



Foot Prints on Friendly Roads

E P Menon

**Route Map of the Peace March
1962-65**



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E P Menon

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FOREWORD

I am glad that the revised edition is appearing in the digital form in the 80th year of the United Nations. I was distraught at the devastation caused by the hydrogen bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Inspired by the clarion call given by the great thinker Sir Bertrand Russel, I planned to go on a Peace March and meet the heads of the world's four most powerful nations who held the control on the nuclear option. I am thankful to Satish who walked along with me in the journey which lasted for 2 years and 9 months.

Almost 60 years have passed and there is no reprieve to the nuclear threat. Wars are continuing and humanity is suffering.

I think the time has come for my fellow world citizens to awake and build a new future where the borders remain only on maps and dissolve from the minds and hearts of people; World becomes One Family as envisioned by the oriental thoughts; global governance takes shape of the World Government under a constitution.

In this edition many photos of the peace march have been added. I appreciate the efforts of Murthy, my friend in bringing this digital edition, which can reach my World Family.

Happy Reading ...!!

01st June 2026

E P Menon

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SHATI VANA, NEW DELHI

October 2, 1964

Dear Luda,

Ours is a tragic world. Man has made it so, but he refuses to accept his responsibility. However, this world of ours is wonderful, beautiful, funny, meaningful and worth living in.

This is how I feel today as I sit in a corner of this vast and hallowed place and focus the world on my mental screen—This place as you know, is Shantivana—the Park of Peace—where the mortal remains of a great man was cremated. His memory will, for ever, be cherished by this innumerable countrymen and by the peace-loving peoples in other lands. His philosophy and thought will continue to inspire future generations and serve as a beacon-light in steering the ship of man's destiny.

The mild ripples of the Yamuna are glittering at a distance as the golden rays of the infant sun fall on them.

Here comes a man with a bit of cloth on his loins. He is the symbol of India and represents the masses of this country. The great man whose spirit is hovering over this spot had willed that a part of his ashes be carried high up into the air in an aeroplane and scattered from that height over the fields where the peasants of India toil, so that they might mingle with the dust and soil of India and become an indistinguishable part of

India. This peasant who has been walking towards the Samadhi is one such as was always in the mind of the departed soul. He has a bundle under his arm, an axe in one hand and a bunch of flowers in the other. His hair is bushy and his beard thick. His swollen eyes gaze at the Samadhi (grave) decorated with thousands of roses. Bare-footed he walks slowly and steadily towards the hallowed spot. Laying aside his bundle and axe, he approaches the Samadhi and with adoration places the flowers on it. Then he prostrates on the ground paying his homage simultaneously to his Master and Mother Earth. Tears well up in his eyes and drop down. He kisses the wet earth again. He gets up. With folded hands and bowed head he performs pradakshina, the reverential salutation according to Indian tradition by circumambulating the Samadhi. As he does this he lies prostrate again and again on all the four sides of the Samadhi.

Half an hour has passed. After prostrating again he goes up to take his things and slowly moves away.

At this juncture my mind goes back to that unforgettable night of the 14th of March 1963. you had asked me to tell you all about it, besides the "entire story of the peace march."

* * * * *

That memorable Moscow night.....There was no moon that night If she were there, the scene would have been different. For in summer the moon-lit Moscow River attracts thousands of men and women from all corners of the world. There they can spend the short summer nights listening to the murmuring melody of the silent flow of the river.

To us there was the Red Star over the Kremlin tower. Though brilliant and high up in the sky, it could not draw people out into the freezing streets and boulevards below. Except the fierceness of the merciless winter with its snow and frost there was nothing else for us to appreciate by the riverside. At that time everyone would wish to curl himself in his cosy bed in the air-conditioned apartment. So it was natural you wondered why we dared to dash towards the unknown at 7 p.m. when the mercury had dropped down to 30 degrees C. below the freezing point and when warm and comfortable beds had been spread for us in Hotel Budapest where we had stayed for a month.

To dash from the known to the unknown! This has been the characteristic striving of every restless explorer. The untravelled world beckons to men of action. All achievements of man can be traced to his thirst for unending quests.

Slava said “dosvidanya” (good bye) and pulled into a taxi back home at 9-30. He couldn’t wish “spakoinai noch” (a good night of sleep) to us for he saw the broad Warsaw highway disappearing into the dark depth of night. He was worried of our dash towards the unknown.

Pitch dark it was in front. Illuminated was the city behind. Our feet froze inside our shoes. Yet our minds were determined to go ahead. But the body frantically sought refuge by the fireside. There was a trolley-bus terminal station on the right side of the road. We knocked at the door.

Opening the door with an air of surprise and warmly welcoming us, a middle-aged woman, the booking clerk, drew a wooden bench near the fireplace for us. She broke the silence after two minutes.

“A few days ago I saw your photos in the papers. Where are you going?”

“Now we are going to Paris—our next destination.”

“But why now, in this dreadful night?”

“We had decided to start this evening. So we did, though we were late. Can you let us spend the night, here, on these benches?”

“It will be very difficult and uncomfortable for you. Moreover, I have to close the office and go home after midnight.” She paused for a while and then said, “Well, I shall take you to my place, all right?”

“Okay,” we assented. Her place was a mile away. It was then that I phoned you up to bid good-bye. As we did not have time to take leave of all whom we had made friends with during our month’s stay in Moscow, I went on dialling to one after the other.

“Seems lots of people are worried about you?” Her curiosity had been excited a great deal.

It was a pity that you and Masha had to search for us in vain by a taxi. Let me confess, it was indeed possible for us to accept your invitation to spend the night at the University; but we felt we had better stick to our motto : ‘Once forward , never back.’

“Or would you mind staying in a hotel? I have talked to the director of the Hotel Ukraina.” The pleasant stout lady came forward with a suggestion after half an hour.

“But you see.....”, we said after a little hesitation, “we have no money.”

“Never mind . Money is not important in our society.” And she took the decision. By midnight we found ourselves comfortably settled in a luxurious and, for that matter, the biggest hotel in the whole of Europe and Russia, with 1500 suites and rooms. _The past, present and future did not disturb my mind in the least. In the course of five minutes I sank into a restful sleep, Nature’s second course as the great bard put it.

* * * * *

Ah! Here comes up another unforgettable day deep down from my memory.-It is a contrast, as far as nature is concerned. To course through contrasts is a joy indeed.

“Hello, a moment please. Where are you heading to?” Hearing this strange voice in a unexpected place surrounded by rocks, shrubs and hills, we turned back and saw a big Chevrolet silently halting behind. A tall, stout and pleasant-looking gentleman got down along with two ladies and another man with a nicely cut mustache.

“We are going to Washington”, we replied.

“Washington D.C.? You mean the United States?”

Dr. Scarf stood in astonishment with a curious eye-

brow. “Are you serious?”

“Indeed, we are serious. But first we are going to Moscow and then to Washington.”

In the meantime Dr. Ziserman was pondering over something. “Yeah, I remember to have read something of this sort while in India just a month ago.”

“Well boys”, the former heaved a sigh. “If at all you reach the United States try to remember us. Here is my telephone number. We live on your way to Washington.” The gentleman wrote down. Mrs. Scarf meanwhile had taken a snap-shot of ours.

“Why not come with us to Kabul?”

“No, thanks. We shall reach that place after a week.”

“Good bye. Wish you the best of luck.” And they sped away.

It was in the Khyber pass. Though lightly clad we were awfully sweating. The blazing sun of July did not have any mercy on the two ‘Indian’ Peace Marchers and the four ‘Pakistani’ body-guards. (On the last day of our stay in Pakistan the Government was “concerned” about-our safety, for we were passing through the “no-man’s-land”)

After nineteen months, one shivering snowy midnight, when the beautiful city of Philadelphia was living its indoor life, I picked up the telephone.

“Dr. Scarf, do you remember two chaps you met in the Khyber pass?”

A pause for a few moments, “Ah! Certainly. Did you make it?”

“Yes, we did doctor. We want to see you sometime tomorrow. How is your health?”

“Tomorrow is too far. I want to see you right now. I’ am fine.”

Within a few minutes the sixty year old doctor dashed to our host’s, where a youth-group-discussion was in progress, to take us to his flat. While enjoying the midnight coffee and crisp American ginger cookies, the two doctor couples also wanted to hear everything about our Peace March.

The birth of an idea

It was in the month of September 1961, I explained. The pleasant morning breeze of Bangalore was exhilarating. As I sat sipping a cup of hot coffee a news-item caught my eye. It gripped the whole of my imagination. It was a call of the conscience of humanity, it was a voice of sanity. It was from behind iron bars; it was from a man of ninetyone.

“To all, in whatever country who are still capable of sane thinking or human feeling” : cried Bertrand Russell.

“Along with my valued colleagues I am to be silenced for a time—perhaps for ever, for who can tell how soon the great massacre will take place?

The populations of East and West, misled by stubborn governments in search of prestige and by corrupt official experts bent on retaining their posts, tamely acquiesce in policies which are almost certain to end in nuclear war.

There are supposed to be two sides, each professing to stand for a great cause. This is a delusion - Kennedy and Krushchev, Adenauer and De Gaulle, Macmillan and Gaitskell are pursuing a common aim : the ending of human life.

You, your families, your friends and your countries are to be exterminated by the common decision of a few brutal but powerful men. To please these men, all the private affections, all the public hopes, all that

has been achieved in art and knowledge and thought and all that might be achieved hereafter is to be wiped out forever.

Our ruined lifeless planet will continue for countless ages to circle aimlessly round the sun unredeemed by the joys and loves, the occasional wisdom and the power to create beauty which have given value to human life.

It is for seeking to prevent this that we are in prison.

At any moment of any day the slightest miscalculation can bring nuclear war. Rockets are poised at a few minutes' notice. H-bombers are continually in the air, radar is totally unreliable. Radioactivity kills and maims, our children. War is always imminent.

To use the vast scheme of mass murder, which is being prepared, nominally for our protection, but in fact for universal extermination, is a horror and an abomination. We call upon people everywhere to rise against this monstrous tyranny.

We call upon scientists to refuse work on nuclear weapons. We call upon workers to boycott all work connected with them and to use their industrial strength in the struggle for life. We will not tolerate the incineration of human beings because governments are occupied with idiotic matter of prestige.

Therefore, while life remains to us, we will not cease to do what lies in our power to avert the greatest calamity that has ever threatened mankind."

This appeal to awake, to arise and to act or be

prepared to perish went straight into my heart like an arrow and shook my whole being. After all, what was the crime committed by Russell and his sixteen hundred young colleagues on the 9th of September? They merely raised their voice of reason and took to nonviolent civil disobedience against nuclear weapons in Trafalgar Square and Holy Loch. "Nonviolent civil disobedience was forced upon us by the fact that it was more fully reported than other methods of making the facts known, and that caused people to ask what had induced us to adopt such a course of action", says Bertrand Russell. "We who are here accused are prepared to suffer imprisonment because we believe that this is the most effective way of working for the salvation of our country and the world. If you condemn us you will be helping our cause, and therefore humanity."

Every human being on this planet of ours has, down the ages, made his contribution knowingly or unknowingly, directly or indirectly, towards the furtherance of culture and civilization. With the dawn of the atomic age we have come to a stage where there are only two ways before us, total annihilation or survival. Therefore, to build the edifice of world-peace every one must accept a personal responsibility and contribute his humble mite.

What can be done by an ordinary individual? How to proceed?.....Questions cropped up in my mind one after the other. The days were gloomy and the nights long.

It was during that period a group of pacifists drawn voluntarily from the United States, U.K., Germany, Sweden and some other countries marched across

U.S.A. and through the heart of Europe in order to reach Moscow. Under the auspices of the National Committee for Non-violent Action, New York, half a dozen young and active men and women had left San Francisco in the beginning of 1961 for Washington and Moscow in order to demand unilateral abolition of all nuclear weapons and take positive steps for disarmament. By the time they reached Moscow, making 6000 miles on foot, plunging into the sea because the French Government refused to allow them to trek through their country, their number increased to more than thirty. By October they reached Moscow and conducted successfully a huge demonstration in the Red Square.

Here was an example of how common people could act and arouse public enthusiasm and conscience. Why should I not start from New Delhi and march to the four big capitals of the world—Moscow, Paris, London and Washington?

Thus the spark of an idea flickered on the mental horizon giving rise to a train of thoughts for days together. At last I decided to write to Russell and seek his opinion. Without any delay his answer came.

From: The Earl Russell, O.M., F.R.S.,
PLAS PENRHYN,
PENRHYNDEUDRAETH,
MERIONETH.
TEL. PENRHYNDEUDRAETH 242.
30th December, 1961.

E.P. Menon Esq.,
International Sarvodaya Centre,
Bangalore 9 India.

Dear Mr. Menon,

Thank you for your letter of November the 2nd, which Michael Randle has already replied to. I am most encouraged by your inspiring idea of organising a march from New Delhi to Washington and Moscow. I am sure that the enormous difficulties of this project have not escaped you: in my view they would merely make more dramatic and meaningful such an action. When you are able to give me fuller details, I feel confident that we can arrange support and publicity for you, and that I shall be able to send you my personal good wishes.

Yours sincerely,
Bertrand Russell
Bertrand Russell.

5/1/62

Bradford Lyttle is a young and energetic man of high principles and ideological conviction. Attracted by Gandhiji's life and activities, he came to India and worked for a couple of years in Sevagram and other places during the fifties. Being the co-ordinator of the San Francisco to Moscow March his experience was of much value. Hence he wrote to me on the 17th of December, from New York :

Dear Mr. Menon,

Your letter of December 11 is at hand. I support in principle your plan to have a march from Delhi to Moscow and Washington. I know the walk is an enormous one.

The San Francisco to Moscow March for Peace required ten months and cost 55,000 dollars. This is a great deal of money even for Americans. The project was, at all times, an experiment and involved enormous risks. We might never have reached Moscow; several times I could not see how we could.

To be successful, with a vision like yours, you must be determined that you are the only person to do the march. It still will be done. You will seek brave and honest people to work with you and march with you. Famous and intelligent people are no help if they are not brave and honest. Plan as carefully as you can. But don't permit imaginary obstacles to prevent you from starting.

Yours sincerely,

Sd/-

B. Lyttle.

To take a decision is more difficult than to plunge into action. There was apprehension in my mind about the project. Conflicting emotions raged in the mind.

After all, I thought, there are human beings like me everywhere in the world. Then there cannot be any difference between me and them in our basic qualities. All the barriers between them and me are artificially created. Once we are able to remove these barriers from our minds we will be a part of one universe. So what we need is faith and confidence in the basic goodness in man. Thus one fine morning that final decision was taken to walk into the hearts of nations, to meet the common masses, to live their life from every angle, to speak to them heart to heart, to express my sincere feelings to the big politicians in whose hands mankind has invested unlimited power, which may, at a moment of nervousness, denote the dawn of utter annihilation.

In search of a Companion

"If no one comes with you, walk alone, walk alone." Tagore still lives in the hearts of many, giving courage and inspiration. Even though I had decided to walk alone at any cost, to have a companion was better. After all, isn't it a great happiness to share even achievement with some one?

Noshir Bilpodiwala, a close friend of mine, was living 700 miles away in Poona, engaged in various activities with a single-minded devotion to work for a radical constructive revolution in India.

To him I wrote :

“.....You are the first person whom I am contacting to get your definite viewpoint in this regard.....Well, if you feel like it, please let me know whether you could be one of the marchers.

Please, for a moment, don't be under the impression that we haven't got anything else to do right under our noses. We have got many urgent problems immediately to consider of course. But this is one of the most important problems facing mankind today—the nuclear bomb. Hence I gave preference to this—that's all.”

Without delay his answer reached me :

“.....It is possible to undertake this venture, particularly when the American marchers have walked from San Francisco to Moscow. However, I don't know what you will achieve.”

He could not make up his mind immediately.

Two years later he realized that “these two young idealists may not have achieved any spectacular results but they have created a sense of indignation among the people they met, at the rising stockpile of deadly nuclear weapons. They have been able to throw light upon the fact that ‘bread is better than. bomb’ and that it is better to remain alive in the old fashioned way than to be killed by civilized and progressive means.”

A couple of other immediate friends were also approached but somehow or the other none of them

could come to a decision and join me.

Meanwhile Satish Kumar came to Bangalore from Banares where he was working as an assistant to the editor of a weekly journal of the Bhoodan Movement. He wanted to work with us in the International Centre we were planning to organize in the beautiful suburb of Bangalore with a view to building up a world-community with a world outlook where everyone would be concerned with the welfare and happiness of everyone.

If I dive into the depths of memory, one horrible afternoon of June 1956 could be easily picked up. Even though the merciless sun used to take a toll of someone by his stroke in the famous city of Gaya, life was in full swing there. The vegetable vendors shouted at the passers-by announcing their prices for the dry potatoes and brinjals. Figures of feminine flesh with youthful blood had started their usual make-up to sit in balconies and search for the hungry eyes among the floating population in the dusty streets. Bare, black and lean legs were toiling on the pedals of cycle-rikshaws which were wending through the indisciplined stray crowds on the roads. A young man of nineteen with a vacant look and a bare body wrapped up in a white shawl entered a small restaurant and occupied a seat opposite to me. I was sipping my favourite cup of tea with a few companions. Our eyes met.

A couple of days later he dropped into my office for some work and that became the beginning of a friendship which has lasted through many a turbulent wave around the world.

“My name is Satish Kumar. I live in Bodhgaya.” He had introduced himself to me. His peculiar way of talking and doing things and his appearance like one who was away from his surroundings puzzled me. However, as days passed he revealed himself more and more.

Three hundred miles West of Delhi, near Bikaner, in a village surrounded by the desert, in an orthodox religious family of businessmen he saw the light of the world, upon which Hitler’s ambition had begun throwing its shadows. Dipped in various seas of superstition his parents didn’t take any care to put him in school. Our youngest son, they thought, must become a true devotee of the Lord Mahavira who had renounced the world, full of selfishness and sorrow and sought the path of non-violence to become perfect. Therefore, at the age of nine Satish was deprived of the opportunity of enjoying the gay and beautiful life of boyhood and was shut inside the four walls of a monastery with all its rigorous, unnatural, ridiculous superstition. To pluck whole tufts of hair from the head with his fingers, to eat in the same bowl which was used the previous night as a urinal, to sleep like a flock of sheep in the same room, to eat lots of rich and luxurious food given in alms by the so-called ‘devotees,’ to preach to women about the chastity of womanhood and to rob the same in serene secrecy, to look down at the world and sit upon the throne of sham saintliness—all these rituals turned to be unbearable to Satish and a couple of his friends, particularly when the real knowledge of the world and the great ideas of thinkers like Marx and Gandhi shed their rays of awakening on their yet immature minds. Nine long years had rolled by when one night they decided to escape from the dark world of make-

believe and hypocrisy into the real world with all its ups and downs, colour and glamour.

“Can you imagine, for nine years I did not take a bath even.”

“Then what happened, how did you get to Bodhgaya?” I asked.

“Yes, I come to the point,” continued Satish. “Though I and my friends were chased by monks and their agents in Delhi and some other places, we managed to get rid of them. At last wandering here and there I reached Bodhgaya hearing that there was an Ashram there.”

At that time two or three intellectuals had started a farm where manual labour and other constructive activities, on the lines suggested by Gandhiji were to be implemented. Satish joined them and thus his path of life took a new turn.

* * * * *

“Are you interested in such a project?” I asked Satish while we were sitting in a coffee house of Bangalore one pleasant afternoon.

“Yes, I am. But you know.....”

“Yes, I know. You mean what your wife would say?”

“You are right. However, let us try to explain to her. If she permits, I will be happy to join the march.”

“By the by,” he continued, “I don’t know English or any other foreign language. Nor have I the capacity to

organize things.”

“You don’t have to worry about anything. In due course you will pick up the languages too. I’ll manage everything. Moreover there are many friends abroad who will help us in conducting the march,” I said.

Bradford Lytle is a young and energetic man of high principles and ideological conviction. Attracted by Gandhiji’s life and activities, he came to India and worked for a couple of years in Sevagram and other places during the fifties. Being the co-ordinator of the San Francisco to Moscow March his experience was of much value. Hence he wrote to me on the 17th of December, from New York :

“Any way, why don’t you also write a letter to my wife? After all, she knows you are a good friend of mine.”

“I can do so,” I agreed. I was afraid if it would be a bitter pill to swallow. Still one mustn’t hesitate to bell the cat.

A week passed. Like a huge stone on still waters a letter from Mrs. Satish Kumar disturbed the tranquility of my mind.

“You are, indeed, a very kind friend! It is hardly a year since you showered your choicest blessings on the occasion of our marriage. And now.....it is better you come here with a dagger in hand.....”

With agony and in confusion, I walked into Satish’s and said; “Naturally I deserve this.....”

“Never mind, Bhaijan,” he said and started consoling me. “I shall go to her personally, and I know she is

quite intelligent to understand everything. After all, our country has given birth to many brave women in the past. Wait and see.”

A week later Satish packed up his baggage and set out for Hinganghat in order to procure the ‘first passport’ from his better-half.

“Well, I succeeded in my mission.” Satish reported after a fortnight. “But let us wait for three more months till the baby is born.” And we waited for the arrival of a new member into our atomic age.

Our Manifesto

In the meantime we went on with other preparations. The first thing was to draw up a manifesto explaining as to why we were marching. We wanted to tell the common people everywhere :

(1) It is time for the ordinary man to think that the destiny of humanity rests in his hands, provided the matter is no longer left in the hands of intoxicated politicians.

(2) It is time for the common man to express his vehement protest through words and deeds against the reckless and cruel misuse of the abundance of techno-scientific knowledge which is meant for the promotion of a peaceful, prosperous and happy life for man.

(3) It is on the lives of the miserable masses that the present sophisticated system of authoritarian

Government is built which runs the affairs of society on the basis of Violence, Suppression and Exploitation.

(4) The incalculable miseries of the hungry, naked and the homeless millions all over the world can be wiped out for ever if the wealth produced is not utilized for the massive preparation for human slaughter and destruction.

(5) The survival of humanity is possible only when each and everyone thinks in terms of a World Community thereby sinking the nasty and narrow mental barriers of language, caste, creed, race, religion and nationality etc. which constitute the death-blow to all human relations.

(6) We are equally opposed to the armaments of East and West.

To the politicians and men in authority we demanded:

(1) All nations which possess nuclear weapons must unconditionally agree to sink all such weapons into the ocean for ever.

(2) All governments must agree that no more nuclear weapons shall be manufactured and tested in future.

(3) All nations, big and small alike, must declare unilateral and total disarmament.

(4) All governments must adopt programs of d and diplomacy based on non-violent action.

(5) Every Nation must co-operate in the founding World Government, without which the futt humanity seems to be in eternal darkness.

(6) People want Bread, not Bombs.

Inspiration and Opinions

Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, the then Vice-President of India, was one of the most distinguished persons to inspire us.

On the 17th of February 1962, he wrote to me (letter on the page 30- Editor).

Then I sought the opinion of our beloved Prime Minister, Nehru and requested : “On the 14th of this month, the day when the Disarmament Conference starts at Geneva, we would like to announce to the world our proposed peace-march. Therefore a few words from you are most eagerly awaited.” Just three hours before the press conference we had called on the 11th of March 1962, his message came :(letter on page 31- Editor).

Pandit Sunderlal, the Chairman of the All India Peace Council and member of the Centrel Committee of the World Peace Council inspired us quoting the Bhagawad Gita, on the 15th of April :

“..... No effort in this direction can be lost. There is no turning back. Even a little of this duty performed saves one from great dangers.....”

Another statesman of India, a vehement opponent of the nuclear bombs and arms-race wrote on the 30th April :



VICE-PRESIDENT
INDIA
NEW DELHI
17 February, 1962.

Dear Mr. Menon,

Thank you for your letter of the 13th inst.

I appreciate the intensity of your conviction that the future of humanity depends on the establishment of World Government and abolition of nuclear weapons.

The knowledge of this very desirable goal is wide-spread, but the will to implement it in practice is not found to the same extent. If your attempts are likely to educate public opinion and make the ordinary man and woman feel that the leaders in whose hands the future of humanity today rests should be educated, your task will have been a very rewarding one. Wish you all the best.

Yours sincerely,

(Signature)
(S. Radhakrishnan).

Shri E.P. Menon,
International Sarvodaya Centre,
Gandhinagar, Bangalore-9.

19/2/62

No. 415-PMH/62

प्रधान मंत्री भवन
PRIME MINISTER'S HOUSE
NEW DELHI
March 11, 1962

Dear Shri Menon,

I have received your letter of the 7th March. Reading it, I experienced conflicting emotions. I like your idealism and your courage to act up to your convictions. At the same time, it is not clear to me what effect they produce.

However, one thing is certain, that is that we must try our utmost to convince people of the madness of nuclear warfare, and try to get nations to agree to disarmament.

Yours sincerely,

(Signature)

Shri E.P. Menon,
International Sarvodaya Centre,
Gandhinagar,
BANGALORE 9.

13/3/62

“Dear Sir,

Thank you for your letter of April 28.

Excuse me saying that I do not see the utility of the march you propose except the satisfaction associated with seeing the world and of course the personal education such wandering gives.

Yours sincerely,

Sd/-

C. Rajagopalachari

As and when we went ahead with the details of the project many individuals and organisations extended their moral support. The All India Sarva Seva Sangh; The All India Peace Council; The Gandhi Peace Foundation; The Committee for Non-violent Action, New York; The Committee for 100, London; The War Resisters International, London and the World Peace Brigade were the important, national and international organisations that extended their support.

Barriers, Bureaucracy and formalities

Even though we never harboured any barriers between countries, in reality we had to face the problems arising out of the existing international rules, regulations and conventions. Our work was concerned not with one country alone; therefore we were determined to do what we felt at any cost. All rules and regulations are supposed to be created by man in order to make life more harmonious, prosperous and happy. But in reality the reverse happens. The very conception of national sovereignty and the thousands of conventions surrounding man have made him more narrow-minded. Thus human history is filled with innumerable conflicts and bloodshed.

We had to seek for passports from the Government of India. Following the usual procedure we filed our applications with the District Commissioner at Bangalore. Now we had a problem of giving a security bond worth Rs.20,000. When the whole world was living without any guarantee of survival what on earth was there for us both to assure the Government ? Moreover, we had no money of any kind and we decided to go ahead ignoring that particular clause in our application. It was in the meantime a young friend of ours, Mr. Mangilal Jain, from Culcutta wrote to Satish : “...while both of you are going to sacrifice everything upto the end of your life in order to pursue a cause, money must never come in between. I can stand security and give a financial guarantee to the Government on your behalf....” and accordingly he did. Other problems also found solution one by one.

Coming to official bureaucracy, it is one of the most omnipresent and omnipotent evils of the Indian administrative system. Under the colonial rule our civil servants must have had the feeling : “We are serving someone,” and therefore it was natural for them to be indifferent to the affairs of the nation as to whether it rose or fell. But in an independent India, where everyone must feel that he or she has to or is contributing his or her humble mite for the progress of the nation, unfortunately this attitude is absent. Most of our public servants, right from the ministers who unhesitatingly chant the hymns of Truth and Non-violence in the name of their departed leader, upto the ordinary clerk in the police station, are infected with the national disease of corruption, red-tapism and irresponsible bureaucracy because of which the common masses of India are living in

perpetual torture and misery. We too were not spared. "Have we got to do anything more with regard to our passport papers?" I asked the person who was dealing with our papers in the commissioner's office in Bangalore, just two days before we left Bangalore. All necessary documents were submitted and formalities met. We were under the impression that the papers had already been forwarded to Madras from where ultimately the passports had to be issued.

"Nothing more. The papers are with me. I shall forward them in due course", murmured the middle-aged man in front of a pile of old files, settling lazily in the chair and running his fingers on the back of his head.

"Then please send it, for we are leaving in two days."

He raised his heavy head and stared at me. "Who are you to compel me?"

"I'm not compelling. I want to know if we have anything more to do. Nothing, you said. Then why the delay?"

"Well.....it will take time....." and he opened a dusty file. I could imagine his mental condition. Whenever a civil servant fumbles over the papers and grumbles with a brooding head and throws a vacant or expectant look at you, you can be sure that he 'expects' something from his 'customer'. To be frank, if you want anything to be done in any public office properly and in time the Jingle of coins must lure the officer into satisfaction! Otherwise the cob-webs keep mounting on his files as on his brain!

"All right." I said. "I shall never come to you again for this purpose. The papers will come to me wherever I

am" and I left him while words of fury were showering behind.

On our way to Delhi we dropped in at the Office of the Passport Officer at Madras and enquired about the situation.

"Mr. Satish Kumar's papers have reached me, but not the other," the able and efficient officer with all enthusiasm informed us. "The moment I get the papers your passports will be issued." With this consolation we squeezed into the train for Calcutta. Being the trouble maker, I then realised my papers should be sleeping under the files of that clerk in Bangalore. Sending a wire to Bangalore and a complaint to the Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, we proceeded with other business. Within three days the following message was received.

May 16, 1962

"Dear friends,

I have just now received your letter; dated the 14th May, from Calcutta, regarding your applications for passports. As you know, there are certain formalities to be completed before a passport is given, I don't know whether that has been done. However; I shall enquire into it.

With all best wishes.

Yours sincerely,

Sd/- Lakshmi N. Menon

Minister in the Ministry of External Affairs
New Delhi.

However, on arrival in New Delhi, for a week we

went on picking up every thread possible from the departments concerned. Yet, when we left Delhi we had no passports in hand. The next day, we were informed later, a question was raised in the Parliament by a very broad-minded member, Mr. Sivamurthy Swami, and he was told by the minister concerned that things were on the way. At last, a week later our passports were issued and were delivered to us by our friends just before we entered Pakistan.

Problem of Money :

Since the invention of money as a means of exchange, it has, perhaps, played the most important role in man's life.

Unfortunately, man has become a slave to money. Thus many a creative life has crumbled into the filth of frustration and doom simply because of "lack of finance." But this can indeed be proved a myth if one is prepared to face any odds with will and determination in the course of a particular activity. Pages of history are full of such examples.

Though we never worried about money to support our project, occasionally that thought used to disturb us. But when our friends in Bangalore and Calcutta promised all possible support wherever and whenever we needed, it was no more a problem. The Sarva Seva Sangh, under whose guidance we had been working in India and which was established by Gandhiji in order to undertake all the constructive activities for the uplift of the country, undertook the responsibility of looking after the needs of our immediate dependents as long as we were away. Thus many clouds but one disappeared. For even the minimum that we may have

to spend abroad, how to secure foreign exchange from the Government of India! That too was easily solved on our decision not to "carry any money at all till we reach Washington."

To meet the Saint on the March

An evening in December 1954! A small village in West Bengal. After a long train journey I had reached the nearby railway station. From the village beyond the vast field the rural folk in simple clothes could be seen spreading about with all enthusiasm and joy of being in possession of something valuable. They were all murmuring to each other. I walked into that village. It was there for the first time I met Vinoba Bhave, the first volunteer Gandhiji selected to conduct his famous individual satyagraha campaign, years ago.

In a small hut made of mud and straw, in front of a small table and lantern a lean little figure sat, wrapped in a handwoven shawl, and put his signature on the copies of the book—Talks on the Gita—which the villagers had bought. Thereafter I spent several months in close contact with him, walking through the remote villages of the East and South India.

Since I knew what sort of a person he was, I never bothered to write to him about the Peace March and seek his opinion. He is a man who appreciates initiative, courage, conviction and action in everyone. So I never had a doubt of any discouragement from him. Hence we just flew into Gauhati on the 16th May 1962 to meet Vinoba and seek his blessings.

"Have you come ?" he asked as we went near and greeted him in his room in a village primary school

after a tedious bus journey of 27 miles from Gauhati. In a few minutes he enquired about the route we had proposed to walk to Moscow and made certain suggestions. "Why not go straight to Moscow from Kabul crossing the Hindu Kush mountains?"

We explained to him the need of meeting so many people from other small nations before we reached Moscow so that we could represent the feelings of the masses of different countries. However we had planned to make necessary changes in the route as and when it was needed due to climatic conditions.

As usual in the evening the rural population poured into the school compound to hear the originator of a new revolutionary movement in India. That evening his speech was mainly devoted to the problems facing the world, particularly of the nuclear weapons and arms race. Vinobaji went beyond our expectation and said :

".....There are two young men sitting in front of me who have come to me to seek my blessing for the enormous task they have taken upon themselves. Since I know them for several years, I have already given them my blessings....."

Then he stressed upon the necessity of mass action against the nuclear weapons and explained the futility of the present military strategy and thought.

Next morning there were clouds all over the sky. A small road ran through the greenery of Assam towards the mountain ranges, across the fields and forests. There was a mild shower in the night and the morning was a bit chilly. As we walked along, Vinoba was eager to hear about the details of our march.

"How much money are you taking with you?" he enquired,

"We don't know exactly how much the whole trip will cost. However, for minor necessities we have arranged with friends. After all, we are going to walk. We shall depend upon people. We have faith in the people...."

"No.", he said. "Either you must have full financial equipment with you or none at all. The people everywhere want peace. You are going with the same mission and zeal. Money will always be a barrier between you and the people with whom you want to be in close contact. Therefore, have complete faith in the people and leave everything to their goodwill."

"What about your food?" was his next question.

"Of course, we have been vegetarians throughout. We want to remain so in other countries too."

"That's fine. Vegetarianism and voluntary pennilessness would help you like mace and discus."

Thus the conversation continued.

Leaving behind the beautiful hills and plains and rivers of Assam we got into a crowded train. There was another crowded train of thoughts running through our brain. Thousands of 'buts' and 'ifs' started criss-crossing with the threads of hopes and decisions of our mental mansion. If we were to need postal stamps and stationery : If our shoe-laces snap ? If we have to buy a new pair of shoes ? If our clothes get torn ? If we are frozen in the unimaginable Russian snow

? If we fall ill somewhere on the way ? If we need a blade or a piece of soap, or toothbrush ? all these, inevitable 'ifs' tried to find solace in the infinitude of our unknown future.

And one dark evening we reached the capital of India.

And the Day Dawned :

The first day of June 1962! At Rajghat, in New Delhi. As I awoke on the green lawn, I saw the horizon in the East all gold with patches of cloud bordering it. It was the dawn of that great day.

Eleven hours more, I thought, for us to take our first step forward. Bapuji's Samadhi would be our starting point.

There has been encouragement from all friends. For the last ten days they have been doing their best. Oh! today is Friday too, as was the thirtieth January 1948. We are also going to start at 5.30 p.m.

The problem of passports. Of course, they will be issued shortly. But to whom ? Let us authorise our friends to do anything and everything on our behalf. Now the question of visas from the Embassies of other countries. One relief is that the reply to my letter to Ayub Khan has come. We are asked to approach the Pakistan High Commission. Similarly let us go to the embassies of Afghanistan and Iran also, and frankly tell them that we have no passports at hand right now. But in a week's time "our friends will approach you, and then, please, issue our visas for we shall be on the march." Once a few countries grant us visas the others will follow suit.

Prime Minister Nehru's secretary says : "You should not disturb him now. He is suffering from a mild cold." Poor man, he returned only yesterday from Madras. What a strain! He works eighteen hours a day. He identifies himself so much with the affairs of his nation. He is not just only the Prime Minister of India, but also the accredited leader of our country. He discovered India for us, and he plans to build a glorious future for us, besides he wants our country to hold its head high in the very heaven of freedom. That is his first step forward to build up one World. He knows in detail all that we are going to do. His words of encouragement are already with us. So let us not bother him now. He is and will be with us inspiring us at every step. He will certainly be very happy when we return and relate to him the stories across the world. So goodbye to Panditji.

Now our President, Dr. Radhakrishnan. What a pity, he has granted us an interview on the third of June, 6 p.m. To wait for that means postponement. No, that is unthinkable. No alternative. Let us meet the President too, two years later. He has certainly understood very well what we are doing.

It was an unforgettable embrace the other day by Dr. Zakir Hussain, our Vice-President. "You are doing wonderful work. I wish you all the best" he had said. He wants us to drop him a postcard now and then.

Our earthly belongings are to be packed up. No good rucksack is available in Delhi. After all we don't have many things. Three pairs of cotton garments, a blanket, a diary to write in, a few books to read, the toilet set, a thermos, a water bottle, and maps and papers. The more one wants, the more cumbersome

will life be.

Leaflets have been printed and banners are ready. People must know why we are marching, hence the leaflets. The banners on our shoulders will speak for themselves:-

‘PEACE MARCH’
‘DELHI- MOSCOW-WASHINGTON’
‘PEACE AT ALL COST’
‘DISARMAMENT-CALL OF HUMANITY’

As the cool hours of the morning gave place to the hot hours of the afternoon we found ourselves exhausted with the feverish eleventh-hour preparations, scramblings and running about. An unexpected boon of nature relieved the citizens of Delhi of their pangs and pains of 115° F heat. It rained heavily, bringing in its wake a storm. People heaved a sigh of relief.

At the stroke of 5.30 we stood with reverence before the Samadhi and placed a garland of yarn on it. Then we took the first step. We were walking into the frontierless family of man. Friends followed; cameras clicked.

As the night spread its blanket over the sea of humanity we had reached Rupnagar. C.A. Menon was the last to bid us farewell as we entered the sweet home of Didi where a sumptuous supper and comfortable beds were awaiting us. We felt as light as feathers and as free as birds.





" 9 " марта 1963 года

Уважаемые Прабхакар Менон и Сатиш Кумар!

Благодарю вас за присланные в мой адрес письма, в которых вы говорите о стремлении отдать свои силы всемирному движению борьбы за мир и разоружение. Такое стремление можно только приветствовать.

Успех в борьбе за мир и разоружение зависит от народных масс, от их активных и решительных действий. Поэтому чем многочисленнее и сплоченнее будет армия борцов за мир, тем надежнее будет обеспечен мир и дружба между народами.

Желаю вам успешного завершения вашего похода в защиту мира.

С уважением

Н.ХРУЩЕВ

House of Commons,
London, S.W.1

15 October 1963

HW/DE/PP

Dear Mr. Menon,

I was most interested to receive your cordial letter of October 14th and want to thank you for your good wishes.

In return, I want to express my admiration of the devotion to the cause of world peace of both yourself and Mr. Satish Kumar. What greater sign of dedication could there be than to have walked from India, through ten countries, to London.

I think you already know of the long campaign which the Labour Party has waged in Britain to bring about the end of nuclear tests and we have registered approval at the recent signature of the limited test ban agreement. But, this is only the beginning and all of us, in our various ways, will be working to secure an end of all tests and the beginning of real disarmament. As you have arrived at a time when I have a very heavy programme, I hope you will forgive me if my support for your aims is indicated by this message which will be conveyed to you by the Overseas Secretary, Mr. David Ennals.

Again, good wishes to you and your mission.

Yours sincerely,

Harold Wilson

Mr. E. P. Menon,
41 Courtfield Road,
London, S. W. 7.







PART-II

- Off on the road
- In Pakistan
- In Afghanistan through grapes and mountains
- In the land of desert, poetry and pleasure
- The lure of Russia

Off on the road

How on earth are you going to remember all such stories, incidents and persons as may come into your everyday life hereafter?" asked Madan Virakt that evening when he heard the discussion we had with an old man in Alipur Village who had said "How can you do away with wars and conflicts from human life? Wars existed even in the epic period. Rama and Krishna fought wars!"

Madan has been walking with us from Delhi. A young firebrand poet and revolutionary, he will be keeping track with us till we say goodbye to India.

"That's why we are going to keep a diary," we said. It was the second day. We were only 13 miles away from Delhi. The representative of the National Broadcasting Company of America was with us for an hour on the Grand Trunk Road. He wanted to show our march to the Americans. How were we walking, what were we carrying, how did we eat and drink etc. etc.

Thus hereafter every night before going to bed, noting down what we feel see, hear and experience is part of our routine.

Therefore, I am placing before you a few leaves of my diary. If you, and those who bother to scan them, ever feel prick of pain, a jolt of joy, a bit of cold, a spark of heat, or a ray of hope, that will be the greatest reward for our work.

June 3, 1962

Hospitable rural folk

Having no money with us, naturally we won't go to a hotel even though hungry. Lo! the hospitable people all around! A young man came running and requested us to stay with him. "Sorry, we must go at least ten miles a day". Since the summer was unbearable we had decided to walk from 5 a.m. to 8 a.m. normally. Later on another youth invited us to his small room in a godown and offered hot milk. Money is nothing before love and human feelings.

The evening was fine and calm. Many men and several Women in purdah gathered around a lantern.

When we talked about the possibilities of world war, they did not seem to understand. For them that is not the problem. How to get good cloths, good food, good houses to live in and how to send their children to school—these always haunt their minds. The women were surprised when we said : "Throw away your viels and join the menfolk to work. Only then can our country progress.

"You are my sons. Do the best for the world....."a grandma placed her palms on our heads.

June 6, 1962

Remembering the past

Panipat is an ancient and famous town. The pages of history stand witness for its glory and tragedy of the past. It is quite evident, the kings and rulers of those days least bothered themselves about the well-

being of their subjects. They spent most of their time and wealth in waging wars, indulging in luxury and amusement. Otherwise this city would have been quite different.

It is repulsive to walk through the narrow streets which are in most unhygienic conditions. Congested bazaars, tall and inconvenient structures of old type on either side of zigzag lanes—all these are the symbols of the past. Old forts, buildings, walls and battle-fields prompt you to ask an answerless question. How many gallons of human blood might have been consumed by this land?

The last three days passed well. Satish's feet were full of blisters. "I have never used shoes in my life, I am afraid," he had said while we were buying soft-soled canvas-shoes, taking the burning summer into consideration. It was a real problem to reach Pattikalyan yesterday. By 11O' clock we were damn tired and somehow we got into our beloved hosts', almost collapsed in the scorching sun. Oh, two more months!

This morning a big procession of youths with inspiring slogans and songs marched with us for an hour. Youths of India! On our shoulders the country rests.

A big welcome meeting had been organised by friends. With all enthusiasm an old businessman got up and declared : "Worthy sons of India, take the message of our country to the distant lands....." This is too much to swallow. How can we,when we have not been the worthy inheritors of those messages ? We have to learn a great deal from others.

June 11, 1962

Shadows of sorrow

Unpredictable is life! Suphala was all smiles and joy when she saw us off a fortnight ago. Today she is no more. What a tragic accident! The sari and the stove!

A retired school teacher from Ratangarh spent three hours in the afternoon talking to us. What a revolutionary spirit and deep conviction of thought he had! "I am an anarchist," he said. May be, that was why his intense feeling for the society and the whole world vibrated in every word of his. "You must drop in at my house for breakfast tomorrow morning at 5.30 on your way to Sahabad." "Certainly we shall."

June 13, 1962

Interesting characters

Balwant Singh is a most carefree, enthusiastic jolly chap with a little music and humour always on his lips. Even before a group of people he would not mind rolling on the floor and cracking jokes. His friend, Niranjana Singh, a father of several kids, is self-disciplined, patriarchal and humorous too. Both of them join us now and then.

Yesterday afternoon a group of young people recited poems, sang music and had discussion. But this afternoon we had a collision with a frustrated Gandhian. "It was good that the atom bombs were dropped on Japan! Why did they ignore the warning

given earlier?" he argued. He does not feel that ordinary men have a duty to protest against the vandalism of the politicians. "However, I am happy you do something on your conviction," he wished us well.

June 15, 1962

With constructive workers

Fifteen miles from Ambala city there is an institution, the Kasturba Seva Mandir. A band of dedicated youth from different parts of the country are undergoing training in various activities which form the basis of rural development according to Gandhiji.

All these days of our journey many organisations, particularly Khadi and Constructive Activities Centres have come forward with full support and hospitality. The annual production here is said to be ten million rupees. "A few men at the helm of affairs spend lavishly....." someone passed a remark. But, they say, the wage of an ordinary man in any of the small scale industries here is a rupee a day.

It is disgusting to see that the inmates of this institution lack the sense of hygiene. To keep the surroundings clean and nice had been one of the precepts of Gandhiji.

June 17, 1962

At Khanna College

After walking twelve miles from 4 a.m. to 8.15 when we arrived at this town the staff and students of the

Sanskrit College welcomed us. It is encouraging to learn that a hundred students receive education in Sanskrit free of charge. They also do manual labour and grow food. This gives us a glimpse of India's past. But alas, today, the modern youth attribute no dignity for manual labour. Everyone seems to be waiting to become a boss. The poor farmer and worker are being looked down upon. The roots of colonialism have gone deep into the nation's life.

The wife of an Excise Inspector requested us many times to accept some money for at least some minor expenses.

News from Delhi. The Anti Nuclear Convention organized by the Gandhi Peace Foundation is in full swing. Dr. Rajendra Prasad is reported to have advocated the need for India to disarm unilaterally. Indeed, a very good suggestion. But one fails to understand such people. Till recently he was the President, the Supreme Commander of the nation. Then he could not give expression to such an opinion. Office always Imposes certain limitations on men.

June 23, 1962.

An Unusual Welcome

By the time we reached Jullundhar city at 7 a.m. a nice breakfast and an enthusiastic welcome awaited us. Representatives of political parties, the municipal authorities and citizens garlanded us as if we were heroes! Posters could be seen all over the city about our arrival and public meeting. A press conference and radio programme had been arranged.

In Punjab the public meetings normally take place after 8 p.m. "Otherwise, it won't be convenient for shop keepers," they say. Usually people take keen interest to hear about the futility of the arms-race and the enormous expenditure involved.

Mittalji and Sumati joined us a couple of days ago. They are a dedicated couple for public causes. Our group is getting enlarged.

June 28, 1962

Cool Mornings

For the last week there were occasional rains at night. So the mornings were pleasant to walk. Enjoying a nice walk with us the another day Dr. Ramlakhamal, a veteran constructive worker and physician said : "Had I known about your peace march earlier, I wouldn't have committed myself to the Ashram and dispensary in the village. I would have accompanied you."

Yesterday's discussion with the Vice-President of the District Congress Committee was interesting. "The whole organization is demoralized," he declared without any hesitation. Gandhiji might have foreseen the impending evils. That was why he wanted it to be converted into a Lok Sevak Sangh (institution to serve the people). But alas, reason fled away in the thirst for power!

Another memorable event was meeting a monk. It irritates me, whenever I see idling gluttons in the robes of saints.

July 2, 1962

“Good-bye” to India

The three days in Amritsar had been delightful. What amount of public support and enthusiasm! Several meetings discussions, invitations and congratulations. Passports arrived just two days ago. Pakistan, Afganistan and Iran have already granted visas.

“What will you do at the border if permission is refused?”

“For heaven’s sake, be careful, people may not be so friendly with you in Pakistan.”

“I’m sure, your march will end at the border.”

“In India it’s all right. Where to stay, what to eat, these things you don’t know in other countries. Have some money.”

These remarks and offers had been given by some people during the past month.

It is already late. This evening the people of Atari gave a hearty send off. The customs officers here have been kind enough to provide accommodation for the night. The moon is gloomy ; breeze is no more. Tomorrow morning we will be in the ‘other country!’ Good-bye to India.

July 3, 1962

First day in Pakistan

When it dawned we did not notice any change in nature’s routine. The sun shed his golden rays equally on the soil of India and Pakistan. The cool breeze never showed any distinction on the border guards on either side. The G T. road remained one and the same. The sweet songs from Radio Pakistan were invitingly melodious. Everything looked the same on both sides, except the uniforms of the authorities.

It was one of the most exciting and happy scenes at nine in the morning. As if the representatives of 450 million people of India, the 47 friends from Amritsar and other parts of the country stood smiling and waving hands till we vanished into the depth of distance on the G. T. Road, as if a strong bow had shot two arrows.

“Our best wishes are always with you,” said the ladies.

“There was a time, when mothers used to send their sons to become soldiers, to fight the enemies, to protect the motherland.

Now we send you off as soldiers to fight for peace. Scientists talk about the incalculable dangers of nuclear weapons and radiation. Therefore, let all mothers of the world unite to protect their children, to preserve peace and the destiny of mankind.”

370 miles in 32 days in the burning heat of June! But there were others also to share. Suddenly we were alone. We knew nobody in Pakistan.

“Congratulations and hearty welcome!” A young man of thirty warmly embraced us as we emerged out of the Pak customs office.

“I heard from my business friend in Jullundhar that you were crossing the border today. Please come with me in my car. You are my guests. I shall take you to Lahore.” Our surprise and joy knew no bounds at the cordial welcome and invitation of Khwaja Ghulam Yasin.

“Thank you very much. But we have to go on foot to Lahore. We shall meet you in the evening.”

“I see, all right. Then you may stop at Batapur; we shall have lunch together.”

A lunch with his cousin at the Batapur colony, a garden party in the famous Shalimar gardens arranged by Yasin and his couple of friends, cool drinks and tea offered by some other passers-by and occasional chats with the truck drivers who would stop to enquire ‘why do you walk?’ and offer a lift which we would refuse politely- all these things provided great relief from the scorching sun.

Tired of the day’s walk of 17 miles, how happy and comfortable we feel now in this room of Hotel Gulberg which Mr. Yasin had earlier reserved for us! Brother Yasin, I’m not a Dickens to express all that I feel tonight!

July 5, 1962

Unexpected Companion !

“Have good rest for two,” Yasin had insisted. So

yesterday was spent nicely in Lahore going round the beautiful parts and the mosques of the city. A crowded city of 2 million people.

“Salam Alekhum. How are your feet? I am happy to welcome you” A stranger with a thick mustache and broad smile got down from his bicycle and kept pace with us. “Just one more mile to the next town. I shall wait for you at the hotel. Cheer up.” He rode away after five minutes. It was like a boon.

“Who on earth could he be?” Satish looked at me.

“May be from the Government; some one keeping an eye on us.”

“Possible. Let’s see,” and we continued with confidence that the evening meal and bed were sure.

The doubt turned to be true. He had ordered a good supper and two beds in a small cafe. “Have a nice sleep. I shall see you tomorrow,” so saying he left us. “Will this be repeated everyday ?” we wondered and went to bed.

July 7, 1962

And it did repeat

A man from the department of Political Police has been keeping company with us. “Your personal safety is a matter of concern for the Government. Hence as long as you are in Pakistan the Government has decided to depute someone with you everyday. I am here to do any service you need,” said the man who took charge of us from yesterday’s companion. He could not find accommodation for us in any private

home and therefore a room in the police station was given to us. Food from the hotel. An interview with the Superintendent of the Municipality. A nice discussion on various national and international matters with some young men in Hotel Dreamland. Khalid Hassan, an energetic, handsome youth took us for an excursion of the 'satellite town' in the evening. Hassan's father is a great scholar. "He was an active member in the anti-partition group, and therefore the Government keeps a watch on the family even now," the boy said.

July 11, 1962

Hearts throb for India

The other day we met an old woman. She almost fainted when we told her we were walking to America. "Boys, please don't," she insisted. We changed the topic and wanted to know about herself.

"I come from Patiala. Did you go through my town? Is there a tree still standing at the corner of the bazaar road? My home was behind that tree....." her eyes were welling and she could not speak any more!

One of these day two 'companions' walked with us a whole day. It was "a joy" for them. Usually we would say "after all we are walking on our own accord. But you are asked to walk with us. Useless isn't it? Well you can go in advance and wait for us.....". Then they would go by bus and wait for us in hotels or cafes. There we would have refreshment. At times they would carry our luggage too. But the company of these two persons was really enjoyable. They were jolly ones. One of them was about 50 years old. He belonged to Gurdaspur. "How happy am I to remember my nice old days in India. Even now I feel like going back, I

feel disgusted here," he said.

Today's hosts are a wonderful people. Choudhary Saheb is a veteran agriculturist. His family, the village folks and some visitors from other village spent a lot of time with us. In spite of the presence of the political policeman we never felt any restriction in discussion anything. The day before yesterday, for instance, the Municipal Chairman was equally vehement against the military pacts etc. "I belong to Ambala, I can't forget India," he said.

"India is a strong nation under the dynamic leadership of Nehru. Here most of our leaders are dishonest," someone had made a comment yesterday.

"The extremes of riches and poverty in India are ridiculous.

Here people make money and spend it lavishly," said another.

It is interesting -to hear every morning at four Ajjan from mosques. It is the call for the people to do their first namaz (prayer) for the day.

July 16, 1962

Rawalpindi and Rotarians

For the first time the Rotarians welcomed us as their guests. For two days we will stay here. Nice to have an occasional holiday. Possibility of meeting President Ayub Khan too.

These days we have been doing our walk both morning and evening. Sometimes it becomes too hard

to endure the heat.

One of these days was unbearable. That day we stayed in a police station. There was a big hall full of cots and wooden boxes. Obviously it was the dwelling place for the constables. Ten to fifteen of them sat together and ate food—rice, bread and some vegetable or meat—placed on a piece of cloth in the centre.

From the adjacent room mourns and cries were heard. “The fellows who stole this and that from shops don’t reply properly and tell the truth,” said one constable when we enquired. “Either you stop beating those people or we are going away,” we protested. After a few minutes we did not hear any more painful cries.

July 18, 1962

“I am very sorry to inform you that the President has left for Karachi to receive the President of the Phillippines. If you wait for a week more he may be able to see you,” said the Personal Secretary of President Ayub Khan on phone ultimately. Yesterday he was almost sure that we could meet the President. However, no use of hanging about.

Thanking the Rotary Club for the warm welcome and cordial hospitality, we walked to a village nine miles away enjoying a reception by a coca cola factory on the way.

July 20 , 1962

A secret message

Lawrencepur is about 40 miles from Rawalpindi. A group of youngmen who work in the wool factory

entertained us under a tree with refreshments.

“I want to tell you one thing very secretly,” said a boy and called me aside. “When you see Khrushchev in Moscow, please convey my greatest regards to him. I envy the Soviet Union. Please tell him that a Pakistani is sincerely praying for Communism here.”

Yesterday a young man accompanied us to Taxila. He belongs to the Ahmediya group. “It is my work to tour the villages and preach the message of our religion and convert people. There are, seventy two different sects among Moslems and most of them fight with one another,” he said.

July 22

A horrible scene

Nowshera is a good town. The Sub-Inspector of Police is playing host to us. This afternoon there was a procession as part of Muharrum celebrations. Dozens of people were in the midst of the crowd, dancing, mourning and beating their breasts. Some of them had cut their skin and were profusely bleeding. An old man explained to us : “They are Shiyas. This is their way of mourning for the Prophet. We don’t approve of this. We don’t even wish to see them. They are savages.” At times, he said, there used to be clashes between the two main groups—the Shiyas and Sunnis.

Basic Democracy

Yesterday’s host was the Secretary of the Union Council. Basic Democracy and Village Unions are the latest administrative reforms Ayub has introduced.

The Basic Democracy of Pakistan resembles the Panchayat Raj in India. In the political as well as developmental aspect both are very important. It seems, in Pakistan the Basic Democracy has taken a deeper root and yielded better results than the Panchayati Raj in India.

My enquiry from the common people reveals that they are happier under this new system. The main objective of the Basic Democracy system is to decentralise and co-ordinate administrative effort, planning and implementation of development projects in order to secure a better collaboration and understanding between the Government and the people. To this extent the system seems to be a great success.

There are 80,000 basic democrats in Pakistan elected on the basis of universal adult suffrage. The primary constituencies normally comprise about 1,000 individuals. Over 7,000 Union Councils, constituted by the basic democrats, and about 1,000 Union or Town Committees, made up of basic democrats as well as some nominated members from different walks of life, form the basic of the entire system. Each Union Council would cover a population between 8,000 to 12,000.

Any project will succeed only when there are thoroughly trained personnel to run the affairs. There are four Basic Democracy Training Institutes where the basic democrats and officials have to undergo a regular course of training. There are two Rural Development Academies also. These Academies are very important, for they impart higher training and conduct experimentation and evaluation programmes. One very important official of the Academy in Peshawar told

me that the Union Councils had trebled their income in comparison with the old Union Boards in East Pakistan. Similarly the administrative machinery has become more responsible and responsive to public demands and aspirations. Another very important result has been that for the first time in their life the women of Pakistan have started taking active part in the affairs of their villages.

“The two most important and useful things done by President Ayub,” said one businessman, “are the introduction of the Basic Democracy and putting down the corrupt high officials.”

Thus wherever we go, a new wave of enthusiasm and confidence can be experienced in the minds of the people. “We want good and able leaders and our President is one such man,” said a student while entertaining us in his hostel.

July 26

Doctor's worry

“At least for the next three days don't walk. If you want I shall come with you. Let's go by car or bus.” Thus concluded Dr. Aslam Mallik this evening, while retuning after the Rotary Club meeting. Being the Secretary of the Rotary Club of Peshawar, he took particular care about our well-being. For two days we have been the guests of the Rotarians.

He was worried about our personal safety in the Khyber area, for Pathans lived there. “No, doctor, we are determined to walk. Nothing is going to happen,” we said. He had no other choice. At last when we returned home that night he presented a few biscuit

packets for ‘munching on the way.’ Tomorrow, he said he would see us off from Peshawar city.

Talking to another Rotarian was interesting. He said : “Ayub Khan has done more good than his predecessors. At least the common man has gained confidence in life and has become more happy. About ten million refugees were tottering in the streets for ten years. When Marshal Law was imposed they could look forward to a bright future. People want bread and butter first. Hence the present Government is better. Our former politicians plunged this country into misery. The first thing Ayub achieved was putting a heavy hand on the corrupt high officials. We want to make this country a place for everyone to live and let live.”

A new suggestion

“Why not a group of young men march from Rawalpindi to Delhi and another group from Delhi to ‘Pindi? You are now marching to Moscow and Washington against the nuclear weapons. We need better relations between our two countries. I appreciate people’s initiative to that extent.” Thus concluded a prominent member of the National Assembly while commenting on our march.

July 27, 1962

A look behind

Just to peep behind through the 24 days, from inside this huge fortress, is invigorating indeed. Jamrut is the check-post and the seat of the political agency which administers this area. Peshawar police do not have jurisdiction here. The entire surroundings

are barren and rocky. Inside a huge fortress, made of mud and stone, there are about 200 people living in barrack-like rooms. They constitute the Khyber Khalsa Force, the guardians of the no-man’s land. The hall is decorated with film posters and photos. Fine crockery sets are nicely arranged in a corner. Garlands of American and Pakistani flags are fluttering all over! Our lunch consists of thick chapathis, dal and fruits. One cannot know what is happening in the world outside.

During the 327 miles trek through Pakistan two questions have been frequently asked : (1) What about Kashmir ? (2)What is your religion and caste ? Since we know that the Kashmir problem is mostly based on religious, emotional and psychological grounds, we were not inclined to get into controversial arguments.

“To free Kashmir we may have to wage another war!”, came a comment one day from a student.

“We have no religion. Our caste is humanity. Humanism is everything for us.” To this answer sometimes we had to face angry and disappointed comments.

Newspapers have given good publicity to our work. Many a truck driver and a car owner must have been disappointed in our refusal to accept their “lifts.” As far as we were concerned we did not feel we were in another country. As long as the opium of religion pervades the minds and hearts of the Hindus and Moslems, India and Pakistan can never live in peace and harmony.

People co-operated everywhere. The other day a press

owner printed our leaflets in Pushto and Persian free of cost.

“The politicians choose the enemy, and the press builds up the bogey image day after day, until the public believe that everything that’s wrong with the world is due to the machinations of the bogey state.” To me it appears that this statement of a Western writer can be applicable as far as Indo-Pak relations are concerned. Nothing but abuses can be heard from the Azad Kashmir Radio every night for hours together. How can this be rectified? Common man, you must know that you have a brain capable of free thinking, analysing things for yourself.

July 28, 1962

The Khyber Pass! The No Man’s Land!

Many soldiers from different lands have marched through this zigzag passage which had been the gateway to India down the centuries. All those who marched through had an intention to invade India or exploit India. But our army of two soldiers, not with gun and helmet but with goodwill and love, is marching forward to the other continents to fight for peace and the unity of mankind.

“The people in that area are not so good. Please don’t walk.” The unhappy Dr. Mallik again requested us on phone, from Peshawar.

“Never worry doctor. We shall manage with them.”

“All right, as you please. But one thing. You must ring me up from Landikotal, at the journey’s end, in

the evening before entering Afghanistan. Oh dear, then again the long road to Kandahar! Are you going by that road from Kabul onwards ? For miles and miles you won’t see a man. I bet, you are going to land yourselves in danger...” said he in a voice low and sad. We promised to contact him in the evening, if possible.

Twenty-five miles! We decided to cover it by the evening. At 8.30 a.m. we girded up our loins.

“You see, there are some sort of snakes in this area. Then there are the Pathans. No rules and regulations of the world are observed by them. They always carry pistols. You will be in danger. It is our duty to protect you. Therefore, we shall provide you with a jeep.” Two officers of the Khyber Ithasla Force approached us with this suggestion.

After a few minutes of fruitless discussion, they decided to let us do what we wanted.

“Any way, these four men will be escorting you all the way,” said the senior official pointing to four soldiers with rifles. They saluted him and stood in attention. The bare mountains stood majestically in front and the road wound up the hills. We said “Khuda Hafis.”

In the course of few minutes our ‘body-guards’ turned to be jolly good companions. “Friends, you don’t have to walk all through unnecessarily,” we said. Our remark made them raise their eye-brows.

“But Saheb we must. If something happens to you ?”

“Why do you think so ? Aren’t the Pathans human beings ? Have we done any harm to them ? After all you can ‘protect’ us only today. Tomorrow we are going to be in their midst, on the other side. Never worry. You may go by some vehicle and wait for us in the evening.”

They looked at each other. Half an hour passed. A dilapidated bus with passengers hanging from all sides and cramming on the roof besides, roared its way. Two of our guardians raised their hands; it heaved into a halt and they squeezed in.

“Why don’t you take the kits of these poor boys?” cried the other; and we gladly handed over our bundles.

Later the American couples encountered us.

Who are they ?

They are a group of exceptionally hospitable, independent and courageous people. To receive guests is considered to be a great privilege by them. You enter a Pathan’s house, you feel at home there. Your protection is guaranteed even at the cost of their lives. They want to be free, happy and gay. Hardly could you see a Pathan without arms on his person. His tall, stout and steel-like body looks magnificent in beautiful salwar and kameez of costly Persian silk and turban of colourful nylon.

Far away, on either side of the road, you see tall mud and brick walls like huge fortresses. Small round holes can be seen on all sides of the walls. Obviously the occupants must see the world outside and also fire bullets if necessary. Village-feuds and quarrels

are common. Whenever there is a quarrel it results in great destruction. Each man is a master of himself. One household will be far away from the other. Occasionally feminine figures can be seen moving about in the fields wearing long burkhas.

The Pathans recognize nobody’s rule over them. They want their own autonomous province Pukthoonistan. The result is a political quarrel between Pakistan and Afganistan.

According to their great leader, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan (popularly known as Frontier Gandhi), who has spent 30 years of his life behind iron bars, their difference with the Pakistan Government is about ‘democratic values.’ “We are fighting for people’s rights of free speech, and the greatest of all, for the right to serve. We don’t run after power,” says he.

“The other major issue is,” continues Khan Saheb, “that the Pathans have their own language, their own culture and traditions.

Hence they want to live as Pathans. Our demand is that the Pathans must be united. We are brethren of the Pakistanis. Just as Punjab, Bengal and Sind are provinces, Pukthoonistan should also be a province. We are not asking for secession from Pakistan.

“When Mahatmaji asked me if we would accept the principles of non-violence and join the All India Freedom Movement, I whole-heartedly agreed. That was in 1929.”

Are they Non-violent ?

Khan Saheb says : “It is true there were days when

as soon as a Pathan saw an Englishman he pointed his pistol at him. But then the rigorous suppression by the British and the suffering the Pathans went through demoralized them. It was due to the non-violent character of our movement that we won their sympathy; when people saw us gladly accepting all the suffering, they regained confidence in us. When they saw that non-violence was a better and more effective weapon they accepted it.

“At the time of the ‘Quit India’ movement of 1942, when the rest of the country indulged in activities of sabotage, my people did not even think of such deeds. Later I asked Mahatmaji why it was that in the regions where he himself had preached non-violence for such a long time, people did not follow it to the last, and yet in my area, where he had preached it only once, they remained non-violent despite every kind of provocation.

“Mahatmaji said that it only proved that non-violence was a weapon of the brave. The pathans were a brave people.”¹

A disappointment

The last moment came. Our plan was to stay overnight at Landikotal, a few miles behind the Afghan border. Though the walk was terribly exhausting, our ‘guardians’ had provided us with a lunch of dry bread and kawa. At 5 p.m. we reached Landikotal with great relief.

“You may proceed right now to Thorkham border.

¹ PEACE NEWS, Nov. 27, ‘64.

The customs authorities will provide you with accommodation for the night,” assured the police officer-in-charge. “This is a very dangerous town,” he murmured. In a few minutes we had to start with bundles on our back. The guardians changed. “Don’t leave the highway for the by-way” though such old sayings echoed in my brain, we chose some crooked by-ways through rocks and valleys so as to reach the border before nightfall.

“There is no accommodation here. You may go to the other side. They have a fine rest house. This is a ‘gair ilaka’ and your safety is our serious responsibility,” muttered the young officer quickly stamping our passports. No explanation was useful. At last we walked into Afghanistan with painful feet and weary faces, while the tiny stars were blinking with woe or delight, I don’t know.

In Afganistan through grapes and mountains.

“At this time ?” exclaimed the man with a gentle smile on his round and pleasant face. It was only 7 p. m. But he was worried. “You will not get any conveyance now,” he said.

“But we are going to walk.”

“To walk ? Where ?

“To Kabul and further on.....”

That satisfied his curiosity. When he heard our story he was all admiration for us and offered congratulations. That made us forget all our weariness. Then he ordered his assistant to prepare a hot meal for us. In the nearby cafe two cots were arranged. Enjoying that nice hospitality we had scarcely thrown ourselves on bed, when we saw a stranger beside us.

“Coming from India ?” he asked.

“Yes.”

“I’m also. Thought of spending the night on the other side. But the Pak authorities didn’t let me.” The same story had happened to him. He was a British student hitch-hiking from India to London.

We had a little chat. The sky was clear right above and the melody of Kabul Radio slowly lulled us to sleep while the cafe keepers busied themselves with their vessels, waste, fire and food.

July 30, 1962

The silent host

This is not a village,
This is not a town,
There is no water,
Nor is there light,
Under the starlit sky,
Over the heaving earth,
Away from everything
Here we are
With our simple, solitary, silent host!
He never asked us “who”
Nor did he bother “where”
All he did was speak
With his fingers to say
“Come” and he went.
And we went;
It was his little hut.
And we ate;
It was a piece of bread,
And we drank;
It was the `kawa’ tea.
And we slept;
It was under the sky,
And we felt;
`One of the happiest days’

Yesterday we walked ten miles and today sixteen. Only the burning barren land everywhere with rocks and hills here and there. Last evening, there was a river far away on our right. Some soldiers in a camp nearby were fetching water. They hosted us under a tree, with hot boiled eggs, thick hard bread and tea. Then one of them who had a broken word or two in

English asked us if we ate mutton. Though he could understand our “No”, he posed another questions. When he understood our helplessness, the teacher in him came to our rescue. A picture o a chicken was drawn on sand and he nodded his head with an action as if he were to eat. “No, no. Chicken too we don’t eat”, we replied pointing to the picture below. Such was our first encounter with the Pushto Language.

But tonight, not even so much. Our poor silent host in shabby clothes was walking on the other side of the road. By nightfall his commonsense got the better of him and without speaking a single word he made us his guests.

As I lay in sound sleep, someone pulled my toe. I opened my eyes. Two people with lanterns in hand stood and stared. One of them spoke a few words the meaning of which could slowly enter my drowsy head. They had been sent by the authorities of the next village, who had heard from the customs officials that we would be passing through the main road. Having waited till 10 p.m. they got worried and sent these two in search of us. “Sahebs are waiting for you with supper” they concluded. I woke us Satish. We felt too lazy to go there at that time. “We are happy here” we said. “Then tomorrow on your way you must drop in at the Arbab’s (the village headman-he was also the police inspector) and have breakfast with him”, he told us. We agreed. They vanished into the darkness and we into our sleep.

August 1, 1962

Two goats in “Your Honour”

Our accommodation had been reserved two days in

advance. The other day on the roadside two young school authorities had entertained us with lunch. One of their guests was a leader of Pathans in Jalalabad. A robust figure with a very friendly disposition, Sialsaheb had said : “When you reach Jalalabad you are my guests and can stay with me as long as you want.” He was eager to hear about Vinobaji and Bertrand Russell.

Thus today when the sun was blazing through the tall trees in this beautiful town, we entered a garden surrounded by a fort like wall. There were about 25 people in session with Sialsaheb in the chair. They were deeply engaged with some problem of their locality. We were warmly greeted.

In a corner of the spacious yard we were seated. All round were flower plants and creepers of grapes. Two goats lay under a tree, chewing the cud, A heated discussion was in progress of which we could understand only some wandering words. There was cool breeze at times and we felt refreshed.

Someone was digging a pit behind the shrubs. An hour passed. The goats were taken away. In a few minutes a bleating sound was heard. Their heads had been thrust into the pit and buried! A huge fire was made; the bodies were cut, peeled and roasted. Then everybody sat in circular groups and heaps of (dark smoky pieces of mutton were placed in the middle surrounded by fried rice, raw vegetables, onions, chillies, grapes, watermelons, curds and cheese.

“Today you are our guests. So we decided to offer these line goats in your honour. Come on, let’s eat,” a bulky man with a thick long beard invited us to join

his group.

My goodness, in honour of these two poor vegetarians two innocent animals have been sacrificed! Warmth of hospitality, feeling of friendship, sense of sympathy, reverence for life, principle of non-violence, glamour of the atmosphere and gloom in mind- altogether we were in between Scylla and Charybdis! Ah, a sudden ray of relief !

“They didn’t eat meat the other day with me. Let them eat what they want.” Sail Saheb pulled us out of the terrible pit ! We were thus rescued and had a nice lunch of fruits, milk, eggs, rice etc. All the while the poor dead goats were bleating in my ears.

August 3, 1962

A horrible day :

It was a cool pleasant morning when we set out at 5.00 a.m. Groups of labourers had already started gathering at their workspot on the river bed. The tall grey mountains stood as ever. The Russian engineers and their families could be seen emerging out of their tents and quarters. People gathered near the smoking boilers of small tea-shops. Everywhere there was bustle and activity.

“In three years, we hope, all these barren lands you have been trekking through will be blooming with life. The canal will run right through the mountains and the thirsty dry land yonder will produce enough food for our people,” declared a proud Afghan worker who invited us to join him for hot kawa on the wayside den. That might come true, we thought. The Russian technical and economic help is being so well utilized

that the common folk in the rural parts of Afghanistan are dreaming of a prosperous future.

By about eleven O’clock, while it was getting hotter we got into a long road through barren land. Suddenly there was a whistle behind and we looked back. Two young men in uniform were approaching us and they ordered us to halt. We stopped.

As they came near, a truck was approaching from behind and quickly the two soldiers got into action. “Get into this truck”, they commanded.

“What for ?” we insisted. Now the problem was that we did not quite understand what they were saying nor did they make out what we were doing. However, we refused to obey their orders and in the meantime the truck driver could grasp our mixture of Urdu-Pushto and he explained the matter to the soldiers. When they found that we were not submitting to their will, they calmed down and let us proceed. They followed us the rest of the day. It was only by the evening that we could realize that they were sent by the local authorities to guide us properly through the barren lands. By nightfall we could reach a small solitary tea-shop which provided us with food and shelter. The whole day was unbearable, for the two chaps were all the while hurrying us and we could not have any respite in the blazing sun and hot wind.

August 6, 1962

“Bandanabashi”

This is one of the sweetest words in Persian and Pushto. It was just a few days ago that I happened to learn it. Everyday is delightful and eventful. The poor old man working on the roadside greeted us as

we passed : “Bandanabashi” (Hearty greetings) and later on we used to repeat this word whenever we met people. The moment this word was uttered, their faces lighted up with joy. Language brings one near to the other.

How innocent are the common people! Sometimes they take a few minutes, rest on the road-side leaving their spades and shovels. But when they see us coming at a distance, they hurriedly get up and start working! If we pass on silently, they would glance at us with fear continuing their work. My half-trouser, socks and shoes might, particularly be giving them a feeling that I might be a road-supervisor!

Yesterday’s truck driver is still in our memory. After a comfortable overnight stay at the road-builders’ camp, we had to climb up and down a number of hills and valleys. Seeing our slow progress he had stopped his truck to offer us a lift. “Neesth, ma pyade mervem. Kheili thasakkur” (no, we shall go by foot, many thanks), this reply dumbfounded him and he slowly gilded up the mountain. After an hour, down in the valley he waited for us with cool fresh watermelons from the extensive field where he was loading his truck. After a good rest, with a stomach-load of melon we were prepared to leave when he made one more offer again, “please come to Kabul with me.”

Another afternoon! We never expected it would be so fine. The engineer and his old servant in the little tent were so nice to us that unless we shared their lunch of bread, salad, apple and tea they did not feel happy to work. Right in front of me an old man was struggling with a huge stone in an attempt to break it ! Another one was dragging water in a big leather bag from the

river to the road, so high up! A group of workers were constructing the protection wall of the road. Should they toil like this all through their lives ?

August 16, 1962

Ten days in Kabul

“That’s all right, doesn’t matter, wish you all the best,” said the barber counting the money we gave him after a haircut which was one of the most important preparations of this evening. We would be off from Kabul tomorrow morning. Our hosts said. “You must be well equipped with whatever you need for encountering the gigantic mountains and untrekkable routes through this country.” We had a haircut at Amritsar and today’s will serve us for the next two months. After all, our hosts have to meet such expenses and therefore our motto is to tax them to the minimum. Sethijan had come with us upto the barbershop and put 50 Afghanis in our hands, for we wanted to keep only what was needed just for the purpose. But alas, the charge for the two of us was 60 Afghanis which we got to know only in the end. “We shall bring the ten Afghanis in a few minutes”, we said to the barber. “No, no, never mind. Rah bakhair”, he said and wished us well. In Kabul the cost of living is very high. In India four rupees for an ordinary hair-dressing is unthinkable!

How quickly and happily have ten days passed in Kabul! On the morning of the 7th when we were approaching this small but beautiful city of 300,000 people what a great relief and sense of success we had left! 788 miles we had walked from Delhi. Now we could think of having a week’s rest at least. “When you pass through Kabul we shall be very happy to

welcome you and give all necessary help you need,” Mr.Dhamija, India’s ambassador to Afghanistan had written four months ago.

On that day at 7.45 a.m. we entered a soldier’s shed for rest. In a few minutes bread and tea were served. Then they wanted to have a photograph with us. By 10.30 we reached the city. The first thing we noticed was a huge slaughter-house. Hundreds of sheep were in groups with a red mark on their back. The place had no proper drainage. It was stinking. Sanitation was neglected.

“In a few hours these living animals would be no more Oh dear Bernard Shaw,” I thought :

“We are the living graves of murdered beasts
Slaughtered to satisfy our appetites
We never pause to wonder at our feasts
We pray on Sundays that we may have light
To guide our footsteps on the path we tread.
We’re sick of war, we do not want to fight
The thought of it now fills our hearts with dread
And yet.....we gorge ourselves upon the dead!
If thus we treat defenseless animals for sport or gain,
How can we hope in this world to attain
The PEACE we say we are so anxious for
We pray for it, o’er hecatombs of slain,
To God, while outraging the moral law.
Thus cruelty begets its offspring.....WAR.”

Ever since we left India, several times we had to answer the same question : “Why don’t you eat meat ?” “We respect the right of the animal to live,” we used to answer. Some people understood us. “If we don’t eat meat we can’t survive,” some murmured. “But we

are surviving.” we used to argue. “Oh, you Indians, you are a peculiar sort of people. Who else can walk around the world ? Indians only can do such a thing?” such were the comments.

One could feel the intimacy and deep friendship between Afghanistan and India at every step of one’s life in Kabul and elsewhere. A student of history will be thrilled with delight when he walks by the side of the gurgling and bubbling Kabul river and recollects the verses in the Rigveda praising this river. The Buddha’s statues in Bamian near Kabul tell us about the strong foundation of unity of these two countries.

Heaps of different varieties of fruits can be seen everywhere in the city. Grapes and apples, peaches and pomegranates, dates and almonds are in abundance. During the ten days in Kabul fruits formed the major part of our diet. The manners of the people are equally sweet.

The Indian Embassy and Mr. Ramlal Anand played host to us. “He is the pista king of Kabul”, someone made a joke one day about Mr. Ramlal Anand. A businessman, a philosopher, a radical humanist, a humorous companion, a broad-minded friend all these put together is the personality of Mr. Anand. What a homely atmosphere we had in his house.

Two interviews :

As if he was expecting us all these days, the Rector of the Kabul University welcomed us to his chamber one morning. “I had seen your photo in the newspaper two months ago. My students and I have been anxiously waiting to see you. It is indeed our responsibility to

express our vehement protest against the reckless cold-war conflicts. Alas, had I been a young fellow like you I too could have joined this venture.” Then he was interested to know about the activities of Indian students. “However, your two years will be invaluable. I am conferring in advance, a Master’s Degree on you for your work”, he said while we all burst into laughter.

“I am extremely happy to welcome you to Afghanistan”, said the solitary scientist in the spacious room. Being the Dean of the Science Faculty in Kabul University and Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission of Afghanistan, Dr. Kakkar was extremely concerned for the way in which the big powers were playing with human destiny. Afghanistan would never subscribe to the use of atomic energy for any destructive purposes, he said.

Dr. Kakkar had just returned from Moscow after attending the Conference for World Peace. “People all over the world want peace”, explained Dr. Kakkar. “Even the politicians in whose hands there is power, sincerely want peace. But I am afraid, it is a matter of prestige today. The main problem is not disarmament; it is the question of who will take the first step? Which nation’s word can be accepted? How to implement them? No one trusts the other. I felt this even in the Peace Conference at Moscow.”

He was eager to know about the Shanti Sena (Peace Army; of India and the formation of the World Peace Brigade in Beirut and other peace movements abroad. “It is unfortunate that we are not able to know much about these activities. The propaganda machinery of the peace movement is weak, of course,” he concluded.

Which way to proceed ?

From Kabul to Moscow. On enquiry the Russian Embassy) said : “Of course, it may not be very difficult to cross the Hindi Kush ranges at present. In September the cold may not be so severe. However till Tashkent you can survive. But after that? For miles and miles no villages, no vegetation; only desert o sand and snow till you reach the Aral Lake. The merciless winte is waiting for you. So we shall inform the Peace Committee it Moscow and shall act on their advice. We shall grant visa tomorrow if you want, but we are worried about your dangerou route.”

We waited for the advice from Moscow. Three days passed. In the meantime the two ambassadors (Indian and Russian) ha consultations among themselves, and we drew our maps an plans.

“After all, we are going to gain additional experience fron Iran, if the Tashkent route is not suitable,” we were delighted a the thought of being in enchanting Persia, its carpets, deserts songs, music and above all the immortal Omar Khayyam! News from Moscow too: “Tashkent route will be terrible for them. We can’t be responsible.” So we decided to turn westwards.

“All right! We don’t bother you any more, but we want one more thing from you, please,” we said to the Russian Embassy official who had been kind enough to go into the details of our needs.

“I am happy to render any possible help to you” he replied with a sportive youthful spirit.

“Our leaflet has to be translated into Russian and

some copies made. We don't know Russian. The leaflets speak for us. How else can we make the rural folk understand ?”

He took a copy of the leaflet. As he went through it he raised his eye-brows a little. “All right! Let me see.”

In two days we got 500 copies, mimeographed on the Embassy machines, in Russian! This would serve us at least for the first week in the Soviet Land.

Thus everything was settled. Woollen clothes from India came. The already worn-out summer shoes mournfully departed with the arrival of the new pair of Japan-made, light, shining, soft and “specially made for winter” ones. Tomorrow we will be off!

Nehru-the messenger

One morning when we went to the Indian Embassy there was a letter from the Prime Minister's office, New Delhi. Another letter by an 18 year old high school student from America addressed to Nehru, was also enclosed therein.

“Dear Mr. Prime Minister,” wrote Julian Koslov, “I beg your pardon for troubling you with my humble request. A few days ago I read in the New York Times and saw on our national television the two boys who have started walking from Delhi to Washington in protest of the nuclear weapons. I am delighted to know about their work and I want to invite them to my home whenever they reach New York. I live not very far from New York.

Since I don't know their address and how to get in

touch with them, I request you to intimate them my desire.”

Two months had already passed since he wrote the letter. Immediately I wrote to him :

“Dear Mr. Koslov,

We are very happy and encouraged to receive your invitation through our Prime Minister, Nehru. We have already reached Kabul and the next stage of our walk will be very exciting through the mountains of Afghanistan.

We shall, indeed, be your guests whenever we reach NewYork It may take at least a year and a half, if everything goes well. One thing is certain: we have decided that we shall not return unless we reach Washington.

You may also contact the Committee for Non-violent Action. Lafayette Street, New York, who will be our main source of contact while we are in the States.”

August 17, 1962

Dusty roads

Every beginning has an end; and every end is either disappointment or delight. But we have been incurable optimists. Therefore every sunrise instils a fresh ray of hope and every sunset is a forerunner of a brilliant dawn after an impending darkness.

So it was not at all difficult for us to say an absolute “No” to the offers made with all affection and concern by Mr. Murugesan and Ramlal to keep with us some money. They said : “You don't know whether you will

get food and place to sleep while you are up in the mountains!”

“That’s exactly what we want to try. Money will keep us at a distance from the people,” and we started on the next lap of trek distributing leaflets in the city of Kabul at 7.00 a.m. The historic Grand Trunk Road which starts from Calcutta comes to an end at Kabul and now onwards a miserable gravel and dusty road lies ahead of us as a warning of the impending hardships. However, it is good if we have to confront all hardships in the beginning. Only then can our mettle be tested.

“So you have decided to trek through the unpopular and dangerous middle route over the mountains ?” asked Mr. Mozeli, the Director of Cultural Relations, yesterday.

“Yes, we have. The Kandahar route is dusty and deserted and the northern route along the Russian border will be icy and cold. Moreover, both of them are much longer than the third” we replied.

“I’m afraid” advised Mr. Ohri, the first secretary of the Indian Embassy, “that you may face a great deal of trouble. By the by, a couple of years ago two western tourists ventured to travel that way and they are reported to be missing. Might have been murdered!” At last Mr. Mozeli promised to inform some of the district authorities on the route so that we might get any help, if necessary, Mr. Ohri and his young colleagues gave us packets of biscuits and sweets, so that we could survive severe hunger. Sewage water flows into a pit around which some children play and drink water. On the other side an old man washes

the head of a goat, blood oozing out. On another side women wash their linen! The time is 9 a.m.; we are on the dusty road.

August 26, 1962

Hakims and Hukumrans.

Hakim-e-Alah and Hukumran are the district authorities, like Collectors and Commissioners. Since intimation from Kabul had reached them that we would be passing that way, they, in turn, seemed to have informed some villagers. That is why the moment we enter a village someone will welcome us, readily and take us to the house of a comparatively better-placed person among them. That means our standard of life becomes far better than that of the common people. They sit around a bowl of Sorba (a kind of soup made from boiling meat and some cereals and potatoes), soak the nan (thick wheat bread) in it and eat it with kawa (green tea without milk or sugar). How interesting it is to see half a dozen hands diving into the sorba-bowl to grab the pieces of meat floating hither and thither, like the beaks of ducks plunging into filth to pick the precious worms and eels! Up in the mountain range, above 10,000 feet high, they go on with their primitive life, dull and miserable. Still there is a loving and lovable look in their faces.

One of these days we spent the night in a solitary police post right in the middle of a big meadow. It was the beginning of our hard struggle with nature! Our plastic rain-coats, had been torn by the gusty winds. Our fingers were numbed in the chill of the wind. But the fried eggs, hot kawa, fried rice and warm beds provided by the police again reminded us: what a curious unknown mixture of pain and pleasure life

is !

Medicine please !

Atom Bomb and Peace March, Moscow and Washington, slogans and demonstrations are not of any concern to the people here.

“Shuma dawa darem” (do you have medicine), an old woman hurried up to us one day with her eye-lids wide open. Eye-diseases are quite common in these regions but no doctor. All the blessings of civilization have reached only the ‘cultured’ parts of the world where now the intelligent man seeks refuge either inside the ‘fall-out-shelters’ or the mental asylums! And here where they grow nutritious dry nuts and fruits and grapes with which the delicious dose of wine is made for the rich to while away their perpetual leisure, they have to depend upon the superstitious village hakims or vaguely look at the passers-by like us who carry a curious sort of bag on their backs. “Doctor, doctor” the urchins and the sick and the old run about proclaiming our arrival in their village! Ah! shortly they will have to sigh in disappointment!

On the 22nd we had to climb up and down twice over 2000 feet through the two highest passes on this route from Kabul to Herat. Sair-e-tala and Abdollah Pass are the two peaks of 11,000 feet altitude.

I never had the least idea that the next day would be so very unforgettable. It was a journey of 20 miles. As we went down from the village, Besut, the great valley of Molla Yakub was visible. Our water bottle was empty and the inviting rivulet below made us rush over the rocks and winding foot-paths. A young

man with a donkey sat in his temporary tent on the sand-bed. We enjoyed a bath after five days; his kawa was sugared and tasty and his company was helpful indeed.

“You must not carry the load and climb up the next steep valley. Here is my dear one to help you,” said he and patted the donkey which unhesitatingly obeyed its master and gave us relief. For three miles we walked slowly and freely.

Men in Afghanistan are generally of a good stature, simple and honest. They prefer to have an undisturbed life, Being very brave and self-defending they could neither be conquered nor made slaves. They are very religious and loyal to the king and the authorities. Whenever we mentioned the name of the Hakim or Hukumran, they responded quickly, and gave us all help.

This is the first town we are seeing after Kabul. Punjao means the confluence of five rivers. A nice little town. There is a telephone line to Kabul. The post is being carried by truck or an occasional bus.

September 1, 1962

On the roof, under the sky!

Not a single day passes without something significant to note in my diary. Till my heart, brain, soul and body cease to be in communion with one-another, every bit of that little village, its grand old moulvi and the eggs and rugs will remain fresh in my memory. Spiddewar is a village of ten families situated on the slope of two hillocks at an altitude of 9,000 feet. A small river winds its way providing some drinking water to the

village. The whole day we had to walk 25 miles with an occasional vitamin pill and a gulp of water. By late afternoon our water stock was also exhausted and finally we had to dig a sandwell on the vast river bed which looked absolutely dry.

Distance lends enchantment to the view. Very often a fine structure which thrilled us with joy turned out to be a dilapidated building which might have once been a big caravansarai in the past. Our maps too often fooled us. They showed the name of a village here and there which did not exist at all! On enquiry from someone later we discovered that the “arbab of that Khema had to emigrate to some other place owing to famine and drought.” So unless we reached very near to a village we couldn’t be sure if it had life and light. That day we were frantically searching for an abode.

As the sun hid himself in the crest of the hills, our spines ached with exhaustion and our stomach revolted. Our wandering eyes caught the curls of smoke from the huts away in Spiddewar. Soon our feet gathered strength and we found ourselves standing in front of a 70 year old moulvi (a priest in the mosque)! The only literate man in the mountains, the moulvi raised his head from a thick volume of scripture and raised his eye-brows in askance.

“We want to spend the night in this village, if possible”, we said. By now we had mastered the technique and terms of colloquial conversation.

Not a word was heard, not a doubt was posed! An old rotten piece of rug lay aside and the old man’s fingers commanded us to be seated. The whole population emerged out of their cylindrical huts and we felt we had

landed on Mars or the moon! Children in their dirty rags, women in veils, dogs and chicken, sheep and calf all were the spectators to see the two new arrivals in the mountain-zoo. A cold wind was seeping through our forger nails and our lips were dry and bleeding! In fifteen minutes the traditional hot kawa came. The grandpa ran his fingers through his long grey beard and looked around as if to seek solution to some problems. Then he went on murmuring something to half a dozen neighbours, the meaning of which we could realize only after a few moments. One egg from one family, thus six eggs from six neighbours. He had some bread with him which was as hard as stone; but we felt it as soft as his affection ! As if the daylight was ashamed to reveal all the secrets of their indoor life to us, the blanket of darkness fell upon the hamlet and our supper of omelets and bread was ready. Before that we had a survey of their existence. In the round mud-hut of ten feet diameter a family of four or five members lives with their brood of chicken and other domestic animals. In the centre of the floor was the permanent fire.

“Just a minute please” the old man interrupted us as we started eating. “When you go tomorrow morning I want to give you something to eat. I don’t have anything else.” With these words he cut a quarter of the bread to keep for our breakfast ! Meanwhile he had to arrange for our beds. No place inside. Biting cold outside. At last he struck upon a plan. Over the roof of the small mosque nearby, a patched up blanket was spread. “Please lie down”, he said which we did. Half a dozen torn and tattered, soiled and dirty blankets of wool and sheep-skin and `tree-skin were dumped over our straightened bodies. “Have a nice rest. I’ll call you in the morning” he said. As the

old legs were going down the roof our weary bodies sank in the bliss of sleep. When we opened our eyes the steaming kettle of kawa and the precious piece of bread had been placed in between our two heads and the old man was removing the heaps of rugs one by one. No washing, no brushing; we gulped-in our bed-breakfast, slipped into our shoes, got down the roof and moved into the vast expanse !

“Kurban Shuma” (ready to do any sacrifice for you), he had said while he stood and stared at our cautious feet along the winding path.

Gandhi still lives

Crystal-clear water was flowing in the river. The sun was blazing hot. We were tired and sought shelter. A clapping sound and we looked around. A man standing far away on the river hank waved his hand. Near his khema (the caravan’s resting place) there were some camels and dogs.

“Shuma az kuja aamadem ! “ (where do you come from ?).

“Az Hind”, our reply startled him.

“Ba pai aamadem ?” (on foot ?)

As usual we recited our ready-made sentences giving the substance of our story. “What is the distance to the next village ?” we asked.

“About two farsaks” he said. In Afghanistan distance is calculated by farsaks by the common folk. A farsak is approximately four miles. They do not bother

themselves about time and distance.

A handsome young Pathan was having a shave. No brush, no soap, no lotion! With an old blade he tried to remove every hair. What patience!

His comrade prepared tea, meanwhile. And sugar too, a rare luxury.

“.....So you’ve been walking for four months! Indeed, you are brave. I too have walked thousands of miles during the last 20 years. You see, I do business. Once a year I go to Kabul with my caravan and buy many things and return to the mountains. It takes several months to sell them. That’s how the hill tribes are able to wear clothes and eat sugar. But my walking is for my livelihood. Yours is wonderful and useful for the whole world.

Ah, you have a Gandhi who lives for the whole world.” We were surprised at his knowledge. He still thought Gandhi was alive ? Had he ever visited India ? What will he feel if we say Gandhi is no more ? However let us see.

“How do you know Gandhi ?”

“Well, I’ve heard about him in Kabul.”

“But,.....he is no more. He was shot dead.”

A gloom spread on his face. With the blade in his motionless hand he stared at the flowing water. A few moments passed. “I see. He was a man of the world.” Then he explained to us his impressions of Frontier Gandhi.

“...However, your Gandhi is not dead. He cannot die. He still lives. He'll live as long as humanity lives.”

A school, butchers and tea!

This morning a young man followed us for some time. “Please come to my school and have rest”, he invited. His school stood on the top of a hillock and he was a teacher who taught about a dozen boys. “My pupils stay with me and do all the work by themselves. Once a week they visit their parents in the villages. I am paid 350 Afghanis (less than 11 dollars) by the local authorities. I teach mainly the great teachings of Islam.” He gave an introduction before we entered that small shed of 10' x 15' in which 12 members ate, drank, cooked, studied, played and slept. It was eleven O'clock. A grass mat was spread and we were seated by the fire side. The head of a cow was lying on one side, blood oozing out a little. Near the door outside half a dozen kids were busy peeling and cutting the thick pieces of red hot flesh from the carcass. Thick chunks and bones were thrust into the fire by one boy while another made tea for us. I felt sick. But what to do ? We should not go away, at least for courtesy's sake. In five minutes the hot sugarless, milkless tea and a plateful of roasted beef were kept in front of us. We went on sipping the tea while the kids fed themselves on the smoky pieces of flesh and bone. As we hurried up giving thanks to our hosts, the teacher did not forget to say : “Please don't forget to come again any time you pass through this way.” When they grow up these boys would not hesitate to do any killing and bloodshed, would they? I asked myself.

Problematic wives?

“What to do with my three wives ?” asked the plumpy short man with his tummy resting on his lap to my friend, Satish. “Since you are a young husband, I want your advice.”

“Keep all of them in the same room and unless they learn to live without quarrelling don't open the door”, Satish's reply didn't seem practicable to him and he laughed a lot. Poor Arbab Aziz, who played host to us was a funny man dragging on with his three wives and four or five children. There were three separate tents since his original house was under repair he and his family lived in tents.

“Thus my trouble increase”, continued the Arbab while arranging a dozen boiled eggs, bread, cheese and tea on a piece of artistic cloth for our supper. “According to the religious sanction I can marry once more, but the existing three create a hell always, whenever I go out. As time goes on I find it difficult to feed them too.”

“In India we can have only one wife.”

“But don't you people feel the urge to have one more when you find another sweet girl ?” Even at this age the man was full of enthusiasm and youthful spirits ! The dogs barked outside, the darkness fell and a pair of beautiful cosy beds with silken quilts were made for us.

Prospective hosts!

In every Afghan village there is an Arbab, a sort of

A painful ride

For the first time in our journey, one of these days Satish the time we reached Kabul he had got accustomed to shoes. But almost everyday I had been seeing him suffer from blisters. By had to ride a horse for a short distance. From June 1st onwards almost everyday I had been seeing him suffer from blisters. By the time we reached Kabul he had got accustomed to shoes. But the new pair had to be tamed again. Sometimes to undergo pain is easier than to watch another person sobbing and sighing in pain. Almost every evening I have seen him performing a minor domestic operation on his feet. That afternoon the swollen feet virtually ceased to co-operate. We had to climb several hills. By 3 O'clock a Theliphooni had arrived on a horse in order to escort us to the nearest village. Seeing his plight, he compelled Satish not to walk the rest of the day. "But every inch we have walked so far. I think I can pull on" Satish persisted. However, after a little discussion he had to ride the lean horse for a short relief!

The Afghan Shakuntala!

To remain in this solitary coochi (a temporary hut for the nomad) in the midst of the vast barren land, oblivious of the whole past, I am unfortunately not a Dushyanta! To seek shelter under some pretentious search of game in the forests and hang around the vicinity for an endless period, I am not a hunter! To extend and establish a reign of authority over this region, I am not a king! To write a literary masterpiece about this memorable day of our journey, for the sake

village headman who looks after the general affairs of the village. It is he who enumerates the young men who have attained the age of 18 and report to the government so that they might be drafted for compulsory military service for two years. During that period they will be paid something like 20 Afghans per month plus ordinary food and inadequate clothing. These youths will be sent to do a lot of construction work throughout the country like road-making and canal digging. Again it is for the Arbab to entertain any guest who comes to the village. The guest is of the whole village and there is a guest room provided at the Arbab's, with a pair of nice beddings. When we discovered the secret of this system, wherever we went, first of all we used to enquire about the Arbab. If the Arbab was absent someone would look after the guest. The Arbab has to look after the collection of small taxes and represent the interests of the village to the government. For all such services the Arbab is paid a small remuneration collected by the villagers themselves.

Apart from the Arbab there is another important man in the village. He is called "Theliphooni". With an ear-phone and a hook and a piece of wire always in his pocket, this man will be roaming about. If there is anything important to be reported immediately to the nearest authorities, he would just hang on the single wireline that is passing through the mountains and villages right from Kabul to Herat on the Western border. This rural 'Scientist' knows the theory of sound transmission and you can see his expert hands bringing down the wire very near to the earth, hooking his ear-phone to it, burying another wire in the soil and talking very loudly. He used to be our companion as well as host at times.

of posterity, I am not a Kalidasa! What best I can do is to plainly tell the curious world, how we landed in this “modern” hermitage, for this is not made of leaves, creepers and flowers and the inmates here are not seekers after perfection through pain and penance. A simple and silent Shakuntala hosted us by the fireside and saw us off at day break, smiling and satisfied.

Like a dark speck on a brown blanket we saw this coochi from afar. Tired as we were, we murmured to each other : “we may not find any other place to halt overnight if we go beyond.”

“That’s true, smoke seems to be coming out indicating the possibility of human existence in that coochi.”

“So let us approach and see, “Khuda ka shukr.”

“There may be dogs, as usual !”

“Oh, that’ll be a nuisance.

“Don’t you remember, the other day a huge demon of a dog chased us when we ran into a coochi to escape from the rain?”

“That’s why people ask us to keep at least a stick for our personal safety.”

“Have you forgotten how we faced about a dozen dogs on another occasion simply by staring and yelling at them?”

“Okay, never mind, let’s see what happens today,” and we proceeded slowly.

Whenever a dog braked or a whiff of smoke was seen from a distance we used to jump to a happy conclusion: “Ah ! there is life there.” In case of necessity we would walk in and everywhere people used to be good and kind.

No leaves were there to tremble; the wind too was still. A pair of sparkling blue eyes attracted our attention. To what face and figure they belonged, we could not make out. The way in which they shot a sort of soft, still, piercing glance was indicative enough that only a feminine owner could possess such a magnetic pair of eyes. “Like the two eyes peeping through the thick curtain of leaves in the garden of Kanwa’s hermitage” I remarked. Later we confirmed it was a ‘Shakuntala’ who stood behind the thick black canvas of the tent watching our approach down the valley. It was at that very juncture that a man on horse-back dismounted beside us and inquired of us “Do you need any help?”

Accompanied by him we reached the door of the ‘hermitage’. The beautiful solitary damsel, may be, 18 years old, invited us to the fireside right in the midst of the room which was full of things scattered all around. An old bear-like dog snored, thank heavens, at one corner and a cow was tied up at the other. A very huge “gosfand” (a variety of very heavy-hipped sheep) lay down chewing its cud. Our coy Shakuntala placed the kettle over the fire and stood fanning with her head a little bent.

By the time we had refreshed ourselves with tea, there arrived a young man with a bundle of faggots on his shoulders whose relationship with Shakuntala we never bothered to trace out. Under the cover of darkness, in the dimness of the fire, he milched the

cow. She then heated the milk while he brought water and we fanned the fire. They had a piece of meat and we had potatoes to accompany the dry nan (bread). We all ate together and lay down around the fire; and there was no clock or cock to awake us. When we opened our eyes it was morning.

Sept. 12, 1962

“Climb on my back!”

Many a mountain, valley, stream and river had been trekked. Fortunately almost all the rivers were dry and therefore we could easily go across ! But this afternoon a small stream 6 feet wide was posing a problem to us.

By noon a simple, and mild-natured farmer around fifty came from a nearby village to walk with us saying that a Theliphooni had intimated to him the previous day to assist us.

The small stream was knee-deep in water. As we removed our shoes to get into the water, the old man rushed up and said : “No, no, don’t remove your shoes. Climb on my back. I shall take you across.”

We politely refused his kind offer and crossed it. He kept company with us enquiring about our health and progress.

Sept. 15, 1962

Back in the 20th century!

Slow and steady wins the race. Thus slowly we had climbed onwards from Kabul upto an altitude of

11,000 feet and had travelled around the highest peak of Afghanistan-Kohi Baba which measures about 15,000 feet. For the past few days we have been coming down. Leaving the naked, barren, rocky and lifeless mountains and plains behind, we were now in the green beautiful valley full of vegetation. During the past month we had a feeling that we were living in the 15th century, but now that was over. From that domain where no newspaper reached, no steam engine whistled, no cinema was shown and where people lived a most unhygienic and poor life of hardship to come down to the familiar world full of news and views was a pleasant surprise indeed ! Thus we reached the other side of Afghanistan, and entered the beautiful town of Herat this afternoon. After a couple of days’ rest and another trek of four more days we shall be entering a new country.

In Herat!

The first attraction to a visitor to this town is the nicely arranged fruits stalls and cloth shops. More than 30 varieties of grapes are said to be growing in Afghanistan. Beautiful, well-laid roads and lanes are other signs of improvement. People seem to be lovers of nature. In front of every shop one could see some flower plants and creepers. On either side of the road good clear water flowed. The ancient buildings are well built with brick.

There is an 800 year-old masjid with its magnificent dome in the centre and a very nice garden called the King’s Garden. The four minars of the masjid are visible from far. In the King’s Garden normally men are allowed only in the company of women! We were told that it was one of the steps taken by the

Government in order to encourage women's freedom and the removal of burkhas (the veils). It is interesting to note that the Afghan Government is fast improving their social and economic life. In Kabul and Herat one can see girls going to school as in any other modern city in the world.

Our three days in Herat were mostly spent in enjoying a good rest in the company of some Indian and Afghan businessmen. There was a famous school teacher in Herat who had been specially brought from India to teach English in the high school. Our acquaintance with him was a little disappointing because he seemed to have no consideration for the value of time and punctuality like Indians. The quickest means of communication between Herat and Kabul is by radio-telephone.

Sept. 21, 1962

In a world of blindness!

On 18th morning it was calm and cool when we were leaving Herat. But we felt the pangs of separation. The district authority who saw us off said : "I'm sending a companion with you till you cross into Iran." Though we did not feel the necessity, young Yusuf joined us with all enthusiasm.

"Are you going to Tehran ?", a sweet gentle feminine voice was heard from behind, as the long black limousine softly pulled by our side.

"Yes, we are."

"Oh, I see", as if the lean lonely passenger in the rear seat knew our story. The driver's eyes surveyed us in a hurry. With a little hesitation the lady continued : "Well I am going to Italy. Would you like to come with me to Tehran, or Turkey or anywhere upto Italy?" We explained to her our project. "Wish you all the best", she said with a happy smile and sped away. (Wherever you are, in Italy or India, we can never forget you, dear lady. You will be happy to hear that it took two months for us to reach Tehran and another eight months to pass through the middle of Europe, while it might have taken a week or so only for you !)

Anyhow, one cannot escape what is inevitable. Man shows his worth in facing it. The last four days constituted one of the most painful chapters of the journey. Had not Yusuf been with us, we would not have been alive to narrate this story to you. It was a terrible journey of 75 miles. We had to combat with severe sand-storms.

From head to foot we packed ourselves completely, leaving only some space to wear glasses. Our life depended upon the expert feet and helpful hands of Yusuf. "Come on, I will hold your hands", said Yusuf and both of us clung to his hands on either side and the three pairs of firm feet trembled and stumbled and made their way through stones and ditches. Nothing was visible beyond 5 feet. But Yusuf knew well where to take us by night-fall. "I have spent all my life of thirty years in nature's fuss and fury. Now I am able to control them. Never worry, I shall be with you till you say good-bye to our country," said he with confidence and pride.

Walking for 7 to 8 hours through dust and storm, by

evening we could reach a village familiar to Yusuf. There some of his friends or relatives would welcome us and provide supper. No question of having a bath. Even otherwise, after leaving Kabul we used to bathe once or twice a week, mostly in a stream or a fountain in the valleys. The passage of days thus taught us never to worry about such things and we got used to accept everything cheerfully.

One day we happened to be in a village consisting of about 70 families.

“What is the population of this village?” I asked our host.

“A hundred and fifty”, he replied.

“That’s all ? What’s the proportion between men and women?”

“All of them are men only”

“Then what happened to women?” I was curious.

“Oh! they are there. We don’t count khanum (women) in the population.

Then he explained that in Afghan villages women were never taken into consideration for any account. “But, you know, our Daud Saheb is a very nice and progressive man. He wants equal position for women. When he proclaimed that women should remove burkhas, it created a lot of confusion in the beginning. But he controlled the situation. He is a good Prime Minister,” concluded he.

Today is the last day. We thought we could enter Iran this evening. At Islam Quila, the headquarters of the border authorities, we were told that the actual border lay ten kilometers ahead. “Even if you enter Iran you have to walk another twenty kilometers to reach any place where there is life”, a man there said. Having no other alternative we decided to stay overnight at the government guest house. The young officials there were extremely kind to us.

We met two students of archaeology and oriental history from Japan, who were on their way back home, at the guest house.

How well Ohri’s biscuits and vitamin pills sustained us on the mountains! Grapes and apples, dry bread and kawa. Arbab and Hukumaran, the coochies and khemas, Shakuntala and Yusuf---Good-bye to you all.

In the Land of desert, poetry and pleasure.

We are in Iran, the land of the Persians. Thayabad means the mother of winds. It was our first camp. As it was in the lowlands, the wind blew from all sides. Physically there was no change; but mentally everything changed.

The first work was to reverse the pointers of our wrist-watch, an hour back. At the Pakistan border, half an hour, at the Afghan border, another half an hour. Now we are two hours behind India !

As we slowly strolled with a sense of loneliness in the street of this small town a young man approached.

“Can I help you ?”

“Well, thank you. We want to stay here overnight.”

“Come along, let’s have tea first.” He took us to the nearby cafe. Over the tea table he heard our story. After half an hour in the beautiful garden-house of a prominent citizen beds were spread for us.

Art, culture, poetry, pleasure, beauty, happy, laziness, carefree life, naughty girls, awakened youth, dreadful deserts, varieties of fruits, abundance of wealth, abject poverty, craze for fashion and sweet manners all these put together will make a line image of Iran. We are going to trek through the very heart of it. It may take at least three months.

Famous Mashad.

A week has already passed. Just like the Arbabs

in Afghan villages, here they have a corresponding official to look after the affairs of the village. Dehdar (the man of the village) and Khadkuda (one who is a sort of co-ordinator) were the first two names we got in acquaintance with. Naturally they would be our prospective hosts.

Before we reached Torbatjam, a small town, on the 24th, two young men invited us for tea. With just a cube of sugar kept in the mouth they would gulp in at least two glasses of black tea, whereas we needed about half of a dozen cubes.

“It is our luck that we met you today. Life is momentary. We meet and depart. Who knows ? Some day I might be your guest in India ! I enjoy the life of the moment,” said one of them, a true disciple of Omar Khyyam, giving us some tit-bits of his adventures in the art of living.

“No accommodation”

The other day we were flatly refused accommodation in two villages, one after the other, for the first time in our trip! Mr. Joma, the dehdar of Khurmabad, and his 25 neighbours stood arid stared at one another for a few minutes while we sat on a stone after a long and weary walk. We had never asked them for food, but only for accommodation. “Here there is no room please,” at last he said. Then we went to the next village. There too the same story. Besides, no one would talk to us. As if we were from some other world!

At last in the third village Daroga Mohamad, a poor farmer, invited us to his house. It was without enough ventilation or light. “In winter we have to suffer pretty

hard” he explained. His two young wives entertained us with cold bread, ghee and cheese. Like any modern women in a city, without any hesitation, they went on asking us questions about India. “Tell us about the land we heard of when Nehru came to Teheran,” they said.

Watermelon and Abdulla.

It happened yesterday. The sun was bright, the wind was pleasant and even the donkeys danced with joy. “Eat well when you walk”, so saying, an old man stopped his donkey, took two nice melons from the huge basket, gave them to us and walked away ! His toothless mouth was wide with a smile and his large eyes stared in surprise. He never bothered to utter a word not did he have time to do so as his donkey sped.

Abdulla happened to be the gate-keeper at the level crossing. But he insisted on our spending the night with him in his single room. “Though it is difficult in winter,” he said, “the railways supply enough kerosene for us to warm ourselves and cook our food.” Then he rushed to the shop nearby, brought some nan and tomato and a hot meal was made.

“When the train comes at midnight I have to get up to give the signal. We have a new beautiful train running on this line now. It is imported from France,” he was happy to say.

“How do you like your job, Abdulla?”

“Oh, job? I keep on well. There are, of course, many problems and difficulties. After all, who can escape

from problems? Life is full of them. So I don’t worry.” Though we lay down anticipating a peaceful sleep, we could not sleep. Throughout the night, soldiers from the nearby camp, called on Abdulla now and then just for a puff of his favourite hukka. The traffic inspectors, who made surprise raids on the passing trucks to trace anything unlawful buried under other things, and a few other friends, who sneaked into Abdulla’s abode for a chat because they had no time during the day when Abdulla slept and they worked, also disturbed us. Then there were the infectious companions-lice and bugs-who, from that night onwards discarded Abdulla’s smoky room to seek asylum in our rucksack, bookfolds and sleeves.

Anyway with a drowsy face and heavy eye-lids we took to heels at the gleam of sunlight towards Mashad, 23 miles away. Abdulla had to leave at six and there was no water even to wash our faces with.

Mr. Hussain sat with a group of his lieutenants in a shed on the slope of a hill which was a den for drivers, cleaners, turners, drillers and mechanics who worked on the road.

“Hai mussaffir, kuja meri ?”, shouted he clapping his hands. The hukka-tip dropped from his lips as he got out suddenly to invite us into his company ! His beautiful turban and broad smile were impressive and in two minutes we became heroes among the group of young fellows, who according to Hussain spent their lives at the wheels and anvils for the sake of wine and girls.

“We are happy to have you with us”, said one of them and started preparing tea, while Hussain plunged

directly into his distant past.

“Tell me now”, he spoke Urdu, “how is our Peshawar ? Oh I loved that city and the fruits and the life there

“Was it there you learned Urdu?”

“Yes, but years ago. So I have forgotten many words”.

“Still you speak well”

“By the by, where’re you going now ?”

“To Teheran and then to Moscow and Washington.”

“Moscow!” He forgot himself at the sound of that name and moved forward a little and planted his chin on his fist to hear more, while we explained the purpose of our march.

“Ah, that’s the one country I want to see before death. I love Moscow and Russia and the people there though I haven’t seen them”, he concluded.

How quickly was the week over! By evening we reached Mashad, one of the most beautiful cities of Iran. To roam about in the long and broad boulevards lit with floodlights in the evening is a great delight. A fountain of poetry would spring forth from every heart as one strolls along by the well-decorated shops full of fruits, flowers and confectionaries, and while mingling with dazzling damsels in Parisian style and lazy lads in American artificialities.

October 2, 1962

Four restful days.

Govindram Sukhvani welcomed us to his office-cum-residence. Though a businessman, money-making is not his chief interest. “A few more years I would be interested in business. Then I would reserve a nice cabin in one of the luxury-liners and wander around the world aimlessly, peacefully and joyfully with my wife, some music and books. I have a fascination for the waves and vastness of the ocean,” he said.

“Have these dreams and wishes dawned in your heart of late after your arrival in Iran ?”

“Not quite so, but to a great extent. After all, who can escape the inevitable laziness and ease and a charming urge to live and drink the short joys of life, in this country ? You see, people around here are carefree and they lead an ‘ayyashi’ life!” Then Mr. Sukhvani imitated a little of the look and the talk and the walk of the familiar figures of that region. A very interesting and jolly man, he is very hard-working with certain principles and routines in business. Our four days with him were delightful indeed.

“How do you find Mashad ?” asked a young student stopping’ us on the road. He was interested to hear about the direct-action movements and the peace march.

“Mashad is a good city,” we replied naturally.

“But don’t measure so soon. We are neither very rich nor reasonable. Our dresses cannot reveal our real picture. We are very poor. Rather, the Western

bosses have made our country so and we go after their fashions blindly.”

In Iran girls are being treated by parents as property to trade in. Many people told us that while a marriage was arranged the boy would be required to sign an agreement that he would provide her with means of livelihood throughout her life.” Even marriage for ten or fifteen days is possible”, said another.

October 3, 1962

A dream in reality!

Five years ago when I read those immortal lines, I had felt: shall I be able to see that place where he sat :

“.....with a Loaf of Bread beneath the Bough,
A Flask Wine, a Book of Verse-and thou
Beside me singing in the wilderness-
And wilderness is paradise now.”

But I never made haste, even though I knew that :
“.....tomorrow I may be
Myself with yesterday's Sev'n Thousand Years”.

Time played its upper hand indeed. Yet, the moment we entered this country thoughts revived its old desire. Therefore the other day we told our host : “Naishabur is right on the main road which goes nearer to the deserts towards Teheran. Therefore we think it is better to follow the northern road, though longer, for there is more population and vegetarian. But our desire is to go and see the Tomb of Omar Khayyam at Naishabur.” We thought of a plan and again told him that we would hitch-hike from Mashad to Naishabur

and back and then continue our walk.

“Why should you worry, I shall see to it”. said Sukhvani and contacted his friends in the transport business. Immediately. Mr. Ardkani, the owner of a fleet of buses, arranged a free ride for us to the Khayyam's which was over 100 miles away. That's how last night we got dropped near the Paradise of that Wilderness, when

The Stars were not set
And the Caravan still moved
Towards the dawn of everything
Without making any haste !

When the dawn came with its radiance we reached the two pillars from where a beautiful boulevard directly led to the monument of Omar.

Sitting and staring at that white marble structure with a conical top, which is about 100 feet high, I noted in my diary :

Here lies buried that great poet of the 11th century whose central philosophy of life is to enjoy the pleasure of life without much reflection. He wants to “fill the cup of life that clears today of past Regrets and future Fears”, for he is conscious of “how Time is slipping underneath our Feet”. There is no use in mourning about the “unborn Tomorrow and dead Yesterday, if Today be sweet!”

The sun shoots his rays through a mild mist. My feet with only socks and slippers cannot stand this biting cold. Shoes are in Mashad under repair.

Here is a mixture of Western and Persian architecture. Very simple and beautiful granite marble construction. Some of Omar's famous verses are inscribed on the inner walls. The vast garden around the monument reflects Omar's life and thought

After all why did he ask to
".....make the most of what we yet may spend,
Before we too into the Dust Descent"

Surely it is not just for the sake of pleasure. Only in the creative utilization of man's inherent energy and faculties can one feel happy. Omar was wise enough to discover this ultimate truth that every moment the End is awaiting at the doorstep. Therefore he appealed to all to make use of the fleeting time in order to create all the necessities of life, to consume them spiritually and physically so that life could be full. Thus everyone could do his duty by the End. If all do their duties, will there be any need of wars and bombs ? Here Tolstoy comes to my rescue :

"By whatever names we dignify ourselves, in whatever apparel we attire ourselves, by whatever and before whatever priest we may be smeared with oil, however many millions may we possess, however many special guards are stationed along our route, however many policemen may guard our wealth, however many miscreant revolutionaries and anarchists we may execute, whatever exploits we ourselves may perform, whatever States we may found, whatever fortresses and towers we may erect from the tower of Babel to that of Eiffel.....we are always, all of us, confronted by two inevitable conditions of life which destroys its whole meaning. There is, first of all, death, which may at any moment overtake any of us, and

there is the transitoriness of all that we do and that is so quickly destroyed leaving no trace.....Therefore, think of your duties not your imaginary duties as emperor, minister, priest, or merchant but those real duties which follow from your real position as a being called to life and endowed with reason and love."

And then we realized the time- the taskmaster of man -reminding us :

"You know how little while we have to stay, And, once departed, (perhaps!) may return no more." And we departed.

October 9, 1962

New hosts!

Leaving Mashad on the 4th, now we are heading towards Teheran. A New type of hosts we found. They are the gendarmeries. (Pasgas-they call in Persian) whose check posts can be seen here and there along the road. They have got varieties of functions like repairing the road, checking traffic, maintaining law and order in the villages etc. Usually they have been very good to us. Where there are no villages their places are quite useful and convenient. Generally there are six or twelve of them assigned for duty at one place. When half of them are on duty, the other half are off duty. That means during the night fifty percent of their barracks is empty. Therefore to find accommodation for two of us is very easy and we have a nice military bed-stand and blankets etc. Since most of the members are young we could spend our time discussing, singing and cracking jokes.

But today we are pulling on through a miserable night

in a very nice building of the police station. Though they welcomed us, there is no closed place to sleep. Therefore we are on the open verandah shivering under the thin blankets we have been carrying from Delhi.

October 11, 1962

Three musketeers

George Savispur, Dadgustari Kirmani and Ghulam Riza-these three names will remain unforgettable in our memory. Yesterday was sunny and pleasant but today it is rainy, cold and windy accompanied by pain and hunger.

As we walked along the long dusty road a group of buildings could be seen on the left side. This was yesterday.

“Why should we not visit that factory?”, said Satish.

“Of course, we shall try. It may be a sugar factory, for this area is full of chukandar (beet-root)” I said and we walked in. The factory was not working as it was not the season. However, half a dozen workers greeted us.

“Ah why don’t you meet our George ? He speaks your language”, one of them suggested and then yelled at George who was somewhere in another corner.

“Namaste” a very hefty, well-built, short-statured man came forward and greeted us in Hindi and started speaking in English. Obviously we could make out that he came from India. After going round the various plants when we were about to take leave

of them George said : “Why don’t you come to my house and have lunch with me ?” We looked at each other, as we had to calculate the time we needed to reach our destination which was a bit far. “I would be very happy to have your company”, he said again. We accompanied him.

As we sat around a nice lunch in his neat little home, he introduced his family-wife and four children. The pretty young wife and the beautiful naughty kids aroused more curiosity in us. “Well, George how long have you been here?”

“It is a long story”, he paused a little. “Twenty years!” He seemed to be eager to know something from us. We talked of this and that. He continued again.

“It was at the age of twelve that I ran away from home leaving my parents to sigh and sob....” His eyes welled. Consoling himself he said : “Out of necessity I did it. I was in the Middle School. My parents were poor. I could not stand the strain of life, I wanted to build my own future. Roaming about here and there and doing this and that work I travelled through Madras, Hyderabad, Bombay, Karachi, Singapore etc. and finally landed in Iran when the Quit India Movement was in full swing over there.” Now George is a technician enjoying a good income and a happy life. His Irani family is dreaming for a visit to their ‘father-land’. “We have asked him several times to take us to India”, said his sweet daughter of shy sixteen. Finally when they knew that George belonged to a village which is only about 25 miles from my home on the Arabian Sea coast, they burst into limitless joy and said “You must come back again”.

“Shall I give you some money for your activities ?”

“No George, thank you very much. We shall reach our destination without money. People like you are everywhere and that is our wealth. Good-bye.” He might have felt as if he had reached his home ! Poor man, he does not know whether his loving parents are still alive or not !

By evening we reached a small tea shop near a Pasga Post where we could spend the night. The next town was 25 miles away. In the dim light and the fume of kerosene we curled into our sheets through a cold night. The lean bearded shopkeeper's life depended upon the occasional truck driver or some stray passenger. A jeep stopped outside. It was raining. Two gentlemen rushed into the chaikhana (tea-shop) and warmed their fingers by the heater. “Where are you coming from?” asked one of them whose eyes were wandering over us now and then.

“From India.”

“Tourists?”

“No.” In the meantime the old man jumped in. “Aga, Paigambare aman ast. Pyda amadem az Hind. Teheran mervem!” (“Sir, they are the messengers of peace. Coming from India, going to Teheran on foot”) And they went on talking about us for some time.

“I shall be happy to take you by jeep to Bojnurd. Come and stay with me for a few days if you wish.”

“Thank you. We shall reach there tomorrow.”

“Then here is my address. Please don't fail to come to my house. Ask anyone for Dadgustari Kirmani's house and he will direct you.” He and his friend drove away and we slept with a special joy: tomorrow our camp is booked in advance!

It seems to be the law of nature that every joy must be followed by pain or that every pain predicts future pleasure! This day brought us immeasurable hardships on the way. Rain was mild in the morning. As we proceeded with the usual gulp of tea and bite of bread at 7 a.m., mud and filth started entering our shoes. We can afford to be wet, but the kits on our back must not be drenched. So we managed to cover it with the plastic rain coat.

We had to cross some small rivers, already flooded. One bridge was under repair, another one already crumbled. “I shall be waiting for you by evening”, these words of Kirmani ran through our nerves and our paces were long automatically. Jumping over the stones and logs of wood we could somehow manoeuvre the bridges. Without a bite of food or a moment of rest, by evening we could see the dim lights of Bojnurd but we could not make out the muddy flooded road. We were drowned in the depth of darkness. Hands and feet were freezing and the wind blew. It was at that critical moment that an empty car swam by our side and the driver was so kind as to stop to ask : “Please come with me”. Out of the 25 miles, 24 we had already trod. Just for the last mile a ride!? Though every physical nerve demanded it there was a mental vibration. “No please”, at last we said. Again he insisted, but we moved ahead. As he glided away I could see the vacant surprise in his face.

At last it was 7 when we knocked on the door of Kirmani. A hearty welcome, a hot meal, a warm room with costly carpets, cosy beds and silken quilts plus a very interesting friend of Kirmani waited for us. As if from the depth of hell to the lap of heaven ! We sat and ate and talked and laughed till midnight.

Gulam Reza is the son of a rich landlord but a tailor by profession. "We are very intimate friends", he said looking at Kirmani. "So all the four of us are very dear to each other", he poured the sixth cup of tea into my glass while the red wine reached the brink of his glass. "It is a pity you don't drink. Well, I won't compel. Wine is life to me, you know. My wife at times scolds me but I don't care. Then I will tell her 'go and read our Omar' Ah, he was a great man."

Neatly dressed in American style, Reza lit the next cigarette when I asked : "What is your interest Reza?" "Ah, there you are. I want to visit India and pay my humble respects to that great man, Nehru. Your Gandhi—he is my God. I wish I could see him ! Good people will not be spread by the evil doers." The very thought of Gandhi lifted him high into the realm of joy.

October 12, 1962

In the garden of life!

Gulam Reza was to come and takes us for lunch with him. "Tomorrow you are my guests. You must not walk tomorrow, Have a nice rest and enjoy a holiday. I shall be here by noon to take you", thus he had said good night.

We lay lazily in our beds and threw a mental glance

at our colourful yesterday. Kirmani arranged a nice breakfast. He had to go his office. "I shall be back only late in the evening. Enjoy with Reza", so saying he left us.

Hours passed but Reza did not turn up. "He said he would be here before twelve !" exclaimed Satish.

"That's right. But isn't he a special type of man?"

"Yes; still I hope he will be punctual."

"Let's not bother about punctuality today, at least for Reza's sake."

"So you are optimistic. Fine ! If he doesn't turn up ?"

"Then let's enjoy that part of the game. After all there is one more person, Hussain, to whose house Reza is going to take us".

We went on with our minor operations with the shoes, kits and dresses. We became tired of our own patience. On enquiry, the real and simple truth was revealed. A boy informed us : "Aga-e-Reza beerun ast !" Reza had gone out in the morning. He had told his family about our engagements. But on arrival in the garden-park he got involved in the company of wine. Hours later when the boy went to call him he was lying on the green garden of life under the blissful spell of wine. "I asked him to come, for you are waiting. But he told me 'I shall come in the night' " said the boy. He had forgotten all the promises of "dead yesterday" to live in the sweet moments of today!

"What a man!"

“Never mind. We must understand him as he is. He is sincere to his principles and philosophy of life. Unfortunately or fortunately the world in which we all lived together last night is no more existing for Reza. Today he is in a different world and he has changed accordingly. What a simple straightforward creature, no circumstances! Let’s admire him because, he is as he IS.”

Our hungry stomachs got on well through the flying moments of the rest of the day till we had our supper late at night. Still Reza, remains fresh and green in our memory as first we saw him and he will remain so for ever.

October 14, 1962

“Spies” or “Guests”

“Are you spies?” some one asked on the way. After sometime he invited us for tea in the nearby cafe!

We don’t go, rather we can’t go, to the small chaikhana on the road, even though these are the places where people can be seen. Normally the dusty gravel road runs through the barren lands. These are places of business. In business, man, to a great extent, ceases to be man. So, only when we are absolutely tired, when our water runs out, when we feel like having a little rest, we enter a chaikhana. It is a custom that any one can enter a chaikhana any time of the day or night to have rest, whether you eat or drink or do any business or not. Wherever we went, they accepted us as their guests without any delay.

Today as we walked past a Pasga (the police chowki), a sepoy invited us for tea. (The Afghan and Iranian tea

is nothing but hot light-coloured—green or black—water with a few cubes of sugar). When we sipped the last drop of our second glass of tea an old man brought a bunch of sweet grapes! It was midday. A few others joined. Then the café keeper himself brought a couple of nan, a few fried eggs and onion slices for lunch! We just looked at him.

“You are my guests. Walking from India.....oooh.....”

By 6 p.m. we reached a place where there were a few houses on the roadside. Nothing further could be seen as far as the eyes went. “We must stop here for the night”, we thought, but walked slowly. A bald-headed middle-aged man sat on a stone in front of a chaikhana. He clapped his hands and said “where are you going? Please come and stay here.” Now we were in confusion. It was business for him to ask people to stay at his place, but he did not know our inner secret. However, we went and sat for a while. Immediately he brought tea. Now we must not waste any more time. “Aga ma tuman na darem” (but friend we have no money), we said.

“Parvah neest. Shuma mehman. Mehman-e-Hind! Chashme...”, and he bowed down putting his fingers on the eyelids. (Never mind. You are my guests from India, on my eyes.) That was the end and the beginning. A fine room upstairs of his cafe with carpets. A petromax was lit. “If you want to read and write.....”, said he. He treated us like his honoured guests.

“I have heard that India and China have started some troubles”. He began. He had an ear for the world too ! For us, the outside world and its news and views had

become remote things. We wondered at and hungered for news.

October 20, 1962

Captain's concern

Gonbad-e-Gabus is another town of Iran where one's heart and brain find nourishment at the same time. We never expected a lordly welcome nor did we ever dream of a man with a fire and feeling in his heart about the affairs of the world. For the last three months seldom could we come across some one who was eager to know the purpose of our walk and work.

At 11 O'clock a black car stopped near us. The lonely passenger opened the door.

"Would you like to have a lift?"

"Khaili muthsakuram. Ma pyada mervem." (Many thanks; we are walking.)

"Pyade?"

"Yes, we are going to Gonbad." While we fumbled over the language he spoke in English : "Why don't you come with m?" Our explanation satisfied him.

"Shall I give you some money?"

"No please. Thank you."

"All right. Then please come to my house and be my guests tonight."

"Thank you, we shall."

It was a lordly welcome in the evening. Captain Honerver had invited some more guests from the neighbourhood. Being a relation of the Royal family, his pomp and riches could be seen on the walls. While eating, he said about himself. "I was a captain in the army. Later the late Prince Ali Reza appointed me as his representative to look after his estates. My favourite pastime is hunting."

"If you don't eat meat, you can eat at least the pieces of vegetables from the dish removing the mutton pieces, "the other guest, a high official, was taking good care of us.

"Sorry, they are cooked together, aren't they?"

"I see. I realize. You are from Gandhi's India. Man must have some principles in life. That's what he taught you people. You are fortunate."

"Oh it was delightful and exciting to hunt in the terrific jungles of Africa," continued Capt.Honerver while smoothly pushing the tasty tail of a fish into his mouth. "I spent some time in India and Pakistan too. But your forests are less exciting. Still I love India. What a hospitable people! How is Nehru? A Great man." As our dinner ended with dessert and coffee, two beds were laid in the adjacent room by his beautiful daughters whose flashing figures used to move to and fro behind the curtain. Shy, though modern and fashionable, they were later introduced to us. One is fond of music, the other of literature and a third of sports.

As I lay in darkness below the 'tick-tick' of the clock, the other side of Iran flashed on the mental screen

and I said to myself : “Did you ever think about the fact that all over the civilized world the working class is the poor class? The other day in the heavy rain when you sat around a stove with half a dozen stone-breakers, near the bridge in their hovel, whose feet were unprotected from filth, water and chill whose bodies were shivering due to scant clothing, who also shared their humble crust of bread with you, did you feel why they should have to lead such a life ? What do you think now when your host, who practically does nothing, tells you about the glory of his ten thousand dollar sojourn in the African forests just for delight and pleasure’ of seeing the frantic end of life in excruciating pains and pangs? And yet, when you see the ten pairs of shoes, the half a dozen sheep-skin coat and hats, the precious carpet below your bed, The decoration on the walls (of deer-skin, tiger-heads and the lots), do you think this is the order of nature?” A reply seemed to have come from some corner of the mind: “As and when the world unfolds before you, the knowledge of these things will come automatically.” And I slept. When, I cannot say.

October 21, 1962

“To marry in hell?”

“Is it a hell, then?” I asked the young gentleman.

“What else? Our world is nothing but a man-made hell. You can’t live happily. You can’t breathe pure fresh air. This year the Americans poison it; next year the Russians, That’s why I am afraid of marriage. After all, where to live safely and happily ? Day and night, all of us are living under the cloud of atomic doom. Aren’t we?”

“So what shall we do ?”

“The thing that you are doing now. That’s why I called you in. First of all I had a doubt whether you were the same fellows whose photographs I saw in the papers a few months ago,” he said.

“We wondered, as we passed by, why your eyes were following us through the windows of your shop !”

“In fact, first I thought you were tourists. Then your banner told me the truth. You know, lots of Yanks wander up and down this way.”

“We want to reach Shapasand this evening. So we were rushing through,” we explained.

“Where did you spend last night ?”

“With the Honervers”.

“Oh ! A nice man and rich too. A sweet family aren’t they ?”

“Well, Mr. Manucher, why don’t you start some antibomb movement here ?”

“Indeed, I am thinking,” he said and waited for a moment. “Bertrand Russell is a wonderful man. I have got great admiration for his work.”

“He has been the main source of inspiration for us.”

“You will meet him, won’t you ? Please convey my best regards. I would like to have correspondence with him. Please give me his address,” After taking down

the address, he looked at our shoes. "Your shoes are coming to an end. Why not replace them now?"

"We hope they will last till Teheran. Then we must have strong once to fight the cold."

"All right. Then, at least, I want to present you a set of goods socks," and he took us to a shop, bought some, again said. "Please don't hesitate to ask me if you need anything more."

"Not at all. We are all brothers, thinking about and fighting for the same end. Thank you very much."

"Had I been free from the responsibility of business, I would have followed you. Very few people are serious about the present world situation. Look at Iran. This country is being converted into an ammunition depot ! The U.S. is establishing military bases all over to watch the Soviet Union. We are their lackeys."

After some refreshments we departed and he said "I am always with you."

The glorious hamam!

In Iran only in very few modern houses one can find a bathroom. People go to the public bathroom once a week and have a bath which will be so elaborate, luxurious and comfortable that they do not feel the need of having another at least for a week ! For the first time today our host said : "You must have a hamam."

Our host, Mr. Sipandar, is an agriculturist and father of a ten year old son, "I want to make him a prince or Prime Minister," he said. His wife had seen

us entering the town at 3 p.m. The husband was roaming about on the road when we were surrounded by a group of curious people to find out our origin, plans and future. A decent-looking gentleman had come forward to offer money to us. In the meantime Sipandar elbowed in and said: "Why don't you come to my home and stay?" That's how we happened to be their guests.

"Let's go for hamam. Then dinner." Ordering his wife for a nice supper he took us to our glorious hamam. You enter a big hall with cement benches all around. As you remove every bit of your garments to deposit in the safe, a thin coloured towel is given to you. Never try to bring it near your nose for it carries the unforgettable fragrance of many a hundred customers of the past. The next room you enter is hot, with no ventilation or fresh air. There is a shower, hot or cold as you wish. The next door opens to another spacious hall with a hot-water-tank surrounded with a group of people. Here complete 'freedom' seems to prevail. Some are dipping in the tank, while some emerge out of it. Some are soaping themselves, while some stand on the others to crush the plump masses of flesh to complete red-hot relaxation. Here all men are really brothers, for everyone is as naked as he was when he saw the light of the world. However, in that world of nakedness, it was impossible for me to turn into a baby. For that reason I became the focal point of at least fifteen pairs of glaring human eyes! My mistake—I happened to wear the minimum 'required' (unnecessary indeed !) piece of cloth. I came out as quickly as I went. Yet, there is a final touch. When you emerge after a long process of your weekly hamam, again into the first hall, the man comes with a dry towel, stinking indeed, and covers your naked

body. Now it is left to you whether to come back into the world of colours and make-ups. Well, there is no choice. You have to; otherwise you are a mad-cap in the outside world !

Our hamam was over quickly. "Did you enjoy it?" asked the host. "Of course. For the first time in our life" But we had not undergone the hole process, alas!

October 23, 1962

Advance bookings!

It has become a routine now-a-days that people make advance booking for us to be their guests. Though we had to walk 25 miles today, we didn't feel the burden of it, for the weather was fine and there was a psychological relief too. Towards the town of Shapasand a car passing the other day while we were on the road. The two young occupants had asked. "Why don't you come with us to Gorgan and stay there for a couple of days". Our thankful refusal and further discussion made them convinced of our action. "All right, when you reach Gorgan you must be my guests". That is how today we happened to be the guests of Mr. Manucher Kathanchi. As soon as we reached his home we did not waste a moment lest all the plans Kathanchi had thought of should be spoiled. A grand dinner in a posh restaurant, an English film etc. It was past midnight when we got home.

"Now the problem remains," said Kathanchi the next morning "since she couldn't entertain you last night, my wife wants that you must stay for lunch. She has invited some other friends also." Therefore, we had to spend the next half day also with the Kathanchis.

As we took leave of them he slowly murmured in our ears : "Please keep some money with you." When that wish couldn't be fulfilled he brought a packet of sweets and biscuits and loaded them on our back. How affectionate and nice are people everywhere!

Yesterday it was Aliabad, another small town, where, as soon as we reached, one of the Pasga sepoys greeted and escorted us to his home. Ordering his wife to arrange for a special supper he said : "You must see our cinema." 'Jaffar Ali' is the story of a simple pair of lovers in a remote village who are cheated by the city dwellers on their first entry into the complexities of the city. The film industry in Iran is in its infancy. Many English and Hindi films are running all over the country.

October 25, 1962

An unusual driver!

This morning we had an unusual driver friend. He drove his tractor along the road and slowly stopped behind us. For a few minutes we explained about our work. Then he said : "I live in the next village. I have a small work-shed in the fields. You must come with me in this trolley, have rest and lunch and then go." Whatever we said he would not agree, "I won't move an inch unless you come with me", and he waited on the road. A few minutes later a car passed through. They too stopped and offered a lift. When that also was refused our former host realized our determination and drove away.

"All Hussains seem to be a peculiar sort of people!" said Satish.

"Yes, it seems so. Let's recollect how many Hussains we have come through so far. The customs officer Hussain, the teacher Hussain, then that mechanic in another village so on.

"Our today's Hussain is another nice chap. I didn't hope he would accomodate us this night."

"That too in this solitary house inside this forest!"

"Poor man, he may not have enough for tomorrow."

"Yes, still how happy he is! How eager he is that we must eat and sleep well." Thus we talked to each other as we went to bed in the forest house at night. This area of Iran is very fertile, green and beautiful, like certain parts of India. The climate is also fine. On the right side the blue Caspian Sea is visible. It seems to be calm and waveless. On the left there is a chain of mountains which runs all along the northern border of Iran right upto the Caucasus in the Soviet Union. Some one said the other day, that we might have to face a tough time to cross these mountains before reaching Teheran. Fields of tobacco, pomegranates, grapes, wheat and rice too. But the most important crop is cotton. Pomegranate is wildly grown all around. It is interesting to pick them up from either side of the road and eat at times.

"Shuma chi darem?" (what are you carrying ?), one beautiful belle raised her dropping head from the midst of the cotton field, ignoring all her comrades around. "anaaaaaaaaar" we retorted with an equal rhythm which made all of them giggle and laugh and shout in a gay and jovial mood. Unlike in Afghanistan, women in Iran have secured more freedom in the

world of veils.

October 27, 1962

Shoes in distress!

"Your shoes must be changed," pointing at our soleless shoes the young Abbas Kiani and his brother insisted.

"No we don't think so. They will take us upto Teheran. Then we shall change."

"No mister. They are in distress. Come along, we want to have a new set of shoes for you." They took us to the shop, bought the shoes, organised a lunch and said. "We hope you will come back here again. You are our brothers."

They were expecting us at noon since we had promised to call on them on our way. Two days ago in a village we had met them. Then they wanted us to accompany them but as we did not, this arrangement was made.

The granny wants Passports!

By evening we reached the village Koleh and a school boy welcomed us to his home. His elder brother happened to be the Khatkuda of the village. Yet all the members of the family did not seem to accept us as guests. However, by nightfall we got settled and sat around the grandmother who cooked hot food and served us. "You know," she said slowly, "you might not get any accommodation anywhere in the village ahead. People are very bad there."

The supper was over. The father of the boy told us that beds had been made upstairs. The boy was eager to hear stories from us, though our command of Persian was not sufficient to make him understand. In the meantime, the grandmother said : “Before you go upstairs, please give me your passports. I shall return them in the morning.

So far not a single person except the authorities needed our passports. Obviously, this lady was full of doubt. We could be cheats or spies or vagabonds or what not. So she might have thought it would be safe if she had the passports with her. “If these boy should run away in the night ?” her face seemed to be asking herself. For two minutes I thought and finally said :

“Will you please keep the whole rucksack of ours with you ? Our passports are inside. The whole thing will be quite safe in your hands,” and I moved to the other room to fetch them. She quickly followed and said, “No no, let it be in the room where you sleep. I don’t need the passports. Sleep well, Shabba khair (good night)” and she retreated without any more worry.

October 30, 1962

Quick march

Sari, Sahi, Amol and Babol are four beautiful towns almost equidistant from one another. Here many people travel by car for the taxi is very cheap all over Iran. “Even when we dig for a well, at times oil comes out”, said a driver once. Everyday, at least ten times people would stop their vehicles at times to offer a lift, at times to enquire why we were walking, at times to ask for some medicine. One of these nights we stayed

with a rich family. The father of the of the family was driving home and he wanted us so get into his jeep. Then the usual refusal, invitation and acceptance followed. Another evening we happened to be the guests of some shop-keepers. A young student ran to us on the road and started saying : “Oh, the other day I saw your pictures in the Itallat. Next year I am going to study in America. You must come and stay with me tonight.” In the meantime a lean but active man came running from his tea shop and dragged us by hand. There were about twentyfive people sitting and drinking tea. All of them had heard about our passing through the town. Cup after cup of tea was offered and the enthusiasm of the proprietor found no limits. He was drunk a bit. He embraced us and again ordered tea. It was a problem to escape their overwhelming hospitality. Then on the road hundreds of children gathered around as if we were some curiosity.

Problem “kisses”

It was an afternoon. There was breeze and good sunshine. A big car dashed past and suddenly stopped about 50 meters ahead. Seven or eight beautiful girls came out and run straight to us.

“You’re from India ! Ha, what a nice country. Please convey our sweet kisses to Raj. How is he now? By God, Nargis too is so pretty.”

“How do you know them?”

“What?” the pony-tailed one thrust her long nose with glaring eyes. “I saw him in Teheran just a year ago.”

“Tell me please, how are they ? Do they have children?”

Everybody in Iran thinks that Raj Kapur and Nargis are husband and wife ! How on earth are we going to convey the sweet kisses to them is a problem now.

The treasure hunters!

“Aga, aga.....” slowly a young man with short hair got down from his bicycle right behind. I looked back. It, was this afternoon, on the dusty road zigzagging through barren hills and plains.

“Chi lazim shuma ?” (what do you want?)

“Please tell me....,” he wouldn’t say anything more.

“What?” we wondered.

“Please tell me....” he grinned. “What do you want us to say?”

“Chira, aga,.....You know everything....”

“But what ? We don’t know anything you need!”

“You’re joking. You know. The Indians know all the secrets. Please tell me. You come and stay with me. I shall pay you money. My mother and sister will look after you.”

The whole comedy was inconceivable to us. We looked at each other and laughed and wondered. He silently but anxiously walked waiting for a word from our lips. Again we asked him : “What do you want ?”

He looked around, walked a bit nearer and slowly murmured : “You know the whole truth. The place

where it is buried. Please say to me.”

“What is buried ?”

“The treasure !” Again he looked around to make sure no one was hearing. You know all these mountains are full of treasure. I know that Indians only know the secret. That’s why you are walking here, no?”

We laughed and laughed; he wouldn’t leave us unless we told him the secret. At last the ‘secret’ was revealed:

“You see,” I said gathering myself, “when it rains in these low plains you take the shovel and dig. You ask your brother to put some grains on the soil. In a few months the treasure will come up....” He got angry and disgusted with us, and rode away with a scornful look.

He disappeared at a distance. In a few minutes another boy rushed up and said panting “Ah! you told him everything! Tell me also. How much money did he give you? I shall give you more”, he was curt and quick. Again we had to repeat the same, this time a little disinterestedly. However, he did not bother us much and sped away.

Indians are well respected, loved and admired too, for they know many things in the world. For instance, one day somebody said, “In Teheran I saw the magicians, the rope-climbers, the building-swallowers, the snake-charmers, the yogis, all Indians. They did wonders. Only Indians can do it.”

“Then you have Nehru!”, said another boy one day.

“Who else in the world can match him ? We too have a Nehru of Iran—Mr. Mossadique—but prisoner of the Shah” his tone was low.

November 4, 1962

Precarious four days!

Till the 31st everything went smoothly. Now there were to roads to Teheran. “If you follow the existing one you may have to walk more. The new road under construction is only half the distance of the old. It is only half done. It cuts through the high mountains and winds around the Demavand. There are many tunnels to pass through. I don’t know whether you will be able to pass”. Thus a briefing was given to us by one road engineer.

We decided to follow the new road of adventure and mountains and uncertainties.

On the 1st of November we had reached a height of about 6,000 feet. The chill increased considerably and we felt the strain of ups and downs again. Construction work was in full progress. The previous night we spent in the workers’ temporary sheds. Their gossips and songs went on late into the night. This afternoon we were just passing under an ‘air bridge’, and a couple of young stout fellows were cooking their food. One of them invited us to join. Such a nice rice-pulav with date fruits and raw tomato in the mountains! Absolutely unexpected. He was a politician too!

“Where are you going from Iran?” , he asked.

“To the Soviet Union”.

“Really ? Will they allow you? You are lucky”.

“Yes, we hope they will permit. Even if they don’t we will enter the country”.

“Can you ?” he asked and sat on the rock with eager eyes.

“Well, can or cannot is different. We have decided to go. Then we explained to him about our march. He was immensely happy and said :

“For going to Russia we don’t get passports. Our Government is exploiting the people too much. We have no voice in anything”.

“But your Shah is making some new reforms in this country, isn’t he?”

“He is a disciple of American politics and imperialism. Most of our natural wealth, oil, is flowing to America. In turn they thrust upon us their manufactures and unwanted goods. You may see them in Teheran market. I want that our country must be a people’s democracy instead of Shah’s monarchy. We won’t keep quiet”.

Crusade through death; Angel in need :

It was day before yesterday. The longest tunnel through a high range of mountain lay dark and dreadful right in front. The sun sought shelter behind the peak, as if he wanted to avoid seeing our plight!

“Are you going to pass through this tunnel?” asked an engineer on the spot.

“Naturally we have to”.

“But it is impossible. Secondly we can’t allow you now, for it is dangerous”,

“What shall we do then? We have to reach Teheran. Now we can’t go back the distance we have already walked”.

“You walked? why?”

The story again. I wonder, how many times in my life I may have to repeat the same story again and again? “All right. First of all we shall have some rest”, and we stood on the stone. Some one said that Phulur, the next village was only five or six miles away. So we could reach there, we thought. But first of all the tunnel!

“Well, if something happens to you ? you see the drilling and exploding of the rocks inside is going on from bolt sides. There is only an opening of about 3 feet in diameter”, another one warned.

“Whatever it is, we shall try. Three feet opening is enough. With regard to our safety, don’t bother. We are fully responsible for ourselves. No one in the world really knows what is in store for him in the next moment. So let us ignore that part of it”, saying so we proceeded.

Half a dozen workers in nasty shabby clothes and shivering limbs accompanied us through the dangerous dungeon of dust, smoke, rocks, railings, heaps and pits.

A small piece of tyre was lit to serve us as torch and they held our hands at times. Huge pieces of rocks hung from the uneven roof of the tunnel. We slowly stumbled and moved ahead.

“Ho-o-o-i, go away. Be careful. Khabardar”, shouted some fellows in the dark. Now a frantic movement inside. Our companions grabbed us into the cave on one side. It was a couple of feet deep in the wall, meant for the temporary protection of the workers inside when the explosives were in charge. About ten of them crammed into it with us and all of us waited with a feeling of nothingness. In two minutes our ear-drums were shattered with the booming sound of explosions one after the other. Eight or ten dynamites were exploded and the fume and smoke and dust filled the whole underworld of ours. Eyes and ears closed, we stood counting moments. Ten or fifteen minutes must have passed. Slowly we felt a sort of release as the others got out. Our guides again held our hands to lead us to the mouth of the tunnel and somehow or other we could manage to squeeze ourselves through the delicate opening which looked like a trap ever ready to press our necks into doom and dust. “Ah! there you are. Go boys, wish you all the best! Bravo!” shouted one of the guides and we were again on the path of victory after crusading through the peril! It was a few moments’ death. In another fifteen minutes we could emerge to the other side of the mountain.

While we were under the other world, the world outside was experiencing a cool, unexpected rain bringing untold misery to the poor workers deeply planted in mud without proper garments and shoes. On the top of the high peak ahead white glittering snow had spread a thick carpet for the dying rays

of the sun to rest. We felt we could not go any more. But what to do ? We must walk upto Phulur. Our feet seemed as heavy as lead. Life indeed is an endless game of pangs and pains.

“Where to?.....”, as if an angel dropped from the top of mountain an a old man in thick trousers and black peasant-cap suddenly appeared in front of us and stood with a vacant look the and mouth wide-open!

“To Phulur. How many” before the sentence was completed again he said : “You are my guests tonight in my little hut”.

Guest, hut, where, when—words rushed through our silent lips. No hut could be seen in the vicinity. But he did not want to wait a moment. Up the mountain there went a footpath. He climbed up and we followed. The soil was wet and sticky; our shoes got into the mud. however, at every difficult step he helped us by hand and at last it was a small temporary shed of rusted tin-sheets, wooden planks, rags and tarpaulin, on the slope on the other side, that we landed in. There were four or five of his colleagues sitting around a burning stove, emitting smoke at times, who warmed their frail and feeble bodies. The room was about 12’x12’ in which a lot of construction materials like cement, oil-drums and metal sheets had been dumped and half a dozen human beings lived. Our host was a section supervisor and his young assistant, the bulldozer driver, was one of his good companions. It was an unexpected blessing for us.

Yesterday was the end of a four days’ crusade through death and difficulties and it reached the pinnacle of pain at the last moment. Mount Demavand , the 18,000

feet high peak of Iran, stood majestically touching the blue sky with a glittering turban of snow. Round and round about, we had to climb upto 10,000 feet in the forenoon and come down about 6,000 feet all of a sudden in the after-noon. It rained on the peak and all around, but the rain didn’t contain water. Small white pearls of snow rained for an hour through the sunshine. It was one of the most magnificent plays of nature I have ever seen in my life.

Though we enjoyed it, untold misery was its result. When the snow-shower was over, we had to reached the top and the terrible wind started by the time we were on the incline. Freezing chill pierced into our finger nails; all our woollen clothes were insufficient; as salt on a bruise, a sudden excruciating pain developed below my left knee. The rest of the day was a living death for me. However, by the evening we could reach a town called Abe Ali which is an excellent summer resort of Iran. But then it was almost deserted; yet the kind inn-keeper, Hassan Mohammad, happily entertained us for the night. “Our Shahanshah visits this place every summer to go for hunting, relaxation, enjoyment and happiness. But we people remain the same miserable creatures all the time”, his comment was universal declaration on behalf of the thousands of people we came across during our sojourn. While some people go on picnic and to ski and skate there must be many others to toil and to serve them.

Seventeen days in Teheran

With a depressed mind and uncomfortable body I woke up in the upstairs room of the traffic control building on the 5th November. The previous night

the enthusiastic officers had accommodated us in their office. Mind was depressed by the fear that if pain increased in the leg it would be difficult to reach Teheran. From Abe Ali, somehow or other, slowly I had been dragging on with accute pain. So, that morning also we loaded ourselves with hope and confidence. More than fifteen miles we had to walk to reach Teheran.

“Please wait till 7-30 when the cafeteria will be open and we will have breakfast”, said the officer-in-charge,

“We want to reach the city by early afternoon. Thank you very much”, and we proceeded.

Ever since we left Kabul, we could not receive any communication from any friend or relative. For two and a half months we were living almost in another world. An occasional news over the radio in a chaikhana was the only means with which we knew that some troubles had shot up in the Himalayas and the Carribean. The mail was lying in the Indian Embassy. Then we had to find out our prospective hosts in Teheran. Since many things had to be done before leaving Teheran, we must stay there at least two weeks. Nothing but the road in front and our feet occupied our minds. We clung to indefinite future, as usual.

From the mountain folds we emerged into a vast plain and a mild fog spread over the capital city of Iran. Some domes and a couple of sky-scrapers were visible which indicated the nearness of the city, though we had to walk more than ten miles yet. However, there was a great feeling of satisfaction though we had been

walking the whole day absolutely hungry and tired. By late afternoon only, we could locate the Embassy and pick up the bundle of mail. The officials there directed us to “Bhaiji” who was going to be our host.

“Bhaiji for all”

Any person who ventures to have a stroll along the crowded Ameer Kabir can come across a pair of radiant eyes well set on an oval shaped face with a long beard and a snow-white turban on a frial body seated behind a large wooden table in an old shop of motor parts and hardware.

“Here are your guests”, Choubeshah, the sweet-meat merchant introduced us to “Bhaiji” who threw a quiet, affectionate glance at us. “Did you have a nice journey?”, Bhaiji enquired in the usual way for a few minutes and directed Choubeshah to see to our requirements. The gurudwara was nearby where accommodation had been arranged. Attending to our immediate needs Choubeshah took leave of us with a permanent invitation: “Whenever you are free, whenever you feel like eating some sweets or other delicacies, please don’t hesitate to drop in at my place”.

“Bhaiji” is known to many people in that locality. The very word itself is enough to convey the meaning behind it. Among the hundreds of Indian businessmen Makhan Singh occupies an unrivalled position by the sheer simplicity of his personal life, the discipline and principle that reign every aspect of his public activities, and involving but detached attention to his business deals. If anyone lands in any difficulty,

“Bhaiji” is a source of help, relief and advice. Every evening on his way home, he would make a round here and there just to enquire whether such and such a person was keeping well or not, whether that family’s problems were solved or not, whether that or this friend’s business was running well or not.

Bhai Makhan Singh is, perhaps, the wealthiest man among the Indians in Teheran. But he does not lead a luxurious life. “I always look back upon my own beginning in this city”, he would recollect his life two decades ago and confess that he had a bounden duty towards the whole human society today. “I started from India, in search of something somewhere, a simple way to carry on my life, with hardly any money in hand. After some wanderings I reached Teheran and started working as a porter in a various transport establishments”. Then he would explain how he had to spend several nights on the wayside, on the heaps of gunny bags without adequate food or shelter. Thus in the course of time he built up a sound business by his sweat and labour. Therefore, today he is trying to lead a simple life doing maximum amount of public service in various fields. Getting up at 4 a.m. he would drive ten miles from his residence to the city so that he could be at the Gurudwara by six in order to conduct the morning prayers with other friends, clean the place, wash the vessels, cook breakfast for guests etc. Sometimes we would be still in bed when he knocked at the door with hot tea in the chill of the morning. By 8 O’clock he is ready at his desk and business. Before lunch he spends an hour teaching in a school for the running of which he is mainly responsible. Again attending to many business and social activities personally, he gets home late at night. “When you finish all your business with the embassies

and governments, and when you decide to start from Teheran, please tell me at least two days in advance. I want you to proceed from here only after getting well-equipped, for Russia is awaiting you with all unimaginable furies of nature”, he told us soon after our arrival in Teheran. That cost him over Rs. 500. A pair of fine sleeping bags, two pairs of thick-heeled, heavy shoes to fight the frost, a pair of warm and strong overcoats were the minimum necessities for us arranged under his personal supervision.

“I should not spend money only for the sake of my comforts and luxury; in fact I am only a trustee of my wealth”, This is his philosophy. If every wealthy man in this world thinks for a moment that he is living upon a pyramid of injustice, automatically he will have to come to the conclusion that he can be nothing but a trustee of all the enormous wealth he possesses. “One may confidently say”, writes Leo Tolstoy, “that in our society (where for every well-to-do man living in comfort there are ten who are exhausted by labour, the envious and covetous, and whose whole families are often suffering) all the advantages of the rich, all their luxuries and superfluities, all that is beyond an average workman possesses, is obtained and maintained by tortures, imprisonments and executions”. Unless the value of labour is established in the society and everyone accepts his social responsibility, no society can progress.

“Did you kidnap a girl?”

One fine morning this was the question one of my acquaintances arrowed at me I was stunned; “What do you mean ?!” He brought the newspaper, The Khaihan International, and showed me the catching

headlines : “The Young Man Kidneys a Girl.....”. Below the headlines my photograph! Reading the whole story I couldn’t but laugh, but at the same time felt angry with the editor of the most important English daily of Iran for such a conspicuous mistake. The story goes like this :

The Khaihan had an interview with us and also asked me to write a special article for them, which I readily agreed. The next day they flashed the illustrated news of our arrival in Teheran.

Unfortunately in the next column another interesting news of the elopement of a boy and a girl was also printed with all prominence. But the photos were misplaced! As a result I became the kidnaper of that girl! In a few days the Khaihan brought out my photograph along with the article, so that the readers might correct themselves. They did not have the courtesy to express any regret.

Teheran is a city full of contradictions and yet with an easy going life. Posh and extravagancy on one side, abject poverty and misery on the other. One can see people hanging around the street corners and pavements without any job. With a piece of cigarette or around a common hukka they would sit for hours together anticipating someone to call them for some petty jobs. Even if they did not get any, they would find solace in the lap of fate. This fatalistic approach seems to be a peculiar trait in many Mid-Asian countries. “You just walk around the streets in the evening. You can see beautiful girls and even mothers waiting at the roadside with searching eyes for somebody to pick them up. These ‘bits of moon’ have nothing except their pretty bodies to trade with

for eking a livelihood”, said a school teacher to us. To prove it, one evening he accompanied us to have a long walk through the crowded streets and pointed at dozens of them who stood on the pavements trying to hook their prospective customers! “Yet to have a daughter is a blessing for the parents”, he commented.

“Why so ?”, we asked.

“Here in Iran the boy must pay enormously to the parents if he wants to marry their girl. He could take her temporarily on payment of some money, in order to find out whether they could make a good match, in case they decided to marry and live together. Since four wives are sanctioned by their religion, marriage and divorce is an easy matter. But they cost too much to the boys”, the teacher explained.

The shoeshines and dinner

Every morning and evening a dozen youngsters in the shoemaker’s shop used to give us a salute when we passed through their lane. At times we would stop for a while in response. One afternoon they said : “Aga, shuma ek roj inja mehman lazim” (Sir, one day you must be our guests). We agreed.

Two days later when we went at the appointed time, they were delighted. “We thought you were very busy and doubted whether you would accept our invitation”, one of them remarked. “We are with everyone in the world. In fact we feel happy to be with people like you”, we said. In the meantime tea was ordered. They had asked the hotel keeper to prepare omelette and rice for us.

“Aga, shuma Shoravi meri? Khaili khoob, Khaili khoob”. (Sir, are you going to Russia? Very good, very good.) Remarked one boy while efficiently stitching the pieces of leather.

“Yes, we are going there after a month”.

“Will you meet Krushchov?”, another question from the corner.

“Of course, we want to meet him. That’s the reason we are going there. We must get an answer from him why Russia is exploding bombs”.

“Please give our thousand salams to Krushchov. He is a very nice man”, a lean boy said.

“How do you know he is a good man ? What do you know about Russia?”

“Sir, we have not seen that country. We all wish to go there one day. But we know that the people there live more happily and comfortably”.

“How can you say that?”

“There is no Shah or landlord or businessman there. All of them work, all of them get enough to live. Look at that son of a miner. He knows the miseries of miners, so he can do better for them than our Shah”.

“But I am told that your Shah is doing excellent work for the progress of your country?”

“Ah! that’s all good stuff to tell visitors like you. Recently he has started some land reform. Still! he

has lot of opposition. Do you know he fled away from this country in his own plane to Paris?”

“Why?”

“For he couldn’t do good things to satisfy the people. We had a nice Prime Minister (Mosaadique). But he is in prison”.

“Some people in Iran tell us that Russia is a bad country”.

“That’s how we are told by our papers, radio and authorities. But we don’t believe that. We are told that in Russia you don’t get even an egg to eat everyday. They count eggs and supply periodically. Bread is rationed. People starve and die, they say.”

“That’s what many people in Iran tell us every day”.

“Still are you not afraid to go to Russia?”, another boy with a melancholy face wanted to know.

“Look here, friends. We are going to the Soviet Union, at any rate. Just like you people, we also feel that most of the things that are told may be wrong. So let us go and see”.

“Then will you come back and tell us?”, asked a joker.

Meantime, lunch was ready. On the broken bench all of us sat. They quickly ate their rice and aabgost. (Aabgost is a most popular common man’s side dish which is a mixture of a piece of meat, a few grains of cereals, a piece of potato or some other vegetable boiled together in water). Either bread or rice with aabgost

is their common food. As the lunch progressed, the clever, energetic and ever-laughing young man went on: "However, there will be an end to everything. Shah will go. The exploiters will go. We are dreaming of Iran to be a country like Shoravi. This must be a workers' democracy, not the Shah's playground." All throughout Iran we found such a strong feeling in the younger generation.

The Shah and the black suit.

"Mr. Menon", said the first secretary of the Indian Embassy over the phone, "Dr. Alah has informed me that both of you will be received by the Shah on the 20th at noon punctually. You are requested to be at the palace half an hour earlier, i.e. at 11.30. Moreover, you must wear black suit and tie. That is the prescribed dress for the Royal audience."

"Well, I am very happy to hear that, But...." I thought for a while and continued : "You know that we have only the same kurta and pyjama that we wear on the road. That too, two months old."

"But you see their tradition and dignity....."

"Yes we see the point. However, you may please inform the Court Minister that unfortunately we don't have the black suit etc. and we don't intend to borrow one. If the Shah is particular on meeting our suits, well, we will have to say good-bye from here itself."

"All right. Let me see", and he asked me to ring him up again after an hour.

"Indeed, you've succeeded. You are asked to go and meet the Shah in whichever dress you have," he informed after consulting the Court Minister. Our clothes were already soiled. So we rushed to the laundry where a stout jolly man used to throw a "salam" at us occasionally when we passed by his shop.

"Look here, tomorrow morning we have to meet your Shahanshah. So these two pairs must be given in the morning. A quick dry cleaning, please", we requested.

"Kurban shuma", the very name of the Shahanshah was enough for him. He quickly grabbed the packet from us and ordered his assistants to do the business.

Dr. Alah, the Court Minister to the Shah, had invited us to the place two days before to have a discussion about our activities so that he could appraise the Shah in detail and seek an audience. A very interesting and pleasant personality of 55, Dr. Alah was the Prime Minister and ambassador of Iran at the United Nations, formerly. Appreciating the work of Vinoba Bhave he said : "It is the same idea, our Shah has in mind in implementing the present land reforms here". Turning to Nehru with a critical outlook he remarked: "We don't like his policy of neutrality. In fact, when we joined the Western Alliance,' he ridiculed us. See now, he himself is in danger when China is on his shoulders", However, he wished that the young generation of the world would come forward with a new spirit of world unity. "I shall try to get you an audience with the Shah in a couple of days", he concluded.

The day dawned on the 20th. At 10 O'clock our host

said : “All these days you have been going around the city on foot. But today, since it is a bit late now, you take a taxi”. Having no money in hand was never a problem for us. For every appointment we could be punctual when we depended on our feet. However, we got into a taxi. The driver looked at us twice when said “to the palace please”. We planted ourselves in a fabulous visitors’ room in the Imperial Palace at the stroke of 11.30.

“Though our dress is clean, what can be done with this ‘window’ near my chest ?” asked Satish pointing to the round hole on his kurta. While walking, the water bottle used to rub against his body creating a big hole on the kurta. I said “Raise your folded hands a bit and keep them permanently there concealing the ‘crisis’ when you say ‘namaste’ to him in the typical Indian fashion”, A solution was found and we waited and waited counting the minutes, appreciating the pictures and paintings on the wall in silence. The lemon-tea arrived and the servants stood stiff and mum.

The clock struck twelve. Any moment the door might open and we would be showed in. Both of us wore brand new pairs of heavy English boots with a thick layer of brasssoles so that, Makhan Singh had said when the shoes were selected, “You must reach Moscow with these, fighting all odds of nature. “So, we had to be extremely cautious lest we should slip on the smooth marble-floor in front of the Shah of Iran!

“So we must walk very slowly”

“To give an imperial grandeur, isn’t it?”, thus we

went on joking ourselves while time never waited for anyone in the world.

Twelve-ten, twelve-thirty, one O’clock ! No imperial gesture or Royal murmur reached our room. Then Satish reminded me of an Indian story. “.....The king had asked his honourable guest to dine with him at noon; the Minister commanded the chef to make everything ready by eleven; the chef in turn ordered his assistants that ‘the Royal Dinner must be prepared at ten O’clock lest there should be any delay’; finally the whole cooking was over before ten and when the Royal guest enjoyed the dinner everything had gone cold!.....”

“Oh, you mean actually our appointment may be at 2 p.m.?”

“Possible! Who knows about the palace punctuality?”

There you are ! Suddenly two long-turbaned attendants cat-jumped into the room followed by another couple of Imperial Assistants. We were escorted into the huge darbar hall. My brain functioned cautiously in my boots; two dozen pairs of eyes arrowed at our unsymmetrical forms from all around. The decent-looking, lean, pleasant Shah of Iran stepped down the stairs with a smile.

“Welcome to Iran”, so saying he shook our hands and sent away the attendants. The three of us stood at the centre of the hall while he enquired about our health. “I have heard about your peace mission and I wish you all the best. It is a tremendous task to walk with such a determination. For such a noble mission you have all my sympathy. One thing is certain : as long

as the greed in man to conquer others and live upon them exists world peace is impossible. We, the small nations, must join together and strive for world peace on certain principles, along with the big powers”.

“We convey our heartfelt condolence for the martyrdom of Malik Abedi, who sacrificed his life for the implementation of Your Majesty’s Land Reform programme”, when I said so he smiled and continued.

“Your Vinoba Bhave’s work is significant. I too get much inspiration from him to undertake my present radical land-reform activities.”

“By the by”, his curiosity increased, “how are you going to walk to Moscow ?”

“We are planning to go through the Black Sea coast.”
“That’s a good area. Still in the central parts it will be difficult for you. When I flew over that land, I couldn’t see any population for fifty-sixty miles, at times. However, take care of your health. You know the Russian snow !”.

By the time it was 1.40 p.m. The Shah must have been equally hungry as we were. He said “good-bye” to us. Enjoying his excellent conversation in English (he knew French too very well) while we stepped down onto the sandy courtyard, Satish’s hands remained still across his chest and our boots received the best of our thanks.

“Have you heard of Napoleon?”

“Indeed”, I replied.

“Our snow had forced him to retreat”, said the officer.

“But something more I have heard of him.”

“What’s that ?”

“That he said ‘there is no word called impossible in my dictionary’ “.

“Kharosho, Tawarisch. (Very good friends.)”, the steel-solid officer sat leaning on a comfortable sofa with a pipe in hand and thought for a while. It was on a sunny afternoon, in the warm room of the Russian Embassy in Teheran, where we had to secure our visas.

“Just think for a while. The whole country will be under snow and frost for four to five months. Now, you say you want to enter the Soviet Union on the 1st of January, You see, January to April is the most severe period. We could welcome you to the Soviet Land after April”.

“What can we do till then ? From Teheran to the border of the Soviet Union is only one month’s distance. We can’t live in Iran till April.”

“But you will be frozen to death in the snow. You can’t walk. Go by train or plane if at all you want to go to Moscow”.

“No please”, we argued. “As long as the nuclear weapons exist we will do our work against them. That means we must walk through the villages of Russia and talk to the common people, find out what they think about all these matters, gather their support for our world movement against bombs and wars. But

one thing : we don't want to die under the snow; we are ready to die under an atom bomb, Therefore we promise you, if we face any physical difficulty while we are in the Soviet Union, naturally we will take all help from you. Otherwise, please give us a guarantee that Russia will not conduct any more nuclear tests. Then we shall fly to Washington to demand of President Kennedy the same assurance”.

He looked at us wondering. He might have thought we were childish to talk like that. But we were serious in demanding a guarantee from the Russian Embassy. Why should we unnecessarily walk and struggle in hunger and pain and frost ? We did not want to have any compromise.

“At least deposit the necessary money to cover all your expenses in the Soviet Union and get the coupons from our Tourist Office”, the Consul General insisted.

“You have no money. How will you live ?”

“We know that there are 200 million people living in the Soviet Union. Therefore, we are confident that we could live with them happily.”

“All right. I don't want to discuss any more with you. Tomorrow morning let us go to the Indian Embassy and discuss with them”, he concluded. Our first day of the encounter was over.

The next day all of us called on the Consul General of the Indian Embassy. Of course, he knew our story from the beginning. Therefore the Russian Embassy was promised that, in case we landed in any physical difficulty in Russia, naturally the Indian Government would accept its responsibility and come to our rescue.

The rest of it depended upon the Soviet decision. And the day passed.

When the night approached with its unusual rage of freezing cold, I curled under my inadequate bedding and lay deep in thought. Then I could visualize clearly in my mind that unforgettable Father Madalane of Victor Hugo who had to crusade through a miserable night with a ‘tempest in his brain.’ Long, calm, heavy moments of night are at times a great blessing for the best of brain-rattling and arriving at a conclusion. At any cost, I thought, we should not give-in till our destination-the White House-is reached.

On the fourth day we went to the Russian Embassy again with the determination to draw the line once for all. “Please grant us four months’ visa. We are leaving tomorrow. After a month we shall reach the border of the Soviet Union.”

No more argument. Our passports were taken in. In two minutes everything was over. No photographs, no fees, no forms to be filled in! “Go and fight for peace and friendship all over the world”, the young smiling officer congratulated and shook our hands. A biography of Lenin was presented to us and he said these final word: “Our country will be waiting for you.”

Really how complicated are the legal aspects of a man's life! Only when peace is the cornerstone of state policy can the world get rid of all the unnecessary, unnatural formalities of today.

During our 17 days in Teheran we had an opportunity to meet a few students. The Rotary Club of Teheran also entertained us. Everything went on well and on

the 21st we walked 18 miles from Teheran and stayed at a pasga station. "How can we get on with this new heavy load on our feet", was a question disturbing us.

November 25, 1962

With an ideal farmer

Forty miles West of Teheran there is a village called Kamalabad. Our plan was to go beyond that village and halt for the day. But fortunately, as our friend in Heart had prophesied one day, our names were 'inscribed' on the grains in the kitchen of the young and well-educated fanner, Mr. Reza.

On the dusty road in the midst of a plain, a station wagon stopped near us. The young occupant got out. It was noon and the sun was blazing. "I want to invite you to my home", he said without any introduction or formality and asked us to get into the vehicle. What to do ? We had to think for a while.

"My brother has asked me to bring you home definitely. You must come", again he insisted pointing to a house far away. It was, a mile and a half behind. We had to drive back. Within ten minutes we reached a beautiful small modern bungalow right in the midst of a big farm of 8,00,000 sq. meters.

"Mr. Reza is a young farmer owning the big farm. "I put my entire energy to convert this into a first class productive land and want to see life blooming in green happiness", he said while we sat for tea. His beautiful young wife and three nice naughty children became so one with us that we felt at home in a few moments. Our plan was to spend an hour or so with them and

proceed. But the Rezas would not let us go, "Though we would like you to be here for some days, at least you must be here today", they insisted. We agreed and went around to have a look at his farm. Apart from agriculture, poultry was another important part of the farm.

As we sat at the dining table in the evening. Reza explained about his family. His parents were very rich and had left a big house for him in Teheran. "Then don't you like to live in Teheran ?", we enquired.

"No. I don't like to live in that city at all. You know Iran is a country where most of the educated youth are wandering for jobs. They don't like to do any labour. All of them want to be white-collar men. That's why our country doesn't progress".

"It is the common disease of most of the Asian countries". "That's right. We have to bring about a change. So I decided to start with myself".

If I should call him a true disciple of Gandhiji, it will not be wrong for in Reza I could find a real teacher and student of Basic Education. If I should introduce him as a follower of Tolstoy, it will be true because one can see him always with shovel and spade, from dawn to dusk, proving the dignity of labour. If I should attribute the comradeship of Marx to him the obvious truth can be seen in the fact that Aga Reza does not believe in any particular dogma of religion and stands for the welfare of the worker. He is very fond of beautiful carpets as well as books of great people like Tolstoy, Hemingway, Gandhi etc. He has travelled in Europe and some countries of Asia. "Next time I would like to come to India", he said.

November 30, 1962

“Haji Hame Balad”

After leaving Teheran Gasvin was the next big town. Haji Rahimi and his family lived there. Anyone would tell you where their home is situated.

Two days ago, as usual a car had stopped by our side and the couple had offered a lift. “We would like you to come with us to Gasvin and be our guests”.

“No, thanks. We shall reach there tomorrow”, We explained our business in short.

“But it is about 20 miles. You will be tired. I promise you, I won’t say this to anyone that you broke your vow and came in the car. In India no one will know about it. Then one or two extra days you can stay with us, so that your time will be made up”

“But you see, it is not for satisfying anyone else here or in India that we are walking. First of all we have to satisfy ourselves. If we cheat ourselves, what on earth can we do ? So, don’t worry please. We shall be happy”.

“I see.....”, the man thought for a while, “All right, here is my address. I shall be waiting for you tomorrow evening”.

Yesterday at 6 p.m. we entered the town. Immediately some persons from the shops came running and asked :

“Are you coming from India ? Haji has asked us to take you to his home as soon as you arrive. He is waiting for you”. Evidently Haji was so particular that we should not wander here and there in search of his house. We accompanied them.

Haji Rahimi was seen through the window of his nice spacious house, standing and saying his Namasz(prayer). We stood silently in the verandah so that he could finish it without any disturbance. As he raised his head his eyes could not escape perceiving us. “Ah, you’ve come, you’ve come”, dashing out to the verandah Haji crushed us both in his embrace. There came his fat and happy looking wife to greet us; one daughter and son dropped in from their study while the other shy girl escaped into her bedroom never to come out till we left the house. Taking the rucksacks from our shoulders, Haji led us to a luxurious bedroom reserved for us. The living room was lavishly decorated and the dining table was laid. Varieties of food-stuffs, cakes, nuts, coffee and tea. A couple of Haji’s intimate friends from the neighbourhood made the whole atmosphere vibrant with enthusiasm and happiness. They all wanted to hear our story.

“How did you get hold of these two ?”, one of Haji’s friends asked him in a very low tone. Whatever be the topic of conversation we could grasp the full meaning. Parsian was no more a veil of secrecy to us.

“That’s a nice story”, replied Haji and related the whole episode of the road. All the while we had been feeling that we had disturbed his Namaz. Haji murmured to his friend in conclusion : “I am very happy. You know, when they arrived I was in prayer. The moment I saw them I couldn’t say any more prayer and went

out to greet them..... After all Allah has asked us to do what we preach and be honest to ourselves. But most of us don't do so. These two people told me that they wanted to be honest to themselves and therefore kept on walking. They are the real followers of Allah though they say they have no religion or God".

The dinner lasted for a long time. The subject of talk varied from Religion and Atom Bomb to the women of India, the "great Nehru" and Raj Kapur and Nargis. "Haji hame balad" (Haji knows everything), said Haji every now and then. "All right. They are very tired, let them sleep", came the affectionate maternal commend from Mrs. Haji. "She is my commander and mother too", Haji muttered amidst burst of laughter from all of us. In two minutes we plunged into the depth of softness in the silken quilts forgetting the worn-out yesterdays and unknown tomorrows. "I have arranged for your haman early in the morning and I shall wake you up. Sao bakhair", thus Haji bade a good night.

This morning the schedule went on nicely. We got on our feet at 8 inspite of the request from the Haji to stay for some days. "We have to enter Russia on the New Year's Day. It's a long way to go", we reminded them.

"Haji hame balad. Khuda Haffis".

As we walked alone on the long dusty road under a bright cold mid-day sun, the small car abruptly squeaked to a halt to our surprise. "We thought of having a picnic with you'. The whole Haji family got out, spread the blankets under a tree, and we all enjoyed an excellent picnic and lunch. "You have become so much one with our family, how can we

forget you ? Please come again", said Haji. All of them had their own words of affectionate welcome. They stood and waved till we vanished into the distance !

I have nothing particular to note in my diary tonight. Yet let me scribble : tonight Sathar Hamidi, the station master, has made us his guests. The room is very small. The next room is full of tools and other materials and signal board etc. There is a petromax to burn throughout the night. Half a dozen people to sleep. None of them has enough clothing for this biting cold. Some squeeze into the rugs, some under the table. Our host is a man of 50, nice and hospitable. He was terribly disappointed to see that we did not eat meat. He brought bread, meat, cooked cereal and sorba. Difficult to make him understand. He feels for it. What could be done? We ate the cereals out of the mixture! To kill one's affection and feeling is in human.

A man pulled a cart loaded with wastes and rubbish this morning. Also he was searching for pieces of food from the rubbish. "All men are brothers", yet this happens everywhere. Blood boils; smell of coal and kerosine enters even the pores of my skin.

December 1, 1962

Kursi dinner & sister in marriage!

This afternoon Nemath Rehmani got hold of us as soon as we reached the small town, Takestan, and insisted : "Please come and stay with me". He is a school teacher with his parents brothers and sisters. As if exhibits in the zoo we spent the evening amidst crowds.

It is a universal custom in Iran to sit around the Kursi (the cheapest method of natural air-conditioning) and eat and gossip for hours together. In the midst of a large room there is a pit, 3 to 4 feet deep and 5 to 6 feet square. There will be fire burning at the bottom, in a small pit inside. Over the bigger pit is a large wooden table, one foot high. Over the table is spread a very large thick cover made of wool and cotton, like a razai, which extends 4 to 5 feet on all sides. At least eight or ten people can sit all around, with legs hanging into the pit under the table. Thus half the body gets protection from cold.

All the food will be kept on the table. Everyone serves himself. The dinner, if it is a rich family, will last for 2 to 3 hours. After dinner one can straightaway lie on one's back and sleep. The cover on the table itself will be the cover for all. One will feel very warm and comfortable in winter. This night we sat and ate and slept with the family around the Kursi.

When the dinner was in progress (it was a very ordinary family indeed) the three youngsters went on cracking jokes and asking us questions about our family, religion, politics, and the world we had seen. "Are you married ?" one of the brothers eagerly asked.

"Yes, I am", said Satish.

"How can your wife wait for long ?"

"She does. I hope she will".

"All right, then my sister can be given to you for marriage", said the humorous chap pointing to me

and gave a pinch on his sister's cheek which made her jump. All of us enjoyed the joke. The old mother brought a bunch of excellent grapes which was grown in their garden and preserved for the winter. Thus one more day passed with a new experience.

December 10, 1962

In a white new world!

For the first time in my life in a white and endless world I found myself when I opened my eyes in the morning. The pasga sepoy shook the cot, the upper berth of which I had occupied last night, to wake me up into a new marvel of the universe. The pasga companions had given an indication of it on the basis of the weather forecast. It was a brave and bright world; it was enchanting and pleasant. It was a spotless and pristine pure. But I could never imagine the possibility of an accute pain behind that glamorous sight !

I opened the door. The white bed of snow was beyond my conception and beyond my descriptive talent. It was on the house-top, on the leaves, on the branches of trees and everywhere. Just as one is afraid to take a careless plunge into the ocean, I was afraid to step into that whiteness.

That was the beginning of a real snowy winter. In an hour we had to grid up our loins. A dog happily ran through; two birds flew away. The sun shone bright and we walked into the new white world.

December 11, 1962

"American spies ?"

"No, no. there is no place here."

“But Aga, tell us where is the next village. How far ?”

“Two or three farsak”. (one farsak is about 4 miles)

“Then how can we reach there?”

“Don’t reach”.

“Then we will stay here only.”

“But where? No place here to sleep.”

“Doesn’t matter. We shall sit and sleep on the verandah.”

“You fools? You’ll kill yourself. See the snow!”

“Yes, we see. You know it. But there isn’t any place!”

“First, tell me where are you coming from?”

“From India”

“Where are you going ?”

“To Moscow”.

“Moscow !” There was new wave of joy on his wrinkled face. “Come in, let’s talk inside”, he said. All the three sat inside the single room and the old man lit the fire. Just a few minutes before, we were shivering in our shoes. It was already 6 p.m. and nothing ahead was visible. When we saw this solitary hut, we had decided that we must seek shelter here. But the fellow was so adamant. Yet, what a quick change ! We were curious to discover him.

“Khaili khoob (very good), then you say you are going to Moscow ! What for ?” he began.

“To ask them not to poison the people of the world”.

“How ?”

“You know the atom bomb ? They explode it”.

“I see, so you are American spies ?” said he with auspicious look.

“We are going to America also to tell them the same thing”.

“No boys. No use. America will destroy the whole world. Russia will save the world. If you meet Krushchov tell him that I am always with him”. We were astonished to here the vigorous argument of the old guy. Obviously he is a politician of a special variety, I thought. “Have you gone to Russia, Aga ?”, we enquired.

“No, haven’t. But I want to go quickly. I want to die only in Moscow. I am sure in two or three years they will conquer us. The whole world will be communist within a few years. Then only you can hope for a poisonless world”.

“Aga, many people in your country are very much afraid of Russia”.

“Because our Shah wants to live for himself, so he propagates all horrors about Russia. But he knows he can’t escape. Look at me, my life, in this miserable room. I have no food today. My work is to remove the snow from the railway track. They give Inc only

very little, hardly to survive. This will not happen in Russia, I know. I want to go there and die there alone. Krushchov, what a wonderful man !”

At 6.30 all the three of us lay down to sleep. There was fire outside as well as inside (of hunger). But the company was fine.

December 14, 1962

A packet of tea, companion to cheat

Gasvin, Zenjan, Meaneh` and Tabriz are the four big towns on the way from Teheran to Djulfa, the border of Russia. At Gasvin we were Haji's guests, at Zenjan the Pasga's and at Meaneh Mr. Houshang's. The rest of the days were mostly spent with school teachers, in wayside cafes, or with pasgas.

Two days ago Mr. Houshang and his friends were on a picnic. On his invitation we joined him last night. We met a group of young men. One of them commented : “How can you expect our country to progress when all our unlimited riches are being exploited by western interests ? Only 25 percent of the oil profit comes to us. The rest is taken by them”.

“India is a famous country for tea and beautiful girls”, said our host and he wanted a packet of tea to be sent to him.

“Along with a beautiful girl”, added another. Thus jokes and political discussion went on.

This morning a young man suddenly got down from a passing truck and waited for us. I remembered to have seen him earlier at the street corner. Therefore a

doubt sprang in my mind. However, he just followed us saying : “Sir, I don't have anything with me. I had an accident; got treatment in Teheran and they discharged me without paying anything to travel home. Please help me.” We explained our position. Then he said : “Shall I carry your luggage?”. We hesitated. In the meantime a group of people with horses and donkeys came along. In a few minutes our ‘comrade’ just took leave of us under some pretext and was never to be seen again. Then one iri the group asked us : “Where did you get that boy from ? He is a first class cheat in the town”. Anyway, there was nothing with us to be cheated. It was the first such incident ‘in our tour.

December 20, 1962

Teachers and drivers

Teachers and drivers have played a very important role in the successful completion of our tour in Iran. Of late it has been our practice to look for the school teachers whenever we felt any inconvenience. After all in any country, under any system progress mainly depends upon the pattern of education. Any visitor to Iran will be happy to see the way in which the school teachers are being treated. Their social as well as economic status is well established.

“I get 840 Tumans per month”, said the master of a middle school who is our host today. (Approximately Rs. 800 per month.) The immediate reaction in my mind was about the miserable lot of the thousands of poor school teachers in India. With hardly one-sixth of the earning of his counterpart in Iran, an Indian school teacher finds it extremely difficult to

make both ends meet. Unless we feed and clothe the teachers well, what instruction can they impart ?

A few days ago, we were, climbing up a hill slowly and steadily. A huge truck also was in the same plight. Beyond the hills there was a small cafe. The driver got in. After some time when we were passing through, he called us inside the cafe, entertained us and wanted to know why we were walking. "I am going to Tabriz. Please come with me and stay at Tabriz to have enough rest". When his request was politely and thankfully turned down he did not press any more. "From the land of Gandhi! Cheer up!", he said and went. Once a week he made a trip from Teheran to Tabriz and back.

Two days later we could recognize the truck as it roared up from the opposite direction and made a halt. Our comrade got down with a packet of sweets and biscuits." That is for you. I knew I could meet you again, so I am happy to have your company. After four days I shall return from Teheran again". Thus we had a sweet party on the way. As promised again after four days he turned up with his present. Thereafter we did not meet him again, for the common road for both came to an end.

December 25, 1962

Dr. Mojtahedi & Gendarmerie.

At Teheran the Rotary Club had given us an introduction to Dr. Mojtahedi, the President of the Rotary Club of Tabriz. Head of the Science Faculty in Tabriz University, Dr. Mojtahedi is one of the most inspiring and gentle persons I have ever come across. The most unforgettable feature of his personality is

that he takes minute care of every small thing. A lighted cigarette can be seen always between his lips. Before the one between his lips is finished, another is lighted and kept ready between his fingers !

In a very comfortable hotel Dr. Mojtahedi arranged for our stay for 3 days, so that we could have enough rest after a very tiresome journey of our 400 miles from Teheran. When we left Tabriz this morning Mrs. Mojtahedi said : "Remember, this is your own home and you are my sons. Whenever you come to Iran you must come here".

Mr. Novai is a young man working in the Radio Iran as well as the representative of Ittalat, one of the two important newspapers of Iran. Every day he entertained us in one way or the other. A dinner, a cinema, a press interview, a radio programme all these were organised by him. "You will have a variety of experiences and the people in Iran must know about your activities," he had told us on the first day we met.

Tabriz is supposed to be a beautiful city, but I couldn't give full credit to that, whatever might be the reason. The second largest city of the Iran, it has a population of 3,00,000. Iran heaters are abundantly manufactured here. People seem to be more free-thinking here than in other parts of Iran. Common people have a great passion to have a look at the other side of the Caucasus.

Before reaching Tabriz, we halted in a small town for the night and the chief of the gendarmerie ordered his assistants to look after us. "They are our distinguished guests", he had told them. As a result one of the

sepoys, Thahari, took us around the town. Whether you wanted or not, he would not leave you alone unless you accepted whatever he had in mind. An old friend of his owned a tea shop. "A cup of tea you must have", he would insist. There, about fifteen people sat around a hukka and chess board. "They may go even till the morning", he commented. In another tea shop again a cup. "Ah ! there is the delightful sweet, pasmak, you can't avoid it". That was a stuff like the old man's heard, white, sweet, all in fibres. "Now you will have your haircut and shave. Tomorrow you'll reach Tabriz. The girls mustn't leave you simply !" We could not but, obey him. Laughing merrily we entered the barber shop at 9 p.m.

December 31, 1962

Iran "Albida"

One hundred and one days in Iran ! This is the last night in this country. It is already 10-30 p.m. This room is fine. It is the Government guest house. There is no place to lay one's head fifteen miles around, in this country.

From this window when I look back and forward, what a great difference ! The other side of the river is completely different. Airas flows calm and slow. The sky is clear and starlit. Biting cold. This side seems to be lifeless; that side still full of life. Smoke is emitting from the huge chimneys far beyond. Long goods-trains are moving up and down rattling and whistling. Long lines of flood-lights can be seen. Obviously, there must be good roads there, with market and shops. Or, will it be different in the Communist world ? Logs of wood are lying in the station yard. Iran imports

them from Russia. Nothing grows on the mountains here. All their wealth is beneath the soil. How many people have told us ! "Aga, even eggs are counted and given to the people in Russia. You can't get enough to eat". If they came here and had look through this window ! The door of that country itself presents a different picture.

How sad it is to think of the moment of departure. It is painful and an entry into a new bondage to bring the same result again. We have been a part and parcel of Iran, with her gigantic mountains which kept constant 'company, with her simple villagers, with her delicious fruits and melodious songs. Tomorrow all these will become a sweet dream of the past.

Eighty-six miles. From Tabriz to Djulfa. Six days. We were not very much tired this afternoon. When suddenly a jeep halted by our side and the two men in uniform commanded us to get in, a mild doubt had crept into our mind. 'Wouldn't they let us stay here overnight?' Things took quite a different turn. "We won't come by jeep", we replied.

"No you must. We are the border authorities".

"But our decision is it go on foot to the border". In the meantime they remembered to have read in the papers about our meeting with the Shah. So they said, "All right, come along. We shall be waiting for you".

That is how they waited for us in the office. They stamped our passports, ordered our comfortable stay for the night, sent our worn-out boots for a thorough and excellent repair. and said good-night.

“We shall come back again in the morning to see you off to the Soviet Land”.

We shall also say `Albida ‘to Iran.

The lure of Russia : “Novim Godam”

New year 1963. As it dawned behind the high mountains, I could feel the mournful departure of 1962 in every bustle and rustle of my surroundings. The sun poured his rays through the mild mist. We waited for the arrival of our host-officials. The booming sound of the siren from the other side of the “iron curtain” and the sight of a very long train winding up the mountain folds indicated that an entirely new atmosphere was awaiting us. Imagination was on its wings exploring the avenues of interest from the Caucasus and Urals to the Siberian snows.

“Did you have nice rest ? A Happy New Year”, the Police officer greeted us.

“Of course. Thank you ! At last we have to say good-bye to you and all the people of Iran”.

“We are always with you in your fight for peace”, he said. Then we all walked to the border.

The border between Iran and the Soviet Union is virtually an iron curtain over the bridge on the river Airas. There is no traffic on the road; the iron gate in the middle of the bridge remains locked. “All the traffic between the two countries is by rail”, said our host. We were asked to sit in the border guards’ office, for there were certain formalities to be observed.

One of the guards waved the flag from this side in order to inform his counterpart on the other side that there was an urgent business. The Communist flag responded from the other end. “Now we must wait for some time”, said the officer, offering us hot tea.

“You see, these Russian soldiers take their own time to intimate the Area Commander who must know the exact nature of the business. Then alone he will send his representative or come personally. They are very strict you see. I wonder, how the people are living behind this gate”.

“You mean the people over there are not happy?”

“How can they be! They have no freedom to do anything even to think!”

“You haven’t seen or experienced it. So how can we believe you! Such talk can be heard everywhere about Russia. After all, just imagine, they are going to reach the moon. Do you think hungry slaves can do that ?”

“No. But they are all controlled by the Government”.

“As if we are not ! However, we are going to see how they are”. Cup after cup, we had hot tea.

“Sir, the commander is coming”, the young soldier came running and stood in attention in front of the officer.

“Fine, Let’s go now.”

We took our loads. The officer took our passports. Two soldiers-in-arms escorted us to the iron gate. From the opposite side too, the same way, escorted by two soldiers-in-arms the Area Commander of the Soviet

Army stepped forward to the gate.

On both sides the two officers stood; greeted each

other; our passports were handed over. His inspection was over in a minute; the ‘iron curtain’ was opened and we were in the Soviet Land !

“Pozdravlyayoo yam s Novim Godam. Ochen rat svami pasnakomeetsa !” (Greeting for a Happy New Year. We are very pleased to meet you), I greeted the tall, stout gentle officer in Russian.

“Da, Ya toshe ochen rat ! Ideom”. (Indeed, I too am very happy. Let’s go), he answered the greetings and all of us went to the railway station quite nearby. Poor me! I knew very little of Russian then.

January 2, 1963

The burning cognac : Nargis again !

It was into an excellent large room in the huge station building that we were taken by the authorities yesterday noon. A pleasant looking lady came forward and interpreted in beautiful English what the Commander had to say. “Friends, it is already past mid-day. I want that you should have a very nice holiday on this auspicious day and stay here comfortably. Your first visit to Russia must start with a nice restful day. Moreover, we didn’t know that you would come today. We wanted to give you a cordial welcome at the border. The representatives of three Peace Committees of the nearest three Republics wanted to be present to greet you. So I would inform them now. Let them come; we shall have an official welcome party and New Year’s Day Dinner tomorrow. Then onwards you are one among ‘us in the Soviet Union”. He explained. “All right”, we agreed and decided to enjoy a real holiday for the first time since

June 1, 1962.

Soon came a young blonde; inspected our documents. "You don't need a vaccination", she said. Another officer arrived to check the baggage. Everything was over quickly, efficiently and systematically. Then an old woman dropped in : "Pozdravlyao, Novim God, Novim God, with a happy smile she offered a handful of toffees as the New Year sweet. A big steel heater of about 4 feet in diameter was radiating heat to give us warmth. She opened its furnace, pushed in a basketful of coal and went away. A long train with an unusually big engine glided by the platform shaking us. The track was wider than any railway track I had seen so far. Suddenly I remembered our station master host in Iran who had said a few days ago : "In Shoravi (Russia) you will find the widest track,' so our trains can't go to their country. It has its advantage in case of war. They are more intelligent".

A few minutes later the interpreter took us to the big restaurant in the same building. Introducing us to the manger she said : "Whatever you want, please come here and have it. Treat it as your own restaurant". The ladies from the kitchen peeped in through the doors and windows. Everything new and unusual!

In the evening we sat at the dining table. A plumpy middle-aged woman and two giggling girls surrounded us to attend to our needs. We could not make out what they spoke. Then they began in Persian. "My name is Nargis", the fat one said. We chose our dishes from the menu.

The dinner was over. They would not leave us unless we visited their kitchen. Everything was done very

clean and quickly too. "We enjoy cooking", Nargis said.

"You Hindus ?", one of the girls asked us.

"No, we are just human beings". They were happy.

"Are you Muslims ?", we asked.

"Not now".

"Then?"

"Formerly we were. Now we are only comrades".

"Members of the party?"

"No, just human beings as you are".

"Are you happier now or then?"

"Oh, then! Then we were miserable. We felt it was our fate and God protected us. But now we protect ourselves. We work hard and live happily".

Late in the evening I strolled on the platform. No passenger trains. "There is a train early in the morning coming from Baku and going to Moscow", one person said.

"Moscow ? How much time will it take ?"

"Three days".

Then I returned to my room and wrote in my diary : I cannot but laugh at the people of Iran. How much of

ignorance is there in the world! On one side a vulgar picture is being painted about this country; but here a strong people are ever active, trying to build up their nation by the sweat of their brow. I feel I am entering a country, which like a steel-structure, strong enough to support itself and carry some burden of others too. Everything here is big, strong and peculiar. I feel sleepy.

By 4p.m. three representatives of the Peace Committees of Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia came with an interpreter. A welcome dinner was organized in the restaurant. I knew that it was going to be a big affair.

A Chairman for the table was elected unanimously. He was the Area Commander. Now it was his duty to welcome the guests officially to the Soviet Union. He got up and said :

“Centuries ago it was from this country a distinguished traveller, Afanasi Nikitan ventured to go to India on foot. That historic bond of friendship between our countries has been maintained all through the ages and now, on this occasion of the beginning of a new year, we are extremely happy to welcome you to the Soviet Union. In fact you two are paying a return visit to that of Nikitan’s on foot. Moreover, your purpose behind such a hazardous trip magnifies its importance and therefore I take the opportunity to promise you that the whole of the Soviet Union is with you in your fight for peace and disarmament. Personally, I am very happy and fortunate in being the first person from our country to greet you at the border. So let me tell you frankly, I am waiting for that moment when I may not be required to wear

the military uniform, when peace prevails on earth for ever”. Then he raised the glass of red cognac and courteously bowing said : “to your perfect health”, and emptied it. All others followed the Chairman. We realised that we had landed in one of the most difficult situations so far !

“Dear friends, please excuse us, we have not had any alcohol in our life’

Most of the raised hands slowly came down and a shade of disappointment fell on their faces. The interpreter pulled himself up and explained : “You see, it is a national custom that we must welcome our guests, with wine. Particularly when our guests are from India our joy is boundless. We know your condition and feeling. We respect it. At the same time, we are sure, you will respect certain traditions of the people of other countries which are eagerly waiting for you. Just as a mark of respect, we would like you to have at least a sip of the stuff in company”. Then he translated the same for his comrades. Everyone smiled. In the meantime, the representative of workers, from Baku, rose up to comment : “Well, we understand the principle behind your vegetarianism. But here is no violence in wine. Pure grape juice ! Cognac is a little powerful, that’s all”.

“After all you are not in India now: in Russia survival becomes difficult without the strong spirit inside you”, said the tall member from Yerevan.

“Indeed we have a strong spirit inside. Otherwise we couldn’t have come so far”, we replied.

“He means the spirit of Vodka!”, the manager of the

Inn tourist office came to his rescue.

Let us not argue much, we thought. We have to understand their feelings. A small silent sip of the strong stuff made my lips and tongue and throat burn like anything. It slowly slid into my inner world creating a hot wave the vibrations of which reached my toes and made my hair stand. I did not ask Satish what was his experience. A loud applause drowned everything. I too joined them. Now it was my turn to return the toast accepting the goodwill of the Soviet Union. I got up.

“Dear comrades, for the first time in the history of our Peace March we are being accorded an unprecedented welcome which has already made us feel at home in the Soviet Land. We are the representatives of the ordinary people. Our conviction is that the common people must wake up and work for better understanding and peace between nations. We are confident, we shall get all support from the people of this country. Let the relation between the Soviet Union and India be happy and cordial”. I had to take a second sip of the red ‘spirit’.

Now it was for everyone to rise up, say a few words and empty the glass.

“For the best health of our great friend Nehru”.

“For the everlasting health and humour of comrade Krushchov”.

“For Indo-Soviet friendship”.

“For one-world and peace”.

Thus words and glasses tinkled each other.

Nargis poured the ‘red’ and ‘black’ into the emptying glasses and blinked at us.

“Please give us some plain water”, we asked.

“Plain water to drink ?” She came with a bottle of sweet lemonade.

The dinner went on for two hours. “Now let us come to our business”, said the bushy haired interpreter.

“What are the things you expect us to do for you?”

“Well, nothing particular. Language is the only problem for us, at least for a few days”. We were confident we needed only two weeks to pick up the essentials.

“That can be solved. Nothing more?”

“Nothing”.

“All right, now we have one point to discuss with you”, he said. “You have decided to go to Yerevan, Tbilissi, Sochi and then onwards to the central parts and Moscow. There are two roads to Yerevan. The one you have chosen goes by the border of Turkey which is guarded by the army. Since there is a dispute between Turkey and the Armenian Republic, there is a strict military rule that no foreigner should enter that area. That means you have to go by the other road, via Baku, which is very long. Therefore, you may travel by your selected route; but by car. Since the military commander himself is here you will have

a special permission”.

We thought for a while and discussed between the two of us. We decided it was better to go by car to Yerevan instead of making a long and arduous trip around Baku on the Caspian coast.

That's how we reached the capital city of Armenia late in the evening after a ride of 115 miles. The Hotel Armenia happened to be our second camp for the second day in the Soviet Land.

Two days in Yerevan.

The beautiful Lenin Square was wet in a mild shower and fog in the early hours when I stood and looked from the huge window of my suite in the hotel. The magnificent statue of Lenin attracted everybody. A few people walked on the pavements, without any umbrella or raincoat. Yerevan is a big industrial city. In the background, far away the famous mount Ararat stood shining in the silvery rays of the sun. The Biblical story goes that Noah's Ark landed first on the mount Ararat. Therefore many people from all corners of the world visit the Ararat every year.

The members of the Peace Committee and the Friendship Society organized a welcome meeting. Expressing full cooperation and support to our march and activities, the Vice President of the Friendship Society, Mr. M. Andronich said : “It is a great pleasure for us to welcome you into our midst. The Soviet Union is well acquainted with the realities of war and the possible catastrophe in the event of the next world war. It is our country which first stood against the propaganda in support of war in those days, and

even now we do our best to minimize the possibility of war. Therefore we are always with you. Only the fools and mad fellows will think of another war. You have come from a country which gave birth to Gandhi. We welcome you. “Then they wanted to know if we needed anything for our journey”, The cold is increasing day by day; you need a fine cap”, said Mrs. Gregorian. The next morning two beautiful black fur caps were ready in our room.

Yerevan is a city of big art galleries, institute, museums and theatres. Madanadaran is an ancient, depository of valuable manuscripts. A friend from the Friendship Society took us to see the Madanadaran. Armenian literature had its golden age in the 5th century when a new script for the language was invented by Mesrop Mastolio, in 428 A. D. In 1478 the second book in Armenian language was printed in Madras ! I was astonished to see a palm-leaf manuscript in Tamil safely kept in a glass shelf. Many works in art, poetry, medicine, astronomy, etc. could be seen well preserved in glass and steel and velvet cases. Armenian culture and literature occupy a great position in the history of Asia. The Armenian Street of Madras immediately came to my memory.

“We must have had ancient connection with your people here”, I said to the young girl who has taking us around and explaining everything.

“Possible. We have record that many pieces in our literature were printed in Madras when we didn't have the publishing facilities here”, she replied. “Why don't you stay in Armenia for some time?” she said. “Not now, we shall come again. First you come to India”.

Poet of “Lovers’ Street”.

Gevork Emin is a noted Armenian poet who invited us to spend a delightful evening with his family. The first family of our acquaintance and the first family dinner. We walked around for an hour seeing the well decorated vegetable shops. We felt the severe cold in our bones; but the humorous poet kept us warm by his conversation. “Now you are entering the Lover’s Street and naturally you can forget the cold and wind of the external world!” he said.

“I see, that’s why you chose to live in this street !”

“Not quite so; I live at the end of the street”.

“So that the warmth of love shouldn’t reach there?”

“Right. Only the final heaves and sighs reach that end”. “Then it turns to be poetry- no?”

“Naturally. Description and disappointment are at times the wombs for poetry”.

We entered the well furnished, beautiful home of the poet. His father, mother, wife and child gathered around. A warm welcome. No formalities. In half an hour we settled at the dinner table, for an excellent vegetarian food. After leaving Teheran we could not get so much vegetables anywhere. We talked of this and that. The old mother made a packet of homemade sweets and gave us saying : “To eat on your way when you walk”. A photograph was taken. His latest books were presented to us. Language again a problem.

‘We have all sorts of problems in this country. Don’t

think we have solved everything. But the joy is that in our country everybody shares everything. Misery and trouble are also shared by all the people”, said another friend at the table.

“Will you dance ?”

Our second evening in Yerevan was spent in a really jolly manner. “Our New Year celebrations last for 13 days. Therefore I will take you to a youths party”. said our friend, Mr. Hratch from the Friendship Society. In the big theatre about 300 boys and girls were dancing Jaz. Slowly we walked into the hall. In a few minutes we were the cynosure of their eyes. A dashing student elbowed through the crowd and asked : “Will you dance with me ?” Poor me ! Another first question of that type in my life ! We never expected such spontaneous invitation. We had to face defeat and beg their pardon. Another said, “We have seen your Raj and Nargis”. Two other girls jumped and giggled and wanted our autographs. There were some other music concerts from 9 to 11. By midnight we returned to our hotel. “Our government gives the best encouragement to the youth to develop their artistic talents”, said Mr. Hratch.

January 5, 1963

“Bhai, Bhai”

“Hindi Russi Bhai Bhai”, all buses, cars and trucks stopped by our side and the drivers and passengers hailed all through our first day’s march in the Soviet Union. “We know your Nehru”, someone shouted from the shop window. “Privet Nehru”, privet Mir i Drushba”. (Long live Nehru, Long live Peace and friendship), a fat lady from a bread- shop waved

her hands and said. There was a wine factory on the way. A group of women stood at the gate. As we passed by they recognised us as they had seen us in the newspaper photographs. "Please come, please come, have some wine", they invited. We stopped; but could not explain properly that we did not drink wine. However, with our hands and fingers we 'spoke' making them laugh and laugh. Every person read newspapers. As a result from both sides of the road people pointed at us saying : "They are going."

Though five days ago we entered this country, today is the beginning of our march. In the morning many people had gathered at the hotel in order to give us a hearty send off. Mr. I iratch walked with us for 3 to 4 miles and then returned home with a permanent invitation : "Come back again to Armenia." There stood a huge statue of Stalin over the mountain. "Haven't you pulled it down yet ?", we asked him. "Not yet. It matters little whether it stands there or not," he said. At noon a jeep came from behind and stopped. Two well-dressed gentlemen and a hefty short man with a grey moustache got down. "Aren't you hungry ?", they asked.

"Not much." we replied.

They took a packet of cheese, boiled eggs, canned fish, apples, slice of bread, milk and wine and said, "Come on, let's have lunch."

"Though the fish seems to be delicious, excuse us, we don't eat."

"Then you may eat the other things," one of them said. All of us sat on the parapet of a bridge and had

lunch. They introduced themselves to us.

"My name is Gorgan and my friend is Telman. The other comrade is our 'pilot' (driver). Let us call him 'Sputnik' hereafter, for he goes like a sputnik." said the middle-aged man with a black moustache and gay appearance. "We will be with you till you are in this Republic, to arrange your evening stay and other conveniences. Since you don't know the language, for a few days it will be necessary for you."

"That's fine. Thank you very much," we replied and they went ahead to meet again.

Two or three days ago, there was a heavy snowfall and therefore on both sides of the road there was one foot snow. The passing trucks always wanted to give us a lift. One truck stopped nearby and the husband and wife, the driver and cleaner, got down with a bottle of wine and said : "It's very cold. Have some wine and come with us." We gave them our leaflets in Russian. Reading it they said something we could not understand and shook our hands in appreciation and drove off.

It was a long walk of 22 miles on the first day. Gorgan and Telman (hereafter I would call them 'guardian' and 'guide') had taken our nick-sacks in the jeep. That was a great relief. By 6.30 we reached the village, Fantan. Just as all other aspects of our march had changed another unexpected change was waiting for us. In the cold wind all the people of the village, about 300, lined on either side of the road to greet us with slogans like : "Hindi Russi Bhai Bhai", "No bomb and war in the world."

Two girls came running before we entered the village and greeted us in excellent English. "You are very tired. They are waiting for you. We will help you." Kima took my hand into hers and Theressa went to the rescue of Satish. "We are teaching English in the school in the next village where you are going to stay tomorrow", the more talkative Kima introduced herself and Theressa to us.

"Comrades, when the villagers greet you, can you say something in Armenian?"

"This is the first day. We don't know a single word."

"Never mind, we shall teach you." And we became their pupils.

"Barabzez, barabzez," we shouted loudly and waved our Bands at the thronging crowd. With an indescribable burst of enthusiasm they rushed on us to shake hands, to talk to us, to give us fruit or flower. Comrade Madoyan, the Chairman of the local collective farm and his family welcomed us to their home. A large table had been laid with at least fifteen varieties of dishes. In the midst of all, a pair of roasted chicken. "Specially for you", Mrs. Madoyan said. Alas, they must have felt disappointed, when we explained our plight.

"Well, doesn't matter", Kima on my left and Theressa on my right went on serving us dish after dish. About fifteen people at the table; the Chairman was elected; the usual procedure followed. However, we could not escape the grip of wine. "At least one sip", Kima raised the glass to my lips and she drank the rest of it! Hands clapped and speeches went on. The villagers

thronged into the room. Three hours passed.

"You must have rest now" saying so Mrs. Madoyan made our beds.

January 6, 1963

"To wash your feet"

"Please take off your shoes", the pretty sweet young Aida daughter of our host requested us last night just before we were going to bed.

"Yes we will. But..." I wondered what had she to do with it! In the meantime her mother brought a bucket of hot water, soap and towel. Kima had to be called in to explain.

"You are required to remove your shoes, so that Aida will wash your feet. Then you go to bed. You are not supposed to move out thereafter."

Good heavens! Never in my life have I allowed my feet to be washed even by my sisters! Satish, of course, had some traditional taste of it, in olden days, by his devotees. "We don't like our feet to be washed", I protested.

"But friends", the parrot-like Kima wouldn't give in, "it is a custom here in Armenia. Our guests' feet must be washed by the daughter of the family. Then only they are allowed to sleep. In your case, you are really tired too. 22 miles!"

Our arguments progressed. Corn. Madoyan, Gorgan and Telman also rushed into the room. "You must do it", everyone past their unanimous judgment. No

escape. The shoes and socks were off; the water was comfortably hot; the hands were silken soft; Aida was blissfully smart.

I wanted to find out the meaning behind such a custom.

Therefore I asked Corn. Madoyan at the breakfast table this morning : “Why do you do such things as washing the feet ? Is there any meaning behind it ? After all, this country is free from many superstitions. In India there are thousands of monks whose feet will be washed at times and the devotees even drink that water. We don’t expect such silly things in this country. Indeed, I have heard that the feet of Jesus used to be washed by his followers. Do you believe that ?”

Madoyan smiled. “Well, we don’t believe in such things. We want to give all comfort and respect to our guests, whoever they are. While you people do everything in the name of God, we do it in the name of man. You forget the man in front of you; but we have nothing but man. Service, justice and equality to man is our motto. You are our guests, so you are Gods to us. What Jesus said, we are trying to practise in our day to day life. That’s all”.

The whole village gathered on the road to see us off to our next halt. It was 10 a.m.

There was a time, we used to get up at 4 a.m. and be on our way at 5. Then in Afghanistan and Iran our routine commenced at 7 a.m. to end by 7 p.m. The New Year brought about some changes in it’s wake. Now here it is a world of spotless snow around. It

has become impossible to go to bed before midnight. By the time we wake up it would be eight. By ten we would be on the road.

By noon we reached a village. The news of our march had cached every home. It was exciting to see the enthusiastic rural crowds gathering on the road to greet us. The village headman embraced us, took us to his home, made us sit in his warm kitchen around the table. “You must eat and drink something”, he commanded. How to explain! How to understand! When we did not eat and drink much, fruits and biscuits were thrust into our pockets. “To eat on the way”, said the mother.

The chairman of the District Peace Committee of Razdan is our host tonight. His two daughters and son would not leave us unless we accompanied them for skiing. Finishing the day’s trek of 9 miles, we had reached this village. Now we were driven to the mountain top for practising snow sports. This is the first lime that I attempted to ski. Fell down half a dozen times. It was a fun for the kids to laugh.

After supper they wanted to know many things about India. “Generally, what do you do after supper ?” we were also eager to learn about their life.

“We study or watch the Television”, Juliatta spoke in simple English.

“How is Chacha Nehru ?”, her younger sister asked.

“He is fine. He loves the children of the Soviet Union very much, you know ?”

“What do the women wear on their forehead in India?”

“It is called ‘tilak’. It makes them look beautiful”.

“Even otherwise they are very beautiful”.

Thus it went on for some time. The mother brought coffee again.

“Do you know why we are walking to Moscow ?

“Yes, our father told us. You want to tell our Prime Minister that our country must give up nuclear bombs”.

“Right, don’t you think so ?”.

“Of course. We don’t want any bomb or war. We keep the bomb only to protect ourselves”.

“But you know, it will not, it cannot protect anyone. So we will go to America also to tell them the same.”

“Will you walk over the Atlantic?” asked the boy. He brought a globe and verified our route. “We shall try. You also can join us”, we said, All of us laughed. Then we saw their album till ten.

January 8, 1963

A lake and a dance!

If I ever attempt to present a graphic picture of our every day march and life in the Soviet Union, the book will run into hundreds of pages. At times one has to confine oneself to space and time.

Lake Seven lay still and quiet, or our right all along our ten miles of walk yesterday. As we got on the road Comrade Nalbanjian, the Chairman of the District Communist Party, drove up to meet us. “When you are walking alone, you must know what is going on in the world outside”, saying thus he presented a nice transistor to us. In the previous two countries many people used to ask us : “Why don’t you carry a radio ?”. In the Soviet Union no one asked; but Nalbanjian actually brought us one !

By 3 O’clock we were settled in the little farm-house of Mr. Semonyan, the leader of the Youth Movement. The activity of the youth there is mainly study and discussion of the national and international problems. “Do you have such movements as the Anti-bomb Movement of England or the Direct Action projects of America in this country against the programmes of your own government ?”, we asked him.

“In our country there is no need for such an activity. We know that people’s money is being spent to explode the bomb; there is no profiteer between the Government and the people. Therefore, it is a political necessity for us to keep a strong defensive force. Otherwise, you can see, in one day the Communist world will be smashed into Dust”.

Yesterday some of the village leaders came to our hosts and took us to show the second largest Hydro-electric Power House of the Soviet Union, situated a few miles away from Sevan. Built in 1949 over a hill, that super-structure has fifteen storeys of which eleven are under-ground. It produces 400,000 kw. power, thus making the Armenian Republic produce surplus power for the other parts of the Union. “The

whole working is easy, for it is automatic the Chief Engineer directs everything sitting in his home”, said our companion.

As we were descending the staircase of a farmer’s family after attending a fantastic welcome this afternoon, two girls stood apart -from the swelling crowd and waved their hands. Their conspicuous aloofness itself attracted our attention. When we emerged from the crowd they slowly came forward and said : “We have come to see you from Semeonovska”.

“That’s where we are going to stay tonight”.

“We know your hosts”.

“All right. Come along”.

They walked with us. Chipliova and Sultan soon became very good friends. “My home is in Rostov. I have come here to undergo training in Dairy Farming during my vacation”, said Chipliova.

It is a real Russian family we are staying with. They invited a dozen of their neighbours to dinner. When they found the two girls had escorted us a long way, they too were invited.

As usual the dinner progressed course after course. By 11 O’clock everyone felt tired of eating, drinking and talking. “Will you accept me as your little sister?”, asked Chipliova a bit slow and shy. “Of course, from today you are my sister in Russia”. The instantaneous reply thrilled her with joy.

A boy suddenly got of and announced : “Let us have some music now.” He brought his harmonium. Our

‘guide’ a very humorous man, suddenly began a funny song; a short woman sprang up to dance.

“Why don’t you dance with them ?” the host-father prompted the two shy girls. By this time their shyness had given place to frank friendship. They drew both of us to the centre of the hall “Excuse me, I have never danced in my life, Chipliff Before I completed, the host-mother interrupted : “Did you know how to eat when you were born ?” She commanded the girls to teach us excellent dancing. “Before they leave the Soviet Union they must be master dancers”. And the rhythm and sound of music went in one direction; our feet moved in several directions. For half an hour I felt I was in a world of eternal childhood !

“We shall meet tomorrow. Spakonai noch (good-night)”, said Chipli. Her golden hair glittered in the flood-light as she glided out. The day was over at midnight !

In the afternoon we visited the dairy farm. Over 250 cows, both English and Swedish, produced over 2,500 kilograms of milk per day. Cleanliness is maintained to the maximum. All work is mechanized and most of the workers are women. “What is your minimum wage per month ?” we enquired. “The minimum is 70 roubles and maximum is 150”, they replied. (A rouble is Rs. 8/-)

January 9.

Georgetta the first volunteer

When the Peace March project was announced in India, I had received at least half a dozen applications from different parts of India wishing to participate in

it. I did not want a big group from India. Therefore, two were decided upon to be the maximum and minimum. Apart from that, we thought it would be significant to enrol one young member from every country we passed through, so that by the time we reached Washington, it would be a real international group of ten to fifteen people. Our attempt in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran did not bring about any fruitful result mainly because of the absence of Peace Movement in those countries.

Dilijan is a nice town situated in the folds of mountains. The youth leaders and women extended us a hearty welcome. On the top of the hill there is a secondary school in which there are only 115 pupils in eight classes. All sorts of arts and crafts are being taught. "It is necessary for all students after the 5th standard to do some practical training", explained the English teacher taking us around. To keep themselves and the whole surroundings absolutely clean is one of the most important aspects of their day-to-day practical education. "Children are given prizes every year for their personal hygiene and habits of cleanliness", she said.

At 8 p.m. the youths of the town organized a meeting in their social club. "You must address the youths. They are very eager to hear you", said our hostess. "We wish we could speak in Russian. Unfortunately, we have just started learning Russian", we begged their pardon.

"Doesn't matter. You speak in English. Some of them understand; I will translate", said the teacher and introduced us to the blooming youngsters.

This is the first opportunity and we must make the most of it, I thought. Explaining the whole absurd arguments of the politicians the world over to perpetuate the arms-race and the need for the young generation to unite and work against it, I appealed:

"We want at least one boy or girl from the Soviet Union to represent this country and join us in our march to the Kremlin and the White House. We are confident, before we reach Moscow, we will get at least one member with courage and conviction from this land of Lenin and Tolstoy."

"I am ready", came a voice from the back bench, before I completed my speech. It was a pretty round-faced girl of 20 in black skirts and red pull-over.

"May I know your name ? I asked.

"Georgetta".

"Please meet us after the meeting".

The youths exhibited some of their artistic talents and the meeting came to a close at 9-30.

"Why don't you join our guests over dinner ?", our hosts asked Georgetta and she accepted. We explained in brief the whole project and purpose. "How can You come to such a quick decision ? Don't you have to consult Your parents ? Will your Government give you passport ? Are you ready to face anything and everything?", we enquired.

"First of all", said Georgetta, ain thoroughly convinced of your principles. I know how Gandhi and Nehru

won a great battle against the imperialists. Secondly, I have only my mother at home. She gets a state pension and I am working in a pharmacy. No trouble.

I hope the government will allow me to go and I'm ready to face everything as you are".

"We don't carry any money. You may have to go hungry too".

"So what ? When you go hungry, I too can".
"If any country puts you in jail ?"

"Why should they put us in jail ? For doing some work for peace ? Even that I won't mind".

"But, first of all your mother's Permission is necessary." Georgetta's face betrayed doubt. "Her Mother will not permit", a member of the local peace committee interrupted. Rather, he was discouraging her.

January 10.

"Mir u Mir"

Fit and tight, when we got ready this morning it was Georgetta who greeted us first. Her angelic . face in the thick cloud of ,curly black hair wore the shade of disappointment. Obviously her mother had not approved of her plans.

"I'm going to walk with you today" she began.

"All right ! Welcome"

On the way she explained her mother's concern over such a "crazy" plan ! Moreover, the local Peace

Committee was also not encouraging. At last we consoled her : "Don't worry about your inability under these circumstances. Wherever you are, you can do something which will contribute to world-peace, according to your understanding and capacity". She walked with us for three hours and returned home hoping to hear from us all stories.

Throughout our journey of 23 miles today, at several points, we could see huge arches and banners fluttering in the air bearing the words : "Mir u Mir" (Peace for the whole world).

The first Soviet of the world

Idzewan is a city of 10,000 occupying an unique position in the history of the world. It was here the first Soviet power was established and Lenin had sent his greetings to the heroic people of this city. That telegram of Lenin has been engraved on a slab of stone in the heart of the city. It inspires each and every one to this day. It was indeed, fitting for the importance of this city, that a fantastic and unprecedented welcome awaited us this evening at 5. The largest crowd ever, more than 5,000 people, thronged into the city centre and we had to be pushed and pulled to get into the host's residence. We were asked to deliver a short speech. Shouts of "peace", "friendship", "victory for workers", "no bombs", etc. rent the air. Before our arrival in the city, five miles behind, a family had come by car, offered us milk, coffee, fruits, chocolate and returned. Half an hour later two motor cyclists came from Idzewan to escort us. Then onwards we saw people coming by trucks, cars and motor cycles to join us in the big procession. One elderly man approached and said : "You must come to my house".

Then another one rushed forward saying : “No, no, I am going to take them my house”. The second one was a bit under the spell of vodka. He held both of us and marched in the middle. At last our would-be host approached. It was a job for many people to relieve us from the clutches of the unbalanced ‘host’.

“Since this is the first Soviet in human history, we deem it an honour to welcome you who are fighters for peace. Only when every city of the world turns to be like this, governed by the people, who work and produce, shall there be no bombs and wars in the world”, proclaimed the chairman at the dinner table.

January 12.

A forgotten question

“Which God do you worship ?”

“None”

An unusual question in an unusual land ! For the first time in twelve days ! That was the sort of question we had to face a number of times everyday for the past five months. On the New Year’s day we had thought : ‘A great relief has come.’ To identify with one particular sect, group, religion, nationality, or to confine to a narrow school of tradition, is the most disgusting thing which always pricks my conscience. To feel that you are one with everybody and everybody is one with you is a sort of infinite happiness for man. Yet, that forgotten question was asked by Aliyef Mohamad, a man of 97. His son and grandson and all members of the family sat around the table to ask

us innumerable questions. They stared at our faces, and inspected our feet. “Did it really take you through 2958 miles from the land of Gandhi to the land of Stalin ?” the old man wondered holding one of the shoes in his hand. “No Baba, this is the fourth pair of shoes. Now we hope we can go easily another 2,000 miles without any trouble”, we replied.

“I want you to stay with me for a week; I want to feed you very well; I want to make a special fur-cap for you. You know, you will die in the cold after a month”. The active old man warned.

“But we have planned everything in advance. So we can’t stay more than a day. After all, this is a country running on proper planning”.

“That’s all for the politicians. Let’s not plan our business”, his son advocated for the father.

“However, we are sorry. Thank you very much. We shall come again. We love the Soviet Union. You must live long long years”.

“Of course, no doubt. I will die after 25 years. I want to see more of Communist construction”.

“Were you a member of the party?”

“No, I wasn’t. By the bye, you said you don’t worship any God. Aren’t you Hindus?”

“Not even that. We consider ourselves just human beings”

“That’s wonderful. See, we are Moslems, and we

are members of a Communist society which never discriminates man from man. So we are happier than before”.

The conversation went on for some time. Our new ‘guardian’ and ‘guide’ cracked several jokes. We realized the change from the old to the new. We are now in Georgia the famous motherland of Stalin !

Our affectionate and intimate company with Comrades Gorgan and Telman is a chapter by itself. Like father and friend they looked after our comforts. Our “sputnik” was so careful that we never carried our luggage during the last week. At dinner table, only after proposing a toast for the “Sputnik” Gorgan and Telman used to drink and eat. They used to translate our speeches. Snatching every opportunity they would take us round to show different aspects of the life of the people. Gorgan is an advocate in Yerevan. One day I asked him : “Do you have very many cases to take to the court ? Can you do private practice ?” “No, we can’t do private practice. No need of that. We are regularly paid by the Government. Therefore people can go to any lawyer and request him to take up their case. We argue on the basis of justice. Money will never come in between. Secondly, we don’t have too many cases. When exploitation and profit motive are eliminated from society there will not be many conflicts”, said Gorgan.

This after-noon they bade good-bye to us. Gorgan virtually wept, embraced us and said : “You must come back again. After meeting Krushchov, please write to us. One day we shall come to India”.

Last night we had stayed at the home of the director

of a secondary school. Except for the snow the atmosphere was typically Indian. Though the house was not much to look at from outside, it was fitted and furnished with all modern amenities.

January 13.

A quiet day

Comparatively today has been a very quiet day. A couple of reporters and cameramen had appeared on the road, as we entered another Republic. “We want to put you on the TV and the Screen”, they said and kept company with us for an hour. A brisk and quiet walk took us easily through 12 miles. Noder and David are our new ‘guardian’ and ‘guide’.

A farmer’s single-room house has been our accommodation. Unlike the previous days, no crowd tonight. Only half a dozen people. We have some time to read and write.

A small village in Georgia is just like a village of Kerala. In fact, this whole area is a chain of villages, one after the other, like the Malabar coast. This ends after the Black Sea in the North-West tip of the Caucasus. In the economic and social set up there is indeed a vast difference. Every home is electrified. People are happy and gay. Beautiful surroundings. Men and women work with mutual respect and reverence. Everything seems to be by everybody, for everybody. One does not feel any sort of barrier existing between one family and the other. No huge buildings; no huts either. All houses have some proportion. Yesterday and today we experienced the Persian touch and taste here. This area is a confluence of three Republics Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia.

Tomorrow, David says, we are reaching a big industrial city, Rustovi. "We shall stay in a hotel".

January 17.

In Georgia's capital.

On the 15th evening we reached the picturesque capital city of Georgia, Tbilisi. Photographers and reporters met us on the road frequently. The villagers and peasants in the field gave us an encouraging welcome. At one point about 2,000 people gathered on the road with fruits and wine. The moment we greeted them in their traditional style with the word "Gaumar Joba", (victory) thousands of throats responded in one voice; "Msvidova", (Peace). Just as one can perceive the differences as one travels from one province to the other in India, here too we found many changes. The first thing we did as soon as we entered Georgia was to learn the words of greetings from our comrades. Now we must give attention to learn to languages Russian and Georgian. Russian is the national language for the whole of the Soviet Union and all Republics have their own languages. We decided to learn Russian as well as we could and a few words of the respective regional languages as and when we travelled through the different Republics.

To commemorate the victory of the people's strength against the tyranny of the Tsars, they say "gaumar joba" when they greet each other. In response they say "msvidova" because they believe that the future of human race is safe only in a peaceful society and they are confident they can build it.

The first thing which strikes the eye of a visitor to this historic city is the huge statue of a woman erected on the mountain top. She holds a cup in one hand and a sword in the other. "What is the significance of that?", we enquired of our comrade.

"It had great historic significance", said Noder. "It says that 'here is a cup of wine for friends and for the enemies the reward is sword'. You see its history of 1,500 years. Tbilisi has suffered thirteen foreign invasions. The last invasion took place in 1975".

The ruins of ancient buildings with balconies, built of bricks, can be seen in some parts of the city. Still the citizens have retained their taste of having houses with balconies. Huge structures, of at least half a dozen floors, are coming up everywhere. The main street, Rostavali Avenue, named after their noted poet, Shota Rostavali, is the busiest in the city.

The University, Institute of Foreign Languages, Technological Institute, Institute of Marxism and Leninism, the Opera and Circus Theatres, the Palace of Sports, the Art Gallery and Museum **are worth visiting in Tbilisi. We visited a factory manufacturing hosiery materials. Out of the 4,500 workers 80 percent are** women. Young girls and mothers worked actively and cheerfully at every stage of production and administration. Their wage varies from 60 roubles to 200 roubles a month. A well-equipped, excellent kindergarten, a polyclinic, a sports pavilion, a cultural house, a recreation center and a restaurant are attached to the Factory.

"What do you do with your children when you are

working?”. we asked a mother.

“We keep them in the kindergarten when we work. As you have seen, a very homely care is given to the kids. Moreover, they develop a social sense right from childhood. When we go home we take them”.

Working time in the Soviet Union is 7 hours. All the workers are provided with quarters at very low rent. The annual production of this factory in money is calculated to be 22 millions roubles.

“Drain the ponds”

One day while we were enjoying a nice conversation over it cup of tea, the subject turned to the social problems.

“Are there prostitutes in the Soviet Union ?”, we asked one of the comrades.

“There are, naturally, as in any human society. in any country. But, by law it is absolutely prohibited. Then, whatever happens is individual’s business. Professional prostitution does not exist in the Soviet Union, rather it is strictly forbidden. Moreover, there is no economic problem which prompts people to take to prostitution as a profession. When livelihood is guaranteed by society for its members, where is the need for such business, except for those who want that only for pleasure ? That of course cannot be restricted by any law in any society”.

“In India there are many voluntary agencies functioning to discourage prostitution. What about

here ?”

“Well, in India or for that matter in other countries like Viigland or America what the people are doing is killing the hogs while the pond remains the same. You will go on killing the frogs, yet thousands will be breeding again and again. What you need is complete draining of the dirty pond. By that I mean a thorough change in your social and economic system where man will cease to live in perpetual want and misery. If a girl is unemployed, if she has no security of life, if she has no opportunities to work and live. if she is surrounded with innumerable barriers as in India, what else can she do ? She will sell her flesh to fill her stomach”.

Ever since we entered this country our eyes were eager to find out if there were beggars. The other day an old man was sitting on the pavement in a small town. He looked like a beggar. But yesterday evening we were having a stroll in the crowded Rostavali Avenue. A few students walked from the opposite direction. Approaching us one of them said : “Hello, are you from India ? Are you the Peace Marchers ?”

“Yes”.

“I see, some of us have seen your photo in the newspaper. Yesterday there was news over the Television that you have reached our city. Very happy we are, congratulations. Let’s have a cup of coffee. We know Indians like coffee and tea very much”.

We all entered a nearby restaurant. Coffee and cakes were ordered.

“What are the conditions of students in India ?”, one of them asked.

We explained to them about the lack of opportunities to all those who want to study, the indiscipline among students and their political activities. “But we can definitely fight with the government in our country if we don’t like any of its action. Students do so occasionally, sometimes for good reasons and sometimes for very bad and ridiculous reasons too”.

Then we wanted to know the conditions in Russia.

“First of all, in the Soviet Union, we don’t have such problems as lack of opportunities etc. Every child goes to school compulsorily till the School Final. After that every deserving student has full opportunity to pursue any course of education. We don’t interfere much in politics. We have a Young Communists League to which all of us can make representation and if necessary it will be taken to the Party and the Government. Thus proper solution will be found out if there is any grievance without any delay or trouble”. At that moment a middle-aged woman suddenly rushed in. Looking this way and that he came to our table and asked for something. One of our young hosts gave her some money and she went out. “Is she begging .?”, we asked. “Yes she is; but seems to be a bit mentally disturbed”, answered another. Whatever may be the type of society, there is bound to be some people, who are lunatics, lazy, mischievous or irresponsible.

“Urgent message”

“Friends, there is an urgent message for you from

Moscow”, rushing into our hotel the Secretary of the Georgian Peace Committee informed us yesterday afternoon. We wondered what it could be. “The Central Peace Committee at Moscow”, she continued, “is waiting for you. They telephoned that ‘since the central part of the country is badly affected by snow, let the Indian friends fly to Moscow’.

“That’s all ? Doesn’t matter. However, we anticipate such possible troubles. But as long as the Black Sea is near us, you know, it won’t be difficult for us. The present snowfall and cold, though severe, can be withstood. We are confident, we can get on. Therefore, you may please convey our thanks to the friends in Moscow for all their concern. Please inform them that we don’t want to fly”. She promised to do so. In the night she again called on us and said : “I explained everything to them. Though they are not satisfied with your answer, they appreciate your courage. So they said : ‘Let the marchers come on foot if they can’. After all, you are from a warm country. It will be unbearable for you. Anyway, cheer up ! Please don’t hesitate to telephone me here or the central office in Moscow and take our help at any time you want, whenever you find it difficult”.

“Naturally, we shall. Whom else can we approach ? We depend upon you for everything”, we replied. She bade goodnight to us after enquiring if we needed anything more. At Teheran and Yerevan we had been re-equipped. Till the end of Black Sea coast, we did not have to worry at all. The Caucasus range could be crossed in ten days. Then, as people say, an excellent sea-side is waiting for us.

January 20.

In Stalin's home

It has been a fashion now-a-days to many people all over the world to throw all sorts of verbal rubbish on Stalin whose body is no more, but whose name will live as long as the Soviet Union occupies a place of pride on the map of the world. Was he so notoriously cruel and inhuman ? Was he so hard-hearted that he mercilessly killed, according to the allegations levelled against him, thousands of innocent human beings ? Was he so selfish that he ignored the happiness and lives of millions in order to preserve his own vested interest ? Like this many a question cropped up in my mind this afternoon, at 4 O'clock, when I stood silently by the side of a wooden cot, in a simple room, in the midst of a beautiful city, after walking 19 miles through terrible wind and occasional snow.

In the middle of the nineteenth century, Gori was just a small village, the image of which is symbolized by this small house which contains only two small rooms with timber walls and tile-roof. When the shade of the miserable world around the Caucasus fell upon the infant Joseph, his poor mother possessed this home. Even when he died under the Kremlin star, in the light of hope for a prosperous future for humanity, he left behind the same old house with the wooden cot, a couple of pillows, a few wooden stools, a small table with a kerosene lamp on it, a wooden cup-board and an oval-shaped mirror on the wall !

No, I refuse to believe that Stalin was as bad as he is being posthumously painted. In the course of the most important transformation period of a section of the human society, which till then was based upon inhuman suppression and unbearable exploitation,

some amount of suffering had to be borne even by the innocent people. For that only Stalin should not be blamed. After Lenin, had there not been such a man with indomitable courage, conviction and pursuit of purpose, I doubt, if the Soviet Union could have been moulded into its present stature. Let us give the devil its due.

What a thrill it was to walk through the museum in which many photos and paintings of Stalin's activities are preserved. The most striking thing I found was the model of a printing press that Stalin used to print the party's secret papers. In the bedroom of Stalin's residence there was a well which later turned out to be a horizontal tunnel leading to a big underground room in which the press was installed. Even when the Tzar's militia raided the whole house the printing, packing and processing work could be carried out undisturbed underground ! "Such was his revolutionary genius in the cause of his miserable countrymen all throughout his life", said a comrade later.

A midnight knock

After that unforgettable midnight knock at the door and the consequent events, I settled by the window to write my diary. 'It is past midnight. Everything is dead calm outside. Not a single human movement anywhere. Like small puffs of cotton flying in the still air, snow is falling. By tomorrow morning there will be at least a foot of snow. When it snows, how delightful to walk ! But after that when the wind blows we feel we are dying inch by inch. The chill enters through the finger nails, nostrils and every available pore in to the flesh and bone inside. The only exposed portion of

the body, four square inches of the face, gets red, stiff and lifeless. Sometimes one feels one is blind. Then the snow melts into water making the road filthy. It enters the shoes. The trucks pass by splashing muddy water over us. Oh ! It is a miserable life on the road, indeed ! However, that's for the day; let me not worry about it now. At present I am in a very nice and air-conditioned room of the Hotel Intourise.

As soon as we arrived, the manager of the hotel accorded us a warm welcome. Escorting us to the special dining room he said : "You are our distinguished guests. For dinner you must sit on these two chairs on which Raj Kapur and Nargis had sat for dinner when they visited Gori". Then he ordered the band party to be ready in half an hour. At 6 p.m. when we sat for our dinner a band played in our honour and the manager too sat with us for dinner.

Satish slept early. I was writing a letter to my Australian friend who wanted to join the march. She had written : "Though I couldn't join this wonderful venture, please give me a graphic picture of the places and routes you are going through, so that I can follow you with the help of a map".

"Good night ,," I finished my reply. It was then I heard the knock that broke the tranquility of the world around me. I opened the door.

A fifty-year old man stood erect with hands huddled in his pockets. On his shoulders, over the thick leather coat and on his head over the flat fur-cap particles of snow melted into water. He spoke in Russian which I could understand but could not reply to properly.

"I saw you walking on the road this afternoon when it was snowing. Two days ago I had seen you in the newspaper. When I read about you, I wanted to meet you, but how and where was the problem. Today, when I saw two people walking, I presumed they could be none other than you. Returning to the city, I enquired here and there and found out that you were staying here. Please excuse me, that at this time of the night I disturb you. But I can't help it. I wanted to see you and pay my humble regards". Then he took off his cap and folded his hands. I responded with a smile and a few words of thanks. Then he pulled out a currency note and continued : "You are the real lighters for peace. I want to help you in your work. Please accept this. I am a taxi driver. My total earning today is 30 roubles. Here is 20 roubles for you, my humble mite".

Now was my difficulty. We had never accepted any money from any-one. How could I explain to him the whole idea behind it ? I had to approach the manager of the hotel who spoke English. I took him downstairs.

The manager explained to him everything in detail. "I see " he said running his fingers over his chin. Then he said : "All right ! You didn't want money. Then please don't walk tomorrow. I shall take you in my taxi to your next camp". The manager again explained. I thanked him very much. He wished long life for both of us and went home.

How much of inspiration and happiness do we derive from such people and incidents !

January 27.

"I have seen the sun".

The beautiful city of Kotaisi lay under a thin blanket of snow and only a few people were walking up and down emitting gull's of smoke from their mouths. There was a cold wind which hampered the free movement of people. Really one felt that one was now living in the midst of such legendary stories exalting the glory of Russian snow !

Every third or fourth day some local people, either a member of the Peace Committee or Cultural Society, or a school teacher would join us, thus giving all assistance from translation of our speeches to finding out possibilities of our stay etc, Another important aspect was that we no more carried our luggage on our back. All available time was utilized quiet usefully. Everyday we had some outside programme in the evening a meeting in a club or a school, a visit to a factory, farm or cultural centre, or an entertainment in a cinema, drama or ballet theatre.

Tonight our comrade, the school teacher, wanted us to see a nice play by a group of young student artists. "We are doing everything to promote the artistic talents in the youth and therefore you can see a group of them undergoing training in various fields of art, music and culture in every village and town", he explained. "I have seen the Sun", is a gripping story of a Russian village during the second world war. One fine morning suddenly the conscription order came to the village that all youngmen must get enrolled in the army. The whole country was in danger. Hitler's army was marching in. Patriotism surged up in every home. The youth marched to the front. In between the patriotic sons and husbands and their anxiously a waiting families there was only one solitary link the

village postman. Exciting days rolled on. Every mother and wife craved for the sight of the old bearded man with the bulky mail-bag on his shoulders. He brought them letters. They read :

"I'm fine. Don't worry, I shall defend the motherland"
".....the trench is pretty cold. Still cheerful....."
".....I'm afraid, any time Hitler may tramp over us".
"Never worry. Pray for me. Love to all".

As the days passed, the tone and contents of the letters changed. Instead of direct letters, indirect information reached them. "Your son did his duty cheerfully". "You're a brave mother". "Your husband brought glory to the motherland by his supreme sacrifice. We share your sorrows. Be brave".

"Andrew served the nation more than anyone else, but at last the cruelty of Hitler didn't let him come back to you. Our sympathy is with you" etc.

Intimations of death, injury, sacrifice and glorification started pouring in. The postman had to face the crying mothers, weeping children and fainting wives from dawn to dusk. He could not endure it. The climax came. One afternoon a big bunch of urgent messages came. He was no more able to perform the duty of distributing death-news. He dashed into the anxious crowd and burst into tears, threw away his satchel in the dust and fell down.

In due course, history takes a new turn. The Germans were finally defeated. The whole village gathered around the radio to hear the message. At that time one German soldier escaped and found his way to this village, tired and hungry. He asked for food and

a woman gladly offered everything he wanted and shed tears. She or anyone else in the village did not have any animosity against him. Thus the play ended with the hope that mankind will not fight another war again. It is not man that is to be hated, but the system which makes even a good man bad.

Such plays and films, propagating the horrors and futility of war are shown all over the Soviet Union. Everywhere one can see huge posters and slogans against war. I was astonished to see huge poster showing the hands of man breaking the rockets. Even postage stamps are issued in the Soviet Union with hands breaking rockets, just like the War Resisters International symbol of hands breaking the gun. "Peace", "Friendship", "International Understanding" etc. are the common banners everywhere.

It is very interesting to note that there are many ancient Indian tales translated and printed in Georgian for the school children. The greatest poet of Georgia, Shota Rostaveli, had written his masterpiece. 'The Knight in Tiger's Skin', based upon Indian life. It is quite evident that the Southern parts of the Soviet Union have had ancient and intimate relation with India.

The inauguration drink !

Georgia is famous for its excellent wine and tea and health resorts along the Black Sea coast. It has been our everyday experience in the farmers' and workers' homes to sit at the dinner table by nightfall and get up to go to bed after midnight. In the meantime all other comrades would have gulped-in at least 25 to 30 glasses of wine. The inevitable glass would be kept in front of us, so that we could take part in the welcome

and return toasts, which could not be avoided. It is the national tradition and custom. Therefore, during the long dinner we would consume maximum one glass of wine and at least half a dozen glasses of tea. The Russian lemon-tea is quite delicious and famous too. At times we would ask for a glass of plain water to drink.

"Water ? To drink ?", there is astonishment over the table ! "Da tawarisch, ya khachu wada", (yes friend, I want just water), we would reply.

"Sovietski narod wada ne peat, davai vino, vodka". (Soviet people don't drink water, have wine or vodka), someone would say and pour wine again. When we say we do not drink, they would give milk, tea, coffee or mineral water. "Water is for only washing hands and clothes. Who will drink water ? Because you people in India drink just water you are not strong enough".

"All right ! For a strong India". another comrade from the other end of the table would get up and raise his glass. Everyone would follow. Then they would drink to the health of all members of our family, head of the State, Prime Minister and the unbreakable friendship between the two countries and above all "for peace and friendship all over the world".

Though women keep company, they don't drink more than two or three glasses.

These things have become a normal routine. Just two days ago another inevitability fell upon us and we could not escape gulping-in a glass.

We stayed at a farmer's. The next morning before we

could pack our things the father of the family called us to the backyard and gave two shovels into our hands. We wondered what was going to happen.

“Please dig this ground slowly”, he requested. We did. A foot deep was found a huge jar buried. He slowly lifted the lid with much care and the whole family gathered around. Two glasses were handed over to us and the ritual started. He explained :

“You see, in Georgia we all cultivate our own grape and make our own wine. We don’t have to buy it from the shop. Right under your feet there are 25 jars of wine. This will be enough for the year. This year I am extremely happy to have you here. We have a custom to call somebody from the next village or town to inaugurate the wine season. We have the most honourable inaugurarors this year from India. We are very much honoured. Please you may perform the function”.

We were asked to dip the glasses in the big jars. “Now you have to drink the first glass of the season”, he said.

What to do ? Again no escape. We had to submit to the tradition. Raising the glass we inaugurated the wonderful season in Georgia !

January 31.

Equality for all

In that part of the world where I was born and bred and in that part of the world which I am going to see after a few months, there is an unceasing slogan of the people. “freedom”. They all feel they are free people

in free nations. That is why the moment they hear of Communism or Russia or China they shiver and shout that there is no freedom under Communism. The Communists are branded as slaves and butchers. All sorts of false propaganda can be heard in “free” countries against the Communists. So my attempt is more to evaluate the freedom,equality and liberty that the common people really enjoy in their day to day life in the Soviet Union.

Here in the Communist world let us see how equality is being practised. For instance, this night, a very nice teacher couple took us as their guests. They have invited half a dozen neighbours too. When the driver of the car which carried our rucksacks entered the dinning room everyone stood up. The Secretary of the district wing of the Party, the Chairman of the collective farm and all others give equal respect to one another. The Peace Committee member or the school teacher, proposes a toast first to the driver of his car and then only he would eat or drink. The chauffeur of the Managing Director of a factory sits with him at the same table and they propose toast to each other’s health, whereas in India a chauffeur can not even dream of such a treatment. If the Seth is enjoying an extravagant meal and drink, the poor fellow has to hang on by the side of the car.

“Land is the gift of nature. So why should we value it in terms of money ? Man has only a right to put his labour on it and enjoy the result”, said our host. “The State allots a plot of land to every family. They can build their own house, cultivate the land, enjoy the produce for themselves. But they cannot sell anything they produce to their neighbours. There is a trade agency which will buy the things and in

turn other members of the society can buy them only from that agency. That means no private business is permitted”, thus he explained.

“Are you a member of the Collective Farm ? Can you tell us in brief the working of the farm ?”, we asked our host. “Of course, I am a member of the farm. My wife too. But it is on our own choice. Because both of us are teachers, we can’t work more than eight to ten hours a week in the farm. This provides us with enough grain for the whole year. For other expenses we get our salary. That’s how we could build this house.

“In our Collective Farms anybody can become a member. The number of working hours each one puts in for production is recorded and at the end of the season the produce is distributed according to the proportion of the labour hours”.

Their house is a fine double storeyed one. All around there is a beautiful garden. Vegetables and fruits are grown. “Do you sell them ?” we asked.

“Yes, we do sell this leaf (he pointed to a particular variety of plant with ovate leaves, very green and fragrant and used in preparing delicious food.) It costs very much. I get eight roubles per kilogram”. “You mean, you sell this to the Government ?”

“Of course, I told you earlier. If I want I can give it to my neighbours free. But never for money”.

Altogether this family is a well-to-do one. They have two children. The rooms are beautifully decorated. A piano, a television set, radiogram etc. are owned by them.

“Abkhasia masla !”

“This is Abkhasia masla”. said Liana, the young school teacher to us one evening, introducing a new dish. Miss Liana and Mrs. Margo have been two delightful companions for us. Most of our companions used to take delight in walking with us, though it was tedious for them. For us it was always helpful, for it was on the road that we got plenty of time to learn the language. In the middle of the Georgian Republic, on the Black Sea coast, there is an area called Abkhasia. They have their own language. Once upon a time Abkhasia was entirely a different administrative unit. Even today they take pride in calling themselves Abkhasians. Liana had heard that Indians eat a lot of spices and chillies. Therefore she took special interest in equating us with the Abkhasians. Since they too eat red chillies, a ball of paste-like, ground chilies was kept on the table. They have given a nick-name to that. “The butter of Abkhasia ! (Abkhasia masla)”. However, we applied a bit of red hot “butter” to the tasty black rye-bread. Even though we did not relish hot stuff we joined the family in a real Abkhasian dinner. They drank and danced in our honour.

February 1.

Rain, sunshine and children

Now we are on the other side of the Caucasus. At Khushori, a week ago, while we were at a high altitude, there was a weather broadcast that within a week there was possibility of heavy snow-fall blocking all road and rail traffic. “It occasionally happens here”, our comrade had said that day. However, as if it was for our sake, the snow-fall was mild and we could get

over the high mountains without any trouble. Now we are approaching the enchanting Black Sea. Hereafter, our friends say, at least for two weeks we have an excellent climate and panoramic prospects. But there are showers now and then, and sunshine too.

In spite of all odds and indefiniteness of nature, the school kids and youth of every village and town we pass through throng onto the roads to accord us a hearty welcome. This morning two high school girls travelled all the way for 5 to 6 kilometers just to tie two red pioneer ties on our necks, present two beautiful flowers and get our autographs ! When we arrived in the city of Zugdidi at least 3,000 boys and girls had gathered in the city centre, singing the national anthems of the Soviet Union and India and other songs, composed by them about our march. They made us heroes. Dozens of badges, and articles of decoration were pinned on our coats; books were presented; we were covered with garlands and ties.

They are the best teachers.

Whenever we stayed with families, I enjoyed learning Russian from the children. They would be very happy to bring their school books, sit with me and utter the words and names one by one, clearly and slowly, pointing to the illustrations. When I would be asked to repeat; if I made mistakes they would correct them again and again till I got through.

One evening it was Maria, an eleven year old girl, who became my teacher. Except the kitchen the whole house was cold; therefore all of us gathered around the mother who was preparing dinner. Maria taught me her lessons for an hour. Then her friends came

in. All of them wanted to hear about India. The first question was : “Why do girls wear a red mark on their foreheads ?”

The next morning before we left the village, Maria took us to her school. All the boys and girls joined together in singing and dancing. Maria received a thunderous applause, for she dragged me to the field as her dancing partner !

February 5.

The Black Sea and the wisdom tea.

If one undertakes a sojourn through the Arabian Sea coast and through the Black Sea Coast in Georgia many experiences and surroundings will appear the same. Just like the continuous chain of villages in Kerala, here you will be going through the villages and towns one after the other without noticing any change. The Caucasus and its continuation on the right side and the blue-black water of the sea on the left, in between panoramic valleys and small rivers and green fields are similar in both the coasts. Big tea estates and mandarin gardens can be seen along the mountain-ranges. But one difference. Here these estates are owned, cultivated and enjoyed by all the people living on this land, whereas on the slopes of the Western Ghats many human lives are being crushed in between the two leaves and a bud, because they are toiling from morn to eve in order to build castles for their masters in their own country as well as in the distant west. It was the same condition here too, half a century ago. So in Georgia we find huge, luxurious castles on the tops and slopes of the hills. They belonged to the Tzars and their kith and kin. Time changed. The worker and peasant understood and acted with courage and conviction. Therefore

today, all are masters as well as workers.

There was a big tea processing factory on the road. As we passed by, a few hundreds of workers gathered at the gate and invited us to visit their factory. "Make hay while the sun shines", we thought, though we were hurrying up to reach our destination. We went inside. In half an hour we were taken around. A group of children of the workers gave a grand 'guard of honour' with peace flags. We were about to say "Dosvidanya" (Good-bye), when one man rushed forward and gave four nice packets of their own tea. He declared : "Dear comrades, you are the best fighters for peace. These children will blame us if we don't get rid of the bombs. We want you to take these four packets of tea upto Washington. When you reach Moscow give the first packet to Comrade Krushchov, the second to De Gaulle in Paris, the third to Macmillan in London and the fourth to Kennedy in the White House. Then request them, on our behalf, that whenever they have to press the button, let them drink a cup of tea made out of this, so that their brain would be sane and humanity safe."

February 12.

Surrender to snow !

It was a week ago, in village Dranta that circumstances started taking a new turn. Ever since we entered this country, we anticipated the rage of nature to which we might have to succumb.

As usual the dinner was in full swing in the well-organized dining hall and Comrade Kwarutsneya's home. The first round of toasts and speeches were over. Everyone proceeded in a relaxed mood. Our

hosts wanted to know if we liked the special dishes of Georgia called Hacha Puri and Mamalika, which resembled to some extent the Indian dishes, Puri and Pongal. Prepared with wheat flour and cheese the Hacha Puri has a peculiar taste. "We like it very much", we said. Then we switched on to politics.

"Why it is that Stalin has been denounced so much in the Soviet Union ?", we asked one member. Stalin is still remembered with great respect in Georgia. "Even though he committed many mistakes, he was basically a man of the people who had sacrificed his whole life for the oppressed masses of our country. Many of our present leaders underrate his services for the cause of Communism", he replied.

It will not be out of place to record now another interesting incident. We had been accommodated in the guest house of a factory. We had to go to a restaurant for breakfast. A school teacher was with us. When we occupied our seats a few people, who were already there for breakfast, got interested in us and gathered around. We smiled, greeted, and started asking questions. After a while, hearing about the purpose of our march and visit to Moscow, an old man of about 75 got up impatiently and said : "All right comrades. You are going to Moscow now. I too have a business with you. You said you would try to meet Krushchov and speak against the bomb. That's fine; we don't want any bomb; we know Communism can bring us more happiness than any other system. So why should we keep bombs ? It is to keep the Germans and Yankees out. You don't know what miseries they brought upon us. But I request you to ask Krushchov why he had removed Stalin from the museum. Krushchov perhaps doesn't know much

about Stalin's deeds. I was an eye-witness to a scene when Stalin had to run away more than 70 miles in a single night, through mountains and jungles, in order to escape the Tzarist Police. Like that there are many instances. I want to ask Krushchov myself; but I won't get an opportunity".

One more round of wine and tea went around the table. We proposed a toast with milk (they all laughed when we said it was 'white wine 'for us) to the ladies who had cooked excellent delicious. It was at the time that three strangers entered the room. They introduced themselves and joined the party.

A tall, stout, pleasant gentleman stood up with the first glass of wine and smiled at us gently. "Dear comrades from India", he said, "I have just arrived from Moscow and I have the honour of conveying to you all the best wishes from the Central Peace Committee, which is anxiously waiting to see you in Moscow. Your coming to our country and marching for peace and disarmament has been of great inspiration and strength to all of us. I have come here to see personally how everything is with you, and if you are in any inconvenience. I'm happy to see you assimilated in the ways and customs of the Soviet life. You are one with all of all us", thus concluding Comrade Alexander Ivanovich Palladin, drank to our health. We shook hands with him and returned the toast. Our anxiety was to know how was Moscow, what were the climatic conditions and what he thought of our further journey ahead. Comrade Palladin (hereafter I would call him Father Palladin, for he accepted us as his sons in course of time) slowly explained to us the purpose of his sudden dash to the South. Everybody was worried about our possible deterioration of health after we crossed over the Black Sea region. "Therefore some solution must be found.

However, you are reaching Sukhumi tomorrow and then we shall discuss in detail", he said in conclusion. As the hours slowly shrunk, some of our comrades sank in drinks, the rest of us retired and Palladin and his friends went back to Sukhumi.

Next morning the 15 year old daughter of the family called me to her study and wanted me to select any one of her large collection of literacy masterpieces as a present.

"You must select it for me", I said. "All right I'm sure you will like this" she said handing to me a wonderful book of Rustaveli named, The Knight in the Tiger's Skin "Do you play piano ?", pointing to the big piano in the corner I enquired. "Yes I do. I will play for you next time when you come here. You must come", she invited.

The beautiful city of Sukhumi lay under a bright sun, fondled by the gentle waves of the sea as we were greeted by a large crowd in the afternoon after walking 13 miles. Father Palladin had arranged our stay in the Intourist Hotel, facing the sea. The whole atmosphere resembled the Marine Drive of Bombay. In the evening we all settled down for a discussion.

"So you had a nice walk today too", Palladin said. He regretted the beginnings of his old age. "Otherwise I too could have joined your walk. That's the best way to see and study a country". he admitted. "We have been getting some news about you now and then. We heard of the enthusiastic welcome you got everywhere. I'm happy to hear that you have had an excellent trip so far". Though father Palladin spoke English nicely, there was an interpreter also. Slowly

he unfolded the mission he carried up his sleeves from the Central Peace Committee, Moscow, "You see, the Peace Committee and the Indian Embassy have been extremely concerned about your trip through the Central part of the Soviet Union, because that area is already under a heavy snow-fall. Moreover, we feel that you are losing a lot of time marching like this. At this rate you will reach Moscow after two months. That too would be impossible. You may have to discontinue the walk and stay somewhere around this area till the end of March. Considering all these I would request you to go to Moscow straight away and spend the severe part of the winter there and then start your onward march."

We expressed our sincere gratitude for all that the Peace Committee had been doing and their concern for our health. But we could not come to any immediate decision with regard to his suggestion. "Naturally, one can't expect to crusade through the unsurmountable snow and frost. Anyway, at present we don't have to worry about it. When we actually face the situation, we shall think of what is to be done", we replied.

"Kanyeshna (of course)", Mr. Palladin agreed. "But the trouble is, once you are away from the Black Sea, any time you may expect unforeseen difficulties and then suddenly if you need any conveyance to fly or so, it may not be available. Therefore I am warning you. At least for the next week no trouble. You go ahead and see by the time you reach Sochi how the climate tells on you. I am prepared to wait and watch, instead of rushing back to Moscow. After all, both the governments and the Peace Committee will enquire about you. I may have to give a report".

After a long discussion we decided that if we found it necessary to discontinue the march we would do so after Sochi. There was no other way except surrendering to the fury of nature, Father Palladin stayed on and we continued from Sukhumi.

The next 104 miles of march from Sukhumi to Sochi will ever remain in our memory. It took six days. Many people from different villages accompanied us. Sometimes a whole barch of school children would follow. Sometimes the villagers would wait for hours on the road. Presents of books and badges and ties were heaped on us. All these six nights we spent in sanatoria.

Any visitor from a foreign country who comes to the Soviet Union, would like to spend a few months, at least a few days, in the fantastic sanatoria on the Black Sea coast. There are more than 500 sanatoria in the U. S. S. R., out of which most of them are in the South. In Sochi city alone there are more than 100 sanatoria and health resorts and rest homes. Total accommodation in Sochi is 25,000 beds.

A member of the local Peace Committee took us around some of the sanatoria and explained : "Last year a total of 7 million people had rest and treatment in the sanatoria all over the country. Out of them 4 million had completely free treatment and care. Others had to pay 30% of the total expenses. All sanatoria are managed by the Trade Union Council. Every year thousands of workers get one month's leave with full pay and all other expenses paid (like free air-travel etc.) so that they could come and live in these sanatoria and recuperate their health. For children there is special care and arrangement. Once

upon a time all these mansions were the private property of feudal lords and Tzars and Counts. But today everything is the property of the people. Before the revolution there was one doctor for 5,000 people, but today I for every 500.”

A good rest at Sochi for a couple of days was a nice thing. The Sochi Peace Committee played host of us. Also we wanted to discuss with the local people about the possibilities of encountering the severe winter. Their opinion was not encouraging. “You may be able to march for a few days more and then if you land in difficulty you may have to come back all the way to Sochi even to board an aeroplane. Once the mountain range is over, the northern blizzard will hit you and that would be the end of your walk. So you can try for a few days more”. We had experienced such blizzards for two three days at a high altitude in between Armenia and Georgia. In a few minutes a snow-storm had made us blind. “It is better to avoid that”, we thought. But to reach Moscow by air was unimaginable !

Father Palladin came from Sukhumi. We had a discussion with him. He said, “Yes, to reach Moscow by air is also not good, I agree. For that I would suggest one thing. You may cover the most dangerous area by air and land at an airport which is about 350 miles behind Moscow. From there again you can continue your walk, so that you will be able to reach Moscow without trouble, for that area is less affected by the blizzards.” That was a reasonable proposition and finally we struck a deal and resolved to fly to Voronezh the following day, i.e., the 13th February 1963.

After meeting the students in the school, the

members of the Peace Committee, Cultural Society etc., for some time we turned to be /cal tourists. Had a sight seeing trip around Sochi, an evening stroll at the sea shore, a visit to the theatre and so on. The most memorable time we spent was in the Ostrovskoi Museum. Nickolayev Ostrovskoi was a historic fire-brand revolutionary whose name is a fountain of inspiration to the Soviet youth. Born in 1904 he lived only 32 years. His wonderful deeds are symbolized in this museum dedicated to his memory. His famous novel, How the Steel Was Tempered, has been translated into many important languages of the world. I was surprised to see a copy of the Bengali translation too. His life was completely dedicated for Peace and Socialism. “An egoist can be killed; but a servant of society can never be killed; for if he is to be killed all the surroundings must be first destroyed”, to read these lines of his was a thrill to me. Yes, he is not dead; he lives for ever, as long as the Soviet Union and Socialism live in this world, his name is destined to live.

February 13.

Under the Kremlin Star

In fact now, when I scribble my diary, it is 14th of February, It is exactly 2 a.m. This room is spacious, comfortable, luxurious, air-conditioned. Went to bed at 1 a.m.; but not a wink of sleep. From the thick huge window pane when I look deep down into the street no movement of life is seen. Granite-like frost is on the road. Occasionally a taxi struggles to glide through the slippery surface. Some fail, some succeed. All do not care to provide the essential iron-chain cover to the wheels. What a terrible blow of nature on the Moscowites ! They have invented an endless number

of essentials to get on. A great contrast between Bangalore and Moscow !

It is quite an inevitable natural consequence that science and technology germinated in the soil of Europe. Man is essentially a creature of circumstances and therefore, he has to make and mould his life accordingly. Very often I wonder, how and why did the European countries turn to be imperialists and colonialists ? Why was it that the soil of Europe had to be a battlefield, stained with human blood for ever. Now when I am experiencing the tortures of nature, I am able to analyze and understand the reason and answer to the above questions.

When one's blood freezes, flesh burns to be senseless, bones endure the piercing cold, naturally the first thing one craves for is a warm place to curl in, warm garments to wrap with and healthy food to sustain by. All these will be available when labour is put into productive use. That leads to over-work during half the year. When that becomes insufficient naturally one has to hunt for the necessities of life from external sources. Improvement of tools and materials which can be applied for increasing production becomes necessary. Thus people started seeking their necessities from abroad which led them far and wide over the mountains and oceans and new colonies came into existence. The new corners ruthlessly plundered the new places they discovered, while the inhabitants there were getting on in contentment, but in slumber and sloth. The very fact that the people of Asia and Africa did not have to struggle much against nature, made them more lazy and paved the way for the struggling Europeans to establish their empire over them. At the same time, at home in Europe new inventions took place. Now

it was the natural result that only a few enterprising members of the society could gain most of the fruits of extractions from the external world as well as from the internal techno-scientific grains. Characteristic to every living creature, those men who wielded the power to dominate the two resources which fulfilled the satisfaction of material necessities, wanted to cling on to the bulk of the gain for themselves giving only a very little share to the rest of the community. Again an inevitable result is conflict between the two sections of the society. Then the idea of God and religion had to be moulded in such a way that they always gave protection to the privileged section. All these things involved the people of Europe in perpetual conflict and bloodshed down the centuries. A new way had to be found out. Peace and tranquility had to be established. Man was not destined to fight like beasts. Thinkers cracked their brains. At last one of the greatest of wise men was able to expose the simple truth in the plainest language to the toiling and suffering millions in the world. They could quickly grasp the inherent meaning of the words uttered by Karl Marx. They broke their chains of endurance and opened a new chapter in human history which laid the foundation for the achievement of equality and fraternity for all. As a mark to symbolize the inauguration of that historic chapter, for posterity, the brilliant red star on the top of the Kremlin Tower stands solitary, high up in the sky !

It radiates a ray of hope and energy into the minds of millions. The silent Mausoleum of the great Lenin is covered by snow. The red square is calm and empty. There are still vibrations of life in this magnificent Hotel Budapest. Satish is fast asleep ! I am yet struggling for it.

It was only ten hours ago that we arrived. Thought of one place, but reached another. We had taken off for Voronesh, but landed in Moscow ! Everything from morning 8 till now flashed like a dream ! In between a thousand miles ! Breakfast at Sochi and dinner near Kremlin. Unexpected and unpredicted.

It was 8-30 a.m. when Comrade Palladin knocked at our door in Sochi Hotel to inform us : “I have called Voronesh. The members of the Peace Committee would meet us at the airport. We have to leave at 11. Our flight is exactly at 12.” Then all of us had our breakfast and chat with the members who had assembled. Many of the hotel staff had been very friendly with us. “You don’t have any holidays. Why don’t you stay here for some more days ?”, asked a young lady who used to take sisterly care of us.

Thirty kilometers away when we reached the airport, it was already 5 minutes late and the plane was on the runway. We were rushed into the aircraft and it moved.

Carrying 90 passengers the Aeroflot jet roared into the infinitude over the Black Sea. For some time we couldn’t see anything but a smooth bed of cloud below and the blue sky above. Floating at an altitude of 7000 meters we could see the earth like a thick, endless white sheet on which occasionally sun rays played. An hour and a half passed : we were nearing Voronesh. Suddenly an announcement was brought by the hostess : “Very bad weather; no landing at Voronesh; we’re straight flying to Moscow”.

Nothing seemed alive in the vicinity of Moscow as we

dashed over the suburbs to a soft halt in a vast field of snow, snow and snow alone. There were many planes lying buried all around. All the passengers got down. A special wagon was brought to the gangway and we got into that, drove away into the terminal building. Again in a large air-conditioned car we planted ourselves to drive through the dead frosty road over 25 miles. As we entered the large comfortable reception room of the Hotel Budapest, people stared at us, for we had two nice bouquets of Georgian flowers, for the sight of which the Moscovites craved during this period of the year.

One month in Moscow.

On the 14th morning when the sun secretly peeped through the window it was 9 O’clock and we lay deep under our quilts, relaxed and thoughtful, like a ship on shore after a wreck in the mid-ocean. The telephone range.

“All the members of the Peace Committee would be very happy to meet you at 11 O’clock. Someone will come there to fetch you”. Within half an hour Father Palladin and another handsome young man knocked at our door.

“Dobra utra” (good morning), had a nice sleep ?”, Father Palladin enquired with a happy smile, rubbing his hands and taking off the heavy coat.

“Dobra utra, Kharoshi net spali. Sadete pashalsta” (Didn’t sleep well. Please take your seat), we replied and they occupied the chairs.

"This is Comrade Slava. We have requested him to help you. He knows excellent English. He will be with you whenever and wherever you need. Don't hesitate to tell him anything you need at any time", Palladin said.

"That's very kind of you. Thank you very much."

All of us went to have our breakfast. A student of the Institute of Foreign Languages, Slava became a happy, jolly nice company for us within a few minutes. English and Chinese are the two languages he wanted to be thorough in. "I had a few occasions to interpret for some Indian visitors earlier", Slava said. "I want to learn Hindi too. Mei tumse pyar kartha hum", We laughed and laughed.

"Who taught these words ?", we asked.

"A girl who visited Moscow last year"

"All right. When other girls from India come here, you greet them with these words".

Then we explained the joke to Father Palladin. "My son also wants to learn Hindi and visit India", he said. "That's fine, let him remain there for ever. We shall try to find out a beautiful partner for him".

"Then you stay over here. Moscow won't leave you so quickly".

"Is it so ? I remember, the other day in Cestafoni (Georgia) what Liana said : `Menon, be careful Moscow girls wouldn't let you go".

"The trouble is, we like India very much, you know ?"

"S-a-t-i-s-h .." I put a long question to him. He drew a long sigh : "Yes, Menon, when we land in India let our friends bring three garlands to welcome us".

"Okay, let us go now". We got into the warm Chaika (car).

The long, interesting and eductive discussion with the Peace Committee lasted for three hours. Comrade Tikhonov, a noted poet and a member of the Supreme Soviet and the Chairman of the Peace Committee, Corn. Kotov, the Secretary General, Corn. Boris Ivanovich and Corn. Bekov are some of the most unforgettable persons who took every care in all respects. They explained to us the working of the Peace Committee and all the earnest attempt they were doing in order to promote peace and understanding between peoples of the world.

In the Soviet Union every Republic has its own regional Peace Committee which again is decentralized into District and City Peace Committees. The main activity of the Peace Committees is to organise meetings, lectures, seminars, group discussions etc. in order to exchange ideas and opinions on various national and international issues and work out possible solutions to the problems. On the educational level excellent films exposing the grave dangers of wars and bombs are being exhibited all over the country. Except the direct action projects that are quite common in the Western Peace Movements, the Soviet Peace Committee does every other kind of propaganda and action for Peace. "After all there is no need for citizens to break the peaceful and normal functioning of a society and take

out processions and go on strikes, to demand of the government to do good things which will bring peace and prosperity. So we want people to express their feelings and opinions through their representatives in the parliament” one of them explained. That is the democratic way in which they conduct their affairs. The Soviet Peace Committee organise many national and world peace conferences every now and then.

Swan Lake ballet.

Maya Plisetskaya and her Swan Lake Ballet are the most famous all over the world among ballet dances. It was our good fortune that on the first day itself we could see that in the gigantic Kremlin Theatre (The Kremlin Palace of Congress) in the distinguished presence of Prime Minister Krushchov and the Prince of Laos among the 6,000 audience. It was specially arranged in honour of the distinguished foreign visitors. Every now and then it was interesting to note that the jolly-good-looking Premier clapped his hands admiring the wonderful performance.

Shopping in the Goom

“Coming from a warm country, you will fall ill if you get out into the 40 degrees moroz (ice) without some more warm clothing”, Father Palladin came and said next morning. “Let us go for a shopping”.

A wonderful shopping spree in the empire of a Goom (the State Department Store) is an interesting experience indeed. One can walk around the huge building through innumerable halls and rooms and buy most of the things one needs for ones day-to-day life. For each article there is a special place and

everything is at a fixed price. Two overcoats, two nice trousers and handgloves were bought, costing about 150 roubles. “Now you can walk along wherever you want”, one of our companions commented as we put on the over-coat weighing more than ten pounds !

Off to the Yasnaya Polyana

A passion had arisen in me in the year 1958 when, for the first time, I read a few immortal lines written by that immortal sage of the Yasnaya Polyana, that one day I must go and see that very hermitage from where he had bidden farewell to his dearest and nearest ones and to the whole world and plunged into the dead dark silent infinitude of night. In his last letter he wrote to dear Sonya :

“I have long been troubled by the inconsistency between my life and my convictions. I could not make you change your way of life and habits in which I had trained you, and I have now determined on what I have long wanted to-do to go away. I long with my whole soul for peace, solitude, and if not for complete harmony, at least to avoid glaring discord between my life and my conviction and conscience.

“That I have gone away from you does not mean that I am displeased with you. I know that you could not literally see and feel as I do, and therefore, could not and cannot change your life and make sacrifices for what you do not recognize. And therefore, I do not blame you, but on the contrary remember with love and gratitude the 35 long years of our life together, especially the first half of it when, with the motherly self-devotion, which is part of your nature, you so earnestly and unflinchingly carried out what you

considered your duty.

“I cannot think that I am to blame, for I know I have changed not for my own sake or other people’s, but because I could do no other. I cannot blame you either for not following me, but shall think of you with love, and thank you for what you have given me. Farewell, dear Sonya, Yours loving Leo Tolstoy.”

Therefore, within a couple of days of our arrival in Moscow I told the Peace Committee : “We have got one intense desire and that is to visit Yasnaya Polyana.”

“That’s not a problem at all, provided the road will not give us much trouble”, replied Father Palladin and he asked us to be ready on the 17th morning.

When the huge city of Moscow was slowly up from its white shivering gloomy slumber, the warm and comfortable Volga wound its way through the slippery boulevards for a 150 mile journey to the South. The driver was a very interesting person who wanted to know about the driver’s life in India.

“Is this the best car in the Soviet Union ?”, we asked him.

“No we have Zeem, the best and largest. Then there is Chaika the second and Volga is the third. Moscovich is the small, popular family-car.”

“Are cars in great demand ?”

“Yes, the demand is great, but the supply is less. First of all we don’t produce too many cars. We give preference to other consumer goods. In our society

doctors have the first preference to get a car, because it is necessary for them. Just because you have money on hand, you can’t get a car easily.”

At 11 O’clock we reached the gates of the huge Yasnaya Polyana Estate of 384 hectares. The whole village and the estate and the roads lay deep in four feet snow and the tall trees stood leafless and silent. Through the main gate one goes up the snow about 500 meters to reach a big building, the ancestral residence of the Tolstoys, which constitutes the literary museum at present. More than 4,000 volumes of most of the world’s top ranking literary pieces were Tolstoy’s collection. In front of the museum there exists the ancient horse-shed. “Tolstoy, his father, brothers all were good riders”, said the guide who conducted as around. A hundred meters away on the right, stands a white double-storeyed building in which Tolstoy and his family lived. “Right in front of this house there was another house in which he was born, but now it has only an historic importance”, said our guide. The story goes like this :

“While serving under the Tzarist military, Leo was sent to the Caucasus where he spent some years. The most wretched and miserable life the soldiers had to lead inside the barracks made the young Tolstoy sad and rebellious against the whole system and the authorities. Then he wrote to his brother at home and asked to sell away the huge house and send the money to him so that he could start printing a magazine for the soldiers. He didn’t have any money on hand so he needed finance. In the meantime he started feeling the injustice involved in his being a rich son of a rich father. His loving and obedient brother did as his brother wished,”

Several years later Tolstoy wrote : “A government is the most dangerous organization possible, especially when it is entrusted with military power. To deliver men from the terrible and ever increasing evils of armaments and wars, we want neither congresses nor conferences nor treaties nor courts of arbitration, but the destruction of those instruments of violence which are called Governments and from which humanity’s greatest evils flow”

Pointing to an old tree standing leaflessly the guide told us : “This is called the poor man’s tree. Oh ! What a wonderful sight it was to see every morning the poor workers and peasants gathering under this tree to see their beloved teacher and leader, to chat with him and to receive some money from him ! Every toiling person in this country knew that Leo was his own companion who shared all his pains and sorrows and drew inspiration to give life and beauty to his literary masterpieces”.

Now I would like to take the reader to every nook and corner of Tolstoy’s home in which he spent 35 years as a writer. The first room you enter is full of bookshelves. The stairs on the left lead to a large drawing cum-dining room of the family. Everything in the room is preserved as it was in 1910 when Tolstoy left his home for ever. As you enter, there can be seen two big pianos on either side. A big chair and a small pillow are still there. The whole family loved music. In the middle of the room there is a dining table on which a big samovar, several plates of German and French design, silver spoons and forks and a set of wooden plate, fork and spoon co-exist, which explains the simple truth of his life. At the left-corner a round table

with chairs around gives a feeling that the master of the house has just gone out with his distinguished visitors who had occupied these chairs a few minutes ago. There are a few excellent portraits hanging on the wall. “His grand parents himself, wife and two elder daughters”, explained our guide.

The next small room on the left was meant for receiving his most intimate friends. From there you enter the most fascinating place the study. “Just imagine for a moment”, I wrote to my intimate friend far away in India, “that you are standing right in front of this wooden table of 4’ by 3’ which stood the pains and pangs of the glorious birth of literary gems the War and Peace, Anna Karenina, Haji Murad etc. ! On the very table I am noting my diary. An indescribable current of experience is passing through my veins. Just let’s have a glance around. There is a baby chair (I wonder how a big man must have been contained in such a small chair !) on which he used to sit to create his wonderful characters ! True, from comforts nothing of supreme value comes out. All the blissful results of creative talents emerge out of the abysmal depth of pain and pangs”. There are many portraits around this table. Henry George and Charles Dickens occupy prominence. Dickens’ David provided a lot of inspiration to Leo, it is said. There are three photographs of his brothers Dmitri, Nicholayev and Serigie. Nicholayev was his most beloved brother. Some papers, still bearing his handwriting, an ink-pot, blotter etc., are kept in tact.

Then you enter his bedroom. A simple bed on a wooden cot, a wash-stand with a couple of towels hanging on it, a bucket, a couple of iron balls he used for exercise, the horse-bridles and some other sport

articles all these give you an impression that the occupant has just gone into the garden. Gandhiji's hut in Sevagram comes to my mind.

Next one is his secretariate. Only in the last few years Tolstoy had a secretary, mainly to look after his correspondences. He used to get 25 to 30 letters everyday from all corners of the world, inspite of the strict censorship imposed by the authorities. It is calculated that he had received over 50,000 letters in his life, out of which over 10,000 he replied personally. His favourite daughter, Alexandra, did much of his secretariat work.

In the sixth room a heart-rending portrait would catch the instantaneous attention of anyone. The picture shows Yan Huse, a famous Chekoslovakian reformer, tightly tied to a post and he looks above into the eternity with a helpless but serene face. "Tolstoy used to consider himself as Yan Huse", remarked our companion, "and that's why he was so fond of this portrait".

Down the stairs, at one end lived Tolstoy's intimate physician friend, Dr. Makoviski, to whom Tolstoy had intimated his unbreakable decision to quit home never to return. "When the countess retired", writes Aylmer Maude, the best translator of Tolstoy's works, "he rose up, collected some manuscripts, took two changes of underclothing, and told his friend and follower, Dr. Makoviski, that he had decided to leave home at once. He bade good-bye to his daughter, Alexandra, promising to let her join him later then he walked towards the stables."

Then you can have a peep, into the calm, cool, cell-like apartment which was the family store-room. "He

converted this as his study from 1870 to 80, to have more peace and tranquility. Most of the work on War and Peace, Resurrection and Krutzer Sonata was done in this room", our guide said.

The next big room has an important characteristic of its own. From the beginning to end Anna Karenina, the most gripping tragic story, was given shape here. A plain white bed on a wooden cot reminds me of the unforgettable scene of that painfully charming Anna giving birth to that blissfully fatal child of Vronsky. As if Anna lay on this bed a few moments ago, with heavenly happiness and contentment.

From there let's walk onto the bed of snow outside and proceed through the narrow foot-path into the silent woods which Tolstoy loved all his life. A few hundred feet away you reach a place under a group of four or five tall trees where Leo and Nicholayev used to search for the green sticks and play with snow. The earthly existence of one of the greatest lovers of humanity lies buried at this very spot, measuring six feet long and one foot wide. Except a sort of green-winter-grass, crowned with spotless white snow, over that part of the raised earth, nothing else is there to tell the tragic end of a glorious simple man who craved for the inner truth and beauty and meaning of life. "No other memorial for me", he had ordered and requested to be laid to rest by the side of his brother, at the same spot, "where both of us searched for the green sticks in our childhood".

From there when you retreat with a dropping head and heavy heart, those weak, sorrowful, final words he uttered from his death bed, in the home of the Station Master of Astapovo Station, 50 miles South-East of Yasnaya, suffering from a fever of 104 degrees,

would be vibrating in the silent chill atmosphere :
“the peasants.....the peasants.....the peasants
....how they die”

Interviews and visits.

Our abrupt landing in Moscow was known to the world outside in a couple of days and enquiries started pouring in with speculations and doubts. Representatives of news agencies radio and television companies started calling in and inviting us for interviews. The Moscow Radio taped some of our impressions of the tour and offered some money. “We have decided not to accept any money. Thanks,” we said.

“But our regulations require that we must pay you remuneration.”

“All right, in that case please contribute this money to the Peace Committee which is doing everything for us”. That problem was solved.

One morning the representatives of the National Broadcasting Corporation of America wanted to take us around the city for a television news-reel so that, ‘before you reach the United States let our people know you had been to Moscow already’. A ten-minute programme on the open road near the Kremlin in the bitter cold wind had its charm when the interviewer asked : “What would you suggest for Mr. Salinger, the Press Secretary of President Kennedy, to reduce his weight ?”

“As soon as we reach New York we would invite him to join us to walk to Washington”.

“Kennedy would be very happy to welcome you. He likes this kind of thing”.

Another evening half a dozen correspondents from England invited us for a dinner and chat. “I don’t really believe that the U.S.S.R. ever wants co-existence with the Western system”, commented one. “The whole trouble is being created by the Soviet Union,” remarked another.

The students of the people’s Friendship University invited us for a lecture. Dedicated to the memory of Patrice Lumumba, this University offers all educational facilities to over, 2,000 students from 80 countries. Without any barriers and prejudices everyone is treated here.

Homage to the Father of the Nation

If Gandhiji is the Father of the Indian Nation, Lenin is the father of the Soviet Union. If Abraham Lincoln is the redeemer of Negro slaves, certainly Lenin is the liberator of the working people of the World.

On the 21st February at the stroke of 11-15 a.m. we stood by the side of the Mausoleum along with an endless line of people waiting for that auspicious moment. They came from the Caucasus and from the Urals; they came from Samarkhand and from Siberia; they spoke different languages; they held different beliefs; yet they all came, from dawn to dusk, from 1924 to this date. They all stood, whether in crushing cold or in sunny summer, till 1924 behind him with a single purpose to create a new human society and after 1924 beside him with a single-minded devotion

to get a glimpse of and pay homage to their departed leader.

Two soldiers, in attention, stood at the entrance. We stepped onto the red-marble. The beautiful black-marble walls shone mirror-like. Turning left and stepping down again you come across a glass case in the center surrounded with a railing around which the visitors moved in perfect silence and attention towards that serene face which lay in eternal peace and tranquility. Lenin lies in full suit, the fingers of one hand folded and of the other straight. His typical beard is a little grey. Everyone bowed at his feet and moved ahead.

Just outside the Musoleum there stood 4 or 5 granite statues of other important colleagues. At the end of the row just a plain marble slab is laid under which lay the body of the second man of the Soviet Union was who next to his master inside the glass case till a few years ago.

Responsibility foundation of progress

From the moment we reached Moscow, a permanent arrangement had been made by the Peace Committee for us, to travel anywhere in the city at any time without any worry or trouble. Get into a taxi, go wherever you want and give a signed coupon to the driver. He will get the amount of fare from the bank. Therefore, conveyance was never a problem for us. Yet sometimes we wanted to travel by the public transport like the trolley bus, electric tram and Metro. For the first time I saw passengers travelling in public buses without the help of a conductor ! The driver just drives the vehicle and everything else is to be looked

after by the passengers themselves. The systematic line of passengers would quickly get in from the rear entrance, deposit the necessary money in the box kept there, pick up their tickets, occupy their seats and get down as soon as they reach their destination. No one to ask, no one to check, no one to cheat ! Two-three times I experienced this and one day I asked a co-passenger : “Does anybody do some mischief or cheating ?”

“Oh, you can’t say human behaviour will be always right cent per cent. Occasionally some irresponsible fellow does some mistake. That will be found out in occasional checking conducted by the officials,” he said.

“In that case what will you do with him ?”

“He will be publicly criticised for his lack of public responsibility. The co-passengers will join the authorities and thus he will be taught that his part is equally important in running the transport. Sometime penalty also will be imposed upon him. In fact, when the conductorless system was introduced a few years ago, we had a greater number of cheats. But the more the people realize that it is their own property the better the situation. If they don’t feel responsible for the running of it, the whole country will come to ruin and thereby the socialist construction will not be possible. If every citizen is educated that in the socialist society it is the people’s labour and money that create all these means for common good, naturally he will not cheat. That’s the self-responsibility we want to create on which the country depends. We have a plan that within a few years public transport will be completely free of cost to every Soviet citizen.”

“I must choose a different path”

A must inside the Kremlin would be a fascinating thrill to any student of history. “Kremlin is no more a Palace of the Tzars, today it is a Palace for the Soviet people. As soon as he came to power, Krushchov opened the Kremlin gates for the people. The whole country was delighted and thousands of visitors. poured into the Kremlin everyday.” said Father Palladin taking us around the historic building.

We were taken to the back door entrance to the Kremlin Cathedral. “Here through this door Ivan the Terrible used to enter slowly and silently and stand in the small room in order to hear the sermon of the priest. Though he was the mighty Tzar who ruled the country, he was not permitted to enter the congregation because of his ‘crime’ of marrying seven times’, explained Palladin.

The most valuable part of the Kremlin that I saw was the apartment and office of Lenin. The whole appearance of his living quarters showed his simplicity. Lenin used a cane chair in his study, while for his visitors four comfortable cushioned chairs were provided. A marble monkey sat on a couple of books with a human skull in its hands symbolizing Darwin’s theory of evolution. “It says, ‘I am like man’” said our guide. Tolstoy and Chekov were Lenin’s favourite authors and innumerable books on law, philosophy and economics could be seen nicely arranged in shelves all around. Pointing to a large map of the country hanging on the wall, our guide explained : “Lenin studied every detail of the country from this map and gave directions about various

economic plans. After the revolution H.G. Wells called on Lenin and was astonished to see Lenin’s famous plan of electrifying the whole country. ‘This is an utopia from the Kremlin’,-Wells had commented and had made fun of Lenin. The nation was in chaos and turmoil, misery and poverty. But Lenin had foreseen that electrification was the foundation upon which a huge industrial nation could be constructed. And look today, wherever you walk along the country, you will realize it’, he concluded. “That’s right, we’re noticing that”, we replied.

A very significant painting in the Lenin Museum gripped my imagination. On the large canvas the young Vladimir Lenin stood with a brooding, sorrowful face and took an oath : “I must choose a different path”. His mother sat on the chair beside weeping and sobbing. They had just received the news that Lenin’s elder brother was shot dead by the Tzarist authorities because he had made a plot to kill the Tzar. Sorrow and revenge did not blind the blooming revolutionary to forget his reason and sense of humanity. Lenin did not like terrorist activities. Here was a principle based upon reason and justice, expounded by Marx and Engels, holdings to which, Lenin was sure, he could break the social and economic bondage of the struggling section of humanity, and turn the tide of history.

A meeting with Spiridonov

Moscow the first destination of our Peace March. After all, why did we come to Moscow ? Not to see the huge buildings and big streets; but primarily to meet Premier Krushchov or somebody highly responsible on behalf of the whole country and to ask a direct

question. Would the Soviet Union take unilateral steps to discontinue the nuclear tests and ease tension ? As soon as we entered the country we had written to the Prime Minister about our march and intention to see him at Moscow, Again on arrival, we wrote another letter and requested the Peace Committee to make an approach which they readily agreed, and we waited with patience and hope.

On the 26th of February we were informed by the Peace Committee that the Prime Minister was extremely busy with state affairs and visits of some other dignitaries and therefore the Chairman of the Union of Soviet of the supreme Soviet, Mr. I.V. Spiridonov, had been deputed to receive us and discuss with us on behalf of Krushchov and the Government.

The next day at 11 O'clock a black Volga glided through the slippery quadrangle inside the Kremlin carrying us along with Com. Kotov, Corn. Palladin and Com. Ivanovich. No one walked on the streets ! Everyone looked as if they were running. There was knee-deep snow on the roads and the cold was terrible. Huge machines one after the other roared and swept every road now and then; otherwise movement of any type in Russian streets would be an impossibility. Wearing big valankies (warm snow-boots reaching upth the knee), heavy big overcoats, fur-caps and ear covers men and women rushed up and down like steam-engines emitting puffs of steam from mouth and nostrils and thrusting their hands into the coat-pockets or the arm-pits of one another. To walk in doubles, clinging to one another as much as possible seemed to be a natural, normal necessity.

As the doors opened into a large chamber in the

Supreme Soviet building, an impressive figure with light grey hair, sharp eyes and attractive smile, came forward with an extended hand to greet us : "Privet, privet" (congratulations, welcome.) "Zdrastuite", we responded in Russian.

"Da, vi gavarete pa ruski ? (Yes, you speak Russian ?)" "Ochen zal, ne magu kharoshi. (Sorry, can't speak well)" "Nichivo, tolke dwa metsyat vi sdez. Eta kharosho. (Don't worry, you are here only two months. This is good)".

In the meantime he led us to the green-baize-covered oval table and lemon tea was brought. Setting for our discussion, he enquired : "How can you manage with the climate ?"

"Well, so far we have managed. Here our comrades are taking great care of us".

"I like the winter in India. You don't have snow".

"Right. So now we are thrilled to walk in the snow here".

"Okay, please tell me how was your march all throughout ?"

We explained in short about the whole project and he commented : "Indeed, it is a grand project. In fact ordinary people can do many things when there is dedication and sincerity". Mr. Ivanovich interpreted our conversation.

"After India you have travelled in other countries. How is the Peace Movement there ? Spiridonov was

eager to know.

“First of all in those countries there is no organised peace movement, as in India, the Soviet Union and other Western countries. Secondly the problems of those countries are quite different from those of the West. Thirdly, political and social awakening is comparatively less in those countries. But we could see one thing among the common people. They are very much concerned about world peace. Bertrand Russell commands great respect among the people. The people realize the dangers of bombs and therefore appreciate the peace movements abroad.

We could also notice a sort of contempt in the minds of the intelligentsia against the military pacts to which their countries are parties”.

Hearing this Mr. Spiridonov said : “It is a good sign that the people of these countries have started thinking. It is necessary for the creation of a war-less world and peaceful social reconstruction. Our country, our people, know with their own experience, the horrors of war. The painful consequence of wars, we have had enough. Perhaps you can’t find a single family which has not endured some loss or pain. Therefore, any propaganda, writing, films etc. in support of war is legally prohibited in the Soviet Union”.

“We have been finding it during our past two months. People hate war and they want permanent peace; and the speeches of Government leaders too give that impression. But, the political reality says something else. While too much of talk is going on, very little is done in conformity with their talks. Seeing the Soviet Society and experiencing its life, we are pained to see that your country should have such a mighty army

and the bombs. We would be extremely happy to see the Soviet Union took some unilateral steps”.

After a few minutes’ silence Mr. Spiridonov replied : “The question is of a very real nature. There is an allegation, widespread all over the world, that we are not sincere in our words and deeds. We have indeed taken some unilateral steps to reduce tension; but to undertake a complete unilateral disarmament is too much a price for a people who have a very painful history behind. You can speak of unilateralism because you have not yet faced certain realities that we have faced. The U.S.S.R. cannot take any such risks. Suppose we disarm unilaterally and the opposite party, which does not tolerate our system and who are bent upon crushing the socialist construction, poses some threat to us, what will happen ? The whole country will blame the leaders. Who will take that responsibility ?”

“We understand your arguments”, we replied, “but in the West also their leaders are saying the same thing. Kennedy says that America is always for peace and disarmament. Our former President, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, said recently that India must disarm unilaterally. Similarly all over the world, all politicians say and want the same thing. Now where does the hurdle lie ? Who would start ? Whose mistake is this ? Will you explain, please”. The table was warming up. Mr. Spiridonov was quietly willing to answer any question; so we didn’t want to leave the work half done.

“After all why ? I agree, the common people want an answer from the politicians”, Mr. Spiridonov slowly but firmly answered. “You know that we are constructing

our society on the basis of a definite principle. In your country, you had a great man Gandhi. He gave a new principle for the country, for the humanity; he wanted to construct a new society on that basis, Similarly Marx and Lenin laid the foundation for a Communist society. The very fundamental principles of Communism preclude the necessity of a huge army and bombs. When the State itself will not remain in the ultimate victory of Communism, how can there be a huge army ? That means army and armament are contradictory to the very core of Communism; but still today we have it. Why ?

“First of all it will take at least another half a century for us to build up a real Communist Society. That too will be possible only when we are allowed to do things without disturbance. The plain fact is that in our economic set up there is not a single person to derive fantastic profits out of manufacture, stockpile and trade of armaments. It is quite contrary in the west. A bulk of the economic depends upon the continuous manufacture and marketing of deadly weapons. There a handful of people reap billions and billions of profit from the very arms which are only destructive to mankind. They control the government. Here the peasant knows that every kopek we spend on the weapons is going from his pocket and the moment complete disarmament takes place he can derive benefit out of it. As long as the vested interests exist behind the business of weapons, how do you expect them to vote for a complete disarmament ? Militarism is the very opposite to the concept of Communism. But today we are helpless; out of necessity and fear we have built up a huge machinery to defend the nation”.

Then Mr. Spiridonov referred about the Cuban crisis and said : “Many people have criticised us for our unilateral action; but we sincerely wanted to preserve peace in the world; therefore we were ready to face all ridicules”.

“For that most of the people in the world are praising the Soviet Union. That’s what we find everywhere and here from all quarters” we said.

Then we wanted to know of the Soviet attitude with regard to the Sino-India border conflict. Suddenly he remarked : “In fact, we never liked the whole thing about it and we never approve of any such action. After all, it is a border dispute; it can be and must be settled on the table. It is unfortunate that such an incident happened”.

“Can you please tell us what are the definite basic points on which the Soviet Union can come to an immediate agreement with the West ?”.

“Of course. We have put forward two definite basic points long ago and we still hold on to the same. (1) We are always ready for an immediate ban on the nuclear tests and an agreement on complete and general disarmament, (2) All the concerned powers must sit together and solve the Berlin and German problem once for all. I again want to assure you and request you to take these words anywhere you go and if you can succeed in bringing the western leaders around the table to come to an immediate agreement on these two points, we are ever ready to do so. This is a challenge. Go and try to convince the West”. The discussion lasted for an hour and a half.

Even though we had a nice discussion and understood the Soviet attitude, without having a word personally from Corn. Krushchov, how could we face the West hopefully ? Our success and approach in the West mostly depended upon our success in Moscow. It was not that our meeting with Krushchov would bring any dramatic result; but it was necessary so that we could go to his counterpart and demand of him a direct answer to our simple questions. Therefore, we told the Peace Committee that unless we met the premier we did not feel happy to leave Moscow. Again they approached the Prime Minister and days rolled by.

In a polling booth.

It was the day of general elections of the deputies to the Supreme Soviet. March 3rd, 1963. We did not have any other engagements. Rolling on the bed till ten or eleven had been a habit, since the days were drowsy, misty, snowy and chill. Five hundred meters away from the Hotel Budapest there was a polling booth. We walked into it at noon.

When elections are conducted in India, there is an indescribable and unbearable atmosphere in the country. Wastage of money, energy and human labour in order to 'capture' votes has been a historic tradition. Most of the people will be engaged in all sorts of cunning and crooked methods to fool the public with unreal promises and temptations. Thus ultimately the majority of the people who will be elected to the legislative bodies do not necessarily attain that position on the basis of their merit, capacity to serve the country or sacrifices for the society. Money and false propaganda play the most important role in India elections. What about here ? This was our curiosity.

First of all there was no crowd thronging around the polling booth to ditch a last minute 'canvassing' or pushing and pulling or head-breaking. Voters came and went endlessly doing their business quickly and most efficiently. As we walked in, the ladies (all the polling officers were ladies) stared at us. "Private, private", they greeted us and referred to our photographs they had seen in the newspaper a few days ago. One lady came forward and asked if we needed anything.

"We want to see how you people conduct the polling".

"Kanyeshna. Ochen rat; paedeom". (Of course; we are glad, come along.) The elegantly dressed fat lady took us from one end to the other, as a voter has to go, and explained the process. On a neatly printed card there were four names of candidates. "You are required to record your mark of consent against any one of these four persons and then deposit it in the ballot box", she explained inside the secret booth and we emerged out.

"We are interested to know how you chose your candidates. In India anyone can stand for election and contest".

"Yes, that is quite different from what we do here. We choose our candidates only on the basis of his or her ability and merit. Secondly, the voters' personal acquaintance and judgement would be the basic criterion for any candidate to contest the election. The candidate's record of public activities, party activities and selfless work are considered to be his merit on which the first selection will be made. To illustrate : Suppose in a workers' constituency we want to choose

a candidate. There can be four or five candidates to contest. First of all the entire voting population would meet together and call the aspiring candidates to appear in front of them. Since all of them are working and living in the same locality, they are already known to the voters. So it becomes easy to determine each one's personal merits. Then all other relevant records of their public service will be considered and then only their candidature will be endorsed by the voters' conference. Since there is only one party to which all these four or five candidates belong, the voters' choice at the polling booth will be only among persons. That means, in our general elections the first process of determining the candidates is very difficult. Once it is done, we can easily pick up the final single individual from the recommended names. In this way our legislators are bound to be more public conscious and service minded. We have got some other provisions too by which we can recall our deputies, if the electorate found them not fulfilling their duties in the legislatures concerned."

Universal, equal and direct suffrage with secret ballot forms the basic principle of their election system. All citizens above 18 years are entitled to vote. Any citizen on attaining 23 years of age is entitled to be elected to any organ of the State power. One deputy for every 300,000 population is elected to the Supreme Soviet.

In the University

Since the climate was severe, we never felt like going around often. Yet many important institutes and museums and cultural places we visited now and then. At least every alternate day we visited the Moscow State University and spent several hours

with the students discussing many a topic, in group meetings, at dinner table and at individual meetings. It has been an amazing and un-forgettable experience to us. In a magnificent mansion of 32 storeys, of a very large area, (I remember to have heard someone say that it takes 146 kilometers in length if one wants to have a visit to each and every room in the University campus) the Moscow University imparts education for 22,000 students at a time. Most of the students study, eat, drink, live and play in the same premises. Every student is provided with excellent hostel accommodation in the same quadrangle. There is co-education and anyone is free to move about anywhere any time of the day or night. There is only one restriction over the students that they must be back in the hostel by 11 p.m. at the latest unless there is special permission from the respective wardens. "After all why should there be any restriction over our movements when boys and girls have the same responsibility in building up the nation? We are responsible for what we do, So over private life is our own concern", replied a boy hearing about the restrictions and separation practised in Indian educational institutions. "That you impose several regulations and keep the boys and girls apart is by itself the greatest hindrance to the all round progress of your society", commented another sharp-eyed blonde. "What is the morality, so to say?" enquired another to which someone else retorted: "Damn the morality and moral priests. I care for my personal morality only. The social morality is merely a bunkum". Thus went on our conversation one night with a group of students. Several times we addressed the students and emphasized upon the necessity of mass action against the nuclear bombs and for unilateral disarmament. Heated discussion used to follow. Altogether, I was very happy to see

that all sorts of debates, discussions and campaigns are a regular feature among the Russian students as in any other university in other countries.

I could find a few unhappy students too. "I want to read some magazines and papers from India, America or England. But there is no possibility. This freedom you people have in India, I want it here", complained a student.

"We too must hear"

We too must hear all your stories, Tawarisch", requested the Director of Hotel Budapest coming to our table. "Of course. we shall be happy whenever you are ready", we replied. "Spaceba, dwa dnya pathom", (Thanks. after two days), he was happy.

A few days after our arrival at the Budapest we made friends with at least half a dozen of the hotel staff. A particular table was permanently reserved for us. It was necessary too. While in the Soviet villages, the jolly good farmers eat and drink for hours together in their homes or clubs, in the big cities the workers and other professionals spend their evenings in restaurants, cafes, clubs and theatres. We visited several cinemas and theaters and never could I find any of them without a packed audience. The Soviet people are mad after ballets and concerts.

I was amazed to see the same couple, or the same family or the same group of friends occupying a particular table every evening at least for 4 to 5 hours. By the time the lights go off in the middle part of the night, each of them would have had several glasses of drinks and many a round of dance. It is a custom in

Russia to send a bottle of drink from one table to the other if at the other there are strangers, foreigners or guests. Thus one night a couple from one table sent a big bottle of fine Georgian wine to the Indian guests. It was for "peace and friendship between our peoples". When our simple vegetarian bills used to go upto 12 roubles a day (Rs. 96/- for food alone), I wondered, how much they might be spending every day ! They do eat well and drink well to build the nation.

Most of the hotel staff are women. The same thing if you go to a post office, school, shop, railway station, hospital, public office etc. throughout the country. One day I asked a woman clerk : "Then what happens to all your men ?". Pat came the reply : "Do you think the simple jobs like pasting stamps, writing bills and accounts, issuing tickets, teaching and nursing etc. are to be done by men ? No no, they must work in the fields, in factories, power houses, mines and then only can we build our nation". Only very few men are found in light jobs.

The appointed day came. In the afternoon about a hundred members of the staff of the huge, luxurious, elegant Budapest our home in Moscow gathered in the dance hall to hear about our Peace March. That was a wonderful meeting indeed. "We are all with you in your fight for peace". They wished us all the best.

"Mass action" Krushchov's message

Our intense desire to meet the Prime Minister had been promptly conveyed to Corn. Krushchov and therefore every morning we woke up with expectations. More than three weeks had already flown by with lots of imprints on our mental screen. Painful February gave

place to hopeful March.

At last the 9th of March dawned with the usual gloom and frost. The Secretary of the Peace Committee brought news.

“Unfortunately the Prime Minister is so busy, that he has expressed his regret for not being able to meet you. I am sure, you will realize the situation. But Com. Krushchov has sent this valuable message to you.” Then Corn. Kotov handed over an excellent folder decorated with the famous picture of Picasso’s Dove. It contained :

9th March, 1963’

Dear Prabhakar Menon and Satish Kumar,

Thank you for your letter in which you speak of your efforts to give your services to the world movement for the fight for peace and disarmament. Such efforts can only be welcomed.

The success in the struggle for peace and disarmament depends on the general mass of people, on their active and decisive actions. Therefore, the more numerous and the more solid is the army of fighters for peace, the more hopeful will be the guarantee of peace and friendship between peoples.

I wish you successful completion of your mission in the defence of peace.

With regards,
Sd/- N. Krushchov

“Very good, thank you very much”, we said, and

" 9 " марта 1963 года

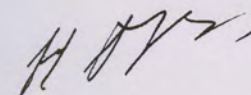
Уважаемые Прабхакор Менон и Сатиш Кумар!

Благодарю вас за присланные в мой адрес письма, в которых вы говорите о стремлении отдать свои силы всемирному движению борьбы за мир и разоружение. Такое стремление можно только приветствовать.

Успех в борьбе за мир и разоружение зависит от народных масс, от их активных и решительных действий. Поэтому чем многочисленнее и сплоченнее будет армия борцов за мир, тем надежнее будет обеспечен мир и дружба между народами.

Желаю вам успешного завершения вашего похода в защиту мира.

С уважением



Н.ХРУЩЕВ

thought for a while. "We hoped at least Krushchov would spare us a few minutes of his valuable time".

"However, Mr. Spiridonov discussed with you personally and now the Prime Minister is represented through this letter. What else can we do ?"

"You've done your best. Now let us think of the next programme". Though we were not satisfied at heart, we decided to go ahead with our further plans. "So we shall be starting from Moscow on the 14th as we had thought earlier", we said.

"On foot ?"

"Of course, no doubt about it".

"But we were under the impression that you would fly from here".

"Why ? Our destination is Washington D.C. and we mean to go on foot, unless there is some substantial achievement meanwhile which might prompt us to alter the decision".

"Well, as far as Moscow is concerned you've achieved your aim. Now, why should you waste your time ? Go to Berlin, Paris, Bonn etc. which are the real hot-beds of all political. headaches. You have to do a lot. We will lend you every kind of assistance. Moreover, you know, how horrible the climate still is ! Your physical well-being is our chief concern".

"We understand your point and appreciate your concern for our health. With regard to the climate, the severities will be only for a month more. We shall

be very careful and walk smaller distances. And we are quite confident that the people on the way will not let us fall ill or suffer in the frost. Now language poses no problem to us. Therefore, you don't have to worry about finding out some people to interpret for us on our route. Secondly, we haven't achieved anything here. Indeed we have a good response from the Government. That's all. So, as your premier himself has suggested in his message, let us meet more and more common people in the Soviet Union and try to organise such mass action as can be our real strength. It will be possible only if we walk". Thus we defended our case.

"Then the problem of the road. You don't know the condition of the Moscow-Warsaw Highway. It doesn't go through villages. It is specially built for the motorists who drive straight from Moscow to Berlin. Then you will be stranded on the road in snow and frost. Please understand us. Within a month you will die and we shall be held responsible."

"**Tha**n problem too is not important, because we shall be going through the old road which leads through the villages all along. And we assure you, that we won't hold you responsible for whatever happens to us." Thus the conversation lasted for some time. No agreement was arrived at. Our comrades took leave of us to meet again the next day.

"Illegal marchers"

We were caught up in between two extremes. On one side the Peace Committee's sincere concern about the possible deterioration of our health if we plunged into the road. They wanted to give us the maximum comfort, no doubt. But we had never been ill so far

and we were confident of the same, for walking was the best medicine. Secondly, in their view our march was not so 'useful' and it was a 'waste of time'. On the other side, though it was not at all a happy, pleasant, sweet thing to walk in the snow, the pain of which we didn't want to endure any more, our main concern was about the possible misunderstanding and wrong interpretation that would be created in the West if we agreed to fly. Whatever be the reality of reason, sincerity of purpose, the Western observers, or for that matter the vested interests all over the world, have developed the habit of condemning the Communists as conspirators. Whatever we did was on our own accord. Yet we anticipated all sorts of suspicious interpretation if we did not walk again from Moscow. Therefore, we drew a final line of argument and decidedly told our comrades that for the sake of their own better image in the West, for the sake Of avoiding the future suspicions and comments, we would suffer all physical pains and continue the walk. "Otherwise we shall be ready to fly to Washington D.C. rightaway if we really achieve our purpose, i.e. if we get a guarantee from the Prime Minister that this country will not conduct nuclear tests any more".

Things took an awkward turn, inspite of our firm stand. The moment we reached Moscow we had left our Passports with the hotel management for the legal formalities, and we never bothered about them. On the 13th, a day before our intended departure, Slava brought us the passports. To . our surprise a wrong entry was made in the passport that on the 15th of March we were leaving the Soviet Union. We had said that we would be leaving Moscow on the 15th, though we would start from the Red Square on the 14th itself. (It was on the 14th of March 1962 that the historic

Disarmament Conference commenced at Geneva; it was on the same day that we announced to the world about our intention of the Peace March; therefore in commemoration on that date we had planned to start from Moscow towards the West).

"Please see, a wrong entry has been made in the passport. Our visas stand cancelled from 15th onwards. But we may require at least a month and a half to enter Poland. Our original visa stands valid till the 1st of May and we hope we will reach the border by that day. Therefore, please inform the authorities and rectify the mistake", we telephoned and requested the Peace Committee. We were requested to meet them again. Then we made a frantic effort to approach the visa authorities. They said plainly : "On your behalf the hotel management and the Peace Committee have been approaching us for everything. Therefore, it is only on their advice that we can do anything."

That night I did not have much to write in my diary. Yet I scribbled. 'So now we have two alternatives; either to ignore the law or to submit to it. After all, man makes laws and regulations. For what ? Naturally, it must be for making every aspect of life and activity smooth, normal, reasonable and orderly so that the whole society can progress, avoiding conflicts and confusions. As long as one doesn't injure another's interest, or jeopardise a society's or country's welfare, one need not bother much about the laws. Since we are not doing anything against this country, let us submit to the command of our conscience and choose the first course of action. It is just our duty to inform the Peace Committee, as well as the Indian Embassy, and go ahead, come what may'.

The next morning we called at the office of the Peace Committee and conveyed our decision. Still they seemed to be thinking : “They won’t dare to face Nature’s fury and other consequences.”

“It is all for your sake and for the sake of the whole. Peace Movement that we suggested to you to fly to Warsaw. All the friends there are eagerly looking forward to receive you. We have also arranged for two seats on the next available plane. You may spend a few days in Warsaw too, so that slowly you can escape the winter and continue your fight for peace. We don’t really find any meaning in your obstinacy in favour of walking. But do whatever you wish; we are always ready to help you in every way we can”, they said in conclusion.

“We shall always be thankful to you for all that you’ve done so far and we sincerely believe that you are with us in our work. But on this one particular point we can’t alter our resolution. This will help both of us. We shall never hesitate to seek and help from you if necessary. We would like you to advise the authorities about our visas. And on our way we would like to spend a couple of days in each of the three big cities. On other days please don’t worry. We shall live with the loving people in the villages. We shall write occasionally about everything. Dosvidanya. (Good bye)”, we said.

“Why don’t you stay for the night at least ?” they asked. “No, we must leave this evening only.”

Returning to our hotel, we packed our things and bade farewell to our friends. “I don’t understand anything”, Slava was in a perplexed mood. He followed us in

order to render any possible help. “Where will you sleep ? You will freeze to death on the road itself” he said.

“No dear friend, never worry. Life is a struggle always. Let’s accept it and face it. We shall reach some place. Tomorrow morning onwards we shall be ‘illegal marchers’ in the Soviet Union.”

And all the three of us marched ahead.

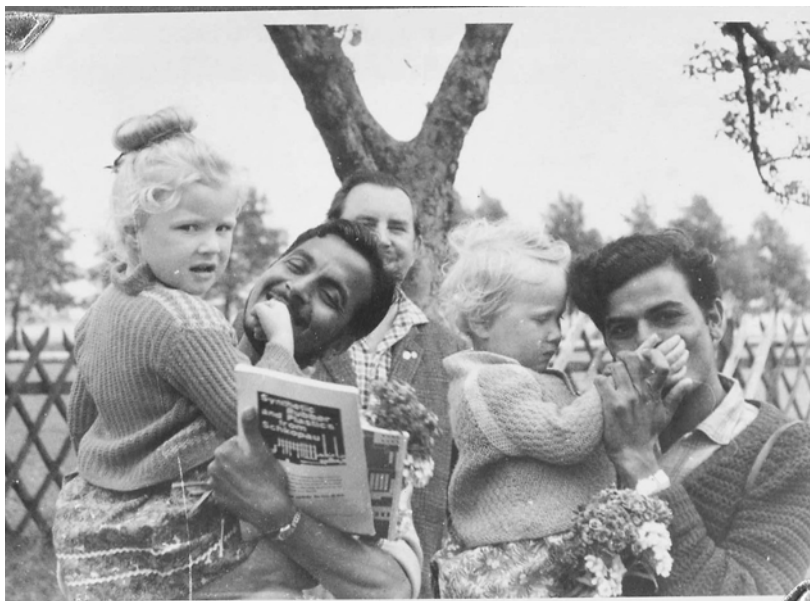








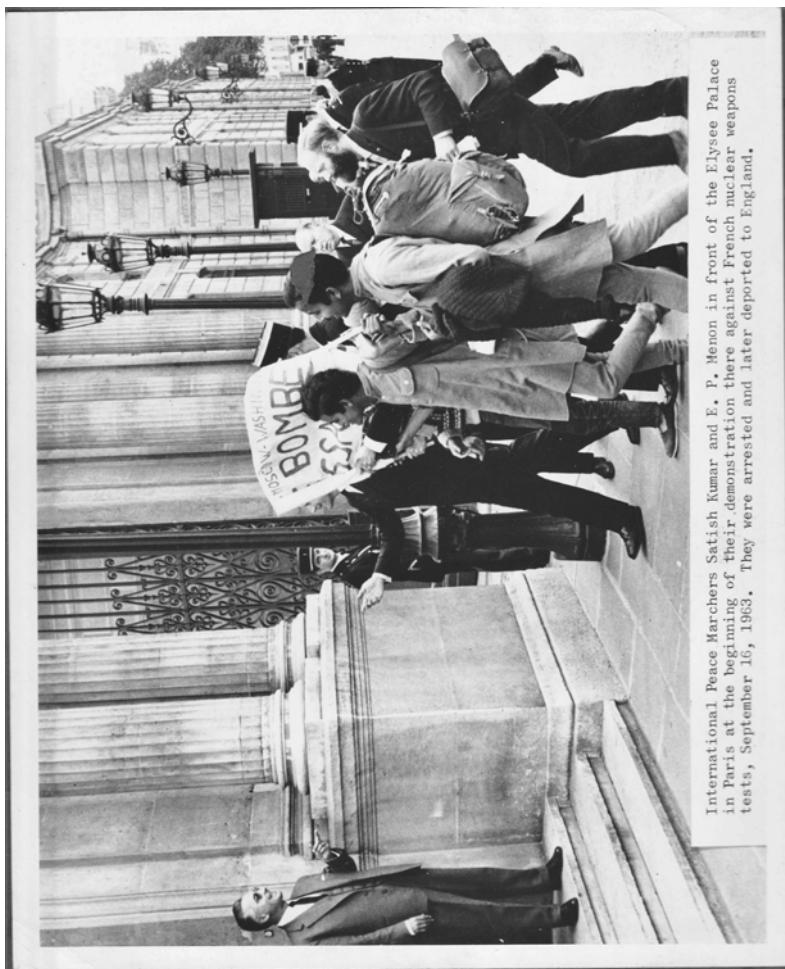




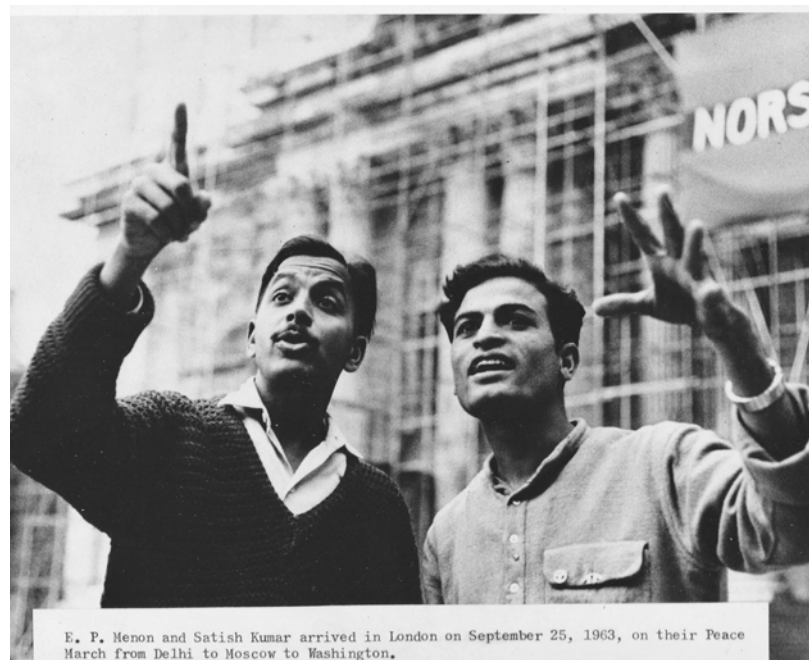








International Peace Marchers Satish Kumar and E. P. Menon in front of the Elysee Palace in Paris at the beginning of their demonstration there against French nuclear weapons tests, September 16, 1963. They were arrested and later deported to England.



E. P. Menon and Satish Kumar arrived in London on September 25, 1963, on their Peace March from Delhi to Moscow to Washington.













PART-III

8. Through Hell and Heaven
9. In Polland- The Pleasant
10. Germany- The Boling Pot
11. Twelve days in Belgium
12. In France- The delightful
13. At Home- in England
14. Across the Atlantic

Smolensk, April 1, 1963

Through hell and heaven.

So Luda, we are fools today! All fools day! The whole world makes a fool of itself. In reality it is so to great extent. But how many people take it seriously? Look at the politicians. Don't they live in a world of foolishness? They do say one thing; but can't remain without doing exactly the opposite ! What about the scientists? In their heart of hearts they don't have any intention of using their talent and energy for anything dangerous. They all sincerely wish that science, covering or encompassing the knowledge of the secrets of nature, must be revealed gradually and make human life happier. Yet you see a good deal of scientific knowledge is being utilized only for the very thing they all hate, i.e., armaments and instruments of war and destruction. "Are we to become mass murderers?" asked Prof. H. Levy years ago, in 1949, to his own scientific colleagues. He was commenting upon the book, SCIENCE FOR PEACE AND SOCIALISM, by J.D. Bernal and Maurice Comforth. He said: "The position of the scientific worker has become critical and acute in very recent years. A generation ago industrial firms has to be coaxed into employing them, by proving that it was profitable and worth while. World War II made the back-room boys into key men.....Today science has become associated in our mind with the atom bomb, poison gas and bacterial warfare. Even the blindest among us cannot escape the terrible conclusion that the role of scientists in the next war cannot be other than that of mass murderersWhy are we today being fitted for the role of mass murderers?" Thus we see there is no escape for them too from foolishness.

"We can't help it." they may say.

And I am also fooled today. You promised you would come to Smolensk, but never turned up. This is the world !

To look at such a world from this nice ancient city of the Soviet Union, after a crusade through hell and heaven for fifteen days, indeed is a thrill. All our days were hellish but the nights were heavenly. If the road through the rural parts presented a hell of frost and blizzards, the homes of people provided the warmth of heavenly hospitality. That's how we could reach here this afternoon, with doubts and confusion in our minds to find everything exactly the opposite, providing happiness and pleasant surprises.

It was around four in the afternoon when we entered the city through the filth and mud created by the melting snow. For fifteen days we had been walking through the villages, living with the heart and soul of the country, "illegally", as free as air. Therefore we doubted as to what would happen when we entered a big city. Several times it had occurred to us : "Why should we not go to a police station and tell them that our passports don't carry a valid visas", "No, not necessary. Moscow knows everything. They would have informed everything," thus consolation came from within. In fact sometimes we used to meet some militia men on the road or in a village, but no one ever bothered to enquire about formalities and legalities. However, in this city we must have at least a few days rest, we thought, and have a bath and the like. To bathe only once in fifteen days is a thing I have never done so far in my life! Winter's blessing! In fact, no need of a bath, no inclination at all. So let us go to the

hotel of the Intourist Department. We shall explain our position and see what happens.

With such mental calculations we called at the reception bureau of the Hotel Russia. A tall gentleman was walking up and down. Approaching him we said : “We would like to see the Director please”.

“Please take your seat”, he pointed to the sofa and went inside. In five minutes a dazzling damsel in snow-white uniform called us to the registration counter and said : “Please go the second floor. Your room number is 249. Here is the key”. We wondered ! No passports were asked for and no other enquiries. “Do you know from where we have come?”, we enquired. “Don’t worry, everything is all right. I know you are the peace-marchers”. Then she conducted us to the room.

Half an hour later the manager of the Intourist came in and informed : “Tomorrow morning we shall arrange a meeting with a few friends. Then we shall take you around”.

After all the surprises and easy solutions to our problems, to sit in the solitude of the night and write the details of what happened all these fifteen days is the most pleasant job I can do. Leaving the Hotel Ukraina in Moscow at about 9 O’clock we walked 13 miles that day and reached a small village by 5 p.m. On the way the staff and students of the Agriculture Institute gave us a nice welcome. Petrovna is a farm-worker. She lived with her daughter in a nice home. For the night they invited us to their house. “My son is in the army. I hate to think of armies and war. My husband was killed in the last war, yet my son had

to go. They say, it is all for defence. No nation can defend itself with an army hereafter”. Thus went on our talk at the supper table. She could not say much. Warm pearls of tears were dropping from her eyes.

The second evening a school teacher, Naza, was our host. We were accommodated in a school. Poor girl, she did not know we had no money. “You will have breakfast with me in the morning. Good night”, she said. However, we were not hungry that night and there was provision for tea in the school.

In the adjacent small house, two very old women lived. “How do they live ?”, we asked Naza. “They get old-age pension which is enough for them to lead a happy life till they die. In the Soviet Union every man above the age of 60 and woman above 55 receives a State pension. There is some exception in the case of the collective farmers”.

Even from a distance of 20 miles or so, every now and then we would look back and there stood your University building, majestically reaching the sky ! That was the only symbol of Moscow we could see after two days ! We could not walk for more than two hours at a stretch, and that too a very brisk walk. By that time our feet would be heavy like stone. Then we would enter any home or roofed place in sight just to have rest and warmth by the fire. Many houses, even though there was no one inside at times, were found unlocked and we would get into them, sit on the sofa, sometimes dozing a little. When the inmates arrived they would never ask us any doubtful question. Then hot tea or milk would be prepared. Thus it was on the third day a driver and his wife, an electro-mechanic, treated us in their house. They said to us “When you

reach India, please remember us. We are always for Peace”.

Near Moshaick town, at the railway level crossing, two women stood as we were passing by. They would not leave us until we told them some stories of India. “We are working in the railways as the signal controllers. Do women work in India ? Why do they have long hair? We too are for Peace. Please convey our love to the Americans; but warn them that it is dangerous to play with Communism !” They made a long speech. Then one of them telephoned the ‘brigadier’ of the next village and arranged our accommodation.

The next afternoon we were unusually tired and the wind cut like a knife. A woman was coming towards the road from a nearby village. We stopped to enquire: “Is the brigadier of the village there?”

“What for?”

“We want to stay somewhere”.

“That’s all ! Come along then. Why not stay in my house?”

“All right! Thank you”. We followed her. Khatia is the mother of two sons. Mr. Vasili Pavlovich and family are Khatia’s relations. In half an hour we felt we were members of that family!. Hot potato, milk, vegetable soup, cheese and bread our supper. Chats, jokes and music gave new life to the whole village. Many neighbours joined. Though we felt the need for a long sleep, we forgot our weariness. The next morning at the breakfast table, Vasili discovered that we have not had a shave. “Oh! We don’t bother very much about

it. Once a week or so will do. After Moscow, so far we haven’t had one”, we explained.

“Your beards are like Lenin’s”, the kids started pulling and fondling our back Lenin-cut beards.

“You must have a nice shave today” remarked Khatia. “Come on”, said Vasili, made us sit, and became a barber. Khatia followed suit. “Kraseevi”, (beautiful) remarked the grandmother who sat near the fire.

Since we carried no money, you know, for everything we had to depend on others. Yet we did not have the necessity to ask. To write letters? For soap? For other minor things ? Everything was taken care of. At night we used to write letters and keep them in our pockets. On the road everyday at least a dozen truck-drivers, motor cars and auto buses would stop to offer us a “lift”. We would explain everything. “Then what can I do for you ?”, they would be eager to do something for us. “Will you please post these letters?”, we would pull out the letters and offer them. “Kanyeshna”, and they would take them gladly. Thus one day, 80 miles away from Moscow, a car-driver had taken half a dozen letters from us. The next afternoon he drove all the way back from Moscow just to inform us: “I handed over all your letters to the pretty girl in the post office and asked her to send them by air. How many sweet-hearts these boys from India will be having, do you know, I told her and then she giggled and replied: ‘All right, tell them all letters will reach safely’.” Then we all laughed heartily.

Prodislova is the smallest village in which we have spent a night so far. I bet, any visitor from abroad to the Soviet Union would not have had such an

opportunity as we had that evening. Always I used to hear in India and other countries that in the Soviet Union 'you would never get an opportunity to be by yourself, to do what you want and to visit whichever place you want.' Indeed it is true that in countries like India, the U.K. or the U.S.A., the foreign visitors have got more freedom to do any work, to wander about and to live or be doomed to their fate. But in the U.S.S.R their argument is quite understandable too. "A visitor from abroad to this country is a guest of the whole nation. We have collective responsibility in a socialist society. Therefore, we don't want to see that our guests face any sort of inconvenience as long as they are in our country." In our case we stepped into the world without any visas, prejudice or suspicion and therefore all over the world we hoped to be as free as we wanted. Thus we are in a better position to go out to the world and say : "Behind the so called 'iron curtain' we were as free as anywhere else, to go anywhere, talk anything to anybody, to stay with anyone we wanted, to propagate our principles of non-violence and anti-bomb arguments".

So we were like two stray leaves blown by the wind that afternoon over the endless bed of snow. Though we knew that there was a small town a few miles ahead, we were desperately in need of some warm place to rest. As long as nothing was visible, to confine to brisk walking was the only solution. At last by 5 p.m., half a mile away to the right of the road we could see a couple of black roofs covered with snow. "Let's walk up to that spot" said Satish.

"All right, but the snow seems to be knee-deep", I replied.

"We shall try to find out some foot-path. If anyone lives there, a foot-path must exist".

"If there is none, let us make one", said I and we stepped into the snow. Our legs plunged deep and in half an hour we could reach the place.

A dog barked and ran across the snow. Through the small window an old mother and a small girl peeped and suddenly withdrew. "They might be afraid. Let's not go there. What about the other house ?" said Satish.

We went to the next house and knocked. An old woman came out. "We want to stay this night here", we said. For a few minutes she looked this way and that. Obviously she might have thought if there could be some accommodation in the other three houses. The whole village had only four houses. Later she said, "Please come in and sit near the fire. My daughter will come now. She is a school teacher. Then we will see where you can stay". We went in. In half an hour the daughter with her little girl came. They had a consultation. "If you can make yourself happy and uncomfortable here, you can stay here", the middle-aged woman told us. "Never mind, we are perfectly at-home here", we replied. The sofa became a bed for one; the floor served the other; the girl and grandma in one bed and the other woman over the pech. (In every Russian home in the rural areas there is a central fire-place made of brick, over which it will be very warm to sleep at night. That is called pech.) Our supper consisted of hot potatoes, milk, fried eggs and tea. The whole house, made of wood, consisted of a kitchen, a bed-room and another small room in which a cow was tethered and all other things like

fuel were stored up. "It's a pretty hard time for the cows in winter. We have to keep her always inside", said the school-teacher. "This is the first time in our life a foreigner, that too from our dear India, comes to this village and stays with us ! We've of course seen Hitler's men who came only to destroy us.

When you go there please tell them they can't dream of it again".

Two days ago we had another interesting evening with three coal-miners. Michael, Nickolayev and Sergie were passing through the road very near the mining town, Cafanovo. There was an autobus station which we had entered just to have a few minutes, rest. The wind was strong carrying snow-dust. As we sat on the wooden bench the three tall stout men came up and greeted. "Please come to our home and have rest", Michael said. "It's very near". All of us got up and walked. In the beautifully furnished drawing room of Sergie's new house. in front of the television we settled down in comfortable warmth and good company. Hot tea, biscuits and nuts were brought. Since it was past midday, our plan was to walk ten more kilometers. "But why are you in a hurry ?", asked Nickolayev, who did not want us to go further that day. "We were extremely happy to have you here as our guests". He would not leave us.

We agreed finally and they made preparations for the grand dinner at night.

"Please tell us something about your work", we asked.

"Our work is quite tedious in winter", replied Sergie, the combine driver. "In summer of course, we have

a pleasant time. You know, in the whole country we can't do practically much during the hard four months in winter. No production on land. So we have to do hard work for eight months to sustain the country. Michael and Nickolayev are working in the office. They have a warmer life".

"But Sergie, you have a better life", said Michael.

"How is it? All the three of you are jolly good comrades. It seems you are inseparable companions", we interrupted.

"Quite so, we are close friends. What I mean is Sergie earns more than what we do. The workers in the mine and the drivers get 200 to 300 roubles a month whereas we, the 'officers' get only 150 to 250 roubles."

"That's nice. Your's is a proletarian democracy, isn't it ?"

"Of course, so it is like this". Michael concluded and showed his curiosity about our 'business'.

"Our business is the bomb, you know ?"

"The bomb ? !" Nickolayev thundered.

"Yes the bomb. To fight against the bomb, the army, and war".

"How do you do it ?" Sergie poured out more and more tea.

"Just like this. Walking across the world. Talking to people; quarrelling with politicians; distributing these

leaflets; explaining the individual's responsibility etc."

"Will the Yankees let you there?"

"Why not ? Just as we came here we shall go there."

"If they don't let you in?"

"Still we will go. To Washington, to the White House, we must go. Your Prime Minister has also given his support. So we shall demand Kennedy to come to the table and sign the disarmament agreement with Krushchov."

"Maladets, maladets" (excellent, excellent), said Sergie and added: "We had a great man, Tolstoy, who could fight against the mighty cruel Tzar with his pen and words."

"We admire him. We have studied him. We visited his home just a few weeks ago."

"Did you ? Wonderful. Yesli vi khatete zaftra paedeom pasmotrem dom Gagarin. (If you want let's go to see Gagarin's home tomorrow)". He offered to take us. "Since it is a bit far and Gagarin is not there, don't worry. Next time when we come we shall try. Tomorrow we must make up our distance, so as to reach Smolensk on the 1st",

"Then won't you spend one more day with us?"

"No comrades, thank you very much, We have decided to enter Poland on the 1st of May."

We ate and talked past midnight.

Minsk, April 15, 1963

The wife rebels, the guests out !

After writing that long letter from Smolensk, fifteen days have passed. Since then we have trekked 210 miles to this enchanting capital city of Bylo Russia. The most outstanding experiepze meanwhile has been that of yesterday's in the village Slavada, fifteen miles behind Minsk. I shall tell you about it latter. Let me say a few words as to what happened in Smolensk.

I was amazed to see the fantastic constructions that were going on briskly in Smolensk! The lady from the Intourist who took us around the city knew a great deal of history which she shared with us abundantly. One cannot believe that Smolensk had been destroyed twenty times by Western invaders. So, that Russian Tzar was wise indeed who built a seven-and-a-half kilometer long fortress around to protect the city from the Western invaders, particularly the Polish'. However, hereafter there is no such anxiety. Is there? Now the Soviet Union and Poland are real sister nations. Hitler was quite cunning to march over Smolensk, for he knew that once the 'key to Moscow' was captured, access to the Kremlin would be easy. But the Soviet people faced all odds and hardships which could be possible only under the banner of a united Communist leadership. They crushed the Germans. Now let us hope that the 1,80,000 population of this city will live in peace for ever.

The famous Dnieper which passed through the middle of the city was absolutely frozen. "Do you know where the name Smolensk came from ?", asked

our guide. "Once upon a time there used to be good trade relations between Russia and Greece through this river. While they had to drag the boats on sand for some distance, a kind of black liquid used to be applied to the bottom of the boats. That thing was called smala' which was available in this town. Thus the town itself was called Smolensk", she explained.

Then she took us to see the beautiful five-domed cathedral. The 800 year old structure was magnificent to look at; but under its wooden carvings, painted in gold and silver, I could see only a very few old men and women. The whole place looked deserted. "On Sundays hardly about 3 to 4 dozen old people come to pray", replied our guide when we enquired about it. One of the most happy things that I have found in the Soviet Union is that many churches and cathedrals are today existing as Children's Palaces, Cultural Centres or Museums.

Then could you guess what I did at the end of our two days' stay in Smolensk? After that, there was not a wink of sleep at all though long five hours lay in dark tranquility before me ! Three minutes talk with you over the phone took me back all the way to Moscow ! Quietly the day broke. A hot breakfast waited for us. We walked into the cold wind and still the Dnieper lay motionless, but glistening in the morning sun.

That day we had walked 16 miles. A school boy walked with us for a few miles. He was very happy to get two friends from India, of which he knew nothing more than Nehru and Taj Mahal. He pressed us to stay in his village. He took us to the Brigadier of the village (in every Russian village the head-man is called 'Brigadier'), who accommodated us in the home of an

old couple. "Both of us are well off", said the old man when we enquired about his personal life over the dinner table in the evening. "Both of us together get a pension of 70 roubles a month. The government has given us a free house, free medical care and a cow. Krushchov is a nice man. In the days of the Tzar we had nothing but work, hunger and misery. Now we lack only one thing, that is electricity". For the first time I came across a soviet village without electricity!

In another village, Babikova, he was an invalid who played host to us. A victim of the second war, Constantinovich, lived in a nicely decorated house with his small library and study. Fifty-five houses and a State Farm in which most of the people worked, made the village. He was very much interested in discussing the decentralization of industries as advocated by Gandhiji, "Whatever may be the planning and the type of economic system, the fundamental basis of society is its sound educational system. Once everyone feels responsible to the society and the society takes up everybody's responsibility, most of the problems are easily solved. That's what I experience under Communism", he concluded his theory.

Though we have been following the road passing through most of the villages, occasionally we touched the highway to Warsaw. One afternoon, on the highway, a car stopped.

"Hello, aren't you the Peace Marchers?", a gentleman with a beaming smile got down and queried.

"Yes, we are...." Before I completed the reply, he said : "Congratulations, brave indeed ! I'm Peter Johnson, do you remember?"

“Oh, indeed ! I do, I do. How unexpected, how happy!”, I said. In the meantime his wife opened the flask and offered hot steaming tea. “How is your health ?”, Peter eagerly asked, “No trouble?”.

“Not at all. We enjoy the life in villages. Wonderful”.

“When do you hope to cross into Poland?”

“On the first of May”.

“All right, I shall send a despatch from Berlin.”

“Are you going to Berlin ?”

“Yes we are going for shopping. Things are pretty cheap there.” They bade us well and said, “Good-bye!”.

We had never seen that person before. But from the day we arrived at Moscow we had known each other. He was the representative of the Reuter News Agency who used to talk to me now and then on the phone. At midnight he used to ring me up to find out: “Any news today?”. “Yes,.....such and such....” or “no news”, I would reply. Thus he used to send the bits of news all over the world about our activities in Moscow. But never we met! Now he was driving from Moscow to Berlin just for shopping !

The same afternoon we entered the Bylo-Russian Republic. A group of villagers entertained us in a cafe and wanted to know many things about India. When they discovered that we did not eat meat a humorous woman remarked : “These Indians are pretty good. They don’t smoke. they don’t drink vodka and they

don’t go to love others’ wives”. All tittered with laughter.

We came across several people who remembered very well the Sanfrancisco to Moscow Walk for Peace in 1961. Once a lady said: “Oh, they were wonderful people! But they marched very quickly. They didn’t speak Russian, except a couple of them. How came you to speak so well? We like the Americans. But you know their government is bad. Businessmen’s government will always be against the people’s wish. Otherwise why did they walk like that? Please tell them, if ever you meet, that all of us remember them and wish the best for their work.” In some other places too we heard about them.

At Tolochin, a town of 7,000, a wonderful welcome was accorded to us by the President of the Rayon Soviet. In half an hour a press conference and a meeting with some prominent people of the town were organised. “I love your Gandhi and Nehru. In fact Lenin had said that the Soviet Union, India and China must come together. Then no power can do any damage to the world. Then war will stop”, the President said. A cinema, a stroll around the town, lot of chit-chat, all went to make a pretty evening.

Another evening we happened to be the guests of a large family in a village where, by supper-time, the neighbours gathered to see the first foreigners, who had ever entered their village. In the kitchen, around the fire we sat with children, who wanted to know from us why we walked.

“Do the children of India like the Soviet children? Why didn’t you bring an elephant with you?” such

were their questions.

“What do you like in the Soviet Union?”, one of the women asked.

“We like many things. First of all, the people are wonderful”.

“What sort of food do you like?”, asked the housewife.

“Grusinski hachapuri, Armenianski pulav, Abkhasianski masla, Russinski borsch i chorney khleb”, we replied. (Georgian hachapuri, Armenia pulav, Abkhasian ‘butter’, Russian vegetable soup and black bread).

“Abkhasianski masla ? da....da.....da”, they started laughing. A grandma came forward to enquire: “zdes devooshki net kharosho ? (are the girls here not good?)”

“Da, da, kanyeshna. Armenianski devochke ochen kharoshi i kraseevi. (Yes, yes, definitely. The girls of Armenia are very good and pretty).”

Again they roared with laughter. Then they said they had seen the beautiful black haired Indian girls on the screen whom they liked very much.

Very rarely we came across large families. So I asked the mother of the house : “How many children do you have?”

“Vosem (eight). God pathom adna toshe budet (one more next year)”, she proudly answered.

“We thought only in India and China there are such big families. Do you like so many children ?”

“Of course. I want at least ten children”.

“Why? Won’t it be difficult to maintain such a big family ?”

“Not at all. I get children’s allowance from the Government. Then for their education and employment I don’t have to bother because the State will provide. My husband and I will get pension after a few years. Then, what trouble? Children are the wealth of the nation. My Tanya learns music and dance; Kathia wants to be a doctor; Vladimir is going to be an astronomer”. “No, no!”, Vladimir protested, “I want to go to the moon”, and he produced a nice stamp of Gagarin’s picture.

“I have heard, in India, women don’t go to work!”, she remarked.

“Not all, Very few go to work”.

“Da, that is the tragedy. In Russia everyone works. You people are worrying about population. If everyone works, how can there be problems ? Our Lenin taught us : “Those who do not work, shall not eat”.

“How far did you study ?”

“After High School, I went to the Technical School and got a diploma. Then I worked in some factories and farms. I will work only five years more”.

Tanya and Vladimir brought musical instruments.

They all wanted to sing some Indian songs. "You must teach me one", Tanya insisted. In fifteen minutes they learned the film song, "Eachak dana, eachak dana, dane uper dana....." Till we left their house next morning, the chorus was vibrating the whole house ! After such a wonderful sojourn for a fortnight, we reached the village Slavada yesterday with a great sense of relief and happiness. Nature there was telling us that summer was not very far off ! Now the snow started melting. The roads became wet and the branch roads to the villages turned to be muddy and filthy. By 4.30 p.m. we saw a village and decided to halt there for the night.

Being Sunday, many youngsters of the village had gathered in the Village Cultural Centre and the mail-woman directed us saying : "The brigadier can be easily located there". Mud and water got into our socks and shoes; but somehow we got to the Klup Kultura (Cultural Club) and set down our nick sacks in the midst of the curious kids. We were told that the brigadier had gone out and was expected only after a day or two. Some elder members came. A film-show began at 6 and we too were invited. There was a militiaman who made his weekly round to the village. When the show was over we told him that we wanted some place to stay. He took us to the house of a farmer. Seeing no one at home, all the three of us waited for sometime inside the house, as it was not locked. In a few minutes the husband came. All of us exchanged greetings and the militiaman' explained our story and requested him to accommodate us for the night.

"Of course, there is no trouble. Have your seat. Let me prepare some hot cocoa for you. It's so wet and

cold", he said and went into the kitchen.

The policeman engaged us in conversation. He said he had to go on rounds to ten villages, once a week or ten days. "Then if there should be any complaint the villagers report to me. Normally the brigadier solves most of the problems".

Hot cocoa and bread came to the table and the farmer joined us. "I am very happy to have some guests from our friendly country. Unfortunately, I am afraid, I won't be able to make you comfortable. My wife is yet to come home. She has gone to visit some friends. It's already late, you must be hungry", he apologized.

"No, not at all. In fact we had a late lunch in the house of an officer who was celebrating his 'Pasga Prasnik' (a religious holiday and ceremony). He picked us up from the road. But the trouble with him was, he was fully drunk and he wouldn't listen. So we had to sip a little for his satisfaction".

"Then you don't drink at all !?"

"Well, we don't".

"How could you survive in our country?"

"You see we have survived. Walking has kept us warm on the road. Then at night we have good hosts like you".

The door opened and a bulky, round-faced woman got in. With a look of surprise she strutted into the living room.

"I'll be back in a moment". The husband got up and followed the wife. Some murmuring went on for a few minutes and the husband returned to the table with a gloomy face.

"Pachimu ?", (Why) the policeman smelled something wrong. "Nichivo. Fseo dobra budet". (Nothing, everything 'll be all right).

The policeman did not give in. The husband explained that the wife did not like very much the presence of two extra members for the night.

"Is it so? Let's try to make her understand", saying so, the militiaman also went in with the husband to pacify her. For ten minutes the discussion was held inside and the two of us looked at each other. "Such a thing is not common in the Soviet Union !" Satish exclaimed. "Da, usually the women have been extra-kind to us. So we are going to face the reverse now", I replied.

"She must be angry with the husband for not consulting her".

"Possibly. After all, don't they claim equal responsibility?" "Let's see what happens".

The two came out. The fatherly policeman wore a shade of disappointment while the masterly husband seemed wild with determination. We sensed the tension. So we said, "Don't worry, please. There may be some inconvenience, it seems".

"No, no. Nothing particular", the husband replied.

"You will be staying here only".

"She says that the baby will be crying throughout the night and the guests will be disturbed. So it is better to seek some other accommodation", the policeman explained.

"Naturally. She is correct. Let us try somewhere, else", we too defended her cause. But the husband was stubborn.

"You will stay here. You can well tolerate a bit of baby crying".

Mild sound of sobs reached our ears. Some articles were being put this way and that. Suddenly the mother dashed from inside carrying the baby wrapped in warm blankets. Off she plunged into the dark cold night with a thunder : "Either the guests will stay here or I". The door slammed behind and the husband retorted : "Go and hang yourself".

We looked at the policeman and he at the husband's face. "Please let's avoid all this scene. We can find out accommodation somewhere else.", we suggested to the policeman. He consoled the husband: "Go and call her back. I will take care of the visitors". "No, I shall come with you. First of all we will look after the visitors", he replied and then both of them went out. In fifteen minutes they returned. "Paedeom drugoi dom (Let's go to the other house)", and we gathered our bundles. Again a walk of 300 meters through knee-deep filth and water led us to the home of an old man with a large family of six children. Though it was 10 p.m., the old couple got up, woke up some of their children, quickly made beds for us and the

two comrades bade us “good-night” with regret and apology.

When the day broke the children found two unexpected people sheltered in their house and the mother was plied with questions. When she explained our story, the kids were too happy to do their mite. While the mother brought hot water for a wash, one boy cleaned our shoes, the other arranged the breakfast table, while the third wanted to know whether we could be their guests for one more day because he complained that he had been sleeping when we entered his house. So you can well imagine what a wonderful time we had with the rural folk! As we approached the city, the sky was gloomy but the people stopped us here and there for a cup of tea, for a chat, sometimes just to shake hand with us.

It was 4 O’ clock when we got settled in Hotel Minsk. Mr. Vitali Vitalivichy, the conductor of the Philharmonia Concert, who is staying in the same hotel, has invited us to the concert. Therefore, let me get ready for that.

Brest, April 30, 1963

“Dosvidanya” !

“.....And, once departed, may return no more”. Thus says the poet, But I shall return again to the Soviet Union though tomorrow I am going to say ‘Dosvidanya’.

This is my last letter to you from the Soviet soil. Yesterday when we arrived at this border city we were anxiously looking for some letters. I was utterly disappointed.....But let it be. No use pondering over the past. Man must always try to look forward

optimistically, with courage and self-confidence.

But indeed I had bunch of other interesting letters. One of them was from an intimate friend in India. He wanted to know : “What about freedom in the Soviet Union ?” “Yes, my dear friend”, I replied to him, “I too have been trying to find out exactly the meaning of ‘Freedom’ against the background of a society, which is called ‘Communist’, in which have I spent four happy months from the Celo Soviet to the Supreme Soviet, from the Kolkoz (collective farm) to the Kremlin and from the Children’s Palaces to the Palace of Congresses. First let me convey to you certain thoughts that came to my mind as soon as I landed in Moscow”.

“When that celebrated Cruiser ‘Araura’ boomed her guns of victory declaring the opening of a new era in human history of the 25th of October 1917, at the port of Leningrad, you and I had not come to this world. When the perspiring people of the Tzarist Russia realized that God was the greatest myth and religion the worst opium under whose protection all crimes and injustices were being committed, our parents were chanting hymns and telling beads in the dark corners of temples, churches and musjids, despairing at their destiny being in the claws of colonial exploitation and imperial injustice. When H.G. Wells laughed at Lenin, our parents in India were girding their loins with the spinning wheel in hand, under the leadership of that ‘naked fakir’ for national liberation. And today, when the reasonable man in the world has recognised the inevitability of Socialism, our free-enterprise politicians are engaged in formulating theories sitting on the neck of the masses of starving, naked peasants of India! You and

I cannot tolerate this. We must be ready to pay any price if we want to see a prosperous India and a better human society.

“Now let me come to the question of freedom. By freedom if you mean that a handful of people must be freely left to enjoy everything in life at the expense of millions, well, that freedom doesn’t exist in the Soviet Union.

“If freedom means to be the owner of thousands of acres of land, to build half a dozen palaces for one individual or a family to live in while millions live on pavements and to dominate huge business-empires and reap fantastic profits for oneself, no, that freedom does not find place in Communist Russia. If freedom means to give opportunity to one person or a group of persons to print a newspaper every morning which contains forty pages of advertisement and five pages of reading matter and circulate among the common masses to take their kopeks, yes, that freedom is absolutely forbidden. And finally, if one wants to blow the trumpet of the above freedom, he will fail miserably in the Soviet Land.”

“So there is, of course, no ‘freedom’ in this country.”

Then, naturally, an ‘iron curtain’ must be hung around it by the freedom-mongers. Yet people here enjoy all the blessings of life.

“Blessings of life ?” You may be raising your eyebrows ! “Yes, I emphasise, blessings of life. From the moment a child is born in the USSR it is guaranteed all opportunity to live. From the age of 7, its freedom is only to eat, drink play, go to school, study, observe

and develop all talents to be a full citizen. If old age the society provides everything for the citizen. If a girl becomes an unmarried mother she is not condemned or persecuted by the Society. Not a single child in this country begs for anything or is in want of anything. The other day, in Smolensk, Satish felt a little pain in his leg and it was intimated to the Intourist manager. In five minutes, a doctor and nurse called on us. ‘It isn’t so serious, we could have come to the dispensary’, we said. ‘Why?’, the doctor quickly asked. ‘In our country a patient is not supposed to go to the doctor. It is doctor’s duty to attend to the patient. Medical profession is a service to the sick; not a business for the doctor’. What about our country? How many people are dying and suffering for want of money and medical assistance? That freedom to die of disease and want of medical care is not to be in the Soviet Union”.

I forget to tell you, Luda, that we spent a nice time in Minsk. On two evenings we went to the theatre. I told you, on the very first day we enjoyed the concert very much. Again we enjoyed a nice conversation and tea with Vitali till 1 a.m. in the hotel. He was very much interested in politics and the problem of world peace. He felt that if the three great countries, China, India and the Soviet Union could come together in one confederation that would be a good beginning. He is a great admirer of Tolstoy and Gandhi.

For the first time in our tour, at Minsk Hotel, a sort of national colour was given in our honour. The manager of the hotel decorated the dinning table with the flags of U.S.S.R. and India and said : “The is for the eternal friendship of India and our country so that both of us can jointly fight for world peace”.

A few hours we spent in the War Memorial Museum, the only one of its kind in the USSR. I was shocked to read a news item which was well preserved in a glass case among the various documents explaining the horrors and tragedies of the War. On the 26th of June, 1941, the New York Times reported :

“Harry Truman, the Senator, said that ‘We would go to help the defeated side. If the Russians get defeated, we would go to help them and if the Germans are found losing we would go to their rescue. That way let them kill as many people as possible, each other”.

We can well imagine how the powerful politicians talk and behave! No wonder, such a person was mercilessly willing to order the butchery of 2,40,000 people, four years later, in August 1945, at Hiroshima and Nagasaki! Power-mongering politicians would go to any extent and would not hesitate to do anything in order to preserve their position and prestige.

After a visit to the University and the Polytechnic Institute we strolled by the side of the Nemiga river which meandered through the middle of the city. This huge city was only a town with small cottages before the Revolution. “In the Second War the city was reduced to a heap of ruins. Minsk didn’t have any establishment of higher learning before 1917. Today the Academy of Sciences itself has 76 research institutions under it”, explained Ludmila pointing to the imposing curved structure of the Academy of Sciences.

When I rang you up it was 11.30. I was just back from the opera after attending a wonderful ballet performance-The Blue Danube.

The 225 miles from Minsk to Brest we covered in 14 days with great relief and joy. It was a pitiable sight to look at the layers of snow melting and disappearing, from morn to eve. There was a time when the sun used to blink in the cold. The over-pervading glory of February frost no more remained. Clusters of snow from the grass-beds wept and vanished. It was then that the soft blades of grass dared to raise their tender heads with the confidence, that the glittering sun above would defend their cause. One’s death is life for the other ! And the lifeless branches of pale trees started wearing a mild green smile. A sweet fragrance also mingled with the breeze; by the time we had treked the 685 miles to the Polish border.

Petkovichi was not a conspicuous spot by the roadside and yet we were destined to sleep by the fireside at an ordinary farmer’s. Between Minsk and Brest the Warsaw Highway passed through thick forests here and there. At the beginning of December we had abandoned the water-bottles. In the Soviet Union so far, we never felt thirsty, and even if one did karbatha (tea) or moloko(milk) or vino(wine) was always available. At times balls of ice could also be picked up to quench one’s thirst. Though a basic enemy, once you adopt yourself to its intimate company, ice serves you in various ways. It serves you as a play-ball, as a ski-bed, as drinking water and even it takes the place of toilet paper in case of emergency! However, that noon we felt a bit thirsty; there was no water-bottle or ice nearby. A single hut stood at a distance and we walked towards it through filth and melting frost. An old woman saw us and enquired what we wanted. “Some drinking water”. As we drank the water she asked: “Where are you going with this load on your

back ?”

“To Poland and Germany”

“Then to America”, said Satish.

She quickly asked me for the glass. I gave. Grabbing the bucket she ran back into the house ! We stood still and looked at each other. The two names Germany and America drove her into a realm of fear or indignation. She shut the door !

After that interesting incident, we walked a long way and sat under a wooden umbrella in the midst of the forest just for rest. It was the travellers ‘waiting spot. Two old men and two young girls sat there. The girls were waiting for the bus.

“Where are you coming from?”, one of the old guys asked. “From India”,

“I see. I know about you. Are you the peace marchers?” the other one asked.

“Yes, we are. How did you know?”

“At least four or five times I have heard about you on the radio. Where do you go now?”

“We are going to the next town”. (The town was only 3 miles away).

“Oh, no, no. You must come with me. Stay with us”. No village was visible there. “Where is your village?”, We asked.

“Just very near”, he pointed to the forest. Endless thick forest! Very near! What to do. He would not waste any time. “It is already evening. Paedcom”, he ordered his comrade to pick one kit and he himself took the other. “You are my guests”, and they started walking. we merely followed.

Rural calculations are always different from the real. His “very near” was a long two miles. Through the forest we walked a mile to reach a meadow. After that was a vast field. The village lay cold and wet. The melted snow mingled with mud imbedded our walk. On the way they called this man and that man announcing the arrival of guests. Here and there some peeped through the windows. At last we reached his ancient wooden house thatched with bamboo and straw.

“Quickly make a hot supper for the guests”, he ordered his daughter and made a warm seat for us by the fire. “I shall return in a few minutes”, said Abramovich Vasili and went out. Darkness fell slowly on the thatched houses while Vasili returned to lay the table for supper. All of us ate. Then he said: “I have asked all the villagers to gather at the school. Let us go there. Then you speak about your walk”.

“As instantaneous meeting within no time ! The school was 500 meters away. Lantern and torches lighted our way. To our astonishment we found about 150 people gathered to hear us. When it was over we could not believe that without a word of English we could manage to converse with the villagers for an hour in broken Russian followed by the universal language of signs and symbols. It was 11 when we went to bed. Vasili was very much interested in the world outside.

“During the march from Moscow to Brest we have had many occasions to be with the grand old generation. To those beyond the age of 75-80, I used to put a particular question : “Please tell us, on the basis of your own personal life and experience, about the three stages of Russian life and your conclusion now. (1) Before the Revolution. (2) During the Revolution and the immediate few years following it. (3) Now, after 40 years of the Revolution”.

Their answers to the above questions used to be identical in most cases. “Well”, the old grannies and grandpas used to say, “before the revolution, we, the rural folk, used to live in perpetual fear and suffering. Sometimes, suddenly one morning someone would appear in the village on horse-back and demand us to surrender the bulk of the products. Naturally, we knew that he was the agent of our Tzars and big landlords. In this way the agents and their henchmen used to go into the countryside and collect the things. None of us would dare ask a question or refuse to submit to their will. Worst of it was that at times the most beautiful young girl of the village would also be taken away by them. Whips and pistols would go into action if anybody resisted. Then suddenly we heard that the revolution succeeded. To tell you the truth, we didn’t experience much of the revolution. It was going on in big cities like Moscow, Leningrad. All of us knew that the Communists were going to crush the Tzars and their supporters in order to establish the rule of workers and peasants. Lenin’s name brought us consolation and occasionally some fellow would come from here and there and ask us to be united in order to resist the Tzars and lords. This we did. So we didn’t have much trouble. We only cooperated with the Communists and prayed for their success.

And now, when you are travelling in our country you notice that we have no fear and suffering at all. We live happily. Till we go to our graves our life is secure and satisfactory. The children go to school and clubs, dancing and working; we don’t have to worry about them; nobody is unemployed; instead of oil lamps we have electric light; we have radio and television too. So why should we bother as to who sits in the Kremlin and what is done by whom ? Fifty years ago we could never see a book in our village; but now we have libraries, schools, and clubs. We all work hard and live”.

I could find a great regard, affection and support for Krushchov in the rural parts.

Before reaching Brest we spent the night in a huge State Farm. The Secretary of the farm arranged our stay with a family. It was a good experience to go around this huge farm of 12,000 hectares with 60 tractors and 36 trucks. There are 2,000 people working on the farm and our production increased from 1 million roubles in 1960 to 1.5 million in 1962. This farm is only three years old and we hope to have a high yield within a couple of years. We prepare a target of production of every year and I am happy to say that so far we have been able to reach it”, explained the Secretary.

“There is a natural tendency of the people to loose their personal initiative in public undertakings. Do you experience that in your collective and state farms? If so, how do you meet the situation?”, we asked.

“That is true when the people are not properly educated to realize the net result of all activity in a

society. When you work for someone else, there is a loss of interest. Here we know that we all are working for the whole society and the fruits of labour, are more equitably distributed here than under a capitalist system. For instance in our farm the minimum wage per month for an individual who works for 7 hours a day is 40 roubles and the maximum is 180 to the Director. Moreover, we give prizes, promotions and merit certificates to those who display extra efficiency in their work. So, we don't find any lack of interest in the people".

Inspiring words of the founder of the great Soviet society are not only remembered in the country, but also practised by everyone. "I don't mind how Socialism comes. You go back to England and try your way of love and peaceful persuasion. You think you can win that way; I think you will fail, but I shall be glad if you are right", said Lenin to George Lansbury in 1920. "We must never allow workers to think that a social revolution means less work. It may mean more. There will be lots to do, undoing the blunders and mistakes of capitalism. But we must teach the workers that they will be working for themselves and every hour's work done will be a blessing". These words of Lenin seemed to be vibrating in the nerves of workers. The man who treated us as his distinguished guests and spent several hours in looking after our comforts the previous evening would get up early in the morning to rush to work at stroke of the hour. This has been the basic foundation of their life in this country.

Keeping the unforgettable 120 days in mind tomorrow we have to say "Dosvidanya" to the whole of Soviet Union and to YOU.

IN POLAND THE PLEASANT

**Bulka Dobrimska,
1st of May, 1963**

May Day here and there

When it dawned through the misty chill we were in the Soviet Land; when dusk fell over the mild green meadows we settled down in Socialist Poland. When we stood on the other bank of the river Bug it was 4 p.m.; after ten minutes when we stood on this bank of the river it was 2 p.m.! When we ate our last lunch at noon we were in the midst of an age-old familiarity; but when we sat for supper amidst a group of villagers, we felt lonely and lost. What a tremendous psychological change! All these happened in a period of minutes, because we had crossed the borderline!

At 9 a.m. large battalions of the Red Army had marched past in majesty and grandeur, followed by groups of professionals, artists, workers, students and the common citizens, through the main square in Brest. We had watched the whole celebration of the grand victory of the workers and I wished I were in Moscow! Everyone in the street greeted each other rejoicing with "prasnikom" (happy holiday). No one remained at home. We too had joined the sea of humanity till the afternoon.

On the Soviet side of the border two officers, a man and woman, sat and played chess as we stepped into the warm hall of the customs house. "Prasnikom", the greeting was exchanged. "You are still in the Soviet Union?", the gentleman official looked at us with a

curved eye-brow holding our passports. “Da, sechas ideom no Warzava”, we replied. (Yes, now we’re going to Warsaw)”

“Sadete pashalsta (please take your seat)”, and he went in. After a few minutes he returned and said: “Fseo kharosho. Sasleeva yam pute (everything is okay. Wish you a happy journey)”. He returned the passports; we also joined the chees game and had a cup of tea. Later he came with us to the border.

“Dzien dobra”, another patrol officer on the Polish side welcomed us.

We walked straight into the customs office. The Polish Embassy in Moscow had granted visas to us for eight days valid from the 15th of March. But here we are on the 1st of May! Therefore the officer-in-charge had to telephone to higher authorities and in half an hour everything was over. We walked again in an unknown land. Everything looked new. There were a large number of children playing in the field. An old farmer joined us on the road. He spoke Russian too.

Warsaw, May 7, 1963

Dom Khopa and the “Wedding Cake”

The walk from the border to the capital city of Warsaw in seven days made us get accustomed to the new atmosphere of a new country. We had made six halts in different towns and villages on the 112-mile route. Sometimes a Secretary of the Polish Communist Party. sometimes a member of the National Front or sometimes the President of the city administration played host to us. Though Polish is different from Russian, once we know Russian, language poses no

problem in Poland. In every school Russian is being taught as the second language.

As usual, each day left some indelible impression on our minds. The very first evening, it was a group of farmers who entertained us. Around the coal heater, in front of the television, all of us sat and gossiped for a long time.

“We have spent several days in the Soviet collective farms. How are you people doing the farm work here?”, we asked the old peasants.

“We don’t have many collective farms here. We have our own plots of land on which we are free to work as we like. But the Government has put a ceiling on private holdings. No one can own more than 50 hectares. Everyone has at least two hectares. We do co-operative farming”.

“Do you know all these areas had been destroyed by Hitler?”, another one changed the subject.

“Yes, we have heard. What did you do at that time?”

“We all fought against him along with the Russian soldiers”. “Now do you like Russia?”

“Of course I like. But you know, Russia has snatched our land beyond the Bug river”.

“Let’s us think of that now; we are together under the same banner of Communism now”, quickly concluded our host.

“Do you find any change in Stalin’s Communism and

Krushchov's"

"Yes indeed", replied the third. "Under Stalin the Russian soldiers didn't have even cigarettes to smoke. When the American soldiers joined the Russians, they gave cigarettes to them. Still, many Russians had only ordinary newspaper to roll and smoke!" Everyone laughed. "But now Krushchov has done many good's things in Russia. They have shining brass-buttons too !"

"All that would have been impossible, if there was no Stalin", another old guy intervened. "Look now, your Krushchov is the driver and we are the bullocks". The pro-Stalinist old man drew a long puff of his cigarette.

What a happy sight it was every morning to see the farmers driving their horse-carts into the fields with seeds and other things. I had not expected that in Poland horses are yoked to the plough as bullocks are in India. The farmers would at times enquire if we had any religion! In the whole of the Soviet Union that was a great relief. It shows that in Poland religious beliefs and practices are prevalent to a great extent.

It was 6 p.m., when we reached the centre of the city today. From a distance of 15 miles the high tower of the great Palace of Culture shot up above the jungles as we emerged from a small restaurant after lunch in the company of the secretary of the Rayon. "I have already informed the office of the Communist Party. As soon as you reach Warsaw you may contact them and seek for the appointment with Comrade Gomulka", said he before returning to his village.

The River Vistula lay calm and mild in the midst

of the panoramic city as if for centuries she had existed in the same way, quite indifferent to all that happened around her! The impressive Palace of Culture, the "Wedding Cake" presented by the Soviet Union to Poland, stood gigantically emphasizing the unbreakable friendship between the two countries after the second war. It took three years from 1952 to 55, to build it, I was told. Poor Stalin could not see the fulfillment of his dream. The Poles are very grateful to him for his gesture. The 44 storeyed granite structure, 234 meters high, accommodates 41 institutions in its 3,288 halls and rooms. Standing on the edge of the bridge over the Vistula when I threw a quick glance on the imposing steel and glass mansions and the straight boulevards certain colourful pages of history flashed on my mind. No one could believe that this magnificent city of today took shape during the last 17 years over debris. By 1945 eighty seven per cent of Wersaw had been smashed into dust and rubble!

Since the middle of March, the Polish Peace Committee was anticipating our arrival. Unfortunately we could not let them know the exact day of our arrival. Most of the offices were closed and therefore we went straight to the secretariat of the Communist Party. Someone from the Peace Committee called on us on intimation. By 7 O'clock we were happily accommodated in the Dom Khopa (House of the People), a very nice low-cost hotel and the lady from the Peace Committee said : "Tomorrow morning you will meet all the friends and then you may decide further plans".

May 14, 1963

A week in Warsaw

We spent a full week in Warsaw as the guests of

the Peace Committee. Mr. Tadeusz Strzalkowski, the Secretary General and a member of the Polish Parliament, and other members of the Peace Committee organised a welcome meeting in which he explained the stand of the Committee on the problem of peace and disarmament. "Really every limb of our country had been broken by the war and what you see now is the post-war reconstruction of a dedicated people. How can you imagine that the people of Poland would ever think of another war ?", he asked. "But again we are in the grip of a cold-war now. How to remove the darkness of such a situation ? That is the question. For that we are trying our best and people like you are acting as good links and therefore we are especially happy to welcome you". There is a saying in Poland that a guest at home must be considered as a God at home. "But", continued the young friend, Strazalkowski, "we consider you as our messengers to go from village to village with the message that everyone has to take up the responsibility of making a peaceful world". A passionate traveller, he had visited India twice and taken more than 1200 photographs.

One morning Mr. Strzalkowski took us to meet the Vice President of the Republic Prof. Kulczynski. A tall, calm and serious gentleman got up to welcome us in his chamber and said : "You have undertaken a very important task and this sort of activity will definitely yield results". A man of 50, Prof. Kuslczynski's philosophical outlook and serious approach to problems impressed us very much. "Any other means to settle the problems are better than the means of war. We are fed up with it. I am very sorry to hear about the recent China-India border dispute. Frank and direct negotiation and settlement is the only solution. However, for the progressive forces of India

this has been a great blow", he commented.

"We are now going from Poland to Germany. You know, Berlin is still the hot-bed of world politics. What message would you like to give to the people of Berlin city?", we asked.

"To the West Berliners I would request that they should never prepare for another conflict. To the East Berliners, you can ask them to make every earnest attempt for the reunification of the two parts. All of them are Germans. They must be happy and contented with what they have and decide to live together. The real causes of war and peacelessness are the deplorable socio-economic conditions of the people", he said. "At any cost it is our duty to prevent war".

That evening I sat at the dinner table late into the night. The House of the people used to be full always. Typical of the custom, every now and then the bands were played and the couples got on to their feet. A young gentleman sat next to me and looked very eager to engage me in conversation.

"I hope you are from India ?", he asked.

"Yes I am".

"I have a great regard for your great Gandhi and Nehru. But I wonder why India's leaders are not giving much attention to her economic growth".

"Well, our Prime Minister is a man impatiently trying his best to give energy and impetus to the millions to build the nation economically strong and sound. You must realize the various social and political factors

involved in our growth”.

“Yes, I do realize. Still I feel that Japan is a good model for India. Japanese people had so many hurdles to cross just as the Indians have, yet they have been very industrious. Look at there industry and agriculture!”

“That’s true. In India there are still many people who have yet to realize that they are a free people, to build their own future.

You know what a terrible colonial and imperialistic brunt we had to bear?”

“So now you must say good-bye to the West in most of our relations”, he concluded and took leave of me.

“A very interesting city. There is something strange and different about it”, this is what the tourists say about Warsaw.

The Moscowites seemed to be always busy but the Warsawites looked to be more relaxed and easy-going. The climate, of course, might be playing a very important role in giving this impression. However, this pleasant city is tensionless, devoid of worry like a smooth-sailing pleasure boat on the river Vistula. Warsaw is a common meeting ground between the East and West. To hear that Warsaw is a 700 year old city is like a fairy tale. During its life as the capital of Poland for over 350 years, Swedish, Saxon, Russian and Prussian troops have marched through it in turn. The people of Warsaw are great art-lovers. It was in the disastrous 19th century that Juliusz Slowacki wrote his works and Frederic Chopin played his first compositions.

It was during that period that Stalinnsław Moniuszko created the National Opera and Maria Curie Skłodowska opened her first physical laboratory. The creator of Esperanto, Dr. Ludwik Zamenhof also lived and worked in Warsaw. Thus by 1939 the city was in full growth industrially, culturally and in other respect with a population of 1.3 millions.

Quickly, history took a different turn. About 800,000 citizens were killed during the Nazi occupation between 1939 and 1945. On January 19, 1940 Governor Hans Frank wrote in his diary :

“On September 15, I was given the task of taking over the administration of the conquered Eastern territories with the specific order to plunder the area ruthlessly. I was to reduce its economic, social, cultural and political structure to a pile of rubble.”

Hitler’s orders had to be carried out. The operation went on in full swing. Again he wrote on the 6th of February :

“If I were to put up a poster for every seven Poles that had been shot, the forests of all Poland would not suffice to produce the paper needed for them.”

The Nazis are reported to have had a fantastic plan for a new town to be established after destroying Warsaw. It was found in Hans Frank’s office in January 1945. (Hans Frank was sentenced as a war criminal and hung at Nuremberg). The plan envisaged that “One hundred thousand Germans would live on the left bank of the Vistula while 80,000 Poles were to be put in the concentration camps on the other side and used as slave-labourers.” The then Superintendent of

the famous Auschwitz Camp, Karl Fritsch welcomed the prisoners to the Camp with the following words :

“You have come here not to a sanatorium, but to a German Concentration Camp from which there is no other way out than through the chimney. If someone doesn’t like it, he may at once go to the electricity-charged barbed wire; if there are any Jews in the transport they have no right to live longer than two weeks; if there are any priests they may live one month and others three months.”

Dumping all these dreadful pages into the dustbin of history, today, when you sit under a colourful umbrella around the small round table, sipping the steaming coffee or licking an ice-cream candy, you will wonder at the progress made by these people during 17 years. They say, their industrial production has increased six-folds, from 1945 to 1962. The destroyed churches have been restored to their original Baroque and Gothic style. Famous statues of Fredric Chopin and Nicholas Copernicus and many others invite everyone’s attention. The whole thing would tempt you to ask yourself : “Can the Polish people ever think of another war?” “Impossible”, would be the quick answer. Yet one doubts considering the universal fact that man has not learnt much from the past.

Today morning when we bade good-bye to all friends in Warsaw, some new problems cropped up in our minds. What to do with our heavy Russian overcoats? By the time we reached England, the winter would set in and we might need them. A new pair of warm shoes had arrived from India, just a couple of days ago and our old rucksacks were replaced by new ones. “You must not hesitate to tell us if you need anything”, this

was the permanent instruction given by the Peace Committee.

“How can you wear your pretty coats in Europe? asked Mr.Strzalkowsky.

“That’s the real problem we’re facing. Since we may need them again we don’t feel like leaving them,” we replied.

“All right, leave them with Rosemary and I shall take care of them. I shall see to it that you get them in London.”

Rosemary was the interpreter girl who took care of us. One afternoon she took us to her friend, a very gifted pointer, Mrs. Suzana, who painted a quick portrait of ours of which she remarked later: “I’ve never done such a hurried work; but it has come up excellently well beyond my expectations.”

When we left Warsaw it was already ten O’ clock and yet we walked 18 miles by evening to find a hearty welcome accorded by the Secretary of the Communist Party and the workers of a watch factory in Bvonie town.

Poznan, May 27, 1963

A forest of death & a bath in sunshine

It was an interesting trek of 193 miles from Warsaw to Poznan, one of the most beautiful cities of Poland. Most of the days we used to be the guests of the local Communist Party or the member or secretary of the National Front. The National Front is a political organization co-ordinating all the different political

parties for the purpose of pursuing a common programme based on Socialistic principles. One of our hosts told us one day : “While there are three parties functioning in our country, on the basic issue of socialism, all have agreed. Then a particular party will be championing the cause of the church while the other of the industrial workers and the third of the small owners”.

“Then still there are owners in Poland! How does this system go hand in hand with Communist principles?” we asked.

“We have not completely eliminated the land-holders. Still there are small land-holders and small industrialists in the country. For instance, no industry which employs more than 50 people, can be under private ownership. Churches are also given support by the Government. Thus we still maintain some of the old institutions even though the Communist Party radically disagrees with it. That’s how all the parties are represented in the Government” he explained.

One of these days we had a wonderful experience. Almost in between Warsaw and Poznan when we reached the town of Kovo, the Secretary of the town party arranged for our visit to the war-time concentration camp. Eight kilometers away from the town we drove into a dense forest at 5.30. Everything was calm. The tall Sonsa trees stood motionless. A sepulchral silence prevailed there. After a while we got down at the edge of an open space amidst the huge forest. Stones and cement parapets lay here and there marking the existence of some built-up structures of the past. “Here under your feet lie buried half a million innocent people from six countries

Poland, Czechoslovakia, Austria, Hungary, Belgium and France. All of them were killed by the Nazis. They used to dump human beings into trenches and pour petrol and light fire”, explained our host. There were more than a dozen trenches, each measuring 120 meters by 6 by 4 into which human beings were thrust. Next to those trenches there lay a round spot where rose plants were in blossom. “Under these plants a large group of Czech children were butchered and buried”, the story passed through our veins like a current. Then we walked to another spot where a village existed before the war. “All the 48 families of that village were massacred without any mercy and buried there,” continued our companion. A three-feet high trunk of wood with a carved cup-like top stood nearby. “Was it a natural tree”, we enquired. “No, no. That’s another inhuman story. Into that wooden cup food used to be put; hungry and thirsty creatures would crowd around and fight for the pieces”. That’s the way the imprisoned people used to be fed! For half an hour we roamed about. Pieces of bones could be seen scattered all over, mingling with dust and stones. For several months dogs and eagles must have had a wonderful feast on human flesh and bones ! However, now the Polish Government is planning to build a war-memorial museum. No one can come back from that forest of death without a heart throbbing with pain.

The Workers’ Party (the real Communist Party) is the biggest having a membership of 1.2 million. The second is the Peasants’ Party (4,00,000) and the third is the Democratic Party (1,40,000). An old exponent of the Democratic Party once explained to us that their party stood for private ownership of land and continuance of the ancient religious traditions.

“Socialism not through revolution, but through evolution”, he said. “The workers are our soldiers, we are their back-pushers to reach the cherished goal of Socialism”, another said, Thus, occasionally we got some people to talk on politics. However much we tried it was impossible to get right to the heart of anything and know it in detail, because of language. In Poznan our hosts were the Polish-Indian Friendship Society, the National Front and the Wagner family, Dr. Hoffman, President of the Society, had arranged our stay with the Wagner family. Mr. and Mrs. Wagner and their daughter, Renata, were so nice, hospitable and affectionate that we could never forget the three days we spent with them.

Being Sunday, yesterday afternoon, two students from the University called on us and invited us for lunch with them. We agreed. “Why not we go for a swim in the Rusavka lake?”, one of them suggested. “That’s excellent. I have not had a swim for the last year”, I expressed my delightful consent.

“But I don’t know swimming, so what can I do?” asked Satish.

“Don’t worry about it. Still you can have a pleasant sun-bath”, proposed the other friend. All of us set out to the lake.

Renata sat in her study impressed in her lessons. “We are all going to the lake Will you come?”, I invited her. “I’d like to, though my examinations are very near”, saying so, she joined us. “Do the people in India go to swim and sunbathe in thousands as we do?”, she enquired.

“Yes, they go to swim, but not for a sun-bath. Moreover, boys and girls go to swim separately there.”

“Is it so?”, a shade of wonder flashed through her beautiful face as the ripples of water ran down her cheeks and we leaped forward with a bet “who will reach the other bank of the lake first ?” It was about a kilometer wide.

When the return swim was over I was absolutely exhausted and my joints were aching. Then an hour of sun-bath in the midst of thousands of enthusiastic people relieved me from the weariness of the lake. It was my first European sun-bath !

On the roadside; May 28, 1963

An unusual experience

Throughout our journey so far, teachers and students have been one of the best sources of contact, support and encouragement to us. Just as in the Soviet Union, in Poland too, we have had the opportunity of coming across many of them. On the way, if a school was noticed, we were confident that we could easily walk into it, talk to the teachers, have some rest if necessary and spend some time with the kids. But this morning we had quite a contrary experience.

Hoffman and Renata walked a long way with us, to see us off at the border of the city. “You must come back to Poland again”, they said and wished us “Bon Voyage.”

“You must kiss them good-bye, Renata”, the affectionate, fatherly Hoffman instructed her, and she did so according to the custom.

It had rained the previous night, so the road was wet and the air cool. With pleasure we covered ten kilometers in two hours. A kilometer beyond the village Swadzim there was a school. We thought we must have some rest and walked in.

Half a dozen teachers sat around the table and we enquired if we could have a few minutes, rest there.

“Why not? Please come in and take your seat”, one of them invited and started asking some questions.

“Who are you? Why did you come in?”, suddenly an elderly gentleman entered the room and thundered.

We tried to explain. “No, please go out. There is no place here to rest”, his sudden reaction was surprisingly disappointing and we left the place immediately. All the other teachers stood in stony silence..

“Should we go from here or sit somewhere else?” I asked Satish.

“No, let’s not go so quickly. Let’s sit under this tree on the grass, even if it be wet”, Thus we decided to sit on the roadside. In half an hour the bell rang and all the boys and girls came out.

“Dear comrades please come to my home”, a twelve year old boy came running and stood in front of us. He said his house was a kilometer behind on the way we had already trekked. “No, thank you very much. We are just having some rest, that’s all”, we replied. But he would not be satisfied. “I want you to come with me. My mother is at home, she too will be very happy to see you, Please come”. Then we followed

him.

As we entered the small village, people started looking at us. “Mummy, mummy, I have brought two guests from India. They are walking. They want to go to America. Quick, quick. Make coffee for them. They must go quickly”, the boy stated shouting as soon as we approached his house. The mother opened the door. “Comrades, keep your things on this table. Come along. Mummy, they say that in India it is not so cold. I’d like to go to India. My daddy is in Warsaw. I will tell him when he comes that you were my guests. He likes many guests, you know. Now come to my study. I want your address”. Without a break in his breath he went on speaking. The coffee and biscuits were ready. All of us sat together.

After ten minutes when we bade them farewell the boy said : “Please write to me from India. I shall come there oneday;,”

Rzapiń, June 3, 1963

Dzien Kvoph The Peasants’ Day

Today is our last day in Poland. These last two days have been the gayest and full of fun. In the typical Polish villages, among the peasants and workers and students, forgetting all fatigue, we lived happily.

When we approached the village Torzim a few people met us and directed us to the village club, where the Peasant’s Day was being celebrated. More than two hundred men and women, boys and girls had gathered there and the President of the administration welcomed us into their midst. “Today is a very important day for us. We are happy to have the guests from India on

this day.” It was afternoon. He ordered some of his colleagues to take all our things to his friend’s house and the young boys and girls took charge of us.

Dance, music, eating and drinking went on in full swing in the big hall. Escorted by a group of youngsters, when we entered the hall, everyone stared at us and the bands thundered louder and louder. “Would you join us for a drink ?” asked a gentleman. “No thanks, we don’t drink alcohol”. “Then Coffee”, “Of course we shall have some”, we replied.

“You are young fellows. You must dance with our girls”, a lean man came to us with a long glass of beer in hand and prompted the girls all around, to invite us. They hesitated in the beginning, but as time passed on we had to dance with at least half a dozen girls.

“I’ve seen some Indian films. Why don’t the men and women in Indian films kiss each other ?” one of them wanted to know. “I wish to go to India and live there”, said another.

At 1 a.m. the party was over and one of our companions accompanied us to our host’s. “Tomorrow is a holiday for me” she said. “What are you going to do ?” I enquired. “I’ll get up at noon, have lunch in a restaurant, a visit to the kaviarnia (cafe) and then on to the club in the evening.....” and she murmured a tune : “la...la...la...la...”.

GERMANY-THE BOILING POT

East Berlin, June 7, 1963

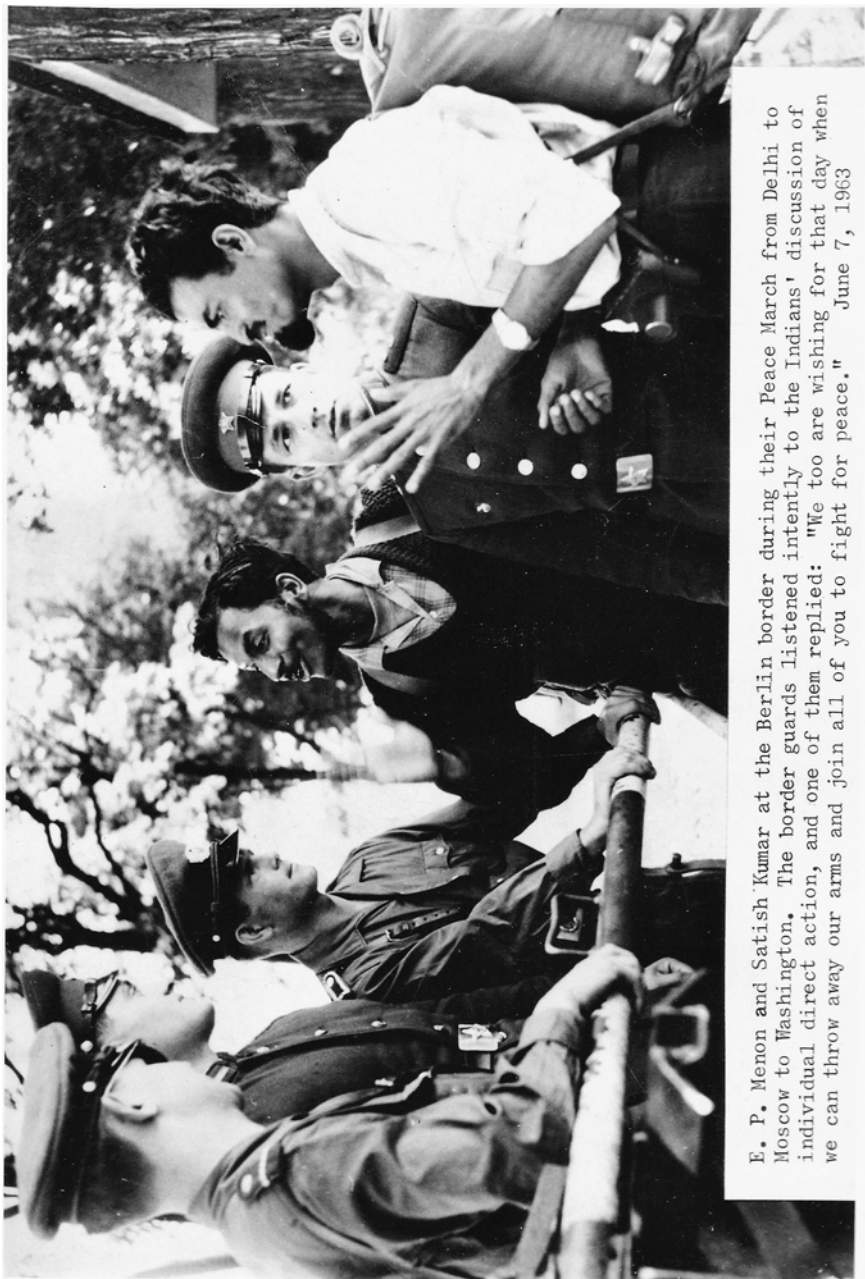
Direct action and decent response

I could never dream of sitting in a posh hotel suite in the small hours of the night to write long letters and delve into the memories of the past, in the midst of this great city, which happened to be the most important focal point of world’s attention twenty years ago. No, even now this place is a focal point of the world, for herein lies an invisible volcano which may erupt any moment to denote the beginning of the instantaneous end of human civilization. To think of the picturesque post of the year; through which I passed, right now, is an inspiration; but to imagine the dreadful future hanging upon the human race is a disappointment. So picking up the pleasing moments of the past let me tell you how, at last, we landed in Yohannishof Hotel this afternoon after a non-stop walk of 17 miles.

At 11 O’clock when we reached the border of the city, a group of soldiers, the city guards, Russians and Germans, inspected our documents. We entered into a nice conversation with them. They were curious to know all about our walk around the world without keeping a single kopek in our pockets. “We just can’t move about even for a day without money when we go on leave once a while”, one of them began.

“Vi gavarete po ruski ?”, the stout Russian soldier asked.

“Da, da, kanyeshna. Sichas mi ideom is Sovetskom Sayusa ?” (Of course, we can. Now we are coming from the Soviet Union). Then he too felt a great relief.



E. P. Menon and Satish Kumar at the Berlin border during their Peace March from Delhi to Moscow to Washington. The border guards listened intently to the Indians' discussion of individual direct action, and one of them replied: "We too are wishing for that day when we can throw away our arms and join all of you to fight for peace." June 7, 1963

"Did you like Russia ?", he asked.

"Yes, we liked it very much". Turning to the German I said : "Yes, you said you can't move about without money. That's true, for you are fighting for war; but we are fighting for peace."

"We are fighting for preserving peace, not for war", another one corrected.

"You can never preserve peace, by weapons. Only by a happy, peaceful people can peace be secured and preserved."

"That's right what you say", said the former. "We don't have any peace of mind, whether we are here at home or at the front. So we are wishing for the day when we can throw away all the arms and Join you in the fight for peace."

Then they wished us well and we proceeded in the bright sunshine. A big car slowly rolled along in front and stopped near us. Two gentlemen with beaming faces got out and greeted us : "Welcome to the city !"

We thanked them and expressed our inability to speak German. "Doesn't matter I can speak English", said one of them. "By the by, we have been sent by the Prime Minister's office to welcome you and inform you of certain things. The Prime Minister has received your letter two days ago and has already instructed the Deputy Prime Minister to receive you on his behalf. Since Comrade Grotowal, the Prime Minister, is not keeping well this arrangement has been made. On the 10th, Monday, at 9 a.m. your appointment has been fixed. Therefore, we are here to request you

not to march into the Prime Minister's office. Instead, we have already reserved a room for you in a hotel. If you feel like, we shall take you by car. Otherwise you may come there on foot and we shall wait for you." Everything happened unawares and to our satisfaction. "Thank you very much. We shall reach the hotel as early as possible. What's the distance?", we enquired.

"About eight Kilometres".

"All right. We shall be there by 1.30."

By now we know, to the minute, how many kilometers we can walk in an hour. One of the friends went back by car and the other joined us on foot. Enjoying good iced drinks, discussions and the magnificent Karl Marx Alley we forgot the distance, covering it so quickly as to reach at the stroke of 1.30.

The whole story seems to be a bit dramatic, doesn't it ? That's true; the story has a long trail behind it.

When we said "Good en tag" (Good day) to the German soil on the 4th it was already later in the afternoon and we never knew what was going to happen. At Warsaw, the Polish authorities had promised us that proper instructions would be given at the border, so that we won't face any difficulty in crossing into the German Democratic Republic. Similarly the GDR authorities told us that they had to consult Berlin and then necessary information would be given at the border. Once we do our duty, we never worry about the rest. Thus we had proceeded from Warsaw.

By the by, when I said German soil, don't mistake me

to be a narrow-minded nationalist. I am only referring to it in the traditional way. Otherwise my conviction is that it is all stupid to talk about the different 'soils' and 'motherlands' and 'fatherlands' when man is basically man everywhere- Only when we cease to think in terms of small dimensions can there be any real unity in the world.

On the Polish side of the river Oder the officials saw us off very quickly after a party. Crossing the bridge to this side we sat at the customs house while the officer wanted to confirm from the higher authorities by phone. Twenty minutes passed.

Then the Deputy Mayor of Frankfurt (Oder) and the representatives of the National Front and the Socialist United Party arrived to welcome us. "On behalf of the people of GDR we welcomed you. We want to live in peace, hence we are always behind you. We want to have a united Germany and live in friendship with all", said the Deputy Mayor. Then they accompanied us to the city, two kilometers away.

On the bank of the river there is a huge bell which rings on the first of every September, the international peace day. "You know many wars have been fought and borders have been changed. To stop all further disputes and wars we have now decided to recognize the rivers Oder and Neisse as the border between Germany and Poland once and for all. So we call this as Peace Border and this is the Peace Bell", explained one of our companions while we strolled by the river. Construction of buildings was going on everywhere and the city looked vacant in the evening.

In every capital we wanted to meet and discuss matters

with the Heads of State or the Prime Ministers. It normally took several days and a long correspondence to know the possibilities. Even then we could not meet any of the highest authorities except in Tehran. Therefore, we planned that our much-reserved direct action method must be adopted hereafter. There was no use in writing half a dozen letters and then hanging upon futile anticipation. Therefore, that very night we wrote a letter to the Prime Minister of the GDR requesting him to grant us an interview "on any day after the 7th ". Since indefinitely waiting was a problem and since we didn't know where to wait, whom to contact, we wrote that we would "straightway march into your office on the afternoon of the 7th. We had decided that unless we got an answer we would not budge an inch.

The next morning our comrades turned up at our hotel and we had breakfast together. Then we informed the Deputy Mayor : "We have written this letter to the Prime Minister. Now we would request you to suggest the best way by which this reaches the Premier at the earliest." "That's not at all a problem. Give it to me. I shall take care of it. I shall send a special messenger to Berlin and you can be sure that this reaches quickly", replied the Deputy Mayor.

Just before we reached Berlin, a young student kept company with us for about two hours. We wanted to know his views on the political and other conditions In East Germany.

"I am absolutely happy and free to tell you whatever I know," said the student. "Now I'm studying in the final High School. Next year I hope to go the University. I get a monthly stipend of 50 Marks. Also, I am working

in an industry as an apprentice."

"Our sector of Germany definitely lags behind the Western part in the economic field. May be 25 per cent difference will be there; hence our standard of living is comparatively lower than that of the West. But that's not the criterion. We have no problem of unemployment, lack of medical care etc. We know we have to work hard and then catch up with the West. In the GDR some people do feel that the other part is better and therefore they try to run away. Since they have lost their vested interests, they felt miserable. They cannot continue their former method of exploiting others. But I would blame our government also. They are not always quite correct in assuming things. They said that the GDR would equal West Germany in production by 1962, which did not happen."

He was a bit criticala Walter Ulbricht and commented: "I don't like all- the things he says. He is the only man who always speaks for the GDR. Our Prime Minister, Mr. Grotowal, is a brilliant man, but rarely comes into the picture.

"Do you know why our country had to suffer more?", he continued. "I put the blame on the German Youth, who were blind in following Hitler. He was a cruel man. He came and said to our youths : "You are the best in the world', and naturally the young generation, steeped in pride, lined behind him. Instead of making a good use of them he used them to plunder the whole country and the world. So we are suffering even now. However, hereafter I hope the German youth will think deeply before they act.

We had another interesting companion on the road

near Rudersdorf. A 78 year old man drove with his wife in the horsecart. Through his toothless mouth, in broken English, he chatted with us for half an hour. "I have visited America and other countries of Europe as a sailor. I have no politics in my head. I've seen people everywhere behaving in the same manner. So I was very happy everywhere. The difficulty with the modern world is that young people are too much involved in love affairs. Do you love anyone in Germany?" We all laughed. When we asked how he managed his life, he said: "Both of us together get a pension of 150 Marks per month. That's enough."

June 10, 1963

Four days in East Berlin

The Peace Council of GDR, our hosts, arranged several programmes for us. "Any visitor to Berlin would have a natural curiosity to have a look at the Wall. Hence let us first go there", suggested our friend, Mr. Arnold Munter. We drove to the famous Brandenburg gate.

On the left side of the wide road a small green hill is there.

"There lies the great Hitler underneath the hill", Munter said, It was the same spot where the Chancery stood and the Feuhrer directed the destiny of the innocent millions till the himself became a heap of dust.

As you cross the gate the Commander of the Wall Protection Force greets you and takes you to a hall where the whole history of the Wall will be explained through a short lecture followed by a film. "According to the Potsdam agreement between the four occupying powers three things should have been done:(1)

demilitarize the whole of Germany, (2) denazify the country and (3) create a unified democratised country. These things were not achieved. Instead, the Federal Republic of Germany was formed; a new currency was introduced; provocations and occasional shooting and smuggling increased. In order to prevent such things and possible infiltration and advance of troops and tanks, we built the Wall overnight on the 13th of August 1961."

The actual Wall built in concrete and granite runs through the city 16 kilometers in length, 1.5 to 2.5 meters in height and 1.5 meters in thickness. The rest of the 'Wall' is a barbed-wire fencing running around the whole of West Berlin measuring 145 kilometers.

In the evening we joined a group of young men in the Club of Young Talents. Orchestra and dancing went on smoothly. We occupied a table in the company of 3 boys and two girls from GDR, and two boys from the FGR.

"Could you come to this side without any difficulty?" we enquired of the boys from the Western sector.

"Yes, we could. These are my close friends. I have come to spend a few days with them," the Research Scholar replied. Then we talked about the youth-activities and Peace Movement.

"Today you are intimate friends. Suppose tomorrow you are called upon by your governments to fight against each other over the Berlin problems. Both of you face each other with guns, then what will you do?"

"I will Shoot at him", replied the Research Scholar

from FGR.

“I don’t think I can shoot at him. Possibly I will throw away the gun. Though we are divided, we are Germans. Then he is my friend, how can I think of killing him ?” answered the boy from the GDR.

“You boys always are interested in politics. Have a drink and dance”, one of the girls suggested.

“We don’t drink or dance normally.”

“Yeah, I know”, said the other girl. “In your country girls dance alone.”

The gossip was over by 8 p.m. and we returned to our hotel. One could always feel a sort of tension in Berlin. The sort of questions and discussions about the Wall, the barbed-wires, check posts, and the like would fill the mind of a visitor. In spite of everything, the city lay calm and settled and the theatres, cinemas, clubs and restaurants were over-flowing with crowds.

A visit to the museum, where the Nazi crimes are exhibited in picture, charts and by actual evidence, would melt the heart of any one. A model of Hitler’s Concentration Camp, the head-choppers and gas-chambers would depict the brutalities of the Nazis. All the evidence that is available will drive us to the conclusion that it was not Hitler alone who should be condemned. A vast industrial-profit complexity was always behind Hitler, perpetually assisting him throughout his dramatic rise and inevitable downfall. Big industrialists used to give enormous financial contributions to him. In turn Hitler gave them orders to produce armaments to the maximum, by which

they could get unlimited profits. The famous Krupp was a great supporter of Hitler. Hitler could get enough help from many capitalists of other European countries too. American and British businessmen and politicians also helped the building up of Nazism indirectly. All the time they had only one intention, to fill their pockets. Finally when Hitler organized his massive plan to capture the whole of Europe and Russia, they had to turn against him.

What do all these things show? The rich always play their cards for selfish gains. It was the imperialistic capitalist society that produced Hitler; so why should we blame one man alone?

Meeting the Deputy Premier

At last Monday morning came. Dr. Lothar Bolz, the Deputy Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister of GDR, welcomed us to his chamber at 9. During the half hour interview only one topic could be discussed. “Now we are going to the West. Naturally at Bonn also we will try to meet the Chancellor and ask the same question as we were asking you. We would like to know what is the solution to the Berlin problem according to GDR.”

“Since I am deputed to discuss with you”, replied Dr. Bolz, “I am here to state that the GDR stands for the peaceful solution of the whole problem. We have put forward several proposals all these years, but the FGR seems to be adamant. First of all they never acknowledge the existence of the 17 million people in East Germany ! They don’t want to discuss with us. Now you are going to Bonn. Ask the Chancellor if he would come out of the Nato Alliance. We shall get out

of the Warsaw Pact and then both the government of GDR and FGR shall sit together and decide our future.”

“What do you think of Non-violent People’s Organisation instead of an army, to demand of the FGR to come for negotiation? Let the people march into the FGR under your leadership.”

“That sort of thing won’t work at all. If we do so they won’t mind putting the whole lot of us in prison. Will your country do such a thing against Pakistan to solve the Kashmir problem ? Would you suggest Nehru to march into Pakistan?” he asked.

He expressed his appreciation of the nuclear-disarmament movement and the Peace march and concluded : “It is good for the common people, particularly the youth, to undertake such actions and work for world unity and peace. We want an absolutely demilitarized and de-nuclear Germany and Europe. Then only the impending calamity can be averted.”

In the afternoon we joined a group of 200 visitors from West Germany on a pleasure trip in the Berlin lakes. They had been there on their way back from Moscow. The beautiful motor launch cruised through the network of lakes for five hours, with music, band, eating and drinking. One lady warned us: “In our part of the country you may not get any support from the Government. Perhaps they may be against you. Still, we are there to welcome you.”

With a visit to the opera, our East Berlin life can be concluded, “Not a single day our cultural centers are

vacant. People work hard and enjoy life”, Munter said, when we returned after mid-night.

West Berlin, June 12, 1963

Inside the Wall

For the last six months we were in different world, a world where no glamour of advertisement catches your eye, no make-believe propaganda of business organizations grips your imagination. Not an inch of advertisement did we see in a newspaper either in Moscow or at Warsaw. No sign boards advertising the glory of beverages, chocolates, fabrics or soaps did I see in any of the Socialist countries. From New Delhi to the Soviet Border we saw colourful bill-boards of Coca Cola or Canada dry. The moment we crossed the check-point here the colourful bill-boards of Coca Cola and beer and cosmetics could be seen everywhere. Now we emerged into the ‘free world’.

We walked through the crowded streets asking the direction to the office of the Mayor. Four persons were digging at the roadside and doing some repairs. They directed us and asked : “Where are you coming from?”

“From India”.

“Why are you walking?”

“Well; we are walking to Washington. We went to Moscow too”

“Moscow! Did you go there? How is Khrushchev? Oh wonderful. We hope one day we can go there. We like Communists”.

The Peace Bell was tolling on top of the Red House while we stepped into the long corridors of the Mayor's Office.

"Why should that bell toll now?" we enquired of a man in uniform who strolled up and down the corridor.

He couldn't talk English easily. Yet, he made us understand in broken words. "It rings everyday at noon. You know, it is a gift from America".

Our interest in meeting the Mayor was to ask some questions regarding the Berlin problem. To spend one or two days, if necessary, was another problem since there was no organization or individual with whom we had contacts. As typical to the system of a democratic bureaucracy, where everyone tends to shift his or her responsibility on the other, we were sent from room to room to find out for ourselves the when and where of everything. The Receptionist took us to the office assistant, he sent us to the department protocol from where we were directed to the press department and finally we landed in the office of one Miss Kornig who was kind enough to ask us to 'Please sit down', and phoned up here and there for information regarding the Mayor.

"The Mayor is in the USA at present and the Deputy Mayor is out of Berlin. He will be back in two days and I shall try to get an interview for you", she concluded and started evincing interest in our project.

"That's very kind of you. But we must wait for two days. We have no place to stay".

"How did you spend the days in the Eastern sector?"

"There, of course the Peace Committee arranged everything for us".

"Let me see what can be done". She took the phone again. "All right. I have requested the Information Department to find out some accommodation for you. Please go there", and she gave the address.

The painters and workmen who were busy on the imposing Red House glanced over their shoulders while we walked down the stairs, to ask : "Tourists?". "Nicht, Frieden Marsch", we replied and asked why they were so busy working on the building. One of them quickly pulled up his trousers and came forward : "Kennedy coming Berlin. We good repair". Obviously, the whole Berlin city was putting up a new show to give a grand appearance to the visiting American President in the near future. We walked into the crowded streets. Inside glass-windows all sorts of articles of luxury were exhibited with price-tags which drew our attention. Even though we had no money or no need of anything, curiosity made us stop to look into the glass-cases. "Everything seems to be pretty cheap here, Satish", I said. Naturally. That's why the Reuter's representative in Moscow drove the other day all the way to Berlin for 'shopping' ". 'Well, in East Berlin our friends were saying that any articles could be available damn cheap in West Berlin compared to the other cities of the world". Eventually we started experiencing and realizing some of the inner facts in the explanation given by the East Berlin authorities for the erection of the wall. "Currency devaluation, cheap-marketing etc. are some of the tactics adopted by the West to attract us", one of our hosts had said in the Eastern Sector.

At last we reached the Information Department. It took two hours for them to find out a place for us to stay after a series of telephonic contacts. By 6 p.m. a nice old couple and their active young daughter, Miss Schubert, welcome us to their home.

The Information Department had arranged a sight-seeing in the city. In the morning Miss Renata Antonio, a good looking blonde greeted us at the Information Office. She spoke excellent English. The very term 'Communists' and the 'GDR' used to redden her face. Taking us to the Wall she explained : "They have been keeping us as prisoners inside the wall. We can't tolerate it. They've made their sector of the land a virtual concentration camp and the people are being tortured like anything".

"What would happen if the whole of Berlin city should be united and the Communists ruled?", I asked.

"I would better die than be a Communist", she threw her clenched fist down on the seat and started abusing the Communists.

The whole afternoon we spent walking here and there and talking to someone or the other. The fabulously rich and depressingly disappointed people could be seen as in any other so called free city in the world. The volumes and volumes of propaganda literature that are put up by the West Berliners against the East Germans are too much for any intelligent and dispassionate person to digest. After viewing the entire situation from both sides, hearing from people and officials from both sides, I am only wondering : 'How did the great Wall come into existence?' An introspection by the West Berliners and their bosses

will better provide the answer.

Magdeburg, June 18, 1963

"Men become mindless !"

On the 13th, we had hoped to meet the Deputy Mayor of West Berlin, as was promised. But disappointment gloomed over our faces when Miss Koring told us at the last moment : "I'm sorry to inform you that the second Mayor has not yet come. Even if he comes today I don't think he'd be able to meet you". We did not want to wait any more. Except the good hosts, the Schubert family, nothing particular in West Berlin impressed us, because everything wore a colour of show and glamour. However, with a disgusted mind we walked off from West Berlin, which I would call a show-case of the Western world, on that afternoon again to reach the East German territory by nightfall. A big city of 400 sq. miles in area, full of lakes, forests and parks, with a population of over 4 million, Berlin is said to have been founded in the 13th century. The thin and marshy nature of the soil in the vicinity gives an impression that the peasants, fishermen and merchants played a very important role in the foundation and development of the city. In spite of a pleasant happy nature of the whole city, the 20th century civilization of mankind had definitely made the city, a simple boiling pot of all tension and tug-of-war. One amazing thing I noticed was, while in the Eastern sector, I did not find a Soviet national flag fluttering anywhere, in the Western sector at many points the national flags of three great Western powers the U.S.A., U.K. and France could be seen fluttering gloriously. German nationalism cannot tolerate this for ever.

The moment we reached the check-point at the city limit the East German border-guards welcomed us to their visitors' room. A woman official came to enquire as to how our feet cooperated with us in the Russian snow. After a few minutes rest and gossip we went to Potsdam and spent the night in a school guest house. The Peace Committee had arranged our stay there.

A visit to the Cecilienhof Castle, in Potsdam at the outskirts of Berlin would be very interesting. In a plot of 20 acer green garden-land, the Crown Prince of Prussia, Wilhem Ofhonsolon, built this castle in the years 1914-16, at a cost of 8 million Marks. It was in this Castle the historic Potsdam Conference took place between the allies in 1945. They had planned to crush Germany and divide it in several ways. A very deplorable plan had been submitted by Kaufman of America in 1941. According to that plan 'sterilization of all Germans' was one of the ways to make Germany never rise again!

The other day I asked a young lady at Genthin : "If anyone in the Federal Republic offers you a better job with a higher income, would you go there?"

"No, I wouldn't like to", she said.

"Why not?"

"Because money is not the most important matter for me. I believe in the principles of Socialism, though I know that in the FGR I can get a better salary. But for how many? Only a few can enjoy better than the others. Here we have less economic and social disparity".

Another day I asked a young engineer: "Would you like to go and live in West Germany if given a chance?" He replied: "No, I don't want to go and live there because it is more militaristic that the East, though I may have better economic advantages. The social justice I like in the GDR, but I don't like the Boss of our Government, Mr. Walter Ulbricht".

Another man, 50 years old, was particularly interested in discussing the possibility of the success of any non-violent action against Hitler. "First of all no one in Germany tried to organize such a mass-movement against him. That was our mistake", he said. He had been a soldier in the Nazi army when the second war broke out.

"Can you kindly tell me what you felt at that time? Did you really think that you were right?", I asked.

"First of all I had no mind to feel anything", he put on a remorseful face. "I can only say that I never gave serious thought to whatever I was doing, or for what I was asked to do. We were all injected with enthusiasm, spirit, courage and pride that we were the best in the world. In the beginning, as and when we advanced and country after country fell under our feet we were really thrilled with joy. Thus we reached upto the Caucasus. Our front line was from Leningrad to the Black Sea, so long and thinly guarded. Then I started doubting about our future. Within a few days the Red Army started pushing us back. The Allied Forces attacked from all sides. I was sent to the French front. In a short while we were utterly defeated and I fell into the French prison. Then only I began thinking seriously. The more I thought, the more I got convinced that we had all been mindless

fools in the hands of Hitler. He was like a magician. I was released in 1947, came down to my village and became a school teacher.

“What is the lesson you thus learned?”

“It’s easy to say. Men become mindless when they are soldiers”.

Morsleben, June 21, 1963

The last supper inside the “Curtain”

In East Germany also we met groups of people on the way, in the schools, in families and exchanged views. Places like Burg, Magdeburg, Morsleben etc. remain for ever in our memory. Let me note down the personal conversations with different types of people.

We visited a washing soda factory which employed 1,000 workers, one afternoon. A young lady took us round the plant. When I asked if she was happy with her work she replied : “I get 350 Marks per month. I am happy and gay with it”.

“Dear friends”, said an old worker, “don’t think that everything in our country is good. We have our bad sides too. Politicians will always give you good pictures. It’ll take some more years for us to come to the level of our brothers in the Western side. But I don’t regret; I like Socialism, though I don’t like some of our leaders”.

Maize, fruits, potatoes, vegetables and flowers are grown in this area. Every home has a garden. Young people mostly ride motor cycles.

Students, soldiers, fire-service men and children welcomed us to the city of Magdeburg which had been greatly damaged in the second War. The members of the National Front arranged our stay in the Government guest house. That evening we had a meeting with a group of people.

An old woman said : “As a mother, who has suffered and who has seen 12,000 people’s death in a single night in this city, I would do everything in my capacity to prevent war for ever. We look to India to take a lead for world peace and disarmament”.

“I remember Nehru’s ailing wife under treatment in a sanatorium in the Black forest 28 years ago. She had explained to me how political leaders were suffering in India and how their wives and other patriotic women joined the freedom fight. It was from that young lady that I got much inspiration. So I have come here to see you and say that I hate war and colonialism”, another woman expressed her feelings emotionally.

An ex-war-officer and at present a lawyer got up to tell us : Do you ever think that we can again embrace that Krupp or kneel down in front of him who had manufactured and supplied arms to Britain with which they killed thousands of Germans in the first war ? That factory which employed 12,000 workers to produce arms is now producing small machines. It will never go back to his hands again.”

“Would you like to go and work in a private factory?”, I asked a worker aged 55 in a lathe factory. “I was working in a capitalist factory before the war. Then I was getting 250 Marks per month. Now I get 500. Life is happier now for me. More than anything else,

we are our own masters now. I have travelled in the United States, Cuba and France too. But I prefer to work and die here”.

A pretty girl was cleaning and painting the parts of an old machine. She pretended to be a bit shy, but vanished within moments when I asked her : “Do you speak English ?”

“Yes, little, little”.

“How far did you study ?”

“I did my High School. Then I worked in an office for a year”.

“Then why did you leave that job and come here ?”

“In the office I was earning only 200 Marks. Now here I get 400. Moreover, I like this kind of work more than office work.”

When we reached Morsleben this afternoon a group of school kids joined company for over two miles. A young lady from Magdeburg who is an active member in the National Front came to inform us : “I have already informed the border-guards that you will be crossing into the FGR tomorrow morning”. She and other friends were very eager to take us to a department store in Magdeburg for buying us a new pair of trousers. “Whether you need them or not, we want to present these to you”, they insisted.

It was in the home of Elizabeth that we had our last supper in the GDR. Her husband is a young Engineer. We had a nice discussion on various topics. “The old

and conservative men in the GDR still cherish many private hopes of the olden days. Though we want Socialism, it will take time to have a firm Socialistic Society”, he said.

“What do people generally think of Water Ulbricht?”

“People think in different ways. However, he is a slightly hard man”.

“What is the desire of the people here generally ?”

“Our people want, first of all, that all armies should go away from Germany. We want neither the Yankees nor the Evans to sit on our shoulders. Then we will have a free election to choose our own way of life and government. After all, the Russians are the victors; therefore, many people still don’t like them, though they are our good friends now”. Then he asked us to convey his good wishes to the West Germans, for “we are, after all, brothers”.

Suplingen, June 22, 1963

First day in the “Free World”

We have spent about six months in the Socialist countries. The three-days, stay in the ‘show-case’ of the West was a sudden change. Again a week’s sojourn through the villages of GDR revitalized us to a climax and yesterday evening a group of people came with flowers to bid us farewell.

Today morning when we started, our hosts handed over two packets. “This is food for you. You don’t know when and where you will reach”.

“But you know, so far we have never carried any food with us. When we leave a place we never bother about the next. But everything has gone well till occasional inconveniences. So we need not carry this”, we replied. “You are very confident; but we would feel happy and satisfied only if you took this”. At last to satisfy them, we accepted the packets.

The grand motorway (autobahn) ran through the panoramic greenfields and bushes which glistened in the morning sunshine. A long line of cars and military trucks very slowly glided and this indicated thorough inspection at the notorious check-point. Passengers from West Berlin are supposed to pass through the corridor to the West without any delay. On both the ends vehicles are checked.

As we proceeded towards the check-post two high officials of the GDR Border Command greeted us at their office. They accompanied us to the point where the three big flags of the U.S.A., France and Britain fluttered high. “Have a happy march. Come back again. Auf wiedersehen (good-bye)”, they said.

By noon we reached the first city in the FGR, Helmstedt, and wanted to see the Mayor. Four young students guided us. For the first time in our journey the Mayor of a city did not even show the courtesy to ask us to sit down and speak a few words ! Another young man invited us to his press-bureau for an interview. Then he wanted to show us the border fencing along which the ‘Communists have planted mines so that no one should escape into the West !” Leaving Helmstedt at 1 p.m., on the way, we had our lunch which we carried from the GDR. By evening, it began to rain. On reaching Supplingen we went to the

police station and the officer arranged for our stay in a hotel.

Hannover, June 28, 1963

Out of track

I had a young friend in Hannover who had visited India three years ago and who happened to be one of the most active members in the Peace Movement in West Germany. I had written to him from Warsaw. He was expecting us; but we received no communication to that effect from him. Once we left Berlin, the date of our arrival or crossing the border etc. could not be decided properly, because we could not draw up a schedule. Therefore, after entering the FGR we kept on our schedule without any stress on time, place and date. Everything depended upon the prospective hosts and conveniences. Unlike the reception in Socialist countries, no one waited for us, no press, radio and TV bothered about our march. Sometimes people would scorn at us because we had been to the Eastern Sector. Sometimes people would offer us a few coins! When we explained to them that we were not walking to beg and we did not need any money, they would put up a long face and stand astonished. We were absolutely our own masters. By evening we would reach a town and try to see the Mayor or a professor or a priest or a police-officer. Normally one of them would be located and our accommodation problem would be settled. Youth Hostels and Police people used to be good sources of help.

Previously, I have spoken about a group of West German friends with whom we had a boat-cruise in the Berlin lakes. Half a dozen of them had taken particular interest in our march through the FGR and

requested us to let them, know our programme. "You must be careful. In our country the authorities will be always against your activities", they had warned. Mrs. De Vris is a very active, intelligent middle-aged woman who devotes her whole time for the Peace Movement and other social activities in Germany. She had written to her good friend, the President of the Friends' Peace Committee, in Hannover about us. Therefore, Mr. Christoph, was awaiting our arrival. One of the best fighters for peace and disarmament, Waldemar Christoph introduced us to the Quakers, students' groups and other members in the Youth Club. "I shall contact my friends on your route to Bonn so that they will be able to organize things for you", said Mr. Christoph and arranged our stay in a fine hotel. Thus for the first 4-5 days in FGR we were a bit out of track.

Bonn, July 19,1963

The youth in a dilemma

In general our march from Hannover to Bonn turned out to be quite interesting and full of experiences. From Hannover we had made a trip to Hamburg by train to meet a group of young friends who had organized a meeting. The War Resisters International had already printed thousands of our leaflets. Returning to Hannover again we started on foot for Bonn. On a few occasions we could meet the youth in small groups or individuals. But language had been a problem. Yet, one could make out the feelings of the other. "Because there are many Americans here we learn English quickly", said a young man.

"Do you like the American army in Germany ?", we asked. "Not at all. But we must fight the Communists",

he replied. "That means another war, no ?"

"May be, if necessary. See, the Russians are occupying our territory. They want to make us slaves."

"But they say that the Americans are occupying West Germany. This dispute will go on. So what is the solution ?"

"Only one solution, that is that we must destroy Communism."

"Will you be able to do it?", I asked.

"That's what we are trying to do".

On another occasion a young man drove his car from the opposite direction. Slowly he stopped in front of us to ask : "Vi gavarite po Rush ?" (Do you speak Russian ?) We wondered, how he could ask us that question in Russian ? He was smiling gently. "Da, malo mi gavarim", we replied. (Yes, we speak a little). Quickly he switched over to English and pointed to the placard in our hands and raised his voice. "You are Communists. The Russians have made you fools. You can't make us fools here. We shall teach them a lesson". Without waiting for any reply, he drove away. One afternoon a young student riding his bicycle stopped by our side. "It is interesting that you went to Russia and spoke to them of the non-violent resistance and unilateral disarmament. How did you find the people here?" he asked.

"Well, the people are good here too. But here we find more opposition to our views", we replied.

"Naturally, you could expect it. Our's is a military state, you know".

"But we wonder, haven't the people in Germany yet learnt the painful lessons of militarism ? What is your personal view ?"

"We will never learn until we are smashed for ever. After the war Hitler is still alive in various forms. You can find many Nazi criminals occupying high positions in the Federal Government. They are all revenge seekers. But I would not join the permanent army, though I had to have the compulsory training. There are many people in our country who look towards India and Nehru, because we are convinced that only India can show a new path to the world. I know, India is also caught up in a struggle now; but Nehru is a human being with a heart, unlike many other politicians. Non-violent peaceful co-existence is the solution for the world. I am happy to see you coming from the land of Gandhi. Only Indians can do such things". Then he wanted to know where we would spend that night.

"In this town there are some members of the War Resisters' International. They are going to be our hosts."

"Well, I know about that organization. But they too have some split among themselves. Rightists and Leftists among them got separated, though they are trying to work out things together".

"That's true. We don't appreciate that division, yet one can't help it. However, we have decided to be with both the groups. We are members of this

organization whose head-quarters is in London. Here in Germany, the German Section of the WRI has already undertaken the responsibility of helping and co-operating with us. Look at these leaflets, they have printed it in Hamburg. Thus we are trying to be with both the wings".

"Wish you all the best. I have to hurry up for my class", he pedalled away.

During the Easter vacation thousands of German youth organize mass rallies against militarism, military pacts in which the FGR is involved and other dangerous policies of their Government. Easter March has become a permanent way of demonstration all over the country. This year it had 50,000 members as participants. Their strength is increasing.

"What is the main cause of the division in the WRI?" one day I asked a lady member. "It's not very difficult to find out", she said. "One section of the members feel that only when capitalism is abolished and socialism is established, can one put an end to war and militarism. But the others think that by persuading the power-mongers and by preserving our so called Free World, we can eliminate wars. This is impossible".

In Germany vegetarianism is another growing aspect of life. Sitting in an excellently organized vegetarian restaurant in Hannover we had an interesting conversation with a couple of friends. "How could you survive in Russia with your vegetarianism ?" an old lady asked. "Only vegetables were in shortage due to the climate. But we could have enough milk, cheese, eggs, canned foods etc.", we replied. "Here you have

plenty of vegetables. Do you consider egg as vegetarian diet ?", she asked.

"Not quite so; just like milk. Please tell me, are there many vegetarians in Germany ?"

"Not many, but their number is increasing. That's why we have fine restaurants, which are always crowded. Our Hitler was a vegetarian too !"

"Do you mean to say that his 'brilliancy' was due to that ?" "I don't know. Some people do say that. What about Bernard Shaw?"

Then she said there was a Yoga School going on upstairs, Another person commented : "We are trying to adopt many of the good things of India. We are attracted to Gandhiji's theory of non-violence and education. He is the greatest man of the country". Then I told them how a young engineering student from Hannover had been corresponding with me for a long time who finally came to India to live with us in Bangalore in 1962. After a year he turned into a Yogi and now I hear that has gone away to some part in North India.

Dortmund, Essen, Dussldorf, Koln, these are the important cities through which we passed before reaching Bonn. In all these places the pacifist friends and members of the WRI arrangad accomodation and group meetings. It became evident that the political police of the Federal Government had been on watch over our activities. One afternoon suddenly a couple of plain-cloth officers got down from the car to enquire: "Where are you going today ?"

"We'll be camping in Essen tonight".

"What are you intending to do there ?"

"Our programme is being worked out by our hosts".

"Would you please give their names ?"

"Of course", and we gave the names and addresses.

"What sort of leaflets are you distributing ?"

"Here they are", we handed over a couple of them.

"Who is responsible for this ?"

"We ourselves. Of course, our friends in Hamburg have helped us to get these printed".

"All right. Thank you", they said and drove away. That evening when we arrived, our host-family said: "There was some anonymous telephone enquiry about your movements and programme". On some other occasions too our prospective hosts used to get advance information and enquiries regarding us.

A picnic in the forest.

"You have walked a long way today. Therefore for two days you must have good rest. I won't leave you otherwise", insisted Mrs. De Vris that evening when we arrived at Dusseldorf after treking 23miles. "23 miles are nothing to us now", we said. That day she walked with us about five miles from the outskirts of the city. She had come to welcome us. She had been taking all motherly care of us. Wherever possible she

informed her friends to meet us and render whatever help was necessary. By the time we reached Dusseldorf a comfortable suite in a nice hotel was reserved. "If you stay at my home or with any other family you will have very little time of your own. You must have good rest and ample free time. So better stay in a hotel", she said. She and her friends organized some group meetings.

On the third day, they had organised a grand summer fete of the WRI members in a beautiful garden restaurant about 20 miles away from the din of the city. The initial calm of the party eventually vanished in the progressive rhythm of the melodious music and dance. "Now you must enter the arena", the brilliant, humorous, direct-actionist friend, Mr. Schumacher, caught hold of our hands and suggested.

"I'm suffering from a bit of cold and caught, so please excuse me. Moreover, I don't know how to dance", said Satish. "I too don't know how to dance. The Russians taught us only very little, that too we're forgetting", I explained. "Nothing doing, your friends will teach you", he passed judgement and jumped into the crowd of dancing couples.

Elke and Margaret had been our companions at the dinner table and now it fell to their lot to be our teachers. The orchestra vibrated the atmosphere again. We soon realized that we were dancing without proper gestures or steps. Half an hour later, as the drum thundered at its maximum and came to a stop abruptly, slender Margaret and I found ourselves occupying the solitary chair left in the centre of the hall. The momentary silence followed by a long applause and announcement : "Margaret and Menon

won the prize", and we were handed over a purse ! We were 13 pairs and 12 chairs when the dance started. The whole credits goes to you, Margaret.

The next morning when we got ready for the long march of 28 miles to Koln both Margaret and Elke called at our hotel and walked some distance.

Direct action at the Chancellery

As soon as we entered the Federal Republic of Germany we wrote to the Chancellor about our intention of meeting him at Bonn. We got no reply. As in the GDR, we had planned to reach the Chancellery on the 15th of July afternoon and seek the interview. Accordingly, at the exact hour we reached the gate and contacted the officials. After enquiries and phone-rings here and there, they asked us to contact them again the next day. When we approached them on the 16th an unusual reply was awaiting us. "The Chancellor's office has asked me to tell you", said the middle-aged officer, "that due to political reasons, Dr. Adenauer will not be able to grant you an interview".

Two days we racked our brains in a single thought : what to be done ! At last on the 18th we wrote to the Chancellor.

".....Since we want to place before the Governments the feelings and aspirations of the common people and since we have failed to do so in the Federal Republic, as a token of protest and in order to express our sincere feelings, we have decided to observe a demonstration in front of the Chancellery on Friday, the 19th instant, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Ours will be a peaceful demonstration and leafletting standing at

the gates of the Chancellery. Therefore we request your excellency kindly to take note of this.”

At the appointed hour both of us stood at the gates with two placards in hand on which was inscribed: “No military Pacts, No Atom Bombs”, and “Peace March Delhi Moscow Washington”. The bundles of leaflets we kept with us to distribute to the passers-by. In fifteen minutes two gentlemen in plain clothes approached us and demanded : “Please go away from here. It is prohibited to make any demonstration within a radius of one mile of the Chancellery”.

“We are sorry, we cannot go away till 5 p.m.”

“We shall be forced to call the police and remove you”.
“We have nothing to say”.

The passers-by on the road stopped here and there to see. The cars and buses slowed down and innumerable eyes fell upon’ us. The officers quickly took note of the situation. They demanded the placards and leaflets to be handed over to them. We refused. Physical force was the only alternative. In two three minutes a scuffle took place and we were easily ‘disarmed’, Off went the placards and bundles from our hands and the two of them withdrew into the Chancellery saying : “When you go you may take this if you want”. Without any trouble we stood for eight hours in the blazing sun and our friends started calling on us with refreshments. Though the Indian Embassy, at the instance of the Chancellor’s Secretariat, wanted to persuade us to withdraw from the demonstration, we did not feel like giving it up till 5 p.m.

It is only when one starts doing something that one

can expect some result out of it. Even if results are not achieved, you have the satisfaction that you have acted according to your conviction.

Aachan, July 23, 1963

Three Companions

On the 7th midnight someone knocked at the door of our hosts, the Willardts. “Where are the two Indian marchers staying ?” asked the stranger. “Where do you come from ? What do you want ?” enquired our host. That evening we had supper with an architect’s family in the countryside and decided to stay overnight in his country-home. Therefore the stranger was told that we were not available immediately and the next morning we could be met. “I am here to join them in their march upto Bonn if they would let me”, he explained to them.

Next morning Mr. and Mrs. Fritz drove us to the city for a press conference, lunch and group meeting, as planned, and it was only in the afternoon we started on our walk to Bochum. Then our young friend introduced the stranger of the night to us. “He is Mr. Thomas who wants to join your march.”

“Fine, let him join. We want as many youngmen as possible”, we replied. The 17 year old Thomas was a brilliant student in the High School when thousands of youth in Hamburg and elsewhere went down to the streets with placards and leaflets to march to the Capital protesting their government’s military Policies and other suppressive measures. “I decided to join them, though my parents were against it”, Thomas explained to us about his previous activities. “What

convinced you that this sort of action will be useful ?” we wanted to hear his view-point.

“There was a time”, continued Thomas, “ I have read in our history, when young Germans forgot everything in their lives and plunged into the battle-field at the reckless call of Hitler. The world had to suffer the consequences. So I believe that we have to do quite the opposite now. Next year I may be drafted for military service. I am going to refuse. I have read about Gandhi’s non-cooperation movement. I believe in that sort of thing. When common people think and refuse to do what they feel is wrong, that is the beginning of peace”. Then onwards Thomas was with us for ten days.

A week later we reached Koln. That evening our hosts at Koln had organized some programme. We had to reach by 7 p.m. and therefore walked at a stretch from Dusseldorf. By the time we entered the city, it started raining. Yet we hurried through. Some one suddenly began clapping from the cafe on the roadside and ran into the rain to catch up with us. “Are you the two who left India a year ago ?” he asked. “Yes, we are. What do you want ?”

“I am very happy to meet you so unexpectedly. Only yesterday I read in some paper and saw your photographs. I am a student in Stuttgart. I’ll be going back to India after a couple of years.”

“What are you doing here ?”, we enquired.

“I’ve just come here today for visiting my friends. After two days I want to go back. Will you be coming to Stuttgart ?”

“No, because we would be taking a straight route to Brussels.”

“Where will you stay tonight ? Why should you walk this rain ?”

“We have got the address of a friend with whom we’re going to stay. We have to be there at 7.00 p.m; rain doesn’t matter, time matters. We’re sorry, you too are getting drenched.

“Well, don’t worry about me, When you have walked for a year braving every adversity of nature, I’m happy to walk with you for some time. I shall show you the way to your host’s.”

Shiv Kumar walked with us in the rain. He knew ‘German very well. We didn’t have to worry about enquiring the direction. All the three of us were completely wet by the time we got into the comfortable home of our young host, Nils Genrich.

“You must also join us for dinner”, Nil’s parents invited Shiv Kumar. That night he said good-bye to us only to meet again the next morning. At the appointed time Shiv Kumar joined us to have a pleasure ride over the Rhine river in the ‘air-ship’. He almost forgot, rather ignored, all about his returning to Struttgart and other business here. He became our inseparable companion as long as we remained in West Germany for the remaining ten days.

Interested in the industrial progress of India, Shiv Kumar cherishes excellent ideas of organizing new enterprises of a co-operative basis. “I must return to

India and devote myself to her services”, with this hope he studies in Germany, quite at home and happy.

On the 16th of July when I went to the Indian Embassy to pick up the mail the receptionist said : “Here is an urgent telegram for you”, It read : “Like to go with you. Give route on Friday, Saturday, Sunday-Elke.”

“Look at this”, I told the smart girl at the reception desk who showed keen interest in the Peace March. “This is from a girl like you in Dusseldorf “. She was astonished. “Is she going to Washington?”, she asked.

“No, no, just for a few days only.”

On the 19th afternoon when we were standing at the gate of the Chancellery the dark-haired damsel, Elke, arrived. Her childlike face was with a sweet smile and perspiration streaming down; she was as enthusiastic as in the forest picnic party. But I doubted if her tender feet would carry her 20 miles a day !

Unfortunately, the very first day of our march from Bonn turned to be unexpectedly adverse. For the first time in our march that night it was 1 a.m. when we could find some accommodation. For the first time in her life, Elke had to undergo such an unforgettable experience full of indefiniteness, pain, sweat and suffering. Yet at midnight when she operated the blisters on her feet and water oozed out and I applied the ointments, she wore the same sweet inspiring smile.

It so happened that we had to walk 24 miles to reach hiskerchin, where some one was supposed to meet us. He was not available, when we reached in the evening

and we had to search for other lodging. The Youth Hostel was full to capacity, A club and a church, we tried, but of no avail. Till 11 p.m. we wandered here and there, unsuccessful, and at last called at the police station. “Let us see”, said the stout officer in uniform and rang up an old man, ‘who is a bit influential in the city’. At last he came and took us to a place where four beds were provided by midnight. For the next three days also Elke walked for some distance, hitch-hiked for the rest and thus remained in the team till we said good-bye to Germany.

A sleepless night and painful stories

It happened in the home of a nice hospitable doctor and his wife who played hosts to us one day before we reached Aachan. We had walked 20 miles. Elke was very much exhausted. The doctor’s wife welcomed us on the road and we happily settled down at home by 6 p.m.

Being very busy in his profession, when the doctor came home it was late. All of us had finished our dinner and were engaged in gossip and discussion. When the doctor and some neighbours also joined us the entire atmosphere warmed up and the coffee boiler was brought to the middle of the living room.

In the evening, as soon as we entered the beautiful home of our hosts, the articles that decorated the walls in the front room had thrilled me to curiosity. Shields and daggers, bayonets and pistols, spears and knives, bear-skins and leather-whips, were some of the important articles. I couldn’t make out the how and why of anything. But, I must find out, I thought. Coffee and cigarettes went round and the humorous,

Well-built, jolly-good doctor, wanted to hear about our 'adventures' in the world. For some time all of us participated in the discussion; then one by one all retreated into the bedroom, except the doctor and myself with the inevitable coffee pot.

"Normally I go to bed by midnight", the doctor said. "Do you sleep during the day ?", I asked.

"No, no. I work like a devil. I enjoy it. Now I want to do nothing more in the world, except to work hard and struggle for world-peace".

A dental surgeon, Dr. Arnold Bartsch, has been a man of great adventures in his life. He earns a lot of money and spends a great portion of that for the struggle for peace and anti-militarism in his own country. "My life is the best teacher for me, who taught me to live for the people and die for peace. So I am doing that for the last decade". Because of his active participation in the anti-military activities, he is also called a 'Communist'. "By the bye", he said, "this evening I had an anonymous telephone call enquiring : 'What are the Indians going to do here ?' I was surprised, for I never told anyone except my neighbour that you would be my guests tonight. However it is evident, some people are watching your movements".

"Of course, we have had earlier evidences of this", I explained the previous incidents. "Well, doctor, I want to ask you one question, if you don't mind...."

"Indeed; go ahead. I want to be as open as a book. I'm ready to answer any question you ask, personal or impersonal or political anything".

"Why are those dreadful weapons decorating your

walls ? Have you kept them just for fun ?"

"They are not just for fun. Every one of them is a chapter in my own life". He threw his glance on the walls around.

"What do you mean, doctor ?"

"I mean, they are the everlasting symbols of my past life. That's why I have kept them intact. Whenever I look at them, I am more and more enlightened, I realize the follies of my own past. They have been my teachers for the last 15 years". Then slowly he unfolded the never-ending pages of his life from the age of 18. "It was then that I joined the army. I never had the intelligence to realize the foolishness involved in Hitler's intentions. The war had developed quickly; the Fuhrer had generated a current of enthusiasm in every nerve of the German youth. I too was caught in the trap. Within three years of my turbulent, brave, miserable, reckless life as a soldier I could gain distinction for my deeds. Glory after glory fell upon me and I became more and more blind". He kept quiet for some time. To recollect one's own horrible past is not a happy thing indeed. I didn't feel like asking any more. I poured hot coffee again into his cup. He continued.

"Well, all those glories were not for good. The more the inhuman deeds I committed the more glorious I became ! Every human being I killed with my knife still seems to be flashing in front of me. I plunged the knife into them without any second thought. Altogether 50 people died at my hands. 24 tanks were exploded and 72 times I jumped non parachute and blew up several bridges. For all such 'brave deeds' I was decorated with five medals of heroism. One

medal was presented by Hitler himself. By the end of 1944. I began realizing the significance of everything. I knew whatever I did was an unpardonable crime. All that happened owing to the false education about militarism and patriotism. At last I decided to turn against the Fuhrer. I worked with the revolutionaries under Marshal Tito and fought against Hitler and the British who participated in the making as well as destruction of Hitler. When the war ended, I returned to Germany. Once and for all I swore to devote the rest of my life to the building up of a peaceful and prosperous world”.

The horrible concentration camps, the trenches, the heaps of human bodies, the blood-pools and snow storms everything came up in the course of his description and the minutes and hours ran past. The coffee pot got empty; an utter silence prevailed for some time; our hostess got up to see us still awake; she wondered if we needed sleep at all !

I opened the window and looked at the world outside. The whole world remained blissfully calm; some leaves shivered at times; a golden streak glittered in the Eastern Horizon. I said to our hosts “ Half an hour later we shall wake up our friends”.

The policeman and the priest

It is a misfortune for the world and a “pure accident” for him that Edwin Jones turned to be a policeman in his life ! Yet, he knows that it is no use of grumbling now when he is in the afternoon of his life. “One has to accept life as it is destined to be and try to make it happy and sweet. Whatever it is, the process of life is and must be a continuous struggle, whether it is

palatable or not”. This philosophy of Jones has got the approval of his wife. “That’s how we are able to lead a happy life”, she came to her husband’s help and placed gently the big tray laid with excellent steaming coffee and cakes, in front of us on the shining wooden table.

“There are some more of my old work, but they are not so good”. He gathered all the pieces of paintings and settled down on the sofa.

“How much time do you devote for painting ?”

“There isn’t such regularity. Whenever I feel like, I take up the brush and canvas. I prefer to paint in water colour”. There were some oil-paintings too.

His wife brought more things to eat. “Coffee is excellent”, we said. “That’s why I told you that you must have coffee made by her”, the policeman was proud of his wife’s abilities.

The beginning of this story was different. Had he not insisted, we wouldn’t have had the opportunity of such a nice experience. That afternoon was a bit tiresome. We had already walked 15 miles and again 4 miles we had decided to go. At the turning of the road there was a police out-post and a little farther on the opposite side a cafe. We wanted to have a few minutes’ rest. So we got into the police station.

The door was closed. For a few minutes we stood on the verandah. Someone clapped from the cafe and walked towards us, “What do you want ?”, the good-looking gentleman in police uniform asked. “We just wanted a few minutes’ rest”. “Then come along”, he

invited us to the cafe.

“Would you like to have beer ?”

“No thanks. We don’t drink”.

“Then Ice-cream”, and he ordered the same. A tall glass which was half-full with beer was on the table. Obviously it was his.

In Germany beer is the most popular drink. “A glass of beer and a cigarette are enough for me”, Elke had glorified the inevitability of beer in her life. “But if you don’t like it, I am ready to give it up”, she had said. “Why should you ? That I don’t like it, doesn’t mean that others in my company should not drink. Does everyone drink in Germany ?” “Most of the people do; people like you drink coffee and tea”, she had explained the habits and fashions of her people.

By the time we finished our ice-cream he said : “We shall go home for office. My wife will prepared nice coffee for you”.

“But it is getting late. This is enough. We must reach the town before six. Rest, refreshment everything is over now”.

“No, no. You must come home. Don’t worry about time”. Then he picked up the phone and asked his wife to be ready with coffee.

In the upstairs of the same building, the family lived and downstairs was the police-station. Some nice paintings hanging on the walls caught our attention. “Whose paintings are these ?”, we enquired.

“They are mine”, said Edwin Jones and brought another big bundle. Going through them one by one, we commented ; “You should have been a professional artist”. He gazed at the green meadow outside and said, “It was a pure accident that I became a policeman”. Our fifteen minutes’ rest lengthened into two hours! They would not leave us. “Why don’t you stay with us for the night ?”. We had to beg their pardon, for we had planned to reach that particular town that day. At 6 p.m. when we reached, it was again a policemen who took us to the Youth Hostel for the night. Policemen were of great help to us.

In the other town we had no known friends or acquaintances. A huge Seminary and a church nearby majestically stood behind the City Hall. Today, let us seek shelter in the church, we planned.

We knocked two or three times and the large thick door opened. A tall, imposing figure in full priestly robes appeared. He held a Bible in his right hand with a finger inside the pages, a golden crucifix on his chest. “What do you want ?”, his voice was heavy and rough.

“We want to have some place for the night”. In two minutes we explained the purpose.

“There is no place here, I’m sorry”, he said and slammed the door ! We stood for a couple of minutes. All right, let us try to locate the Youth Hostel, we thought. In the meantime again the door opened and the same person appeared. “What are you waiting for ? I told you there’s no place here ?” he muttered. “Thank you very much”, we said and moved ahead. The door slammed again. It was just an ordinary young man who found

out an accomodation for us later. That night as we lay in silence, the two faces the policeman's and the priest's appeared and disappeared again and again in the mirror of my memory.

The other Germany.

From a look over the surface, everything seemed posh and nice in Germany. One of the disgusting things that we saw and experienced was the existence of a sort of home for the helpless people. Two or three times some people arranged our stay in such places. On enquiry we found out that those places were meant for vagabonds, ex-convicts, the unemployed and the unemployable. Whatever they did during day time, in the evening they could go to such places, have a free meal and a bed. The drunkards and gamblers could also be seen causing disturbance and inconvenience to other unfortunate people.

"Churches and other charitable institutions maintain such places", one day the manager of such a place told us. "This is the other side of Germany, sir, which you don't see. We have got so many problems".

"So it is nice for us now, to have such an opportunity to live in the 'other Germany' ", we replied.

"Auf wiedersehen"

The last night arrived. Two days, in the border city of Aachen, were nice. The Collards played hosts to us. One of their good friends died yesterday. The cremation took place this noon. We were also invited to attend. "There is one peculiarity of this function",

explained a gentleman. "We are free thinkers; we don't stick to the religious conventions. We burn the dead body as you do in India. There is a separate yard for those who wish to burn the body".

Shiv Kumar and Elke returned tonight. Tomorrow morning we would be entering Belgium. "Auf wiedersehen" (shall meet again) to Germany !

Quaregnon, August 4.

Twelve days in Belgium.

Today is the last day of our tour in Belgium. A real holiday, we feel. Mr. Cavenaile is a brewer who has a beautiful bungalow in the countryside. He wanted to take us there. Apart from being a brewer, his tastes are many. No man can remain out of the current of world politics, he says. That is why he is also a member of the Belgium Peace Committee. He runs a Ceramic and Painting Gallery. "The handicrafts are slowly vanishing; the artisans are losing their talents; all these things are the products of industrialization: I want to revive the lost tradition and culture of our country", he said while showing the different paintings and other materials manufactured here.

Then we sat down for tea. I was astonished to find most of the utensils were made there only. Like an Indian hermitage of the olden times, mud-pots and plates in simple style decorated the table. "Gandhi was so wise to stress upon the village industries of your country. A time will come when our rapid industrialization and automation will make man absolutely inactive. So it is good to have some balance between the two".

Then we turned to politics. In 1956 the husband and wife had visited China.

"What is your impression ?", we enquired.

"Altogether I was much impressed by China. One particular aspect impressed me most. When the Communists started the revolution, the big landlords volunteered to give up their property to people. Thus a moral force and understanding worked in the minds of the people. So I would call the Chinese revolution more meaningful ideologically and ethically, while the Russian one was more violent and bloody".

To cut across such a small country like Belgium did not take much time. Within twelve days a distance of 128 miles we walked including a halt at Brussels for three days. The Belgium Peace Committee, The Socialist Youth Movement, and the World Federalists Association were our main supporters. The anti-nuclear bomb activities are strong and wide-spread in the country. "We struggle to see that the army and weapons are abolished for ever", said our host on the first day welcoming us to his home at Welkenraedt. "Our king, though only a figure-head, merely enjoys holiday in Spain making propaganda for himself. He receives 42 million Francs per year as salary. We can't tolerate this any more. Churches and priests are strong; they are also paid by our Government".

The Test Ban Treaty

It was on the 25th of July that we reached one of the oldest cities of Belgium, Leige, with a population of 150,000. A university student from Sudan and another from Pakistan welcomed us along with a group of local supporters. All through the day there was mild rain on the way. We were drenched. All of us entered a restaurant for refreshments. It was then that the radio announced the historic agreement

reached by the three powers banning nuclear tests in the atmosphere. The announcement was followed by another disturbing piece of news that France was determined to ignore the Test Ban Treaty and refused to be a signatory.

"That will spoil the whole situation", one of our companions commented.

"Now it is for the rest of the world to mobilize public opinion and put pressure on those nations, which refuse to sign the Treaty", another person said.

"The most significant part of the Treaty poses much danger", opined the third. "That evidently means, if the French conduct further tests and the others feel it dangerous to their sovereignty, the Treaty can be thrown into the dustbin and the big games can be started all over again".

Article IV of the Treaty read : "This treaty shall be of unlimited duration. Each party shall in exercising its national sovereignty have the right to withdraw from the treaty if it decides that extra-ordinary events, related to the subject matter of this treaty, have jeopardized the supreme interests of its country. It shall give notice of such withdrawal to all other parties to the treaty three months in advance".

"Aren't you very happy with the news ?, asked our young friend from Sudan.

"Yes, indeed. This is the happiest news we have had during the course of our march", we replied.

"So now your task is more in France", remarked the friend from Pakistan.

"That's true. Let's see how the people of France react to the treaty".

That night we were the guests of a professor and his wife. By midnight when we retired to bed, my mind was musing over the same words again and again : 'Now Paris is more important than Washington'.

With a shop-keeper host

Tienen was another town where we were to contact a friend of our previous host. Distributing leaflets we reached that particular street by 2 p.m. A man on his middle fifties evinced great curiosity and came down from his shop to take a leaflet from us. A black further we knocked on the door of our prospective host.

The door did not open. A lady from the next house peeped out to say : "No one is there, they are out of station", Oh, it was Saturday; naturally most of the people went on weekend outings.

In the meantime we saw the shopkeeper coming to us. He had read the leaflet. His face revealed his heart's concern. "It seems he isn't there", he volunteered and continued. "Wait a bit, I shall find out". From his shop he phoned here and there. At last he said : "I'm told he'd be back only on Monday. Let's go to the school and meet the director". Unfortunately the director wasn't there. "Look here, friends, why don't you stay with me ? It is my great pleasure if you do", We became his guests. The Simonds and their teenage daughter and son made us feel one with them.

At the dinner table Mr. Simonds told us about himself

and the family, "My wife runs the shop and we go on weekends to the sea for holiday. But this week we didn't go, so we are fortunate to have you". He was a happy and jovial type of person. His love for the family was admirable. "I am not a rich man. I love all good men. Bad men have no place in my home. I'm a Catholic, that doesn't mean that prayer is enough. Without practice no religion is good. What Jesus said, Gandhi did in your country. I am not in any party too. Our king is neither good nor bad for me. However, I have to pay 28,000 Francs per annum as tax. Communists and Catholics are equally strong. But I keep myself in between them".

"Are you not interested in politics ?"

"Of course, but I do not take part".

"What do you think of Congo and your government ?" I asked.

"Our attitude towards Congo and our policies are not good. We must not suppress others and live on them. All peoples of the world must be free to do what they want. It is my mother who taught me much. She always told me to give things to others and help others and consider all as my own brethren."

Theirs was a general provision store. Being Saturday, the shop was closed early. "Let's go and have a drink", he suggested at 8-30 p.m. "But we don't .drink", we replied. "You can drink what you want". Then the whole family went to the pub. It was a commoners' pub. Many others were introduced to us. All of us had some drinks. Black thick Turkish coffee was also available. Then he took us to the park. "You see, the

German army had marched through this city and we had to flee. Many people were killed; much of the city was smashed".

"Still the Belgian Government is not prepared to renounce the machinery of war. That's pity. In4ct no Government does it", we said.

"That is correct", he agreed. "Look at India itself. We hoped and still hope that India can take better steps for the good of the world". Till 11.30 we were there; then returned home for a happy sleep.

In Brussels

Madam Isabelle Blume, Mr. Maurice Cosyn, Mr. De Mont and Mr. Sylvian Libert, these are the four individuals who always appear in my mind whenever I eriink of our three days in Brussels. Madam Blume arranged for an interview with the President of the Socialist party. Mr. Leo Collard. "The Socialist Party of Belgium is always opposed to the NATO and such alliances. Mr. Spaak is increasingly getting convinced of the need of getting out of the alliance", Mr. Collard told us. He had been a Counsellor to India in the International Court of Justice in her dispute with Portugal over Goa. But he did not know that India had taken Goa in 1961 until we informed him ! Still he couldn't believe it. "I can't believe that of India !", he exclaimed.

In the afternoon we went to the Foreign Ministry to find out the possibility of meeting Mr. Spaak, the Foreign Minister. Miss.Tack, his Private Secretary, told us : "I shall try; but you know he is too busy". When we emerged from the tall building, a black

limousine was standing there. "Are you from India ?", the chauffeur enquired. "Yes, we are. Whom are you waiting for ?" we too were curious. I'm waiting for the Minister, Spaak.

The Congolese Premier is here discussing matters with Mr. Spaak".

Meanwhile, we saw Mr. Adoula coming out of the building and getting into his car. There was no sign to show that the Prime Minister of a country was moving about. No top leader of the Belgian Government was there to see him off ! I remembered a comment heard from a young man the other day : "Belgians still consider the Congolese as their slaves". Obviously, if a slave went to his master could the master see him off ?

That very evening Mr. Cosyn drove us to the country-home of Mr. De. Mont. In the course of our discussion Congo came up. "The 24 rich Belgians who virtually held Congo in their hands anticipated more profit in the wake of independence. They put pressure on our Government. That's why independence was granted as early as 1960. Naturally every rich man would have great influence on the government in every country. If you go deep into history, you will find the tactics and process of colonialism. It was Leopold the Second, who acquired Congo, paying a very trivial amount to the people, bit by bit, making all sorts of false documents in French and English and asking the people to sign them". Mr. Cosyn explained in short.

"Still you can find people here saying that it was for the good of the Congolese that we ruled them". Mr. Cosyn is a very frank and fearless person. He has a world outlook. In the World Federalist Movement he

plays a very significant role. A vehement opponent of Colonialism and imperialism, he believes that Dag Hammerkshjeold was intentionally killed by the conspiracy of white colonialists. "All the papers in our country lied at that time", he concluded.

As we drove into the green lawns of a beautiful country home, a tall man came down to greet us. At the age of 74 De Mont lives alone and cycles five miles everyday to the city, in order to assist in the office work of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. "Is your cycle as old as you ?", anybody can crack any joke with him. He won't mind. "It's a baby of 12 years only, yet serves me very well", he replies. He takes life quite easy.

"Come along, let's have a game of ping pong", he invited me the next morning. We had a nice game in the bright sunshine. Till midnight normally he would sit at his desk to study. At times he would suddenly get up and play the piano for a few minutes. "I am too lazy", he said once, but never could I see him inactive or slow in any of his work. In spite of everything he held one conservative viewpoint, as far as the Congolese were concerned. "Look at those chaps, they only know how to create more confusion. Can they ever administer themselves?" He is of the opinion, that there must be complete disarmament and a world government set up. He is one of the founder members of the World Federalists Association.

Mr. Sylvian Libert is the National Secretary of the Socialist Youth Movement. At Leuven he got up a small discussion group in support of the anti-nuclear activities. At Brussels he helped us to get thousands of copies of our 'manifesto' ready, in French, for in a week we would be entering France. "There it is more necessary at this stage of the international situation",

he said. A man of conviction and dedication, he wants to build up the youth movement on a world-wide basis.

The next evening we sat over a cup of tea with a group. "Germany is a good and beautiful country; but it is a pity that Germans are living there", a student from Holland expressed his disappointment about Germany. "Our room was a cell for prisoners during Hitler's time; still the toilet rooms are in the same old condition", remarked a young man from Kenya about the YMCA accommodation.

Problem of language

Language is one of the most important things which unite mankind. The more language one learns, the better one becomes a citizen of the world. Unfortunately, in many parts of the world the problem of language has become a very important cause of disruption and ruin. In India, the situation is like that. In Belgium too, we could notice the trend of the people who are virtually divided on the question of French and Flemish. Flemish is an important language which has not been given due recognition. In a country of 6 million since many prefer to have French as the official language and since French influence is more widespread in the country, a natural inferiority complex has been created among the Flemish. Often we could hear bitter complaints from the Flemish-speaking people that the French-speaking section wanted to dominate the country with French. While the Flemish learn French, the French speaking people do not learn Flemish and look down on the Flemish with contempt.

Every evening we had some group discussion with the local people. Usually non-violent direct action and defence would be the predominant topic. "It is too idealistic and impractical", a gentleman said one evening while we were the guests of physician's family. "Even in India, where there are better chances of success for such ideologies, you are failing when you face realities", said another person. "What happened during the course of Chinese aggression?" Such questions usually confronted us. It is a pity that people abroad expect too much of India's moral leadership in the conflicting world situation. The very fact that India of today does not have such a dynamic leader as Gandhi who can bear the torch of truth and non-violence and guide the nation, is causing India to trek the path which the Western world has trodden for centuries.

"This is a socialist town", said our host and denounced the government's policy. "They say that there is no atom-bomb in Belgium; but in reality American bombs and rockets are based here. We are against that".

Tomorrow morning we will be crossing another frontier.

August 5, 1963.

In France the delightful

Maubauge is a nice town which happens to be our first camp in France. Comrade Gasiorek Luis had come to the border to receive us this morning. A group of well-wishers had accompanied us to the border of Belgium. A Catholic priest volunteere to take us around the town, get our story into the newspapers and acquaint us with the town authorities. "I am a protestant", our host said. "So it is nice, that we are in the hands of both of you" we said.

While we sipped coffee from the typical big French cups, we asked the priest what he felt about the French Government's decision to ignore the test ban treaty. "It is obvious", he replied, "France can't come to an agreement with the other three unless she is equally strong as the others. Our President is sensible enough not to support all the whims of the Americans. I appreciate his attitude. He wants peace as anyone else in the world; but not at the stake of his interests. Very few in France would say 'I am a Gaullist'; but most of us vote for De Gaulle".

"What will you do if a robber robs you ?" the priest asked, indicating the India-China border conflict.

"What did Jesus teach you to do if you are robbed of your robe ? The problem is, how to organize a human

society in which there is no necessity for one to rob the other. The main thing is that we don't practice what we tend to profess".

"Aren't you Hindus ?"

"No, we aren't"

"Then what ? Christians ? Buddhists ?"

"Neither of such groups. Just human beings, nothing more". The other comrade enjoyed the conversation. We are told that religious instruction is not compulsory in France.

"All right, I shall see you again in the morning". And the priest said good-night.

"Have a nice sleep, friends, tomorrow morning I have to go to work very early. Since my wife is out on holiday you have to look after yourselves". Our host gave us instruction as to how to lock the house, etc. before leaving the house in the morning.

Paris, August 16.

Confusions and solutions

If anyone ask me how much time it takes to travel from Moscow to Paris by air or rail, I must plead ignorance. But if one dares to ask an unimaginable question : "All right, what about on foot ?", I can convincingly establish the fact : "It takes exactly five months !"

On the 15th of March it was bitterly cold in Moscow and this evening in Paris, we were disgustingly drenched. On that day we were determined to face any consequence of the visa episode; on this day we

were depressingly exhausted due to the strain, rain and the indefiniteness. That evening we had a happy shelter, this evening there is the fire of hunger in our stomachs. Yet, we thought, as the poet said : “Even in the infinitudes of darkness there are bright stars”. By afternoon we had entered the city of Paris. There were some friends of mine living here whose addresses I had. I had written to them, but couldn’t get a reply. Most of the boulevards looked deserted. Poor boys played here and there. We passed through a big street where many Algerians lived. We realized that we were in the ancient parts of Paris. To find out places was not at all a problem. We did not have to ask anyone. Paris is the best city where you can go anywhere with the help of the informative maps that are exhibited at the entrance of every Metro (underground train) station. We found out the locality where our friend lived.

“He and his family have gone on vacation”, the neighbours told us. So we went in search of another friend; but the same happened. It began to rain. To walk from one part of the city to the other was a problem. Many people did not know English. A packet of biscuits had been given us by our hostess last night. “You may just keep it with you”, she had said as if she foresaw that today we were destined to have no food at all. ‘Standing under the porch of a bank we consumed the biscuits. I was both our lunch and supper ! Again we got into the rain. If the same thing should happen at the third friend’s ? ‘So let’s try to telephone and find out’, we thought, and got into a police station.

In all countries, so far, the police had been extremely kind to us and gave every assistance we wanted. In

Germany we could enter any police station and make use of their telephone. For the first time in our journey the French police turned to be rude and unkind to us. “Can we make use of your phone please ?”, we enquired of a hefty constable. “No, no”, he muttered. We explained the situation. He would not bother. Stamping his foot on the floor he cried : “Not possible, go away”. The same sort of thing happened last evening also when we enquired about somebody’s address in a police station on the outskirts of Paris ! For all those who intend to visit Paris an important warning ! Never, never come to Paris in the month of August. You won’t see anyone whom you want to see. Three-fourth of the population seems to be on “vacation”. Paris spreads into the world outside and still the world outside pours into Paris. The Plaz de la Concord is always crowded, the Rue de Germaine never is empty and its pubs and cafes never have any vacation !

Again we stopped into the road. The rain had subsided a little. A university student from Pakistan came to our help. We were in search of the laboratory of Prof. Kastler, one of our important supporters in France. “The whole institution is closed. Prof. Kastler is on vacation. He’ll be back on the 2nd of September”, said the young receptionist. One more link from the chain of hope was broken. What should be done ?

A week before, we had been the guests of a doctor. He had introduced us to a lady who was interested in Indian philosophy and writers. She had wanted us to meet her rich American business friend in Paris. Ah, here is a last resort. Let’s find out if he is also on “vacation” or not, we decided. Fortunately the businessman was available on the phone. “I see“ he

waited for a moment after hearing our story. "Well, in that case", he continued, "you can come over and stay with me. You see, my family in on vacation. They would be returning after two days; till then you may stay", "All right, thank you very much !" In a few minutes we were again in the drizzle in search of Avenue Foch.

That is how by 7 p.m. we landed in the most aristocratic locality of Paris, shivering in that rain and burning with hunger. The house is palatial, the host is rich, pleasant and social. He owns mines in Africa and always flies up and down between Paris, London, New York and Africa. Yet it is with empty stomachs that we are going to bed tonight. Throughout our journey we have never asked anyone for food. Everywhere we have been feeling at home so far. But tonight though we are physically made "at-home", mentally we are in a state of loneliness and isolation. In spite of everything, a sort of human touch which we craved for, is lacking here.

The very thought of marching through France had been of confusion to us for the past few months. Our friend from London had written : "You know the American marchers to Moscow were not allowed through France and they had to jump into the English Channel. All their attempts were futile and finally they had to get into Belgium. The French Government may not allow you, too". Some other friends wrote in a similar way. Unlike other countries of Europe, the Government of France was quite stubborn in their dealings with the Pacifists, direct-actionists and conscientious objectors. We were told that still hundreds of conscientious objectors were rotting behind the bars. However, we had to decided

to approach the Government directly and to explain to them everything and seek the visas. Accordingly in Bonn we had gone to the French Embassy. In ten minutes, without any trouble or discussion, they granted visas to us for one and a half months. Money was another problem. In the Socialist countries there was no need of money for our visas. In other countries our friends paid the fees. As it was our wont, we told the French Embassy too that we did not have any money to pay. "It is necessary", the officer insisted. At any cost, we were determined to walk into the country. The dispute reached our German host who intervened and paid off the visa fees. When we entered France, as in other countries the people accorded a good welcome. Then we had continued to march to Paris. Thus all confusions found solutions one after the other.

A letter to De Gaulle

It was the 6th of August. Our second day in France. The vast green fields and enchanting landscape were a feast to our eyes. The bright sun made the tree leaves oily and shining, and we perspired a lot.

Exactly eighteen years ago this day the world had witnessed the hurling of the first nuclear weapon on man ! On July 16, 1945, the first nuclear test had taken place in New Mexico. Till July 18, 1962 a total of 342 nuclear tests took place of which the USA shared 229; USSR 86; UK 22 and France 5. The total explosion equals to that of 17,750 Hiroshima-type bombs. That means, during the last 18 years the population of the world has been breathing the air which has been polluted every day by three bombs similar to those dropped over Hiroshima and Nagasaki !* (*Peace News 17-8-1962)

Politicians all over the world always plead their helplessness while singing the burden of peace and brotherhood. One writer put it this way: 'Helplessness appears to be the chief characteristic of our leaders as they 'reluctantly' acquire nuclear weapons; 'reluctantly' test them; 'reluctantly' pay for them; and are 'reluctantly' ready to use them. Is not the helplessness of our politicians even greater than the helplessness of the legendary Greeks who, to appease a tyrant, sent a yearly offering of their children to be devoured by the Minotaur ? It is time for the people to decide that they should fight for their values without getting on the 'moral escalator' of nuclear defence. People should be prepared to act personally.'

We have been acting personally all the time. Now the intensity of our feeling and the necessity of action doubled. Unless we know something definitely from the Government of France we would not leave Paris, we thought. That doesn't mean we are against France and its people. In 'fact, one has to recognize that President De Gaulle is one of the most intelligent and reasonable politicians in the world. No one can dispute against his argument behind his keeping aloof from the test ban treaty. For over a decade and a half the three powers have been ruthlessly measuring their military might against the will and wish of humanity. Now they have come to realize that there is no need for conducting the nuclear tests any more. In fact it started telling on their economy and public opinion. So it was easy for them to come to an agreement which would never hamper their vested interests, while their backyards are stored with suicidal weapons. When De Gaulle expressed his readiness to drown all the French bombs if the big three were willing to do

the same, they would not accept that. So De Gaulle's position is quite understandable in the international race of politics.

Yet as simple human beings we could not subscribe to the point of view of 'tooth for tooth'. As long as the nuclear weapons are incredibly devastating, the use of them by anyone in the world must equally be opposed. One good step taken, even by a murderer, must be recognized. Therefore, the nuclear test ban treaty can be considered only as one good step, because at least hereafter human beings need not swallow the poison. But that step could be retracted if they felt that their "supreme interests" were "jeopardized", in the event of a future French nuclear explosion. That is why we decided to express our feelings to the President on the 6th of August and request him that : "Your excellency must consider the call of humanity and take a voluntary step- to stop all nuclear tests and thus help realization of the wish of mankind. We hope to reach Paris on the 16th inst. Therefore, we would like to meet you so that we could place our viewpoints and get a direct personal answer from your excellency".

We had requested for a reply in Paris, but of no avail. So we had to go ahead with further plan of action.

That evening our host was a hero of the war. "I have worked for De Gaulle during the war", he recollected the stories. "To get an important document revealing Hitler's plans from a German Colonel I had to burn a house. I was a Resistance leader at that time. The Germans had offered two million Francs for my head. For a year an old lady gave me protection in Paris". His family had undergone a lot of suffering. His 18 year old

son was killed by the Nazis in a concentration camp. "At least hereafter I want to work for international co-operation. Europe has been always at war. It will not serve any purpose.

"How do the people like De Gaulle's policies ?", we asked.

"Most of the people like him. But there are many opponents too. First of all, it was he who saved our country. But he is too proud, it is not good. His nuclear weapons policy is not so good, yet I like his attitude, he is a man of self respect. We hate Germans, we don't want to shake hands with self-respect them". Then his old wife started shedding tears remembering her 'nice little boy'.

A body-guard of Gandhi

"Namaste", a tall, stout, thick-faced man in a black flannel suit greeted me as I was climbing up the staircase in a beautiful hotel at La-Capelle. That evening we happened to be the guests of the City Hall (Mayor's office). We had no previous contact and therefore we enquired at the City Hall where we could find some accommodation. Without any waste of time the authorities ordered a nice room to be allotted to us in a hotel.

"Namste", I returned the greetings.

"You are from India, I'm sure".

"Yes, I am. Yourself ?"

"I am an Englishman but employed in France. I like India very much".

"When did you visit India ?"

"Before independence. I served for 8 years in Indian in the Royal Army".

"All right, we shall sit and talk at supper".

At supper we all spent a long time in discussion. He was not a nationalist; he was not very much interested in politics. "The world will not improve so quickly. I am not very optimistic. See that man, Macmillan, licking the boots of Kennedy ! It's shame for England. Wherever the master goes, the servant must follow. So he followed John to Moscow to sign the test ban treaty. The English have lost their valour".

"Don't you approve of the 'Moscow treaty ?', we asked.

"Well, It's something not very good and very bad. I'm not optimistic. The point is, I like De Gaulle. He is sensible. He is serious when he says that complete destruction of all bombs is the only way. He doesn't believe in this eye-washing business, initiated by Kennedy. It's like I say I am going to stop smoking and throw away the cigarette in hand while in my pocket there is a tin of cigarettes".

Then we jumped into the problems of India. "Nehru is an idiot for he is unable to solve the problem of India's economy. I've got great admiration for Gandhi. I was one among his personal body-guards while he was in Poona. Yet, I doubt the success of his ways in India. Had India followed the path of Gandhi all the time, it wouldn't have moved. an inch from where it is today. India needs tremendous struggle by her people

to industrialize the country and root out several social habits that hamper her progress.” Being a person who has moved throughout the length and breadth of India, he knew many things in detail. “I’m more interested in the economic aspects of any country. In France I am involved in the fruit Industry. I live in the South. I admire De Gaulle for his courage and action,” he concluded.

A chunk of meat

At Maubauge the newspaper had given a lot of publicity to our March. The next morning when we walked through the main street, people started greeting, and smiling at us. From the butcher shop a young man came out and clapped his hands. He called us inside and cut a big chunk of meat. Quickly packing it up he said : “Your work good, good. I present. I support”. Poor man he could not talk English, we could not talk French. To convince him was a problem. “No, no, merci beaucoup”, we said. We explained to him with our hands. He stood like a tree. “Marche de la paix” (march for peace) “Thank you very much”, we bade him farewell.

The beautiful countryside of France attracted anyone’s attention. The North-East part of the country is famous for cattle breeding and dairy-farming. “The whole of this area was under Germans during the war. Everything was destroyed”, said a farmer. Very huge graveyards could be seen here and there in which thousands and thousands of granite crosses were standing in line on the green grass-beds. All those crosses represented the millions of men who fell in the war !

A visit to midnight cafe and Swimming Ballet

Laon is one of the most beautiful cities of France, situated on and around a hill with a population of 25,000. In this 2,000 year old city there is a historic cathedral, 1,200 years old, which has four towers. This is the only one of its kind in France.

Our host being a physician, could not spend much time with us during the afternoon. In the evening he said : “Now let us be together”. We were taken to a beautiful little pub late in the night after a nice supper with another family. At the table the political discussion turned to jokes and laughter. A staunch opponent of De Gaullism, he narrated a humorous story. “Once there arose a dispute among the ministers ‘Where must De Gaulle be buried when he dies ?’ One said : ‘In the unknown soldiers’ cemetery ? the other wanted : ‘Where Napoleon lies buried’, and a third suggested : ‘We must build a special place for him’. Then a fourth minister got up and said : ‘Never worry about this problem, for De Gaulle will rise up again on the second day after his death.

In the darkness inside the small pub tiny shade-lights in colours twinkled by the walls which were decorated with leaves, mattresses and flower vases. “After a busy day many a man of substance prefers to peep in here for a sip of drink and a chat with the naughty girls”, the other young host-partner gave an introduction to us before we sneaked into our seats around a small table. A couple of smart girls in blue skirts brought the long glasses of cool drinks and occupied the chairs in between the four of us.

“Let’s all drink to the health of the two champions

for peace”, they all raised their glasses. The girls, who owned the pub, too, were astonished to see that we didn’t drink. “You don’t drink, don’t smoke, don’t like meat, no fish, but what about girls ?”, one of them threw a quick question. “Around them the world revolves”, we replied to which an addition was offered by the Professor friend, “therefore they can’t be spared”.

“There is a swimming pool four-five miles away in which tonight there is a grand Swimming Pool Ballet Dance performance. It is only once a year, that is today. So you are lucky, let’s go there”, the doctor invited us. We drove down the hills at midnight. The young boys and girls enthusiastically danced the Ballet in the luke-warm water in colourful floodlight. A huge crowd had gathered around the pool with candies, drinks, ice-cream cones and cookies in their hands. “We want to give all opportunity to the young in all fields of art and culture”, the professor explained. By 1 a.m. we returned home and sat for coffee and discussion. “Only night time is free in our hands, so let us talk”, said the doctor. They wanted to hear something about our impression of the Soviet Union. Lost imperialism and farmer couple

“Look at them, they are not at all capable of anything. They are too young for taking liberty and preserving it. They can’t construct their country. We told them several times, but they won’t understand”, the retired Bank Manager expressed his vehement protest against De Gaulle’s generosity towards the Algerians. According to him, De Gaulle should not have given freedom to Algeria, Ben Bella was “nothing but a rascal”. However, it happened, now there was no use of talking. “Still I am sure, we could have done

many things from them”. This was the main topic of discussion one evening at our dining table.

“That’s exactly the same thing the British told the Indians, you know ? To them Gandhi’s reply was : ‘We shall manage our business in whatever manner we are capable of, but you get away from India.’ Why should not the Algerians look after themselves in whichever manner they like ? It’s fine what De Gaulle has done”, we replied.

That morning our hosts took us to a church for the mass. There were five children who attended the priest who conducted prayers and performed the holy communion. The disgusting thing is to imagine how the simple, innocent, tender brains and hearts of the children are being polluted by the deeds of priests all over the world !

Reaching any other city was not so troublesome and strainful as reaching Paris. At the outskirts of Paris there was a small town, Gonesse, where we decided to stop for the night on the 15th. When we walked into the Commissarie of Police to find the direction to our prospective host’s the drunkard officer shouted : “Nothing, nothing, go” stamping the floor. However by evening we were happily accommodated by a young farmer-couple in their ancient home. They spoke English too.

“The whole of Paris is on vacation”, the more social-minded and philosophical wife told us.

“What about you people ?”

‘We normally have our holidays during winter. Now

I have more work on the farms”, said the husband. Then he took us to his 200 hectare-farm. “Weather and the government are the two great disturbing factors for the farmer”, he explained. “When the price goes up the workers cry. So prices always remains low. At present in the North of France 3 kilograms of potatoes are worth 3 cigarettes only”.

At night Mme. Boisseau had kept a packet of biscuits in our kits. In the morning when we said “Good-bye” she handed over a dozen railway tickets to us and said : “While in Paris, to go here and there you may use these tickets, by the underground trains”. The value of both these presents from her came home to us on arrival in Paris in the evening while we wandered for a long time in rail, disappointment and hunger.

Paris, September 14.

One month in and out of Paris

It is exactly a month since we arrived in Paris and still we do not know when we shall proceed from here. Until and unless we got some answer to our questions from the Government, we had decided, we would not leave. Paris. That decision still holds good. Finally, when every attempt to meet the President or the Prime Minister failed, on the 12th we determined to take to the last resort, the direct action. Therefore, we wrote to the President about our decision and the following statement was issued two days ago.

“.....From every Government we demand that there must not be any nuclear tests in the world and immediate steps should be taken for complete destruction of the nuclear weapons and for complete and general disarmament agreement.

In the light of the recent test ban agreement, which is a welcome step, though we understand much of the French Government’s stand, we fail to find reason in one point of view. ‘If you kill the cow, I will kill the calf also’, this sort of argument is beyond simple reasoning. Therefore, we have decided to start an INDIVIDUAL NON-VIOLENT DIRECT ACTION in front of the Palace Elysee at 4-30 p.m. on Monday, the 16th of September 1963, for an indefinite period.

We want to make it clear that we have to grudge against any particular government. As we are the CITIZENS OF THE WORLD and as we deem it our duty to raise our voice against the perpetual crime of poisoning the air, in the name of those millions who have directly suffered in the past, who are enduring in the present and those who are going to swallow the same poison in the future, we are doing this action according to our CONVICTION”.

No more return from the decision. Thus while waiting for the appointed time to come, let me explain to you what we did during the month in and out of Paris.

A pistol at the chest and push by the neck !

Mme. Petit is a ‘mother of Paris’, a friend of Gandhi and a lover of India. Though in her sixties, she is an extraordinary, active woman with never-failing enthusiasm and an ever/blossoming smile on her lips. Throughout the night she works in a nursing home. Her motherly treatment is a great consolation for many patients. She thinks of the welfare of the whole of humanity and participates in activities, which will benefit the whole of mankind.

No. 35, Avenue Dequesne, was lying buried inside the pages of my diary, right from New Delhi onwards when a common friend had given the indication : “You must meet her when you reach Paris”. On the third day after arrival I told Satish : “Let us try to meet Madam Petit”. He agreed and both of us stopped out that afternoon.

The most striking feature of Paris is this. You hold a map of the city in your hands and follow your commonsense, you are bound to reach your destination whether you know the language, or not. In half an hour we reached the circle from where Avenue Dequesne starts. One, two, three, we counted the houses. Most of the houses are tall buildings of at least 5 or 6 storeys. Ah, there in front of a big granite mansion of 6 storeys two figures in shining brass plate could be seen ! ‘35’, I compared the figures in the piece of paper in my hand and murmured : “Here is the house”.

At the entrance, behind the door there stood a pretty young lady with a baby in her arms. As we approached the door she vanished. We opened the door and stood in front of the name-board which indicated who lived in which flat. No sooner did we stand to scan the board with our eyes, than we heard a sudden thundering rush of footsteps from above. A very bulky man in white trousers and tweed shirt crashed down the winding staircase and stood in front of us pointing a pistol right at our chest ! Dumbfounded, we stood with our eyes planted on his face while the hand which held the address paper rose up to the domain below his eyes so that he could know what we wanted. He was red-hot with rage or fear; we were

stony silent and confused; he wouldn’t look at the paper; we wouldn’t notice that the mouth of the pistol was only six inches from us chests. As if a ray of good sense reigned inside his brain, the next moment his iron hand fell upon the back of our necks and we were right in the middle of the road ! The thick door slammed behind us and he was no more in our sight. We looked at each other. We realized that we were not on the stage of a theatre, yet everything was dramatic. The next minute the door creaked and again the villain of the show rushed to the street. One finger was still on the trigger. Quickly he concealed the pistol in the pocket and shouted : “Go, go”. In the meantime an old, lady stopped by us to ask “What’s the matter ?” “Good heavens”, we thought, at least here is one person to talk to. “We are in search of his address”, and showed the paper. The man had calmed down a bit. “Is this lady livings here”, the woman asked him in French. “Oui, oui, Madame Petit, Madame Petit”, he pointed to the top floor. What a sudden change ! “Sorry, sorry. Excuse Mister, excuse”, he could utter only a few words of English. I could see his face getting pale and his heart sinking into his shoes. What a terrible repentance he must have undergone. However, we said “Don’t worry”, and the lady pacified him. Madam Petit was not at home then.

The next morning Madam Petit waited for us at the Indian Embassy. “Oh, my dear sons, I’m extremely sorry for what happened yesterday. The man explained to me everything and asked me to beg your pardon”, Mme. Petit was so much disturbed and again expressed regret for the incident. We said, there was nothing to worry about.

It so happened that the man who was about to shoot

us, explained Mme. Petit, had misunderstood that we were some Algerians who had entered the house for some atrocities. "Ever since the Algerian struggle had started, in Paris and other cities of France many Algerians had committed burglaries, murders, and other violent acts. The whole of Paris had lived horrorstricken until independence was granted to them, and even later. You were wearing the Indian dress, churidar pajama and kurta, which made him suspect you as Algerians or Arabs. Moreover, a couple of years ago in the same building some midnight tooting has taken place. Thus, with this background, the man lost control over himself when the girl whom you saw first told him that 'some two strangers have entered the house'. This is the whole story".

That evening we called on Mme. Petit at her flat. "You are welcome, this is your own house", said she. Ever since, No. 35, Avenue Dequesne became our alternate abode. Every time we got up and down the staircase, that beautiful girl used to stand behind the door with a regretful happy smile. The man too crossed at the stairways at times. A shade of repentance and respect could be seen on his face.

Delight in disappointment

Chateau de Charbonnieres is a big ancient castle built in a very large estate in the countryside of enchanting France about 100 miles South-West of Paris. It was there the War Registers' International had planned to organize their annual conference to which we had been invited. When we received the invitation at Warsaw, we were planning our route from Bonn to Stuttgart, Geneva and then to Paris, if the Disarmament Conference were to be in session

at Geneva. Later, when we learnt that the Geneva Conference would not be in session in July-August, we decided to alter our route so that we could reach Paris before the third week of August to enable us to attend the WRI conference, come back to Paris and continue our project. Everything went on accordingly and on the 23rd of August we left Paris for Chateau de Charbonnieres, not on foot, but by some other means.

"I shall come with you to the Railway station and buy tickets for you", Mme. Petit wanted us to travel comfortably.

"No mummy, (hereafter I would call her mummy) we don't want you to take all this trouble".

"Then how will you go?"

"You know, Europe is famous for hitch-hikers. In Germany, Poland, France, Russia everywhere people used to offer a lift to us and we have refused. But now let us see, from Paris to Chartres, if we could get a lift or not".

"If you don't?"

"We are sure, we will"

"Then at least have some money in hand. Though you may not use it, it's better to have it".

"So far we never carried any money. So don't worry".

She insisted; but we refused. "This is the first time we are going to try the popular method of youths' travel",

we said.

There was a mild shower. We decided to walk upto the main road which emerged out of the city where it was easy to get a lift.

“All right, I shall quickly make lunch”, she said and a hot lunch was made. By 1 p.m. we got out of Paris and started raising our thumbs against every passing car.

One after the other every minute a couple of automobiles passed through. Some full, some empty. The result was the Name. Even if a solitary individual drove a big car, no one ever bothered to offer a lift ! When you are in need of something you do not get it easily. We remembered that lady who wanted to ‘lift’ us from the border of Iran to anywhere on her way to Italy. We could see in our minds whose innumerable truck drivers in the Soviet Union who had stopped, under some pretention or the other, as if to ease themselves, to open the bonnet and check up the functioning of the engine, or to inspect the rear tyres, so that they could get into conversation with us and offer the ‘lift’. Then the taxi-driver of Gori, the Hazi of Gasvin, everyone appeared and disappeared !

“What can be done ?” asked Satish. “Already we have spent two hours, in disappointment”.

“That’s true; but we can’t give up; let’s try again”. Any slightest sound of a vehicle from behind would automatically ignite a spark of hope in our minds. The left-thumb would shoot up. But alas ! Disappointment again and our thumbs would remain up in the air.

“Do they take us for Algerians ?” Satish doubted.

“Possibly, everything is quite strange here”, I replied.

“We could have taken our mummy’s advice”.

“Past is past. Let’s not worry. It’s already 4 O’clock. No point in going back. We have to march ahead.”

“March ahead, where ? Let’s hope we shall get a gift”.

“Fine, hope is still there. We shall never lose hope. But let us speed up. Our greatest confidence is our feet”.

“You mean, we should walk ?”

“Well, we have already walked a dozen miles. If we decide to reach before the conference starts tomorrow evening, I’m sure we can. We have got a whole night and a whole day at our disposal. An entire 24 hours ! At the rate of 3 1/2 miles per hour we can easily cover the whole distance if we want. Why not ?”, I said.

All right, he agreed. To withdraw with a sense of defeat was unimaginable. “May be, at midnight at least, someone will help us with a lift”. And we pulled ourselves to 4 miles an hour.

Half an hour passed. There was a petrol station. A young man was taking gasoline for his small nice car. “Hello friend, where are you heading to ?” we asked him without any hesitation. “Where are you going ?” he wanted to know.

“To Chartres”

“Then come along” he invited us, and we got into the car ! “Where there is a will, there is a way”, this has been long proved true, several times. This young man spoke English too. In an hour and a half we reached Chartres, about 80 miles. We thanked him and got out. While we turned to the branch road leading to Chateau de Charbonnieres, about 20 miles away, suddenly another car stopped by our side. “Would you like to have a lift ?”, he asked in excellent English. “Oh, thank you”, and we got in. He was going to another town, so he could drop us at a point from where we had only 10 more kilometers to walk to the Chateau. He wanted to hear our story. “So your destination is the United States !”, he exclaimed. “Well, I like the people of America. I have studied in Michigan University for a year. But their policy is bad. I feel the Russians are more sincere than the Yanks. The Americans have created more misery and conflicts in the world today”. He did not like Parisian life very much. “So every week-end I go away hundreds of miles. Still I have to get on in Paris”. By that time we reached the road junction. “So thanks to you”, we said. “Oh, never mind. I shall take you upto your place”, he volunteered. Before the stroke of 7 p.m. we found ourselves comfortably settled in the palatial Castle of Charbonnieres !

From castle to cottage

It took two weeks to reach this simple cottage from that splendid castle. The WRI conference for a week was attended by about a hundred dedicated young men and women from over a dozen countries of Europe, the USA, Australia and Africa. In a world full of conflicting social, political and economic

conditions how to bring about a better understanding between the East and West; how to wage a non-violent struggle against colonialism, apartheid policy and racial discrimination; how to formulate direct action programme against the dangerous military establishments all over the world; how to work for disarmament and abolition of nuclear weapons; how to suggest constructive activities for the building up a society with the fundamental principles of non-violence, freedom and justice; were the important topics on which a thorough discussion took place from morning to midnight.

From there we were invited by the organizers of the French Peace Movement to take part in their annual conference at Lyon. The most active Peace Organization in France is called the Action Civique Non-violente. Mr. Jo Pyronnet and Marie Faugeron were the active leaders of this group. It was they who organized the conference to discuss and decide the future course of action to fight the increasing French military expenditure, possible nuclear tests and getting legislative measures for the protection of the conscientious objectors. It was interesting to note that every one of the participants was clear and sincere in what they were doing. Non-violent confrontation at a given situation in any conflict with the police or army will not be an easy joke. It needs thorough training, understanding and discipline. Therefore, a portion of the conference period was set apart everyday for actual training and rehearsal on the ground as to how to deal with the police when they would try to disperse a crowd of peaceful, non-violent demonstrators. Some would act as policemen, some as demonstrators, some as group leaders, some as volunteers.

According to French law, anyone can be called for military service till the age of 35. At the age of 18 it is compulsory to serve in the military. A friend who refused to respond to the military call explained to me : Everyone when asked must go to the army. In emergency everything can be taken over by the army. Our government can say that this part of your factory or property is required for defence. Everything in the country is considered to be a part of defence. Defiance of this law means six months imprisonment after a trial in the military court”.

If one occupies a soft cushioned seat in a rail-coach at midnight in the illuminated city of Paris, the next morning one can reach the small town Bollene, in Southern France, on the bank of the Rhone. It was the first brilliant sunshine that I enjoyed in France on the 9th of September when I woke up and emerged out of the hermitage in which I had landed the previous night. At that time there was not a sigh of human existence, in the modern sense, and a candle was lit to trace the doorways that led into the ancient house inside a big garden. I pulled out a couple of blankets from a corner and there was a mat on which I lay down to sleep.

The morning was splendid. Had a wash and then set out to discover the aspects of life around there. I call it a hermitage, for no sign of modern industrial complexities has cast its shade over there; no boon of science has penetrated its rays to those apartments. There could be seen under the trees a group of men and women spinning their yarn and weaving their cloth and mats and growing their vegetables, cutting wood and washing vessels, eating together and

singing together around the candles or under the moonlight. Their aim is to rediscover the lost human values. Therefore, they strive to return to nature as far as possible and establish harmony between production and consumption. The spirit behind the institution is Mahatma Gandhi whose simplicity of life and principles of truth and non-violence inspire the inmates. That's how the L' arch, a Gandhian Community Centre, came into being in the year 1948. A young man of 27 invited us to tea. He had started his life as an industrial designer in a big city. “But, as I realized that it was injustice towards the society, I developed a sort of hatred for such a life. Hence I resigned and joined this institution two years ago”, he said about himself.

“Then, do you consider that being an engineer is bad?” “No”, he replied, “but the trouble is that my work profits me and only a few others, while in society there is a lot of injustice and inequality”,

“Then what better thing did you do or achieve during the last two years here ?” I asked.

“Formerly I didn't know anything about spiritual life and meditation but now I am slowly understanding it. Now I look after the cows, work on land, attend to the foreign visitors like you who speak English. I have heard that people lead a simple life in the ashrams in India” he said. He lives in a simple room, sleeps on mat and reads books and attends prayers.

Micheline, another girl in her late twenties, also spoke good English. “How do you speak so well ?” I asked her.

“I went to England to study English ten years ago.

I studied for a year and then worked as a nurse”, she said while explaining the working of her wooden spinning wheel, operated by feet.

“Then how did you come here ?”

“Then I joined the French Army and worked in Indo-China. Though life was gay, I was dejected with the sort of life and the suffering of the people for whose welfare our country was supposed to fight! Then I started searching for a better avenue of life. After the term of service, when I returned to France, one day I heard Shantidas speaking in my home town. He spoke of this institution and I was attracted towards it. Within seven days I was given a place here. I have been here for seven years. One day I want to come to India and see Gandhi’s Ashram”.

Who is this Shantidas ? In the year 1901 in a Cicilian Royal family a prince was born. He was named Lanza del Vasto. Though enwrapped in the usual royal pomp, his young talent found its way to various fields of art and knowledge. Simultaneously a sense of detachment to the unreasonable aristocracy and easy life also sprouted in his mind. Years rolled on.

When I entered the room upstairs of the L’arch Community there was hot tea ready in earthen pots. The old man with a long silvery beard and broad forehead welcomed us to the table. In a few moments a lean, gracious, smiling lady joined us. The crisp home-made biscuits were delicious.

“I support you fully in all your plans of action in Paris”, he said after hearing about direct action project. “Non-violent direct action is bound to be effective when it

is launched with dedication and discipline, Wasn’t it this that Gandhi did in India ?” His keen study of Gandhi’s life and technique induced us to go deep into this personal life.

“At the age of thirty two”, he explained, “a king of detachment towards life I experienced. I left my Cicilian home and tramped far and wide, in Italy, France etc. and then went to Jerusalem. I was in search of some place and some person who could give me more education, understanding and peace of mind. India and her struggle for independence has attracted my attention. In 1936 I travelled to India”.

“After a few weeks of my arrival”, he continued, “I had an opportunity to meet your father of the nation, Mahatma Gandhi. There was an immediate inspiration in my mind. I felt he was the person I was searching for”.

Then onwards Lanza del Vasto spent a few years in India. Again two years of wandering brought him back to France. “Gandhi’s Sevagram was an encouraging abode of peace and harmony and I thought that sort of community life was necessary for an integrated growth of the individual as well as society. For several years I thought and planned. At last in 1948 this community was established. Then both of us got married”. The lady beside threw a sweet glance and poured more tea. “But Gandhi’s death disturbed me very much”, he paused for a while.

His second pilgrimage to India was in 1954 to meet Vinoba Bhave, “the spiritual heir of Gandhi. He is an perfect man in his own way. One can’t compare him with Gandhi”. Tagore was another inspiring

personality to him. "A grand and immortal man, he was", he said.

"What are your impressions about India ?" we asked. "India is a country which I like always. My new name, Shantidas, is also given me by my Indian friends. From that colourful country, I could learn many things, see many things, and enjoy and pity too. The sense of poverty would grip anyone's imagination. On one side fantastic riches, while on the other abject misery this is the contradiction and disappointment I have about India".

The L' arch when started, had only half a dozen inmates. Now there are about 70 inmates, living and working in a plot of 20 acres. They want to be self-sufficient in most of the things, but this has not yet been possible. A pledge to lead a non-violent way of life is the basic foundation of the institution. They are supposed to observe seven basic vows : work, voluntary poverty, obedience to one another, co-responsibility, veracity, purity and non-violence.

Living a community life does not mean getting away from the current problems of the society or escaping from the duties outside. The wood-carver, the tiller, the teacher, the doctor all these members of the community refuse to take part in any of the State-enforced activities like serving in the military, but do voluntarily accept any other functions in the society with which some constructive result could be achieved on certain fundamental principles. In protest against their own government's policy of imprisoning the conscientious objectors or conducting nuclear tests, the members of the community rally together to take determined action. They also hold seminars on

important national and international topics, exchange views with other individuals and organizations.

Like an Indian Ashram one can see the inmates tilling the farm with the country plough using organic manure and also eating vegetarian food in the community kitchen.

We returned to Paris on the 11th. Everywhere we discussed with people, the members of the Peace Movement, students, teachers, some priests etc. seeking their opinion about our proposed direct action plan. All of them expressed their serious concern for the French policy of continuing nuclear tests, while they appreciated certain reasons in the Government's argument. "Yet, we must try our best to compel our government to come to agreement, at least for the sake of lessening international tension". This was the consensus of opinion. It gave support and strength to us. One of the most important fighters for peace and for the defence of conscientious objectors in France, Mr. Louis Lucoin, was happy to know of our project. He said, "Since you have gone to many countries with the same purpose and since there is not response from our government, your action would have a definite value. Our government never responds to any letters we write. I am fighting for getting a statue passed by the parliament for the sake of the C.O.'s I had to undergo fast and follow other non-violent action several times. Now slowly things are coming around". About two hundred people of France extended their wholehearted support. We waited for the afternoon of the 16th. We again wrote to the President, but there was no response.

A peep into Parisian life

A normal visitor to Paris from any corner of the world would have already created a certain image of the city in his mind, based upon hearsay. I am not a camera-carrying pilgrim to efficiently focus the Louvre's complex of buildings and the central explanade with its pink marble Arch of the Carrousel, built in honour of the Napoleonic triumphs. I am not a poet to compose the melodies of the murmurs of the easy-flowing Seine through the heart of the city. I am not a bearded artist to hang around the world famous and 'tantalizing painting of all time' Mona Lisa, to study every curve on that angelic face or judge the talent of the renowned painter, Da Vinci. I am not a gifted journalist to describe the shabby-haired bohemians on the Left Bank, and the Americans whose foundation grants have long since been exhausted and who are yet lingering around the 1)uex Magots to have a drink and watch a parade of other foreigners already assimilated with and disguised as Parisian intellectuals. What best I can do is to throw a glance around myself, wherever I have been in the corners and cafes, boulevards and buildings, markets and parks, and pick the pieces of experience and scenes and place them before the readers.

On the very first day inspite of the preconceived judgment my mind murmured in time with the observation of D.H. Lawrence. 'Paris is a nasty city'. Symbolically, the Rue Saint-Denis which used to be the traditional path for the kings to make their solemn entry into Paris, looked dissolute and repugnant. Auctioneering and bargaining in the small wayside shops, sickening smell form here and there, old smoky and gloomy flats with dilapidated windows, a mixture of people, many in shabby clothes loitering

and quarreling all these made me confused.

In course of time when I sauntered around the Etoile, the Plaz de la Concrode, the Louvre, on the Right Bank and the Champs Elyees, the grandeur and splendour of the ancient Paris mixing with the modern taste, was slowly revealed and I thought : 'It is beautiful and interesting'.

Eventually, as I mingled with the people of Paris, I felt at-home and happy. All those whom I came in contact with were affectionate and hospitable people wit ideas and understanding.

I got increasingly convinced that De Gaulle was doing better then the other Western Statesmen to bring about a disengagement of the two hostile blocs and to lessen the international tension. General De Gaulle, one has to admit, is a master-mind who does not bow down before the dollar diplomacy and the poor statesmanship of the other side of the Atlantic.

On the train, midnight, September 19. Direct Action, prison and deportation

At this time, when the 19th of September, is dramatically disappearing at the impending approach of the 20th, the train is rushing through a vast domain of darkness. Outside, this part of the country must be enchanting and refreshing to look at; but only some flickering lights can be seen here and there in the distance. The train is not at all crowded and it seems to be halting occasionally; but it is beyond my comprehension. A cool breeze is gushing through the little gap between the window-glasses and at times a drop of water also gets in. For a wink of sleep I

have been trying; but of no avail. Still I am in the grip of the past, while the future is awaiting at the other end. Right now I am in the lap of France, but in a few hours I'll be in the hands of England. This was unexpected any yet it has to be. "You must not open your mouth to them", we had been warned. They are hunting for us, it seems. The news-mongers. We had made news, it was said. They wanted to know further, but there was no chance. From that moment, on the 16th afternoon at 4.35, till now the light of Paris and the air of France have not been free for us. Tomorrow morning everything will be restored, but on the other side of the Channel !

Every idea, like water, if it remains buried in the fathomless depth of the brain, or in the pages of books, is useless. When it moves, water becomes purer, clearer and acquires utility value. Put into action, every idea brings result; wrong or right, it does make a repercussion on the surroundings.

The country is fine, the people are good. The government, too, gave us full co-operation in conducting our activities. One day we had been to the Foreign Department in Paris. Our visas were to be extended. Ten or fifteen Francs were to be paid as the extension fees. "We have no money in our hands, then what to do ?", we asked the middle-aged woman. "I see but it is inevitable", she smiled and said. We had no choice. A few minutes later she went in and consulted her superiors. "All right boys", she said on return to her desk and our visas were extended. "Fight for the good of all", she had said.

Yet, we were against one thing—the bomb. We are against it, we shall be, for all time to come, of

whichever country it may be. Therefore, we could not go back from our determination. The appointed hour came and we stood at the gate of the Palace Elysee.

Mr. Ole Henrichson and Mr. Wolfgang Zucht are two firebrand youngsters from Denmark and Germany respectively. For the sake of world-peace and disarmament and anti-militarism they do a lot of work in their countries. They were on a visit to France.

"Shall we also join in the protest demonstration ?", they asked one afternoon. "Of course, we have no objection" we replied and they cancelled all their further programme. So we were four.

Advance information had been given to the police and we again explained to the press, radio and television. Then only we drove to the Presidential Palace.

At the stroke of 4.35 the four of us opened our banner, BAN THE BOMBS, and stood on the side-walk right in front of the Palace. There was a crowd of people and press representatives, apart from our friends and well-wishers. We were to stand there for ever !

But we stood only for three minutes ! A large group of policemen were already at the gate. We were surrounded quickly. The Chief of the palace security guards came down to the street and requested us :

"Please, both of you are invited into the palace".

"We are not two, we are four", we said.

"Okay ! All of you may come".

We did not want to go; yet we thought, perhaps we

could meet the President and get his reply to our questions.

“Please, you are invited”, the officer with a gentle smile again said. In the meantime we were being pushed slowly by the police. The cameras were clicking all around. People poured in from all sides. Madam Petit and another old, active supporter, Madam Askinasi, plunged into the crowd to distribute our leaflets to the people. The atmosphere was getting tense.

By this time we had already reached the gates. The huge iron gates were open; the four of us were inside. The gates closed behind us and we were taken into the palatial room of the Chief.

“Dear friends, you are creating peacelessness in Paris”, the officer said. “Please don’t do such things”.

“What else can we do ? We wanted to discuss with the government; but no one responds. You please inform the President”.

The President is unable to meet you”.

“Then we shall go back to the public”.

“We shall give you a car. Please go to your residence and tomorrow continue your march. But never in front of the President”.

“Thank you for your kindness. But we have nothing else to do. We have talked to the people. They have responded to us. So now we have only the President to speak to”.

“You can’t change the Government’s policy”.

“Nor can the Government change ours”.

“All right”, and he went to the other room. A few minutes later a closed police car was called inside the Palace. We were put inside. Through the back door of the Palace the vehicle wound its way to an unknown destination.

“Ah, ha, how on earth are you people here ?”, seeing our two grandmothers, Mme. Petit and Mme. Askinasi, we were over-whelmed with joy. They were inside a glass case against granite walls on three sides. It was underground, in a sort of semi-circular cell. All the four of us also were driven into the same. Now we were six. We forgot everything and made a jolly good family of ourselves.

“We were distributing the leaflets outside when you were taken in”, explained Mme. Petit. “Within moments they took us also into custody and drove us into this cell”.

“All right, so let’s remain here for ever”, we said.

“We must resist any temptations from them to release us”, the anarchist friend, Ole, was quite firm in his words and action. “We must stick together wherever we are”, the bearded Wolfgang was very serious and calm in his thoughts and expressions. “Yes, then what happened outside?”, we wanted to know from the ladies.

“People started rushing in, from here and there. The Police started dispersing the crowd. But the reporters and cameramen waited for long, it seems, hoping that

you people would come out”.

“Well, now no one knows what will happen”.

Meantime two policemen came into the room. The two ladies were taken to the underground office. After a few minutes, Mme. Petit returned to our cell and asked : “Friends, they say that we would be let out if we pay some penalty, what shall we do ?”

“Okay, go ahead. We don’t like both of you suffering behind the bars”.

“All right, in that case we shall conduct the Movement from outside”, said she and returned. In a few minutes both of them were let off with a warning.

The four of us sat on the stone slab, waiting for the inevitable. An hour passed. A couple of officers dropped in and escorted us to the car. This time we could see clearly that the city of Paris was in the full swing of evening life. Through some crowded streets we were driven to the office of the prison chief. We were asked to sit on the bench.

A decent-looking, calm gentleman came and enquired about our activities, name and address of our hosts.

“I want to give you the last chance”, he concluded. “I would let you go, provided you promise me that you won’t -go to the President’s house again”.

“Unless we get an assurance from the government that France will not conduct nuclear tests, we cannot leave Paris and the Palace Elysee”, I replied. There was no argument. He went to his chamber. By

8.30 all the formalities were over. From the office of the Prefecture we were again escorted to the street outside, this time on foot. Across the street stood a huge granite mansion, old and historic, for someone said later : ‘Once upon a time Marie Antoinette had been kept behind those very great walls and iron bars”.

The big iron gates were opened; into a big room we were led. There were half a dozen others too.

Nothing but an open flush latrine in a corner was in that room. The tall smooth walls had small ventilation windows high up near the ceiling. Stains of phlegm, blood and mud were all around on the walls and on the wooden benches. The floor was icy cold and sticky with oil, blood-stains and urine. Stinking smell from the corner made utterly sick.

A boy curled up in a corner, for he had only some tattered cloth on his person. A middle-aged man sat and coughed on the other side. Two youngsters stood leaning against the wall staring at the four new-corners. One young, good looking man increased trousers and unbuttoned coat walked up and down the room, occasionally throwing a glance at us from the corners of his eyes. After some time I decided to talk to him, if he knew English.

“Monsieur, parley vous Anglais ?”, I asked.

“Oui, oui, I speak English”, he answered. “Where are you from ?”

“From India”

“Your friends ?”

“One from India and the others from Europe”.

“Why are you here ?”

In short I explained the story. Then I asked; “What about you ?”

“Well, nothing special”, he paused for some time. “They don’t like me”.

“Why not ? You are handsome”. He smiled at my words. “You see, I sort of don’t work. So they brought me in”. “Just because you don’t work ? There are many in Paris without work, going about”

“You’re right; but in my case, my girl works and I don’t”. “You mean your wife earns money for the family ?”

“Urn .something like that. I am unmarried”.

Things were more confusing to me. What would be his reaction if I went deeper into the problem ? But my curiosity made me impatient. Come what way, let me see what happened, I thought.

“Then what do you mean by ‘my girl’, friend ?” I bluntly put it.

“You call me friend ?”, he removed the hair falling on his face.

“Of course, I have several friends in the world ! now here your friendship is the best”.

“The thing is this”, he was equally blunt, “the girl I

keep company with is earning money. She gives me a share. What all I have to do is find good chaps for her. The cops won’t allow it”

The matter got plain to me. It goes on like that and there is not a shade of shame on his face, I thought.

“How long will you be put in jail ?”

“Probably six months. Last time I had six months”. By the time the door was opened and the four of us were called.

In the adjacent room sat a hefty man with a thick moustache and two of his sides stood nearby. He could speak only broken English. Many people in France, I had discovered, are like hard coconuts. From outside appearance they would seem to be hard-hearted, like the shell of the coconut, but the deeper one penetrates, one finds them softer and softer like the white sweet kernel inside the shell. This man looked grave and stubborn in the beginning but in minutes his facial expressions changed slowly. All our belongings, had to be deposited at this man’s office before we would reach the final destination. “Anything more”, he asked. His assistants had already removed every bit of movable property from our person except the dress. The wrist watch, the fountain pen, the shoe-lace and even a book from my pocket was taken. “Please let me have it”, I said. “No, no, s’il vous plait”, he muttered. Satish and I were wearing the tight pajamas and woolen kurtas. Again they searched our pockets. Finally they ran their hands one round and up and down our bodies. Suddenly the pair of hands stopped over my stomach.

“What is this ?” he asked, while his fingers were trying

to identify the thing that stumbled on my stomach, under the shirt. "That is the string".

"String ! What string ?"

"You know, the pajama is tied over there with a string".

"Oh, the most dangerous thing in the cell ! Please remove it", he commanded. How could I ? My friend also threw an embarrassed look at the other chap. We did not mind even giving off our kurtas; but the string ! That was the only thing which kept us tied on to human civilisation. The air of hesitation on our faces did not bother them at all. The shirts were lifted; the strings were cut; off they were pulled ! Our free hands plunged down for the sake of the helpless pajamas !

The next moment we were in another room with doors of iron bars. There were 25 people already in that room. Four more members were admitted into that family of man, where freedom and equality were exactly the same for everyone. A man waited outside with a pot-full of black coffee and a basket-full of pieces of bread cut from the long, delicious loaves, typical in France. More than half an hour we spent inside. There was only one wooden bench on which half a dozen fellows, who might have come in the beginning, sat and snored. Every five minutes I had to gather the edges of my pajamas properly from one hand to the other.

The back gate was opened. All of us were asked to stand in line. One by one everybody picked up a cup of coffee and a piece of bread. The four of us simply marched past the food distributor without even

looking at the things. His eyes surprisingly followed our steady movement. The whole show was over in fifteen minutes. Now batches, two, three, four, all were taken into their allotted cells of confinement.

It must have been half past ten. On the third floor of the ancient building in two cells adjacent to each other we were locked up. Satish and I in one other two in the next.

Now I began realizing the secret of the cell and the taste of solitude. There was a pair of rotten, dusty, torn-up mattresses with stains of bug-blood and what not! Many men must have come and gone through that cell, yet irrespective of my distinction those mattresses must have served them all. There was no pillow, no blanket though it was biting cold. A wooden bench lay on one side and a flush latrine in the corner. The glaring light on the ceiling pierced our eyes. A small ventilator with thick iron bars was right above our head on one side; but no sun-rays could enter. The door was very thick and wooden with a couple of tiny holes in the middle through which occasional human eyes used to peep. The cell measured about 8 feet by 12.

Not a wink of sleep; nothing special to talk about. Nothing to see; nothing to hear. With a never subsiding whirl-wind of thoughts and memories we lay flat looking at the bulb above. Space and time, night and day, date and month no more mattered to us.

Hours passed. A couple of bangs at the door and I could hear the long thick key manipulating the lock-mechanism. A man in loose black trousers commanded us with his hands to get up and follow

him. Evidently he could not speak English. From the other room also our comrades emerged. Ah, what a happiness it was ! Supreme happiness may be only for a few minutes in everyone's life ! We were driven to the wash-room, the only place for us to meet each other in every twenty-four hours. We did not want to lose a moment. Four brains were active all throughout the night. Everything must be conveyed to each other and things must be set right. Momentary consultation and decision had to be arrived at. Our guard's ignorance of our language was a great blessing. We murmured to each other.

"How was the night ?"

"No, sleep, burning brain, yet happy heart".

"Were there any bugs ?"

"Yes, under the mattress ; in the light they didn't dare come out".

"How long will this go on ?"

"No one knows".

The guards hurried us up. To the large wash-room, batch by batch all the prisoners were taken. Not more than two minutes. They would drive them back to the cell. I wanted to get my brush and tooth-paste. "No, no", the fellow shouted. While we poured the cold water on our heavy faces, we went on talking. "Then what shall we do ?"

"We must escape ?"

"How ?"

"By refusing to co-operate with them. Let them be compelled by themselves to throw us out".

"But how ?"

"Let us refuse everything that comes into our room, except water".

"Fini, fini, Okay. Come on", the fellows shouted at us and we had to get out quickly. A cough, a sneeze and a wash again— by all these methods we could snatch one or two minutes more. They may not allow even this privilege tomorrow, we thought.

Again we climbed up the wooden staircase. Before we reached our cells a decision was reached : "Well, absolute non-co-operation. No breakfast, no lunch, no dinner. Until we are free". And the doors slammed again behind us.

Breakfast arrived—two pieces of dry bread and the same old black coffee. Four hours later lunch was sent in—a bowl of porridge, two pieces of bread, a piece of meat and a potato. When we felt it was getting dark, the dinner was pushed in—the same stuff as for lunch. But everything lay in the room untouched and uncared for.

That forenoon we were taken to the police headquarters. A report was prepared about us and we were asked to sign. "If I get an English version of it, I shall sign, for I don't understand what you have written", I said. The young lady-interpreter was baffled.

"Have you any children ?", she asked me.

“I haven’t even married yet”.

“Not necessary....”

“What do you mean ?”

“I mean, not necessary to be married to have kids.”

She wore a smile. I replied : “Such large-hearted girls haven’t come to me yet”. “Cheer you”, she said and disappeared into the next room.

Back again into the cell. The day passed without any particular events. Hunger started, showing its grip on every fibre of existence. For the first time in my life I realized the taste of hunger to bitterly and acutely. In the Afghan mountains and Iranian wastelands we have had enough of it. Yet that was no more than for a day. But here, this was for an indefinite period. Yet we were extremely happy, for we were fighting for a good cause.

The third morning the doors were again opened. But our two comrades did not turn up. Their room was open. “What happened to them ?” we enquired. “They have been taken away to their home”. At midnight they had been deported to their countries, accompanied by police. What would be our fate ? It would be hopeless if they deport us to India, we thought.

In the afternoon the Chief, accompanied by a couple of other officers called on us. Across the street, to the Chief’s office, slowly we swayed along. Dramatic changes were in evidence. Two high officials from the Embassy of India had already been called in. In their

presence the matter was to be cleared up.

“You have been one of the greatest problems for us”, declared the Chief. “We can’t keep you inside, we can’t let you out. Inside you are going to die; outside you’re going to sit at the Elysee for ‘ever’. In the office we have no peace, for people are always enquiring about you on phone. We sympathise with you. Therefore, finally we have decided to do what we must”. He handed over our passports and a deportation order. “Tomorrow morning be ready to leave Paris by Air France to New Delhi”.

It was a bolt from the blue. Now nothing could be done. “Whatever happens, we are prepared to face”, we said and kept quiet. Then the Embassy officials intervened. “You may still have a chance to consider everything and avoid the deportation”, they said. We did not want to avoid everything. At the same time it was better to accept, a deportation to England, now that they would not let us remain in France.

It was at that juncture that Mme. Petit rushed into the office with a packet of sandwiches, fruits, coffee etc. and demanded of the authorities : “My sons are starving for three days. Is it not a shame for our country to see them suffering for the cause of humanity ? I want them to eat. Come on boys”. Before a mother’s affectionate tears even a stony heart is bound to melt. We had no more so think. The whole world around was immaterial to us. Sitting by her in the next room, we ate everything she had brought !

The Indian Embassy and the French Government held consultations. It would not serve any purpose if we were to be put back in Delhi. By evening again we were

back in our cell. Getting out of detention Mme. Petit and the other lady conducted a vigorous campaign for us. Organizations like the Action Civique Non-violente accelerated the strength of the campaign.

At last the French government reversed their decision and the Indian Ambassador took personal charge of us. While we left the office of the police Chief he wished us well and said : "I realize very well the meaning of your action. In principle I am with you; but after all, I am in the hands of the law which I am supposed to serve. So I am just doing my duty. I have no grudge against you". We could see his sincere concern for us. In his heart of hearts, he supported our work. But alas, in the hands of law, prestige, false notions and blind convictions, man gets lost !

Before we boarded the train we could meet our friends at the ACNY office. The greatest joy was that our hands were released from the pajamas. A sumptuous dinner was awaiting us at our Ambassador's home.

"It is good, your deportation is to England instead of India", commented one of our friends.

"At least we will have a chance to talk to the people in London and Washington too", we consoled ourselves.

"Come back again. The people of India and France want peace; let's struggle for it all the time". These were the last words uttered by Mme. Petit and Mme. Askenasi when we bade farewell to them. Paris revelled in its usual glare and glamour.

The time was 10 p.m. •
AT HOME IN ENGLAND

September 20.

All over again

It was 1 a.m. when the train dropped us at Dunkirk from where the steamer was to leave for Dover after an hour. The port, was radiant with flood-lights and small steamers floated here and there in the English Channel. The waves were not very strong and there was good breeze on the deck. The occasional drizzling prevented us from roaming about on the deck. Carrying a full load of passengers the steamer sailed for England while I sat and discussed with a member of the British Parliament who was returning home after a holiday in Germany. Instead of sleeping, we enjoyed hot coffee and sandwiches. Moreover, there was no place to sleep !

The calm and gloomy coastline of England lay damp and drowsy to receive the hundreds of tired and sleepy people from several countries of the world, at 6 a.m.

"This country puts up a foggy face always", a humorous chap passed a remark.

"That's why the Englishman went away to seek sunshine in all corners of the World", another commented.

"The lion bared his claws too wherever he went", a third. "Necessity made him do that", said a student from Germany. The silhouette of hills magnified the beauty of the green valleys ahead. Cliffs of rock could be distinctly seen on one side.

On the top of a hill stood the Dover Castle. Many old fashioned buildings were scattered here and there on

the hill-side. All of us lined up at the customs' desk. Quick action and disposal followed.

"What have you got in the ruck-sack ?" the lean, active officer asked us.

"A few pairs of clothes, books, diary and toilet set, that's all".

"How much money do you have ?"

"None"

"He ran his eyes from our head to foot. "Our government needs financial guarantee", he said.

"Our friends are in London. They're going to look after us".

"But ", he paused for a minute, "what are you doing ?"

"We are the Peace Marchers".

"I see, from India ? All right. Go ahead", and he looked at the conspicuous badge on our coats. "Seems, you fellows are the CND friends ?"

"Yes, we are".

"Okay, wish you the best !"

We walked ahead. The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament is one of the most active peace organizations in England. Their Peace Badge is internationally known. In every field of life and activity

one can find supporters of this movement. Evidently the customs officer had a soft corner for the CND.

A sudden sense of familiarity greeted us as we stepped on the road to London. The traffic was passing on the left. Language was no more a problem. By now my friend, Satish, too could slowly converse in English. In India he had not known a word of it. A few miles ahead, in the home of a young couple, Stan and Anne Taylor, we decided to have our first day in England as a holiday. From here we have to start all over again.
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London, September 25.

An encounter with a cop

Five days, seventy-five miles and self-confidence would take any person from Dover to London through the panoramic countryside of England. Century after century, many a caravan of traders and sailors and tourists must have trodden the same zig-zag, narrow road that we trekked through the hills and vales, plains and pastures. Beautiful cottages bearing the names, "Mysore", "Rawalpindi", "The Nest" etc. are bound to bring a person from the East nearer to his home. Canterbury, Faversham, Rochester, Dartford—through these towns when we marched, everyday something or the other interesting happened.

At Canterbury our hosts, the Wollens family, prepared a new set of banners for us overnight. The next morning their kids marched with us for some time. "Why also take part in the Aldermaston marches", they explained.

At Faversham the home of Mr. George Champion was

an "Open House" for us. Many families in Europe and America have made their homes open to visitors from other countries, for it will be one of the best ways for better international understanding and co-operation. At Rochester Mr. and Mrs. Hosnaill Ruth sat on discussed with us about Gandhi and Non-violence till late in the night. At Dartford when we enquired the address of my very intimate friend, the lady who gave direction insisted : "Why don't you come in and have a cup of tea ?" We promised her we would call on the same evening, but "first of all let us meet Terry and his mother". (Terry Walster and his mother had been like my own brother and mother for several years through correspondence). That night the Drongins family with whom we stayed wanted to know what the condition of the workers and peasants in India was.

Thus after a steady march and happy stay with unforgettable families, when we came near the London bridge in the bright sunny afternoon, our first encounter was with a cop.

"You must fold your banner. It's prohibited to walk on the pavement with banners". For the first time in our long march of 8,000 miles around the world, a policeman fell foul on us. It was the gentleman English cop. He came and stood by our side.

"We can't fold the banner".

In the meantime his eyes were wandering all over us with special attention on the banner.

"Delhi-Moscow-Washington ! On foot ! Are you Communists ?"

"We are just humanists. To fight against your atom

bombs is our business."

"I see, like the bunch of crazy boys around here, no ?

Do you support the Campaign here ?"

"Of course, we do support it". By that time he had pulled out his diary and pencil.

"Your name ? Address ?"

We explained.

"How long will you be in London ?"

"May be, a couple of months".

"Well, fold the banner, please".

"We just can't, please excuse. You say it's prohibited on the pavement. Do you mean to say we can walk in the middle of the road ?"

He called us aside from the pavement. "Look boys, I'll arrest you".

"Please go ahead. You must do your duty and we ours". "You may have to come with me".

"Before that, please, can I have your name and number too ?" my question surprised him.

"Why d'you want my name ?", his friendly smile got mixed up with an air of curiosity.

"Well, you see, we have been walking from Delhi to

London. This is the first time we are facing the police authority. We have got some other work, too. After this globetrotting we intend to write a book. Ah, there you will be an important character for a nice chapter”.

“All right boys, Go ahead. It’s a problem to deal with you chaps. Wish you all the best. I’m also for peke”.

And we marched on with the banner high up in the air !

Fourteen-aged girls got behind our heels. Teasing, screaming, laughing, giggling and shouting they followed us for some time. When we remained quiet they started pulling our banner from behind. One of them wanted to know how we wore Pajamas ! “Ay, you are a nice fellow, where d’you go ?” one queried.

“We go to hell, will you come ?” “Ha, ha, ha, ha...” all of them cried and went their way.

A few metres ahead, a stout middle-aged woman stopped us. “Hello, what’s on your banner ?” she silently murmured each word and said : “This is excellent. But why don’t you fight against the racial discrimination and poverty of England ? Here there is a lot of racial hatred. I’m an Irish, they don’t like us here. We are deprived of our freedom. They’ve snatched away our land. They treat us as slaves”.

“You mean, the conservative Government ?”

“Conservatives or Labour, all are the same”.

“But Wilson may become the Premier next time. Then I hope, things will improve. What do you say ?” I said.

“May be, a bit better. But see boys”, she concluded.

“once you’re in power all promises are forgotten. That is the way they go. However, will you meet the Prime Minister ?”

“We want to”.

“Okay, tell him that I told you that we the Irish won’t tolerate them. I wish you all the best”. And she walked off to a shop.

“Be careful, the cops may question you. They know people like you pose a lot of trouble to the authorities. I’m glad to meet you. I read about your march in the papers”, said a bearded young man meeting us as we walked down the St. Paul’s Cathedral and joined the swelling crowds. He was an active participant in the Peace Movement. “Where do you live ?”, we asked. “I live around here, here is my phone number. Don’t hesitate to call if you need any assistance.”

It was 4 p.m. exactly when we reached the Kings Cross Circle to terminate our day’s walk at the office of the Peace News. The most important journal of the International Peace Movement, the Peace News has been one of our greatest sources of support for several years. The Peace News, the War Resisters’ International and the Committee of 100 jointly undertook the responsibility of assisting us in every respect in order to make our march successful in England. A press conference had been arranged, but only two reporters turned up, for ‘Everyone is extremely busy with the Denning Report’, said our friend. (The Denning Report on the Profumo Affair

was to be published ,, that night).

London, November 13.

In and around London

The Longest period we spent in and around a single city in the world, has been in London. As usual, a thread of indefiniteness was hanging upon our head from the very first day. In 50 days, one by one, everything could be tackled and we are off tomorrow morning towards Southampton.

London is the citadel of democracy. London is a hot-bed for revolutionaries; yet it is a soft-bed for conservatives. London is the dustbin of the world; yet glittering gems twinkle here and there. London is the focal point of the world; yet the pendulum of power swings to East and West. London is the graveyard of colonialism; yet it is a symbol of imperial splendour. London is a paradise to crazy cops; yet it is a battlefield for intelligent youth. London is a death-pit of frustration; yet it is a fountain of inspiration.

The second evening after our arrival we were watching on T.V. the answer given by the Prime Minister, Macmillan, when he was bombarded with questions by a correspondent. "I would rather carry the burden of having made a mistake and been proved wrong than destroy a man's life when he was innocent" said the Prime Minister, which proves how sensitive and democratic the members of the government are.

Our heavy Russian overcoats had already arrived from Warsaw and in London they proved very useful. A letter arrived from our prison companion in Paris, Mr. Ole Henrichson, describing what happened to

both of them on the second night.

He wrote : "in the night Wolfgang and I were taken out of our cell to the police Chief's.. 'You are to be deported to your countries' 'said the Chief. I said I had my motorcycle lying at our host's, but they didn't bother about it. Accompanied by two cops we were off from Paris the same night. We wanted to meet you and say good-bye, but they wouldn't permit it".

"The most interesting thing was", Ole continued, "the incident at the German border. The next morning both of us were pushed into German territory, but the German authorities refused to accept me. So I was taken upto the border of Denmark and set free. But I had no money to travel to Copenhagen. So I said to be French police : "Either pay me the necessary money, or I will sit here and you will be responsible for everything', The poor fellows, they couldn't decide what to do. As a result, they took me back to Paris and again the next day I was flown from Paris to Copenhagen ! I will go to Paris again after a few weeks to fetch my motorcycle".

The Atlantic Fund :

As long as land was there and as long as our feet didn't fail us, we could walk. But over the Atlantic what shall we do? The biggest practical problem ! "All right, we shall put a sort of suggestion to our readers to contribute for the expenses of your voyage", the Peace News volunteered. Then we wrote a personal appeal to a group of about 30 selected organizations and individuals in London for financial support. Through the small hours of the night, when I sat and typed over 150 letters and appeals during the month,

I used to feel : “Money creates most of the problems in the world”.

•Days and weeks passed. A surprising letter from a lady in Paris arrived : “When you were in Paris, I couldn’t meet you. Your story in the Guardian thrills me. I want to help you in your ventures. Please accept these ten pounds”.

Another letter arrived from a fanner in a village, seventy miles away from London. “Please call at my home sometime. I want to meet you and discuss with you”. He was not an unknown person to the Peace Movement of Britain. So, one Saturday morning when I got down at Banbury Station. Howard Cheney was standing near his car to welcome me. In his most ordinary farm-dress and light beard, he didn’t look a “typical rich Tolstoyan farmer”, as some one had described him to me in London. While we drove 12 miles into the interior he said, “I was in India for five months at the age of 12, in 1929. How happy I was to look at the Kashmir Valley and other beauty spots ! I would like to go to India again”. In his 300 acre-farm he grows wheat and grazes cattle. “Everyone must work, then only justice can be established. The way in which the centralized cities come to exist is ridiculous. That is the root of many evils. Today you can see that Northern England is nothing but a shooting and playing ground for the wealthy lords. In the cities the people get impoverished. Disappointment increases”. At the dining table Margaret Cheney explained how they turned to be vegetarians. “For over six years the whole family is vegetarian. We used to buy meat from the market formerly. Once it so happened that due to a holiday, the meat-shop was closed. We decided to take one of our pigs to the slaughterhouse,

and do the business of killing by ourselves. It became impossible for us. How can you cut the throat of a member of your own family ? Till yesterday it was a part and parcel of our home, we fed and nurtured it, patted and fondled it, like our own child ! All of a sudden how could you justify your action ? Then we understood the meaning of non-violence more clearly. We ceased to be meat-eaters”. Their two children do not know the taste of meat !

After spending an unforgettable four hours with the Cheneys, when I bade them farewell, Howard handed over an envelope to me and said : “You have to cross the Atlantic, so you may need some money. Your work and my work are two sides of the same coin”. It was a cheque for 50 pounds.

Thus in one month we got whatever money we needed to pay for the passage. In fact our Atlantic Fund was oversubscribed by a few pounds with the help of the ATV and BBC programmes.

Apart from the few individuals and students of different colleges in Manchester, Birmingham, Brighton and London, a few organizations like the World Council of Peace, the Fellowship of Reconciliation, the Woman’s Liaison Committee for Peace, the Peace Pledge Union, the Independent Labour Party and the Scott Badar Common-wealth etc. also extended their material support for our Atlantic Fund for which we are ever thankful to them.

Meeting people

Bertrand Russell:—Right from the beginning he had been the most important source of inspiration and strength to us. Every now and then we used to write

to him about the progress of the march. In spite of the innumerable pre-occupations he used to be very prompt in acknowledging and giving suggestions to the minutes details. On May 4th, 1962 he had written:

Dear Mr. Menon,

I am extremely sorry not to have replied to your letters sooner concerning the New Delhi March. Committee of 100 would be most honoured to be one of the supporters of your action and we shall give you any help that we can. I am afraid that I do not know of any people or organization in the countries you mentioned who could help you. I think the main lesson of the San Francisco-Moscow march was that leafleting, picketing etc., could usually be carried out provided the marchers were determined. On many occasions the authorities tried to persuade the marchers to by-pass towns, not to give out leaflets, not to picket Ministers of Defence and army installations, but when faced with the passive resistance of the marchers who refused to co-operate with the authorities unless they allowed them to continue as they wished, the police usually gave in.

I should like to say again how tremendously encouraged I am by your intention. I am convinced that these actions serve to arouse the conscience of everybody who comes in contact with them. If there is any further assistance that the Committee of 100 can give you. I hope you will let us know.

Your's sincerely,
Bertrand Russell.

At that time another rumour was spreading in the

newspapers that he was going to sail into the Pacific testing area where the U. S. Govt. had planned a series of nuclear tests. So when I wanted to know the details about it, he replied on the 10th of May '62.

"I am sorry to have disappointed you, but the report that has apparently appeared in a number of Indian papers that I am sailing into the Pacific testing area is entirely untrue. I appealed to a number of non-aligned leaders, including Nehru, Tito, and Nkrumah, to send ships into the testing area. A Boat is leaving San Francisco next week for the Christmas Island area, organized by the American Committee for Non-violent Action with the full backing of the Committee of 100 in London. I am afraid that the task of sailing thousands of miles across the ocean I have to leave you younger men.....,

Bertrand Russell.

So, having reached London, to go away without meeting him personally was unimaginable for us. But he lived over 200 miles away from London in the North of Wales. Our proposed plan of walk from London onwards was : London to Southampton and then from New York to Washington. "Now what should be done ? To walk to the South of Wales ? To go by train or bus ? Where is the money ? At last we decided to write :

"Dear and Respected Earl Russell,

You know all about our activities and circumstances. Now how and when to come and meet you is the problem we are facing. Only you can find a solution to this."

In four days his reply came. On the 29th of September

'63 he wrote :

Dear Mr. Menon,

I am very pleased to hear from you and to learn of your arrival in London. I am, at the moment, announcing the formation of the two foundations which has caused me to be entirely occupied with the press. I understand you intend to be in London for three weeks. Could you telephone my secretary in ten days time to that an appointment may be fixed ?”

“Yes, Menon, why shouldn't we spend one whole weekend with the Russells in that village ?,” was an impressive masculine voice over the phone one afternoon.

“We would be extremely delighted to have such a nice, opportunity”, I said.

“Then be ready for a long drive on Friday evening.”

“Thank you very much.”

Friday, the 18th of October 1963, was nothing unusual to Londoners, though it was so to us. The privileged and the elite could enjoy a comfortable escape from the bustle of London into the countryside irrespective of the climatic conditions. The young, crazy and adventurous also could cram themselves into a borrowed automobile and dash out into the darkness on a 'share-expenses' basis. The Picadilly Circus was bulging with crowds of people. Pat Pottle, Tom, Kensey, Satish and I occupied a car which crawled into the winding ways heading towards the North-West of London.

Pat and Tom were the young, energetic secretaries of Earl Russell. Pat had been sent to India and China to meet Nehru and. Chou-En-Lai on behalf of Russell. “Tell us something about your impressions on the way, Pat”, we requested.

“It was terribly hot when I landed in Bombay, yet I liked India very much. But the misery and poverty of the people were appealing to me. Ceylon is very beautiful but I disliked the deplorable English pomp and manners that were exhibited in a hotel. Some Englishmen pierced me with their look, for I didn't have a tie ! At a snap of their fingers the attendants shot themselves at the table in attention. Oh, ridiculous !”

Tom was hard at his wheel. In an hour we were away from the flashes of the city into the chilly atmosphere crowned with a dark starless sky. Two continuous line of pale yellowish headlights of the incoming cars and two lines of the twinkling red-lights of the outgoing cars magnified the dark beauty of the 'Motorway One' which ran up and down the enchanting landscape.

“At an average there are 38 cars per mile on British roads,” Tom answered our query and pressed the accelerator again. At 2-30 a.m. the car stopped in the compound of a solitary home on the slope of a hill and we suddenly woke up. A young lady opened the door and went back to light the stove. A hot cup of coffee in that invigorating chill made us wish for a trip of 225 miles again. But a cosy bed was inviting us, in the lap of which we were lulled by 3-30 to wake up at 10 the next morning into an exciting world of nature's bounties.

On Saturday at 4 p.m. when we stopped Up the

verandah of the Plas Penrhyn a lean and impressively dressed-up gentleman paced towards the door to extend a warm hand-shake to us. Though mild wrinkles lined on his face, full of vitality, he did not look to be 91 at all” The silvery hair fluttered in the pleasant breeze. “How do you do ?” he enquired, looked at our feet, smiled and directed us to a cosy sofa and himself occupied an arm-chair by the side of the tea-table. A slender, attractive woman of about 60 welcomed us with a radiant smile and warm hand-shake and then got busypacking tea.

“I am so eager to hear all about your wonderful March from Delhi to London,” he said and extended his hand to pour the light green tea, which he had been so fond of after his two years in China long ago. We explained the story to him.

“Didn’t you get some more people to walk with ?”

“Yes, we did. In fact from every country we wanted at least one person.” Then we told him about the willingness of the Russian student. He held the pipe in hand and attentively listened to everything with an occasional puff of smoke. The Bay of Tremadoc looked very calm through the window. So peasants and sheep loitered on the green slopes around the village Penrhyn. The small town, Penrhyndeudraeth, didn’t seem to exist nearby, for the Russells lived in a single cottage on an elevated spot overlooking the Bay which crept through rocks and mountains. Flower vases and plants decorated all sides of the living room. Firewood burned inside the natural heater. Huge book-shelves on all sides contained innumerable volumes of various branches of science and literature.

“So it seems to me that the people in the Eastern

countries have been more responsive to your ideas and activities and they are more anxious for peace and disarmament”, he remarked.

“Right, so far that has been our experience.” He was very happy to hear that in Pakistan we had a good response from the people and the government.

“The trouble is the blinding nationalism. It is one of the greatest evils.” Bertrand Russell, slowly and steadily picked up phrases and explained. “The mere existence of nation-states and the purpose behind it is for murdering people. That’s why I always stress upon a world government. But people are not prepared to leave their independent power and decision-making convenience. So it remains a distant dream. Therefore, conventional wars would occur every now and then among nations. So I am particular of abolishing nuclear weapons and nuclear warfare. It would give unimaginable misery and destruction to humanity. We must discard it. Humanity must be the primary concern of man.”

“Have you got any objection if I smoke ?”, he asked.

“Oh, not at all”, we said. Then he wanted to know something about our personal beliefs. “We have no religion”, we said.

He laughed and responded quickly : “I haven’t got one either”. His sharp and inquisitive eyes were planted on us when he replied to all our questions. We wanted to know something about the two Foundations he was going to institute. “The Peace Movement and people like us cannot reach the masses because we have to beg the mercy of the press and papers which

are based upon vested interest. That's why we have decided to build up our own mass media of approach to the people—a newspaper and a radio station”, said Pat on behalf of Russell.

“We, who have been working, day in and out over a period of many years, against the threat of nuclear destruction have known the frustration of being without access to means of communicating our views or of systematically providing people with an alternative to the desperate policies pursued by governments,” said Russell.

“America seems to be the greatest trouble-maker,” he continued. “Compared to the previous years, consequent to the emergence of new African nations, the domination of the U.S. over the U.N. is lessening. The business of veto must be abolished,” Russell insisted. Then the question of China. “She is making the U.S. feel that she too exists on this planet.”

“I am happy to hear that you had a good welcome from the people of Afghanistan. It is quite reasonable that they have very close relation with the Soviet Union. The British have invaded them many a time. The British used to feel that by invading, one can make friends with others”.

“Do you support direct action by individuals ignoring the legalistic barriers of different countries ?”

“It is not necessary to ignore them. What we need is thinking and acting with a feeling of oneness with the entire humanity.”

“Your role in the Sino-Indian border dispute has

become a point of heated controversy among many people in the Peace Movement and particularly in India.”

I have held my opinion, as expressed in the ‘Un-armed Victory’, on the basis of facts and studies that I have made impartially. My main sources of information were the representatives of the Governments of India and China in London and the enormous amount of personal contact that I made with the two Prime Ministers.”

“What do you think of the Russian responsibility in the international tension ?”

Lord Russell held Krushchov in high esteem. “His wisdom and courage saved the world from disaster, inspite of the mounting criticism and ridicule showered upon him both from inside and outside,” he said.

One could spend hours together with this great man who is one of the sharpest intellectuals with a great concern for the survival of humanity and the preservation of civilization. There are many people who believed that Bertrand Russell's concern for nuclear annihilation is out of fear only. They fail to find reason in Lord Russell's argument that minor conflicts are bound to take place in the world as contradiction is a part and parcel of human character. So he is very particular about the abolition of the dreadful weapons which would bring only total annihilation and misery to the entire human race. In a nuclear conflict there cannot be any victor : both sides will be vanquished. Secondly, to avoid major conflicts and wars among nations, strengthening the U.N. and establishment

of a World Government can be the only solution. Absolute national sovereignty can then be voluntarily surrendered in the hands of the third party which could come to impartial judgment, devoid of prestige, prejudice and vested interests of the individual nations. Patriotism if it is now wise and reasonable, will only render untold misery to the majority of the human race. When persons like Lord Russell, who are above the narrow mental barriers, express their ideas with a broad outlook and universal feeling, naturally it cannot be palatable to those who refuse to get out of the rut of secluded notions and prejudices.

At this age when everyone needs complete rest, he is really a human dynamo. "Getting up 8 a.m.", said his secretary on our way back after the long discussion of 90 minutes, "Russell attends to his correspondence and newspapers till 11-30. Then till 1 p.m. he dictates letters to his secretary and receives visitors. Again from 4 to 6 p.m. visitors and correspondence are dealt with. After dinner at 7, for another six hours he will be buried in his personal correspondence, study, research work, cutting out news-paper items of importance, and go to bed at 1 a.m. His unassuming wife is a secretary, companion and mother, too, always helping him in every activity. He has been living on liquid diet for several years".

Earl Attlee

On the 8th of November, about 150 members of the British Parliament and distinguished educationists gathered in the House of Commons building to discuss the educational reforms, that would be necessary in the wake of a World Government. Since I had been in contact with the Parliamentary Group for World

Government since 1958, one morning Mr. Patrick Armstrong telephoned : " I would like to meet both of you and invite you to join the discussion on the 8th. We readily agreed to. It was on the previous day that I had received a reply to my letter from Lord Attlee. It said ;

Dear Sir,
I shall be at the conference tomorrow and shall be pleased to see you.

Your's sincerely,
Attlee.

At. 2-30 p.m. when the conference was again to assemble, an ordinary looking, short-statured gentleman slowly walked into another hall where both of us had been asked to wait. Slightly bending his neck to one side, he walked slowly towards us. He had not completely recovered from the serious illness of the early part of the year. Yet, with a happy smile he shook our hands saying, "Congratulations for your wonderful work for peace and world unity". I could feel the smallness and softness of the hand of Earl Attlee from which a current of enthusiasm seemed to be passing into my young hot veins, giving more hope and confidence to me in the work. That was the hand which, once upon a time, wielded the unlimited power of a mighty empire. It was the same hand which drew the first stroke that determined the destiny of the same empire. It belonged to that man who presided over the inauguration ceremony of the liquidation of the dreadful dragon of colonialism. It still belongs to the same person who walked in the streets of Tokyo and London with lantern and placards in order to instil some sense into the power-drunk politicians and some courage into the restless youth all over

the world. Once a Prime Minister, today Attlee is an agitator against wars and weapons and campaigner for One World and World Government. "Without that there is no bright future for humanity", he said.

"How are the governments responding to your work?" he enquired.

"Neither good, nor bad. At least they don't obstruct our activities in any way."

"What is your opinion of unilateral disarmament ?, we asked.

"I don't believe in unilateral disarmament. It seems to be an impossibility. Every country lives in fear, for that matter, every politician. It needs courage and conviction. The people must be educated and fearless. These are not easy things. So all nations must come together to agree for a total disarmament." "Would you please make any comment about the recent trouble between India and China ?"

Mr. Attlee thought for a few moments. Suddenly he said : "Well, it seems, China is becoming more and more imperialistic. But the world knows, imperialism and colonialism can no more survive."

"From England where are you going ?" he asked.

"To the United States. At the White House we shall end our March. We hope to meet Kennedy. What message would you give to him ?"

"Please ask him to be sincere in his struggle for

peace. He is a good young man. The world can hope for something good from him."

In the meantime all the members had assembled in the other hall. The meeting had to be resumed. All of us walked into the conference hall.

Mr. Philip Noel Baker, a former Secretary of State in the Commonwealth Relations Department, Mr. Cannon Colins, Chairman of the CND, Mr. Phizo, the Naga-leader in exile, Rev. Michael Scott—these were some other important personalities we met there.

We had written to the Prime Minister, as soon as we arrived. The Profumo affair and the subsequent events were shaking the whole country. One Prime Minister was about to go and the other was to come. In this government shake-up and confusion, we did not have an opportunity for any concrete discussion with any particular high authority of the Government. Yet, on the 15th of October, we received a communication from the P.M.'s office which said :

10 Motenica Skutt

October 15, 1963.

Before he went into hospital the Prime Minister asked me to thank you for your letter of September 27 telling him about your remarkable enterprise in marching from India to this country.

Mr. Macmillan was very grateful, for your congratulations on the part he played in promoting the recent Test Ban Agreement. He hopes that that may prove to be a first step towards the ultimate removal of the anxiety felt throughout the world (of which your mission is a manifestation) about the dangers of a nuclear war

Mr. E.P. Menon and Mr. Satish Kumar.

On the same day Mr. Harold Wilson wrote the following letter :

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leabon. &Wit
15 October 1963

HWAS/PP

Dear Mr. Menon, *

I was most interested to receive your cordial letter of October 14th and want to thank you for your good wishes.

In return, I want to express my admiration of the devotion to the cause of world peace both yourself and Mr. Satish Kumar. What greater sign of dedication could there be than to have walked from India, through ten countries, to London.

I think you already know of the long campaign which the Labour Party has waged in Britain to bring about the end of nuclear tests and we have registered approval at the recent signature of the limited test ban agreement. But, this is only the beginning, and all of us, in our various ways, will be working to secure an end of all tests and the beginning of real disarmament. As you have arrived at a time when I have a very heavy programme, I hope you will forgive me if my support for your aims is indicated by this message which will be conveyed to you by the Overseas Secretary, Mr. David Funnals.

Again, good wishes to you and your mission.

Yours sincerely,

Mr. E. P. Menon,
41 Courtfield Road,
London, S. W. 7.

The Foreign Secretary's office informed us that : "Lord Home is extremely busy at the moment and would be unable to meet you personally. He has suggested however, that if you wish to discuss the prospects for disarmament, we could arrange to meet the Head of the Department responsible for disarmament within the Foreign Office, Mr. Pemberton Pigott."

Accordingly, one morning we called on Mr. Pemberton Pigott at his office. His view could be summarized as follows :

"We are for complete disarmament, step by step. We cannot take any step for unilateral disarmament as it may be easier for the East for any surprise attack. Can you ever think of unilateral disarmament by India in a situation she is placed today ? However, without China's participation no proper disarmament can be achieved or negotiated. We are trying our best in Geneva."

The white washers !

As we emerged from the Foreign Office two policemen stood at the gate of the Prime Minister's residence, 10 Downing Street. A few yards ahead half a dozen middle-aged and old workers stood. We slowly walked past.

"You boys Indian ?" one of them quickly stopped us

to ask. "Now we are English," we replied. It is nice to have some gossip, we thought.

"Yeah, I saw you on the TV last nigh, weren't you," a plumpy joker type of person, over fifty, elbowed to the front and asked.

"Yes, we were".

"That's right, friends. I recognized your coats easily. Where are they from ? Not English ?"

"They are from Moscow."

"Moscow ! Oh, how nice. Tell me, how's it around there ?", his anxiety to know about Moscow was indescribable.

"It was fine, but you see, terribly cold. So they gave us these coats."

"Or fellows will be killed. India very hot, no ?" a third one said.

"Listen, how are the people ?", the plumpy one asked.

"People were very good to us, as everywhere else".

"Why did you go there ?" asked the first one.

"Ay, you donno", the plumpy man replied on our behalf. "These boys are walking in the world to ask the leaders to stop their madness. I watched the TV. Oh, wonderful programme.

"What is your opinion of walk ?"

"Very fine. These politicians should be taught sense."

"What d'you want us to tell them ?"

"Tell them, we, poor people wan'to live. They play with our taxes."

"What do you think of your leaders ?" we asked.

"They are as criminal as the Americans," then one looked over his shoulders towards the cops at the P.M.'s gate.

"What are you doing here ?" we enquired.

"We build houses," he pointed to the huge granite building of the Prime Minister. "And do the white-washing. All that is for the criminals to live in. It's time, we worked against them."

"Don't they say they are working for peace and happiness of all ?"

"They say everything. Friends, you expect them to make peace ? Do you know Lord Home is the owner of 97000 acres of land ? These dukes and lords are exploiting us. No peace. No happiness. They look after their happiness always. We're fed up with building and white-washing. Over 15 years I've been doing this. All right. One day we shall blow them up. As the Russians did. They're fine boys. We need guts." He gave a long lecture. The cops were occasionally looking at us. Our dark, thick overcoats impressed the old man very much. He ran his fingers on the smooth surface and commented : "Very good.

They are nice people, that's why, you got this. No one give in England."

Then he wanted to know about Nehru. "How is Paris ? Beautiful city. I'd been there once. French are funny good fellows."

"Now we are going to America," we said and asked his opinion about Kennedy. "Young man of course. But a millionaire can do not much for the world. Meet him and give our hello, too."

"All right, friends, we have to go now. Thank you for the nice gossip," We bade them good-bye. "Cheer you," all of them said together. What a good gang of white-washers !

A midnight welcome

The underground train service in London is the second best in the world. The Metro of Moscow tops the list in cleanliness and beauty. In efficiency and punctuality both are the same. It was late one night when we returned to our residence at 41, Courtfield Road, after a public meeting and TV programme. As soon as we got down from the train someone caught hold of our conspicuous coats and said : "Hello, were you on the Television just an hour ago ? I saw you having a discussion with the Interviewer."

"Yes, we were."

"I am extremely happy to meet you. Where are you going ?" "To our place ; we stay just here."

"How nice, I too live around here, in the other street.

Please come to my room and have a cup of Coffee."

"But friend, it is already 11 0' clock. Why not some other time ?"

"Oh, it'll be too late. I'm overwhelmed with joy. I must have your company just now. You see, I would have come with you had I not registered for the exams".

By the time we emerged out, his overwhelming enthusiasm captivated us and we walked to his room in the lower floor of a big building.

"How much do you pay for this ?," we enquired Mr. Nat, a broad-minded young student who came to London a couple of years ago from Kenya.

"Five pounds a week, though a room of this type is normally available for 3 pounds. It took several days for me to find out a room. You see, the colour prejudice is no less in London, though they boast of many things. For a white student this accommodation would cost only 3 pounds."

"We don't think so."

"For Indians, it is better than Africans. Moreover, your situation is quite different. Everyone would invite you voluntarily for you are a hero." While talking Mr. Nat made hot coffee.

"How do you find life in general, Nat ?"

"I like London, but not the society. Homo-sexuality is the worst disease of this society. Out of 3 men one is homosexual out of two girls, one. People are too

individualistic. Food is cheap. If you care for every penny, you can manage without difficulty.”

Our chit-chat lasted till midnight. Mr. Nat wanted young people to come together from every corner of the world and work against the apartheid. “As you are doing it is the duty of every youth to work for world unity. I am sure, peace depends upon that.” It was a joy to discuss with him.

Hameed—the train driver

An elderly man in a thick leather coat sat opposite to us in an underground train another evening. Several times our eyes met. At last he got up to ask : “Excuse me, are you not the two people who have walked from India ?”

“Yes, we are. May I know what you are ?”

“I am called Hameed. I work in the railway as a driver. I am very pleased to see you in person. Your picture in the Guardian made me recognize you. Congratulations”. Then Hameed proceeded to explain his own tale of woe and ambition. He said the first thing he did was, as soon as he read the article in the Guardian about our Peace March, to buy three-four copies of the paper and send the cuttings to his old friends in India. “Then when did you leave India Hameed ?”, we asked.

“More than twenty years ago. My ancestral home is in Hyderabad. I had joined the army to fight against Hitler. After the war I got settled here with a job. But I am fed up with the society here. War is horrible, I would do everything for the prevention of it in the

future.”

“Then do you support the CND movement here ?”

Of course I do. Though there are mischievous fellows in the group, their aim is good. World Peace needs mass action. I want to go back to India and live there. Some time ago my son visited India. On his return he was telling me, “Daddy, I don’t want to go to India any more’. He disliked the appalling conditions in the country. Here he doesn’t experience such conditions. So I told him that it was no use escaping from those circumstances. In fact all of us are responsible. I am slowly making my children understand. In my childhood and youth I have suffered too much, but my children are growing up in Western surroundings. I never go to mosque or temple to worship. I worship mankind.

By the time we had to get down. “Can I help you in any way ?” Hameed asked. “Not dear friend, thank you very much. We enjoyed your company. Your good-wishes are our best source of strength.”

He also got down with us. “It is not very far for me to walk down. I can have a few minutes more in your company,” he said and we walked out.

A prospective participant

At the War Resisters’ Conference in France we had met a very nice gentleman from London who had wanted ‘definitely to meet you when you reach London.’ By profession he is a businessman; but in practice he is a journalist-cum-pacifist-cum-agitator-cum-traveller-cum-humorous personality. His interests are varied

from philosophy to politics, and from science to spirituality. His comrades are numerous—from saints to sinners and from politicians to businessmen. His world is one and vast and therefore, it was natural that we fell into a fast friendship with him at first sight. Yet, we couldn't locate him nor could he trace us during our first fortnight in London, inspite of the attempts both parties made. At last one evening the telephone rang : "Hellow, Menon, it has been a Herculean task to get you. Look, dear chaps, let us meet tonight itself," John Papworth insisted. The same could shivering night we called on him at his lonely home. Being a bachelor, John Papworth is a happy-go-lucky free bird. His days started at 7 usually to end at 1 or 2 a.m. During weekends he would escape to his country-home, a couple of hours from London, for he is a person, who never likes the complexities of the mechanical life of the city. "Man has become a slave to the machine," he would scorn at the domination of the machine over every aspect of man's life.

"Why shouldn't I also join you to Washington ?" he cracked a surprising joke.

"Ah, fine ! Why not ? You will be the first person in the history of our March to join us from one country to the other." "Well, I must think a bit deeper."

"Okay, you think and decide."

That night we went on with our discussion of international politics, nuclear bombs, Shakespeare and Gibran, love and sex till 1 a.m. Then he accompanied us to our residence.

Though he casually talked about coming with us,

we knew John was a person who could take quick decisions without much brain-racking and worrying about. Yet, he said, he had to convince his business partner, for it would take a few months to return if he joined us. "After all, it is just a month's walk from New York to Washington, John, you can make it up," we had opined. However, he couldn't decide anything as long as we were in London.

Peggy Smith

As long as we live, certain individuals who have come into our life during the two years and a half can never be erased out of our memory. Peggy Smith of 41, Courtfield Road, London, S.W. 7, is one among them. Within two days of our arrival in London we happened to be the guests of Peggy Smith, through the Committee of 100. In her late seventies, Peggy is well-known to the Peace Movement in England, for she is a direct actionist and a staunch supporter and campaigner for nuclear disarmament. Being a quaker and interested in various other social activities, not a single moment does she sit quiet at home, inspite of her physical inability. Peggy's house is ever upon for all those people who find it difficult to find accommodation owing to lack of funds or other troubles when they get into the field of action.

"As long as you are in London, please consider this as your own home and feel ever free to ask me if I can do anything for you," she told us on the very first night of our arrival at her house.

American Visa

While the Soviet Embassy took only four days to grant us visa, the Champion of the Free World, took an easy 22 days for the same ! Whereas the Communist bureaucracy could do the whole business between Kabul, Teheran and Moscow within ten days, the Democratic bureaucracy had to hang upon the strings of indecision and indefiniteness concealed in the cloak of NtiNpicidn of our identity and purpose ! While the Soviet Embassy never doubted our sincerity of purpose, the U.S. Embassy suspected as to whether we were Communist propagandists or genuine fighters for peace and disarmament.

That is why the good-looking officer in the American Embassy turned every page of our passports, scrutinized all the several stamps and seals and finally shot a surprising question at us : “Are you member of the Communist Party or any other organizations affiliated with it ?”

“Does our passport show that ?”

“Well, you’ve spent a lot of time in the Communist countries.” We did not want to give up easily. Then we explained to him that in the Communist countries we had been well received and our activities were well publicized. That showed that the people of those countries were very responsive to our work.

“However friends,” he concluded, “your matter is complicated and political. It is beyond our jurisdiction. Moreover, you say you are going to walk from New York to Washington ! Do you know walking is prohibited in the American Highways ?” Then/ we told him that it

was not necessary that we should walk only through the highways. “Anyway, we have to refer the whole matter to the State Department in Washington and our Embassy in New Delhi. Only when they recommend your case, we can issue visa. Therefore, let us write to them. If you want this to be done by cable, then you may have to bear the expenditure ! Otherwise wait a few days !”

We filed our applications, of course, and the days rolled into weeks.

In the meantime I wrote a detailed letter to the Ambassador of the United States in India, Mr. Chester Bowles. We were determined, not to return unless we reached Washington D.C. If every attempt to secure visa from the States failed, we thought we would proceed to Canada and then walk down to the United States whether we were permitted or not.

In a week I received a letter from Chester Bowles :

Dear Mr. Menon,

Thank you very much for your letter welcoming Mrs. Bowles and me back to India. We’re delighted to be back since we have so many good friends here. In regard to your problem, I have queried the Visa Section here and have been informed that your visa application will be processed as rapidly as possible.

With best wishes,

Sincerely,

Chester Bowles.

After a week when we called at the U.S. Embassy, there was no more discussion. The Visas were granted. While our days rolled through the London streets and

mdors o olleges and other institutions, an inspiring letter reached me fr across the Atlantic. Enclosing a Cheque for \$ 6/-, the undersigned wrote to the Editor of Peace News :

Dear friend

I deeply regret the military aid given by my country to India and to my other nation. I want to help these two young men dedicated to peace and human understanding and non-violent resistance to problems, to come to Washington. I -hope they may be allowed to speak with some of our-leaders. At least their presence and their ideas can help to inspire greater activity in the Peace Movement here.”

Sd/- Ann. B. Simmon.

In the meantime the American National Committee for Non-violent Action, New York, was preparing to accord us a grand welcome.

The British Peace Movement

The progress of human society and peace or war, mainly depends upon the attitude, understanding and action of the people. The more the knots in the hearts of men are broken, the happier and more peaceful the world is bound to be. With this view when one looks at the British Peace Movement, one is sure to be very much encouraged, though a shadow of discouragement will definitely follow him, too. In almost every University, college, or other public institution a group of dedicated young boys and girls can be seen working hard for the cause of world peace and understanding, disarmament and nuclear-test-ban, racial equality and anti-colonialism and the like.

At least a section of the young generation of Britain has accepted its responsibility and decided to act according to its conviction. The historic Aldermaston Marches, Easter Marches, and other public demonstrations, in which thousands of people plunge, testify their concern for international problems. The young students could be seen sitting in the corner of a cafe, or in their classrooms, or in the public park, discussing ways and means as to what could be done in case the East or West or their own country would explode the next series of bombs, or how to prevent the visit of a nuclear submarine from across the Atlantic to the British ports, or how to organize public support to bring preasure on their government not to encourage the barbaric actions of the South African government and the like. With a cup of coffee and cigarettes they would sit for hours together and evolve the technique and policy of their actions. For every complicated problem of the world there can be found one office or establishment or a group of people to take up responsibility and do something, Whether it is the Nuclear Bomb or Non-violent Resistance, Kashmir problem or Cuban Crisis, the Berlin or Cyprus problem, Conscientious Objectors or the question of Capital Punishment, Naga question or the Amerindians dispute, Apartheid or the Civil Rights Movement, Anarchist Movement or Free-love-and-sex-promotion—all the problems under the sun have occupied a definite place within the walls of London. The shade of disappointment arises from the fact that a clear-cut policy and leadership are lacking. At times one would tend to think : where are they all heading to ? Means and ends cannot be clearly distinguished in many respects. Inspite of everything, we can arrive at an optimistic conclusion that the people are churning their brains and restlessly seeking to solve

problems by analytical, reasonable, persuasive and active means.

The democratic right to express one's opinion on any matter has been granted to every citizen living in the United Kingdom. As a symbol of this fundamental right, there exists in the heart of London a special open place called the speakers' Corner at the Marble Arch in the famous Hyde Park. Almost every day you can see someone delivering a fiery speech to a huge gathering.

On the 26th October, after a busy day we returned to our apartme exactly at midnight. A news items on the paper immediately caught my eyes. "Members of the Committee of 100 are going to fast from this noon in order to sympathise with Dolci's fast i Italy, at the Marble Arch, for a period of 36 hours."

I could not remain in the room any more. I put on my coat and muffler. "Where are you going ?," asked Satish. "To the Marble Arch," I replied. "I'm too sleepy, moreover we have to get up early in the morning," said he, and I bade 'good night' to him.

The public traffic of London stops at midnight. I could go only half way by train and the rest of the distance, I had to walk. When I reached Marble Arch there were half a dozen young boys and girls sitting on the cold platform with placards in hands. "You see, for the sake of thousands of farmers in Sicily, Danilo Dolci has launched an indefinite fast against the government's obstinate policy. Isn't it our duty to supportthem ? Every good work in the world needs people's support from all corners of the world. Then only we can hope for a one-world and peace for all." They explained.

After spending three hours with them when I walked back home to sleep for two hours it was 4 a.m. What a great inspiration and sense of unity I experienced that night !

"Oh, What a Lovely War !"

Everyday in London was fully utilized in meeting people which left very little time for any sight-seeing or the like. The University students of Brighton, Manchester, Birmingham and some other supporters of Sacrlborough and Leeds gave us ample opportunity to go around a bit to the countryside.

One of the rare free evenings my good old friend, Eleanor, suggested : "Tonight I want to take you to a good musical entertainment."

Glaring lights magnified the marvels of advertisement in the Picadilly Circus. The queen mother's palace lay deserted in grave-yard silence. One wondered what on earth could be done with the 200 and odd rooms that constituted a single mansion for a solitary soul to live in ! Though I have not had the opportunity to see the other side of London some people had told me that the side of the picture was simply disgusting for there existed frustrated souls and miserable creatures, teddy boys and the unemployed lots, slums and savage-life, too ! Yet an imposing statue of Major Henry Havelock stood at the heart of the Trafalgar Square to instil a typical blind spirit of sacrifice in the posterity's young blood. "Soldiers, your labour, your privations, your sufferings and your valour will not be forgotten by a grateful country !" The social life of the Soho lanes was in full bloom; the "gigy girls" were on to the stage for their "striptease" shows; whirls of

smoke and calls of "life" dominated the atmosphere and we briskly walked into the Wyndhams Theatre at the stroke of nine.

At the introduction of the heart-rending and highly appreciated musical entertainment. "Oh, What a Lovely War !" one reads : "The cost of World War I was 35,000 million pounds and 10 million human lives. The world of today spends 43,000 million pounds a year on arms. For every person there is a stockpile of 20 tons of TNT." Such artistic productions provide ample food for sane thought and sensible action. What prompted the making of such a film ! Says Mr. Charles Chilton : "In 1958 at the request of my grand-mother I went to Arras (France) to photograph the grave of my father (her son) killed there in 1918. When I discovered my father's official memorial it was to find that he had no grave ! Instead, his name was inscribed upon the wall along with those : 35,942 men and officers of the forces of the British Empire who fell in the battle of Arras and who have no known graves." What could have possibly happened to a man that rendered his burial impossible ? What horror could have taken place that rendered the burial of 35,942 men impossible and all in one relatively small area ? The search for answer to this question has finally led to this production, in the sincere hope that such an epitaph will never have to be Written upon an man's memorial again !"

It is the story of the first war. At the time the mothers, wives and sisters of Britain sent their sons, husbands and brothers with final kisses and farewells to the battle-field. Today the mothers, wives and sisters sit and shed their tears in the theatres. But tomorrow what would they do ? Will not the story be repeated ?

Isn't it the same case all over the world ?

"One and a half million killed; but only 800 yards !" like that the flash-up statistics were shown one by one. Only with a sinking heart and a load of questions and statistics, one could get out of the theatre after midnight.

Off on the track

By the 14th of November all our problems were solved and we started towards Southampton. The Scindia's Steamship Company in London had generously offered all help. Two of their cargo vessels were scheduled to leave Liverpool to the United States on any of which they offered to take us free of cost to New Orleans. "But we can't give you any guarantee of the definite date of arrival," they said. Moreover, we wanted to reach New York from where our schedule was to march to Washington. Marching from New Orleans would be too long. So we did not avail ourselves of their offer.

We reserved a cabin on one of the world's two largest passenger ships, the Queen Mary.

Southampton, 21st Nov.

Farewell to England

The next one hundred miles from London to Southampton was comfortably trekked, except that we had to get drenched in rain now and then. Yet the overwhelming and warm hospitality from the hosts along the way made us as fresh and happy as ever.

The Friends Centre as London had intimated many of their members in the towns along our route

and therefore, every evening we could reach a pre-determined place.

Mr. and Mrs. Basil Yeo, Rothwell and Rosemary, the Stevens, Mr. Christopher Lake, John Smith and Claire, Arthur Jenner, the fanner Ronald, the Pecks and the Fengers—these are the people who are ever in our memory, like mile-stones on the road to Southampton. At Southampton we had a busy time with friends, meetings and Television programme.

Tomorrow afternoon we would be on the waters of the Atlantic !

ACROSS THE ATLANTIC

Mid-Atlantic, November 25th Through the roaring waves

When one is in the midst of a desert, the mirage far beyond appears to be green, cool arid comfortable, bringing hope and happiness. But when one stands on the shore of an ocean, instead of hope and happiness, his mind will be full of illusions and indefiniteness of the future. At that juncture courage is the only consolation.

But when we stood at the brink of the Atlantic on the 22nd of November, of these feelings disturbed our minds, for we were pretty sure of definite destination at the other end.

The Queen Mary was getting ready for the leap into the Atlantic with 1500 passengers. abroad. Her external appearance was majestic and inside she was more enchanting. We had to board the ship at 12 noon.

That among all our hosts and friends gave us a hearty send-off and we walked into the docks with our banners, and distributing leaflets to the people on the way, At the gates of the docks two security men stood when we walked in.

"Where are you going ? You can't get in there," one of them came forward and said.

"We're going to the ship."

"Eh !", the other one was also curiously surveying us from head to foot. We handed over a leaflet to

the former. The other man murmured gazing at the banner : "Delhi-Moscow-Washington."

"Going to the States ?" he asked.

"Yes, we are."

"Have you got tickets ?"

We showed him the tickets. "I see", both of them said at once and a smile flashed across their weary faces. "Go ahead, turn right, then straight on." Within five minutes we were right inside the corridors which led to the ship's gangway.

"Good morning friends, greetings to you", the customs officer recognized us from the newspaper photographs which he had seen that morning.

"Hello, last night I saw you on the TV. Welcome to our boat", a couple of young officers of the ship came forward to greet us. A few of the crew stood on the other side, waving hands. Quite unexpectedly we happened to be heroes in the eyes of the crew !

At 1.30 p.m., when the majestic "Queen" slowly moved into the mild waters, the passengers on board thronged at the decks to bid farewell to their kith and kin and the country. At that time no one could imagine that within a couple of hours the world would be plunged in sorrow ! I could never think that our auspicious departure from the shore of England would coincide with one of the most mournful moments of history.

At seven O'clock a whisper went round the elaborate

lounge and everyone frantically craved for the confirmation of the shocking news. At 9.30 the BBC broadcast pierced the heart of everyone. There were men and women from several countries on board the vessel. Everyone of them felt the irreparable loss sustained by the world in the abrupt disappearance of that brilliant President of the United States. Some sat sobbing on the sofas, some went up to the open deck and gazed at the dark sky and the endless ocean; some simply lay down in their cabins with heavy hearts and tearful eyes. "Let us observe mourning for the next 24 hours. No more functions and socials on board the boat till tomorrow evening," the captain announced. That was the end of our first day on the Atlantic.

To give a real picture of the interior of the magnificent 'Mary' in words, I don't have the talent of Charles Dickens. The 'Stateroom' specially allotted to both of us, was excellent and self-contained and every possible facility was provided to us.

On the second and third day the mighty Atlantic rose to its full fury and yet the "Queen" cruised at a minimum speed of 25 miles an hour. "She has been fighting with these roaring waves for the last two decades," the glory of the 'Mary' was explained to us by one of the officers on board. "She can carry more than 4000 passengers with a crew of 1500 in her gigantic belly which weighs 89000 tons. 'Queen Elizabeth' is her sister of the same capacity. Both the sisters have been doing excellently well up to now. During the second war 'Mary' was used to transport troops over the Atlantic." He spoke proudly of the 'Mary'.

Last night the violence of the turbulent tides tossed us. Today, there is beautiful sunshine and the 'Mary' is doing marvelously well through the roaring waves which crumble and vanish with a whitish-blue, foamy, laughter of death !

End of the voyage

Since morning, everybody had been busy packing going up and down the decks, some with binoculars and some with cameras to trace something of the land and the people. The sea got calmer and the sky clearer. The Captain announced at noon "We shall be landing at New York by 7 p.m., provided the circumstances are fine. "The previous day we were running a tow hours behind schedule.

Everyone felt the pangs of separation, for all had cultivated a Willy atmosphere on board. The clock had gone five hours behind during the five days of journey. We were entering the new world!

The afternoon was all confusion and helter-skelter. By 3 p.m. the Manhattan skyline could be mildly visible through a very thin layer of smoky atmosphere. In a couple of hours we were in the wide mouth of the Hudson river and the 'Queen' steadily moved to her pier.

It was at that time another historic incident took place. The sister Queen, 'Elizabeth' was on her way to Southampton. It created an uproar and excitement in our boat. Everyone rushed onto the deck to have a glimpse of the 'Elizabeth' for it was after 14 years that the two 'sisters' crossed each other at the docks ! Fleets of cars were passing like a flash far away. Helicopters

circled all around, as if to welcome the majestic arrival of the 'Queen'. Roaring jets took off and landed at the Idlewild airport far away. Innumerable small boats were playing around.

Slowly, darkness fell. The illumination of the impressive New York was clearly visible. What a marvellous sight ! The Statue of Liberty thrilled our hearts. The Empire State Building was conspicuously dominating the Manhattan panorama. "Doesn't it look like a South Indian Temple fully decorated with lights in festival ?" wondered an Indian student.

By 6.30 the 'Queen' anchored at the pier. The passengers crowded in line for the formalities. Someone touched my shoulder : "Mister, will you please come to the lounge ?"

"What's the matter ?"

"We want to have interview with you." There were half a dozen people. The TV, radio and press representatives.

"We have to put you on the air tonight itself," the young cameraman insisted. An old guy with paper and pencil shot at : "First of all. tell me, how are your feet ?" The interview went on for half an hour.

Then a photographer ! "Dear friends, will you please pose for a photograph ?" We said we did not mind. But we wanted to know why he was so keen.

He said : "I am the official photographer of the Cunard Lines. It is a privilege that you preferred to travel by our boat and we are thankful to you. We want your photograph to be displayed on our ship and in the

business office."

Ah, that is the crux of the problem. We realized, it was in a land where business counted most that we had arrived. "Dollar and advertisement," someone on board the ship had told me, "are the basis of American life." From the very first moment we are getting into that. However, we did not object to him. He wanted us to sign a contract that we had no objection to exhibiting our photographs. "But mind you, we don't, mind if it is displayed only on the ship. We don't want our photos to be used on papers for your advertisement," we said. "Of course not," and he went away happy and contented.

It is here, that I remember a similar story in London. One afternoon I got a telephone call : "Please make it a point," flowed the feminine melody into my ears, "tomorrow evening you and your friend must attend the party we are organizing. You are our chief guests, eh, fine thank you goodies." The previous day I had a chat with that lady, hence I didn't have to ponder over the "where" and "why" and the like. It was in one of the fashionable restaurants in the Chelsea area.

The next evening we called in at the small, posh restaurant punctually at six. In a few minutes we were introduced to the Invites. The dynamic hostess went around and offered us a lemonade or a drink or coffee or tea. At the end of the hour we were called to a corner. "Would you mind sitting on this chair ?", the pleasant-looking young man requested. We sat. Camera clicked from all sides. "Feet up a bit.....yeah, that's okay.....the one on the other...," his directions were followed.

"Thank you very much," he said. Now we were to

depart. Then the lady explained. "You see, today is the inauguration of this friend's restaurant. He's a good supporter of our movement. We are very happy to have you as our first guests from distant India.

We shall be extremely privileged to display your pictures on the walls' here. Our first customers after walking over 7,000 miles!" We had nothing else to do but laugh. "Your feet are very important with the English shoes," added the photographer.

At last we joined the line's end. The customs officers were very efficiently handling the passengers one by one. We were called at two different desks. An old man took my passport. After turning all the pages he looked straight into my eyes. "What is the CNVA?" I explained, it was the Committee for Non-violent Action, our organizers and hosts in the States.

Making a deeper curve of his eye-brows he asked : "What sort of an organization is it ? Is it connected with the Commies?" A sense of irritation was passing through my veins. But, patience was the best medicine, I knew well. "It will be better if you find it out for yourselves," I replied.

"All right, wait a bit please," he got up from the chair and went to consult the higher officer. A few minutes later he returned and handed over the passport to me and warned : "Well, I remind you again, you can't make any political speeches in this country. You have no money ! You should not engage in any fund-raising campaign either."

I could not resist the temptation to reply. "Well, friend, politics is our main business. That too super-politics.

We are fighting against the greatest authorities. We are going to march to the White House."

"Marching to the White House ?" he sat with a wide open mouth.

"Right; we are marching from Moscow."

The name of 'Moscow' darkened his face. He checked up the U.S. Visa again and again.

"Okay, boy, there's something wrong with you chaps. Let the fellows in Washington worry the hell about you. Go ahead," From there we walked down the long corridors of the "Queen" into a very large hall at the docks. It was the customs section. We parted to plant ourselves in different lines.

The old man and the cake

Wearied and impatient we slowly moved ahead. The man at the counter, though old-looking, disposed of the passengers quickly. My turn came. We were aware of the fact that a group of our hosts, and supporters were waiting at the gate outside for several hours to accord a grand welcome to us.

"That's all you got ?" the old man surprisingly asked me seeing my bulging ruck-sack, a neat and tidy packet in one hand and the rolled-up banner in the other.

"That's all. Less worry for you, isn't it ?" I smiled at him.

"Good boy. You see, folks carry lots of stuff up and down their sleeves, giving head-ache to us. The fellows

don't care a damn for government rules, at times. You travel light. Well, tell me what's in your sack ?”

“My clothes, some books and papers....hmmmmmm....a wooden stuff of Germany...and.....yeah, the heavy Russian overcoat.”

“Russian coat ? Been to Moscow ?” the thin wrinkles disappeared in the flush of his face.

“Yeah, then to London and now to Washington.”

“You kiddin’? Tell me, who gives you money ?”

“I’ve no money. People are fine. No trouble.”

“What’s in this packet ?” he took the packet from my hand.

“It’s a cake.”

“A cake ? D’you know food articles are prohibited to this country ?”

“Yes, I know. But I didn’t know it when I started from England. It was only yesterday that the ship authorities informed me that no food-stuff should be taken into the States. But what can be done now ?”

“You should have eaten it last night.”

“Ah, that’s the whole trouble, my dear friend. This is meant for another person.”

“There let me see, open it,” he insisted.

“Can’t you believe me ? Moreover, I can’t open it, for

it’s a Christmas Cake.”

“But it’s law; I can’t ignore it.”

“Yes, my dear man, but listen,” I started explaining the background of the whole tragedy. “You see, a friend of mine in London has a friend of her’s near New York. Now this is a Christmas presentation that I’m carrying to her from London. Can’t you understand the situation ? Had I known these legal complexities, I wouldn’t have taken it at all. Look, my position is just a post-man’s. Can’t you realize it ?”

“A friend of your’s in London has a friend of her’s in New York,” he calculated. It seemed he was losing his patience. “My dear young man, don’t you know these girls are like that ? Why on earth d’you run into them?”

Old guy, he didn’t know how much labour poor Eleanor had to put into the creation of that wonderful cake. She had desired that the cake must reach her friend quite safely for it was her first X’mas present.

“Menon, would you mind carrying a cake to my dear friend across the Atlantic ?” Eleanor had asked me one cold evening while we sat by the fireside sipping hot coffee and exchanging the innumerable stories of our adventures. She had to relate many incidents of her travel since we had met and departed in South India three years ago. “I’ve no objection at all,” I had replied and then the next evening both of us jointly had worked at the cake. It took a whole night to bring it to an excellent shape and colour. On the third day she packed it and later brought it all the way to Southampton. But the old man insisted on at least

opening and seeing it. Yet, as a last resort, I started some more argument.

“All right, in that case please you do the operation yourself. But hear me once more. Suppose you are the person to receive a cake from me after it has been crumbled into pieces and the packet has been cut and torn, what would you feel on the Christmas eve? How carefully your sweet-heart would have packed and kept it for you ! If she sent it by post, she knew, it wouldn’t reach properly. Now you think for yourself and do whatever you want. But I won’t like to perform the business.”

By that time Satish joined me. A camera-man of a TV company fell into our midst. “Please open the banner, stand for two minutes. That’s right, cheer up. Excellent,” his direction and our posing confused the old man. The camera-man went away.

“Hey, so you are walking from India ?,” he was eager to know.

“Yes, we are, Please do your business and let’s go. Our friends are waiting outside. Will you kindly give your name to me ?” I asked.

“Why d’you want my name ?”

“For I want to write a book. You will be one of the best characters in that.”

“Chee, boy ! I don’t care about that. Well, don’t bother about the cake. You funny chaps to deal with. But you see, I like you very much. You’re the lightest travellers and nice fellows I met. Cheer you, good night.” We

wished him well and walked off with the cake intact close at my bosom !

“Welcome to the United States !” Neil and Margaret Howorth, Beverly Sterner, Scott Herrick and a few others constituted that group of brilliant, dedicated and active fighters for peace and understanding, who first welcomed us to the shores of America. “But, dear friends, we were so sorry, for you had to hang around here for several hours waiting for us !” we Plaid politely.

Before we lay our heads on the lap of sleep by 1.30 a.m., the whole nation had known about our landing at New York, for our weather-tanned faces had been already flashed on the TV.

New York, December 6.

Ten days in New York

The imperial grandeur of New Delhi, the vastness of Teheran, the marvels of Moscow, the beauty of Berlin, the pleasures of Paris, the life of London all these things could be pushed back into the second-class compartment of memory when one looks at the massive existence of the second largest city of the world, New York. The tallest building in the world, the Empire State Building, the most gay and care-free life of the Greenwich Village the madding crowds of the Times Square, the Brooklyn Bridge, or the gigantic granite-structures of Wall Street or the steel-and-glass structure of the U.N. none of these historic landmarks of the wealthiest city of the world could attract me so much as did its population, which maintains its everlasting desire to live and die under the sky of Manhattan. Though we are leaving for Washington

tommorrow' a craving to return and see a little more of the city is in my heart.

Our first hosts

On the very first day in the States we happened to be the guests of a very fascinating sister and brother living across the Brooklyn Bridge. "Treat this home always as yours," said Beverly and Jerry. In every sense of the term that apartment remained our beloved home as long as we stayed in New York !

In Russian villages we used to get into any house on our way and we found them unlocked always. Sometimes we used to sit and sleep for an hour and then only some member of the family would come home to see us occupying the soft sofa. Their surprise turned into sympathy when they entered into conversation with us and the next moment they would make hot coffee or tea for us.

But in a city like New York, where many people told me that burglaries and murders occurred now and then, our home was never locked. "Isn't it the sort of society that we all hope to build up ?" Jerry had replied one day when I asked him if he ever bothered to lock the house. He worked in the rail-road office and Beverly worked in an organization working for disarmament and world peace. Any time of the day or night the four of us could come and go, cook, eat or sleep. To sit for hours and hours and discuss with the brother and sister was one of the best things I could do in New York. That night around the coffee-pot Bev and I sat discussing till 5 a.m. Then she concluded: "Life has taught me that people are reflections and projections of all that is positive, creative, weak and

human within myself. We must constantly question the motives of ourselves as well as those in the society."

"I can't believe this happening in New York," was the comment of the reporter of the New York Herald Tribune when I said that our home was never locked in New York !

Visit to the United Nations

On the bank of the Hudson river, there stands a super structure of steel and glass attracting the attention of the whole world. It is the United Nations Organization, in the corridors and assembly halls of which we could spend several hours.

There the old dream of Wendell Wilkie is becoming a reality. There the representatives from all parts of the world gather to discuss the ways and means for peace and survival of mankind. There the Black and White, the Capitalist, and the Communist, the have and have-not find a common platform to express his will freely and frankly.

"It is in the minds of men that the seeds of war sprout out; therefore it must be in the minds of men....". This eternal hope of mankind can be experienced when one wanders through the huge secretariate or through the assembly rooms or the green lawns under the shade of flags representing three-fourth of the human race.

While enjoying a delicious lunch in the U.N. restaurant, one of my old friends from Ghana, a non-violent revolutionary, who worked as an adviser to the Tanganikan delegation to the U.N., commented :

“The U.N. is only a sort of aristocratic political club. There is no real meaning in an organization unless its words are fully recognized by the very people, who gave sense and shape to it. What is the use of merely passing resolutions ?”

Long lines of visitors from all the parts of the world thronging at the counters for securing passes make the onlooker very happy, indeed. If one diplomat is fed up with the nerve-breaking discussions at the table, if one loses one's temper in performing the intellectual acrobatics with the opposite party in the Security Council, if the Secretary-General is overburdened with exhausting activities or if a visitor is in need of a bit of rest in seclusion, there is a temple of meditation too. The moment one enters that room everything in the world can be forgotten and one can be immersed in a realm of solace and solitude. The following inscription can be seen on the stoneslab :

“In the middle of the room we see a symbol of how, daily, the light of the skies give life to the earth on which we stand, a symbol to many of us how the light of the spirit gives life to matter.”

A pencil of rays strikes the stone in that room of utter simplicity. There are no other symbols to distract our attention. This meditation room depicts the basic essential centre of tan-quality”that everyone possesses inside him surrounded by silence.

“This is a room devoted to Peace and those who are giving their lives for Peace. It is a room of quiet where only thoughts should speak,” is the inscription.

As one watches the proceedings of any of the several

committees of the General Assembly, a natural and instantaneous question crops up in mind : “Can there be any meaningful and significant settlement arrived at the table of the U.N., on any of the crucial issues facing the world, as long as one-fourth of the human race is excluded from this world body ? The all-pervading and unjust dollar-diplomacy must be held responsible for this situation.

Right in front of the U.N. one can see the following words inscribed on the walls : “Swords shall, be turned into plough shares....” A few yards away I saw an old man living under a roof made of an old rusted automobile with a declaration poster : “I have come here to seek protection for life.” Further away in a restaurant an unemployed hungry youth was found scrambling for a morsel of bread. Still farther in, the ghettos a section of the population dragged on a miserable life simply because their skin happened to be dark ! Still an air of confidence and a ray of hope prevailed in the minds of the people that the U.N. would pave a new path.

“When the war drum throbs no longer and the battle-flags are furled in the Parliament of man, the Federation of the World...” then, as the poet Tennyson dreamed, mankind will live in peace for ever. From this mansion at Manhattan let us cherish this hope; this is how I felt on the 28th of November, after marching from the docks where we landed the previous night, to the U.N. quadrangle, where we joined a group of people who were staging a fast and vigil, organized by the CNVA and the War Resisters' League, because on that day, the Thanks-giving Day, the whole country was celebrating the occasion with feasts and lavishness, “while the bulk of the world

population live in hunger and misery.”

We wanted to meet the Secretary-General of the U.N. and hence I had written. On our arrival we found the following letter:

Dear Mr. Menon,

I have been asked by the Secretary General to acknowledge your letter to him, sent from England and dated 30th October 1963.

I note that you will be in New York from the 27th November onwards. I shall be happy to meet you and Mr. Satish Kumar on behalf of the Secretary General and I would request you to phone my office after your arrival. My office number is PL 4-1234 ext. 2723.

Sd/ C.V. Narasimhan

On the 29th afternoon we were received by Mr. Narasimhan, “Non-violence is possible and practicable only when a nation’s sovereignty and borders and guaranteed and secure,” he said. Non-violent direct action was not a proper method to deal with national, or international problems, according to him.

One afternoon we could meet Mr. U. Thant for a few minutes. “Well, I’m happy to hear all about your magnificent work for world peace. Wish you good luck,” he said.

Washington D.C., January 7, 1964.

The last lap

representing different organizations gathered at the United Nations At 11 a.m. on the 7th of December ‘63 a group

of 25 people

Nations Plaza to see us off to Washington. About a dozen of them walked with us for the whole day.

“How are you boys ? What service can we do for you ?,” with a flowering smile the older one of the pair welcomed us into the State of New Jersey when darkness fell over the calm river. The soaring crowds of the Times Square, the enthusiastic kids of the Negro Harlem and the long Washington Bridge had been three landmarks on our ten-mile tiresome walk of the day.

It was the voice of a policeman. When the two attractive and jovial custodians of law and order stepped out of their car and greeted us I wondered : The New Jersey cops haven’t inherited their neighbours’ characteristics ! The New York City policemen, though helpful and co-operative, were strictly businesslike in their behaviour.

Meanwhile our hosts-to-be for the night turned up to take us to their home and we thanked the cops. All other companions, except two, bade us farewell. The red garland of tail lights of the battalions of gliding mother cars was decorating the northern bank of gliding mother cars was decorating the northern bank of the Hudson river and we threw a last glance over the Manhattan.

Still, the Harlem and its dwellers occupied my mind. “It’s an unusual thing that most of the people are accepting your leaflets,” one friend had made a remark when we were distributing the leaflets at the Times Square. “It’s because you are foreigners,”

opined another. When we reached Harlem, Negro boys and girls thronged around us. Spanish, Italian and Russian shops were crowded with those, who sought cheap food. "In this Housing Colony flats are not given to those mothers who live with illegal children. So they have to seek other dwellings, paying high rents. The cheap public houses are refused to them on the ground of moral degradation !" explained one of my friends.

The Committee for Non-violent Action had already made all necessary arrangements for our stay with different families every evening. Since the winter was at its peak and most of the people travelled by car, we could meet very few people on the road. Even if one wanted to stop the car and talk to us, it was a Herculean task, for in the United States the minimum speed on the highways must be maintained at 45 k.m. ! Yet many people used to stop their cars and offer lifts.

Three Companions

For the first time, it was in the United States that we had the privilege of having one more companion from another country. It gave an international colour to the venture. John Papworth did not seem to be serious about it at first. But as days passed, he could make up his mind and therefore, when we boarded the Queen Mary it was a surprise to see a letter from him. He wrote that there was no meaning in worrying about imaginary inconveniences and hence "I have decided to join you in the States." Immediately on arrival at New York I wrote to him saying that it would be excellent to have him on the march to Washington and the CNVA and other friends also appreciated the

idea. But, "since the detailed programme and dates of the march have been already decided, we can't postpone the date of starting from New York and you may join us on the way." That is how on the 13th of December, John reached New York and dashed to the enchanting Pennsbury the same evening, where we had camped for the night. From that day onwards the March had a peculiar charm and vitality provided by the ever-enthusiastic active participant from the British Committee of Hundred.

Rod Smith and Arthur Miller happened to be two volunteers who were associated with the CNVA in some of their direct-action projects. Having worked in business and film enterprises for several years, Rod Smith had developed a sort of discontentment towards the machine-civilization. "I was searching for better avenues for the restoration of the lost fundamental values of life. In course of time I liked the projects of the CNVA, for they were directed towards the building up of a better society based upon the principle of non-violence," he explained about his past.

Arthur Miller had got into the Peace Movement only recently. "I couldn't complete my education. Before that, there developed a sort of difference of opinion between me and my parents and I concluded that it was better for me to follow my own conscience. My parents wanted me to proceed in the normal course. But how could I when my reason convinced me that it was wrong to associate with the military and killing ? Therefore, I broke away from the conventional stupidity and joined the farm of the CNVA in Connecticut to experiment with a new process of life in the soil and society....," the young, silent, deep-thinking Arthur briefed his story.

The very first day when the CNVA suggested their participation we accepted them. "By all means, as long as we walk in the States," we said.

To cover the 240 miles from New York to Washington it took exactly a month. It had already started snowing. By the time we reached Philadelphia the whole country was two feet deep in snow; yet compared to the Russian winter it was less severe. The last week of December and the first week of January tortured us, indeed.

To paint a picture of picturesque New Jersey, to sing the melody of the mourning murmur of naked trees and to convey the message of the delightful neighbourliness of snow-clad Philadelphia, to describe the colourful Christmas of Delaware, to acknowledge the warmth of love and hospitality we enjoyed everywhere, or to explain the homeliness of the white House, I don't venture at present. All am trying to do is to recollect some incidents which left everlasting impressions on my mind during the last month.

* * *

A typical modern rural area, Kendal Park, lay shivering in snow when we reached there on the 11th of December. Still it did not trouble a group of young Negro boys and girls who were standing in front of a diner with posters hanging around their necks.

"What's the matter friends?," we enquired.

A fat girl moved up to say: "We want to protest against the fellows' rudeness, you see. Last week the fellows

(the dinerowners) advertised for a waiter, you see. My sister wanted to get the job, She phoned up. The manager called her for an interview, you see. But yesterday the girl turned up and he said no. They want whites only, so we fight."

"We are fighting for our rights."

"We protest against injustice; we defend the constitution." "Black and White together.

These were the posters. A few hundred metres ahead a car was parked. An elderly man sat inside while a couple of youngmen stood outside. "We're here to watch the kids over there!" the old man said. "They won't mind killing the kids. They killed our best President."

"Are you sure?" I asked.

"Damn truth it is, friend. John Kennedy fought for Negroes. So he was killed."

Joseph Walker is a baker who carried a wagon-full of various kinds of bread, cakes and biscuits for distribution in shops. That afternoon we were nearing the famous Princeton University campus.

"Oh dear boys, wait a moment," somebody called from behind and a wagon stopped nearby. The five of us were briskly walking, for the cold was too severe. We stopped.

Joseph quickly got put rubbing his palms. "It was just last night, my kids were tellin' me about the two boys who walked from India. They saw you on the

television. I'm very glad. Aren't you hungry. Come on," thus saying he opened the cabin and pulled out a few packets. We said we didn't feel hungry at all. "Nothin' doin', you must take," he insisted. "All right, just one packet to satisfy you," and we took a packet of biscuits. Then he was curious to know if we had met Krushchov and De Gaulle. We told him the story. "Thank you. I'll tell my kids that I saw you. Terribly cold, go ahead, don't give up. Best of luck," and he drove away.

That night we sat very late to discuss with a group of Princeton students. Each one of them spent \$ 3,200 per year. "But I don't have money to spend," said a student who looked calm and thoughtful. "Then how do you get on ? What about scholarship ?" we asked him.

"Yes, I do get a very small scholarship. That's enough only for the tuition. For food I work in the diner." I was curious to hear more about him. Half an hour's intimate talk with him revealed so many astonishing facts. For 24 hours, he is able to get only one meal and a cup of coffee ! "But don't you feel hungry, my dear friend ?" "Yes, I do a little bit; but everything is a matter of habit. When I can't afford to eat twice or thrice a day, I don't bother about it. All the time I study. Twice a week I work in the diner, washing the dishes or cleaning the room. This provides me with a free meal every evening. A cup of coffee in the morning sustains me through the day."

A brilliant student of mathematics, in one of the best universities, in the richest country in the world, is unable to have two square meals a day ! His friends also help him at times. Whatever it is, however much

he suffers physically, not an iota of disappointment can be seen on his cheerful face. "To strive against every crucial stage of life, I have learnt", he consoled himself.

"In the Soviet Union I don't think you come across such a situation where a person of your calibre is suffering from want," I remarked.

"That's why our generation has started realizing the goodness in Socialism and the wrongs of capitalism. I myself want to go and study the conditions there," he said.

One of the most striking things in the United States is that the younger generation is increasingly becoming conscious of the world problems in reality.

* * *

Benjamin Franklin Elementary School, near Trenton city, attracted our attention, as we passed through. In all other countries, unhesitatingly we used to get into any school that lay on our way and we could spend a good deal of time with the teachers and students. We just walked in. The young principal welcomed us to his office, ordered coffee and wanted to hear about the March.

A few minutes later he entrusted us to a boy and a girl to "show them around the school."

"What all d'you want to see ?," the kids asked.

"Everything. First of all let's go to your class." We went. All the kids gave a welcome with claps when our young guides explained about us. They asked

us various questions like “How many pairs of shoes ?,” “Did you meet wild animals ?,” “Aren’t you afraid ?” From there we were taken to another class and the lady teacher wanted us to speak to the children for a few minutes, They were eager to know how the children of other countries welcomed us. Suddenly a boy of twelve from the corner got up and asked : “Friends, you are walking for peace. But how is it possible when the Russians say they will burry us ?”

“Please don’t think the Russians or any other people are bad. People are good everywhere; but our leaders are not leading us properly.”

“Oh, friends,” suddenly the .teacher interrupted. “Let’s stop, I’m sorry, it’s getting late. Keep quiet boys,” she ordered and bade farewell to us ! This was absolutely unexpected. The boys and girls sat with a vacant look and we said good-bye to them.

That night our camp was in the historic Pennsbury Manor, an estate of 40 acres which now remains in memory of William Penn, the English Quaker who established Quakerism in the States. “This is a monument for the expression of Penn’s conviction, that life in the country was more wholesome than that in the wordly surroundings of crowded cities. He had sought to establish in the forest of Pennsylvania a ‘Holy Experiment’ founded upon liberty and toleration and dedicated to religious principles,” explained our host, Mr. Haynes, taking us around the original building in which Penn lived. “The first ship arrived just below in the river Delaware and -it took some time for the Quakers to gain the confidence of the natives,” said our host while showing a picture depicting the first encounter with the natives.

The cafe owners and the fast travellers also showed their sympathy and support to our work. Sometimes someone would stop the car, talk to us, offer a lift. We would tell them our story. Still they would want to do “something for your wonderful work.” It was thus one afternoon a couple of journalists got on the road to have a ‘face-to-face-interview.’ The weather was biting cold. “Please all of you must have a cup of coffee” said one of the journalists and offered a dollar bill. “No, thanks. We don’t need any money.” “All right, then come to the restaurant?’ They took us. By the time we had coffee the ladies -at the counter got keenly interested in us. “A couple of days ago you were on TV, boys,” one of them said. “Please eat whatever you want. You are our guests, too,” she said. “No, madam, thanks, we’re reaching our hosts shortly.” We took leave of them.

Just half an hour later a car stopped. The sole occupant got down and shook our hands. “I know all about you. .I wish you the best in Washington. Please accept this.” -He pulled a ten dollar bill from the pocket. When we said we would not accept any money, he was surprised. “To walk around the world without a penny is unthinkable for an American. Come and stay at my home tonight,” he insisted. “But some other people are waiting fur us tonight, please excuse,” we explained. “Then I shall send this money to your organizers in New York,” he said. “All right,” we said thanking him.

Another day a group of Indian students dropped -on the wily. “Why not we sit in a cafe and chat over a cup of coffee,” olio of them suggested. All of us got into a small cafe. An hour law our host went to the cashier

to pay the bill. "No, no, 'it's all right," the old woman wouldn't accept the bill. "But we have invited these friends to have coffee, we must pay," the students insisted. "There's nothing wrong if we make all of you our guests," she didn't give in. However, she accepted the bill when our friends compelled her to do so. "Otherwise, we wouldn't feel quite happy," they said. The Howard Johnson's group of restaurants and cafes can be seen every 15 or 20 miles of the highways. Neat and tidy, beautiful and artistic, cottage-type construction is typical of the Howard Johnson.

We were leaving Philadelphia city. "You folks seem to be quite tired, it's pretty cold too, let's have coffee the Johnson's" said our host and all of us walked into that famous restaurant where ice-cream alone was available in 28 different flavours, apart from other delicacies.

"Oh, I know about these Peace-Marchers. It's my privilege to have them as guests," saying so the manager refused to accept the payment from either our host.

They got into a discussion. "After all, they are my guests" explained our host. "Well, I hope you haven't got the monopoly of their hostship, have you ?," said the manager. No use of argument, thought our host, and we all thanked the manager and walked into the thick bed of snow.

The most surprising aspect of the above incident was that the American audience could never believe that such a thing could ever happen in their country ! We were speaking to a group of people the next afternoon. Questions and discussions followed. In the course of

narrating various experiences, the Howard Johnson's hospitality also came up.

"Impossible," like a lightning a young man got up to declare. "But dear friend, this happened just yesterday," we tried to convince him.

"Howard Johnsons ? They'd never do such a thing." Some others also joined him to express their doubts.

"Here dollar counts," remarked another man.

"Might be, they'd some special feelings for these good boys," a lady ruled out.

Like this several other minor things had happened now and then. One tends to think that much of American opinion depends on misunderstanding or lack of proper thinking !

Whenever I think of the week that we spent in the homely atmosphere of Philadelphia, one particular person, among many others, always dominates my imaginations. Wilmer Young is an old man in his late sixties who could never be seen without an attractive smile on his face which would bind anyone to his warm friendship. Just before we reached that famous city Wilmer had come with some refreshment to welcome us. "We have made many programmes for you for this week. It's our privilege to have you in this city for such a long time. Please tell me anything anytime you need," he said.

From that day onwards everyday, at least once, Wilmer would call on us wherever we were to enquire of our well being. Since we were five members, generally

we used to be accommodated with different families. But in Philadelphia we were all accommodated in a single house of a Quaker friend. Any time of the day or night we could be free to come and go, cook our own food and thus be 'at-home.' Wilmer used to bring the necessary supplies. "Let's call him the 'Universal Supplier,' hereafter, Menon." John's humour found a bit of chance anywhere he went. A staunch activist in the Quaker Movement Wilmer has been engaged in various direct action projects against the wrong military and racial policies of the government for years. I'll fight for justice all my life." Wilmer's every word and work would inspire every young and old person alike.

Unlike the other cities in the States, Philadelphia has a speciality. Whichever street one walks along, whomever one happens to meet, whichever family one goes to dine with, a sense of neighbourliness can be felt everywhere. Being the home of the Quaker Movement in the States and being the seat of the American Friends Service Committee, it is quite natural that this city has developed more intimacy and friendship among its inhabitants.

To be a guest for the night at the home of Dr. & Mrs. Sidney Diamond in the panoramic countryside of Swarthmore was another valuable and interesting experience. To sit and discuss about the international politics with the Diamonds through the small hours of night was most enjoyable. "It is the sense of nationalism that's to be broken," said Mr. Diamond. "Patriotism is an evil in the relations of man. Look at the new nations emerging ! Every one of them wants to establish their own military superiority, linguistic identity and the like. The result is; the world gets

more disunited. The problem of language in India too will have the same fate. Within the next 30 or 40 years you people will be more alien to us because of your discouragement to English in future. If the Americans and Russians knew more of each other's language it would promote better understanding and establish peace."

Every day of our stay in Philadelphia had its own speciality. We had the opportunity to meet some of the staff and students of the University of Pennsylvania, visit some schools and be with different host families.. Altogether the American Friends, Service Committee had been the main source of contact and support.

Everything in the world has its other side. While we enjoyed excellent hospitality and met wonderful and having people all over, we also suffered from some bitter events.

Wilmington (Delaware) happens to be one of the memorable cities of our sojourn. Owing to heavy snowfall in the previous night, the roads were white and slippery. Yet by forenoon, the sun brightened adding to our enthusiasm. Many passing cars stopped; usual enquiries and offers of help were made; but there were unusual shouting and fist-raising and abuses showered on us by some of them. We were walking one behind the other.

Suddenly I was stopped by a gentleman in a decent suit. He yelled : "You mad caps, why not your heads get examined, boy was a middle-aged man. He wouldn't tolerate the banner in my hand "Disarmament, NOW". He was boiling with rage. Rushing forward he shouted again : "I'll punch your nose." I stood in front

of him like a pillar. Moments passed. Two or three other people also gathered around. In the meantime wisdom had dawned upon him. He cooled down and slowly walked away! We continued our walk.

“Oh, boys, where are you walking do ? Why not drop in and have some lunch ?” Another call from behind. Just two minutes only had passed after the previous incident. She was a house-wife, going for shopping. As she opened the door and stepped onto the road we were passing. As if from a burning furnace into a pleasant fountain ! It was a fountain of motherly affection, sense of human one-ness ! We were helpless. We had to confess : “Thank you very much; American hospitality doesn’t leave vaccum in our stomachs. Just only two hours ago we had our heavy breakfast.” She was happy. She accepted our leaflet and wished the “best for all time to come.”

Half an hour later, we reached a gas-station, A stout man with a thick moustache was taking petrol for his car. I handed him a leaflet. Another car flashed by and a fat woman peeped out her head to cry : “You fools why don’t you go to hell ?” The former glanced through the leaflet and smiled at me. “Funny folks you are !,” he exclaimed. “Tell me young man,” he continued,” how on earth you think of peace ? War is the only solution against the Reds. Ah, one must enjoy life being a soldier. I was a man in uniform. Then women wagged their tails after me. I drank and enjoyed. Sort of fun, you know, to fight, to kill and die. With guns in hand a bit of doubt of an enemy, bang, bang, we fired blind. I’d see them fall down.

“What did you feel in your heart then ?,” I interrupted. “To feel ? Damn it, the heart and head. We’d turn

behind and grab the bottle. A gulp of Whiskey would do it well. And we carried on. That’s life, boy. To live and enjoy. You fellows are wasting time. I regret my old age. It’s fast approaching. Still I want to live my full life. Hi, you chap,” he looked at Arthur who stood beside me, “I’ve seen beatniks like you in the Greenwich village ? What’s you, dad doin ? A soldier ?” Arthur said, he didn’t know about his father’s work.

“Thank you, goodbye,” we took leave of him.

Extremes exist everywhere. Ecstasy of happiness may follow devastating despair. There are tiny islands in the endless waters; and twinkling stars in the infinite darkness.

For the first time in our long March over the dozen countries, personal hostility, through in the lightest form, we met with only in the United States !

The best education a child can get is, primarily, from its parents. On another day it was the story of a nice-looking boy who stood and watched the half-a-dozen peace marchers passing before his house. His father stood at the gates gazing at us. He picked up snow from below, rolled it into balls and showered them at us. I was at the end of the line. Half a dozen snow balls fell on my pack. I stood and looked back. “You vagabonds go away. Who pays for your existence ?” cried the man. The boy had run towards me by that time. I gave him a leaflet. He was curious to read. The father did not like it. “Good-bye” I said and continued the walk. Again the snow balls on me. This time the boy too joined the father. They shouted this and that. One could only feel sorry for them. Just two miles ahead, a driver of an automobile

wouldn't leave us unless we accepted his invitation for a cup of coffee. Similarly a group of Negro boys who waited for their bus got into conversation with us. "We learn many things from India. Non-violent direct action this is the best lesson that we have learnt. Gandhi's method will bring us justice from the white savages," one of them commented.

On another gloomy afternoon an automobile from the opposite direction suddenly creaked by our side. "You damn idiots, why did you come to America ? Go to Cuba; Castro is your friend, a . ." He was pointing at the banner. "Moscow" and "peace" these two words shot him up to the height of irritation. He was the representative of Americanism. Whatever is coming from Russia is intolerable for the conventional American. The Communists are horrible monsters, according to them. "If they are allowed to thrive in the world, no more hope for humanity," one day a householder told us. "We must crush them, before they 'bury' us", was the opinion of another shopkeeper.

Apart from the permanent group of five, young students used to take a fancy of marching with us for a day or two, if circumstances permitted. From Swarthmore College, a student, Margaret joined us for a day. She was a Quaker once, she said. "But I am nothing of that sort now. Just a normal person. I hate all religions and their attitudes. Their impositions and moralisations are simply stupid. They curtail the freedom of man. For me, I just want to do what I want, right or wrong. Whatever one does, one must be ready to face the consequences. Even the Quakers who should have been more radical in their approach to life and religion, pretend to be superior to others." The young generation of America is becoming non-

conformist. Whether the social fabric will be changed for the better or worse is a matter for conjecture.

We had our Christmas in Wilmington. My hosts were the Larabee family. "This year people say we have a white X'mas," said Deby, for everywhere it was covered with snow.

Near Wilmington we visited the automobile plant of the Chrysler Corporation. "Racial problem is, in every aspect of American life," one of our hosts had told us. "There are 2,600 men working in this plant. Every minute one car comes out of the assembly lines. We produce according to the demand of the consumers," explained the man who took us around the factory.

"How are you ?" I asked a young Negro.

"I'm still a slave of these fellows," he replied.

"Are you happy with your job ?," this question was to another man over fifty.

"I'm working for 20 years. They're goin' to kill me," he replied.

"I am happy in my job, because I get a lot of money" said another.

"Automation has taught me how to make more money with less physical exertion," said a very active youth.

"I can't say whether the kitchen is better or the workshop," this was the answer from a lady.

"I prefer factory to the kitchen," a young blonde was

proud of her work.

"I don't want to work here if I can get another job," middle-aged man said.

Seven out of ten replied to me "I am," when I asked a single question "Are you happy?"

"Is there racial segregation in this factory?" I asked six Negroes. Four of them said "Yes, of course," while two of them nodded their heads and said "No." "I don't care a damn as long as I can get a minimum wage of \$ 2.75 per hour," another young Negro said.

The next day we were walking to Newark. The sun was pleasant and a group of children played on the road. To slide on the icy- road is one of the most interesting games of the season. Our banners and leaflets caught their attention. They all gathered around us. Two boys carried toy pistols on their shoulders. "What is this for?" I asked them.

"To kill our enemies," was their sudden reply. "Who are your enemies?"

"The Japs"

"How do you say that? Who are the Japs?"

"Mummy told me that the Japs attacked us in the Pearl Harbour," the clever and naughty boy said, "So when I grow old I'll fight the Japs."

It was shocking to see that the children of America were getting more and more military-minded. Wherever you go, you can see American parents spending hundreds of dollars to establish the 'military power' of their

children! The basement most of the American families with children, could be seen full of war toys.

Here I remember a small story of Lee Harvey Oswald, the so-called assassin of President Kennedy, as told by a woman who is reported to have known Oswald as a boy when he lived in the Bronx. She "drew this picture of him for a New York Times reporter: 'We all thought that he was a king of queer. He liked Western comics. All you could hear here was "bang, bang, bang." He would play by himself with his toy guns.'"

It would be appropriate for me to reveal certain facts about the war toy industry in the States. Mr. William Honan wrote in the New Republic of the 21st Dec. 63, that "the sound of sleigh bells will soon be punctuated by the blare of missile-warning sirens as American Youth gathers around the Yule tree and unwraps what promise to be a record-breaking arsenal. 'Military will lead the league this year,' says Toys and Novelties, the toy industry's major trade publication.

"Twenty-eight American manufacturers and half-a-dozen importers are vying for the spoils. One of the largest of the manufacturers, the Aurora Plastics Corporation which grossed close to \$ 14 million last year, announced this December that its' output of military and naval equipment could supply all of NATO's needs. The Aurora assembly lines turn out 'more planes, more ships, more tanks than all the world's man-sized factories put together,' a company advertisement proclaimed.

"The customers for this new martial abundance are the nearly 16 million three-to-ten-year old boys in the United States who have been pre-told, through

Saturday morning television commercials, on exactly what manner of armament they want for Christmas. This year, the emphasis is on achieving a nuclear capability...,” the writer goes on.

What about the American children’s counterpart on the other side of the globe ? “While American and European youngsters are being fitted out with enough make-believe mayhem to unhinge the heavens,” Mr. Honan continues, “children in the Soviet Union must go virtually unarmed. No war toys are made in Russia, not even chocolate soldiers, and, so far as can be learned, there have not been any in the Soviet Union since World War II.”

The above statement about the Soviet Union had been quite convincing to me because of my personal experience in that country for four months. “War toys are absolutely prohibited in our country,” thus we were told by many leading members of the Peace Committee, some school teachers and parents. In every Soviet home there would be a piano and the children could be seen devoting themselves to music and painting, whether it is at home or at the children’s palaces or clubs or schools. Not a single home could I find in the Soviet Union where children were given war-toys to play with !

Just before reaching Washington one evening we were invited to speak from the pulpit of a church. It was the same morning that we had read a very revealing article in the Washington Post in which it was mentioned that in the United States 52 million guns were owned by private individuals and families. The Church Minister introduced us to be audience as “real messengers of peace, who follow the words of

Jesus to their best in words and deeds.” Then both of us were asked to deliver our “message.”

“You must excuse me for being frank,” said my friend, Satish, in the course of his talk. “I wonder where our human society goes ! This morning I read that 52 million guns are privately owned in this great country and therefore, I am tempted to ask you : are there not at least 52 million Holy Bibles too owned by the same persons ? In one hand a Bible and in the other a gun ! This is the structure of our society !”

Violence is rampant in every field of life all over the world. In some countries it will be more, in some less. Compared to the Socialist countries, the so called “free world” is much more violent and of that character. I found more violence in an Indian society or American society than in the Russian or Polish society. It is evident that the basis of violence is the social and economic structure of the society.

Baltimore was another important city in which we spent four days. Several families, institutions and schools played host to us and invited us to speak.

Richard and Ellen are the first two persons who welcomed us to the city of Baltimore. “This is your own home and you have to make yourself happy and comfortable. This is all we have to offer,” they said.

There is a natural misunderstanding in the world that all Americans are rich. But very few people know that in the richest country in the world there are “36 million people without adequate food and shelter.” There are scores of men who “walk all night in the Madison Street because they have no place to sleep.”

But the Richard couple were neither rich nor poor, in the material sense of the term. Till we reached Baltimore we had never lived in an American house, where everything was disorganised and untidy. "Just a couple of days ago only we moved into this house," Ellen said. For the first time in his life Richard had a house to call his "own". Richard didn't talk much. But his mental poise and tranquility could be easily seen reflected on his face. I have never seen him losing his temper in any circumstance.

At the pinnacle of joy or in the abyss of sorrow he is a man who does not worry. "I was a very angry boy, I used to quarrel with people always," said Richard recollecting his own turbulent past. But the more tempered the gold, it gets more and more radiant. That had been Uncle Richard's life. Affectionately I used to call him Uncle Richard.

Every night, when all our companions retired, Uncle Richard and I would get into the kitchen to wash all the dishes and clean the place. Throughout the day all of us would be busy with various programmes; whenever one got time and convenience one could cook and eat whatever one wanted or whatever was available. The whole kitchen would be a mess by evening. So both of us volunteered to do that job and it was one of the best and valuable periods in every 24 hours, between 1 and 2 a.m. ! It was then that I could know Richard well.

Uncle Richard was managing a rummage store. People could donate all their used articles to that store and any one could buy those things at the cheapest price possible. The proceeds of the store would go to the Quaker Centre. Ellen had worked as a theatrical

artist formerly. "Just a year ago we got married," she said while showing me innumerable pieces of, colourful costumes she used during, her artist-life. "Now Richard and I have some plans of producing films too. Life has all its ups and downs. That's why we are able to lead a contented life inspite of many a stress and strain." The greatest thing they posses is their tender hearts, full of affection, hospitality and feeling of oneness with other.

Another family has been that of the Morrisons. Norman Morrison² would be ready at any time of the day or night to look after us. I can think of such people who have been so intimately connected with us, only with a sense of indescribable gratitude and indebtedness.

"I have heard about you chaps on the police radio a few minutes ago," said the owner of a gas station who allowed me to use his telephone for calling our prospective host that evening. First he seemed to be a bit hesitant when I went in. "I must congratulate you boys, though I don't agree with your actions." It was evident, in America too we were constantly watched by the police.

The last day. came. Yesterday, the 6th of December '64 was like the 1st of June 1962. When we started from Hyathsville at about ten O'clock a couple of policemen called in to explain.

'Welcome to Washington D.C. We shall be moving along with you either in front or behind. You'll be walking through the crowds. Your security is our

² It is the same Morrison who has now become a martyr. He imolated himself before the. Pentagon for the sake of Vietnam.

problem. Therefore, we are happy to say that we shall be always at your service. Whenever you need anything or our help just raise your hand, we shall reach you.”

Okay, thank you very much.”

They wanted to know the exact road that we would follow to reach the White House and approximate time of our arrival.

Exactly at 2-35 p.m. we reached the gate of the White House. The TV cameras, radio and press reporters and photographers made a bigger crowd than ours. Unlike the other capitals, at the White House I experienced a sort of homeliness and simplicity mingled with a sense of grandeur and dignity.

“Please wait for a moment, let me consult the President’s secretariate,” said one of the security guards and went into his room. Then he called me in to talk to one of the President’s staff members on phone. “Since Mr. Arthur Schlesinger is leaving the White House, you may please contact Bill Moyers tomorrow who will be in charge of Presidential appointments,” he said. That was the end of the matter.

The sky was cloudy. All the trees in the White House garden stood bare and still. A gloom and sorrow prevailed everywhere. The tiny blades of the tender grass on the green lawn seemed to be hungering for the blissful touch of the rosy feet of John and Caroline. A few moments we all stood and watched the impressive building and then our feet compelled us to the Arlington Cemetery.

At the stroke of 4 we stood by the grave of the great

President of the United States. The eternal flame conveyed the great message for which that man lived and died.

As if it was the determination of destiny, as if it was inevitable at the end of our journey, we walked from grave to grave ! From Gandhi’s to Kennedy’s ! From Rajghat to Arlington ! We walked through the hearts of nations in search of the seeds of Peace. But we discovered the trees of violence ! Yet, in many a humble heart there is a flickering flame of hope to illuminate the dark destiny of the human race.

THE LECTURE TOUR

Tokyo.

To Micky :

So, your question is : “How did you happen to come to Japan ?” It is a long story again. I shall have to go back all the way to London.

It was a very cold morning in November ‘63. I received a letter, which said :

My dear Comrade Menon,
You are the Marco Polo of India in the 20th, century. I have been reading your letters in Peace News and other Journals. How much I appreciate your heroic march through the continent and to America.
I want to request you that you must come to Japan before returning to India. You know this is the only country which has suffered too much from Atom Bombs. So the people in Japan will understand more about your work. You are going through the huge part of the world, then Japan should not be ignored . I want to see you and hold your hand. My sickness also will go away from my 73 years old body as you come to see me. Though I am poor, you can stay with me and my wife as long as you want. I will inform all my friends in Japan. They will help you everywhere. Daidoji is also very eager to see you. You must come and march from Tokyo to Hiroshima. I want to see you before I die.

T. Yamaga.

This was the letter written by one of my oldest friends in Japan. Yamaga and Daidoji had been to India in the year 1960 to participate in the War Resisters’

International Conference, held in the South of India. At that time I had the, privilege of making them my guests in Bangalore for a few days.

A staunch anarchist, Yamaga had lots of bitter experiences in his life during the wars. Till the end of life to fight against wars and injustice, to propagate the anarchist view-points, to work for a united world and a world language Esperanto is the single aim of Yamaga and Daidoji.

This letter made me think day and night. Our original plan was to return to India by sea from New York, after completing the march to Washington. But now a new project became inevitable. It would be of course, very meaningful to walk to Hiroshima, provided the circumstances permitted, we thought. Now from the States to return to India or to go to Japan we had to depend upon some means of conveyance. That part of the support had been already promised by the pacifist friends. But the thought of Japan posed more problems.

By the time we completed the march the friends of the CNVA, New York, suggested : "Your march in the States has become a great attraction and provides encouragement to many people all over the country. We have received at least a hundred communications requesting to get both of you to different cities so that they can hear the wonderful stories of your march. This means at least 3 or 4 months time and a lot of expenditure. Of course, the hosts would be happy to share the expenses of your travel inside the country as well as for your return journey to India or to Japan." This suggestion we agreed to and the CNVA got into immediate action to organize an extensive lecture

tour for us. At this juncture a lean, ever-active, young blonde comes to the surface of my memory. She cannot escape my pen. She is our unforgettable friend, Barbara Lehman. In fact, two young friends' active involvement in the organizational part of our tour made the whole programme excellent and smooth running. During the march from New York to Washington it was the efficient young conscientious organizer, Russ Godard. Then the reins were taken over by Barbara whose hands and voice worked simultaneously on papers and with us until we bade farewell to the United States. As a result, in every corner of the country we happened to be, every 13. of the schedule went an excellently. Sometimes mid-dent)/ Barbara's voice could be heard on the phone, from thousands of miles away. "Hi, cheer up friends, well done, with you the best," etc. She burnt the midnight oil in a small apartment in New York and we were automatically rushing throughout the country. Those four months were one of the best periods of my life.

Let me, before speaking more about the Lecture Tour, give a gist of what we did in Washington. On the first day my mind was too occupied with the single thought of the assassination of Kennedy. After all, was it just a brain wave, a nervous breakdown, of a single individual which brought about a tragic page in history ? So far, mountains of volumes have been already written about the whole mysterious question : Who killed Kennedy ? Yet, all the people, from philosophers to paupers, harbour a doubt in their minds. During the six months in the PINION innumerable men and opinions, papers and discussions that I came in contact with, led me to the conclusion that President Kennedy's assassination was not just a crank's mischief, but a deliberate act of high-handed

conspiracy of a sick society.

For three days I went on telephoning the White House and replies came from different persons that our case was on the move. Just as we could discuss with the authorities in Moscow and London, we wanted to have the answers to our questions from Washington.

In the White House

At last on the 9th January, while the snow on the road was quickly melting and the rain was pouring down, we drove into the White House, at the stroke of 10.30 a.m.

“Hi, you’ve come ? Good morning,” it was one of the security guards who recognized us.

“May I take off your coats and get some hot tea for you ?” A young lady vigourously walked into the visitors’ room, took off our coats and led us into another chamber. “Just a few minutes, Mr. Hayes will be back in his chamber,” she bade us to be seated.

Mr. Brooks Hayes is the Special Assistant to the President who had been White House during JFK’s period also. He sat on a big-arm-chair and welcomed us with a broad smile. A very interesting personality, Mr. Hayes straight away entered into a hearty conversation without any formalities.

“Your letters have been received by the President,” he said. “He has asked me to meet you on his behalf. You know, the Panama crisis is up on his shoulders. He is much occupied with that”

[On the 6th of January ‘64 at the gate of the White House]

“First of all,” he continued, “let me congratulate you for the fine work you’re doing across the world: You see, the Russians are hard people to understand. They are good people indeed. I have been to that country.

“Problem of unilateral disarmament is a very complicated and remote thing. It can’t happen. That’s the way the world politics goes. In the current Congress we are thinking of proposing some more cuts in our

military expenditure. We hope that the Soviets would follow the same. Thus let's hope to lessen the tension. The pretty secretary brought hot tea and the subject of talk took a different turn. "What is your religion?" he queried.

"Well, we've no religion as such. We believe in humanity only. All the so called religions have been dividing the very fundamentals of human unity."

A few wrinkles were visible on his bald fore-head. "I see," he thought for a while. "Since you have very good ideas as Gandhiji had, you can do many things. I'm a Baptist myself. In this country churches are doing a lot of work for Peace."

Half an hour passed without our knowledge. "I shall try my best to get a few minutes from the President for you," he seemed to be earnest in his effort. Still we doubted if the President would grant an interview. Mr. Brooks Hayes in his late fifties has a variety of interests in public life. Certain aspects of the direct action movements led by the Women's Strike for Peace, the CNVA and the Civil Rights group are appreciated by him.

Though we enjoyed very much the half an hour in the White House, as far as our work was concerned we were disappointed because there was no direct challenging discussion and response from the authorities as we had in the Kremlin.

That night we had a meeting with a group of miners who had arrived from Kentucky in a deputation to the Federal Government. "We are unemployed for several weeks; hunger and misery are our lot now-a-days,"

one of them said. If the Federal Government could not intervene and redress their grievances, they said, they would not have any other course except some direct action.

If I start explaining the wonderful at-homeliness we enjoyed at the Fellowship House in the company of Joan Ohrenstein, and with the families of the Bates, Hal and Lois Witt, the Patricks, Leon and Barbara Bick and many others it will take pages. The week in Washington D.C. gave us the feeling that we were in New Delhi in the coldest season of India, with an additional boon of snow!

A midnight revolution

On the way, from New York to Washington, students of different schools and colleges used to accompany us. One evening near Baltimore, a pot-luck dinner and discussion was at a high pitch, in an enchanting rural surrounding. By midnight the meeting was over and the families departed. A black-haired brilliant girl slowly approached and asked: "Shall I join your walk for a day?"

"Of course, you may join."

"Then tomorrow itself," she decided and said "good-night."

Next Morning the stout, pretty Corenna Fales kept pace the wind and snow and discussed about the day's impressions. One of the many fire-brand young revolutionaries that I have met in the States, Corenna was to return home the same evening after the walk of a dozen miles. But by the time we reached

the destination, she changed her mind to “continue in the March for some more days.” Thereafter she was a member of the team for a week. When we left Baltimore she had requested : “I would like to invite you to my college to speak to the 400 students one evening after finishing the March to Washington.” We readily agreed and a date was fixed.

On the 14th of January, Corenna and her fellow-students and some of the staff members accorded a grand welcome to us at the Goucher College, near Baltimore. It was the inauguration iif a thrilling success of our activities among the younger generation in America.

Goucher is one of the excellent colleges. With a limited number of less than 500 students it is exclusively a girls’ college.

The students’ meeting organized by Corenna commenced at 7.30 p.m. and lasted till midnight. By the end of the talks and subsequent discussions, many a young blond face could be seen radiating a new vigour and spirit of enthusiasm.

“All right, it’s we, the youth of the world, who have to bear the responsibility of tomorrow’s life or doom. So what do you suggest us to do right now, from this hall, for the sake of the world?,” an enthusiastic girl, Sue Shapiro, got up to ask,

“We haven’t come here to ask you to do this or that,” we replied. “First of all what we need is to try to understand the complexities of the world without any particular prejudice or preconceived notions. We have a lot of problems, necessary and unnecessary, right

under our nose. How to tackle them, understand them and deal with them in the right manner is the first thing that you can do. It’s for you to discuss and decide what and how things can be done here. But all the time, one must accept the full responsibility of whatever one does frankly and earnestly.”

“All right, then let’s constitute a Students’ Action Committee,” Sue wouldn’t give up. A Committee of about a dozen members was formed. “Now what about money for the initial expenditure ?” I asked. “Never mind, let’s create the fund from our own pockets,” suggested another girl. Over ten dollars were collected. “From tomorrow let’s see what are the problems right inside our own campus,” they concluded. It was the beginning of a Campus Revolution hatched at the midnight meeting.

The next day we had to bid farewell to our unforgettable hosts. After a month, while we were on our hectic countrywide tour, one fine morning I received a letter from the Goucher friends.

“Within two weeks of our intensive study and discussion of your Peace March and what we can do for peace, suddenly we discovered that a lot of unnecessary things exist in our own campus which do not help World Peace. For instance, the Fallout Shelters ! So we decided to remove all the posters that had been stuck up on the walls and buildings of our campus by the Government in the name of civilian defence. Now that action created a hell. On the very first day the FBI and CIA authorities entered the campus to question us. Now the press, radio and T.V. people are making good stories of it. Thus the city of Baltimore is full of Goucher News ! For all these

things we give credit to you, two fellows. Many thanks !” We were happy, our comrades were on the move in the active field. Again a week later another letter arrived with a press cutting enclosed, which said :

State Department answers to students

(Editor’s Note : Sue Shapiro, President of the Goucher Peace Union, has received an answer to the 210 signature-letter to President Johnson urging him to see the two Peace Marchers from India who were at Goucher recently. The reply consists of a letter and a note which was attached to it. Both are printed below)

Dear Miss Shapiro,

I have been asked to reply to your letter of January 17, also signed by other members of the Goucher student body, addressed to the President, concerning the two young Indian Peace Marchers.

You, of course, know of the dedication of President Johnson to the cause of world peace and his constant quest for new ways of laying a basis for it. We are currently engaged in disarmament negotiations in Geneva which we hope may lead eventually to strengthening prospects for a world without war.

Unfortunately, the President’s busy schedule will not permit him to receive the two young men on this occasion, much I am sure he would like to do so. We do, however, appreciate your helpful letter informing us about these idealistic young Indians and the efforts they are making throughout the world in the quest for peace.

Sincerely Yours,

Philips Tablot
Asst. Secretary for Near Eastern and
South Asian Affairs.

Dear Miss Shapiro,

I have been informed, subsequent to the signing of Mr. Tablot’s letter; that Mr. Brooks Hayes, Special Assistant to the President, received the two Peace Marchers in the White House offices.

Sincerely Yours.
Lee. F. Dinsmore,
Staff Asst., Dept. of State.

In most of the colleges in the United States there exists a group of students who constantly take part directly or indirectly, in all the problems concerning the country and the world. The Students’ Peace Union, the Students’ Non-violent Co-ordinating Committee these are the most popular student bodies all over the country, in the field of Civil. Rights Movement, Anti-Nuclear Movement, and for such activities which promote human goodwill and understanding beyond the borders.

The lecture tour

From the middle of January till the end of May 1964 we spent the busiest period throughout the United States. Starting Foot-prints on friendly roads 446 from New York, within these four and a half months, we visited 27 States, travelled over 16,000 miles by bus and car, spoke in at least 100 Universities, colleges and schools, over 200 at-home meetings, and an equal number of group meetings in Churches, Clubs and

other organizations. A thousand miles' travel a week used to take us through half a dozen important cities. From 7 a.m. to midnight we could hardly get half an hour for ourselves. Yet, it was an exciting and valuable experience indeed ! In between one city and the other at times we had to ride on the excellent Greyhound or Trailway coaches for the whole day or night, covering a distance of 500 miles in, say, ten hours ! One would never feel the weariness of such long journeys, for the bus provided comfortable accommodation and the fine highways made the running very smooth and fast.

An Indian reader would be surprised to hear that on certain highways it is prohibited to drive, at less than 45 miles per hour ! 60 to 70 m.p.h. is the normal speed that an American would like to maintain once he is at the wheel. The first citizen of the United States, the President himself, happens to be a law-breaker of the country ! He is notorious for his recklessness at the wheel. Less than 80 m.p. is something silly to President Johnson for which several times he has been under fire in the Press. Thus it won't be an exaggeration if I say that America likes to live upon wheels all the time bringing down the population of the country by about 50,000 a year, who perish under the wheels on road "Yet it has its own charm," muttered a boy one day while taking out his father's automobile just for a pleasure ride. One night a youth wanted to test his capacity at the wheel and set up a record for himself. The seven mile-long gigantic bridge that connects San Francisco and Berkeley was his target. After two O'clock in the night, when the heavy traffic in eight lines on the two-tier bridge subsided, he sat at his wheel. By the time the speedometer showed 120 m.p.h. three minutes were over and his victorious entry into the domain of the fourth minute was a

crucial entry into doom ! The flashing automobile crashed across the railings on the side shattering the car to pieces ! "But he lived worthy of his guts, didn't he ?" a bushy-haired blonde asked me the next day while we were sharing the news over the bed-coffee at 11 a.m. ! It was one of those lazy days for me in the memorable city of San Francisco !

New York, Boston, Buffalo, Niagara, Syracuse, Rochester, Westport, Trenton, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Richmond, Charlotte, Atlanta, Albany, Knoxville, Dayton, Detroit, Battle-creek, Chicago, Columbus, Madison, Kansas, Denver, Albuquerque, Tucson, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Sacramento, Modesto, Eugene, Portland, Seattle, Vancouver (Canada) these were the important cities which played host to us across the country. Everyday turned out to be a wonderful composition of hairsplitting discussions with the conventional and rocky-minded Republican youth, the reasonable Democrats, the optimistic and radical revolutionaries in various movements, the bearded 'beatniks' who swarmed around the dungeon cafes or campus canteens, and our 'sermons' from the pulpit and the midnight gossip with the host-families.

Tom's company

On February 3, a ride of 300 miles by the Greyhound coach through the snow-covered hillsides of Massachusetts took us to the crowded Boston at 5 p.m. A boy came to welcome us. "It's my great pleasure to welcome you. I shall be with you for ten days," said Tom Rodd leading us to the car parked across the street. The old colour and new glammers of Boston mingled in the evening illumination while we drove into the countryside with Tom. He was only seventeen

and a half years old !

For ten days Tom drove us from morning to midnight, for hundreds of miles and to about 25 cities and towns. If we were tired of the talks and travel, Tom would suddenly occupy the 'stage' with his guitar. Folk songs were his favourites which also helped him to be popular among his friends. His father was a high official in the Federal Government. Tom was not in tune with his father's ideas and activities. "For America to waste millions and billions on armament is a sheer immorality," according to Tom. Therefore he decided to leave his school and fight for the cause of the Negroes, the cause of World Peace, and for the establishment of a non-violent social order. Within ten days, Tom became our inseparable companion.

Within the next two months we heard that Tom had taken another important crucial decision in his life. He refused to be drafted for the compulsory service in the military. He didn't want to escape his responsibility. Therefore he wrote the following letter to the Attorney General of the United States at the Federal Judges.

Dear Friends,

In the near future, it is very possible that I will be tried in your court for violation of the Universal Military and Service Training Act, i.e., failure to register for the draft. Therefore, I am taking this opportunity to explain the reasons behind and nature of my action. I am a pacifist. Through several years of work and study in the integration and peace movements, as well as through a deepening of my personal religious convictions, I have come to the conclusion that violence is never morally or practically justifiable. I

have seen the folly of war and hate and have striven to present to the American people viable non-violent alternatives to the arms-race.

I cannot do personal violence to any other human being, nor can I train others to do so. Therefore, I must not serve in the armed forces. Furthermore, I cannot register for the draft and request conscientious objection status. You see, by registering for the draft, I am in effect saying to the government, I give you the right and the power to decide whether I should go to the army'. If I registered for the draft, and was not classified as a CO, I would, by virtue of my original registration, be morally obliged to accept the government's decision.

But I could not accept such a decision. Thus to register for the draft would be a deception. More important, though registration is still co-operation with Selective Service. I don't want to be excluded while others learn to **kill**. I want the entire draft law to be done away with in its entirety, including the 'deal' it gives to those who cannot morally kill. The draft law is unjust and evil.

So I must **disobey** the law. This disobedience will not be a furtive act. On the contrary, it is completely open and above-board. Five days after my eighteenth birthday I will present myself at the Federal Attorney's office and request to be **arrested**. I will make no contest of my legal 'guilt.'

The Allied Judges at Nuremberg rendered a judgement that applies to my case. It is simply this : **When individual conscience is in conflict with manmade law, conscience must be obeyed!** Eichman's crime,

you will remember, was that he obeyed orders when they contradicted a higher law.

I do not wish to be another Eichman. In the judgment of my friends and my own conscience, I would prefer to be known as one who refused to obey an **immoral law**.

I understand your position in this matter, and bear you no ill will. I will walk into the courtroom with a light heart; for the greatest privilege accorded to man is the right to suffer for one's beliefs.

I ask for your understanding, and implore you to work as an American citizen for the repeal of this unjust law. Not for the benefit of those who are imprisoned for conscience's sake, but for those who learn to kill in the name of our country.

It was a challenge from a blooming young man against the mighty Federal Government and its laws. Like Tom Rodd I could find hundreds of young men and women, white and black, in the United States who acted upon their beliefs and, conviction.

Six months later, as written in the letter, he refused to sign up for the draft, As anticipated, he was sentenced to 5 years imprisonment in Federal Prison! Tom gladly went to prison !

Today, Tom, you are rotting behind the bars ! Not only you, but like you hundreds are there enjoying the same fate in the States, in France, in Germany and the rest of the world.

Russ Goddard, the organizer of our March froilllNew

York to Washington, was also imprisoned for the same reason. Such are the pioneers of the American Peace Movement apart from the elderly people like A. J. Muste, Bayard Rustin, Arlo Tatum, Alfred Hassler, Homer Jack, Robert Pickus, Chester Graham, Robert and Marjorie Swann and scores of those dedicated individuals who have directly or indirectly come in contact with us and helped us in making our March a great success.

A new form of church.

Many a time in the States we were invited by the church authorities to go and speak to their audience. Most of them were the Protestants and Unitarians, which are the progressive groups. One day we had an invitation from an abosolutely new type of church situated a few miles away from Boston.

"Since I am an outspoken atheist, I was dismissed from the church I was serving previously," said Mr. Meyer who drove us to his church. Only a small group of 20-25 families belonged to that church. In the beautifully decorated interior no sign of conventional forms of worship or materials and symbols could be seen. In the place of a cross there was a globe and nearby a piano. From the pulpit any human being could give a message to the audience, without any restriction or reservation. There was no question of administering the Holy Communion or the stupid act of confession. "From the pulpit we read any good passages from any scripture, reasonable book and stories and even sometimes, a newspaper editorial," explained our host requesting us to give "a message to the world" from their `church of humanity'. "Unity of men is the only religion for us, and therefore the

globe is our symbol of worship,” he explained.

Visit to the Walden.

That afternoon our host drove us to that particular spot, 20 miles away from Boston, near the river Sudbry, which had attracted my attention a decade ago when I read for the first time in gripping essay on Civil Disobedience by Henry David Thoreau. As long as man is invested with an infinite capacity to think and act according to his reason and conscience, he must do so; otherwise he would be a traitor to his own conscience. This is what first and foremost I learnt from that sage of the Walden.

While the sun had almost gone down behind the hills and thick woods we dropped in by the Walden Pond which lay like a big slab of hard granite in the freezing cold. There, by the side of the pond, in the midst of the thick forest, was a round spot, where nine stone pillars stood marking the existence of the famous hut of Thoreau built in 1845 by himself in order to experiment with his own life, create the necessary materials for life, give expression to his theories of Civil Disobedience and refusal of federal taxes. Any law, if it is unjust, must be disobeyed by the subjects on whom it is imposed. Thoreau acted according to his conviction and therefore was put in prison in nearby village, Concord (peace).

While in prison Thoreau's great friend, Mr. Emerson, visited him and asked : “Why are you in prison ?” It is reported, Thoreau's immediate reply was : “I wonder, why you are not in it ?” Every reasonable being, who is against the unjust authority and law, must land in solitary confinement. Thoreau was not an exception,

nor was Gandhiji, who regarded Thoreau as his own teacher.

In that tranquillising solitude of the Walden nothing but the chirping of small birds could be heard and nothing but the footprints of rabbits or foxes could be seen.

Concord is a small town at present which is called the “Cradle of Freedom.” To declare the story and glory of the past there is a historic wooden bridge over the small river. On a stone slab nearby it is inscribed :

They came 3000 miles, and died.
To keep the past upon its throne.
Unheard beyond the ocean tide
Their English mother made her mourn.
19-4-1775.

It was here that the first shots of American Freedom boomed all over the world.

“By the rude bridge that arched the blood Their flags to April's breeze unfurled. Here once the embattled farmers stood. And fired the shot heard round the world.

Today the most boastful trumpet of freedom can be heard from the soil of the United States. This brings a question to our minds. What is this thing called ‘freedom’ in practice ? To escape from the tortures and persecutions they crossed the Atlantic. To establish themselves they ruthlessly plundered, butchered and pushed the natives into remote parts of the country. Again, to extract the bounties of nature they imported the black slaves. They fought and won liberty. They

abolished slavery, but denied rights. A couple of centuries rolled on. An infant nation bloomed into the fore-front of the so called "civilized world." In the same world of 'freedom' and 'civilization' if his black brother opens his mouth for the basic rights, bullets and cattle-prods are the answers given by the very white brother who craved and fought for his own 'freedom.'

New trends

The Putney-Vermont area in the north of New York state is a panoramic landscape. It was a very valuable time that we spent in the midst of the members of the 'Experiment in International Living' which exchanged young people from different countries, in order to promote better understanding.

I could see a new turn in the path of education in the United States. The gigantic universities which accommodate several thousands of students are becoming a sort of factory to produce human machines to fit into certain preconditioned holes and moulds of the highly mechanized society,' as one professor put it. Therefore, in several places a new trend is being developed.

Marlboro College in Putney is a typical example. Only 150 students study in that college. Ample opportunity for a full and rich development of character is being provided to those students. "Here the student-teacher relationship is at a higher level compared to our huge universities and we have much better chance to explore and discuss all aspects of life right from the dining hall and playground to the class-rooms," said a student while we were discussing the world

problems, one evening.

One of the most interesting questions I was ever asked in the States was, in that college, by a blue-eyed blonde : "There was a Frenchman who came to America as an agitator and he travelled around speaking against the Government. But several months later when he was offered a good job in the FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation), he welcomed it and started working for the government. Would you also do something like that if our tactful government throws a bait for you ?"

"I never would want to do anything against my conviction and conscience," I replied.

"That's it. After all, you're from Gandhi's India," another girl remarked.

The same afternoon we visited a secondary school. Almost every school I visited I used to ask one particular question to the pupils and always there would be an encouraging answer. There also to a group of 50 pupils between the age of 12 and 16 I asked the same question : "You know that France has recognized Communist China. What is your opinion about it?" 38 of them supported France's action while the others opposed. "We can't forget China in the world map," a boy of 14 got up and defended the majority opinion.

Another High School which impressed me very much was the Scattergood School at West Branch, Iowa. In the whole school the number of students was 62 and the number of teachers 12. Run by the quakers, it is a residential school for both boys and girls. The most impressive factor of the school is that every

work in and out of the class-rooms is being done by the students themselves. It was late in the night that our unforgettable host, Chester Graham, drove us into that school which situated in a nice and calm atmosphere away from the swelling crowds of cities.

The next morning we went around the campus, boarding homes, classrooms, laboratory, work-shop etc. "Kids from this school always score high ranks and distinction, in the State," said Chester.

"We get up at 5 a.m. and batch by batch take up different pieces of work. Some milk the cow, some clean the whole campus, some work in the kitchen. In summer we work in the fields, growing vegetables and other things. At 7.30 our classes start. After lunch we have a rest for half an hour and then again classes, laboratory work library etc. In the afternoon we have sports. In the evening again we work in the kitchen and have time for our personal work. Then an hour is absolutely free. At 9 p.m. we must go to bed. We have heard in India Ashram life is like this," said a brilliant girl from Mexico who took me to the pottery section where she had made articles with her own hands ! Her favourite subjects were fine arts, pottery and agriculture.

"I am not at all interested in modern fashions and ways of American life," said another student. "But I don't think I'll be able to go my own way, for our society is based on a different footing. Here we find more opportunity to develop our inherent talents and tastes".

"There is no grade examination in our school," a teacher explained. "Instead, the teachers prepare

the progress report of every student for every three months. At the end of the year we give promotion. We take into account all aspects of their life, say, personal hygiene, discipline, manual labour and social attitude, apart from the subjects of study."

Towards the South.

From the familiar and crowded East coast between Washington and Niagara, a happy drive towards the south takes you through the thrilling pages of history. "History springs into life in Virginia's unique Centennial Center an orientation centre which presents the full sweep of war as it raged through the entire state," thus goes the description in Richmond museum.

The bloodiest of the American civil wars had taken place in Virginia over a century ago and even now another kind of war is going on in the West Virginian region against which the present President is knocking his head. The war against poverty. That is a part of the "other America" with which I shall deal later.

Prof. William Beidler of Queen's College, Charlotte, was at the wheel of his Volkswagen who told us several of his impressions and his "wonderful stay in India." The curry powder, a simple bed on a wooden cot, the meditation room and his daily sadhanas in his nice solitary home in Charlotte would provide a typical Indian atmosphere. A long drive of nine hours made me feel that 'now I am slowly entering the other America.' The first thing that attracted my attention in that North Carolina city was a newspaper report which ran :

"Charlotte Crime statistics rise up. 34 crimes have been

reported by police during the past 24 hours ending at 3 p.m. Saturday. These include one murder, *five store-break-ins, four assaults with deadly weapons, three damages to property, three stolen cars, two ‘ simple assaults, two home-burglaries, one robbery and one bicycle theft.”

This was the case of one small city ! Then I remembered to have read somewhere a quotation of the FBI report : “There are 24 deliberate murders taking place in the USA in every 24 hours.” I had read another news about the murder of a lady ‘at 2 a.m. in a New York street while about 30 onlookers watched the episode ! “Where does the human society go ?” One tends to think. It is not only the problem of America alone; in most parts of the world the same sort of things are happening in more or less the same way.

A week’s rest and comfortable stay with Bill Beidler gave us an opportunity for a bit of sight-seeing too. The Grandfather mountain and the ghost lights, the mystery of which has not yet been established by the scientific world, and the Linville Falls still remain fresh in my memory. Of the ghost lights the report goes : “This is said to be seen and investigated for more than a century, a tantalizing mystery remains unsolved in the mountains of North Carolina. This is one of the most famous legends of this area. Mr. Gerard William de Brahm recorded in 1771, ‘the mountains emit nitrous vapors which are borne by the wind and when laden winds meet each other the niter inflames, sulphurates and deteriorates.’ “

To meet Dr. King

“For years now I have heard the world ‘wait !’ It rings in the ear of every Negro with a piercing familiarity.

This ‘wait’ has almost always meant ‘never’. It has been a tranquilizing thalidomide, relieving the emotional stress for a moment only to give birth to an ill-formed infant of frustration. We must come to see with the distinguished jurist of yesterday that ‘justice too long delayed is justice denied’. We have waited for more than three hundred and forty years for our constitutional rights. The nations of Asia and Africa are moving with jet-like speed toward the goal of political independence, and we still creep at horse-and-buggy pace toward the gaining of a cup of coffee at a lunch counter.”

These were the words ringing in my ears as I was passing through the Harlem of New York city, one fine cold afternoon. My surroundings were explaining to me the deeper meaning of these words. Babies with protruding bellies, boys and girls in shabby garments, youth with melancholy faces and the aged with brooding heads gathered around me. I was accompanying a Negro youth to his apartment for a cup of coffee.

The world outside knows very little of the stark realities existing inside the rich America. Those realities were the reasons for the thundering cry of a man of conscience. It was a call from behind the iron bars. It was a warning to the high priests of society. It was a reply to “An appeal for Law and Order and Common Sense” in dealing with the racial problems. It was from none other than Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., the man of the year 1964.

I wanted to meet him, to discuss with him, to convey the regards of the people of India and abroad who admired him, and to study how the “Gandhi of America”

worked his “miracle” of non-violence to establish human justice in one of the greatest democracies in the world.

Dr. King is indifferent to correspondence. I had written a couple of letters seeking an interview, but no reply came. However, I launched into a last minute attempt and called for his number from Charlotte.

“I’m sorry, I’m now supposed to disclose the telephone number of Dr. King. You may talk to his secretary in the office,” said the operator from 300 miles away. Within moments a sweet and gentle voice poured into my eager ears : “Yes, Mr. Menon, you may come over here within two days; but I can’t guarantee an interview.”

Sheer optimism itself is a great driving force and I have depended upon it on several occasions in my life. The next day my friend and I waited in the office of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference at Atlanta.

At 4.30 a young, energetic, smiling, robust figure dashed into the room from the street and wiped out the few drops of water from his face. It was raining outside and Dr. King had just returned from a meeting.

“I beg your pardon for keeping you waiting. Come along, let me hear something about my land India !” He escorted us to his office. We sat face to face in that small chamber, neatly and simply arranged.

“I can’t forget my trip to India, short though it was. The pleasant and busy sojourn throughout that country thrilled me and I could imagine how Gandhi derived

such power from the loving simple masses of India.”

He began recollecting incidents one by one. Then he was eager to hear about our global walk against nuclear bombs. But our impatience dragged him into his own distant past. Without any hesitation he picked out the incidents which led him to believe in Gandhi’s theory of non-violent non-co-operation with injustice. To Dr. King non-violence does not mean sitting quiet and tolerating injustice. “It is the most positive moral force by which man is bound to accept the dignity of man.”

“All that started unexpectedly. At that time I was studying to become a priest. It was in 1951. I happened to attend an unforgettable lecture delivered by a professor of Harvard University. The way in which he exposed and explained Gandhi gripped me and I thought : here is a way of life and justice for the teeming human beings.” Dr. King paused a while.

“The meeting was over. The first thing I did was to get into some book-shops and buy as many works of Gandhi as possible.”

That was his entry into a new life. To be a servant of God was impossible unless he became a servant of the miserable “twenty million black brothers and sisters who have been denied the most essential right to live like human beings” in a democratic country. A decade later, on April 16, 1963, he wrote to his fellow clergymen who appealed to Dr. King to withdraw from demonstrations in the streets :

“While confined here in the Birmingham city jail I came across your recent statement calling our

present activities 'unwise and untimely.' No, I guess it is easy for those who have never felt the stinging darts of segregation to say wait. But when you have vicious mobs lynch your mothers and fathers at will and drown your sisters and brothers at whim; when you have seen hate-filled policemen curse, kick, brutalize, and even kill your black brothers and sisters with impunity; when you see the vast majority of your twenty million Negro brothers smothering in an airtight cage of poverty in the midst of an affluent society; when you suddenly find your tongue twisted and your speech stammering as you seek to explain to your six-year-old daughter why she can't go to the public amusement park that has just been advertised on the television, and see tears welling up in her little eyes when she is told that Funtown is closed to coloured children, and see the depressing clouds of inferiority begin to distort her little personality by unconsciously developing a bitterness toward white people; when you have to concoct an answer for a five-year-old son asking in agonizing pathos : 'Daddy, why do white people treat coloured people so mean ?'; when you take a cross country drive and find it necessary to sleep night after night in the uncomfortable corners of your automobile because no motel will accept you; when you are humiliated day in and day out by nagging signs reading 'White' men and 'Coloured'; when your first name become 'nigger' and the middle name becomes 'boys' (however old you are) and your last name becomes 'John' and when your wife and mother are never given the respected title 'Mrs' ; when you are harried by day and hunted by night by the fact that you are a Negro, living constantly at tip-toe stance never quite knowing what to expect next, and plagued with inner fears and outer resentments; when you are forever fighting a degenerating sense

of nobodiness, then you will understand why we find it difficult to wait. There comes a time when the cup of endurance runs over, and men are no longer willing to be plunged into an abyss of injustice where they experience the bleakness of corroding despair. I hope, sirs, you can understand our legitimate and unavoidable impatience.

Even among the Negroes there are many people who feel anxiety over "breaking the laws." To them Dr. King's answer is : "One may well ask, 'How can you advocate breaking some laws and obeying others ?' The answer is found in the fact that there are two types of laws just laws and unjust laws. I would be the first to advocate obeying just laws. Conversely, one has a moral responsibility to disobey unjust laws. I would agree with Saint Augustine that 'An unjust law is no law at all' ".

There are some of his own fellowmen who dub him "an extremist." As he continued to think, Dr. King "gradually gained a bit of satisfaction from being considered an extremist. Was not Jesus an extremist in Love 'Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, pray for them that spitefully use you.'

'Was not Paul an extremist for the Gospel of Christ ? 'I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.'

'Was not Martin Luther an extremist ? 'Here I stand; I can do none other, so help me God.'

"Was not John Bunyan an extremist ? "I will stay in jail to the end of my life before I make a butchery of my conscience.

"Was not Abraham Lincoln an extremist ? 'We hold

these truths to be evident that all men are created equal.'

"So the question is not whether we will be extremists but what kind of extremists will we be. Will we be extremists for the preservation of injustice, or will we be extremists for the cause of justice ? So, after all, the South, the nation, and the whole world are in dire need of creative extremists."

Dr. King narrated the activities of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference of which he is the Chairman. A radical educational programme has been undertaken by them. Unless the common people, particularly the oppressed and suffering, undertake full responsibility of what they are doing, and do things with good intention, adhering strictly to non-violence, the goal cannot be reached. "Therefore, we have to impart proper training and discipline."

The telephone rang persistently. The secretary was always busy pushing papers on his desk. We thought we must take the minimum time.

"Finally, Dr. King, I would like to ask you one personal question." I hesitated. "Go ahead," he said.

"What is the best memory in your life and what is the worst ?"

A few minutes passed. Leaning on his chair he said: "The best memory in my life is the birth of my nice little daughter. You know, the racists didn't allow me to lead a happy family life. My home was bombed several times; our lives are always under threat. But I have crusaded through all the sweet and bitter sides

of life. And it was the happiest day when I heard a daughter was born to me."

"The worst memorable incident took place in 1959. It was in New York city. I had addressed a meeting and emerged out. A woman rushed from the crowd and stabbed me. But fortunately she missed her aim and I was only seriously injured. After some days in the hospital I could-escape from the verge of death."

An earnest and sincere' man of 39, King remains the hope and confidence of the vast majority of Negroes. "Let us hope that the dark clouds of racial prejudice will soon pass away and deep fog of misunderstanding will be lifted from our fear-drenched communities and in some not too distant tomorrow the radiant stars of love and brotherhood, will shine over our great nation with all their scintillating beauty."

It was 5.30. We had to rush to the bus station. Atlanta city was still under a mild shower. The whole atmosphere was gloomy and smoky.

The cops and the prison.

The same night at 9.30 the Greyhound coach dropped us in a small town, Americus, near Albany, the capital of Georgia. A cool wet breeze made us fresh and happy. Within two minutes the bus station was deserted and the booking office closed. Both of us waited for our host to come from Koinonia farm, eight miles away, to pick us up. There was an automatic machine on the verandah. I inserted the coin, pressed the button and pulled out the carton containing hot but tasteless coffee.

"I don't want coffee; how I wish I had a packet of

popcorn,” Satish’s favourite was popcorn. Mine was potato chips. Neither was available then; however, I strolled up and down sipping my coffee.

Suddenly we saw a black limousine circling round the corner the flashing top red-light of which indicated it was the police car. The next moment it smoothly stopped by the coach-station. Two youthful faces peeped out.

“Hello friends, d’you mind joining me for a sip of coffee ?” I threw an instantaneous invitation.

“No, thanks. Where’re you coming’ from ?” one of them asked.

“From Atlanta,” I replied, though I knew what he meant. “I mean, from which country ?”

“I see, from India,” then I went near the car.

He wanted to know why we were waiting there. I explained. The moment he heard your names a sudden surprise spread over his face. “Yeah, I’ve heard our names. Then that fellow from England was your companion and you’re going to meet him and others ?”

That was correct. We were going to meet our comrades who had been in prison in Albany for a couple of weeks. Under the auspices of the CNVA a group of volunteers were on a march from Quebec (Canada) to Cuba across the United States in order to promote relations between the States and Cuba and defy the militaristic policies of both the governments. As and when the march progressed many young Whites and

Negroes had joined. Thus when he integrated group of volunteers marched through Albany, one of the vulgar segregationists’ pockets, they had to encounter severe brutalities from the police and all of them were thrown behind the bars.

After completing our march in Washington, John Papworth, the English comrade who had joined us, left for the South and joined the Cuba marchers. Therefore when the mass arrest took place John was one among them. The newspapers had coupled our names in describing how John had come to that spot. That was why the cops immediately recollected our names at the bus station.

One can have a glimpse of the way in which the police brutality exists in that region from the following words which John managed to convey to his friends outside. He wrote from the city jail of Albany on the 18th of February ‘64 :

“At last I can write again. I had written out four pages of notes since coming in here and then one of the police sergeants spotted my pen and removed it. However, my cell is the size of a railway carriage with a two tiered bunk on either side. On the wall between the bunks is a water tap and basin and next to it, touching the mattress of the lower bunk, a W. C. The front of the cell is iron bars rather less than the width of this paper apart, say five inches, with a ditto door. The rest is metal sheet and hence its name, ‘the tank.’ The cell is crawling with cockroaches, the covers of the four mattresses stained with unnameable deposits and the place reeks of a compound of carbolic and urine. Worst deprivation of all is lit by a bulb in the corridor outsidewhich throws in oblique shadows of

the bars across this page as I write. It burns all night and all day.

“On Saturday evening I came along to the City Hall and asked the Police Captain to release my friends from their unjust imprisonment so that they could continue their peace march to Cuba. He told me to stop my impertinent nonsense and begone, but I said, I would wait until they were released. He said I should have to wait a long time and went off. I think he actually went to telephone the police chief, because some time later a burly pale faced man in a mackintosh strode in and asked me aggressively what I wanted. I asked him if he were Mr. Pritchett and on his acknowledgement gave him a civil ‘Good evening’ and explained my mission. He glowered at me and told me to ‘get out’ and when I explained I would go if my friends were released, he seized me in a rage and threw me against a door so that I bruised the side of my face slightly, and told the captain to ‘book him’.”

John was not alone. There were over a dozen boys and girls in the jail. “There are eight girls in and I have not seen one of them, but their voices are becoming clear to me. But it is marvellous to feel the bond between us and to know I have only to shout through the bars ‘Hello Girls’ for an answer to return from several voices ‘Hello John’,” wrote John.. So, we had planned to go and visit them, even though many risks were involved.

“So it’s pretty fine, you fellows walked around the world” the young cop exclaimed. Both of them had their pistols hanging on the sides. “Please tell me, why do you carry weapons all the time ?” I asked. “To shoot at the folks,” he retorted.

“What sort of folks do you shoot at ?”

“You see, lot of boys here break into homes and shops. We shoot them.”

“Do you think human life is so cheap ?”

“You don’t know friends, our country is terrible. We’ve to use this,” said he pointing at the pistol. Then I told him that we didn’t see policemen carrying pistols in England or Russia and some other countries.

“Yes man, I too have seen. I’ve been to England and Germany. The British cops are the best. But in America we need it; our folks are very violent.” But he hoped that “American police will one day be more civilized,” and drove off wishing the best for us.

A slave of circumstances !

Atlanta city had another interesting incident in store for us. On our arrival, one of our friends told us : “You’ve come at the right time. The Cuba marchers are all in prison in Albany. The police are getting wilder and wilder. In this city there is a notorious judge who is quite popular for his sergregationist views and cruelties. In previous years he has imposed lots of torture on peace agitators, civil right supporters and the like, who are always non-violent peaceful demonstrators. He hates the word non-violence. Why don’t you try to meet him, too. I bet, he may even avoid you people.”

This was a curious proposition. We thought : “It’s nice to study the psychology of such a man.” The next

moment I picked up the telephone.

“Wherever we go, we want to meet some of the distinguished people of the locality. That’s why here we would like to meet Mr. Pye, the judge,” I told his secretary who responded to my call.

“Just a minute,” he said and asked me to hold on. Returning in two minutes he said : “Yes, Mr. Menon, you may come over right now. Mr. Pye would be happy to receive you.”

So our friend dropped us near the big courthouse.

“I don’t want to come near the building lest my car number be on their record.” So saying he left us.

Mr. Durwood Pye is one of the nine senior judges in the city. As we entered his chamber he welcomed us with a warm hand-shake. His well-built body and the pretty hard look gave an impression that he was quite a capable and a stern man.

“How is Mr. Nehru’s health ?” was the first question Mr. Pye asked us. “I wish him all the best. He is one of the best men in the world.” Then he enquired about our activities.

We wanted to know his opinion about the Civil Rights Movement, Martin Luther King and the non-violent direct action project. “From men of authority and distinction like you we would wish to know the various aspects of American life and politics,” we said.

“You see, all these topics are too complicated,” he cautiously replied. “If you want to study these, you

had better discuss them with our Senator Mr. Russell in Washington. He is the appropriate person. Dr. King is a very controversial man of whom too, I don’t want to discuss. Let’s talk about something else.” Then for a few minutes we talked about the climate, the test ban treaty etc. How to get this man to the crux of our visit, I was thinking.

“What do you think of Gandhi, Mr. Pye,” slowly I asked.

“Oh, Gandhi was a marvellous person. I admire him very much. Just by lying down on the road and sitting in fast he could do wonderful deeds. The British had to run away; he had a tremendous power. He was a great man of conscience.” Basically the very concept of non-violence Gandhi stood for was approved by the judge. But the moment his attention was turned to the domestic scene, ideology and conviction would perhaps vanish into the conventional prejudice and hatred towards Negroes. However, after the twenty minutes’ interview, when we came out I thought : ‘The man understands very well the trends of the world; but may be, as most of the people in the world, the thirst for power or status has made him, too, a slave to his circumstances.’

A pistol for coffee !

Again it was in Albany. One fine afternoon. All our friends had been released from jail and they were resting in the Koinonia farm. Some of them were leaving for their native places. I went to see them off at the coach terminal. A group of Negro girls surrounded me and asked various questions.

“D’ you know in this hall we couldn’t enter till a few

years ago ?", one of them explained to me about the laws which existed there. On the other side of the main waiting hall there was a small one which was "for the black". An old woman sat there. "She still won't come here even if we tell her," another girl murmured. "The whites are horrible," a third one said.

On my return to the farm another piece of startling news was received. John and Satish had been downtown just for a stroll. They didn't take it seriously when friends had advised them "to be careful." Why should one be "careful?" It is human beings everywhere, blacks or whites ? If there is an injustice, to turn one's face away from that, is the worst. "We presumed, there will be segregated places where 'Whites only' would be allowed," said John. However, they wanted to have a cup of coffee and entered a restaurant.

"A fat lady came to our table and enquired what we wanted," explained Satish. "Two cups of coffee and some vegetable sandwich, please," they ordered. She went in. "All the customers sitting around started staring at us." Satish wondered. A few minutes passed.

"We don't serve here, please," it was the manager who turned up to inform them. They wanted to know the reason, but he was not prepared for any discussion further. He wanted them to get out.

"But I want to know the reason why you don't serve," Satish had insisted.

"The man's face grew red with anger," explained John "and he wanted us 'to get away or shall I teach you a lesson ?' "

"This is not a school we have come to learn a lesson; we want a cup of coffee," Satish wouldn't give up.

The man had shot up to the zenith of his rage and he pulled the drawer, grabbed the revolver and pointed it at Satish' chest. Every minutest fraction of time was fatal and the motherly heart of the fat lady sensed the tense moment.

There she rushed toward the table and "pushed me by the neck. The next moment I was on the street, perplexed and curious and confused." The pistol in Paris was certainly not a fatal one !

With Pearl S. Buck

It was one of the coldest days; it was one of the warmest too. It was a day of dullness; it was a day of delight too. It was far from the madding crowd; but blessed with the boon of science. It was the 16th of February '64, the day we met the mother of 'Good Earth'.

"Bucks County is pretty in the blanket of snow, isn't it ?", asked our host who was at the wheel.

"Yes, indeed. Perhaps that's why she has this pen name the Pearl of the Snowy Bucks County no ?" my explanation of that world-renowned name made the silent scientist laugh a bit.

"I simply don't know how she came by such a name?", confessed Dr. Ramberg though he had been living in that area for the last several years. The Rambergs and the family of young Mr. Robin Harper were

entertaining us for a new days.

Robin Harper is a carpenter who refuses to pay the taxes to the government, "for it is immoral for any man of conscience to associate with any government which perpetuates war and arms-race. So I prefer to earn and live under the taxation level.

When I earn more money I give away more in charity and for the support of the peace movement and civil rights activities." He happened to be a great inspiration for us too.

The Volkswagen wound its way slow and steady. 50 miles West of Philadelphia the enchanting Bucks County was under a vast bed of snow in the morning but the warmth of the afternoon made it weep in silence. Occasionally the wind was piercing through my sleeves and gloves. Dr. Edward Ramberg was steady at the wheel while Mrs. Ramberg was curious to know if I had ever seen snow in my life. The whole atmosphere was gloomy. Narrow road ran through the vast plains and hills with modern small houses on either side. Beehives and bare trees stood shivering. "By the by, doctor, what do you think was supposed to be the charismatic power Hitler wielded in order to gather the multitude of the masses behind him ?" I posed this question as he once belonged to Germany. "It was very easy for him," said she nuclear scientist who worked in Princeton University where Einstein worked and lived. "The first thing Hitler did when he became the Chancellor was to employ the millions of German youth in the armament factories. The jobless became employed, the starving became well-fed and the whole country hailed Hitler. But they didn't have the intelligence to realize his cruel ambition."

That was how Hitler instilled hope and confidence in millions. "What about Gandhi ?" he continued. The moment he came down to the common masses, spoke their language, ate their simple food, wore their simple dress and identified himself with those whom he had to serve, people simply believed and followed him. That is the essential quality for any leader."

In village Perkasie, a snow-covered gravel path led us from two big gate-pillars into a vast estate in the midst of which, surrounded by many leafless flower-plants, there stood a century-old big bungalow.

"Come in please, Mummy will see you shortly," said Chaika, the giggling Japanese 'daughter' of Pearl Buck opening the door of the warm spacious living room at 3 p.m. sharp. We all settled down near the fireplace, while Chaika began feeding the fire with big logs of wood.

While appreciating the beauty of that old-fashioned room and anticipating the appearance of the famous lady I explained to the Rambergs how easily we could get that interview.

"On the 11th I had written a letter : 'at the age of 15 when I read the GOOD EARTH an utopian dream had blossomed in my mind. Can I never be able to see the author personally and pay my respects ? As today's utopia is tomorrow's reality, now when I am right near your door-step, don't you think that it will be a terrible loss for me for ever if I am unable to meet you ?' Four days later our young host near Philadelphia telephoned and enquired about my communication. Quickly came the melodious voice

with all enthusiasm: 'Let them come tomorrow itself. We shall have a pleasant Sunday afternoon.' "

"I'm sorry to have kept you waiting. Welcome home," seeing off the former visitors at the door a bulky woman with silvery long braids of hair, approached us with one of the most attractive and affectionate smiles that I have ever seen in my life.

"Yours is a country which I want to see again and again. Unfortunately I couldn't get much time to stay on. How is Nehru's health now?" Pearl Buck went on with curiosity. The two names, Gandhi and Nehru, made two different reflections on her shining face. When asked : "What do you think of Nehru," quick came the reply.

"He is a man of courage and vitality to do things. His impatience and individualistic urge to pull India out of the social and economic rut are quite different from that of Gandhi. After all, Nehru and Gandhi was Gandhi."

"Could you elaborate this a bit more?"

"I mean, there is an essential difference between the two. Gandhi was a magnet. Had Nehru not been shaken up by Gandhi he would have been something else. One could visualize an impatient revolutionary in Nehru in the olden days."

Quickly we changed the subject to the Sino-Indian dispute and Nehru's attitude and responsibility. She being an appropriate person who knew China and her people from, every angle of life, my friend and I were eager to find out her assessment of the situation.

Thinking for a while she continued :

"Though I spent over 40 years of my life in China and know that country to the root, I feel incompetent to make a proper assessment now because of their growth and change since the revolution. Moreover, after the revolution I haven't been able to go there. Rather, they don't let me in."

"The Chinese are a proud people. Their civilization and culture, like that of India's, have their roots in the history 4662 years back. They seem to be wanting to hold it up. Historically they had been non-violent. They had been conquered by various foreign powers, but all the time they never resisted. The conquerers were treated with all luxuries and thus they were drowned into slumber and sloth under the spell of intoxicants and opium. Eventually the Chinese people could ignore their rulers and go their own way according to their traditions and habits. Seldom they submitted to alien authorities. They had, indeed, their share of endurance too. But all the while, it had been their character, not to wage wars. They pulled on their lives inactively and carelessly.

"Again, if the son of a family chose to be a soldier, he was considered a gangster. He was never treated as a decent human being. Thus one could see that to fight and kill was not a traditional characteristic of the Chinese in the past."

"But the situation deteriorated. Rapid growth of population, prolonged endurance of external invasions, non-exposition to the world outside, increasing hardship and unrest inside, infiltration of Marxism, emergence of the Communist Russia

and their influence on the Chinese intellectuals etc. made them militant. In the beginning they found the Russian influence useful. But the essential difference between the Russian and Chinese community set-up was not properly understood by the Russians. That created a sort of resentment among the Chinese communists. The Chinese Communists organised the peasantry, talked their colloquial tongues, looked after their interests and thus won them over. Being one with the masses the Communists gained full support and confidence of the people. Then the revolution was easy. During the famous 3000 miles march organized by Mao Tse-tung, as and when they advanced, permanent cells among the peasants could be established. Thus you find the solidarity of their peasants."

"But how will you explain the Chinese action in 1962 when traditionally they had been a non-violent people?" we wanted to know.

"That had been the force of circumstances," said Pearl Buck. "According to their old history and geography, many of the surrounding small nations belonged to China. So today the Communists must be feeling that they should regain the lost territories. One cannot understand or support this attitude. After all, history changes geography. However, one thing I can say : if it were the Nationalist China under Chiang to raise the dispute with India, certainly they would demand more territory than the present government under Mao. It has been unfortunate for such giant neighbours to get into this border clash. Negotiated settlement is the only solution."

We explained to her the attempt made by many

Pacifists from India and abroad under the Shanti Sena to face the situation non-violently and establish public contact with the people from the other side. She believes that non-violent resistance against aggression and construction of the human society through nonviolent co-operation is the only answer to human problems.

"But in the present set up, it seems to be impracticable. What you people are doing is excellent, I congratulate you. You must keep up the spirit and evolve methods on conviction and courage, as Gandhi did. So I admire Bertrand Russell for his relentless efforts in his old age for nuclear disarmament. Similarly Vinoba too. Such people are needed in the World,"

Pearl Buck is one of the ardent supporters of the Civil Rights Movement. "We can't ignore their demands. President Kennedy was reasonable and radical, and understood the world much better than many of our countrymen. He saw China too as it exists today."

She is impatient about China's entry into the UNO. "The earlier she is recognized and admitted into that world forum the better. It must happen, it is inevitable."

Recollecting her previous visit to India she remarked: "India is a great country with a distinct culture, varieties of life and people. I like it very much."

She runs several institutions for the welfare of helpless children, particularly of mixed parents. 'Welcome Home' is the name of her organization. At home she has nine children, adopted from Japan and the United States.

“Can you please tell us, what is Your greatest inspiration for your literary activities ?”

“I am deeply interested in people. That’s my inspiration to write. All throughout my life I have been writing something or the other. My mother used to encourage me when I was a child.”

Seventy-five minutes had flown away so quickly and we got up say good-bye. We had to rush to fulfil another engagement at 5.30

The farmer, the flight and the lunch

Mokena is a small town, within an hour’s reach from Chicago. We were spending a couple of days with the Lehman family, which organized our program around that area. One forenoon I walked into the post office. That was one of the rare days when we could get a few hours absolutely free. Hearing someone clapping and running from behind, I stood. A hefty man in soiled trousers approached and said breathlessly : “You’re from India ? One of my friends told me you reached here last night. I’m very happy to meet you.” I returned the greetings and wanted to know about him.

“My home is a couple of miles away. I want to take you for a ride. Please come with me.”

“But I must tell my hosts, lest I should be delayed for my other engagements.” He came with me. Picking up my friend he drove us to his farm-house.

In the backyard of the old farm-house there lay a small air-craft. James Tilsy had already made a plan in his

mind to provide us with the maximum amount of a picnic delight and within the next few minutes all the family introductions were over and he took us to backyard. Another old man came to his help. The ropes that tied the plane safely to the stumps were untied, and it was pushed into the field !

No runway and the sort of air-port paraphernalia ! Into the wheat-field the 1946 model aircraft was brought out and the three of us were seated inside. Tilsy pulled and pressed the switches but the engine would not start ! The propeller would take a couple of mournful rounds and come to a standstill ! The old man came to “give a hand” ; he started turning the propeller.

“I have bought it for 1800 dollars, just a fortnight ago. It has made only 100 miles; this is the second trial I’m going to make,” Tilsy started explaining the history of his latest ‘pet’. Our blood pressure would have shot up to the highest point ! “Don’t think of anything for the next two hours,” I murmured to Satish. We sat stony stiff !

Ah, there, the engine roared suddenly and the small ‘cage’ bumping and trembling moved ahead through the fields ! We regained our breath while the craft steadily floated in the air with occasional swings and jerks. However, 20 minutes later we dropped into a small air-field at the outskirts of Chicago, had a nice lunch at the restaurant, returned home after another 20 minutes. After a happy landing at the farm when we drove back, our friend’s face was full of joy and satisfaction. We felt we had come back from the brink of death !

Dr. Linus Pauling and the Peace Movement.

“Yes, indeed, you may come right now. I will be very pleased to meet you, though I am tied up with some papers under preparation,” said the heavy voice over the phone when I rang up at 2 p.m. on Tuesday, the 12th of May 1964. I could not picture clearly such an imposing figure, leaning over the pillow, fingers running over his bald head, holding the phone in his left hand and recollecting the letter he wrote to me a couple of weeks ago, suggesting a few of possible places and times he could be met. I had lost all hope and was getting ready to bid farewell to the United States, after a hectic and memorable tour of about six months.

It was in the beginning of 1962. I still remember vividly that charming picture in a magazine. Dr. Pauling stood under the bright sun at the gate of the White House protesting against the American nuclear tests. It was one of the most inspiring incidents, which propelled me through 7500 miles on foot in order to stand at the gate of the White House on the 6th of January 1964.

The beautiful city of San Francisco was shivering under a mild fog. My friend, Satish, and I were driven into the porch of the big Jack Tar Hotel. A black man in stiff uniform stepped down to open the door. By that time we got out thanking our host the young lady. With a mind full of questions I walked into that modern mansion.

After all, I thought, is the Negro destined for ever to be only the door-opener, the attendant, the sweeper, the ‘stupid-nigger’, the ‘son-of-a-bitch?’ How long will the 20 million black brothers and sisters of Uncle Sam be able to tolerate their humiliating miserable life?

A man in pursuit of science and knowledge with dedication

brothers very little as to how he looks like. Prof. Pauling was full of enthusiasm and energy. The black tie was loose. A white shirt hung freely around his well-built body. “Rarely does a human face communicate such a magnetic shock,” says Danielle Hunebelle, a French journalist, about Dr. Pauling. “Do old scientists really have a monopoly of supernatural blue eyes, looming foreheads under a crown of white hair, kindness in a childlike smile, youthful appearance, a perfectly clear conscience and complete serenity? You do not really listen to Linus Pauling, you drink him in”, he describes. Drinking that broad smile we settled down to talk to him.

“Perfectly well, thank you,” he answered with a pride of his good health and enquired the same of us. “My wife has gone to the Hague to take part in the demonstration against the NATO which is being organized by the Women’s Strike for Peace. But I just read in the paper that she has been prohibited entry into that country!”

The husband and wife conduct a constant struggle for peace. They are under incessant fire a criticism by the conventional champions of peace and freedom, for they are against the prevailing process of religious peace-making. Pauling is a heavy headache to the top guardians of the free world and self-determination, for he cannot be silent against his Government which denies the same to the people of Vietnam and Cuba. He is a ‘black sheep’ to many of his contemporaries in the field of science, for he is outspoken and he swims against the current refusing to co-operate with the blind sophistication of the political argument behind the suicidal arms-race. He is isolated in the American Peace Movement, for he does not subscribe to all views of the pacifist spearheads and unilateralists.

“His Nobel Prize is of no importance to him. Neither is his present research on the effect of body acids on mental illness and the structure of alloys and metals. And what difference does it make whether or not he really understands politics ?”, asks Danielle Hunebelle. He goes on relentlessly raising his voice against man’s follies. He fights for the cause of humanity and its values. Going from one capital to another, when he campaigned restlessly and presented a petition with about 10,000 signatures from scientists all over the world, against American nuclear tests, he had to face the Congressional Committee for explanation. At that time “the SANE (a very strong peace organization in the U.S.) refused to support me. So I had to resign from that organization,” said Dr. Pauling when asked about his alienation from the SANE.

“But people in the world give more attention to what persons like you and Berty Russell say and do. So, we would like to see you as a spokesman for the entire Peace Movement in this country and as a link between the various groups.”

“Well,” he replied, “when I can’t find reason for the Peace Movement, in general, to tolerate and give sanction to the existing socio-economic situation in our country, naturally I prefer not to be a partner to that. Peace and disarmament are possible only when the present deplorable economic system is changed. For the Soviet Union it is a tremendous drain on her economy to maintain the arms-race and therefore they are more positive in taking steps provided we too are able to do the same.

So I speak out what seems to be necessary. I have to

conduct my single-man organization for peace.” His frank utterances make many a conformist’s face long and eyes dubious. “Really he has gone left,” such whispers fly like whirl-wind all over the world !

Why is he so particular in attacking the American bombs and American policy ? To this question he will answer that, being an American citizen, primarily, “I have more responsibility to criticize my Government’s policy. Secondly, the American industrial and military complexities are so great that the U.S. can’t get rid of the weapons so easily, whereas Russia’s case is quite different.”

“Do you think unilateral disarmament is possible and a non-violent defence system can be worked out ?”

“Unilateral disarmament seems to be an impossibility. The method of non-violent defence may be possible only in certain situations. India had a peculiar circumstance in which the theory of non-violence could be put into practice to some extent under the leadership of a great man like Gandhi. Martin Luther King is also trying for that.” Pauling is very doubtful of the application of non-violence in international conflicts.

“There can be no end if both sides build up their arms-arsenals,” said Pauling commenting on the India-China dispute.

It will be detrimental to both, as well as to the world. “The best solution to the problem is : India must submit the whole case to the United Nations and request them to protect her borders and demand for a guarantee. But there is indeed one difficulty, since China is not in the U.N., which is another grave injustice towards her.”

In a world which possesses a total of 320,000 megatons of nuclear explosive stock-pile there cannot be any guarantee for peace and abolition of war unless the national immorality is eliminated. "Nations are immoral and principles of morality for individuals are not the same as for nations. Therefore, I advocate the necessity for the development of a world law under which national sovereignty will be less important. Another immediate need is to make central Europe a denuclearized zone. Instead of re-militarization de-militarization is urgently needed."

Truth is always unpalatable to authority. Dr. Pauling never hesitates to say what he feels is correct. "The Central Intelligence Agency of the United States is the most outstanding among the immoral institutions existing in the world," he declared. It has got tremendous power at its disposal. In the formation of the U.S. foreign policy, the CIA's role is extremely important.

He became a Nobel Laureate in 1954 for his contribution in the field of Theoretical Chemistry. In spite of the mounting criticism as a controversial character in politics and Peace Movement, when Dr. Pauling was awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace in 1962, many envious political pundits and pacifist pontiffs raised their eye-brows. But it was in general a happy moment of rejoicing to thousands of people whose lives are dedicated to world peace, disarmament and understanding.

Absence of leadership from persons like Dr. Pauling and Bertrand Russell in the world-peace-movement, as a whole, is a great loss. It is disgusting to see a view point prevailing that these persons are "extremists" or "pro-communists". To me it appears that these outstanding

men of science dive deep into every aspect of human existence and formulate certain opinions on the basis of which they never hesitate to act. They try to visualize the possible path of human welfare against the unforgettable background of history. They attempt to study human character in its minutest detail and accordingly allow concessions to the inevitable good and bad elements in man. Thus when they arrive at some conclusions, after constant experiments, on the touchstone of realities and natural human tendencies, it becomes difficult for those people who are mainly revelling in a realm of ideological convictions and emotional long jumps but at the same time spending very little time and energy to penetrate into the material and social aspects of man. "Maximising happiness and minimizing suffering of the people all over the world," is everybody's duty according to Pauling. "It cannot be possible under a capitalistic system. Peace Movement throws a soft look on this."

If Dr. Pauling too puts more efforts to realize the ideological, emotional and non-partisan aspects of different peace organizations, he will be in a better position to come closer to them. But in losing the co-operation of such an eminent fighter for peace, the movement itself must be more responsible. We must try to find out the rock-like reality and reason behind Dr. Pauling's argument and attitude and attribute full appreciation to his sincere effort to achieve international peace and disarmament. We must change our "holier than thou" attitude and reach our arms nearer to him and take the best advantage of his exceptional capacities. "De Gaulle is a very intelligent and reasonable politician. He has done much good by putting an end to the Algerian war. His policy on S. E. Asia also seems to be pretty good," Pauling commented after hearing the story of our imprisonment in Paris for three days.

"I too will be going to Hiroshima in August; perhaps we shall meet there again. So long wish you all the best," he got up along with us and accompanied us to the door.

This one-time close friend of Einstein occasionally takes a trip to his picturesque ganch on the Californian coast when he needs rest. Between ocean and forest he finds himself amidst his twenty-five heads of cattle and thirteen grand-children. Roaming the world as a visionary pilgrim of peace is his another vocation. "Nothing bothers me at Dear Flat. There is no telephone too....." and then he returns to the California Institute of Technology at Pasadena or to take a plane to New York or Oslo or Tokyo.

Along the West Coast

Just as we spent the first couple of months busily and pleasantly along the East Coast, the last couple of months were also busy and pleasant along the West Coast. From the sunny sea-shore of Los Angeles and green cottages around the Hollywood upto the picturesque mountain-side of Oregon and enchanting lake city of Vancouver in Canada, it was thrilling everywhere.

One of those fine evenings we happened to drop in the home of an unusual American in the outskirts of San Francisco.

"Let me hear something more about India and her 'social miracle'," said Dr. Daniel Hoffman greeting us in his house. He was referring to the Land-Gift Movement in India under the leadership of Vinoba Bhave.

"America is going to dogs. It has no basic values in life.

Ours is a public-relation society ! Everything we do is motivated to create more and more intense desire in man," he was very much critical of the things around him.

He is an ardent admirer of Gandhi and an advocate of vegetarianism. "If and when India grows fully to be a meat-eating nation, that will be detrimental to her. A cow needs 7 acres of land to be fed upon whereas a man needs only one acre for his vegetarian food."

During his visit to India there were many things that impressed him. "The most striking thing in that country is the way in which you people greet each other. Oh, those greetings with folded hands and dropped head is a marvel by itself," he recollected.

He considers drinking too not necessary for anyone. "In India that evil is much less when compared to our society," he said.

While driving us back, Wendy, the young blonde remarked : That's why I and going to India, to so see and study the people."

A morning with Richard Gregg.

"Thus on the first of January 1925 I packed up my minor belongings and said good-bye to Chicago."

It was the concluding narration of an impressive story. It was the beginning of a new path of life for a becoming lawyer. It was a new quest for Truth of a blooming young bachelor who was caught up in modern civilization. It was the end of an immature chapter; but it was the birth of an immortal scene.

“As an active participant in the labour movement, in my capacity as a lawyer, my basic interest was to study human conflicts and find solutions to problems.” Thus he began his life in the crowded city of Chicago. But today, after trekking through 79 eventful years, he lives on the top of a hill, in a house which has no foundation on soil, with his companion who is always busy in the kitchen or in the courtyard or in the garden, in communion with life and nature. “She does a lot of gardening and I too enjoy working on the soil with her,” the old man tells a visitor with a smile of contentment.

My friend and I were eager to delve deep into the trodden past of his life and thought. So with elephantine ears we stared at him, while he explained.

“One evening I was walking through the streets and naturally a book shop drew me in. An unusual book attracted my attention. Reading it, I experienced a new awakening. Gandhi was giving a new message to the modern world. It was a novel method for the settlement of problems. His theory of Nonviolence and Satyagraha seemed to be a completely new technique; and I was under his grip.”

That incident made him restless. “I wrote to Gandhiji seeking his permission to spend some time with him. Straight came an invitation from C. F. Andrews who was editing YOUNG INDIA. I set sail aiming for the East.” At that time Gandhi was rotting in the imperialist prison. Years later Gandhi wrote : “Mr. Gregg has first-hand knowledge of Satyagraha, having lived in India and then too for nearly a year in the Sabarmathi Ashram. His pamphlet A DISCIPLINE FOR NON-VIOLENCE cannot fail to help the Satyagrahis of India ?”

Let alone the pamphlet. Does the stuff contained in the pamphlet, does the man himself who gave spirit and light to the expression of the historic principles, who experimented with his whole life on the anvil of Truth and Non-violence, really help and inspire the Satyagrahis and common people of India today ? Is it possible for India to stand up by herself against the rest of the world with the moral weapon of non-violence ? Churning my mind with all such questions and doubts I was crusading through the hills and dales, fields and forests of California. At last on the morning of April 29, 1964, far from the madding crowds of New York, relieved from the desert winds and perspiration of Arizona and New Mexico, recollecting the sweet memories of San Francisco, gliding zigzag through the narrow gravel roads, when we got out of the small fiat car, Mr. Richard Gregg was writing at the door with folded hands and “namaste” on his lips.

“Last summer we came over here and bought a piece of land,” he touched on a bit of personal life and conducted us into the living room. Even though the house stands on wheels one does not find any difference between it and a well furnished modern flat. Telephone, refrigerator, hot-water, electricity and heating all modern amenities of life are available in his trailer-home. To seek oneness with nature, to give expression to one’s essential value of life manual labour there is abundance of land, fresh and fertile. “So we don’t have to buy any vegetables.”

He answered all our questions one by one. “I am not a pessimist at all : and at the same time I do see the existing realities. If one is not capable of defending oneself, on the principles of non-violence, to fight and resist the injustice, it is better to resort to the force at

hand than run away as a coward. It was Gandhiji's stand. But that doesn't mean that we mustn't build up the force of non-violence. We must try to get more and more people to come to that conviction. Otherwise it is difficult. Of course, it would have been possible to resist the Chinese army by a non-violent force, provided there was conviction and dedication, as Gandhi thought while the Japanese were approaching."

"I was amazed to see the young Negro students and even the kids at home fully committed to the cause of Civil Rights and equality based upon non-violent action. That is the work of Martin Luther King." Gregg was recollecting his trip to the South.

"Sometimes people criticise me calling me 'unpatriotic.' Well, I can't support war or the military machinery and therefore I support those people who don't take part in them."

"What about the Peace Movement in this country and abroad?" The answer to his question was not so easy according to Richard Gregg. "What we need is a more constructive programme. For instance, now the American Committee for Non-violent Action is engaged in bringing the Hiroshima survivors from Japan to this country. This kind of work I consider more valuable than protesting against the bases and military. Indeed, protests and demonstrations have their effects too. But we have to go deep into the social and economic problems and thus make society more coherent and non-violent. The Peace Movement in England and Europe is mainly political; they always cry against the bombs and wars. They pay very little attention to positive constructive activities."

"Would you support the formation of a world government

and the sanctioning of some sort of force, I mean the International Police Force or something of that sort, in the hands of that government for settling international disputes, if necessary?"

Vaguely pausing for a while he raised his bushy eyebrows and said: "To some extent." Still violence will be violence, killing will be killing, no matter who does it. "Like the States in America which have relinquished some of their sovereignty to the federal government, if nations of the world are ready to give up some of theirs to an internationally agreed body, it will be a great relief." Still our attempt must be to build up non-violence from the grass-roots of our lives, he concluded.

According to him, unlimited reliance industrialization seems to be the most severe danger hampering the good qualities of man. So Gregg says, "As everyone knows, modern science and technology, wrapped up in large-scale commerce, are now introducing rapidly and in a big way into the continents of Asia and Africa. India now is in the midst of this kaleidoscopic whirl."

Thinking, working, reading and writing, Richard Gregg leads a quiet life: To spend some time with this sort of people with ideas and experience, is existing indeed.

Since our hectic travel did not permit us to have more time with him, we said good-bye in an hour. The old couple stood in their vegetable garden. "We enjoy this life, though it is solitary," Mrs. Gregg shrugged her shoulders. The sky was gloomy and the breeze was cool but all of us felt a warmth at heart.

In the court with Joan Baez.

Just a little rain falling all around,
 The grass lifts its head to the heavenly sound;
 Just a little boy standing in the rain,
 The gentle rain falls for years;

 And the grass is gone, the boy disappears,
 And the rains keep falling like helpless tears,
 And what have they done to the rain?.....

The musical rhythm and painful melody of this song had created an ocean of waves in my mind as I sat sipping coffee in a small apartment in Washington D. C., one night at 2 a.m., after a long discussion with my American friend. Brice was recollecting his student days in the city of Allahabad where he had spent several cold nights in the dusty, dirty streets in the company of half-naked, shivering, shoeless, shelterless coolies, vendors and rickshaw drivers, who sat around the fire in the severe winter nights.

“Yet, I saw a gleam of happiness and a sense of unity on the faces of those poor people, which I cannot find on the faces of the people in our affluent society,” he said.

Happiness in ignorance had helplessness on one side of the world; unhappiness in riches and knowledge on the other; thus the brain got engaged in conflicting arguments while I turned the record-player again.

This is one of the most popular folk songs which can be heard across the United States, giving inspiration to the thousands, who plunge into the field of direct action to protest against the nuclear tests and radiation rains in that country, particularly when it is sung by the best

folk-singer, Joan Baez. I must meet the owner of this sweet voice before leaving the country, I had decided and started working out the plans as to how, when and where to catch a glimpse of her.

Several weeks rolled on. Every string of hope had been broken. Four days were left and we shall be off from the States ! Then the day broke on the 1st of June 1964 through the fog of San Francisco and the telephone rang at 9 a.m. on my bed. Suddenly walking up I grabbed the phone to receive a delightful news from my friend : “This afternoon Miss Baez is reaching San Francisco to attend the court and she will be very happy to meet you. But unfortunately there is no other free time, so you may join her in the court.” What an unexpected news and what an unimaginable place ! At 1 p.m. Satish and I waited at 341, Market Street.

At 1.30 a dark-haired, tall, slender, simply-dressed girl of 21 dropped in and greeted us with a warm handshake. “Let’s go.” she said and we all got into a sleek limousine aiming at the court. “There I am to be questioned about my sincerity in arguing for the issuance of an injunction order against a firm, which has manufactured and put into the market several thousands of records of a number of my songs in 1958.” It was alleged to be without her permission and therefore she had filed a suit against that firm. “Those songs are so bad,” Joan continued, “and my present reputation will be damaged. I myself can’t stand them, except one or two.”

Being a famous folk-singer, who earned anything between 200 to 10,000 dollars for a concert, was not the important aspect which impressed me in her attractive personality. Her art, her talent, her thought, her action, everything has a special significance and meaning in

her personal life as well as that of society and the world in which she lives. That's why she wrote to the Internal Revenue Authorities in May 1964 :

*Dear friends,
What I have to say is this : I do not believe in war. I don't believe in the weapons of war. Weapons and wars have murdered, burned, distorted, crippled and caused, endless varieties of pain to men, women and children for too long.*

Our modern weapons can reduce a man to a piece of dust in a split second, can make a woman's hair fall out or cause her baby to be born a monster.....

I am therefore, not going to volunteer the 60% of my years income-tax that goes to armaments. There are two reasons for my action.

One is enough. It is enough to say that no man has the right to take another man's life. No, we plan and build weapons that can take thousands of lives in one second, millions of lives in a day.

No one has a right to do that. It is madness; it is wrong.

My other reason is that modern war is impractical and stupid. We spend billions of dollars a year on weapons which scientists, politicians, military men, and even presidents, all agree, must never be used. The expression "National Security" has no meaning. It refers to our Defence System, which I call Offence System and which is a farce. It continues expanding and heaping up, one horrible kill machine upon

another, until for some reason or another a button will be pushed and our world, or a good portion of it, will be blown to pieces. That is stupidity.

People are starving to death in some places of the world. They look at our National Budget. They are supposed to respect us. They do not respect. They despise us.

Maybe the line should have been drawn when the bow and arrow were invented, maybe at the gun, the canon, maybe. Because now it is all wrong, all impractical, and all stupid.

So all I can do is draw my own line now. I am no longer supporting my portion of the arms-race.

There are thousands of mothers and sisters in the United States who refuse to contribute their portion to the stupendous war machinery. There are thousands of fathers and brothers who refuse to play their "screw-role," however infinitesimal it may be, in the fantastic death-machines. "If one screw is loose in that gigantic machine, to that extent it becomes weaker, to that extent is my contribution to the benefit of mankind," thus goes the thinking of many a youth in America and elsewhere.

In the huge court-building in the midst of the city, we occupied a bench and engaged in conversation with Joan. "I don't accept any program to sing at night-clubs. Either in concerts or in peace rallies or other public platforms and benefit performances I feel like using my artistic talent," she said.

The court commenced its proceedings. Joan was called into the box and the oath was administered.

“Well, Miss Baez,” the judge concluded after some explanations and questions, “will you be ever tempted to make use of the same record and put it into the market, when you discover that money will pour-in in millions?” The court decision was going to be in her favour. Her present popularity in the country could definitely bring her enough money even if her old recordings were not up to the mark. The judge wanted an assurance from her.

“Money is nothing for me. I don’t live and sing for the sake of money,” she retorted. She demanded that at any cost that particular record must be withdrawn from the market.

Though she earns over 200,000 dollars a year, the level of taxation is as high as 90%. “So I live in debt always, for so many appeals for contribution to different organizations and movements come to me. I try to do as much as possible for the anti-nuclear and other peace activities,” she said.

Three hours had already passed in the court. We had to attend a pot-luck dinner and meeting across the bay and she had to go to her home-town, a couple of hundred miles away.

“I hope to come to India one day,” she said bidding us farewell..

“Please do come,” we said, “good-bye” and rushed to catch a bus.

We shall overcome, we shall overcome.....
Oh deep in my heart, I do believe,

We shall overcome o-n-e-d-a-y-y-y-...These famous words of the song of hope and victory echoed in my ears again and again.

The Harvey family and goat’s milk

San Francisco and Berkeley have occupied a very important place in our thoughts and activity. More than a month we spent in that area as guests of two important organizations, the CNVA West and the Turn Towards Peace, and many families around. Mark and Sonya Morris, Brit Peter and his wife, Sandra, Sylvia, Penny and Peter they include our large family of friends there. Everyday we used to have some programme or the other and it is one of those get togethers, that I am going to describe which has made a chapter in the history of the Peace March.

If one wants to get away from the foggy but enchanting city of San Francisco, for it is too cold to enjoy a swim, one can occupy the back-seat of a Mercedes Sedan and by the time one enjoys a short seista he is in front of a solitary large modern house, built by an ever-enthusiastic couple called Melwin and Mary Harvey. If Mary were to drive with you, the 90 minutes to Modesto will fly like anything, for you will be thrilled with the innumerable stories that Mary might relate concerning her life in the active field of the Peace Movement and other social and personal activities. American fashion and Indian asceticism, Tolstoy and Gandhi, marriage and morality, violence and sex all topics will come up for discussion. A couple of years ago, when the whole world was rejoicing the gala Christmas, you could find Mel and Mary along with some friends sitting and fasting at the Nevada nuclear-test-site to protest against ‘our

government's non sensical poisoning the air and milk and everything with which we have to sustain our lives.' Two days later you could see them behind the iron bars. "During two months in prison I had a lot of opportunity to read and think," recollected Mary. Being the mother of three children her family duties did worry her much. "Yet when I think of the millions of families suffering from radiation, my little sufferings were nothing," she said. It was in her home that one evening about 50 people from the neighbourhood gathered in order to give us a grand welcome dinner.

People took their places, and we were seated in the centre at the head of the table with Mel and Mary on either side.

"Oh, I have got an Indian sari presented to me by a friend, but I don't know how to wear it. I want to wear it tonight," Mary had said as soon as we arrived. So it took a few minutes for us to dress her up in Indian style. The table had been laid with varieties of dishes, suitable to all tastes.

"These are two glasses of special milk for you," Mel said placing the glasses in front of us.

"Why on earth special milk for us ?", we wondered.

"You see, it's goat's milk"

"Goat's milk ! Don't you have cow's milk ?"

"Yes, but we know Gandhi used to take only goat's milk."

We burst into laughter. Our image was created in such a manner, that they were under the impression that we

would be doing things as Gandhi did ! A couple of days ago all the local newspapers had written long stories about our ventures and we were described as "disciples of Gandhi !" "Only Indians can do such things," such comments we had heard in several countries. America was no exception. "Gandhi's disciples suggest Peace Army as an alternative to Military," wrote one paper. That is how our hosts had taken pains to get two glasses of goat's milk for us !

"We drink cow's milk and buffalo's milk also," we said. "Who knows in the Afghan mountains of Persian deserts you were not given camel's or donkey's milk too !" a young man wondered. However the dinner and discussion progressed in full swing.

It was midnight when everything was over and we went to bed. Not a single day in the United States had we been able to retire before midnight.

Next morning at breakfast Mary said jokingly, "Why shouldn't I also come with you to Japan and walk to Hiroshima ?"

"Indeed, it'll be excellent. Then our March will be really international. Only in America and Japan it'll be like that. In your case it has special significance, being a woman and a mother of three children," we replied.

"Okay, go ahead if you want," the husband backed the proposal. Being an engineer in electrical and construction work, Mel was extremely busy with his work. Hardly did he find time to join the family at the dining table. Now he came forward to undertake all the family responsibility if Mary wanted to go to Japan ! "I can be a good house-wife too," he declared.

“However, things are not so easy,” she concluded and all other programmes went on as, scheduled. We returned to San Francisco after a couple of days.

The other America

Everything in the world has its two sides. Cause and effect, reason and result, good and bad, bright and gloomy. America has its own bright and dark sides of life. There are extremes existing in that country. There is too much of stress and strife in the society, and yet one can see a chord of Pan American unity. In course of time, America is bound to change; if not by voluntary and intelligent realization and willingness, by the force of circumstances, both domestic and foreign.

Normally a visitor to the United States sees and enjoys the America which is bright in its flood-lights, which looks magnificent in its marvellous sky-scrappers, which is exciting in its super highways and break-neck-speed motorcars, and which is pleasant in its beaches, university campuses and families where he enjoys informal hospitality, affection and friendship. Entangled in the glamour of the above circumstances, one seldom discovers the dark side of America which will land him in disappointment. It is about that side of America, “the other America,” as they themselves call it, I am going to write.

According to my evaluation there are three facets of the “Other America” (1) America of the Indians (the original inhabitants), (2) America of the Negroes and (3) America of the Advertisers.

As history tells us, it was to lead a free, happy and

better life that the immigrants from across the Atlantic crossed the ocean. Their most important concern was freedom of the individual and his conscience. Now, when the new-comers landed in America, did they grant the same right to the original inhabitants of the ‘new world’ ? No. Today if one takes a cross country drive through the river bed of Niagra, the reservations of the central region, the pueblo (means a village in Spanish) in New Mexico, history will unfold to his mind the horrible pictures of the tortures and torments inflicted upon the poor people who lived there for centuries. Can they now speak proudly of the Mayflower ?

To study the present conditions of an original Indian village, one day we drove into the Pueblo Islata, near the city of Albuquerque, in the South-West corner of the States. Albuquerque is a city of 300,000 population, where the culture and civilization of the East and West have mingled. The mud-plastered houses would remind you of the Pathan houses or the Persian rural dwellings. In spite of the pleasant and appealing surroundings, Albuquerque never lives in peace ! All the 24 hours booming jets and gigantic bombers circle in the air in order to keep vigilance over the innumerable nuclear arsenals that are hidden in the mountain folds around ! “Ninety per cent of the city’s population work in the armament industry and therefore we can’t think of any disarmament agreement between our country and the rest of the world,” argued a student one afternoon. This is the crux of America’s problem. “How shall we survive if thrown out of work ?,” this is the question millions of people ask.

There are over half a million Amerindians living in the reservations, specially meant for them, without equal opportunities and amenities with the Whites. In the

beginning when they were pushed into the reservations, all promises for educational and employment facilities were given. Today they live in appalling conditions. While the average longevity of life in the rich America is 62, that of the American Indians is 41. An Indian in Albuquerque told me that a movement must be started to “establish our rights, just like the Civil Rights Movement of the Negroes.”

Peublo Islata consisted a population of 5,000. We felt as if we were no more in the rich America. Houses built of mud and wood made you feel that it was an Asian village. Handicrafts like pottery, basket making, doll making are still there in the Indian reservations.

A fat lady, Mary Zuni, took us to her home which was neatly decorated. A couple of chairs, a sofa set and TV too, were there. “Some of us have cars too, for they work in the city,” she explained. Many affairs of the village are taken care of by themselves. They elect a government body for two years. “Though we still speak our own language at home, we learn English and Spanish, for then only we will get jobs in the cities,” said Zuni. “We want to draw the attention of the people and the government to improve our economic and educational standard,” a foremost leader of the Indians’ cause, in Philadelphia had said.

In Negroes’ America the situation is far worse. “For years the idea haunted me, and that night it returned more insistently than ever,” says John Howard Griffin, who had decided to discover it for himself. So he had packed up his baggage one morning and said good-bye to his family in order to realize and experience it by being one among the 20 million, by colour, by taste, by smell, by touch, by conversation, by transforming every fibre of

his existence into a Negro.

In his book “BLACK LIKE ME’ Griffin explains how he turned his skin-colour and became a Negro. The world called him a novelist, a journalist, a white man of the civilized world. With chemical aid he darkened his colour and crossed the line into a country of hate, fear and hopelessness, the country of the American Negro. “It was on November 7, 1959 and the doctor shook my hand and said gravely, ‘now you go into oblivion’.”

Yes, Griffin went into oblivion, for five weeks, to tell the story of reality. “His story is one of the deepest perhaps too deep for some penetrating documents yet set down on the racial question,” remarked one newspaper in the deep South. Now let us consider what Griffin has to say about his life on the sidewalks in disguise. “I stood in front of the mirror. In the flood of light the face and shoulders of a stranger, a fierce, bald, very dark Negro glared at me from the glass. He in no way resembled me.” It was in New Orleans, just before he got on the sidewalks. “It was the ghetto. I had seen them before from the high attitude of one who could look down and pity. Now I belonged here and the view was different. Here it was pennies and clutter and spittle on the curb. Here people walked fast to juggle the dimes, to make a deal, to find cheap liver or a tomato that was over-ripe. Here was the indefinable stink of despair.

Here modesty was the luxury. People struggled for it. I saw it as I passed, looking for food. A young slick-haired man screamed loud obscenities to another woman on the sidewalk. She threw them back in his face. They raged. Here sensuality was escape, proof of manhood for people who could prove it no other way. Here at noon, jazz blared from juke boxes and from

dark holes issued forth the cool odours of beer, wine and flesh into the sunlight. Here hips drew the eye and flirted with the eye and caused the eye to lust or laugh.” “You can’t just walk in any place and ask for a drink or use the rest room.” Wandering here and there Griffin went to a shoe-shine. “Joe leaned over to me and pointed to a man across the street : ‘Watch that wino, he’ll sit right there, he wants some food, but he won’t come over till I tell him to’.”

“Untill we as a race can learn to rise together,” says an elderly man to Griffin, “we will never get anywhere. That’ our trouble. We work against one another instead of together. Now you take dark Negroes like you, Mr. Griffin and me. We are old Uncle Toms to our people You’ve got class. Ins’t that a pitiful hero-type ?”

Another street, in the night. “I walked fast and looked straight ahead. ‘Hey, Mr. No-hair,’ some one called. I realized he was following about 75 feet behind me I’m going to get you, Mr. No-hair, I am after you’ “ Griffin stopped into the alley, clinging to the garbage, and escaped somehow from the manhunt of the white man. “The psychological aspect of white conquest should constantly be kept in mind these days,” says A. J. Muste, a noted pacifist. “One of the great charms in the world is that between the people who have known humiliation and those who have not, but instead humiliated others. The Whites are the ones who shoved other peoples, especially the coloured, off the sidewalk in Western and in Asian and African countries alike; no one could push the white master off the sidewalk anywhere.”

To crown the misfortunes of the black Americans there are certain inhuman organizations like the Ku Klux Klan and extreme opponents of all radical thoughts

and progress, like the John Birch Society. Started in 1865 by six people who were looking for something to occupy their minds, the Klansmen have been riding all over the countryside, particularly the South, thirsting for violence, cloaked in their sheets and masks. “Anyone white or black who co-operated with reconstruction was fair game for barbarism. White men who taught in Negro schools were lashed, and their schools were set afire and reduced to ashes. Negroes who refused to work for white men, or who seemed to flourish on their own, were for white men, or who seemed to flourish on their own, were thrashed with whips; some were hanged, some castrated, some burned to death, some murdered and quartered like animals,” says a journalist.

The John Birch Society believes that, “Every vote for the Civil Rights is a nail in the coffin of the American Republic.” Democracy is a merely deceptive phrase, a weapon of demagoguery and a perennial fraud, according to them. Founded in the name of John Birch, a U. S. Army officer who was killed by the Chinese, the founder of the Society believed that the U. S. Government deliberately kept the truth from the family. “To fight Communism and to arraign the U. S. Govt. as a partner in the Communist Conspiracy,” the Society exists. “Remove Commies from the White House,” “U. S. must get out of U. N.,” these were some of the prominent large bill boards that I could see while travelling on the super-highways. Kennedy was also a Communist, according to the Birchers ! “Nehru a lying, murdering, thieving agent of the Kremlin” !

Behind the veils in the “Other America,” according to the TIME, “each year hundreds of children are brutally assaulted and even killed by their own parent. In 1962 alone the American Humane Association found

662 newspaper reports of parents who beat, burned, drowned, stabbed and suffocated their children with weapons ranging from baseball bats to plastic bags under the stress modern life, more and more parents apparently vent their anger and frustration on the easiest targets at hand."

"Lingering poverty in the shadow of unrivalled affluence is the painful paradox of American life today," says a News-week report. "On any given day, 430,000 men, women and children live on relief in New York city alone, thousands of them in appalling vermin-ridden tenements. In all, close to 8 million Americans are receiving public assistance worth 400 million dollars a month. In Appalachia, varmint stew (made from stray animals) supplements the beans, meal and lard collected from the government. Running water is a rarity, a pencil unknown to many children, and a refrigerator on the front porch is a symbol of status !"

"The 'Other America' is becoming increasingly populated by those who do not belong to anybody or anything," writes Michael Harrington. "They are no longer participants in an ethnic culture from the old country; they don't belong to unions or clubs. They are not seen, and because of that they themselves cannot see. Poverty in the United States is a culture, an institution, a way of life. There are more homes without a father, there are less marriages, more early pregnancies and markedly different attitudes toward sex. As a result of this, hundreds of thousands of children in the 'Other America' never know stability and 'normal' affection."

According to the FBI report everyday 24 deliberate murders take place in the States. In New York city there are innumerable people who keep on walking in the

streets throughout the night, for they don't have a place of their own. 80 Warren Street is called a 'slave market' where scores of human beings, Puerto Ricans, Negroes and alcoholics would be thronging around from morn to eve in search of any petty job in the underworld of the city !

One wonders, why in the richest country of the world, where every citizen could be provided with a decent life, this painful and torturing situation exists ? While on the one side farmers are being paid by the state persuading them not to produce more and to destroy some of the surplus products, on the other side over 50 million people are reported to be living in the 'Other America' in perpetual squalor, deprivation and misery !

Business, advertisement and profit constitute the baneful backbone of American life. Everything seems to be produced primarily to satisfy the insatiable greed for money. Under the label of Free Enterprise, everybody is allowed to exploit everybody to the maximum. In this contest, survival of the fittest theory does play the most important role. You cannot just sit in front of the TV without any waste of time for five minutes continuously, just to listen the news and watch the world events, because within five minutes there will be two bits of news and three bits of nasty advertisements of the lipstick, sleeping pills or ladies' bra and what not !

Directly or indirectly, we too were caught up in the whirlpool of American commercial advertisements on several occasions. As soon as we landed in New York a cameraman approached us and said : "I'm the official cameraman of the Cunard Lines, It's a privilege for us that you travelled by our boat, Queen Mary. Please pose for some snaps. We want to use your photos as

‘distinguished travellers’ on our liner.”

Another incident, when we became a sort of medium for advertisement, took place in Philadelphia. We were limited by a radio station for a midnight programme from 12 to 2 a.m. The listeners could ask direct questions to us over the phone as and when we explained our purpose of the Peace March.

At the stroke of midnight we were seated around the table and microphone along with the interviewer, a nice jolly good fellow. Out of the two hours about 40 minutes were taken by him to announce the impending events at the auctioneer’s, in the theatres, or to speak about the latest arrival in the Jimmy’s Market or the finest fashion in hair-dos that had been introduced at Peggy’s Saloon !

A listener wanted to know something about Gandhi’s technique of non-violent struggle and we were in the process of explaining a few incidents of Gandhi’s life. Right in the middle of the talk our interviewer switched on his microphone to give a thundering news :

“Here folks, X’mas is at your door, why not drop in at Joe’s Paradise ! Fanciful furniture newly arrived. Take today, pay later. Contact.....”

Another interesting incident : A television Company invited us for a ‘face to face’ interview. The programme was for 20 minutes. For about eighteen minutes the discussion went on nicely and then suddenly the interviewer grabbed two bottles of Pepsi Cola from under the table and offered to us, saying : “You folks have walked over 7,000 miles. Must have been terribly thirsty all along ! However, why not enjoy a ‘pepsi’ now ?” The camera was focused straight on the bottles and

our faces !

On the American highways the most conspicuous eye-catching bill boards are for advertising various beverages and about the glory of the army. ‘Say Pepsi Please’ feel young always’ and ‘Uncle Sam needs YOU’, ‘I want YOU’, ‘Your glory, service to the nation,’ etc, etc. This is one side of the ‘Other America’, which has no meaning to a thinking man !

Two days in Canada

Some of our Canadian friends had invited us to Canada when we met in Paris. By the end of our American tour a couple of days’ programme were fixed in Vancouver.

So, a four hours’ run by train through the panoramic seashore and water-logs took us to the beautiful city of Vancouver on the 5th May ‘64. To my great surprise my old friend, Mrs. Mildred Fehrni, was waiting at the station.

While crossing the border by train the immigration authorities got in and informed us that we needed an endorsement and renewal of our visas if we wanted entry into the United States again, whereas in our original visas it was mentioned ‘valid for three entries.’ However, we had to take an immediate decision or get down from the train, the officer demanded. We were not sure whether the next day our visas would be renewed, and whether we would get time enough to attend to those matters. If by any chance we were delayed in Vancouver so many programmes for ten days would be affected in the States. We had to return to Seattle and finally to San Francisco to catch a plane to Japan. Come what may, we thought and proceeded to the other side. Of

course without any delay the next day visas were again endorsed.

In two days Fahrni and her friends had organized several meetings, discussions, and radio and TV programmes. I was astonished to see a press reporter who did not know who Gandhi was when we answered his questions as to what sort of activities we were engaged in, in India. "What is the Gandhi ?", he was curious. "He was the father of India's independence movement," replied the friend who was with us.

Vancouver is a business, industrial and mining city. The "sleeping beauty" of Vancouver is simply enchanting.

A day of agony

Returning to San Francisco on the 9th, the next three weeks we spent mainly in the two great cities on either side of the Bay. Berkley and San Francisco turned to be our restful abodes where many an eventful, happy, lazy morning and drowsy evening provided ample rest. San Francisco is the most beautiful city in the United States, as far as I know, with its straight roads, climbing up and down the hills which constitute the whole city, and finally everything merging into the calm, vast and pleasant Bay.

May 27, 1964. 9 a.m. West Coast Time. I had to attend a Press Conference. Mr. Mitra, the Editor of Amrit Bazar Patrika and Mr. Mankumar Sen, who were on a visit to San Francisco, waited in the Hotel Canterbury. The coach dropped me at the terminal. The hotel lay at a distance of ten minutes' walk.

As I emerged from the huge terminal, as usual my eyes

fell upon the news-stand. As if the sky just dropped on my head, as if I was struck by lightning, as if an arrow had pierced my heart, as if a bullet entered my skull, I stood stunned !

"The Darkest Hour for India," a full-page headline blurred my eyes.

"India's Nehru is no more," another headline of a prominent paper.

"A gloom for humanity," a third one.

Picking up one of them I moved ahead. Some were staring at me. In the hotel Sen and Mitra sat like two pieces of stone. The telephone rang.

"Extremely sorry to hear the sad news, friends," said Brit Peter.

"Let's cancel all engagements," I murmured into his ears. I took sank into the sofa. Nothing to be thought; nothing to be said.

An hour later I said good-bye to the friends. Satish called in. A few minutes later we departed.

I wandered up and down the streets aimlessly for sometime. An old woman suddenly stopped me on the footpath. "Oh, what a pity !", tears were welling in her eyes. "I am with you and all people of Indian in this suffering. He was dear to me as to you people," and she quietly moved away.

It was only a week ago that I received his personal letter from his death bed ! He himself could not have imagined

about the approach of the inevitable ! He was confident of his recovery. He wanted to live for several years, for he craved for an India of his own making blossoming into a happy, prosperous nation; he craved to see a world which would live in permanent peace and harmony. He had a long way to go before the eternal sleep; he had several “promises to keep,” before the retreat. Therefore he wrote to me :

Torturing thoughts and recollections began to unfold one by one. Every word he uttered to me had taken me to the Olympian heights of inspiration and encouragement.

“The country depends upon young fellows like you; work hard,” he had said in 1957 when I met him just for a minute at Yelwal, near Mysore.

“Excuse me, are you from India ?,” suddenly holding my hand a beautiful girl stood before me. I stopped and looked at her. “ I come from Switzerland. I’ve read much about your great Nehru. Today I’m very unhappy. It’s good I met you; let me share my grief.....” her throat choked.

“Thank you very much,” I murmured.

“Tell me, have you met him ?”

“Yes, I have.”

“It might be terrible for you. Why not come to my home; have some rest,” she felt as if she had lost a member of her family.

“No, thank you very much,” I said and walked ahead.

Her head dropped, her feet slowly paced ahead.

I walked up to Larkin street. Wendy came to pick me up. We spent two hours driving up and down Palo Alto, not knowing what to do.

Mark and Sonja were not at home. Their home was open to us always.

I went to another friend's at 5 p.m. and sat in front of the TV expecting the special bulletin on Nehru. At the appointed time a heavy voice of the announcer said : "The world has lost one of its greatest men. In him humanity could find much of its future hope." And then the heart-rending scene followed on the screen. All the streets leading to Teen Murti House were flooded with human beings. They came in millions, from all corners of the country. They came in thousands, from the villages, soiled and sorrowful, hungry and naked, just to have a 'darshan' of their beloved Panditji.' They came on foot, scores of miles, to pay their respect to their departed leader. Every face was pale; every eye was tearful; every foot was tired; every heart was bleeding !

There he lay clad in spotless white and I could see an eternal tranquility on his face.

Half an hour later I moved out. Every face on the street that stared at me was wrapped in a shade of gloom and sorrow. Sandy, Sylvia and Penny expressed their deep sorrow.

By midnight when I sank into my bed a feeble voice echoed in my heart : "He loved everybody, and everyone, in turn, loved him in abundance. He lived for all."

Off in the air

June 4th. That morning did not exist for me ! It was a part of the previous night; it was a part of the ensuing day.

I didn't have a wink of sleep. A big stock-taking was going on in my mind. In six months we had become an inseparable part of America. Every day we had lived with families. The unforgettable friendship and affectionate hospitality of the people had made us happy and gay. Hair-splitting discussions and restless, automatic journeys throughout the country had made our body and mind adjustable and accommodative to anything and everything.

The English people had sent us to the United States in a nice liner. The Americans are going to send us over the Pacific by one of the best air-lines. Wherever we had gone to address meetings, they had contributed some money to the national CNVA for paying our passage. Every arrangement was so excellently made by the CNVA that we could find ourselves at the San Francisco International Airport at the stroke of 8. Peter Griffin, Mark Morris and Bob Mang said a final "farewell" to us to "meet again either in the States or in India."

At 9 a.m. the Pan American super constellation jet roared into the sky. Blue infinity above and blue infinity below ! 30,000 feet high over the peaceful Pacific we were sitting absolutely motionless and quite comfortable. The pretty Japanese hostess brought varieties of toffees and juices one after the other.

"You are scheduled to reach Honolulu at 11 a.m. (local time) i.e., 2 p.m. west coast time," the announcements

came and everyone settled down to one's own business. Sipping the delightful pineapple juice I sat and mused on the impermanent nature of the world.

Four days in Hawaii

"Then one day, at the bottom of the deep ocean, along a line running two thousand miles from north-west to south-east, a rupture appeared in the basalt rock that formed the ocean's bed. Some great fracture of the earth's basic structure had occurred, and from it began to ooze a white-hot, liquid rock. As it escaped from its internal prison, it came into contact with the ocean's wet and heavy body. Instantly, the rock exploded sending aloft through the 19,000 feet of ocean that pressed down upon it columns of released steam....," thus my mind was delving deep into the ocean of history though the words of James Michener, when the announcement came: "Within fifteen minutes you will be landing in Honolulu." I jerked my head and surveyed the surroundings with all curiosity.

Far away, on the horizon, a vague outline of a small mountain appeared above the calm blue waters of the vast ocean. My mind again turned back to James Michener who had said : "How beautiful these islands were ! How shot through with harmony and peace ! How the mind lingers on their pristine grandeur, a grandeur that nothing so far devised could permanently destroy. If paradise consists solely of beauty, then these islands were the fairest paradise that man ever invaded, for the land and sea were beautiful, and the climate was congenial. But if the concept of paradise includes also the ability to sustain life, then these islands, as they waited in the time of Jesus and Mohammad, were far from heavenly. They contained almost no food. Of all the

things that grew on their magnificent hillsides, nothing could be relied upon to sustain life adequately. There were fish if they could be caught and birds if they could be trapped. But there was nothing else."

From that stage of nothingness, I thought, the islands must have developed tremendously. Otherwise how could the Hawaiians claim." Aole oe i noho a like is Hawaii" (you have not lived until you have seen Hawaii)? Otherwise how could the Americans problem : "Hawaii with its golden sun-splashed magic is America's third way of life the all-year-round Visitors' Paradise, the home of rich cultural races, where the twain have met, and the playground of the world ?" However, the moment I saw the Hawaiian outlines I could justify Mark Twain: "The loveliest fleet of islands that lies anchored in any ocean."

It was a real paradise as seen from the bird's eye position. As the plane slowly circled down, the long beach could be seen surging with sun-brothers, surf-swimmers and gay-strollers who played with the splashing waves. Small beautiful houses surrounded with green lawns and gardens, white silvery domes glittering in the bright sunshine, clusters of woods and winding roads up and down the hills and valleys constituted a panoramic sight of the whole city of Honolulu and its surroundings.

"Aloha," Mrs. Elliot, wearing the typical native colourful mumu greeted and garlanded us as we came out of the airport. Immediately a pretty teen-aged girl dressed in hula skirts, made of ti-leaves, hardly covering her hips and breasts, came forward with two flower bouquets and posed with us for a cameraman who was right in front. "No cost, if you want you may buy your own photo tomorrow at the hotel," he said and a card was given to

us. This is the inevitable custom for everyone who lands in Hawaii. "Aloha" with a flower bouquet is the perfect welcome in Hawaii.

A radio programme for an hour, a drive through the city and dinner at the East West Centre were the three programmes arranged for us on the first day.

Comprising of eight islands with a total population of over 600,000 Hawaii is one of the States in the U. S. A. Though Hawaii is the largest island, Oahu is the most important and the capital, Honolulu is, in Oahu. Kauai (the Garden Island) with a population of 27,000 is on the north-west side and is picturesque and full of colourful tropical plants. Niihau has a population of less than 300 which is entirely owned by a single private family ! Oahu has a population of 488,000. Being the seat of the Government, it had trans-oceanic air and naval ports with the famous Pearl Harbour and exciting Waikiki beach. Molokai is called 'friendly island' which has only two very large pineapple plantations. Population 5,000. Maui has a population of 3,500. On this island the largest inactive volcanic crater in the world called Haleakala exists. Kahoolawe is called the 'island of death' which is used for target bombers. So many unexploded shells are still said to be lying on that island. The U. S. government does not allow anyone to go there. Lanai island is a very rich and productive land with many pineapple plantations. Hawaii is the largest island with only 60,000 population with varying climate. On the whole the group of islands enjoy a nice tropical climate. Hawaiian islands have a long history. It was Captain James Cook who discovered the islands in 1778 and named them as "Sandwich Islands" after the name of the Earl of Sandwich, who sponsored the expedition. Cook is said to have been killed in an encounter with

the natives. In the beginning of the 19th century the first missionaries arrived from New England. Eventually the Chinese, the Japanese, the Portuguese, the Spaniards and the Russians found their way to these islands. In 1898 the United States annexed the islands and in 1950 it became a State of the Union.

Sugar, pineapple and tourism are the main industries of the Hawaiians. Now the military has also occupied an important position. 146 million dollars worth of sugar and 124 million worth of fruit juice are annually produced in these islands.

If you are a flower-lover, the varieties of plumaria, hibiscus, olyanda, pinciana etc. are there to please you. If you like fruits, there are delicious mangoes, papaya, leichi, passion fruit, guava, cashewnuts, pineapple, avacados etc.

The four days we spent in Hawaii were crowded with meetings and interviews. One evening we had a nice dinner at the home of an American-Japanese family and a meeting with the representatives of the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union. "Because of our union, the workers and peasants enjoy a better life as compared to the mainland," remarked one of the chief activists in the Union. 23,000 active members are in the Union.

Another evening a couple of youngsters took us to the Tahitian Lanai on the Waikiki. It is a fine restaurant constructed in cottage style with palm leaves and brick and palm-trunk walls. Oil lamps flickered all around and young couples and solitary dreamers occupied their seats to enjoy the delightful fruit juice or light drinks or hot coffee. A young waitress attended to us. She was

attired in the native style, with the minimum possible items of dress, consisting mostly of leaves. Every gesture, every pace, every word of hers had a peculiar Hawaiian grace and charm. The Hula dance was in progress on the other side., The melody of hula music would elevate one to the pinnacle of joy, happiness, pain and pleasure at the same time. Each note has a definite meaning and every limb of the dancer would be flowing and twisting and swinging according to the rhythm. "A story will be told in that way," said our host.

"Let us see the poor people's area," we said. "All right," said Allen, our friend with a beard. "It's dangerous area we are heading to," said Ikeda, the young lady. "Don't worry, we three are there to protect you," we said and walked through the 'hell' inside the happy heaven of Hawthi.

There they roamed about, the unfortunate sons of the soil, the unemployed and the drunkards. In a dirty cell-like cafe, some played billiards, a few sat and slept on the verandah of the pawn broker's, some sauntered on the sidewalks, half sleepy and aimless. Most of the faces were mirrors of melancholy.

Two blocks ahead, the entire picture changed. There in the thrilling Waikiki, under the glitter and glamour, the rich and the lazy and the drones revelled in their domain of enjoyment. There in the exciting 'Queen Surf' the hula dance and fire-ball dance attracted hundreds as the night dissolved into the small hours of the morning. One forenoon we drove into a rural settlement. The whole island is within the reach of an hour and therefore it took only half an hour to get into the village.

Kanahali is the grandmother of the family and Kahala

is her daughter. She has other sons and daughters too. Kahala has a fine baby. She said : "I was married to James only two years ago. He and his friend were convicted to be hanged first, and later, the punishment was reduced to life imprisonment. The charge was rape and murder of a white woman. But my mother being a great social worker argued the case for them. She protested and pleaded and finally undertook to fast. At last she won their release. By that time, I fell in love with James because I wanted to make him a nice man. I gave him love in abundance and waited for six years till his release. Then we got married", she was proud of him.

It is like a matriarchial joint family of Kerala. In fact the nature, climate, plants and vegetation, hills and valleys all resemble the west coast of India. In that Hawaiian homestead there are about 300 families. Comparatively they have less amenities of life; their houses are smaller and cheaper.

When we arrived, Kanahali was not at home. Shortly she arrived and greeted us with "Aloha" and started coaxing us to have lunch with them, though we had another lunch engagement. However much you argue, their hospitality does not find justification in your arguments. Fruits and juices were brought in. "This is the first time we are having the great opportunity of welcoming people from India to our home," she said. "I've heard, India is a beautiful land, I wish I could see that wonderful country of Gandhi."

Kanahali is also a very active political worker. She said "Like the Negroes we too sometimes are being treated as a pile of rubbish. After we became a state in the Union it seems discrimination has increased. Goldwater's is an unhappy success; but it makes Johnson's victory easy."

She supported the Democrats.

On our request Kahala danced a graceful hula dance.
“Lovely hula hands, graceful as the waves in the ocean,
Finger tips that say, ‘I love you’,

Say to me again, “I love you,’ lovely hula hands ,’

Then we visited the replica of an ancient Hawaiian village, Ulu Mau. An old woman sat and made the famous ‘poi,’ the traditional dish of tubers grown under water or on dry land. Another woman described her family life. Coconut trees play a very important role in Hawaiian life. Just as in Kerala they use coconut trees for house-building, for good, for firewood and the like. Hawaii is a land, where one feels he is in world-family. The deplorable stress and strife of the mainland will not be felt here. People from all corners of the world will find Hawaii a happy, nice, congenial place to live in. But the sense of isolation from the rest of the world is quite natural, for you will be quickly aware that you live in an island. Yet, the tastes and tidings, cultures and colours, habits and attitudes of different parts of the world are well represented here. Everything blends into the typical local colour and custom.

On the fourth day our hosts drove us to another nice village. About 50 villagers gathered. Music and dance were for our entertainment.

In the midst of everything, a girl suddenly fell into a trance. “The spirit of Jesus is functioning through her,” an old lady explained.

Saying “Aloha” they kiss and present garlands and bouquets when they receive and send off their guests.

The East West Centre of the University of Hawaii is a real meeting point for the East and the West. One night we had long discussion with a group of students. “Let us accept the similarities in people and ignore the disagreements. Let’s explore the things in common and avoid the points of conflicts,” said an enthusiastic student at the close of my discussion with her.

The Friends Centre of Hawaii played hosts to us and it was difficult for us to leave behind a group of nice people, young and old, from that family of the world, Yet, depart one must after meeting. On the 5th day we packed our baggage.

The eighth of June. The morning was pleasant and the sun bright. There was an invitation from the high school to spend some time with the students, who were anxiously waiting to see us. In four days we had been known and heard of by the whole island. Hundreds of boys and girls extended a cordial welcome. After an hour they bade us farewell with flowers and garlands, “Aloha” and kisses.

At the stroke of 12.30 p.m. the gigantic Pan Am Boeing pierced into the sky and the endless Pacific lay beneath, invitingly pleasant and existing. In between the two bluish eternities again we floated towards the west, but aiming at the east. The Hawaiian panorama still occupied the mind.

That's how the story goes and here we are in Japan. Today is the 9th of June 64. I told you, it was at 12.30 p.m. on the 8th that we left Honolulu and landed in Tokyo at 3.30 p.m. after flying for 8 hours ! Mysterious ! But it is a known mystery. We had crossed the international date-line, losing thereby a night in our life !

How eager I was to have a bird's-eye-view of the largest city in the world. Unfortunately a mild fog covered the whole of Tokyo as the plane flew over its suburbs. A group of press reporters, TV cameramen and representatives of different organizations had gathered to extend to us a very cordial welcome.

What a contrast ! East and West. When you are in the East you crave to look at the West. When in the West you long for the East, yearn for its beauty and simplicity and aspire for its tranquillity.

Physically you are in Japan; but mentally you are in America ! You just can't get away from your recent past, which is now poles apart. With delight you recollect, it had nurtured you, fondled you, criticized you, accepted you and understood you. For over six months you had been a part and parcel of it, to taste its salt and butter, to experience the warmth of its outer smile and inner affection. Suddenly you discover that you are in the other land, which, of course, has been inflected with the colour and glamour of that part of the world which you have left behind !

"What is your first impression of Japan ?", you ask me. Very easy to answer. The moment I emerged out of the Haneda Airport, I felt that I had landed in Calcutta ! There were the rattling sounds of the tram-wheels; there were

over-crowded buses slowly gliding through the dusty roads; there were narrow lanes branching out from the main roads; there were small shops of all types jammed tightly on either side; there was dirty water flowing through the lanes and gutters; there were streams of human crowd flowing up and down the sidewalks and everything suggested a sense of age-old familiarity with the eastern colour and culture. But I could never feel the gigantic nature of Tokyo's existence, for there were no structures high up in the air as in New York, London or Calcutta.

So Micky, hereafter whatever be our activities in Japan, you will be knowing for yourself. The first thing I want to do is to go through the pile of mail awaiting response. My friend in India is eagerly waiting for news of every step of the March and therefore let me tell him everything in detail.

* * *

Tokyo.

To, Noshir :

You know, from Delhi we had started walking towards the West and we never took a step back. We are now in the East ! Now I have realized what I learnt in the primary class !

After a long sleep of ten hours--for one wants to compensate the lost sleep in transit when you wake up in the second floor apartment of a nice little house in the heart of Tokyo, right through the window, yonder in the horizon, you can see the silvery peak of the Mount Fujiyama shining in golden rays of the rising sun. It is then one realises the saying : 'Japan is the Land of the Rising Sun' !

I became deeply thoughtful in 'Japan not because this is the mythological Plain of High Heaven, not because it had a seventh century when the Heavenly Sovereign said that 'The chronicles of the Emperors are mostly amplified by empty falsehoods,' not because it had a ninth century when learned emperors ruled, not because it had a 14th century when the Ashikaga feudalism flourished, not because its 16th century witnessed the Portuguese domination, not because it had its grand imperial monarchy in the 19th century, not because it produced a militant, cruel and aggressive people in the first half of the 20th century, but because today it is a country in which a new and awakened people are living and striving for peace and brotherhood of mankind, since they have learnt the greatest lesson out of their worst experience of man's stupid nuclear civilization. I feel that Japan has an inevitable and exclusive chance of becoming the bed-rock of future civilization, when mankind will cease to fight like dogs and beasts, under the spell of blind nationalism, foolish patriotism and brutal imperialism. With this hope and confidence, let me peep into the nooks and corners of this land.

The preparation

The War Resister's International, the Japanese Anarchist Society, the Fellowship of Reconciliation, the Japanese Buddha Sangha, the Gensukyo (the most active peace-group) and the Zengakuren (students' movement) joined together and formed a Committee called 'Menon-Kumar Peace March co-ordinating Committee' to organize the March from Tokyo to Hiroshima.

"Normally we are all working in different ways for the same goal. But occasional difference of opinion and

methods of action keep us apart; but now this March of yours has become a good connecting link between us," said one of the prominent members who participated in the preparatory meeting.

Mr. Shimpei Shirai, the Chairman of the WRI, undertook the responsibility upon himself to organize and co-ordinate the programme all along the route, in collaboration with other organisations. Mr. Endo is another active man.

Professionally, Shirai is a printer and journalist having special interest in the field of sports, horse-breeding and horse racing. Apart from that, he is interested in all social problems without any direct participation in party-politics. Individual direct action and personal responsibility must be the concern of everybody. "That is why I am extremely happy to co-operate and support all your activities," said Mr. Shirai. Every now and then Shirai would reach our camp to enquire about our wellbeing. Being a close friend of Yamaga and Daidoji it was easy for him to get acquainted with our thoughts and activities quite in advance.

Yamaga lived at an hour's distance from Tokyo. One evening when we called on him in his neat little home surrounded by a fine kitchen garden, he was still in bed. "Oh, I am so happy that I could see you," he said and then started discussion. "India is still clinging to the English language, which is a shame for your country," he was frank. He is an old anarchist, he opposes all wars and bombs and alliances. "There must be one language for the whole world. Esperanto is the most convenient and therefore I studied it well." Now he is engaged in some writing work.

Daidoji lived about a hundred miles away from Tokyo.

Formerly he was the chief of a newspaper. Now both husband and wife are actively engaged in the Peace-Movement and the Anarchist Movement.

Anarchism is a very popular philosophy and there are many members in that organization in Japan. Most of them were in some way or the other connected with or participants in the World War and their bitter experiences at the hands of their own feudal lords and monarchs compelled them to look to the realities of life. They hold radical ideas. "But the Movement is not gaining enough strength as it should," one of them confessed.

Three volunteers

At the airport among the group of people who welcomed us, there was a middle aged, stout, grave-looking man. "I have decided to join you," with a warm hand-shake and in broken English he had told us. "That's fine. We are happy," I replied and we all proceeded to the coach. He is Ryo.

Mr Ryo Buichiro was a soldier in the Second War. "But I didn't have to fight in the front," he said. His idea and action were typical to that of the then imperial Japan. "I wanted to sacrifice everything for my country." But the tide of time and falsehood of militarism forced him to believe the futility of war. As long as he was not confronted with the painful realities, he acted like a machine. Then that significant day dawned in his life, throwing a new ray of enlightenment on his brain.

"It was on the 9th of August 1945," he related his own story later. "I was in a village very near Nagasaki. Suddenly a yellow flash could be seen right over the city, like a lightening, and a huge mass of cloud burst into

the atmosphere. My eyes were blurred and I plunged into a pond nearby. I thought it was a bomb from the enemies but never imagined that it could be the most deadly weapon mankind had known so far. For three hours I lay in water and I could see people running away into the fields and valleys, jumping into ponds and sea. The first thing I did emerging out of water was to throw away my uniform and bayonet to become a 'man' and to work for the good of man."

Thereafter Ryo ceased to be a soldier. For the first time he realized that 'to kill a man is immoral; the world must get rid of wars and weapons.' He went home; he had to undergo some punishment too. Yet, he did not fail in his determination. "For many days I didn't have employment, no proper food and shelter, and wandered here and there" he said. Then he joined the anarchists and started reading some important books. "It was then that I heard of Gandhi's movement in India. Gandhi, Thoreau and Tolstoy became my favourite food for thought." Thus Ryo unfolded all his personal stories one afternoon while we were taking rest under some trees. Eventually he joined the War Resisters' International and the Peace Movement. That's how when I heard about your global March, I had wished to join you. Shirai and other friends agreed and I volunteered to look after the co-ordination activities along your route and walk the whole-distance with you." On completion of the Peace March he would return to his village and work for the Youth Hostel movement. His wife and child gave a grand welcome to us in their small country home, very near to Fujiyama, while we passed through that region. They also joined us in the March for several days. "We had a tough time after our marriage and had to suffer a lot of hardship," she explained. Hireko spoke good English and therefore she could be of much use in our meetings

now and then. Ryo is a very hard worker and he used to carry twice the luggage that anyone of us could. He is a disciplinarian and therefore, he used to be miserable in his heart and harsh in his words sometimes, when he could not find the other members to 'his' expectation. As a result, the three women members of the group had been unhappy on certain occasions. Yet, everything went on smoothly till the end, for his self-discipline and anarchist tendencies prompted him to accept others as they were and adjust himself to the surroundings.

On the third day of our arrival in Tokyo some friends suggested that we had better march for a few hours in the crowded parts of the city, 'so that the citizens would have an opportunity to see you.'

As soon as we got out into the street a dark-haired, blonde teen-ager came forward and greeted us in excellent English : "Hello, how do you do?" She wore a black skirt and blouse. An attractive smile blossomed on her lips and an air of curiosity blew over her round face. "My name is Mioko Doi and I am a University student. Yesterday morning I saw your photograph in the newspaper. It was a thrill to read your story. I wanted to meet you. After many telephone calls here and there I discovered your whereabouts. I am happy to meet you," she finished the whole story in one breath ! Then she joined us till we reached the centre of the city and said "good-bye."

"Shall I join your March to Hiroshima ?" she had asked. "Of course you may," I replied. "But you know it's a long distance. I'm doubtful whether you could stand it. However, when you feel tired you may give up; but we shall walk every step of the way. Indeed, we want as many young people as possible to join us."

She did not have to think much. "I've decided to join you, but a few days later, after finishing my classes." "You're welcome anytime," we assured her then and there.

A couple of days later she met us and said : "I've a very intimate friend who is also very eager to join the March, if you permit." We did not have any objection, provided it would not inconvenience the organizers and hosts. We wanted a battalion of direct actionists all over the world. "Surely, she too can join," we agreed.

It was a fortnight later, one fine evening, the two girls dropped in at a small hotel in a village where we had stopped for the night. We had left Tokyo on the 16th June and normally our stay used to be with some family. But at times our hosts would make arrangements in a hotel. But they hardly knew that we always felt more happiness and comfort in houses.

Mioko (Micky) and Sueko became very good companions, interpreters and guides to us right from the beginning to the day when we could see no more of the land, Japan. Their participation contributed very much to the success; otherwise it would have been hard to get at the ideas and thoughts of hundreds and thousands of people.

Being the pet daughter of a physician who had narrowly escaped the Hiroshima bomb, Mioko enjoyed a very happy life for eighteen years in Hiroshima and now she studies in Tokyo. "I was only a couple of months old," she said one day while marching in the hot sun, "when the bomb exploded over our city. Years later my father related the story of that morning. We lived just at the outskirts of the city and my father was on the train, going

to attend to his work in the hospital. Though he escaped death, he had been affected by minor radiation.” She could not describe the horrible scenes witnessed by her father. “However, I am happy to represent Hiroshima in the fight against the bombs with you people.

Sueko being a student and worker has more practical experience of the world. With endurance and determination she could stand the strain of the walk, inspite of blisters on her feet. Though holding very radical and liberal views she could not at times understand what the meaning of such marchers and demonstrations was.

Mioko is an ardent admirer of Albert Schweitzer, his philosophy of service and “reverence for life.” She wants to be a doctor and serve the suffering human beings. “I just don’t understand the meaning of Peace-movement,” she wondered several times. “Of course, walking and talking and demonstrating will not bring peace on earth; it depends upon the social; economic and political factors on which the nations and societies quarrel always. But this is only our personal protest to certain abominable aspects of our life and a sort of promotion to better understanding between the peoples of the world,” we would explain to her.

On the 16th of June at 9-30 a.m. a group of 30 to 40 people assembled near the monument constructed in memory of the thousands of children who suffered and died in the war, in the Shiba park, in the centre of Tokyo. That was the beginning of our March to Hiroshima. The pedestrians, the shop-keepers and students and workers welcomed and encouraged us all along the way. Hundreds of leaflets were distributed. Very eagerly people would accept the leaflets, read, and put them in

their pockets and at times would talk to us.

The Earthquake

Japan is a land of earthquakes. Oa the very first day of our March we had an experience. One of our supporters had arranged a few minutes rest and refreshment in the home of a businessman. As I sat and sipped the excellent cold milk, my chair had a sudden jerk and the floor seemed to be wobbling. Everyone had the experience and looked at each other.

“ May be an earthquake,” one of them said.

“Or due to the train that is passing by the house,” said another.

“It’s quite common for us,” Ryo was undisturbed. The next morning, newspapers brought catching head-lines which said that due to the earth quake a big oil storage had caught fire, and oil and properties worth millions were burnt, in another city away from Tokyo .

“Yet we have now started building tall buildings in the city,” one of them said. Rarely one finds buildings over two storeys in Japan.

It was a grand welcome awaiting us in the municipal office at Kawasaki when we reached there in the afternoon, tired in sun and sweat. Only ten miles we had walked, but all our companions were terribly exhausted. For both of us now walking 25 to 30 miles a day is not a problem.

Mr. and Mrs. Watahiki and children were waiting for us at their beautiful little home. It was the first family of

Japan that played host to u,;.

To be in a Japanese home is one of the greatest delights that I have ever experienced. The very appearance of the . home would give joy to anyone. Simplicity, cleanliness, adjustability and beauty together make a Japanese home. The natural curses like earthquake and typhoon force the Japanese to build their houses with light wood, glass and paper. In providing maximum comfort and convenience in the minimum space, the Japanese have got a special skill. Even in the lavatory one can see a flower-vase. The gardens will be full of flowers and vegetables.

To sit around the one-foot high table on the smooth mat-covered floor and eat with chopsticks was another delightful experience. To eat with chopsticks needs a special skill which I could acquire only after a few weeks in Japan.

Since meat and fish constituted almost every variety of Japanese diet, we had one difficulty. Yet, plenty of milk, eggs, rice and vegetables were available. Tempora (vegetables mixed with cereal-flour and fried in oil) and soya sauce used to be one of the best dishes.

The Japanese do things very quickly and efficiently. Even at the dining table they would push food into their mouths so quickly that within a few minutes their lunch or dinner would be over.

Altogether our life with the families of Japan has been one of the happiest events of our tour. Yet language turned to be a great bather. Therefore, in the beginning itself we learnt a few verses and songs and sentences with which we could express the basic aim of our March.

Everywhere we would repeat the same and the people would applaud. Since Mioko and Sueko were with us, there was no problem of getting the ideas and feelings through. Several times we had to pity them, for after the day's March for hours together they had to interpret, which would exhaust them.

A cable of surprise

Seventeenth of June. The day's walk was of ten miles. By 5 p.m. we had passed through another large city, Yokohama, and halted at the Buddha Temple for the night. Actually after leaving Tokyo, there was no indication of our entry into Kawasaki and Yokohama, for the main road lay busy and crowded with people, traffic, shops and restaurants all throughout a length of over 20 miles !

It was then that Mr. Endo, the Secretary of the WRI, arrived from Tokyo with a cable from across the pacific. It said : "Reaching Tokyo at 3-30 p.m. by BOAC flight on the 17th."

It was from none other than our good friend, Mary Harvey ! Before the news arrived she had already landed in Japan !

"...And I waited for some time thinking that someone would come and meet me," explained Mary the same night when I went back to Tokyo by train to meet her, and make sure that everything went well with her and she could have a day's rest at Tokyo.

"Then a funny thing happened," she continued. "A young man rushed into the airport waiting hall and shook hands with me saying : 'Please come, I have

brought a car for you,' and I accompanied him into a sleek limousine. On the way he began explaining the circumstances that caused his delay in reaching the airport and expressed regret. 'where is Mr. Shirai and where are the Indian boys?', I enquired."

" 'I don't know them,' he blushed."

" 'Then haven't you come from Mr. Shirai ?' "

" 'No I'm the relative of your friends; aren't you Mrs. Margaret ?' "

" 'I am Mrs. Mary Harvey from California', I said with confusion and surprise."

" 'Oh, I'm sorry Madam, I have come to meet Mrs. Margaret', said the young man and then he drove me back to the airport. Later I took a taxi and reached the WRI office myself. The first thing that got on my nerves in Tokyo was the taxi-drivers who ploughed through the crowds, rash and zigzag and yet escaped from every possible accident which seemed imminent and inevitable," Mary concluded.

"In fact I had written to both Mr. Shirai and you from San Francisco but the plane arrived earlier than the letters."

"However, now everything is all right. When would you like to join us ?" I asked.

"As early as possible; but I have to do a bit of shopping. I must get a nick-sack and soft shoes."

"All right, then you may reach our next camp by

tomorrow evening," I said and telephoned Mioko to help Mary. The next morning I caught the earliest train to join the company.

That evening Mary Harvey, a mother of three children, carrying a load of about 15 kilograms, wearing a blue skirt and white blouse like a college girl, joined us in the village of Fujisawa to get immersed in the affectionate hospitality of the Kogima family.

At the dining table we were all men and she was the only woman. The house-wife and her neighbour waited and served us.

"Why can't I too wait and eat later," Mary wanted to, follow the tradition.

"But you are the guests," insisted the host.

"Yet, I would love 'to be Roman in Rome' "

"That's right," Ryo passed his comment. He insisted at every possible stage that we must try to do and behave as the Japanese did. "It's a matter of adjustment and every one of our group would be quite responsible for whatever we do and say and in whichever manner we behave," I used to interfere.

What will the people say ?

It was nine O'clock one night. The usual meeting and discussion were over. We were put up in a hotel. The night was sultry. Longing for some fresh air I put on my ugatha (the nightgown used by the Japanese) and wooden sandals to move out.

"Like to come for a stroll, Mary ?" I asked.

“That’s fine; we shall have a cup of coffee also,” Mary got up and put on the ugatha too.

“I too will join,” the childish Mioko jumped up.

“Okay, let’s go,” and I waited for them to get ready.

“Oh, oh, oh, oh.....,” with curved eye-brows and long face Ryo got up to request, “Menon, please don’t go out in ugatha. It’s too bad.”

“What’s wrong with it ?” I asked.

“No, no, no. In Japan the ugatha is used only inside the house.”

“Never mind; nothing will happen to us. After all, we are not naked ! The ugatha covers your whole body from neck to feet, doesn’t it ?”

“But, you see, it’s not Japanese custom.”

“What about the fellows roaming about the streets almost naked ?”

“But that’s okay for them. You are from India. What will people say ?”

“Well, we are perfectly dressed; then what on earth if people say anything ?” Mary didn’t give in.

Let’s go,” said Mioko and the three of us walked to the main road.

The stepping sound of our wooden footwear and our

ugatha-clad easy stroll attracted the attention of people from all sides. Some pointed at us with surprise; some murmured to one another ! some rushed into the houses to bring their children to see us; some young girls giggled and stared at us from shops and cafes; some boys stood at the corner and whistled a musical tune in rhythm with our steps !

People of Japan are very self-conscious with their own presuppositions. Even before we reached Japan, they had created a big image of us in their minds.

“You are great disciples of Gandhi; so I thought you would be wearing loin cloth,” remarked an elderly gentleman !

“I never expected you to be young and handsome boys,” said a middle-aged lady.

“Only Indians can do such wonderful work; you are heroes,” another comment was heard in a discussion group.

“What will the people think of you ?” was the problem that troubled the mind of our good friend, Ryo, quite often !

Question and discussion

Everyday there used to be at least a couple of people extra from one village to the other. Sometimes the group used to be as large as 25 to 30 members, all with placards and banners with different types of slogans and symbols of peace, disarmament, co-operation and universal brotherhood.

Mr. Uehara was a silent participant, who accompanied

us for some days. Mr. Sumi was another interesting, humorous and active pacifist who used to come and go now and then. The entire Fujii family of Okayama was fully involved in various activities connected with our March. That family has a tradition of active participation in various movements and constructive activities of the country. I felt great pity occasionally seeing the grand mother and children keeping pace with us for several miles and getting exhausted. Mr. Kou Mukai, poet, journalist and public worker, was one of the best guiding factors of our March. Mr. and Mrs. Kurihara of Hiroshima happened to be another wonderful couple whom we can never forget. Being a poetess Mrs. Kurihara had written to me several letters and poems explaining the horrible catastrophe that fell upon Hiroshima. "Therefore, I have dedicated myself to fight for the cause of peace all through my life," she wrote once. From the beginning she kept contact with us and did everything possible to make the March a grand success. Apart from these few individuals, there are hundreds of men and women who played a very significant role in our March. We owe them a great debt of gratitude.

Various questions and problems used to confront us from morn to eve everyday. Our walk to the city of Tayota that evening had a special charm and impression. A dozen young men and women, mostly students, had joined us.

"Can this sort of walking ever bring peace on earth ?"

"Can non-violence ever be a successful, practical, means for the solution of human problems !

"Indians have a special position in the world. Only Indians could make such tremendous political changes

in the world based upon non-violence. No other country can do it."

"Violence is enevitable to a great extent, in human affairs." Such arrows used to be shot.

"Okay, tell me which country would you like to visit first if a chance is given ?," I asked a group of young boys and girls from the high school who gathered at our hotel one evening in a small city called Araimachi.

"America," most of them said.

"Russia," a boy got up and said.

A few girls were anxious to visit India to see the Taj Mahal and 'learn Indian dancing.'

The young generation of Japan stands in the front rank in imitating the colour and glamour of America. I could see only very few people who harboured any animosity in their minds towards America for the atomic crime. "Why ? We attacked the Pearl Harbour. We provoked the imperialists outside and supported them at home," remarked an elderly gentleman. Thus there are few people who look at things quite impartially, without prejudice and narrow-mindedness.

"But Americans have given us the great lesson of Democracy," argued a school teacher one day. It had been the greatest boon for the Japanese from America apart from the economic aid poured the re-construction of the country. "We could achieve a successful programme of land-reform democratically. Thus we are building our own type of democratic socialism," he concluded. "And yet, your government is thinking of re-arming and

re-militarising the country, isn't it ?" I asked.

"Unfortunately, yes. That's why we want to organize a powerful movement against the proposal in the National Diet for amending our Peace-Constitution."

'Miss Hindi' and tea ceremony

It was the 27th of June. Rain, rain, rain and rain all along the route. From Shimada, the city authorities had volunteered to send our luggage to the next camp and therefore we had an easy walk of 14 miles. In fact during the whole journey around the world only on about a dozen occasions did we have to walk in rain.

Miss Katsu and a few others had been waiting for us as we entered the town of Kakegawa. She had known the sweet and bitter sides of the March for she had participated for a day or two. Being a person, who had visited India and studied Hindi very well, Katsu evinced a keen interest.

"Kakegawa is my home town. When you reach there you must visit my home," Katsu had said.

"My parents run a shop and my elder sister is a teacher who teaches the art of Tea Ceremony," she introduced the family to us. It is a custom in Japan that the eldest son or daughter must stay with parents to look after them. "Therefore my brother-in-law is also here, helping the parents, since we don't have a brother," she explained. "Let's hear something about the Tea Ceremony," we said eagerly. Immediately they organized a full-fledged ceremony and demonstrated to us. It is a special way of preparing the tea, serving it so the guests in a very ritualistic and customary manner. Dressed in colourful

Kimono, the lady sat in a peculiar manner and made the thick green tea. Sitting, serving, accepting and drinking has its own peculiar style.

"So you had a nice ceremony at Miss Hindi's ?, Ryo was eager to know.

The Mayors and meetings

It was only in Japan that the government directly and indirectly supported our activities and extended every cooperation to make it a success. In every town or city we passed through, the Mayors and town authorities used to organize a grand welcome. They contributed money too. As an exception, we accepted their contributions and passed on to our organizers, for they had been spending a lot. Sometimes the Corporation or the municipality would play host to us and accommodate the group in excellent hotels. Many a time the city authorities volunteered to transport our nick-sacks from one place to the other.

Another interesting custom in cities was that we were accepted as Honorary Citizens and presented the keys and mementoes.

An evening with a scientist

It was an exceptional day July 13, 1964. Though the perspiring heat of Central Japan was a tormenting companion throughout our March, that day had its own charm. The Pacific was not so peaceful the previous night; as a result Japan enjoyed the blessing of occasional showers. May be it is nature's law : one's fury is a blessing to the other; one's decay is manure to another. So the next day was bright, windy and cooler

too.

To walk 28 kilometers was only a hobby to our experienced feet; but the Japanese companions did feel its taste. However, by 5 p. m., when the Vice-Mayor of Kyoto city welcomed us into the air-conditioned hall and the long glasses filled with pine-apple juice and iced green tea appeared, fatigue vanished in moments.

“On behalf of this city I am very happy to welcome you,” he said and the “Key to Kyoto City” was presented. “By the by,” he added, “the Mayor has asked me to inform you that he had contacted Prof. Yukawa and requested him for an interview -with you. Therefore you may straight away call on him at the University.”

In a few minutes we reached the lobby of the Yukawa Institute of Fundamental Physics, surrounded by trees and green lawns. An imposing figure, in grey suit and glasses stepped down the stairway. His drooping bald head was obviously involved in some deep problem. As he came near he raised his head. Those sharp eyes met ours. With a soft hand-shake he led us to the adjacent room.

Dr. Hideki Yukawa is the top-most nuclear physicist of Japan who has won the Noble Prize. His studies and work in America and constant contact with the world outside have enabled him to speak fluent English, the type of which one can rarely hear in Japan. Once he is in the grip of discussion, you will realize very fruitful and encouraging results emerging from it. Then time and space cease to exist. Thus the man of the laboratory can be seen with the same deep insight to explore and explain the topics at hand on the discussion table. “You are doing a task of much perseverance and courage.

My welcome to you. Peace is possible only when man is ready to make some sacrifice for the sake of all fellow-beings,” he commented about our March and continued : “Your country is fortunate to have had men like Gandhi. Gandhi and Einstein, I consider, were the greatest men of the 20th century. I feel it a great loss; I couldn’t meet Gandhi. Then there is Vinoba doing good work to follow the path of non-violence. Nehru was an exceptional statesman not only for India, but for the whole world. He was more a philosopher than a politician. He had certain basic principles behind his politics. He worked on a humanitarian basis. India, I hope, will keep up the spirit of Gandhi and Nehru.” Dr. Yukawa is a firm believer in non-violence. “What is necessary is for every individual to develop a spiritual life of non-violence,” he said.

The once strong anti-nuclear bomb movement of Japan is very much divided and complicated at present in accordance with the split in the Communist world. Therefore we were more interested to have his opinion on the situation. He replied : “I don’t like the increasing tension and split in the Peace Movement in Japan. Therefore I am trying my best to find out some solution for cementing the various factions. But it seems a big task, for it depends upon the political and ideological difference of Moscow and Peking. As I do, many others who are active in the Movement hold the view that the test-ban treaty had been a good beginning to ease the international tension. But the other section in the Movement does not agree with us. Thus the division becomes an inevitable and discouraging factor.”

“What other steps, would you suggest for individuals and small groups, to be taken up for promoting world peace ?” asked Satish.

“There are various things that can be done individually and collectively. To educate the common people is the most important task. For instance, ‘national defence’ is the most dangerous slogan the politicians are harping upon under the spell of which people of every country forget reason and humanity. Now people must realize that there is no defence possible in the nuclear-age for any country. Though I would admire that nation which takes steps for unilateral disarmament, it seems to be an impossibility because everybody lives in fear of the other. So we have to work for a world government and world law. That is why I am involved in the World Federalists’ Movement.”

Himself being a man fully aware and responsible for contributing his mite to the scientific pool which may be used for destructive discoveries, he is now more cautious. “Scientists have a greater responsibility in determining the destiny of mankind. So I have decided to work for the use of nuclear power for peaceful and developmental purposes. Also I ceased to work with the Atomic Energy Commission by which action I could avoid political pressure.”

In the post-war Constitution of Japan, promulgated on November 3, 1946, Chapter II, Article 9 reads under the title : Renunciation of War :

“Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as the sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes. In order to accomplish this aim, land, sea and air-forces as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the State will

not be recognized.”

But the present Japanese Diet if considering the amendment of this clause in order to organize national defence force. “Therefore what do you feel about this, Dr. Yukawa, ?” we asked.

“Today, ours is an example for the world that we have a Peace Constitution. But this proposed revision staggers me and I am always opposed to it. That will be dangerous for Japan and the world. Still I will do my best for retaining the original clause.”

Thus one can see in Dr. Yukawa a man without any bias. He is neither of this camp nor of that. Man and the world, these two seem to be his concern. He is beyond all other barriers. When I insisted upon his frank opinion as to ‘which of the two mighty powers is more responsible for the world-tension,’ with some hesitation but absolute sincerity he remarked : “One must not make such comparison. In essence both are responsible. Still, closely observing the history of the recent years I feel that America is more responsible.”

Expressing his appreciation of the American women’s activities for peace to Mrs. Mary Harvey, he commented : “I hope American people will not elect Goldwater to the Presidency. It is dangerous to the world.”

“Since you have spent some years in close association with Dr. Einstein in the Princeton University. I would be very happy to know about your most memorable incident with him, if any,” I requested.

Prof. Yukawa smiled. His fingers ran over the smooth head. He delved deep into the depth of memory to pick

up the pearl from oblivion. Two minutes passed. Then came the answer : “Einstein used to like children very much. With them he forgot everything and played like a child himself. Once I took my family to his home. As we were waiting, my boy played with this and that and his hand was stained with ink. In a few minutes when Einstein came to the room and eagerly shook hands with the boy, naturally his fingers were also stained with ink. But he never noticed that and went on playing and joking with the boy. There are some other instances, but this particular one remains in my memory. He was frank and sincere like a child.”

An hour and a half passed. The sun had already gone beyond the horizon. Though we were rushing up, he never expressed any hurry. Slowly all of us got up and he accompanied us to the front porch, posed for a photo and said, “Sayonara” (Goodbye).

In a World Federal City

It was a grand welcome awaiting us at Hikone, when we arrived after a strenuous walk. “Ours is a World Federal City and hence, there is special interest in greeting you,” said the Mayor. That night a meeting of the citizens had been arranged. “In Japan there are many cities which have declared themselves as World Federal Cities. Thus we want to create the real world brotherhood,” said he.

The Castle of Himeji

That evening when we arrived at Himeji city the usual welcome at the city hall was warm. All along the route we were entertained by people. Ocha is an inevitable drink in Japan wherever you go, whenever you go. Very light green tea, hot or cold, is always ready at every home

or factory, office or school, for everyone. If we stop at a petrol station for a few minutes rest, immediately they offer ocha. If we get into an air-conditioned road-side office of a business executive in order to snatch a cool comfort from the scorching sun, the pretty smiling girls would rush in and bring the ocha. They wouldn't leave us unless the whole story is told in brief. If we happen to pass by a school, the kids would crowd on the road and pose a shy face until we approach them with “konichiwa” and extend our hands. If we enter a Buddha temple or any other religious monastery the inmates would quickly bring the kettle of ocha and “musubi” (rice-balls) for us. Even if it be a cafe or restaurant you seek rest in, the cup of ocha is ready at your table, free or cost, whether you eat and drink anything else.

After the delightful refreshment of ice-cream, ocha, fruit juice and the ‘welcome’ and ‘thanks’ speeches a sightseeing trip was organized for us. A few miles away a gigantic Buddha Pagoda, built very recently at a cost of 2000 million yen stood inviting the tourists. “Himeji Pagoda is to recall us to the teachings of Buddha and our prayer for the everlasting peace and welfare of the humanity and it is also a mental resort of the universe”, thus declares the tourist literature about his Pagoda. “In 1954 Nehru had send a replica of such a pagoda which is kept inside”, explained one of the authorities.

Not far from there, there exists a big memorial to perpetuate the memory and pay respect to the thousands of young men who lay down their lives for the glory and safety of Japan. “They all perished in the Second War”, one of the companion said.

“On the one side the world prays for peace, while on the other men fight and kill ! Buddha had asked everyone

to be kind to others; but cruelty reigned in the heart of men. The finest human qualities of love and kindness found resort in stones and marbles, pagodas and temples, mosques and churches and mankind remained as butchers, plunderers, exploiters and slaves. On the one side we built the magnificent Peace Pagodas and on the other the destructive weapons ! Unless man cease to exploit man, no peace on earth is possible. Prayers and Hymns are not going to improve man,” some one remarked.

The next morning we visited the Hemeji Castle, the most beautiful Castle of Japan ! No thinking man and woman could visit any of these world famous Castles and Pagodas, Forts and Temples, Tombs and Mahals of the world, without a heartrending feeling that every bit of stone or marble, ornament and decoration that constitutes these structures might represent one human being who has spilled his sweat and blood, in suffering and torture, for its sake. This particular Castle is said to be 600 years old. “On completing the construction of the Castle,” says a description, “all carpenters, including their masters, were buried alive to keep the secret of the Castle. A certain gate, the Uzume-mon (castle-gate of burial) is said to have derived its name from this story.” One can thus see the most inhuman landmarks of history all over the world. Japan is no exception.

Every nation in the world has its own imperial traditions and tendencies, in varying degrees. Japan, traditionally an imperialist country, has now improved to a great extent and yet it seems that shades of the imperial glory continue to exist here and there. One evening a gentleman, who happened to be the chief of a bank, was explaining to us about the life of the Koreans in Japan. “They are like the Negroes in the States. There

are 60,000 Koreans in Japan. Less opportunities and all sorts of discrimination and inconvenience are their lot. Recently ten Korean sportsmen wanted to go to Korea and represent their country in the forthcoming Olympic Games; but they were not allowed by our Government. Not were they allowed to join the Japanese team. What shall be done ? They don’t have any status ! Still Japan thinks that Korean people are under us,” he concluded. “Though practically our Emperor has no power, still he remains the figurehead,” said a university student. “He is still adored and liked by many people of the old generation. But we don’t care anything. The Imperial Palace of Tokyo and many other remnants of our rotten past must belong to the people some day.”

“Even in our manner of greeting, you can observe a sort of royal gesture,” another anarchist friend explained the significance of certain habits and customs. It is a wonderful thing to watch a woman greeting a guest in typical traditional style. Sitting on her knees with feet stretched backward, she would bend forward, prostrate and touch her forehead on the ground, over the two hands spread on the floor in reverence. Though the guest would not mind such elaborate way of greeting respected, it would indeed seem to be too much of a waste of time and energy if one has to greet a dozen guests a day. “These are certain things we have inherited from our grand old lord-and-slave manners. We, the common people, had to do everything wretched in order to please our lords and monarchs,” he said.

The public bath

In a world of inhuman wickedness if you do an act of kindness, you may be termed as ‘dangerous.’ In a world of make-believe and injustice if you are frank and truthful

you may be condemned by society. In a world of blind patriotism and fierce nationalism if you talk the language of reason you may be called 'a traitor' or 'reactionary.' In a world of high fashion if you are unfashionable you could be called a 'crank' or 'orthodox'. In a world of absolute nakedness if you happen to be dressed-up, you could very well be a 'fool' or 'uncultured'. The world is mysterious !

This is how I felt that evening while standing in my underwear in that steaming big hall amidst a crowd of completely naked human beings of the post-sputnik civilization !

"Why don't you remove your underwear ?" Ryo asked against laughter. "It's impossible for me Ryo," I replied and poured the luke-warm water over my head.

At least twenty pairs of curious eyes were surveying me with surprise. Anything concealed is bound to create more and more curiosity. Once the hidden secret is revealed, all the charm and anxiety will vanish.

In five minutes I had my bath. I felt a sort of suffocation for the air was hot and damp and full of human smell. By the time you wipe out the rills of water from your body, sweat will be pearling. You are eager to get out. I snatched my soap-box and rushed out.

The whole snow was staged in the beautiful public bathroom in that small town. Every family in Japan does not enjoy the luxury of having a private bath and therefore, many people go to the public-bath. The difference between Iran and Japan is while in Iran most of the people are content with an elaborate 'haman' once a week or a fortnight, in Japan people do take a

bath everyday and the whole thing won't be so fantastic as that of Iran. Yet, there is a certain amount of joy and pleasure in the public bath.

Generally there are two separate bath-halls for gents and ladies, though from the entrance hall one can see the naked male and female figures soaping and rubbing and dipping in the hot water-pool right in the middle of the bathing-hall. There will be a partition wall between the two sections. "Are there mixed bathrooms too," once I asked Ryo. "Yes, there are in some remote parts of the country. In Hokaido island men and women bathe together in public baths," he replied.

Normally the Japanese public-bathrooms contain two sections. First of all you enter the dressing room and become fully naked. Then you enter the bathing hall. All around, by the wall there are hot and cold water taps. Having a wash-up you plunge into the pool, in the middle of the room, which will be full of hot medicated water. At least a dozen people can dip in that at the same time.

The Japanese like very hot and cold stuff. The water in the pool will be so hot that I never dared to get in, nor did I want to. They spend a long time in hot water, massaging the body, so that the body would be red-hot when they emerge out.

"Do as Romans do while you are in Rome, Menon," Ryo would induce me and Satish occasionally. In a couple of days Satish could become a member of that naked world; but only after four or five occasions I could get over the sense of shyness and mingle with that world of simple, naked reality. With the common folk

Though at times the intensity of heat and length of journey would exhaust us, some unusual people, places and incidents used to plunge us in happiness, encouragement and inspiration. One of those exceptional days was the 30th of July. We were nearing Onomichi. At Matzunga the City Hall had arranged for our lunch and rest on the way. The sun was scorching. We passed by the side of a small shop. An old man stood near the shop. The moment we came near he moved forward and greeted us.

“Konichiwa. Atsui des ne ? (good-afternoon. Isn’t it very hot ?)” he said and invited us into the shop. Quickly he ordered cold milk, fruit juice and coca cola ! “Drink as much as you want,” he insisted. “One is enough,” we said and each of us accepted a bottle.

“I saw you on the Television last night,” he explained. “I am thrilled to hear that you are walking around the world upto Hiroshima. Oh ! I know what a great folly it was ? I had entered the city of Hiroshima just after an hour of the bomb flash. With the thousands of people I too ran here and there for safety. The whole city was ablaze. Some people fell on the road. Some were burnt alive inside the houses. Children were crawling in the streets. Many people, to save themselves, ran and plunged into the river. But many of them merely mingled with the mud. After a couple of days I could see corpses floating like dead fish. Like heaps of fish, dead bodies had to be carried away in trucks, later.

“People lay prostrate in mud and fields. I can’t think of that sight. I never want to witness such things again. My children must be safe; the world must be safe. Your work will arouse the minds of the politicians. This sort

of politics must end in the world. I am happy, at least, there are some people in the world with good spirit and hearts, thinking and working for the good of all.” He wanted us to have something to eat. “But just an hour ago we had a nice lunch,” we replied.

“What are you doing now ?” I enquired. His name is Fujihara Tsuneo. He runs a poultry farm in the village nearby. “I had been to Bombay and Calcutta too. Europe is right in front of my eyes always. I’ve crossed several seas and seen a good part of the world.” The old man has a big family now. But his income from the poultry farm is quite sufficient to manage everything. “I am happy personally; but about the country and the world I have great concern,” he said. After a few minutes we said goodbye to him. “Gambate kudasai,” (never give up), he raised his hand and saw us off.

Another sunny, sultry afternoon. Suddenly a taxi pulled in from behind and a young man got out. “Please wait a moment,” he requested us and drew out a box containing half a dozen lemonade bottles.

“You people must be very tired; please have it,” he said.

“Oh, thank you very much. Why this trouble ?” we asked.

“Not at all, with pleasure,” he spoke English. “I saw you half an hour ago while I was sitting inside a shop. Your banners made me think that you must be the Peace Marchers. So I wanted to meet you and pay my humble respects.”

We had the lemonade. Several bottles of drinks we used to consume everyday, mostly provided by way-side hosts or city authorities. This young man worked as an

apprentice in a poultry farm. Poultry farming is one of the best industries in Japan. Each hen gives 300 to 350 eggs a year.

Again one afternoon. Suddenly a van stopped and a stout, short gentleman got out and opened the door. He could not talk a single word directly to us in English but when he knew that we could manage a few words of Japanese he was overwhelmed with joy.

“Watasitachiwa ninne maine Indono New Delhino Gandhino hakano maikara aruite kimasta” (we are coming from New Delhi, India, on foot from the grave of Gandhi in 2 years), we explained to him in one sentence. Offering us sweet ice-cream he drove ahead with all best wishes for our success. Selling ice-cream he earns a sum of 2000 yen per day. “Quite sufficient for my family and myself,” he said.

Basic education

It is in its sweet tender age that every child's character and behaviour are moulded. The behaviour of the elders and environment play the most important role in this process. As far as Japan is concerned the clue of its fantastic progress can be traced right from the kindergarten and primary school. A few days after our arrival in Japan, I happened to walk in front of a Tokyo school. It was 4 p.m. The bell rang and all the kids, in the age group of 8 to 14, rushed out of their classrooms. Every one of them had a broom in hand. In a few moments they scattered all over the compound and the public road in front.

It was one of the most delightful sights to look at the flower-soft hands of the children wielding small brooms

and cleaning the whole place ! Not a piece of paper or any dirty thing was seen there after fifteen minutes ! Then they all rushed back to the school, deposited the brooms and went home.

Another day it was in the central part of Japan. As we passed by a High School, the students clapped and greeted us. All of them were out of their classrooms. Some were digging small water-channels to the plants they cultivated in the school-garden; some were sweeping the verandahs while some were cleaning the window-panes. We went in.

One of the teachers immediately assembled all the kids in a hall and asked us to give a lecture. We spoke for fifteen minutes.

“Is it a regular routine for the boys and girls to do gardening and cleaning ?” I asked the teacher.

“Yes, it is; we have set aside half an hour for this work. We want our children to learn everything by the time they come out of the University. Then they will have confidence in themselves and be ready to do any work. Therefore, apart from arts and crafts, we give much importance to light industrial activities to be taught in school,” he explained.

“Do you enjoy your work in the garden ?” I asked a couple of girls who were shy and standing aloof with shovels in hand. Unlike the American girls, the Japanese girls are very shy and mild. After looking at one another and hesitating they replied : “Yes, we like it very much.”

“Why are you cleaning the windows ?” I asked another boy who seemed to be very clever and active.

“Because it is my school. My teacher has told me that this is our school and we have to keep it always good and clean.”

Agriculture and industry

The whole country is a beautiful garden with chains of mountains and hills, green pleasant valleys, rich vast rice fields and streams and rivers, lakes and gulfs. Not an inch of land can be seen lying fallow anywhere in the whole country. The ripening rice-fields could be seen well protected with vast plastic nets over the plants.

“Agriculture is the backbone of every country and we have to labour hard to nurture every plant like our own children at home,” a proud farmer explained one evening while entertaining us. “And since every farmer possesses a piece of land we put maximum effort to get the most out of our farms,” another person said. “Without a revolution we have been able to bring about land-reform in Japan,” a farmer-cum-politician described how the government had taken up the ‘land to the tiller’ policy and found a solution to the burning problems.

Industry is the most important aspect of Japan. It can compete with that of any other highly industrialized country. In the rural areas we could see small industrial enterprises owned and run by small groups of families. Since electricity has reached every nook and corner, organization of industry on small scales in the countryside is a peculiarity of Japan.

“That saves a lot of time, energy and all other things that would be wasted in case the workers have to hang around a big industrial plant in a city,” said a very important

member of the Japanese Buddhist Society. Being a very able person, though a monk, he is extremely interested and active in politics, social problems, and international problems like war and peace. As one who had worked in some industrial concerns, he held an authoritative knowledge of the whole system of industrial organization and management. “But my bitter experiences and self-realization through the wars and conflicts made me renounce the imperialistic ways of life and activities and I plunged into the monastic life to dedicate the rest of my life for world-peace and understanding and for the reconstruction of society on socialistic principles,” Mr. Sato drove us into his personal life.

“But people all over the world wonder at the secret of the cheapness of Japanese goods in the international markets. How do you manage to attain this state of affairs, while we see the standard of life in Japan is perhaps the highest in Asia,” I asked him.

“It’s very easy to analyse,” he explained. “First of all there is very little concentration of workers at a particular place. Except in heavy industries, the workers are able to live and work in their own respective villages or towns. That means, they can afford to sustain on minimum wages that our capitalists give. Production will be the maximum since they don’t have to waste their time on transportation etc. If they have to live in cities, housing problem is acute.”

“For instance,” he continued. “if a truck is to be manufactured, many of its components can be made at small levels in the rural areas. There will be an agency to collect all the parts made hundreds of miles away and bring them to the main assembly plant in the city. Then the assembling will be done for which only a few workers

are necessary. Thus in a big manufacturing concern actually if there are 20,000 people employed, only 2 to 3 thousand workers will be engaged at the main plant. In this way, in the whole set-up, the management gains a lot and naturally the goods can be cheaper. Secondly, many things are produced not considering durability as the main factor. Keeping up the market will be the main concern. That means goods must be cheap and attractive more than durable and costly. There are thousands and thousands of workers in our country, living under comparatively poor conditions. That's why the Socialist Party is getting stronger and stronger in Japan."

Honda Motor Cycle Factory is one of the important factories we visited in Hamamatsu city. Employing 2200 workers this factory produces over 700 motor cycles a day. The average wage of the workers is 33,000 yen per month. (About Rs. 650/-)

"We had offered to sell our cycles in India at a cost of about Rs. 1000 each, but your government didn't permit, for they said their industry and foreign exchange position would be affected," said a young man who entertained us at the plant.

In another village we saw a small co-operative industrial unit. That village produced a lot of tea and therefore they set up a small processing plant in one of their houses. I could see only 4 or 5 men working at the plant. But to pick the leaves a few other members of the village participate. Cleaning, steaming, drying, sorting and packing are mostly done with the help of machines. "Once a month the whole-salers come from the city and buy our product," said the old man who was running a machine. "We can employ our family-

members also whenever there is more work," another said. Thus very easily, without much complication of the highly centralized industrial set-up, the Japanese are putting their maximum time, energy and attention with the minimum inconvenience into their fields and factories so that they can be proud of their advancement in the world.

Social problems.

Though highly industrialized Japan has its own social and economic problems. The growth of population is a great concern to Japan just as it is in India. Therefore, as a first step to check the exploding growth of population the country has legalized abortion as a necessity. Apart from that, all methods that medical science can provide have been adopted by the people.

"I consider it a sin to kill a baby before it is born", commented an elderly man one day. High ethical moralists are everywhere in the world.

"That's like non-vegetarians' argument," retorted another lady. "They say to the vegetarians that if killing and eating is wrong, eating vegetables is also wrong, for vegetables have got life too. It is stupid; I approve of the legislation for abortion."

"At least it is a good boon to the youngsters," a third gentleman threw a glance at our young companions and said smilingly.

"Then there are the beggars and the unemployed too roaming about in the unknown corners of great cities like Tokyo," said Mioko one day. Though city-bred, she dislikes living in huge cities like Tokyo. "Whenever I

get an opportunity I go to my grandfather's, away from the city of Hiroshima. There I find that atmosphere quiet and invigorating." Yet she has to be in Tokyo till she finishes her University course. "But I think, I must devote my entire life to the service of the poor people, particularly in Asian countries."

"So industrialization has created more problems," another friend commented.

"That's what D.H. Lawrence also said," I drew his attention to the England of Lawrence.

It was England. "Merry England. Shakespeare's England. It was producing a new race of mankind, over-conscious in money and social and political side, on the spontaneous, intuitive side, dead but dead ! Half corpses all of them. What has man done to man ?" asks Lawrence. His answer is : "They have reduced them to less than humanness. And now there can be no fellowship any more. It is just a nightmare !"

If that Lawrence happens to take birth now what would be his remark ? Even then he had said : "This is history; one blots out the other; the new blots out the old; and this continuity is not organic, but mechanical."

"After all, the industrial civilization is supposed to be for the maximum happiness of man; but is it the happiness man seeks for, a happiness without fresh and life-giving oxygen, without a moment to see and enjoy the marvels of creation, without any opportunity to get oneself immersed in the soil and plants and trees which every human body must and is destined to fulfil ? All around you see only smoke, dust, dirt, chimneys, beatings, crackings, tearing, moulding, selling, buying,

quarelling, sweat, blood, pangs and pains ! Still we call it the 'civilization'," Lawrence concludes.

"Is it the fault of industry and machinery or of man and his administration ?" asked another friend.

"Of course, it is the fault of man's administration," I said.

Youth and Peace Movement.

Just before entering the city of Tamashima on the 27th July there was a bridge to cross. A small tent was seen on the riverbed. Two young students emerged from it and came running to greet us. "We have heard about you. We are making a trip to Kyoto by foot. We want to talk to you."_ - ..

"All right, come along to our host's this evening and we shall have a talk," we invited them.

That evening a group of young students had gathered to hear and discuss with us. The two boys also joined.

"What do you think about the Japanese youth and how can they work for peace ? According to a press report you seem to have said that Japanese youth must lead the world in the fight for peace and abolition of nuclear weapons," one of them said.

"Well, that's right. The Japanese youth are in a better position to lead the World Peace Movement because you can declare to the world that you are the only country which has directly suffered at the hands of nuclear civilization and therefore you don't want it again repeated in any part of the world. When the atomic victims go

around the world what an amount of welcome and sympathy they get from the peoples all over ! What does it show ? Thus you have a direct point to fight against, uncompromisingly and unitedly against the nuclear weapons and military-pacts.” Our answer made them happy but confusion again reigned in their minds.

“But our Peace Movement is divided now,” they said. “That’s quite natural. After all, every movement in the world emerges out of the social economic and political inconsistencies. Once economic and social justice is established, peace is automatically guaranteed to a great extent. Secondly, the problem of national sovereignty. As long as nations don’t want to budge an inch in investing some part of their sovereign powers in the hands of a third party, like the United Nations, no world peace can be attained.

The Gensuikyo and Zengakuren are the two most active peace organizations in Japan. But both have been divided in tune with the division in the Socialist World. One wing of the Zengakuren (the militant student organization) invited us one day to give “advice” to mend their differences to that unity could be restored.

“First of all let us know some details as to why and how you were split and what are the basic differences of each ?” we asked them.

The young secretary went on explaining the history of their origin and development, tracing the historic achievements like forcing President Eisenhower to cancel his visit to Japan. Then he started showering abuses on the other wing whose Indisciplined and irresponsible activities’ divided the group. Apart from explaining their ‘mistakes’ and ‘drawbacks’, he did not have much to

say what actually the section that he represented was engaged in or intending to do, inspite of the past and present troubles.

“I am more interested to know that positive activity you are involved in to convince the people and the world that you are genuinely striving for better understanding and peace ?” I asked.

He was unable to answer any question in a positive and constructive manner. If the Japanese Peace Movement as a whole stood together in opposing their Diet’s proposal of amending their Peace Constitution and took up the championship of the World Peace Movement, condemning all nuclear bombs and tests, irrespective of whoever did it, I am sure they will have the brightest possibility of winning the confidence of the peoples of the world. Japan alone has got that advantage over the other countries. (1) Their bitter experience would play as the first trump card in winning friends for them. (2) Japan is not in any cold-war conflict with any other country as the US or USSR or China is Nor is Japan is any temporary hot-war conflict with any other nation like India, Pakistan and China.

Though Japan is on the road to democratic socialism, there are many more rock-like barriers. That means, breaking up the gigantic capitalistic monopoly institutions.

The destination

August 4th, 1964. There was only a distance of 7 miles from Yanocho to Hiroshima our destination. The morning sun was bright and torturing. A couple of friends had arrived from Tokyo. Some joined us from Yanocho. Mr.

and Mrs. Kurihara had been with us for a few days. At every step they were like friends, parents and guides. The whole city had known about our arrival at the Peace Park by noon. People lined up all along the route : some with folded hands; some shouting anti-war and pacifist slogans; some bringing flowers and fruits for us. A van fitted with loud-speakers went ahead announcing the “glorious March of the two Indians around the world to fight against the bombs and wars.” Melodious and heart-rending songs used to flow out now and then.

At the outskirts of the city of Hiroshima, a large group of school boys and girls extended a thunderous welcome. There were two photos hanging on our shoulders. They had been given to us a week before. Here is the pathetic story about them.

Two young girls and an elderly gentleman, the A-bomb victims, were in the Hiroshima hospital, “When they heard about your March to Hiroshima,” said Mrs. Kurihara when she brought the photos to us that day, “they were overwhelmed with joy and expressed their wish to meet you when you are at Hiroshima. We had assured them that we would take both of you to the hospital. But in a week they suddenly passed away. Their parents and relations and friends were impressed in sorrow. To meet both of you had been their last wish which want’s fulfilled. Therefore, we decided to send these photographs to you and you will wear them, all the time, till you reach the Peace Park.”

Many a curious pair of eyes fell upon the photos and enquiries followed. Those victims’ parents and relations met us on the road with tearful eyes and painful hearts. Press reporters, photographers, Television cameramen and members of various peace-groups accompanied

us. Garlands of paper-cranes were presented by the representatives of the Paper Crane Society. This Society, called Orizurukai in Japanese, was established after the atomic destruction of Hiroshima. A teenage-girl-victim wanted to make 1000 paper-cranes and before she could reach the target she died. In her memory many victims started doing it, with a feeling that they could get the disease cured. Now it has become a great organisation and the proceeds of the sales of the paper-cranes go to the help of the thousands of suffering victims.

No visitor to Hiroshima today can say that it is a city which had been crumbled into dust a decade and a half ago. Modern glass and steel structures are rising up; green lawns and parks are pleasant; cafes and restaurants, show-rooms and fashion houses are as attractive and crowded as over; business and profit crack the nerve of many; life and activities in full swing.

But behind all these, concealed in the colourful atmosphere of immediate appearance, there stand some big structures giving shelter and consolation to those hundreds of human beings for whom life is nothing more than a hopeless string of pain and agony to hang on. They still drag on their lives, because death has been unkind to them. They envy the dead and gone, for life is nothing but a meaningless emptiness to them. Pills and tonics will not help them, for they are undergoing a continuous process of burning.

No one bothers about history. It does not give much education to man. He moves on and on violently and aggressively.

Indeed, the path is nice ! It is called the Peace Avenue! Then you come to the Peace Bridge, then the Peace Park,

then along the clear-water canal you reach the Eternal Flame. It is a single flickering flame of hope for mankind, in the midst of a monstrous monument of human annihilation ! Right behind there stands a monument for children, those innocent thousands who also turned to ashes and mingled with the dust and filth ! Yonder behind there still exists the skeleton of a dome of a big building which is the only real symbol remaining in the city to tell the story of that fatal morning of August 6, 1945. It is called the Atomic-Dome and the walls stand as they were after the destruction.

Followed by a huge crowd of people, the old and the young, the weeping and the silent, with banners and flags, we slowly stepped onto the cement platform and placed two wreaths of flowers near that flame, stood in silence for a minute and retreated into the crowds to face questions and cameras, accept invitations and hospitality. The sun was still blazing above.

On the Graveyard of Civilization

On the 6th of August at 7 O'clock we walked into the Peace Park again. There on the Graveyard of Human Civilization, stood over 50,000 men and women and children. The green pleasant park turned into a sea of humanity. They came from across the oceans and mountains; from near and far. They came from all corners of the world with a single thought and simple wish; to pay homage to the 2,40,000 who lay mingled with the dust under their feet and to wish and pray for the drawn of sanity in the minds of the wielders of power. The Mayor of Hiroshima, the Governor of the Prefecture and foreign delegates and representatives of various organizations silently walked to that Eternal Flame and placed their wreaths. Someone murmured into my

years : "The Emperor and the Prime Minister of Japan have never taken part in the August 6th ceremonies." Naturally, how can they, I thought. Wasn't it the monarch and his "yes" men around who plunged the whole nation into terrible wars, all throughout its history ? Ultimately their vanity went upto the Pearl Harbour which reacted and determined the destiny of not only the whole of Japan but of the entire human race.

Then the painful songs and prayerful hymns dominated the atmosphere followed by the sound of bands and bugles. Then the short speeches. Some condemning the past, but condoning the present; some compromising with the present, but confused about the future; some militantly critical of today, but confidently craving for tomorrow.

As the sun ascended to the heights of its glory the functions were over and we returned to our hosts', the Kawamura family. We visited the hospital where over 500 patients lay. As I emerged from the hospital that immortal story of the young pilot of America came again into my mind.

Claude Etherly was the young man who was assigned to lead that historic "Mission" over Hiroshima on the 6th of August '45. He fulfilled his 'duty' as every senseless, stupid human cog that is fitted into the inhuman, incredible military machinery all over the world. But, beyond the perception of the blind sense of duty, beneath the steel helmets and striped uniforms, there he possessed a heart which was a fountain of the finest human qualities love and kindness. His "conscience was burning," he wrote to a distant friend on return to the United States, after a couple of minutes of the "yellow-flash" over that panoramic city for which he had

given the “go-ahead” signal. From a height of 20,000 feet he could see the running crowds of human beings, “crawling like worms in the sand and plunging into the river.” His rational and reasonable mind was full of remorse. He discovered the hidden truth behind that inhuman deed. He found out that he was nothing but a screw in the machinery of cruelty, injustice, power and prestige. He realized most of his own deeds were foolish and unpardonable. His heart ached; his brain rebelled. To tell the truth in front of the authority is always dangerous for the sincere. On his home-coming, Claude Etherly was given a hero’s welcome. But he refused to acknowledge it. He accepted his guilt and demanded of the society also to share the guilt. Then the society rebelled; no, the Government which pretended to be the representative of the society could not tolerate it any more. The poor man was stamped as “crazy” “insane” and “irresponsible.” He was thrown into the mental asylum ! He was isolated from the society ! He was to rot inside the hospital walls and behind the prison bars for the rest of his life !

The dramatic news spread all over the world. Beyond the barriers and oceans someone’s imagination was caught. A writer from Germany, Mr. Andres, wrote a letter to Claude which somehow reached his hands. He was overwhelmed with joy. Then followed a series of letters between the two which later became a book : The Burning Conscience.

Claude is still rotting behind the bars somewhere in the United States, while thousands of pilots like him are roaming about the world as ‘protectors’, ‘advisors’, ‘guardians’ and ‘saviours’ of mankind ! That night the Peace Park was turned to a sort of carnival or trade-fair. “Normally the park is closed by 10

p.m. every night,” said Mioko, “but tonight it is crowded with people.” There were the vendors and vagabonds, businessmen and bureaucrats, the rich and the poor, beggars and lovers.

The same evening the Mayor of Hiroshima gave a welcome at-home to all the foreign visitors and everyone drank the toast to world-brotherhood, prosperity and peace.

To Nagasaki and Kyushu

On the 9th of August we visited Nagasaki and took part in the ceremony. Then we had a tour through the Kyushu island at the invitation of the Japanese Buddha Society for five days. One fine morning we stood at the brink of the erupting volcano of Mount Aso, in the central part of Kyushu, to see the boiling lava at 200 c.c. which emitted a yellowish smoke of sulphur-di-oxide continuously.

“Religion in Japan is reactionary,” said Sato, our good host, on our way back by the luxury bus. “All over South East Asia revolutions and liberation movements are being led by the Buddhists,” he concluded. A nice happy picnic of five days !

All the way back to Tokyo we enjoyed a nice journey by train. Japanese railways are famous for punctuality and speed. Though the traffic is very heavy, the way in which every detail is being organized throughout the country makes the passenger as comfortable as possible. If one travels without a ticket, due to lack of time or any other inconvenience at the commencing point, he can obtain a ticket from the conductor either on the way or after completing the journey at the other end. There is no question of penalty or punishment for not possessing a ticket while on journey.

The most crowded railway platforms I have seen is in Tokyo and the quickest movement of the passengers from and into the trains, too. From 7 to 11 a.m. and 5 to 8 p.m. no one can travel in a Tokyo train keeping the limbs intact and without a sea of perspiration. And yet, hundreds of people instantaneously push in and pull out from every door and everything goes on automatically. Another amazing thing in Japan is that girls are engaged in every field of activity. Whether it is in grocery shop, in the petrol station, in the restaurant, in the public bath, at the butcher's or the barber's a pretty maiden is ready at your service. While in a country like India, where more than fifty per cent of the human energy is being wasted, in Japan or in the Soviet Union or in any other western country, the maximum of it is utilized for nation-building activities.

The last ten days in Japan were spent in Tokyo, meeting people and addressing meetings. We had planned to proceed to Korea and China, but due to the Chinese Government's absolute silence to all our communications and contacts we decided to return to India straightaway. Mary had planned to travel to Manila and Bangkok and then return to the States. Unfortunately, by the time we reached Hiroshima, her feet were full of blisters; pain and bleeding forced her to undergo a minor operation and rest in the hospital for a few days. "So let me cancel all further plans; moreover I feel homesick," she said and on the 12th of August she flew back home from Tokyo.

"Sayonara"

"Menon, your boat is leaving a day late," one fine morning Mr. Shirai called on the phone and said. "Due to the

typhoon that is expected to hit Japan on the 23rd or 24th, the departure of the 'S. S. VIETNAM' is postponed." That was a sudden but happy surprise, though some inconvenience was anticipated at the other end of the voyage. We had written to all our friends in Bombay that we would be arriving on the 11th of September.

In the afternoon of the 25th August a large group of friends came from far and near at the port of Yokohama. By 3.30 p.m. we boarded the ship and the assembled well-wishers, numbering over 40, offered us flowers, presents, fruits and toffees. The warmest and the most impressive send off ever accorded to us from any border happened to be on that memorable day.

Japan had been so dear and near to us that again we plunged into the same old gloom of depression and loneliness. There existed an indescribable thread of bondage between us, those panoramic mountains, the green and breezy valleys, the land and its people. Those affectionate and lovely small faces had got accustomed to us; but within the next couple of hours everything would seem like a dream when the whole ship would disappear and remain like a speck in the ocean's infinite expanse !

They all stood at the pier and threw long colorful paper ribbons at us. Learning on the railings of the open deck we held the one end of the ribbons tight in our hands- ! But alas, how foolish it is that man tries to hold something for ever ! Nothing remains for ever; everything has a beginning and an end.

There were hundreds of people to bid "bon-voyage" to their near and dear ones. Some stood and stared silently; some shouted and threw ribbons to and fro; some were

wiping off their tears while some were hugging and kissing the departing ones.

Time happens to be one of the most important determining factors of life in the universe. Suddenly the siren roared and the helter skelter followed. The hundreds of ribbons connecting those hands on the deck and the dock were broken and the “Vietnam” broke through the rings of waves slowly and steadily. A slim, tall, blue figure and a waving hand could be distinctly seen amidst the crowd, until the distance blurred my vision.











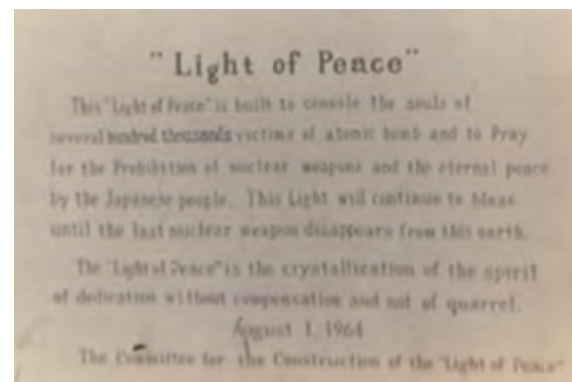
















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THROUGH THE ASIAN WATERS

Hong Kong Diary

29th August, 1964, 9 a.m. Feeling a great relief. At least for the next 36 hours one can stretch oneself in the open, sit under a shade, walk along the streets.

To hear about the heaven and hell is nothing; but to experience it is something. Right under the sun, I am living through it. That's how it seems when I stand on the open deck gazing at the majestic hills over the skyscrapers of Hong Kong. The beauties of the curving bay and the glamorous shore are delightful indeed. But one does not know the other side. There must be a dark side, a painful part, too. Anyway, let me, for a moment, look back.

If anyone dares to call the 'Queen Mary,' which carries over 4,000 passengers comfortably over the turbulent Atlantic, a piece of heaven, one can be pardoned if he calls this ship, "S. S. Vietnam," gliding through the waters of Asia carrying over a thousand passengers miserably, a plot of hell ! The fault is not of man's. It is of those ignorant cockroaches, flies and other invisible insects which frantically seek asylum in the cooking vessels, courageously escaping the expert fingers and exploring eyes of the chefs and suppliers, in order to find a peaceful grave inside the human intestines of passengers of 'Class Economy.' The sun and storms are also responsible, for they bestow some special 'blessings' upon the 'Deck Economy' where people stand, stare and stroll like jackals in a cage. Sticky benches, broken railings and rough ropes are the only things for them to hang around. Thus three-and-a-half days rolled by, in between Yokohama and Hong Kong. My New York friend



heaved a sigh : “Yet, the ‘class economy’ is in front; so we reached faster than the class one passengers.”

11 a.m. Enjoying a nice ride along the green and winding hill-sides to the New Territory, far from the madding crowd of Kowloon Peninsula. Peter and Harle provide good company. The sort and stout, active and smiling cab-driver is happy to answer whatever I ask him. “English speak little, little,” he said and sat erect at the wheel.

“How much do you earn per day, friend, ?” I asked.

“Seventeen H. K. Dollars (i.e. 3 U. S. Dollars),” he said.

“Are you happy ?”

“I manage, okay.”

12 noon. Chung Chi College is situated in the midst of hills and valleys. About 25 youngsters, mostly students, have gathered to discuss ‘Tension in Asia’, under the auspices of the American Friends Service Committee study programme.

“America has nothing but one aim behind her so called generous foreign aid : to promote and preserve her capitalistic interest,” emphasized one student from Malaysia. He is thoroughly convinced that wherever the United States puts her fingers, there trouble increases. An enthusiastic student from Japan got up : “It is the business monopoly of America that controls their government and wants to dominate the poor nations of Asia. In Japan too we have that danger. So we have to fight against it.” A defensive remark came forth from a tall young man from Canada : “The U. S. feels responsible

to fulfil her commitments to protect the freedom and democracy of her allies and small Asian countries. So the aid she gives must be treated as generous. Naturally, she has a right to know how and where the money goes. The Government has a duty to convince their people who pay taxes.” A girl from Hong Kong University slowly and steadily raised her gentle voice : “If the giver puts his feet in the receiver’s shoes and thinks, he can realise better. No one feels happy if he is dictated to as to how and where he must spend the money, no matter who gives the aid.”

Thus an hour is over and the general conclusion seems to be this. In whichever manner it is, the American economic or military aid and intervention in Asia is only to increase the tension.

At the lunch table the Hong Kong girl wanted to know something about Indian Yoga ! “I want to practice it,” she said.

“The Communists will dominate the world and they can’t be trusted,” said a dark-eyed brunette from Philippines. “Yet, I want to know your impressions of Russia,” she was curious.

3 p.m. Dr. Andrew T. Roy is the Vice-President of the College. He is very much interested in the Peace Movement. He has been a witness to the establishment of the Communist regime in the People’s Republic of China. “Till 1951 I lived in China and when the Korean war broke out I couldn’t stay any longer though I wanted to,” he explained. “All American nationals had to leave the country. I was also suspected, though I am a Socialist, and had to face a public trial. Then I left for Hong Kong.

Being in Hong Kong is a delight for him. He believes that in due course Hong Kong has to accede to the Mainland. "Since the Chinese Government is convinced of that and since China has even now good economic advantage due to trade through Hong Kong, they are not in a hurry to take any other step." Pointing to the railroad which goes to Canton he said : "Everyday wagons of vegetables and other customer goods arrive here from the Mainland."

Recollecting about the Korean War and the Japanese-Chinese enmity of the past he continued : "Chinese people are peace loving in general. But in the present government there are some people who hold strict Stalinist views and therefore the world looks to China as the most dangerous enemy."

5 p.m. Mr. Ma. Man Fai is an ever-smiling, active and intelligent man with a beard like that of Ho Chi Minh. He sits behind a table surrounded by half a dozen colleagues in an old second-floor apartment at 2, Windham street. The inevitable pipe in the left corner of his mouth will never be a hindrance to a delightful conversation with any visitor. He said :

"The world has been always at war. Still we are all living at the brink of it. The only hope is the United Nations. It must be well understood by the people for which I am spending all my time and energy. Ultimately a World Government and world law must be established. Let us extend our hands of friendship and work for the same goal." Then he requested us to speak at a public meeting the next day.

6 p.m. A cup of coffee is always welcome though seldom I had it during the last couple of months. (To get a cup

of coffee in Japanese villages was a problem). Now one I must. In front of every caf , restaurant and bar a man or woman stands and invites the passers by. The small cafe is air-conditioned; nice cushioned boxes for two or four persons. My friend and I ordered coffee and sandwiches as soon as we occupied our seats.

There approaches a middle-aged woman. "Sir, two nice girls for you, okay ?" and she disappears ! Whether you consent or not ! Slow and smiling come two slim, black-haired, dark-eyed girls. May be around 18-19.

"Good evening, Sir."

If the visitor is a bit indifferent, the entertainer proceeds. "Where do you come from, Sir ?"

"Coming from Japan, going to India," I replied. The taller one sat by my side and the other one next to Satish.

"D'you like Hong Kong," she wanted to know. "Indeed, a beautiful city with lots of people."

"Don't you like me ?"

"Of course, I like people everywhere. How do you speak such good English ?"

"I learnt at school...." At this moment the coffee finds its way to the table. The man returns and brings two glasses of red something. My stare in surprise is responded :

"Just for the girls, Sit".

"Mister, we are not sailors. We've got some other business in the world. We don't drink : neither do we offer, sorry."

I said and turned to my 'companion' : "Like to have a cup of coffee ?"

Moments drown in silence. The two hefty hands of the tall man withdrew with the glasses. Rays of optimism vanish under the clouds of disappointment; the two 'companions' retreat the way they came !

30th Aug, 10 a.m. The young anarchist friend, Ma Schmu, takes us to YMCA restaurant. Things are comparatively cheap. Fine coffee costs Only half that in the USA. Being a free port travellers find an interesting shopping centre in Hong Kong.

"Ten years ago I started reading about anarchism. The idea was fascinating to me. Now I have many friends in different places. I. am learning different languages; Esperanto must be popularized," Schmu said. "Still the roots of colonialism are deep in many places in Asia. Youngsters like you and me have to strive hard to pluck them away." Living and experiencing the life and politics of Hong Kong, he does not like it. So he plans to go to Germany for studies. "I must understand the world better. I like India very much." He concluded.

4.30 p.m. in a spacious hall on the eighth floor of the tall sea-side City Hall building, about 100 people have gathered. Mr. Max Hazicht, a practicing lawyer and a former official of the League of Nations, from Switzerland, explains in vigorous terms : "Only when nations of the world are willing to submit a part of their national sovereign authority to the decision of a third party, wars shall cease to exist and the world shall live in peace. The U. N. is not a solution; it is only a good step. As long as one fifth of humanity is excluded from that organization, it is less useful." There was applause from

the audience when he said : "We all do our share. Last year Lord Attlee and I marched in the streets of Tokyo with lanterns in our hands. Once Prime Minister of a mighty empire now marches for Peace ! When all prime ministers and statesmen thus march for peace and work for a world law, world peace shall be guaranteed." The young people take keen interest in the story of our March. At one point when I said : "The dying colonialism and imperialism is still frantically living in this city. It staggers me to see the sky-scrapers on one side and the children picking food from the trash-bins in another street," they again applauded.

9 p.m. I am not a tourist. Still I must look around. Time permits. It is interesting to wander about. I don't have to bother about the normal "warnings" to the visitor. They are endless.

"Beware of pick-pockets in boat, railway and bus stations."

"Settle fare beforehand or be prepared for a ridiculous demand verging on petty extortion," if you get into the man-driven rickshaw.

"Please don't encourage the beggars who accost you. As for child-beggars you will do them a dis-service if you give them money, as they are probably in all cases, being misused by the adults."

"They charge local people 30 cents and tourists all that the traffic will bear. So get the price settled," if you want to take the service of a shoe-shine boy. "50 cents is all I'll pay, you little devil," is a hymn tourists are supposed to chant. These "devils" are many among the angles who trade with everything including flesh and blood.

“The bar girls” drinks are of a standard price HK 4.80 for a cordial of coke (coca cola).....and the girls are perpetually thirsty.....taking out charges are generally 30 to 48 dollars.”

Poor man too can enjoy his ‘own’ night-clubs. The car park in front of the Traffic Branch Police Headquarters is cleared of cars in the evening and an open-air market unfolds around 7.50 p.m. Hawkers and fortune-tellers too can weave their webs of existence here.

One can find varieties of delicacies both in and out. Peeled snakes, eels and fishes are hanging on hooks. Steaming meat and broth and noodles are pushed into the mouths with chopsticks by half-naked folk in poverty and perspiration. Children run about searching for the left-over pieces or thrown-away bits. Standing at the corner I gave a few candies to a group of children. In a moment mobs started rushing towards me. One becomes helpless at such moments.

Midnight. Again back to the ‘dungeon’ ! The “Vietnam” blows her siren. The broken-hearted exchange their departing kisses. Small boats are plying everywhere. All around glaring lights. Waves are mild and dazzling.

Only one thought : 99 per cent native Chinese of the 3,600,000 total population of this British Colony are ruled by a country thousands of miles away ! When shall they be free ? The smell of rotten life under colonial fetters prevails in this “Fragrant Harbour.”

And the boat moves away.....“Joy quen” (good-bye) to Hong Kong.

A peep into Vietnam

September 2, 1964. 5 a.m. There was an unusual amount of enthusiasm followed by people running helter-skelter on board the ship. Everyone was in a hurry to get up, throng into the kitchen, gulp-in the insipid coffee and the same old hard bread, to rush onto the deck, to stand in line at the purser’s office. We were approaching the Southern tip of the war-stricken Vietnam.

The Mekong river was flowing slow and calm. The marshy river delta was pleasing to the visitors’ eyes. Human figures moved here and there in the fields occasionally and the palm leaves fluttered in the morning breeze. One could sense nothing extraordinary in those surroundings.

Under the command of a special pilot from ashore the ship moved ahead slowly but cautiously. “The river is not very deep,” someone muttered. 30 miles to Saigon. Political comments and speculations could be heard from almost every murmuring lip. An air of doubt, indecision and fear was blowing mildly through the deck and dining room, bar and music lounge.

“What d’you think will happen if we get into the city ?” an impatient blonde patted my shoulders and asked. “Never mind, let’s see what happens and get into the city,” I replied. Speculative eyes followed the course of occasional helicopters flying over the city. The solitary peasants in conical straw hats were never disturbed. Nothing strange seemed to be prevailing beyond the fields.

9.30 a.m. As the boat touched the pier the loudspeaker warned : “All passengers must be back on the ship before midnight, for there is curfew in the city between

midnight and 4 a.m.” However, I thought, within the available 24 hours I must try to have a first-hand knowledge of Saigon and understand the situation.

Right on the quay there sat two dozen porters. Two policemen were guarding them. “They are not allowed to do anything without permission,” said one who was posted at the ship’s gangway.

A kilometer away, on the pavement of the main road a young man sat on a parked motor cycle. Seeing an English newspaper in his hand I approached him. When I greeted in French, with a broad smile he responded and asked : “Where are you from ?”

“From Japan, going to India. Are you a student ?”

“No, I do business.”

“Can you tell me what happened here last week ?” my curiosity didn’t displease him.

“I don’t know much,” he said.

“Why not ? The whole world talks about your city and you say you don’t know ?”

“I don’t worry, Sir. Let me do my business. I help my father. Let the Khanhhs and soldiers fight.”

Tu Do is one of the most important and beautiful boulevards of Saigon. Street hawkers and small shops are many. Not much business. A group of men were standing and talking.

“Do you speak English ?” I asked one of them.

“A little, also I can speak a little Hindi,” he replied.

“Can you tell me something about what’s going on here?”

“Of course; you know ours is a hopeless city. Still we don’t worry much. Things will get settled, but will take time,” he was proud and self-confident. “Last week there was a riot throughout the city. Now our students are awakened. They can’t tolerate such a Government which does nothing for the people. The Buddhists are also with the students. So we all feel that something good will happen. We want peace.” Then he pointed to the tall building nearby. “That is Hotel Carville, the most famous and the best in the town.. A few days ago a bomb was exploded inside and eight rooms were damaged, because some Australians were staying there. The Australian government is also helping our corrupt government. The people don’t like it.”

“What do you do ?”

“I am working in a shop,” said he and continued, “I like visitors from foreign lands.”

“What about the American soldiers and visitors ?”

“Of course, I like the American visitors too. But not the soldiers. Americans think that they are our protectors. We can never be fooled like that. We know that what they are and what they want.” He had to hurry up to his work. We went to have a glance at the damaged hotel.

3 p. m. Visited the British Council. Every visitor was thirsty for the latest news. On the front pages of the papers appeared three photographs. Two student leaders and one Buddhist monk. Headline ran : “People’s interest

must be met. Buddhist's ultimatum to the government. Khanh must give in," etc. One English businessman said : "People are fed up with politics and war. Though I am not interested in politics, I can see people hate the present government here."

6.30 p. m. to think of a meal outside our boat was a great relief. At least for once we could escape the dead mosquitoes, bugs and cockroaches from our regular ashes ! Life on board the "S. S. Veitnam" often reminded us of our prison life in Paris!

We entered a small restaurant. Dilip and Ghosh also were with me.

The 57 year-old owner served an excellent dinner. His personal supervision pleased everybody. His political interest and understanding is to be appreciated. The customer is bound to be satisfied, for he speaks several languages. He too explained the bomb incident and the religious fight and concluded : "Whatever it may be, by 1966 you can see the end to all this and the Viet Congs will have their go."

"What do you mean ?" I asked.

"I mean," he was frank and clear, "the Communists will succeed. People were disgusted with Diem. His disappearance hasn't improved the situation. The Yanks have their own axe to grind. We can't believe them. People believe the Communists, for they do what they say. They are sincere at least."

"What makes you feel so convinced ?"

"I've been running this restaurant for 30 years. My

relation is with ordinary people. They know that America's dollars are helping the big fellows and their army protects the government of Vietnam. That's why the Buddhists and students derive support from the common folk. At any rate, we have to fight against the dictatorship and injustice."

Nearby there was a photo studio. A young girl cried; "Sir, good photos, cheap rates." "No please, thank you," we moved along. Children in shabby clothes played on pavements.

Midnight. To know what happened after midnight I was eager. "Shall we go out and have ..a stroll," I asked the cabin-mates, Gosh and Dilip.

"It's dangerous," said Ghosh.

"I'm ready; let's see what will happen," Dilip got up.

"After all, we aren't going to roam about all over the city. Just in the main road, near the port, we shall walk along," I explained and both Dilip and I went out.

At a stone's throw, from where we could see our boat lying anchored, we stood on the road-side. The shops were already closed at 11.30 p.m. Lights were off in bars and cafes. Night life had ceased. Streets were almost deserted. Taxies were almost off the road. Armed-soldiers were the final authority in the city during the curfew hours. They could shoot anyone anywhere. Only occasional cars and tri-cycles could be seen.

"Sir, good Saigonese girls sir. Come with me," whispered an old man stopping his tri-cycle close to us. He spoke good English !

"No please," we replied and continued, "but tell us, how on earth can you do your business after midnight ?"

"Don't worry Sir. The gun-boys won't do anything to us. We know them well." He paused for a moment.

"Only 1,500 piastas, Sir. I shall bring you back after one hour or you stay for the whole night, Sir."

"No, thank you," we said and with a murmuring irritation he pedalled away. Just in two minutes another one came by.

"Sir, what did he say ? How much did he ask you ? Sir, them won't be good. I shall take you to beautiful young ones, Sir. Only 2,000 for the whole night. Sir, Please come."

"No, mister; we are just enjoying a walk; we want to go back to our ship. You go away, thank you."

A disappointing look came from his weary eyes and the naked legs slowly struggled with the pedals.

Military vehicles glided through the main roads and men in arms and helmets were dropped at every nook and corner. Closed vans with soldiers roamed about slowly. At 12.40 we left the deserted road and returned to our boat.

September 3, 11 a. m. Met a young clerk of the Gandhi Memorial Association of Saigon. He hated the Communists. "I did like Diem, for he was against the Communists. We want Democracy. So we can't live under the Viet Congs." He was furious.

"Who are the Viet Congs," I enquired of him.

"Most of them are our own people. What to do ? They are everywhere because they believe in Ho Chi Minh ! What stupid fellows ! We shall crush them in our fields and jungles," he raised his fists.

"Do you like the American soldiers ?"

"I don't like them either; still we have to get on like this to defend our country."

We met a professor of the University who said : "Our country is torn to pieces with years of war. I think the students and Buddhists are fighting for the people. So I do hope something good will come out in due course. The tragedy is that we have lost faith in the great teachings of Asian philosophy.

Though the American umbrella is always on the head of the South Vietnam government, from the pauper to the professor most of the people are convinced that they have no choice except suffering. They are disgusted with their benefactors from across the Pacific. "What is their interest ?," continued the professor. "They want to plant their feet firm on the Asian soil so that one day or the other Russia and China can be destroyed."

One can very easily realize that nothing but a tug-of-war for power and domination under the blanket of dollar diplomacy is going on in Vietnam. The arrows of imperialism are aimed at the Reds through the blood and corpses of the poor millions !

At 12 noon the "Vietnam" blew her siren and we were off for Singapore.

A rebellion on boat

For a week we had been tolerating the food served in our economy class. There is a limit to everything. One by one many of us had informed the chef about the lack of cleanliness of the utensils, the cockroaches and bugs in rice and vegetables. Promises were given that "Everything will be all right." But it was of no use; days and nights had passed and we decided "to do something" in order to put a stop to the serving of uneatable food and the rude behaviour of some of the crew.

At Singapore the boat anchored but tense political situation did not permit us to go out. The quarrel between Malaysia and Indonesia had reached such a climax that the radio-broadcasts were nothing but war-cries. Only a couple of days ago it was reported that a group of guerillas had landed on the Malaysian shore from Indonesia. "Therefore," came the announcement, as soon as our boat anchored, "under instruction of the government, the passengers are ordered not to leave the ship, for there is a 24 hour curfew imposed upon the city of Singapore." That was the beginning and end of our Singapore halt. Within 12 hours we left for Colombo. There were less than 200 passengers in the economy class. "We must try to get as many supporters as possible to lunch a direct action in the dining room," with full enthusiasm Eddie said. She was an American volunteer in the Red Cross in Korea. After a year and a half in Korea she was returning home via Japan, India, Middle East and Europe. "Of course, I am with all of you; let's do our best," Margie, another friend from USA also gave her whole-hearted support. There were some other people also. All of us had secretly decided that we must start a non-cooperation movement in the dining room.

As a first step a signature campaign was conducted in all cabins and more than 50 per cent of the passengers had endorsed the plan of action.

8th September morning. The ship was cruising through the high waves of the Indian ocean. There was beautiful sunshine and the flying fishes delightfully played over the rising waves. In every cabin, on the deck, the dinning room, which also served as the sitting-room, lounge, dance-hall, cinema-hall, and what not, and in the corridors everyone murmured to one another in complete secrecy.

It was planned that in the evening everyone would enter the dining hall, as usual, and occupy their seats. When everything was served, "all of us must get up together and walk out." Apetition was drafted and it was to be delivered to the Captain.

The previous night Eddie had undertaken as fast as her personal protest against the rude behavior of the attendants. Comments and interpretations were, already in the air all through the day.

At 6 p.m. the dining hall was opened for the first sitting. About a hundred passengers occupied the seats. When all dishes were served, everyone got up and walked out. The next fifteen minutes cannot be describe in simple words. The chef and waiters, the purser and the supervisor all started staring at one another. By that time our deputation had reached the Captain, who sent the Second Captain to investigate. From the next day onwards everything got improved in the kitchen and the dining hall !

But all .the kitchen staff were terribly angry with us.

They silently served and stared at everyone of us. The next day rumours started spreading on the ship that the “ring leaders of the direct action would be put in jail at Colombo or Bombay.” No one bothered about it and the ship approached the Island of Ceylon.

On the 10th evening Eddie and Margie organized a party. They had bought a big cake and candles were lit. Then only I realized the whole secret of it.

“Menon, isn’t today your birthday ? So we have decided to have a birth-day party,” they explained and all of us sat around the dinner table.

“H-a-p-p-y b-i-r-t-h-d-a-y t-o y-o-u

They all sang in chorus and the cake was cut. “Why not we invite the chef also ?” I suggested.

“All right,” it was agreed and the tall, active gentleman happily joined us.

He brought a bottle of superior champagne and served everyone. “This is my share of the birth day party,” he raised the glass and wished me a “happy, prosperous and long life. Whenever you come to Marseilles, you are my guest.”

That was indeed, a memorable evening and it ended with a music and dance party till 1 a.m.

11 th of September. The ‘Vietnam’ was heading towards. Bombay. The Arabian Sea was mild and calm. Many hours I spent on the open deck. On the right an outline of the Malabar coast with its mountain range could be seen. “Here we are at home,” someone silently murmured.

By 4 p. m. we were in the hands of a big group of Bombay friends who had been waiting at the port since mid-day. What a hearty welcome it was !

Conclusion

Another historic day in New Delhi. The Second of October, ‘64. Thousands and thousands of people has been streaming in and streaming out from the early hours of the morning.

They will come and go as long as-India exists. They will come and go as long as people will remember history. They will come and go in order to pay their humble homage to their beloved Bapu.

By 8 a.m. the whole of Rajgaht was a sea of humanity. From the President to the peasant, from the richest to the poorest, from the saint to the sinner all arrived.

We stood at the feet of Bapu at the same spot where we had stood on the 1st of June, ‘62. Our feet had discovered that the world was round and our hearts had discovered that human beings were the same everywhere.

Later on I came to this spot, Shanti Vana, to pay my respects to the man who worked for a world order, world peace and brother-hood. From his I drew courage and everlasting inspiration.

Until and unless man learns to love and respect his fellow-men, until dignity of labour is established throughout the world, until every institution of exploitation of man by man is destroyed , until private ownership of all means of production is abolished, until the narrow interests of national sovereignty are given up for the higher values

of world-brotherhood and until a World Government is established, there can be no Lasting Peace on Earth. Therefore, the struggle for peace must go on and on relentlessly.

That means men of conviction should act optimistically. They are the hope of mankind. Keeping them in mind, with folded hands and sincere thanks to the whole world, let me leave this spot with a heart full of courage and hope.

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