

Jawaharlal Nehru

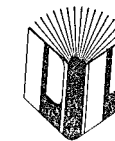
STATESMAN,
NATIONAL LEADER
& THINKER

Contributions by GDR Scholars

Edited by

N. L. GUPTA & VINOD BHATIA

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FOREWORD

Jawaharlal Nehru occupies a historic place in the annals of National Liberation Movements and world politics in the twentieth century. He was a political leader, a statesman and a humanist. His was a dynamic personality, a cultured man with an encyclopaedic knowledge, a keen historical insight and a philosophical mind. Nehru, after Gandhi, was the tallest leader of India's national movement. He believed that masses make history and mobilised them in the anti-imperialist revolution reflecting their problems and aspirations and in turn became their darling. He linked up the freedom struggle with the interests of peasantry and working class and provided linkages between their sectional, class and sectorial interests and national movement. It was this faith in the masses of India that he proposed in 1934 that the Constitution of India be framed by a Constituent Assembly elected on the basis of adult franchise. The people of India awoke on 26th January, 1950 and found themselves armed with adult franchise. He provided a radical socio-economic content and socialist orientation to the national movement.

Nehru also linked India's freedom struggle with that of peoples of Asia and Africa and democratic forces everywhere. To him, democracy could not be real unless colonial people were independent and masters of their own destiny, until imperialism and colonialism were wiped out. Nehru fought not only against British imperialism but against imperialism as a system—the finance-imperialism, as he called it.

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- 83 All three versions are to be found in *SWJN*, Vol. 10, Delhi 1977, pp. 122-38
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THE ASIAN RELATIONS CONFERENCE IN NEW DELHI IN 1947 : NEHRU'S VISION OF INDIA'S ROLE IN ASIA AND THE WORLD

Dietrich Reetz

"For too long we of Asia have been petitioners in Western courts and chancelleries. That story must now belong to the past. We propose to stand on our own feet and co-operate with all others who are prepared to co-operate with us. We do not intend to be the playthings of others."¹

Those were the famous words which Jawaharlal Nehru addressed to the nations of the world from the rostrum of the Asian Relations Conference. They signified that India was entering a new phase of its development, that it was marching towards the dawn of freedom, bringing two hundred years of colonial rule to an end.

It is surprising that so far this conference received very little attention in GDR publications.² Considering time, venue, contents and message of the conference, this is rather unjustified. It was one of those events on which Nehru in those years formulated the imperatives of an independent India's foreign policy. Keeping in view India's external affairs for the past forty years one is amazed at their deep-reaching historical springs and the stability of their foundations. Its values and contradictions have grown out

of a long historic context that goes back well before independence was achieved. Nehru's speech at the moot reflected the transitional stage through which the formulation of the foreign policy concept of the Indian National Congress passed. India stood at crossroads and so did the Congress. On the one hand, his address reflected the concern for the success of the national liberation struggle, and on the other, he projected the vision of India's future governmental policies that were concerned with the world as a whole and with Asia in particular.

The Conference in Brief

At that time—and even by applying today's standard—the conference was a rather unique venture. It brought together 244 delegates from 28 countries of Asia (including seven Soviet Asian Republics), observers from Australia, New Zealand, the United States, the Soviet Union, Britain, and from two international bodies: the newly founded United Nations and the Arab League. Japan was in notable absence due “to circumstances beyond our control” as Nehru put it.³ He was referring to restrictions imposed by U.S. occupation forces under McArthur. Nevertheless, with a few exceptions, participants agreed that the former war power, Japan, should play its due part in the comity of Asian nations.⁴ China was represented by a joint delegation of nationalists and communists. “Never before has such a gathering met... at any place”, Nehru stressed.⁵ For eleven days they discussed political, cultural and social issues of the young Asian nations aspiring toward independence and unity. The moot was convened by the Indian Council of World Affairs, a private organisation which was barely three years old at the time. It was the name Nehru, who presided over the Council, the prestige of the Indian National Congress, and the tremendous national liberation movement which it had directed that attracted so many representatives from different Asian countries. Nehru inaugurated the conference with a major

policy speech on which this paper centers. The famous woman Congress leader, Sarojini Naidu, a former Congress president, welcomed the delegates and Mahatma Gandhi briefly addressed the forum amidst loud cheers on its seventh day.

The Indian Background

There were some specific features about the conference. It took place from March 23 to April 4, 1947—just before formal independence was achieved in the shape of dominion status in August 1947. The constitutional arrangements for independent India were still undecided. It was a state of suspense which dominated the Indian political scene. The aspirations of the Indian National Congress for leadership of a united and independent India were challenged by the All-India Muslim League which claimed to represent Indian Muslims constituting twenty per cent of the population. Although this was an overstatement, yet it succeeded in starting the Pakistan movement that aimed at the separation of the Muslim majority areas in the North-West and the North-East of the subcontinent and the creation of an independent state for Indian Muslims. In order to press for this demand the Muslim League had started a widespread campaign by its National Guards that resulted in terror and bloody communal strife. The Asian Relations Conference preceded the famous partition statement of the British Government of June 3, 1947 by two months. That statement finally suggested a procedure for the partition of the subcontinent by creating a separate Constituent Assembly for the Muslim majority areas to meet the demands of the Muslim League which refused to co-operate in the constitution-making process and boycotted the Constituent Assembly. The intimate connection between internal and external factors distinctly shaped the conference. It remains without question that the main objective of the conference and its major result was the furtherance

of the national liberation movement in India, in the Asian countries and in other oppressed nations.

This is not contradicted by an evaluation which also gives the conference a place in the heated political power struggle which was going on between different political forces with a view to the approaching date of independence. Without doubt, Congress reflected and articulated the aspirations of the Indian liberation movement in the broadest possible sense at the conference. At the same time the growing influence of a more conservative element in Congress politics associated with Congress President Kripalani could not be overlooked.⁶ Congress politics were not immune to considerations of bourgeois power politics that prompted them to press for a maximum share of political power and that probably also complicated the search for a political compromise which would have involved power sharing with the Muslim League to a larger extent than certain Congress politicians were ready to accept. It is against this background that the conference provided the Congress with an opportunity to muster support from Muslim nations like Egypt, Palestine, Iran, and Afghanistan. The Muslim League whose international connections as well as its foreign policy concept were much less developed felt that it could not derive much benefit from the conference. The Muslim League party in the Central Legislature at a meeting held on March 19, 1947, decided to boycott the conference and to decline the invitations which it had received. In a strong-worded statement it viciously attacked the conference which it described as a "thinly disguised attempt on the part of the Hindu Congress to boost itself politically as the prospective leader of Asiatic peoples."⁷ In its capacity of the conference's sponsor the Indian Council of World Affairs refuted the allegations and disclosed that as early as in August 1946 Nehru personally sought the co-operation of the League's leader, Mr. Jinnah, who was sent the preparatory papers for the conference, but did not reply.⁸ Due credit must be given to Nehru, in that he avoided lending credence to such suspicions and tried to

present a fair and objective picture of the intentions and visions for an independent India.

Though the conference was an unofficial undertaking, it gave the Indian National Congress a first chance to set foot on the world stage of history as an independently acting body which was not subservient to the British colonial government. This was greatly facilitated by Nehru's prominent role in the conference. The Indian National Congress had joined an interim government formed by the British Viceroy in September 1946. Of the Indian members Nehru occupied the most prominent position holding the external affairs portfolio. To some extent, this was a contradiction in itself as Nehru had to reconcile independent Indian and colonial British interests. But Congress considered it possible to take this risk and join the government so that it did not miss the chance of the hour to transform the cherished dream of independence into reality and to secure a dominant place for the Congress in the body politic of an independent India.

The Immediate Results - Sentiments or Politics

Among the more notable results of the conference was the decision to convene a second conference in China in 1949. Due to the vicissitudes of the civil war in China in which the Communists were fighting against the Kuo Min-tang, their erstwhile ally, the conference did not materialise and was not reconvened at any other time and place. The formation of an Asian Relations Organisation (ARO) of which Nehru was elected President with two General Secretaries from India and China received much attention at that time. Consisting of a small secretariat in New Delhi it never got off the ground politically and was finally dissolved in 1955. Speaking to the then Joint Secretary of the ARO, A. Appadorai, Nehru argued that "almost from the start of this organisation, there have been conflicts among member-states and in such a situation I don't think any useful work can be done"⁹. Another probable reason was

that for the Indian National Congress and for Nehru the unofficial body of the Asians Relations Organisation had soon outlived its utility. Becoming the first head of an independent Indian Government Nehru had better opportunities to pursue his objectives of Asian unity and solidarity. In 1949 he inaugurated the nineteen nations conference on Indonesia in New Delhi. The 1955 date of dissolution of the ARO also revealed the preoccupation with the forthcoming First Afro-Asian Conference at Bandung for which the ARO might have proved a procedural burden from the Indian point of view.

The unofficial character of the conference's proceedings reflected the realities of colonial rule. In consequence this prevented hard decisions being taken by the forum. The participants of the conference had to be content with producing informal advice instead of binding resolutions. A broad consensus rather than obligations evolved from the sometimes heated debates in five discussion groups which covered the principle topics of (i) national movements for freedom, (2) migration and racial problems, (3) economic development and social services, (4) cultural problems; and (5) women's problems. The reports of the discussion groups were presented to the plenary session which almost without exception adopted them without major amendment. Defence and security were totally excluded from the agenda. This was deliberately done to avoid confrontation with Britain over external matters while the Indian Congress was intensely bound up with India's internal problems. Here also the international scene comes into the picture. World War II was just over. Britain, one of the allied victors, was busy working out its approach to a post-war world setting. The first shots of the Cold War had been fired. Hectic activities by Western powers were afoot to draw as many countries as possible into their political and military orbit. India and other young nations wanted to exclude divisive issues. They felt that if defence and security were discussed they would

be forced to take sides in the ensuing post-war polarisation which they thought necessary to avoid at any cost.¹⁰

For the formerly or still dependent nations, defence and security were a delicate issue in more than one respect. Their overriding concern was national liberation. But the speed and extension of the liberation process was very uneven. Vietnam and Indonesia were technically independent but were fighting bloody liberation wars. India had progressed quite far with Britain committed to a transfer of power not after 1948. China was stuck in an exhausting civil war. In one way or the other, Britain was actively participating in all efforts to crush Asian national liberation movements. For this purpose even Indian troops were used in Indonesia which was bitterly resented by the Indian Congress. Nehru directed Congress president Abul Kalam Azad to initiate a protest and strike movement boycotting the transport of war material to Indonesia.¹¹ Although this development called for coordination among the peoples and countries affected, there was still essential disagreement as to what extent this cooperation should go. It was particularly Vietnam and Indonesia which looked for Indian intervention. Though not unopposed, Nehru's view finally prevailed: The relevant discussion group report recorded the Indian statement that "it was difficult to visualise, short of declaring war, anything but moral support. It was emphasised that any support given should not have the effect of enlarging the area of conflict."¹² In this Nehru proceeded from the consideration that the weakness of each of the national liberation movements as compared with the developed war machinery of the European colonial powers would make mutual military assistance ineffective and endanger the success of its own national movement. The respective discussion group report, therefore, contented itself with laying special emphasis on the necessity of every Asian Power withholding direct or indirect assistance to colonial Powers trying to keep any Asian country in subjection.¹³

The Lasting Message

In the long run it probably was neither the proceedings and resolutions of the conference nor its impact on world opinion in favour of national liberation movements in Asia that mattered. The practical effects of the conference were minimal. The political impact was limited though not insignificant. Nehru in his opening speech remarked that the conference, in a small measure, represented the bringing together of the countries of Asia. "Whatever it may achieve, the mere fact of its taking place is itself of historic significance". However, a Pan-Asian movement or organisation as envisaged by many participants did not emerge. The Asian Relations Organisation did not survive the year 1955. No effective mechanism for cooperation or coordination among the young Asian Nations emerged. What survived was the message of the conference. Colonialism was finally put on its deathbed though its agony was to last a considerable time. Asia had returned to the world community of nations both as a continental policy factor and as a group of young and foreseeably independent nations. As a continent struggling for liberation it also felt a special responsibility to the peoples of Africa. The Asian nations were striving hard for an independent line of policy and action. In 1947 the British international affairs analyst Mansergh mentioned among the "practical, if intangible results" of the conference the "unanimous view that the day for imperial rule in Asia had passed" and that "it has probably hastened the final day of the departure of the ancient regime"¹⁴.

With regard to the on-going liberation struggle in Asia the advantage of the conference was even more definite. The event provided a rare opportunity for the republican delegates from Vietnam, Indonesia, for the representatives of Burma, Malaya and Ceylon, representing national liberation movements, to participate in international politics and to present their case to world public opinion. It particularly benefited the hard embattled young national

governments of Vietnam and Indonesia in their appeal for action and solidarity against the invasions. Vietnamese President Ho-Chi-Minh and General Aung San from Burma sent messages to the conference. The Indonesian Prime Minister Dr. Sjahrir stands out among the delegates who commanded significant political influence. Also S.W.R.D. Bandarnaike from Ceylon, a future Prime Minister of his country, should be mentioned here.

Nehru's Part

The conference itself and the foreign policy concept Nehru expounded were very closely linked with his personality. Nicholas Mansergh observed that in a real sense it was Nehru's conference. "None could fail to be flattered by the time he devoted to its deliberations. He was present not only in the plenary sessions but also at many of the discussion groups. He lunched at Constitution House where the Conference was held; he personally showed delegates round the Constituent Assembly...Among delegates as a whole his already high reputation was enhanced. His interventions in the discussions were uniformly helpful; his speeches in the plenary sessions were remarkably alike both for their fluency and for their consciousness of high responsibility at this critical hour in Asian history. When dangerous courses were advocated he threw his great influence on the side of statesmanlike moderation. Throughout his personality and charm showed to great advantage, though a certain restlessness carried with it the suggestion of a man who was running the risk of over-straining himself by the weight and variety of the responsibilities he undertook."¹⁵

Nehru could well be described as the architect of a foreign policy for the Indian National Congress. He understood and formulated earlier, more precisely and resolutely than many other Congress politicians the requirements for international links of the Congress, for a deep interest in world affairs. He intensely felt the deep bonds between

the struggle of India for freedom and the world-wide struggle of oppressed peoples. Peace in India and peace in the world were indivisible for him.¹⁶

The global aspect of his foreign policy concept grew very strong after Nehru's participation in the First Congress of Oppressed Nationalities held at Brussels in February 1927. Nehru described the Brussels Congress as the outward symbol of the intense desire for mutual co-operation which had taken possession of the oppressed and the exploited all over the world. He warned that India in her own interest as well as in the interest of the world could not afford to remain isolated from the great movement and forces which were shaping the future.¹⁷ His anti-imperialism which he vigorously defended, was mainly anti-colonialist, though not only. The conference speech is marked by a different tone. The accent moved from stressing common bonds among oppressed peoples towards highlighting the responsibility of an independent India for the world order which was emerging in the aftermath of the War. He celebrated the return of Asia to world affairs when it "takes her rightful place with the other continents"¹⁸. Colonial powers, Nehru repeatedly emphasized, had isolated the countries of Asia from one another. In India they would receive a cable from China via London and it would take often more than 24 hours.¹⁹ The old land routes almost ceased to function and India's chief window to the outer world looked out on the sea routes which led to England. This also obstructed India in preparing for the conference. Most Asian countries were yet to secure their national freedom. India had no representative in any Asian country except China.²⁰

Nehru gave a voice to widespread discontent in Asia which was to grow several times in the years to come that Asia and the developing nations had been excluded from world affairs so long, and that the vital matters of a post-war settlement were decided without them. Nehru stressed, "in this crisis in world Asia will necessarily play a vital role". The Asian countries "are bound to have their own

policies in world affairs."²¹ Those years of 1945 to 1948 were the time when the particular interests of developing nations were taking on more distinct shape. They were later on embodied in the non-aligned movement. Nehru aptly articulated the specific interests of the young nations rejecting the post-war divisions into power blocs and emphasising Asia's responsibility for the state of world peace. "The West has...driven us into wars and conflicts without number and even now, the day after a terrible war, there is talk of further wars in the atomic age that is upon us. In this atomic age Asia will have to function effectively in the maintenance of peace. Indeed there can be no peace unless Asia plays her part."²² In 1947 the Indian national movement held the opinion that world peace was conditional on Asia's and India's full participation in world affairs. Since then this correlation has rather been reversed: Keeping in mind the destructive force of atomic weapons and the interdependence of international events, peace in India and in Asia is unlikely if there is not progress towards world peace and disarmament, particularly in the nuclear field.

Nehru understood that the atomic age would change the shape of the world and that "there is no escape from two alternatives—a solution of world problems and the establishment of a world order based on freedom everywhere, or world conflict and destruction on a colossal scale". Yet, Nehru probably considered the atomic factor to be only one of the many priorities for policy making and not the very reference point for human survival that it has become today. He thought it possible to conduct policies, irrespective of the nuclear factor or neutralizing it: "...Even this mighty source of power is not going to enable the countries who possess it to impose their will on the countries of Asia," he contended.²⁴ The specific Indian and Asian view of the correlation between regional conflicts and the atomic factor still persists: The atomic factor was considered to be imposed upon Asian countries by the West. Nehru and others felt that its political conse-

quences would be mainly executed on the backs of Asians in the shape of increased tensions and conflicts. Up to the present India and the non-aligned nations hold the view that atomic disarmament would not suffice if it did not lead to a reduction and solution of tension and conflict. To many the Indian stand on the atomic factor seemed contradictory in itself; India, the Asian countries and the Third World nations renounced responsibility for the atomic weapons race, for the issues involved the East-West confrontation. Yet, they demanded a say in world affairs equal to that of the big powers possessing nuclear arms. Today the nuclear factor gains increasing importance in debates on foreign policy options in Third World nations like India, Pakistan, Iraq and others. Time showed that the capability to influence world affairs to a large extent rested—and still rests—with the nuclear weapon states. The system of international relations that evolved after the World War II was primarily based on the nuclear factor. Asia, by and large, did not succeed in significantly influencing the course of world events in the post-war period. In that sense Nehru's vision that "the emergence of Asia in world affairs will be a powerful influence for world peace"²⁵ remains a valid goal today. Assessment of these particular interests by the socialist countries varied substantially over the decades and it is only recently that they came to acknowledge the relative autonomy, stability and justification of Third World international politics.

Nehru had a very comprehensive understanding of the world order to be erected. "Peace can only come when nations are free and also when human beings everywhere have freedom and security and opportunity. Peace and freedom, therefore, have to be considered both in their political and economic aspects."²⁶ By this Nehru probably replied to the Anglo-American Atlantic charter which was criticised for leaving out the dependent and oppressed nations. In his approach Nehru not only anticipated basic principles of non-aligned politics but also of Gorbachev's "New Thinking". If peace is to be indivisible, so democ-

racy, political freedom, social progress and economic development are also.

India, Asia and the World

Nehru emphasised that all the participants of the conference were meeting on an equal basis in the sense that all nations were equal, irrespective of their political status. At the same time he explained why India deserved a special role in restructuring international relations: she "is the natural centre and focal point of the many forces at work in Asia." He stressed her central geographical position: "Streams of culture have come to India from the west and the east and been absorbed in India producing rich and variegated culture which is India today. At the same time, streams of culture have flowed from India to distant parts of Asia. If you would know India you have to go to Afghanistan and western Asia, to Central Asia, to China and Japan and to the countries of South-East Asia. There you will find magnificent evidence of the vitality of India's culture which spread out and influenced vast number of peoples."²⁷ Occasionally, Nehru emphasized that India herself had been a mother country to many Asian nations.²⁸ During the conference Nehru avoided to be more specific about India's role. Yet, the remarks he made in interviews and articles at that time showed that he had definite ideas of what place India should occupy in world affairs.

In October 1945 he called India "the torch-bearer in the liberation movement of Asiatic countries, which look up to India for assistance and guidance."²⁹ He was convinced that India's independence would give a strong impetus to liberation movements all over the world. Nehru told the Labour Government that "India is the key to the solution of the question of freedom of all dependent countries"³⁰. As independence drew closer and the world was full of talk on bloc politics Nehru's attention shifted to the Indian part in international affairs: "We in India should have the privilege of playing an important part in the

development of the world situation. Instead, we have to watch things happening."³¹ With regard to the Potsdam Conference, the crucial point of a post-war settlement, Nehru remarked: "At this moment the Big Three are deciding these vital issues. But it must be remembered that other countries are not necessarily in agreement with their decisions. Certainly India has neither been consulted nor has agreed to them. Though India's voice may be powerless today it will not be so in the future. I hope whatever influence India comes to possess will be used to evolve more stable conditions of world peace and freedom."³² In January 1946 in an interview to the Delhi correspondent of *The Hindu* newspaper, B. Shiva Rao, who later was to become India's General Secretary of the Asian Relations Organisation, Nehru complained that it was due to the British nominated official Indian delegation at Dumbarton Oaks where the United Nations charter was chalked out that India was denied a permanent seat in the Security Council - a recurrent theme in foreign policy debates in India in later years.³³

In the West, particularly in the U.S., it was felt that the assembly was meant to work out some approach towards forming an anti-Western Pan-Asian movement or bloc.³⁴ Though one delegate suggested that a neutrality bloc be formed in Asia, this proposal did not receive much support.³⁵ Nehru tried to reassure Western countries that "this Conference, and the idea underlying it, is in no way aggressive or against any other continent or country". He did not forcefully advance his idea of an Asian Federation during the conference as he was well aware that the smaller Asian countries were apprehensive of India's dominant role in any such organisation. The Burmese and the Ceylonese delegates expressed fears of economic and demographic domination by India or China.³⁶ The report on industrial development noted that India was the only country, barring Japan, which was industrialised to any significant extent.³⁷ "The smaller Asian countries would need economic help from larger Asian powers", the report on

freedom movements stressed, "but it was hoped that such assistance would not lead to domination by the larger power"³⁸. The conference deliberations portended the disruptive effects that ethnic tensions were to have on these countries. It was the status of the immigrant population such as Indians in Burma and Ceylon, and Chinese in Malaya, Burma and Indonesia that caused concern. The respective report stated that in most areas economic factors were responsible for suspicion and distrust.³⁹

However, such differing opinion did not prevent Nehru from pursuing his objective of Asian unity in a more specific way. In the above-mentioned interview to Rao, Nehru spoke of prospects of a "close union of countries bordering on the Indian Ocean, both for defence and trade purposes", a system of defence, stretching from the Middle East to South East Asia, in which India because of her "intrinsic importance" and "her strategic position" was to play a significant role.⁴⁰ Nehru elaborated that "the coordination of various countries in the Middle East, India and South East Asia is not only possible but undoubtedly certain in the near future. The question of an Asiatic federation is perhaps premature, but some kind of closer association between these countries is necessary, both for defence and trade purposes."⁴¹ Because of her rapid industrial development that Nehru expected after India achieved independence she was likely to become the "centre" of such regional arrangement.⁴²

Along with some kind of Asian group of nations led by India Nehru envisaged an Indian Federation which would or could include all the British possessions and the princely states in South Asia. That means Burma and Ceylon would also be members if they so wished. This idea was rejected both in Burma and in Ceylon, fearing Indian dominance.⁴³ Nehru tried to assuage such fears by resolutely demanding that Indian residents, especially business people should not claim privileges. They were to share the rights and duties of the resident population. He called upon them for active support to the liberation movements

in their country of adoption. While no special rights were sought Indians should enjoy equal rights with residents and should not be discriminated against. This was particularly stressed in connection with the fate of Indian labour at Ceylonese tea estates. "On no account must Indians agree to any position derogatory to their individual and national dignity", Nehru demanded.⁴⁴ A movement had started in Ceylon to declare Indian labour foreigners and to send them back to India - a conflict engaging both countries up to the present.

The Roots of Asian Unity and the Federation Concept

The idea of an Asiatic Federation had occupied the thoughts of Congress politicians for quite a considerable time. Its roots go back much beyond the post-war discussions on a new world order. Ideas of an Asiatic Federation whether in a larger context from South-East Asia to the Middle East or confined to the South Asian subcontinent had an original Indian background both religiously and politically. In the political thinking of the Congress there had long been an idea of a Greater India which was partly derived from the religio-cultural concept of uniting Hinduist areas—much in the same way as Muslims inside and outside the Congress relished Pan-Islamic ideas. In his presidential address to the Gauhati session of the Congress in 1926, S. Iyengar stressed that "the adventurous spirit of early India which built up long ago a greater "Bharat Varsha" to the East and to the West, to the North and to the South is not extinct. It is now seen in the greater India which our brethren, in humble and laborious fashion are building for us in far off lands against unparalleled odds."⁴⁵ The Islamic factor also continued to shape Pan-Asian ideas of congress leaders throughout. When the Congress supported the Khalifat movement, C. R. Das, Congress president in 1922, called the Asian federation scheme an outgrowth of the Pan-Islamic movement.⁴⁶ Nehru conceded that the Asian Relations Con-

ference was to have a favourable effect on India's internal situation. When B. Shiva Rao in the afore-cited interview expressed fears that in a larger regional arrangement a minority of Indian Hindus would face a majority of Muslims from the Middle East, India and Indonesia, he replied: "I do not believe in the bogey of a Pan-Islamic movement sweeping over South Asia. On the other hand, any form of closer association or union of these countries of the Middle East, India and South-East Asia would go a long way towards removing the fears and suspicions of the Indian Muslims."⁴⁷

After World War I, the discussions on the post-war order stimulated Indian national leaders to actively consider the mode of co-operation with neighbouring countries and other Asian nations, with the world as a whole. Congress started to develop its own distinct foreign policy attending to the fate of Indian migrants abroad and condemning the use of Indians, particularly of Indian troops against China and other countries. Gandhi wrote in 1920 "Common lot no less than territorial homogeneity and cultural affinity is bringing the Asiatic races wonderfully together, and they now seem determined to take their fullest share in the world politics."⁴⁸ C.R. Das, lawyer and Congress politician, is credited with formulating the Asian Federation concept. In his presidential address to the 1922 session of the Congress he saw the Asian federation emerging as the union of oppressed nationalities of Asia.⁴⁹ The federation idea was considerably strengthened after Nehru's participation in the Brussels Congress of Oppressed Nationalities in 1927. It reached another highpoint at the Calcutta session of the Congress in 1928 when a resolution was moved "to correspond with the leaders and representatives of the other Asiatic nations and to take other steps to summon the first session of a Pan-Asiatic Federation in 1930 in India."⁵⁰ By that time the Congress was busy organising the civil disobedience movement and the federation plan did not materialize. In 1936 Nehru's ideas on this issue were clearly marked out. In the postscript to his

autobiography he wrote that he had "no doubt that in any future order Ceylon and India must hang together. My own picture of the future is a federation which includes China and India, Burma and Ceylon, Afghanistan and possibly other countries. If a world federation comes that will be welcome."⁵¹

His adherence to the Asian federation plan offers an explanation for Nehru's interest in the world federal government movement. He told the Asian Relations Conference that "we have arrived at a stage in human affairs when the ideal of One World and some kind of world federation seems to be essential though there are many dangers and obstacles in the way. We should work for this ideal...We therefore support the United Nations structure which is painfully emerging from its infancy."⁵² The catchword was taken from Wendell Willkie's book 'One World' which he wrote in 1943 after he concluded a forty-two days tour of the world in 1941-42. Willkie who was an unsuccessful Republican contender for Presidency in 1940 made the world tour as the personal representative of Roosevelt. His concept of the unity of the world, its nations and cultures grew out of his desire to fight isolationist tendencies in U.S. politics in the conduct of affairs in World War II. He strongly favoured U.S. intervention in the war. The U.S. could not monopolize freedom and democracy while other nations were subjected to war and tyranny.⁵³ Nehru received this book in Ahmadnagar Fort on December 27, 1942 and, reading it, he was "quite excited."⁵⁴ The ideal of the 'One World' became even more popular with the foundation of the United Nation which many saw as a transitional stage to a world government. The Soviet Union declined to participate in the 'World Movement' which it feared will be directed against it. Especially, it resented the demand to transfer a part of every country's sovereignty to a world government. Though, no doubt, there was an element in it which, particularly on the part of some U.S. participants, aimed at unit-

ing all non-communist countries, it might have presented an opportunity to promote better understanding and closer contracts among the world's nations. Nehru understood that the underlying concept of the 'One World' had a far wider meaning. To his daughter Indira, Nehru wrote in 1943: "This concept of one world hanging together, all inter-linked, is still quite difficult enough for most people in the East or the West to grasp, even though they may hold advanced ideas. Even when it is grasped intellectually there is no emotional appreciation of it. Yet, I think that this is the basic idea of our present day world and unless we imbibe it, our other ideas are apt to be airy and without reality."⁵⁴

An Evaluation Attempt

This paper was meant to emphasize the indigenous elements of the Indian foreign policy concept as they were evolved by Nehru at the Asian Relations Conference in 1947. Considering Nehru's speech at the conference and his other statements around that time, there are two closely interlinked aspects which are worth mentioning here. One concerns the overriding Indian interest in world affairs, India's heightened sense of responsibility and far-sightedness which positively influenced the international climate throughout the past forty-two years. The other reflects specific features of India's foreign policy which sometimes are underestimated in the G.D.R.'s research on this topic. These included India's explicit consciousness of her growing weight in Asia and in the world which it tries to enhance further, her overriding concern for the state of affairs at her borders in South Asia and in the adjoining regions of South-East Asia and the Middle East, her continuing concern about the effects of the partition of the subcontinent, her strong interest in regional economic co-operation, and her concern for Indian residents abroad—to mention but a few. A closer look at the Asian

Relations Conference of 1947 and at Nehru's strategic contribution to shaping India's foreign policy at the time may help to understand India's role in international affairs today.

When delegates from all over Asia met for an Asian Relations Commemorative Conference in New Delhi in October 1987 it was Nehru's grandson, the Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, who delivered the inaugural address. Rajiv Gandhi reminded Asia of its special obligation that it must "dedicate itself to the complete elimination of nuclear weapons" as it is "the only continent to have experienced nuclear horror". The United Nations should be strengthened as it is "the only forum where all the countries of Asia meet together as a group", where "the Asian identity acquires a certain dimension". He outlined common elements for an all-Asian co-operation: a peaceful solution of disputes without the involvement of outside powers, the elimination of outside military presence from Asian lands and from the Indian Ocean, and the reinforcement of mutual economic co-operation.⁵⁵ The points which Gandhi emphasized make clear that India's foreign policy is still governed by the basic principles of Nehru's concept of peace and solidarity.

Notes:

- 1 *The Indian Annual Register (IAR)*, Vol. I, New Delhi Jan. - June 1947, p. 273.
- 2 For example, the otherwise very comprehensive study on the evolution of the foreign policy concept of the Indian National Congress undertaken by Diethelm Weidemann in 1976 does not mention the Asian Relations Conference. Cf. Weidemann, D., *Die Haltung des Indischen National kongresses zu internationalen Fragen - entscheidende historische Quelle und Vorgeschichte der Außenpolitik des unabhängigen Indien* In: *Politik und Ideologie im gegenwertigen Indien*, Berlin 1976, pp. 73-115
- 3 *IAR*, *op. cit.*, p. 272.
- 4 *Ibid*, p. 284.
- 5 *Ibid*, p. 274.

- 6 Cf. Weidemann, D. *Die Haltung des Indischen National kongresses zu internationalen Fragen*, *op. cit.*, p. 108.
- 7 *IAR*, *op. cit.*, p. 298
- 8 *Ibid*, p. 299
- 9 Appadorai, A., "A beautiful but ineffectual chimera". In : *Link*, New Delhi March 29, 1987, p. 42.
- 10 *Ibid*, p. 40
- 11 *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru (SW)*, New Delhi 1974, Vol. 14, p. 456
- 12 *IAR*, *op. cit.*, p. 291
- 13 Cf. *ibid*, p. 290
- 14 Mansergh, N., "The Asian Conference". In : *International Affairs*, London Vol. 23 (1947) 3, p. 305
- 15 *Ibid*, pp. 304-5
- 16 Cf. Weidemann, D., *Die Haltung des Indischen National Kongresses zu internationalen Fragen*, *op. cit.*, pp. 111-2; Prasad, Bimal, *The Origins of Indian Foreign Policy*, Calcutta 1960, pp. 73ff., 99, 114, 221-3
- 17 Cf. Nehru's report on the Brussels congress to the Congress Working Committee of February 29, 1927. In: *SW*, *op. cit.*, Vol. 2, pp. 291, 293; On Nehru's attitude toward the "League against Imperialism" cf. Krueger H., *Zum Einflub internationaler Faktoren auf die Herausbildung und Entwicklung der anti-imperialistischen Jawaharlal Nehrus*. In *Politik und Ideologie im gegenwertigen Indien*, *op. cit.*, pp. 320ff.
- 18 *IAR*, *op. cit.*, p. 272.
- 19 *The Encyclopaedia of the Indian National Congress*, Vol. 9 1925-1929, New Delhi 1980, p. 67.
- 20 Appadorai A., "A beautiful but ineffectual chimera", *op. cit.*, p. 39
- 21 *IAR*, *op. cit.*, p. 273
- 22 *Ibid*
- 23 *SW*, *op. cit.*, Vol 14, pp. 466, 471-2.
- 24 *Ibid*, p. 466
- 25 *IAR*, *op. cit.*, p. 274
- 26 *Ibid*.
- 27 *Ibid*, p. 273
- 28 *SW*, *op. cit.*, Vol. 14, p. 477
- 29 *Ibid*, p. 459
- 30 *Ibid*, p. 460
- 31 *Ibid*, p. 465
- 32 *Ibid*, p. 442
- 33 *Ibid*, p. 474
- 34 Cf. *The New York Times*, 2.4.1947.
- 35 *IAR*, *op. cit.*, p. 290
- 36 Indian Council of World Affairs, *Asian Relations: Proceedings and Documentation of the First Asian Relations Conference*, New Delhi 1948, pp. 73, 74, 90
- 37 *IAR*, *op. cit.*, p. 287

- 38 *Ibid*, p. 290
 39 *Ibid*, p. 283
 40 *SW*, *op. cit.*, Vol. 14, pp. 473-4.
 41 *Ibid*, p. 472
 42 *Ibid*, p. 450
 43 On Burma cf. *The Encyclopaedia of the Indian National Congress*, Vol. 9, *op. cit.*, p. 71 ; *SW*, *op. cit.*, Vol. 4, p. 508. On Ceylon cf. *ibid*, Vol. 14, pp. 449-451, 468-9.
 44 *Ibid*, p. 468
 45 *The Encyclopaedia of The Indian National Congress*, Vol. 9, *op. cit.*, p. 130
 46 Prasad, B., *The Origins of Indian Foreign Policy*, *op. cit.*, p. 72
 47 *SW*, *op. cit.*, Vol. 14, pp. 474-5.
 48 *Young India*, April 14, 1920, qu. after Prasad, B., *The Origins of Indian Foreign Policy*, *op. cit.*, p. 72
 49 Prasad, B., *The Origins of Indian Foreign Policy*, *op. cit.*, p. 72
 50 *The Encyclopaedia of the Indian National Congress*, Vol. 9, *op. cit.*, p. 363
 51 Nehru, J., *An Autobiography. With Musings on Recent Events in India* Bombay 1962, p. 608.
 52 *IAR*, *op. cit.*, p. 274
 53 Cf. Willkie, W., *One World*, New York 1943
 54 *SW*, *op. cit.*, Vol. 13, p. 323
 55 Gandhi, R., Inaugural Address of Shri Rajiv Gandhi, Prime Minister of India, at the Asian Relations Conference, New Delhi: Conference papers, October 2, 1987.

NEHRU AND THE POLICY OF NON-ALIGNMENT

Renate Wuensche

The emergence of the idea of non-alignment, the development of the policy of non-alignment and the formation of the international Non-Aligned Movement will always be associated with Jawaharlal Nehru's name. He was not only the spiritual father of this new phenomenon in the post-war international relations but also the main architect who developed the idea of non-alignment into the significant movement of international life which it has become today. "Thought and action, these two currents flowed together in Jawaharlal Nehru"¹, as Rajiv Gandhi wrote in a book about Nehru which was published in the GDR. Indeed, also with regard to non-alignment he developed the theory and translated it successfully into practice. This very accomplishment in the area of foreign politics and international relations is one of his lasting merits. We should devote our special attention to it on the occasion of his 100th birthday.

It is by no means easy, however, to write about it and to even produce new thoughts, as excellent statements and examinations were made before by prominent politicians, well-known scholars and respected historians. The analysis of