 in the morning. When I went to the parade ground from the station, I noticed that there was a *hartal* in the city. After the flag hoisting, the chief secretary told me that although the inauguration was scheduled for 11.30 that day, I should wait in my saloon at the station and that he would let me know what time I should leave for the ceremony. However, I adhered to

my programme and went to the Palace at 11 a.m. The Maharaja of Dholpur told me there that he would go to the jail himself to meet the Jat leaders and see that everything was all right. In the meanwhile, I had asked the military commandant to guard the road to the fort with armed soldiers. I told Maharaja of Dholpur that he was the ruler at the time and he could do whatever he pleased. He returned in about a quarter of an hour. He had released the Jat leaders and told them that their grievances could be put before Vallabhbhai by the visiting Minister who had come to inaugurate the Union. The Jat leaders conveyed it to the Jats who had gained entry into the fort. The mass of them then gathered outside the fort in a maidan.

The Chief Minister designate and his colleagues had by this time arrived in fort. The President of the Rajasthan Congress Committee, Gokulbhai Bhat, was also with them. The future Chief Minister came up to me and complained about the release of the Jat leaders by Maharaja of Dholpur without his permission. I told him that he and his colleagues were nobodies until the Matsya Union was inaugurated. The man said that in that case, he and his colleagues would not participate in the swearing-in-ceremony. I said it was all right with me, that I would declare the Matsya Union as established, catch hold of any sweeper on the street and swear him in as the Chief Minister and see to it that the orders of Sardar Vallabhbhai were carried out, whatever the cost. For five minutes the four gentlemen and Gokulbhai discussed this amongst themselves. Then Gokulbhai came to me. I told him that there would be no change in what I had decided. Gokulbhai again went to them and within a minute all of them came over to me to say that they would accept whatever I said. We then started for the Durbar Hall which we reached at 11.50. I gave instructions that the old Bharatpur Flag should not be lowered, but that the Union flag should be hoisted next to it. I administered the oath of office to the Rajpramukh and he in his turn administered it to the Chief Minister and his colleagues. I made a brief speech in which I made the point that 'Bharatpur was the beginning of a new

era in India.' A fortnight after this, on 23 March, I inaugurated another union of States, Rajasthan, at Kotah. That ceremony passed off without any incident. When Vallabhbhai heard of the Bharatpur incident and how I had handled it, he was pleased and wrote me a congratulatory letter.

Towards the end of March I went to Bombay with Mrs Gadgil. The date for the inauguration of Vindhya Pradesh was 12 April and as usual Vallabhbhai wanted me to go. I said I would go but would have to return the same evening. The function was to take place at Rewa and Vallabhbhai arranged for a special plane for me. I left early in the morning and reached Satana within three hours. From there we went to Rewa by car, a distance of forty miles. Ram Rao Deshmukh was then the Dewan in Rewa on behalf of the Government of India. As I reached Rewa I was surrounded by thousands of people and the Police were about to rush their horses towards the crowd. I stopped them and 'took' a public meeting there and then. I asked whether the people wanted Vindhya Pradesh or not. They wanted the Union but insisted that the old Maharaja of Rewa should be reinstated on the Gaddi of Rewa. I said that I would complete the inauguration in an hour and would meet ten representatives elected by them at the State Guest House. The function passed off peacefully and a new constituent unit, Vindhya Pradesh, came into existence. In my inaugural speech I praised the sacrifice and patriotism of those rulers who had voluntarily given up power and challenged them to devote their future to the glory of India. Afterwards I met representatives of forty institutions and organisations. In the report I made to Vallabhbhai I recommended that responsible government should not be introduced in Vindhya Pradesh in a hurry. But Delhi would not wait. Responsible Government was introduced with dire consequences resulting in corruption, inefficiency and all its accompanying evils.

I returned to Bombay on April 12. Mrs Gadgil passed away the next day. I took it calmly, but that did not mean that I was not affected by this tragedy. I have always believed that the play must not stop because one of the actors is absent or removed and continued life in the light of the

same conviction.

The Madhya Bharat Union was to have been inaugurated in the third week of May and I suggested to Vallabhbhai that he should ask Nehru to inaugurate it. I felt that if Nehru was invited to do so, he would feel happy. In the least, the growing differences between him and Vallabhbhai might lessen a bit. The Union of Madhya Bharat tried us to the utmost. Indore and Gwalior were both ruled by Maratha princes, but the ancient rivalries between them were unabated. Indore was somewhat modern and progressive. It was nearer to Maharashtra and therefore a bit liberal in outlook. Gwalior, on the other hand, continued to be feudal in atmosphere and completely northern in cultural affinities. I had known the ruler of Gwalior, Jayajirao Maharaj, since 1936-37. He had been to Simla twice to watch how the legislature worked. At the time he was accompanied by Sardar Muley and on his recommendation I used to explain to the Maharaja the working of the Legislative Assembly.

It was the Maharaja of Gwalior who was instrumental in persuading, as I have said earlier, the Maharaja of Indore to sign the instrument of accession. The people's representatives in Gwalior were mostly non-Maharashtrians and had not much affection either for the Maharashtrians or the Maharaja. The Indore representatives showed the opposite sentiments. They wanted an independent Indore State and did not care to associate with Gwalior. However, Vallabhbhai and V. P. Menon succeeded in persuading them and thus the Union of Madhya Bharat became possible. Naturally, both the Maharajas wished me to be present at the inauguration ceremony of the new State, but I was not too keen on doing so. Nevertheless, Vallabhbhai sent a message from Mussoorie asking me to be present at the inauguration ceremony. I attended the function and became a witness to the birth of that State also. The Maharaja of Gwalior was the Rajpramukh, and in his speech he mentioned me by name and said that he was guided by my advice. Nehru showed some surprise at this. I told him that all that it meant was that I knew the Maharaja of old. Jayajirao Maharaj was shrewd,

knew the sense of the times and while introducing the Maharani called her 'Mrs Shinde'! The rivalries between Gwalior and Indore did not end with their union in the new State and we had to intervene often between them. As a result, the States Reorganisation Commission merged Madhya Bharat into Madhya Pradesh and added a huge sprawling State to the map of India. Nehru had often stated that the constituent states of India should be manageable and tidy. At one time he had even suggested that Uttar Pradesh should be split into two. But sprawling Madhya Pradesh was created. When the question of Samyukta Maharashtra came up, he raised the objection that it would be a huge State. I reminded him of his various contradictory statements in the meetings held for it. But experience shows that the Congress has different rules of justice as far as Maharashtra is concerned.

I have already described the manner in which the differences between the Hindus and the Muslims increased after the partition. I was sitting alone on the lawn in front of my residence on 7th September 1947 when the Chairman of the Council of State, Hussain Imam and another Muslim gentleman came running to me. They were followed by the guard at the gate. He, poor fellow, thought that those two Muslims were rushing at me to do some harm to me. I sent him back. Hussain Imam literally fell at my feet and asked for sanctury. He said that two of his servants had been killed in his house and he had run out by the back door and come to me. I assured him that no harm would come to him. The gentleman accompanying him was sent in my car to Shankerrao Deo and I took Hussain Imam who had a little fever into my house. I took him to a room and asked him to rest there. After about an hour a crowd gathered before my gate and asked for 'two Muslims.' I told them that one of them was in my house and if they wanted to kill him, they would have first to kill me and while they were doing so, the armed guard there would not look on idly. This impressed the crowd which melted away. Next day we shaved Mr Imam's beard and my private secretary, Borkar, took him to the Safdarjang

airport and put him on a plane going to Gaya. At the time it required the Ministry's written permit to take any Muslim in an aeroplane and that too I obtained with some difficulty from Rafi Ahmad Kidwai. I told him that he should note on the permit that it was given on my request. Hussain Imam wanted to carry his pistol with him, but it was not allowed and he had to surrender it. Probably this saved him, otherwise even during the plane journey some harm might have come to him. Thus, the occasion to carry out that part of my oath of office which enjoined me to carry out my duties as a Minister without fear or favour and that while doing so 'I will not consider caste or creed,' arose within three weeks of taking office. All through those five years of office, and upto-date my conscience is quite clear that I have never done anything under the influence of fear or malice or with considerations of caste, creed or religion. When I am attacked by professional critics, I do not get disturbed, because I have abiding faith in the ultimate victory of truth.

Another incident refers to the Diwali of 1948. The celebrations for the birth of the founder of the Arya Samaj, Swami Dayanand Saraswati, are held during Diwali. During my years of office as Minister I used to attend Hindu functions as well as Muslim functions, when invited. So also did I attend Sikh functions. Neither the Birla Mandir nor the Arya Samaj was taboo to me. As I said, it was the Diwali of 1948 and huge gatherings are held on the Ramlila grounds for about a week during these days. One day I was the main speaker. I spoke against the narrow outlook of orthodox Hinduism which did not allow others to be converted into Hinduism and excommunicated people for trifling transgressions making their life in society intolerable. Widow marriage was also looked down upon. As a consequence, there were more going out than coming in in that community because the only way to enter it was by birth. Illustrating the political consequences of this outlook I referred to the historical incident in Kashmir when, in the 18th century, the Kashmir kings tried to take back into Hinduism those who had been forcibly

converted to Islam. But the self-opinionated, shortsighted Brahmins defeated those efforts, thus leading directly to the present Kashmir problem. A majority of the Muslims in India were originally Hindus who accepted Islam because of injustices of Hindu orthodoxy. Today's Sheikhs, I said, had Brahmins as their ancestors. For instance, the great poet Iqbal sprang from a Brahmin ancestor. From this standpoint, I said, the sage Dayanand had laid the Hindu society under a deep debt by preaching true Vedic Hinduism. We are beholden to the Arya Samaj for the progress in women's education, for its opposition to caste distinctions, insistence on the Hindi language and the rejuvenation of the interest in Sanskrit.

This speech, especially that part of it which referred to conversion, was naturally reported in Indian papers. But it received great and sensational publicity in Pakistan papers. Sheikh Abdullah brought to the notice of Gopalaswamy Aiyangar the reports about this speech which were published in the Pakistani papers. He asked me about it. Fortunately, it was my practice to keep notes in English of whatever public speeches I made while I was a Minister. I took him to my office and showed him the notes of that particular speech and also cuttings from the Delhi papers regarding it. He then wrote an appropriate reply to Abdullah.

I did not stint in arranging for the accommodation of Delhi Muslims. Nor did I hesitate to punish those who had tried to put something over me. The Delhi Muslims therefore had no prejudices against me. Unfortunately, the Prime Minister believed that I was anti-Muslim. Therefore, whenever he sent me complaints from Muslims, I took care to reply in detail and to tell him that there would be no injustice. It is possible that justice might seem inadequate. My heart was not a grocer's balance completely void of emotions.

Vallabhbhai was watchful regarding the state of affairs in the Government. He used to invite the Secretaries of the various departments to tea or dinner almost every week by turns, listen to their problems and difficulties, and advise and guide them. The civil servants were greatly encouraged by

this and worked with greater self-confidence. The Cabinet had introduced the innovation of referring difficult problems to committees of the secretaries of the Ministries. This too had encouraged the civil servants who considered the problems with enthusiasm and offered their suggestions. This innovation was entirely Vallabhbhai's. There was great desire in the country to assist the Government and numerous suggestions were sent, all of them were not necessarily helpful. But neither Vallabhbhai nor I ever treated anybody with neglect or contempt. We took into consideration all these suggestions and accepted whatever was acceptable. In brief, neither he nor I ever pretended to be omniscient because we were in power. Our policy was to listen to as many people as possible, consult those experienced in administration and then take a decision. Nehru rarely behaved this way. He made statements in a hurry and even the Cabinet members dared not oppose him, let alone the civil servants. The result was indecision in policy and weakness in execution.

The Congress Cabinet seemed to be riding on the crest of popularity and reaching for the apex of honour. It had assumed office with the pledge to uproot corruption, inefficiency and exploitation. It is now well-known how far it succeeded in this objective. Nehru had once announced that he would hang the profiteers by a lamp-post near the Clock Tower in Chandni Chawk. That Tower waited for 12 years in the hope of witnessing this historic spectacle. In 1959, the Clock Tower fell. Now there is no Tower and no profiteer or blackmarketeer is in danger of being hanged because he has taken the politician as his partner in his business! But at the beginning the officers were so terrified that none of them would do what ordinarily a man does in great difficulties.

The Yamuna was in extra-ordinary floods in 1948 and its waters threatened to enter the All India Radio Station. I heard of it in the morning and on inquiry found that the engineer had gone on the spot. Smt Maniben Patel phoned at about the same time and took our administration to task

for its glaring inefficiency and neglect that even a Radio Station could be flooded endangering equipment worth lakhs of rupees. I told her that the engineer had already reached the spot and that I myself was going there. I reached the shortwave station in about half an hour and saw that the floods were rising while about two hundred men were sitting on a nearby hillock arguing with the engineer. I asked what the matter was and was told that they were asking three rupees a day for flood work while the scheduled rate was only a rupee and a half. I intervened and agreed to pay three rupees and asked them to start work immediately. Within five minutes they began to build a protective wall of sandbags round the station. I ordered more trucks, gave them petrol from the military depot and by noon a wall five feet high, hundred feet long and four feet thick was built. I ordered a similar wall for the protection of the Medium Wave Station which was also threatened. At 5 in the evening, the workers wanted to leave. I said that they had to complete the work. We had agreed to pay them as they demanded. They said that they had not taken the food the whole day. This was true. I told them that I would feed them and sent my car to Chandni Chawk to get *puri-bhaji*. I too shared this meal with them. I returned home at 8.30 in the evening. The Radio officers had already given a report of this to Vallabhbhai who congratulated me next day and said: 'This is how one has to work in free India.' I need not add that I felt gratified.

Vallabhbhai gave encouragement and admonition as and when deserved, which made him a great administrator. I have already recorded how much work was done in my five years as a Minister at the Centre. Suffice it to say that except for the Vigyan Bhavan the blue-prints or plans of all the new buildings seen in Delhi were ready before 1951.

But if I am proud of anything it is the Samadhi of Gandhiji at Rajghat. We consulted various architects, prepared a plan and the work was begun after it was approved by the Cabinet. A platform was already erected on the spot where Gandhiji's body was cremated. The plan kept this

structure inviolate and envisaged surrounding it with a green lawn in tune with its solemnity with ample water playing round it. No important foreign visitor to Delhi after Gandhiji's death leaves the capital without visiting his samadhi. One such visitor was President Soekarno of Indonesia. Nehru told me that Soekarno felt that the samadhi should be surrounded by woods, with a large memorial slab in the centre, round which should be grouped smaller slabs in memory of Gandhiji's devoted followers. I said that the memorial was already there, it was built with the consent of the Cabinet and has met with the approval of the people. It would not be proper to change it. Besides, even if it is changed, there were millions of Gandhiji's devotees in the country and if we intended to place one stone for each of them, the stone quarries of India would not suffice. Nehru laughed and said, 'But this has become a love garden.' 'Quite a few visitors,' I said, 'had told me that in the early morning and in the evening, the atmosphere in the garden is so pleasant and holy that the mind entertains only good thoughts and becomes calm and serene.' The talk ended there and as long as I was the Minister, the solemnity and serenity of the Samadhi were undisturbed.

The Parliament enacted a law in order to prevent the possible destruction of the Samadhi by any other Party which may come in power in future. Under this Act the upkeep and administration of the place has been entrusted to a Committee. Some new structures have now arisen or are arising round the Samadhi on which six million rupees are to be spent. Nehru, who was then inclined to surround the Samadhi by thick woods, is now the proponent and patron of a palatial memorial!

Another important work I remember is the restoration of the Somnath Temple. Sardar Patel and I went to Junagarh after it had been liberated and saw the remains of the ancient temple. One morning, while walking on the beach, the idea of the restoration occurred to me and I mentioned it to Vallabhbhai. He approved it and with his consent I made an announcement

of the intention to restore the ancient glory the Somnath once was. I prepared a plan and recorded it in the proceedings of the Cabinet. The Maulana said that the site should be preserved as it was. I said that the intention was to restore it to its original state and thus to destroy a sliver of distrust between the Hindus and the Muslims. In Kathiawar we found artisans of the Sompura community able to recreate in stone the wealth of images and decor as it was in olden times and decided to restore the temple with their assistance. Vallabhbhai and I collected five million rupees for this purpose. Earlier it had been decided to undertake the work through the Central Government. Nehru did not approve. On Gandhiji's advice, it was decided to entrust the work to a Trust which would have one representative of the Central Government.

The Government of India appointed a Committee of two engineers and one architect for the supervision of the work. By 1951, the whole of the base of the temple was ready as also the inner altar and we requested President Rajendra Prasad to be the chief participant in the installation of the *Lingum*. We gave him a note on the history and progress of the scheme and he agreed to participate in the sacred ceremonies.

As is usual with Munshi, he gave the enterprise a grandiloquent turn and wrote to our Ambassador in Peking, Panikkar, to send the waters of the Chinese rivers for the ceremony. Panikkar, that secular Ambassador, asked the Ministry of External Affairs to what particular head of account the expenses on that could be debited and the letter was placed before Nehru. At about the same time the Pakistani newspapers had started growling at the enterprise and were telling us that they would produce another Mahmud Gazanavi and again destroy the temple. Nehru expressed the opinion that the President should not attend the ceremony. The Cabinet also discussed the matter. I told Munshi that if anyone was responsible for the affair it was I and Vallabhbhai who supported me. I would therefore explain the affair to the Cabinet. I quoted from the Cabinet reports to prove that Nehru's charge that the thing was done without informing the

Cabinet was not correct. The Maulana and Jagjivan Ram said that the matter was discussed. Government of India had spent about hundred thousand rupees on the work. I pointed out that the Government gave subsidies and grants to thousands of mosques and tombs and there could be nothing objectionable if it spent a little money in restoring a Hindu temple. I understood secularism to mean the equality of all religions. The restoration of the Somnath temple had earned for the Government the goodwill of millions of people and had made the creation of the Saurashtra State easy. Millions of Hindus are idol-worshippers and not intellectuals like Nehru. 'Some of us are subject to the weakness of a firm faith,' I said. The discussion ended there and President Rajendra Prasad did participate in the ceremonies. I understand that he was firm in his resolve to do so and told Nehru of his decision. He was ready even to resign his august office if need be.

These five years in the Cabinet also saw quite a number of incidents in connection with the United Maharashtra (Samyukt Maharashtra) movement. Some of them I have recounted in the earlier chapter. After the republic had been proclaimed, it became obvious that the question had to be tackled some time. In that process the two great stumbling blocks were, obviously, Bombay and Hyderabad. Mountbatten had felt that the preservation of Hyderabad as a separate State would create a balance in Indian politics. And Nehru was deeply under Mountbatten's influence. All the capitalists and industrialists of Bombay were against its merger with the Maharashtra State. Bombay had contributed millions to the non-violent freedom movement. Vallabhbhai too was for Maharashtra without Bombay and Andhra without Madras. I told him, 'If not today, tomorrow you will have to give Bombay to Maharashtra. We should find a way out.' Discussions with him revealed that he was in favour of a united Maha Gujarat and Maharashtra State. And if it did not work out, Maha Gujarat could be separated and Bombay would then go to Maharashtra. But there should be some special safeguards for its administration. I also found that he wanted a huge

Bombay State with Gujarat and Maharashtra as a counter-weight to U.P. whose influence in the Indian politics was undeservedly out of proportion to the capacity of its politicians. I told Vallabhbhai that the Maharashtrian politics had been impregnated with the idea of a United Maharashtra but that I was ready to discuss his idea with the leaders.

Accordingly, prominent Maharashtrians and Gujaratis assembled in my house in Delhi in October-November of 1950. They included U. N. Dhebar, Khandubhai Desai, Kanjibhai Desai, then President of the G.P.P.C., Shankarrao Deo, D. R. Gadgil and, if I remember right, Madholkar also. The idea of a United State of Gujarat and Maharashtra was discussed and everyone felt it to be worth a thought. But Vallabhbhai died in December 1950 and the scheme lapsed. It was revived in 1956, but this is not the place to recount it. I had once said about U.P. in Parliament that 'U.P. exports *Bhayyas* to Bombay and unwanted politicians to Delhi.' The statement received applause, but quite a few were stung by it.

The annual Congress session in 1946 was held at Meerut. Kripalani was the President of the Congress then. He resigned in August 1947 on a difference of opinion regarding the formation of the Cabinet. The AICC met in December in Delhi and elected Dr Rajendra Prasad in his place who resigned from the Cabinet as a consequence. Actually, it was not necessary under law and Nehru proved it by holding the office of the Congress President from 1951 to 1954. However, Rajendra Prasad was advised that way and he left the Cabinet. The next Congress session was held in Jaipur in 1948, under the Presidentship of Pattabhi Sitaramayya. Vallabhbhai expressed the desire then that the 1950 session of the Congress should be held in September if possible. He asked Shankarrao Deo at a meeting of the Working Committee if the session could be held in Maharashtra. Shankarrao Deo said that he would let him know next day. Deo and Hirey, who was then the President of the Provincial Congress Committee, came to me and we agreed to have the session in Maharashtra. Hirey was worried about the expenses. I said that all of us would try and

contributions would come. The next day the suggestion was accepted. It was decided to hold the session at Nasik.

That session created a sensation in Indian political life. Vallabhbhai had tried earlier without success to get Tandonji elected to the Presidentship of the Congress. He decided to try again this time. His orders were that no Cabinet Minister should interfere in the politics of his State and accordingly I never interested in controversial problems of my State. I was in Simla instead of in Poona at the time of the election of Pattabhi Sitaramayya. But this time I decided to be in Maharashtra with the intention to help make the Congress session a success. Shankarrao Deo met me in Mussoorie and said that he was going to contest. I told him to consult Nehru, Vallabhbhai and Rajaji before doing so. He indicated that while Nehru did not express any opinion, Rajaji supported him. Vallabhbhai said that Tandonji should be elected. I told Deo that he would get the first preference votes of Maharashtra. But he must be successful in the first count, because the second preference votes in other cases would not be his. I told him that if he wished I would speak to Vallabhbhai. I did so a few days later in Dehradun. I told him that from all account relations between him and Nehru would further deteriorate on account of that election. Therefore, if he backed Deo, Nehru would not oppose. He was adamant on Tandonji. It was clear that he was hurt by what had happened in the past. I said that it was my considered opinion that if Tandon were to be elected, Nehru would throw a tantrum, would be furious and political life would be in chaos. If Kripalani were to be elected, he would be a source of annoyance to both of them. Vallabhbhai said that there could be no change whatsoever in his decision to support Tandon. I told him that as all Maharashtrians wanted Shankarrao Deo as the Congress President, he would get their first preference votes, but Tandon would get the second preference.

The following three weeks were days of greatly disturbed politics in the country. Rafi Ahmad Kidwai, the legendary go-between, Narada, in Indian politics,.....took Kripalani to

Nehru and some sort of understanding was arrived at. Newspapers began to speculate that Nehru was backing Kripalani. All over the country, the people interpreted Tandon against Kripalani as Patel against Nehru. Nor was it strange or far-fetched. This election revealed that the backers and supporters of both the candidates had abandoned the Gandhian way completely. The rich worked for Tandon and the Muslim Congressmen worked for Kripalani. I went to Poona at the time for a meeting and told the people that while they should give their second preference vote to whomsoever they pleased, all of them should give their first preference to Shankarrao Deo.

Shankarrao expected backing from Karnatak, Tamilnad, Bengal and a few votes from Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan. The election gave Tandon 53 per cent of the votes in the very first round and he was elected. Pakistani papers interpreted this election as a defeat for Nehru and this interpretation ultimately led to a political tragedy.

Holding the Congress session in Nasik meant beginning from A to Z. The Government of Bombay was ready to give as much help as it could. The site was selected, but it required a great deal of conveniences. Quite near the site was a shed with a seating capacity for about three thousand persons belonging to the Military. We hired it and about forty acres of land round it on nominal rent through Baldev Singh for the Reception Committee. He also arranged for the supply of water for the Congress Nagar from Military waterworks, again for nominal charges. We got four thousand cots from the military stores in Kirkee at the rent of four annas each. Its transport cost us only the expenses for the petrol. The railways arranged special trains etc., as usual. The only thing that remained was the collection of funds ! Barring one or two exceptions, the industrialists of Maharashtra contributed satisfactorily. I gave a thousand rupees and collected a hundred rupees each from the Maharashtrian members of Parliament. Similarly, contributions were obtained from Maharashtrian members of the State legislature. I went round in the districts of Nagar and Sholapur on the advice of

Hirey and collected nearly two lakhs of rupees. I did not charge Government for this tour, but paid Rs. 225/- for the Bombay Government transport used by me. The session passed off well from every point of view, although Nehru seemed displeased. I seconded his resolution for unity in the country. Vallabhbhai was like a witness throughout the session, although it was obvious that he was happy and proud that he had succeeded in getting Tandon elected. Later Nehru and Maulana Azad non-cooperated with Tandon and considerable bitterness was created in our politics. The Nasik Congress met in September 1950 and by the 15th December of the same year Vallabhbhai was no more.

Rajaji took over as Home Minister after the death of Vallabhbhai. The reorganisation of the Cabinet followed almost immediately in January 1951. This was in a way a reflection of what had been happening in the Congress and I was warned by friends that as I belonged to the 'Sardar Party' I would be dropped from the Cabinet. I said that I did not think it would happen at that time, but might happen after the elections. Jagjivan Ram said more than once that Baldev Singh, he and I were definitely in the list of the 'out'. I told him that it was the right of the leader of the Party to select his own Cabinet colleagues. In England this selection is made in consultation with other Party leaders. In some dominions the Party elects its own Ministers which have to be accepted by the Prime Minister. In my opinion the English system is the best.

1951 also saw the difference between Nehru and Tandon reaching a climax. Nehru had joined the Working Committee of the Congress after considerable persuasion. Tandon had taken Mohanlal Gautam, an opponent of Nehru in the U.P. politics, as his General Secretary. The U.P. quarrels spread all over India's politics because of Nehru. I attended a meeting of the All India Congress Committee held in Bangalore in 1951 to draft the Congress Election Manifesto. The one presented for our approval was so loosely drafted that it gave Muslims representation in proportion to population. This very principle had been successfully opposed by us at the time

of the Nehru-Liaquat Pact. The economic part of it was equally loosely worded. I moved amendments in regard to both these points which were accepted. In the meantime, some members decided to have a resolution regarding the differences between the President of the Congress, Tandon, and the Prime Minister, Nehru and it was decided to discuss it in a closed session. The intention of this resolution was indirectly to express no confidence in Nehru. This secret session met in the big hall of the old Residency. I told Rajaji that whatever the fate of the resolution, its result would be more disaffection and chaos in politics. He agreed and I suggested that I should move a resolution to suspend discussion on the resolution. He liked the idea and I moved it accordingly. I spoke for half an hour and explained what would follow the approval or rejection of the resolution. If approved the differences between the Prime Minister and the President of the Congress would become public and there would be further confusion in the country's political life. If rejected, there would be countrywide agitation, may be non-violent, against Tandon which would lead to an internecine struggle. I argued that this kind of development at the very dawn of freedom was most regrettable and dangerous and asked those gathered there to support my suggestion. Rajaji seconded the resolution as 'very wise'. None of the opponents was sure of the trend of possible voting on the original resolution and therefore my suggestion was accepted unanimously. My guess is that the resolution would have been passed and Nehru taking into account what had happened during the election of the President, would have threatened to resign. That danger was avoided. But Nehru's supporters did not rest there. The Congress politics again inflamed in July-August. Lacking a sportsman's spirit, Nehru could not forget that Tandon's election was a defeat for himself. A common theme of his speeches became, increasingly, a rebuke to the Hindus and the supporters of Hindi and their so-called obscurantism. Sometimes his observations lapsed into personal criticisms. Till then he was free from such lapses. As a consequence, a demand was made for a meeting of the AICC for the express purpose of

moving a resolution asking for Tandon's resignation.

This extra session of the AICC met in Delhi in September of that year. The partisans of both had pitched their camps in Delhi two days before the session. Even Government officers joined in discreet canvassing for votes. A day before the meeting, Mishra of Madhya Pradesh phoned me to ask how Maharashtra was going to vote. I told him that more than half of the Maharashtrians would vote for Nehru. He was banking on the Bihar and Uttar Pradesh members to vote for Tandon. I told him that all of them would vote against Tandon and he (Mishra) should decide his next step with that in view. He phoned me that night to tell me that Tandon was resigning. The next day the meeting was to have been held in the Constitution Hall. Milling crowds had gathered outside. Brijlal Biyani had brought lorry loads of people from Nagpur. As soon as the meeting came to order, Tandon's letter of resignation was read without a moment's delay and accepted. Mohanlal also resigned. Immediately another resolution, calling for a Congress session in October was moved and passed.

The All India Congress session was held in Delhi in October 1951. The specially erected pandal for it was burnt the previous day, but re-erected within twelve hours. Obviously, it was done with the help of Government machinery. Nehru was elected the President. His was the only name proposed. He thought that his defeat in the election of Tandon was thus avenged.

I once observed to Gobind Ballabh Pant about this whole episode: 'All of you insisted on electing Tandon as the President but abandoned him when he was the victim of an injustice.' His response was: 'The world is like that.' I was most disappointed by such a callous observation. The question raised by Tandon was of fundamental importance. What should be the relationship between the Party and the Cabinet? Should the Party determine and direct the Ministry's policies or should it only be an election machine and publicity agent of the Ministers? The convention in Britain is to elect the Chairman or President of the Party, as distinct from the

leader of the Legislative Party, every year. The Conservative, Labour or Liberal Party meets in a general session every year and passes resolutions on the policy to be pursued the following year. The Party elects its Working or Executive Committee of which the leader of the legislative wing of the Party is ex-officio member, which means the Prime Minister if the Party is in power. The Cabinet does not go against the general policy of the Party and the Party does not interfere in the day-to-day administration of the Ministry. The Party looks after the elections also. The elected members form their own Legislative Party whose members are alert and see that the Ministry or the Cabinet does not deviate from the general policies of the Party as a whole. The Party in opposition too has what is called a 'shadow cabinet' which is composed of possible future ministers from the elected members of the Opposition Party. These members of this shadow Cabinet speak on subjects which are allotted to them. That is why the discussions in the British Parliament are interesting and enlightening.

The Indian National Congress was a fighting militant force before freedom. Therefore the need for discipline then was greater. After freedom, innumerable difficulties have arisen out of the decision to make the Congress Party a conglomeration of the people of all views. It continues to be a national forum even today containing members of different views and persuations. There are no standards required for becoming a member. Only a quarter rupee coin is required and this coin pleases the Congress god. If the Congress were to become a Party with a definite platform, Indian politics would take a different turn. It was not so in 1951 and is not so today. The result has been that the Prime Minister of India has become all powerful. At the top of it, if he is the President of the Congress at the same time, his power becomes absolute. He nominates the Working Committee. That was the position in 1951 and as a result, differences of opinion did not get an airing in the Working Committee.

Another wing of the Congress is the All India Congress Committee. This is a good forum for discussion. But if the

President happened to be the Prime Minister also, as was the case in 1951, controlling all patronage and all appointments, only a few dared oppose him. His will determined whether one got the election ticket or not. The Parliamentary and Legislative members have also an organisation in which the Prime Minister or the Chief Minister explains his policies. This Legislative wing elects its own executive committee and the Prime Minister explains his policies to it also. Occasionally opposition is voiced, but by and large the speeches are designed to please the Prime Minister whose favour can endow one with positions of power. As the Prime Minister alone can decide who should or should not be in the Ministry, opposition to him is strictly limited. Under such circumstances it is rare indeed to get a Prime Minister scrupulous enough to respect the democratic practices. Within limits Nehru was a democrat, particularly if undemocratic behaviour affected his power, but normally he imposed his will on others. Samyukt Maharashtra is a significant illustration of this. It was because of this that he did not favour a man of sturdy independence and strong views as the Congress President. That is why he was opposed to Tandon. Besides, many of us did not approve of some of the views of Tandon. That is why I said to Pant that the fundamental question had been left undecided. Even today it remains so. So long as some ground rules are not laid to determine the relations between the organisational and legislative wings of a Party in power, democracy would be in danger, and administration, inefficient and corrupt.

The first Cabinet had good opportunity to set some wholesome constitutional precedents. It was, however, sadly missed. Similarly, it failed to understand that there are people and countries which become your enemies without rhyme or reason, howsoever friendly you may be and, therefore, a country must organise its defences and industrial complexes accordingly. The Planning Commission did not display such a foresight and a powerful minister could take the lion's share of industries and other works for his own ministry. Even today, the same sorry state of affairs continues. Few industries

have been located with due consideration to the availability of raw material, transport facilities, labour situation etc. The greatest curse of modern civilization is the urbanisation of the country. The end of the last war clearly saw that the villages were being denuded and a steady stream of men was rushing towards the cities. The growth of huge cities inevitably leads to indiscipline, social crimes, a loosening of traditional ties and conventions and a loss of the sense of moral responsibility. Delhi has been experiencing all this. During my five years as a minister, I must have planned the shifting of many offices out of Delhi and arranged for their accommodation elsewhere half a dozen times. But every time pressure was exerted on behalf of this or that department or ministry. As a result, barring a very small number of minor offices, no worthwhile relief could be given to the bulging city. On the contrary, quite a few new departments and offices came to be located in Delhi. When I was pressed to locate the Road Research Institute in Delhi, I told the officer concerned, Dr. Bhatnagar: 'The only research you will do in the Institute will be to find which was the shortest road to the residence of the Prime Minister.' In 1947 attempt was made to take the Central Water and Power Research Station from Khadakwasla, Poona, to Delhi. I was not a Minister at the time but was in the Standing Finance Committee. The Station remained in Poona by the casting vote of Liaquat Ali who was then Finance Member of undivided India. After I became a Minister, I sanctioned a crore of rupees for its expansion.

The same Standing Committee discussed the question of the Military Engineering College of Kirkee and the National Defence Academy of Khadakwasla. Liaquat Ali agreed to keep the M. E. College in Kirkee on my request, but he wanted to take the N.D.A. to Punjab. I told him that as the question of the partition of India was likely to be decided in a few months, the question should be kept pending, and he agreed. Otherwise, a decision to remove the N.D.A. to Punjab would have been taken at the same time *i.e.*, March 1947. In 1949, Dr Mathai, the Finance Minister, was not willing to sanction any amount for the construction of buildings for the Academy.

But I pressed for it in the Cabinet and H. M. Patel, the then Defence Secretary, did likewise. We got sanction for a nominal sum of 5 to 10 lakhs and within two months Nehru laid its foundation stone.

I suggested to Vallabhbhai that there should not be a concentration of all ministries and offices in the capital, and that we should have an alternative capital in case of war. He approved of the idea. We were thinking of Mhow near Indore or Nasik at the time. Both places have an equable climate. Patel and I even inspected the sites. I sanctioned the placing of the new Security Press in Nasik which was built in good time. Two more offices were to have been removed from Delhi, but I was no longer in the Cabinet and the plan was dropped. In fact, the Punjabis and Bengalis in the Central Secretariat were opposed to an alternative capital and Nehru himself was none too enthusiastic about it.

Many other problems cropped up during those five years in the Cabinet. A member of the Cabinet is primarily responsible for administration, then follows his responsibility for the legislative work, and last his responsibility to the politics of the country. I contributed extensively to Marathi and English papers from this viewpoint during this period. I also gave my attention to questions vital to Maharashtra and tried to obtain as much assistance from the Centre as possible.

In this connection, it would not be out of place to refer to the Dangs controversy. Kher and Morarji had definitely said that the language of Dangs was Marathi. But the Gujarati capitalists were attracted by the forest wealth of Dangs and were trying hard to include it in Gujarat. When the Parliament discussed the delimitation of constituencies in 1951, it was proposed that Dangs should be included in the Surat district for that purpose. The concerned Committee was divided on it, but somehow it did recommend it. Vallabhbhai was dead when this particular question was discussed in Parliament. As opinions were sharply divided, the matter came up before the Cabinet. I placed before them the detailed history of Dangs. Maniben, daughter of Vallabhbhai, had

canvassed a number of ministers and, in brief, the question was linked with the prestige of Vallabhbhai. I pleaded that justice should be done and nobody's prestige need be involved. As for myself, I said, I was ready to resign so that my personal prestige would not be involved and I could speak freely in Parliament. The Cabinet took no decision. Later it was decided to appoint a Committee of three to arbitrate, to which Shankarrao Deo and Hirey readily agreed. I did not agree. Dr Ambedkar advised me to agree if the arbitrators were absolutely impartial. The Government appointed Tek Chand, a former Justice, Father D'Souza and Prof. Mukherji, who later became the Governor of Bengal, as the members of the Arbitration Committee. I placed before it the Maharashtra view-point. Deogirikar had prepared all the figures and the detailed history. Gujarat was represented by Munshi. Thus the Arbitration Committee saw two members of the same Cabinet arguing before them from opposite sides. The Arbitrators heard us and within two hours gave their decision that Dangs should be included in the Nasik district for the time being. This decision led to some terrible propaganda in the area by the Gujarat Congress. The 1956 Act made Bombay a bi-lingual State, but Dangs was completely neglected by the Maharashtrian ministers of Bombay as well as by the Maharashtra Congress Committee and the Samyukt Maharashtra Samiti made a pact with the leaders of Gujarat awarding Dangs to Gujarat. I told one of the leaders of the Samiti, S. M. Joshi, that the Samiti had presented Dangs to Gujarat on a platter. When Samyukt (United) Maharashtra was created in 1960, no one remembered Dangs and the poor people of Dangs were sacrificed at the altar of politics. I once observed in a speech: 'Gujarat gave up its demand for Bombay, and Dangs was presented to it like a Sari presented to the bride's mother.' There is no Marathi school there now and Gujarati has been made compulsory. Sacrifices in a good cause are accepted as a matter of duty, but in the case of Dangs, history will record that the Maharashtrian leaders betrayed their solemn pledge to the helpless people of that area.

EPILOGUE

I WAS SWORN in as the Minister of Works, Power and Mines on 15th August, 1947. My tenure as Minister ended on 12th May 1952. I returned the small national flag meant for my car and the plate of the national emblem to the Cabinet Secretariat. The same day I returned a truckload of 'secret' documents and files which had accumulated with me. When I looked at the huge pile of papers in the lorry, I could not believe that I had gone through so many papers during the last five years. All sorts of statements, reports, cabinet meeting notes, fortnightly reports from India's representatives abroad, weather reports, in brief, the record of everything that had happened during the last five years in India and about India in the world was preserved in those files. The general elections had taken place in January, 1952, and I was elected to the Parliament from the Poona City, Haveli, Dhond and Sirur constituency. During the election campaign I had toured the whole of Maharashtra, including my own constituency. The electorate at the time was bigger than what it was in 1947. There were about 85,000 electors in 1947, which were spread over seven districts, both in the East and West Khandesh, Nasik, Nagar, Poona and Satara. Hirey and I were the Congress candidates at the time and Bhopatkar was one of our rivals. Our slogan in that election was 'On to Delhi' and there was little, if any, opposition to us. In the districts of Khandesh and Nasik our election tours were strewn with welcome garlands and the remaining four districts too offered little opposition. The number of khadi yarn garlands was so

large that like Shankaracharya, we divided them between us, those received in areas north of the Godavari were kept by Hirey and those from the south of the river were kept by me.

In contrast, the 1952 electorate consisted of 3,80,000 voters. The area was small, but the number was large because of adult franchise. Then we had to search for the voter, but now everyone above 21 years was a voter. Thus 'God was represented by every human being.' As a result, everyone whom we met and wherever we met him, in houses, institutions, restaurants, bus stops, railway compartment, was a voter and we had experience of real 'mass contact.' We had not to tell the voter what the Congress would do if elected, but what it had already done. A learned man is to be recognised by his performance and not by his promises. Therefore I explained in hundreds of meetings what the Congress had done, especially for the country's prosperity. There was opposition. I myself was opposed by Jedhe on behalf of the Peasants and Workers Party, and S. M. Joshi on behalf of the Socialist Party. Both were old colleagues and personal friends and I had instructed my canvassers to observe the utmost restraint in canvassing. Opposition was there, but it had no moral backbone.

Jedhe spoke often but he never introduced communalism in his speeches. Occasionally he was bitter, but I myself had said that Keshavrao (Jedhe) was incapable of abuse. When abuse came out of his mouth, it became piquant criticism. Nehru too spoke in the elections on the Fergusson College grounds and he too dealt with principles only. I also followed, in and out of my constituency, the same principle of avoiding personalities and speaking on principles only. Often the meetings were held in villages and Jedhe and I spoke in the same meeting. Jedhe used to criticise the Congress harshly, but I confined myself only to the factual account of what the Congress had done during the previous five years and refrained from 'replying' to him.

Two days before the day of voting, he came to me in the evening after having had his meals with my daughter and said 'It was wrong of me to have contested the elections against

you.' I said, 'Do not be perturbed. There are only fortyeight hours left. Whatever the verdict of the electorate, the friendship between us will remain unaffected.' I won the election and the first garland offered to me was from Keshavrao ! I vetoed the idea of a victory procession. Nor did I allow a public meeting to be held to congratulate me. In fact I left for Delhi the very next day and toured the Punjab and Madhya Bharat for electioneering. I spent nearly a week in the Punjab. All the elections were over by the end of March.

Ever since I returned to Delhi and before all the elections were complete, speculations regarding the new Cabinet were ripe in Delhi. A prominent Congressman from Bombay was busy canvassing for himself. I had not done so before nor I intended to do so now. But I felt that I might not be included in the new Cabinet on account of my differences and criticisms in the Cabinet during the last five years. In the first week of February Mr Malayya came to me and said that he felt that I should accept a gubernatorial post. Mr Malayya was then the secretary of the A.I.C.C. and he considered it his sacred duty to report everything to Nehru. He was believed to carry everything he heard in the lobbies of the Parliament to Nehru and that too with some spice added by himself ! He was a shrewd person and when he suggested a Governorship to me, I knew that he had someone else lined up for my seat in the Cabinet and must have discussed it with Nehru. His suggestion to me was a step in the same direction. I told him that I was not interested in a Governorship but that he should give it to the person for whom he was trying for a Cabinet seat !

Sure enough, Nehru called me on April 6, 1952 and suggested that I should accept the Governorship of Bihar which was a very important industrial State. I told him that there are three instruments for the execution of Government policies : (1) the Cabinet, (2) the Governor, and (3) the representatives abroad, and added that now Parliament had two Houses and the opposition had secured 150 seats which included some communists also. Barring Mukherji, there was none in the opposition who had regard for him. He should

take into account all this and then order me to undertake any work he felt proper. I would not mind if I were not taken in the Cabinet but I would find it difficult to break the promise given to the electorate. My election meant a promise to serve them for five years. He said that he would give thought to my suggestion.

Next day an inspired message appeared in the newspapers that I had agreed to accept a governorship as a disciplined soldier of the Congress. I contradicted the report and said that I was ready to undertake any work in times of national emergency, but normally I would prefer to remain a common member of the Parliament. In the second week of April I returned from Bombay and when Gopalaswamy met me and said that he had heard that I was not being included in the Cabinet, which in his opinion was a grave mistake. I said that it was the prerogative of the Prime Minister to include or exclude whomsoever he liked. On this he offered to speak to Nehru. I told him that he should do so only if he felt it absolutely necessary.

After the death of Vallabhbhai, the Maulana and myself were the only senior colleagues of Nehru left and it is an accepted practice in Parliamentary democracy to consult senior colleagues in the formation of a new Government. I do not think Nehru consulted anyone and the Maulana could not have been hurt by my exclusion !

At the end of April I wrote to Nehru that I would not accept a gubernatorial post. Also I would not mind if I were excluded from the Cabinet. He replied that Bihar was a vital centre for India's prosperity and he wanted a 'first class man' for that State. In this context my name was the first to occur to him and he was keen that I should accept the Governorship of that State. The previous Governor had done well, but work in the industrial sector was not upto his expectations. I replied that I would not be a Governor but was willing to help in any other capacity. He then pressed me to accept it at least for two years and I again declined.

Nehru later sent me a letter thanking me for my cooperation, but it was a formal affair.

On 12th May, 1952, I was free from ministerial responsibilities. Eight days earlier Sri Prakasa, who had accepted the Governorship of Madras, had pressed me to accept Nehru's offer. Aney too had written in a similar vein. To both of them I conveyed my viewpoint.

The Congress failed to get a majority in Madras State in the 1952 elections, but Sri Prakasa who was then the Governor, invited Rajaji to form a Government without consulting Delhi. Rajaji accepted and saved the Congress. I did not expect Rajaji to accept the job, but Gopalaswamy thought that he would definitely accept it. I lost a bet of five rupees to him in this affair.

Later I came to know that after I had definitely declined to go as a Governor, Nehru wanted to include me in the Cabinet. The list of those to be dropped included, among others, Mehtab, Baldev Singh and Jagjivan Ram. But President Rajendra Prasad pressed the name of Jagjivan Ram. As a result he was substituted for me. Rafi Ahmad Kidwai also gave me this information and I said that everything was all right as long as the continuity of the accepted policy was maintained. After the Cabinet had been announced, Nehru asked me if I would accept the membership of the Planning Commission. I wrote that one's acceptance of the membership of the Planning Commission, even an unpaid honorary membership, automatically resulted in vacation of one's seat in the Parliament. He consulted the Law Minister on this who agreed with me and I declined that offer too. I am happy that Nehru appreciated my desire to be faithful to my electorate and I continued to serve the country according to my lights.

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