

Rajaji: Gandhiji's 'Alter Ego'

PYARELAL

THE die was cast for Rajaji when Gandhiji became his guest during his visit to Madras in April 1919, in connection with the launching of *Satyagraha* against the Rowlatt legislation. After establishing himself as a leading luminary of the Bar in his home town of Salem, Rajaji had only recently moved to Madras. He had hardly finished unpacking his law books downstairs when he was summoned for a talk by Gandhiji to his room on the first floor. The previous night Mahadev Desai had "discovered" Rajaji and reported his find to his master. Before Rajaji came down, he had given up his law practice for good.

The suddenness of the decision took everybody by surprise. For years he had followed Gandhiji's meteoric stormy career in South Africa from afar. But he was too much of a rationalist suddenly to come under anybody's spell. Even in his eulogistic review of *Indian Home Rule*, the earliest to appear in India, so far as I am aware, he had the following sly dig: "Naturally, the Editor is the better debater." As everybody knows, this booklet is written in the form of a Socratic dialogue between the author, cast as "Editor," and his friend, Dr. Pranjivan Mehta, in the role of the "Reader." The dig was intended, as it were, to warn the reader not to be taken in too readily by the dialectics of the Editor, who could not but be biased in favour of his own viewpoint and, therefore, could not be expected to let his adversary have the better of the argument.

What conquered Rajaji, I think, was the deadly earnestness behind the conclusions presented in *Indian Home Rule*, which the author had endeavoured with all his heart and soul to translate into his life. Here was a man who was not afraid to face and follow the deductions of his reason and conscience to their logical conclusion, no matter where they might take him. Such a person is very rare in this world. Rajaji had found one such in Gandhiji. He needed nothing more.

I do not know who at the time congratulated himself more on his find—Rajaji, who had at last found in Gandhiji his Pole Star, or Gandhiji, who had found in this Shankaracharya of South Indian politics, a unique interpreter of his philosophy, his standard-bearer and *alter ego* rolled into one, and his conscience-keeper besides, which he continued to be even when he ceased to see eye to eye with Gandhiji on many a current political issue. The difference was superficial; the

basic loyalty that united them, deeper and stronger by far to be affected by the fissures that showed on the surface. It never suffered diminution or change.

For a considerable time after I joined Gandhiji, I had been content to admire Rajaji from a distance. It was an accident—shall I call it a stroke of good luck—that brought me into close touch with him and revealed to me the shy, sensitive, warm, affectionate spirit behind that forbidding mask of his cynicism. In May, 1922, I was staying at "Anand Bhavan," the historic residence of the Nehrus at Allahabad. Gandhiji had been providing Mr. Motilal Nehru with a succession of Editors for his daily *Independent*. George Joseph, the first Editor sent by him, had been arrested. The arrest of Mahadev Desai, Joseph's successor, was expected. In anticipation of it, Gandhiji had sent me to step into the breach in the event of Mahadev's arrest. When *Independent* suspended publication, rather than furnish a security under the Press Act which was against the principle of Non-violent Non-cooperation, under Gandhiji's direction, we began to bring it out in manuscript form. Soon, Mahadev Desai and Devadas Gandhi also were arrested and I alone was left to keep the flag flying.

I was expecting to follow suit any time, when I received the following wire from Rajaji:

"You must join *Young India* immediately, remaining Sabarmathi...announcing my name Editor. Wire your consent..."

After Gandhiji's arrest and sentence of imprisonment for years, the Editorship of *Young India* had been taken up first by Satish Chandra Mukherjee, the hero of an earlier era and Editor of the prestigious *Dawn* magazine and then by Shwaib Qureshi, who later became Maulana Mohammed Ali's son-in-law. A little later, Shwaib also resigned and Rajaji became Editor of *Young India*. He wanted me to take charge of the weekly as Assistant Editor at Ahmedabad.

The prospect of being in the "active firing line" had gripped me. I was impatient to offer Civil Disobedience and join my two comrades, Mahadev and Devdas, in prison. I replied to Rajaji, begging to be excused on the ground of my utter inexperience in journalism, and whatever other shortcomings I could think of to put him off. But he would have none of it. Some of my writings in the manuscript *Independent* had

caught his attention. Brushing aside my elaborate excuses, he wrote back: "I do not quite like your plan of courting imprisonment...but of this we will talk when we meet. I have a fear that I may not meet you at all, and that the last Editor of the hand-written *Independent* will not go without the honour accorded to his predecessors." Alluding to the catalogue of my shortcomings, in a postscript he added: "You can't better describe what I feel regarding myself when I contemplate the responsibility now undertaken by me. But if you are at Ahmedabad, and I here, I think we could pull the thing through."

In the meantime, my plan of offering Civil Disobedience was sabotaged in an unexpected manner. A meeting of the All-India Congress Committee was to be held in "Anand Bhavan." The Nehrus, father and son, were in prison. They sent word, laying upon me the duty of making arrangements for the Committee meeting and of getting piloted through it a resolution on the boycott of foreign cloth and the picketing of foreign cloth shop and liquor shops. If I courted arrest or allowed myself to be arrested before seeing my charge through, they added, a "vote of censure" would be passed against me! I had to see it through.

Soon after the meeting of the All-India Congress Committee, first Pandit Motilal and then Pandit Jawaharlal were released—Pandit Jawaharlal only to be rearrested in a few days on a charge of preventing people from pursuing their "lawful" vocation (dealing in foreign cloth and running of liquor shops) and of "extortion," i.e., imposing fines and realizing them from foreign cloth dealers who had broken their pledges not to deal in foreign cloth. Then, my uncle, who was like a father to me, fell seriously ill. An urgent wire called me home. I had to go, leaving behind half a dozen issues of the hand-written *Independent* to be released in my absence on the due dates. This was done, the last issue of the hand-written sheet, with its motto: "I change but I cannot die," being reproduced in full in the first issue of the resurrected daily, after the peal of the Press Act.

In the result, it was only in the month of September, 1922, that I could join *Young India* at Ahmedabad. In his very first letter addressed to me there, Rajaji wrote: "Your arrival at Ahmedabad was timed providentially. Not only am I unable to exert physically but I feel quite dry to the brain. *Young*

India is, therefore, entirely in your charge." I could not have wished for a warmer or more encouraging greeting.

Thus began a sweet association that I have dearly treasured and which has grown with the years.

The initiation into journalism that I received in the following months under Rajaji was replete with rich and varied experience. Not only I learnt my steps, but also what it meant to cope with the exigencies of peripatetic Editorship. Rajaji was constantly on the move. Besides, he was doggedly wrestling all the time against ill-health. Not infrequently, the matter posted by him during his train journeys reached me late; sometimes failed to reach me at all. This put the mettle of the man on the spot to the severest test. Once he had sent a leading article as a Press message telegraphically on the last day. It was delivered to me at midnight, a few hours before going to the press and then only the second half of it. The first half was delivered after the week's issue was printed. Luckily, the second half contained all the editorial comment. The other half carried the story of the event commented on, which I reconstructed from the facts that I already knew. Errors in telegraphic transmission constituted another headache and when chunks of matter sent to the telegraph office for transmission got jumbled and were delivered not in their due order, but out of series, the resulting confusion may better be imagined than described.

To keep me *au courant*, Rajaji used to take me with him to all the meetings of the All-India Congress Committee and of the Working Committee of the Congress. In December, 1922, I had accompanied him to Calcutta. On arrival there, we received a wire saying that my Assistant, in whose charge I had left the printing of the next issue of *Young India*, had fallen ill. I had, therefore, to rush back to Ahmedabad the same evening. I wrote an article during the train journey. As the next issue was to be a double issue, with a comprehensive survey of the progress of constructive work in all the provinces, based on nearly 600 reports which had to be studied, digested and collated, I had to work for about 60 hours at a stretch, without any rest or even sleep. Rajaji's copy as usual was sent from Calcutta telegraphically. It consisted of a leading article and a note which, although it read like a continuation of the leading article, was meant to be printed separately. The result was a jumble. Rajaji felt happy with the piece that I had done but was distressed by the mess that telegraphic transmission of his contribution had resulted in. His comment was characteristic:

THE SHIKARI

PAT SHARPE

"DURING the monsoon," said Morris, the Club Secretary, "I think it would be a good idea if each week, on Club evenings, one member was called upon to tell a story which he or she claims is true. We can all sit round and listen—while we drink, of course! A sort of modern *Canterbury Tales*. There was a chorus of 'Good idea!' and then one voice piped up, 'How about you cracking off, Sir.'"

Morris looked slightly embarrassed, but urged by the assembled company, he said, "Very well, I'll start off—and tell you the story of a young planter who was a marvellous shot. I'll call him Dickens."

Well, Dickens arrived out from England and soon grew very popular in the district, and so he was invited to all the shikars. His skill was really amazing and he could shoot a kite on the wing with a two-two.

As one of the most junior members of the firm, he was given a rather unattractive bungalow on a big tea estate, in Ceylon. This didn't worry him, however, as he was also a keen gardener and all his leisure hours that he didn't spend shooting were devoted to turning the wilderness surrounding the bungalow into a really wonderful garden.

His one great trouble was a cow, belonging to the milkman, which used to stray into his compound and eat the succu-

lent seedlings, planted by Dickens, in preference to the rather meagre grazing in the neighbourhood.

In vain, Dickens tried to keep the cow out by putting up a bamboo fence, but it always broke through! In vain, he alternately begged and threatened the cow's owner to keep it tethered or graze it elsewhere.

The cow had always grazed there, the owner said, and he couldn't alter its habits.

One evening, Dickens planted out some rather rare seedlings, and seeing the milkman on the road, warned him that there

would be trouble if the cow ate them. The man promised to watch the animal carefully.

Imagine the fury and indignation of Dickens, when looking out of his window early next morning, he saw the cow breakfasting off his seedlings!

His temper got the better of him and seizing his rifle, he took aim and shot the cow dead.

There was horror and excitement amongst his servants and later amongst his fellow-planters, who all said that frightful vengeance would be taken.

The milkman himself, however, was surprisingly calm. He took a look at the dead animal and then looked rather sadly at Dickens and went off, returning later with a religious "medicine man" who performed some ceremonial rites over the cow and then, turning to Dickens, muttered some incantations at him.

Dickens was relieved.



Shortly after this incident, one night he sat up on a machan over a kill for a tiger which had been making a nuisance of itself in the neighbouring village.

Towards midnight, when all was still, the big beast came prowling out. Dickens aimed an easy shot, fired—and missed! He could hardly believe it and his companions with him were most surprised.

Some days later, he was asked to go snipe shooting. The jeel had been carefully preserved, the birds were plentiful and a good bag was brought back—but Dickens had not contributed one bird towards it.

Puzzled, he had his rifle and his gun cleaned and tested, and shot with them at targets—his aim being always accurate.

He soon noted, however he used them to fire at wild animals or birds—however easy a shot—he missed. At times, Dickens imagined that the animals knew they were invulnerable because they seemed to take such chances—almost to laugh at him!

His bad luck was the talk of the club, but in the servants' quarters they shook their heads gravely and said: "It is the Curse of the Sadhu—Sahib shooting cow."

Be that as it may, the fact remains that young Dickens never again killed or wounded any game, large or small.

There was a good deal of ribald comment at the end of the tale. Many of the audience were sceptical.

"If you shot, Morris, you'd realize how incredible that yarn of yours is—but you never do, do you?"

"No," replied Morris, quietly. "I never do—now. I gave it up. You see I was that young planter."

From previous page:

"Two articles, one as it appears, and the other...have been printed together; the latter running on from the other like a tail. However, being organically connected the thing is saved from much ugliness. A kind of monkey with a long tail! Telegraphic contributions cannot hope for a better assembling."

The same letter bought also the following:

"I must offer you my congratulations for the beautiful article. 'Thus to be patched and cobbled in one's grave.' Why should you not have put it up as the leading article? Your modesty (or is it only a sense of discipline?) should not interfere with your faculty of judgment. However, it is well that an Assistant Editor errs on the side of humility."

Having crammed all this in a post card when it called for the use of a postal cover, he impulsively added in a postscript: "I have cheated Government of 6 pies!"

The following day he again, wrote:

"Your letter reached me this morning. While its literary beauty pleases me, the hard realities behind it make me feel anxious... Do see that you get rest and fresh air and exercise at least for a few days in the week regularly... The steady flow of thought in sound health is more fulfilling than the irregular high potential brain. Moreover the body must exist for any brain to work... I write all this as I am rather anxious about your health."

In the first quarter of 1923, Mahadev Desai was released. But Rajaji continued to fret over his inability to send as

much matter as he would have liked to. "I have not been without imagination," he wrote in one of his letters, "to see what excruciating anxiety and trouble you suffer each time you deliver *Young India* at the press without sufficient (or any) matter from me... The truth is that you and Mahadev Desai should consider yourselves as joint and responsible Editors of *Young India* and I only favour you with concessions when I write."

Later, when the controversy between the "no-changes" and "pro-changers" was at its height, Mahadev Desai and I launched on a filibuster on our own in a series of articles, writing alternately by turn. As ours was pretty "hot stuff" and the targets of our shafts were those for whom we had the greatest regard and whom we did not wish to give an opportunity to turn round and say *et tu Brute*, we wrote under

the pen name "New Rebels," being a variation upon C. R. Das's description of himself in one of his speeches as a "Rebel." It brought from Rajaji the following in a letter to Devadas, the sharp medicine being tempered, as was Rajaji's wont, with a sweetening:

"The last issue of *Young India*...was superb. I got an art paper copy sent very carefully packed by proud Pyarelal. Pyarelal is a jewel.

"Tell him I would prefer the 'New Rebels' to discard anonymity. Anonymity is against the established spirit of *Young India*. I know we have infringed the rule. Initials are permitted but there should not be too much of the usual style of anonymity and pseudonymity. However, that is one thing. But I at least should know who it is. Is it (A. T.) Gidwani?"

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won the battles but lost the fight.

In the 1924 elections, the Swaraj Party swept the polls and Gandhiji, who had been brought to the Sessoon Hospital at Poona, for an emergency operation for appendicitis, was released on the eve of the resolution to be introduced by the Swaraj Party in the Central Assembly for his unconditional release. One of the first things he did when he had recovered strength sufficiently to look around him and actively participate in public activity, was to dissolve the party that had been formed in his absence in support of his programme, and before the year was out had invited the Swaraj Party to take charge of the Congress, while resolving to devote himself exclusively to constructive work.

Rajaji had conquered; but in *Satyagraha* one has not to defeat but win the opponent even by surrendering the gains of victory and embracing defeat in order that the opponent's thinking may be changed and truth and justice enthroned. *Satyagraha* is not ju-jitsu which ends with the defeat of one party; rather it is transmutation of one or the other or both the parties so that they find a common meeting ground in the truth. The end is victory without the sting of defeat, a conquest that is loved as well by the conquered as by him who has achieved the conquest. "People see and admire the fighter in me but they miss my capacity for surrender from which my power of assault springs," Gandhiji explained once in a letter to Mr. K. Natarajan, the Editor of the *Indian Social Reformer*. A fighter first and last, he chose to fight for his opponents instead of against them, so that they would fight with him in the common cause, when the time came, as they actually did later.

Thus ended my apprenticeship under Rajaji. But the bonds of mutual affection that had been forged between us remained. Thereafter, my relation with him became like that of father and son who could freely share with each other the sweet and bitter of life. I would fain share with the reader some of the vignettes illustrative of this phase but must not; it is too sacred. Suffice it to say that I could always depend upon him for wise counsel and guidance

From opposite page:

The CSIRO has now entered into a licence agreement with Dalgety Agri-Lines Proprietary Limited of Sydney for the development and commercial production of polyunsaturated meat and milk products.

Dr. McDonald said that if a large demand for polyunsaturated food developed, extensive changes in the pattern of agriculture would be needed, especially in Australia.

in facing life's problems and he upon me for whatever service and consolation. I could bring It was not much; in either case the gain was wholly mine.

In Gandhiji's circle, Rajaji's visits were always looked forward to with avidity. Their unbounded mutual love and regard turned a meeting between them into a gala occasion for us—a rich feast of sparkling wit and humour that made Gandhiji's little abode ring with roars of laughter. Rajaji had a sharp tongue, but like "a polished razor keen" it caused the ritual wound with a touch "that is scarcely felt or seen." The wound is meant to heal, not hurt. Like a surgeon's knife, it removes the scab without leaving a scar. Rajaji was unsparing but never heartless or cruel. He could be angry but not vindictive. Once someone was narrating to him that a certain lady, who had of late been spitting venom against Gandhiji and his Non-Cooperation movement, was bitten by a "worm"—euphemism for a snake. With mock concern, Rajaji exclaimed: "And what happened?" and then quietly added, "to the worm!" On another occasion, he told us how, when he was Governor-General, the Russian Ambassador, in presenting his credentials, addressed him as "Your Excellency."

"But I thought you in Russia had discontinued the use of all titles," Rajaji asked with a twinkle.

"Yes, Your Excellency," the Russian diplomat replied. "But that was at the outset of the Revolution. Then we realized it was a mistake."

"What!" Rajaji innocently exclaimed, "the outset of Revolution was a mistake?" And not even the solemnity of the diplomatic ceremonial could repress a smile and a titter all around.

I have often seen Rajaji engage in a dialectical duel with his adversary. He confounded the adversary by assailing his position from every conceivable angle, his logic cut clean through its matrix like a surgeon's knife. In the words of Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, "elementary propositions are called in question, axiomatic truths denied, obvious postulates...put to proof." The poor fellow threw up his hands and departed reduced to a state of semi-idiocy. Cold and unemotional, C.R. "thinks nothing of the mortification felt by the helpless man. He has no pity for fools and is callous to a degree, for fools have no place in this world." At another time, the adversary fired his last shot, and was about to depart with "a smile of triumph on his face" when, to quote Dr. Pattabhi again, "out comes Rajaji with a new argument. A new aspect is discovered. The opponent's seeming triumph leaves him helpless to meet the last minute devastation of C.R.'s strange discovery. Who can solve the riddle? The key

is only with C.R. and he is grinning with his white teeth under his dark glasses while the rest of the world is gaping with a cipher face of rounded foolishness over the mystery before them."

To be present at a discussion between Rajaji and Gandhiji was always an education. At the time of the Cripps' Mission, Gandhiji had actually egged Rajaji on to press with all his might and main his resolution against the Congress Working Committee's. Gandhiji's view was that if the Congress did not wish to go his way of total rejection of the Cripps' plan, then Rajaji's was the right course to follow, not the one that the Working Committee had adopted. But he blamed himself for not having opposed Rajaji sufficiently at the time of what is known as the "Poona offer." Out of his great regard for Rajaji's judgment and his honesty he had let himself doubt the correctness of his own interpretation "to the point of allowing Rajaji to act on his own," when Rajaji had asserted with astonishing self-assurance that Gandhiji was wrong and he was right in the interpretation of non-violence and its implications.

(To be concluded)

—Courtesy of Swarajya

slator Gets e of Life

RAJA

technique for the bypass surgery.

Though Dr. Debakey offered to perform the operation free of cost, Mr. Muthuselvan had to meet travelling and other medical expenses. A "Muthuselvan Fund," launched by his friends, raised a sum of Rs. 70,000. With the monetary hurdle overcome, Mr. Muthuselvan, accompanied by Dr. Annamalai, left for the United States in December last year.

The bypass operation took five hours. During this time, Dr. Debakey removed the narrowed portion between the aorta and heart. He then connected the artificial tube from the aorta to the three main blood vessels to permit normal flow of blood.

But only after ten days of intensive care at the Methodist Hospital, was the verdict given. The operation was proclaimed a success. Mr. Muthuselvan celebrated his recovery by participating in the Pongal festival with other Indian residents of Houston.

TOSHIBA POPULARITY CONTEST

NO ENTRY FEE — YOU MUST WIN A PRIZE



FIRST PRIZE: One Scooter, Vespa, or Allywn Refrigerator. **2nd Prize:** One Tape Recorder or Automatic Camera or Radiogram. **3rd Prize:** (100) TOSHIBA Made as Japan 3 Band All World Transistors costing Rs. 275/-. **4th Prize:** (10) TOSHIBA Junior Made as Japan 3 Band All World Transistors costing Rs. 250/-.

WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO ?

Use digits from 22 (Twenty Two) to 37 (Thirty Seven) in the Blank Squares so that the **TOTAL** should be 118 (One Hundred and Eighteen) when added vertically, horizontally and diagonally, using each figure once only.

Entrance Fee :

NO ENTRY FEE, This is only a Popularity contest.

LAST Posting Date 10-2-73 RESULT Date 15-2-73

Specimen for help : total 110

33	34	23	20
22	21	32	35
28	31	26	25
27	24	29	30

RULES FOR CONTEST:— (1) Use plain paper. (2) Corrections erasures not accepted. (3) Promoters' decision shall be final and legally binding and is an express condition of this contest. (4) Correctness will be judged with the **OFFICIAL SEALED SOLUTION**. No prizes will be given in cash. (5) **FIRST PRIZE:** (1) will be given to the entry found similar with the official solution. (6) Second Prize will be given to the entries found similar to the three upper horizontal rows. (7) Third Prize will be given to the entries found similar with any row or any figure any where in the official Result. (8) Fourth Prize will be given to those entries which would be found lucky entries out of the draw. (9) The winners will be informed to pay for postage, packing, licence fee in respect of the prize secured by them. (10) The winners of 3rd prizes will also have to pay half cost of the transistor in addition to the expenses and will bind themselves by our rules and procedures. (11) Send 45 paise postal stamps for official result by Express Delivery. (12) Write your address in English or Hindi only. (13) One family can send only one entry. (14) Keep cutting or copy of rules for guidance or reference in future. (15) The Promoters reserve the right to amend the Last Closing Date.

Director—Contest Department:

PROFIT CIRCLE (W)

POST BOX No. 1430, DELHI-6

Buava, even more deadly, can explode in mid-air, "shooting out pellets diagonally so that they go into holes where people are hiding." The Flechette projectiles, tiny steel nails with fins at one end, lacerate the skin, shred internal organs and lodge in the blood vessels. The plastic bombs break up into hundreds of tiny slivers, which cannot be detected by X-ray. Also in use are miniature mines shaped like leaves which are scattered over vast areas. A single plane can carry up to 7,500 such lethal "leaves."

Morticians' Meet

A "Die and We Will Do the Rest" conference of undertakers from 25 countries was held in the Belgian city of Liege at the end of April, this year. The delegates discussed in detail the latest achievements in their ancient trade and acquainted themselves with the newest models of coffins and other burial accessories.

The King of Noses

Fifty-year-old Luigi Ros-

setti was chosen Italy's "King of Noses" at a contest held recently in the North Italian town of Soragna. His nose is 69 millimetres long and 42 millimetres wide.

From page 4:

lists' tour were discussions with officials of the Regional Development Division of the Scottish Office, a visit to a jute spinning plant in Dundee, on Tayside, the seat of the jute industry in Scotland, and a tour of the Hunterston nuclear power station. Summing up the journalists' impressions of their visit, Mr. Ganguly said: "We feel Scotland is progressing economically. The country obviously has great potential, and the places we have seen, particularly Hunterston and Scott Lithgow, are full of promise. The nuclear research station will, I think, set the pace for nuclear development in the whole of Britain."

The visitors' programme in Scotland was arranged by the Scottish Office in U.K.

Rajaji: Gandhiji's 'Alter Ego'*

PYARELAL

"I WAS unjust to Rajaji because weak," Gandhiji declared: he should have prevented Rajaji from adopting the role that he had at Poona in Rajaji's own as well as in the interest of the Congress. For the Poona offer, he argued, might have been unassailable from Rajaji's own viewpoint, as Rajaji thought it was, but it did not cease to be "a denial of the last twenty years' past of the Congress," which was a humiliation for the Congress, as it was for a Congressman of Rajaji's eminence and antecedents.

Similarly, while in detention at Poona, during the "Quit India" struggle, Gandhiji had allowed Rajaji to try to come to an agreement with the Muslim League and Jinnah on the basis of the national unity of India and winning India's Independence through the joint efforts of her own children without British intervention. The later could only lead to monkey justice being dispensed to us as in the case of the two quarrelling cats in the fable. It was Gandhiji's firm conviction that no worse evil could befall India than Partition and that at the hands of the British, or under the British aegis. Every other conceivable harm could, he held, be rectified, but that resulting from the partition of India at the hands of the British would be irreparable, because irreversible. He could never doubt Rajaji's integrity and loyalty to him and to the country. Believing that an error committed in all good faith by an honest man of God can always be rectified, he had no hesitation in putting himself entirely in Rajaji's hands.

That Rajaji failed, that he was let down by those whose word he had trusted, and that perhaps, it even accelerated India's partition, is a different matter. This is not the place to unravel the skein. It is enough that the two thoroughly understood each other, and in the end, in spite of the untoward result, felt as close to each other as ever.

After Gandhiji's release, Rajaji met him at Sevagram in 1944. It was a flying visit. Gandhiji wanted him to come again for a longer discussion. It being Gandhiji's day of silence, the conversation on Gandhiji's part was carried on by scribbling on slips. Rajaji's remarks I took down as they dropped from his lips. Rajaji had become thoroughly unpopular with a section of Congressmen, and even suspect in their eyes because of his opposition to the "Quit India" struggle,

and his courtship by turns of the British officials and Jinnah. This section did not like a meeting between Gandhiji and him. Both the veterans knew it and even had a pleasant banter over it at each other's expense. This is how the dialogue proceeded:

Rajaji: I may be able to come to Sevagram by the 30th.

Gandhiji: So, I shall look out for you by the time you mention.

Rajaji: If you so desire.

Gandhiji: What is the meaning of "looking out for you?"

Rajaji: One looks out for dangers, too, sometimes!

Gandhiji: You may put it that way. I want that danger also. I have to compare notes about several things.

Rajaji: I hope both of us will have by then forgotten some of our notes so that there will be none left.

Gandhiji: Then we shall laugh together and fatten.

The topic then changed to saltless diet.

Gandhiji: I have lived without salt for years in South Africa. Here I interrupted the rule but reverted to the saltless diet on further consideration.

Rajaji: When people are made to do without salt in their diet, they are likely to take to licking walls and eating clay like children to satisfy their natural craving for salt!

Gandhiji: It will do them good. The walls will be cleaner! This is the beginning of the laugh we shall abandon ourselves to in Sevagram (when you come next).

It was now 9:45 p.m., getting late for Gandhiji who wished to go to sleep, being an early riser.

Gandhiji: Now I am going to leave you, if I am also to love you!

Gandhiji and Rajaji met again at Mahabaleshwar in May, 1945. Bhulabhai Desai had for some time been trying to negotiate a pact with Liaquat Ali. Rajaji felt that unless Gandhiji lent all his weight to Bhulabhai's effort, Bhulabhai had little chance of success, and if the Congress did not resume power in the Provinces the political deadlock would continue, which was just what the British reactionaries wanted. Gandhiji, on the other hand, felt that unless Congress could return to power on its terms, the wisest course would be to keep out:

C.R.: The people who are now saying they are doing your constructive work are really parliamentarians, but only one branch of it, and they seek power through your unofficial influence, whereas other parliamentarians are seeking it through constitutional channels. On the other hand, the only man who understands and can do your constructive work is myself.

Gandhiji: Yes.

C.R.: Are you thinking of dividing Congress work into functions?

Gandhiji: I am not thinking of division of functions. But there is a natural division. But I have not thought (of) compartments lower and higher.

C.R.: It is like *Varna Vyavastha*.

Gandhiji: Horizontal, never vertical. But my conception certainly is that we can come into our own if all take up constructive work.

C.R.: Parliamentary work will help constructive work. But (constructive work) need not necessarily be our whole care.

Gandhiji: It replaces armed activity. But we can never come into our own through parliamentary activity (alone).

Rajaji put before Gandhiji the deadlock that had followed from the position created by the Congress Working Committee's being imprisoned and the doctrine that no one could, during that time, act on behalf of the Congress. "If, on the one hand, no one outside can act on behalf of the Congress and, on the other, the British Government will not release the Working Committee members unless a basis of reconciliation has been authoritatively agreed to, there is an insoluble tangle. Someone must, some time or other, act on behalf of the Congress and accept a scheme of settlement and as a part of that scheme, the prisoners must be released. You must, therefore, act on behalf of the Congress. You know you are competent to do it. You say that every Congressman may act on his own authority as if he were President. But this is chaos. Suppose now, there are a number of President-candidates, the best man must win. That is you. The man who is, in fact, the best man to take up authority should take up responsibility at some time. There is no use asking others to negotiate without committing the Congress. There is no force behind Bhulabhai's efforts because you have not given open and unreserved approval to his proposals. It is only if you take up the authority like a dictator

can a reasonable scheme of settlement have success. You must take up authority on behalf of the Congress some time:

Gandhiji: That point may be reached some time, but not now.

C.R.: It may be that parliamentary activity will advance constructive work and that will help.

Gandhiji: Then you hold my view or I yours.

The dialogue was resumed the following day. The fate of the Ashti-Chimur prisoners was hanging in the balance. Following popular violence, the military had let loose unrestrained vendetta against the inhabitants of Ashti-Chimur in the Central Provinces. Their homes had been looted and burnt, their womenfolk openly violated. In spite of it, they being accused of political murder, their fate was believed to be sealed. The whole of India was watching the issue with bated breath. If the Government insisted on sending these unfortunates, who had been more sinned against than sinning, to the gallows in the teeth of universal popular sentiment, all its professions of wishing to transfer power to India were, in Gandhiji's eyes, worth nothing. Gandhiji had consequently made the Government's attitude in the matter the acid test of British sincerity. Gandhiji had explained all this to Bhulabhai. The dialogue naturally turned upon this issue. Gandhiji was afraid that the courts could not be depended upon to take an impartial view of the case. As he was at this time observing silence for a greater part of the day under medical advice, he wrote his observations on slips. He began, "As Churchill (was it Pritt?) has said, the courts are not beyond political influence. This, he said, some years ago about Judge Granville over a heated political case involving judicial points. In my case (in South Africa), it was a franchise question. I lost because it was political. I had engaged Asquith."

Rajaji asked him to suggest a *modus vivendi*. Gandhiji scribbled: "If Colville (the Governor of Bombay) means it, he can say, 'withdraw legal proceedings and exercise clemency.' I have done all these things in South Africa once through Hertzog. Clemency has now a greater chance of success. Let us hope that Bhulabhai is on the *qui vive*. I don't mind if the examination is started." Summing up the point of his difference with Rajaji, he continued: "I simply feel that we shall have to go through these things the rulers are bent on crushing us. The difference between me and me is not great, but it is vital, though (it seems) small. You want, if you do, pay any price. I have put a limit on the price to be paid. You if you do that, nothing will

* See MYSINDIA Dec. 31.

From previous page:

If we don't take power. I say I can afford to wait till it comes at my price, for I am making progress, however slight it may be...

Finally, he wrote: "If you feel like talking about any other thing, I am prepared and will gladly set apart the time. I simply do not worry you for I have nothing to ask. Your presence gives me solace and strength. What more do you I want? I understand you and you me."

One of the last things that Rajaji entrusted to me was a delicate mission when he was Governor of Bengal. It was concerning the Governor's latitude in dealing with his opposite number in Pakistan. In February, 1947, when Gandhiji had gone from Noakhali, first to Bihar, and from there to Delhi—never to return—he had left me behind, with some other members of his entourage, to carry on his Peace Mission under Mr. Satish Chandra Das Gupta's overall direction. In the middle of November, however, he asked me to join him in Delhi. I talked over with Gandhiji the matter that Rajaji had mentioned to me. A few days later Gandhiji took me with him to meet Lord Mountbatten and presented me to him. At the end, he asked Lord Mountbatten to send for me and hear what I might have to tell him. In my next meeting with Lord Mountbatten, I discussed with him what Rajaji had told me, as directed by Gandhiji and then made my report to Rajaji.

"I had a talk with Bapu in regard to the matter you spoke to me about. It seems the granting of that latitude rests with the Governor-General, who, in his turn, must act on the advice of his Prime Minister. So I have asked Bapu to talk the matter over with Pandit Nehru. I discussed it with the Governor-General also. He, I fancy, will be quite agreeable. Probably, he will talk it over with you during his forthcoming visit to Calcutta en route to Assam and Burma."

My letter to Rajaji continued:

"Bapu is O.K. in every respect. He is due to leave for Wardha on the 1st and expects to return here on the 13th or 14th after observing Jinnah's death anniversary on the 12th at Wardha."

A cruel irony of fate, the day Gandhiji was snatched from us, leaving the orphaned Rajaji poured his grief in his next letter.

Your letter of 29th January was waiting for me read on the morning of Feb. And in the interim Bapu who was 'O.K. every respect' is gone. Personal correspondence has been more

wickedly made pathetic than this letter of yours that was moving towards me just when the bullets were being discharged into our dear master's dear body.

"Narasimhan read this letter when I had left Calcutta and sent a copy of it to me to Delhi, which too missed me while I was there."

Soon, I was again at the receiving end *vis-a-vis* Rajaji. On the last day of his earthly sojourn, Gandhiji had asked me to disengage myself from Noakhali to accompany him to West Pakistan. Accordingly, after his death, I returned to Noakhali to disengage myself from the work there. But before that I had to fulfil some commitments that I had entered into under Gandhiji's directions. They included securing as a duty-free donation, a sizable supply of drugs, surgical instruments and clothing as relief material needed by our Peace Mission Camp in Noakhali, and getting our Government to agree to release 50 thousand maunds of rice, outside East Bengal's quota, that Khwaja Nazimuddin had asked for to tide over food shortage in some scarcity areas in East Bengal when he was Chief Minister at Dacca, and which Gandhiji had promised. For this I sought Rajaji's help and expert advice, and as ever he came to my succour.

On reaching Noakhali, I found that after Gandhiji's death some influential Muslims of Noakhali had, in collusion with the local police and other officials, stepped up harassment of the minority community and made a dead set upon the Gandhi Camps. They had even instituted criminal proceedings against Col. Jeewan Singh of the I.N.A. on a flimsy trumped-up charge. In March, 1948, I sent to Rajaji with a trusted friend two letters concerning these matters—one addressed to Khwaja Nazimuddin, the other to A. H. Abdulla, head of the Enforcement Branch of the Anticorruption Department at Dacca, and a draft of a statement to the Press.

Rajaji to Pyarelal

Calcutta, 15th March, 1948

I have sent the letters respectively to Khwaja Sahib and the Anti-corruption officer. I still think that you need not go to the newspapers over it but should maintain your cordial relation with the Premier. Once a man goes to the Press, he has declared war, and thereafter international law applies! Therefore, you may not do it now. Your power will continue and grow.

In continuation of the tradition set up by Rajaji, Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy, the Chief Minister of Bengal, had established a very healthy convention with Khwaja Nazimuddin which was beginning to bear fruit.

Pyarelal to Rajaji

Wardha, 26th April, 1948

I saw Dr. Bidhan this morning. We discussed several things. He is getting into telegraphic touch with Nazimuddin regarding Jeewan Sinha... as he has an agreement with the East Bengal Government that no political arrests will be made by either Government without consulting the other Government. I have also been able to manage about getting those supplies through to Noakhali duty-free.

The machinations of the local Muslim influentials of Noakhali reached their culmination at the time of my departure from Noakhali drew near. A couple of days before the date fixed for it, a conspiracy was hatched, under the direction of Mian Ghulam Sarwar, the organiser and mastermind behind the Noakhali disturbances (who was reported in 1971 to have been killed by the Mukti Bahini for collaboration with the Pakistani military) to plant arms in my Camp and then to denounce me and the Gandhi Peace Mission Camps to the Pakistani authorities for engaging in "subversion."

Providentially, however, I got wind of it, and reported the matter in full detail, first to the new District Magistrate of Noakhali, and then, with Satish Chandra Das Gupta to Dr. A. M. Malik (now under a shadow in Bangladesh for being a Pakistani collaborator—Ed.) who was then Minister of Agriculture and Labour. Dr. Malik immediately rang up Nur-ul-Amin, who had succeeded Khwaja Nazimuddin, when the Khwaja was elevated to Governorship of East Pakistan, and fixed an appointment with Nur-ul-Amin, we saw Hamid-ul-Huq Chowdhury, Minister of Finance, to both of whom we reported all that we had told Dr. Malik, and from there made straight for the jetty, to take the steamer for Goalando to return to Calcutta. At the jetty, I received a telephonic message from Dr. Malik. He had met the Chief Minister, he said, after we had seen him, and the Chief Minister had given him full authority to inquire into the matter and take necessary action. He requested me not to go to the Press, or report to the Government of India. I sent him a scribbled note saying that it was not my habit to rush to the Press on every occasion, but now that he had cautioned me I would be doubly careful.

Before taking leave of my Centre, I had, at a small farewell gathering, warned those who were involved in the conspiracy that their machinations had been discovered, and if, after that, anything happened they would be in for trouble. I had hoped that, in the face of this, they would desist from further mischief. But it seems that the mine had already been laid and the time-

fuse set; it was too late now to defuse it. They had arranged with the police at the Noakhali headquarters to bring a raid on my Camp, the machinery had been set in motion, and there was not enough time left to call it off.

The first thing that I learnt on reaching Calcutta from a report in the Press, followed by a telephone message from Dr. B. C. Roy, Chief Minister, Bengal, was that on the day following my talks with the Ministers at Dacca, the police from the Noakhali headquarters had arrived in force at my Centre, accompanied by a crowd of over 600 Muslims from the adjacent villages. They had cordoned off my Camp, spread themselves, all over the place, searched houses, sometimes even without the presence of the occupants at the site, the crowd mixing with the police indiscriminately in conducting the operation, and recovered "arms" and "ammunition." I immediately wrote to Hamid-ul-Huq Chowdhury, demanding deterrent action against the conspirators who had fallen into the trap that they themselves had laid. In the alternative, I insisted that they must prosecute me; there was no third course. I did not get any reply from Hamid-ul-Huq, but Dr. Malik wrote to me that he had fixed a date for the inquiry when he would visit my camp and he hoped that I would be present there at the time.

When Rajaji came to know all this, he became concerned about my safety and wrote a personal letter to Khwaja Nazimuddin to put him on the alert.

I returned to Noakhali to be present at the inquiry. On arrival at Chandpur, I was met by my Camp doctor, who told me they had succeeded in ferreting out further details of the conspiracy. They had even succeeded in tracing the weapon numbers of the arms that had been seized by the police: the names of their original owners, those who had taken them away, and from whom they had been taken by those who had planted them. As a result of the firm, unequivocal stand taken by Dr. A. M. Malik at the inquiry, the nefarious plot was completely frustrated and those who had hatched it were exposed.

On my return from Noakhali in the last week of November 1948, I made my report to Rajaji:

"I returned to Calcutta from Noakhali on the 17th instant. The inquiry... went off very well, both in the case of the 'arms find' in my camp, and in Jeewan Singhji's case. Dr. Malik managed the job with firmness and tact. He left no doubt as to what he thought of the whole affair. He even declared in his public speech at Gopirebag that if Gandhi Camp was driven

See page

Dr. Sambandam then told me that the Annamalai scientists have located a wild melon variety called *Cucumis Callosus*, which fruitflies are unable to damage. The fruit of this wild plant has a tough rind—stronger than that of the cultivated one—and the plant has a high chlorophyll content. *Cucumis Callosus* also has low concentrations of amino acids, organic acids, sugars and minerals. These characteristics protect the plant from the fruitfly at-

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campaign. A postal qualification was obtained by a certain Oliver Greenhalgh, whose application form stated that he was "a rodent operative." Two referees vouched for the fact that he had "worked diligently" during the period they had known him. Oliver Greenhalgh was...a cat.

Feminine FANCIES

A.S.C. Corps Day

THE Rain God poured down their bounty with all their might and main on A.S.C. Corps Day, so the Ceremonial Parade and Trooping of the Colours which were to have been held that morning, as well as the Variety Entertainment scheduled for the evening, were cancelled, but the Laying of a Wreath on the A.S.C. War Memorial and Inspection of the Welfare Centre, took place in traditional manner.

Undaunted and resourceful, Col. P. L. Handa, the able and efficient Commandant, who is held in such high esteem in the Centre, and his zestful band of Officers, determined that the Corps Day Dinner should, despite the cyclonic weather, be a grander show than in preceding years, and their efforts were well rewarded.

Chief guest this year was none other than Lt. Gen. Ajit Singh, PVSM, Colonel Commandant, who has had a splendid military career, and is a well loved figure in the Centre.

The General has great personal charm and *aisance* of manner. His sincerity is one of his best qualities, and he has endeared himself to his friends here, all of whom were delighted to see him again.

An interesting personality, he has many enthusiasms. He loves gardening and grows a vast variety of roses. Music means much to him and he possesses a wonderful collection of records, and another of his pastimes is golf, which has brought him many victories on the links. He is also a very

good dancer and a fine Bridge player.

Excellent arrangements had been made for the Corps Day Dinner. As over three hundred guests were expected, and nothing could be held outdoors, the entire terrace was protected with an immense water-proof awning. A part of the large hall had been cleared for dancing and people were able to sit indoors or on the covered terrace, well sheltered from chilly breezes.

And so, in an atmosphere of warmth and good cheer, Col. Handa, a charming and attentive host, welcomed his guests, while Mrs. Handa played her part in her kind and gentle way. She was wearing a striking colour contrast of navy and red.

A distinguished figure, the General moved about, smilingly renewing contacts with his friends.

Adding glamour to the evening was the presence of Mrs. Ajit Singh, who was visiting Bangalore for the first time.

Graceful and well proportioned, with clear-cut classic features, she was wearing a sari of gleaming white charmeuse. A delightful young person, sharing all her husband's interests, she appeared happy to meet his friends.

Another Army V.I.P. at the party was General Kumaramangalam, who had climbed to the top of the military ladder and occupied the post of C.A.S. of the Indian Army. With him, was his gracious wife



Lt. Gen. Ajit Singh cutting the tape at the A.S.C. Officers' Mess. On his right is Col. Handa, the Commandant, and on the extreme left is Maj. Soin, the Adjutant

Philoo, who is noted for her poise and elegance.

Also present were Brigadier Man Singh, Sub Area Commander, and vivacious Pushpi; and Mrs. Reggie Rebello, Chief Secretary to the Government of Mysore, accompanied by his gentle wife Ophelia, in a sari of dark green and black.

Going out of their way to make guests feel welcome were Brigadier Noshir Master, the popular former Commandant, and bright and lively Marook, and Brigadier Stan Kamath and Betty, both of whom are always so helpful.

A famous doctor present was Dr. Rustom Vakil, one of the world's finest cardiologists. The only Indian to have received the Lasker Award, he is frequently invited to England and the States to deliver lectures, and was here from Bombay by invitation of the Institute of Aviation Medicine.

He had addressed the Institute that morning, greatly impressing everybody with his brilliant talk. He spoke for one-and-a-half hours, and answered all manner of technical questions without making a single reference to notes!

Despite his fame and high degrees, Rustom Vakil is modest and gentle and has a cheerful and happy disposition. His wife Jeroo is sweet and vivacious; and it is always a pleasure to be in their company. She was looking very pretty that evening in a sari of printed nylon bought in London.

Both of them were being introduced by Air Commodore Jimmy Manekshaw, A.O.C.-in-C. of the Institute of Aviation Medicine, who was accompanied by his tall and elegant wife Bhicoo and lily-like daughter Erna.

Among the many other guests were Air Commodore and Mrs. Majumdar of Jalahalli Station; Gp. Capt. and Mrs. Sahgal of the A.F.T.C.; Col. and Mrs. Kalyandesani, and other Officers of the Sappers and Miners; Col. Basu and Col. Baines of the Agram Hos-

pital, both accompanied by their ladies; Lieut. Mehrish, the Governor's tall and stalwart Kashmiri A.D.C., with his comely wife Usha; and Major Sharma, P.R.O., Sub Area, with his bright wife Kavita, in dark blue and gold with matching "tiki."

Two A.S.C. Officers who deserve much credit for the evening's perfect arrangements were Lt. Col. Srinivasan, the competent Deputy Commandant, and the enthusiastic Adjutant, Major Soin.

Helping them in their gentle way were Padma Srinivasan, a slim figure in melon silk bordered with maroon, and Bubby Soin, who despite her little-girl air, is extremely capable. She had been responsible for the attractive Ikebana flower decorations and had been assisted by Mrs. Vaz.

Among other A. S. C. Officers and their kind ladies helping to see to the needs of all were Lt. Col. and Mrs. Ram Singh; Lt. Col. Sunita; Lt. Col. and Mrs. T. K. Menon; Lt. Col. Srinivasan, who has now taken up farming and grows ginger in Whitefield; Major and Mrs. Isaac; Major Martin and his pleasant wife, who is always so well turned out; Major Murgai, former Adjutant, and Mrs. Murgai; Major Bertie Menon, a very obliging Officer, as usual full of life, and his wife, in red; Major Papali and dainty young Barbara; and Capt. Manjunath with Manju, another good-looker.

A little word about Dr. Kathy Dorairaj, who is in charge of the Welfare Centres of the A. S. C. and of 515 Command Workshops. Not only is she a really clever doctor, but she is always ready to submit to a busman's holiday! With her was her husband, Major Dorairaj, here on leave.

Dancing was popular, and everyone much enjoyed the tempting, piping-hot barbecue, ideal on a winter's evening. Dinner was served later in the candle-lit dining hall.

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Taken at the A.S.C. Dinner. From left, Brig. Man Singh, Mrs. Ajit Singh, Col. and Mrs. Handa, Lt. Gen. Ajit Singh and Mrs. Man Singh



From page 6:

out, it would mean driving out a crore and a half of Hindus, and, in return, the Pakistan State being saddled with the responsibility of having to receive, four crores of Muslims from the Indian Union as refugees. (Pir Sahib) Ghulam Sarwar tried to browbeat the Minister and there was more than one sharp passage at arms between the two, in which the latter did not spare the militant, Pir Saheb, as, for instance, when the Pir Saheb contended that association of Hindus and Muslims must result in the undermining of the latter's faith and the Pakistan State. The least... he (Pir Sahib) demanded was that no Indian Union man should be allowed to operate in Pakistan. The Minister's reply was sharp and decisive.

"In the course of the inquiry at Bhatialpur, I was able to tell the Minister that I had even discovered the source from which the arms had been obtained, how they had been taken to Mian Ghulam Sarwar's residence and from there handed to his agents for planting. A local Muslim, an ex-lieutenant of the Mian Saheb, who had the story from the mouth of the person who had actually supplied the arms, had come to me the previous night. I got him to tell the Minister what he had learnt. During the inquiry, the District Magistrate told the Minister that the police themselves now admitted that the arms had obviously been planted and that my Camp stood exonerated. Their concern, he added, now was to find out the person who had planted the arms. I told the Minister that it was a bootless search, as the conspiracy had been hatched and directed by two officials of the police themselves. One of them I had already named (when I had met the Minister at Dacca). All that now remained was to bring to book, and take exemplary action against those who were known to have engineered the plot. They had been trapped in their own trap like corrupt officers (who are) caught with marked currency notes in their pocket. No further proof was necessary. The fact that the authorities had detailed information (beforehand) of what was being hatched and that it had subsequently happened exactly according to plan, was enough."

Rajaji felt relieved. But when I met him afterwards, I got from him the soundest rating I had ever received in my life. In my letter, I had set down something which, though innocent by itself, would, in terms of international relationships, be considered indiscreet—now that East Bengal was "foreign territory." For this he took me to task.

I pleaded by way of mitigation

tion that, after all, what I had said was contained in a personal letter which was to be delivered by a trusted emissary.

But it was no good. I was in for more reproof—and richly deserved, too.

"Do you not see," he said, "that you put it all down in black and white in a signed letter...?"

"And that addressed to H.E. the Governor-General of India," I added, completing the sentence for him.

He saw that I had had enough of it. The lesson had gone home. With a forgiving smile, he set me at my ease.

Full of years and honours, Rajaji had lived to witness his ninety-fourth birth anniversary. As a patriot who gave up at one stroke his flourishing legal practice and thought nothing of spurning all the glittering prizes of life that could be his for the taking; as an ardent social reformer who took up the cause of Prohibition; who, although born and brought up in an orthodox Vaishnava Brahmin family, as Chairman of the Salem Municipality, dared to break the orthodox religious tradition of South India by posting Harijans to operate the water taps in Brahmin localities, undeterred by the storm it raised, long before the Congress had adopted Prohibition or the eradication of Untouchability as its programme; as an administrator, who by his firm and tactful handling of the administrative machine, won the respect and loyalty of the services, on the one hand—to the extent of making the Chief Secretary of the Government, an Englishman, feel proud to accept at his hands a piece of *Khad* and don a *Khad* uniform—and the deep appreciation and admiration of Lord Erskine, his Governor, on the other; as a political leader, who scored one of the most spectacular victories at the 1937 Madras elections, and as Premier of Madras, virtually wiped out of the Justice Party, without incurring mortal enmities; as a successful Governor of that most difficult of Provinces, Bengal; as the first Indian Governor-General of India under Independence; and as a writer of luminous prose, that has a distinctiveness all its own, in Tamil—his mother tongue, which he loved with a deep, passionate love, he established a record, which even if it had been confined to any one of these fields would have assured him a permanent niche in India's temple of fame. If I were asked what was Rajaji's finest hour, I would unhesitatingly point to the period of his self-discovery following the launching of *Satyagraha* against the Rowlatt Act by Gandhiji.

It has pithily been observed that it is not the stage one has reached in the ascent to one's ideal, which by its very nature must remain unattainable, but the accelerated impulse towards

its attainment that constitutes the true measure of one's stature. Thus, Zaccheus the publican, the adulteress, and the thief on the cross by the side of Jesus, represented a higher degree of attainment than the self-satisfied Pharisee who had literally kept all the laws and commandments and never consciously erred, or even the chosen disciples of the Master—none of whom was by His side in the last hour of His trial, and one of whom even denied Him ere this.

Rajaji attained his greatest height in the years following his discovery of Gandhiji and Gandhiji's discovery of him, during the phase of *Satyagraha* and Non-cooperation struggle that closed with the Mahatma's first arrest and imprisonment. It was then that the nascent incandescence of Rajaji's spirit that dazzled and made him the idol of the young, particularly the students of Madras, and swept even their elders, the intellectual elite off their feet, shone at its brightest. The scepticism and doubts that later assailed his spirit had not yet made their appearance. His pristine faith in the master's philosophy of *Satyagraha* and the master's faith in him as a *Satyagrahi*, filled him with boundless self-confidence. The prospect of limitless horizons opened up by the new way of life shown by Gandhiji had fired his spirit. The serenity, the inner poise and the joy of self-discovery that filled this phase of his life are reflected in the tremulous tenderness and luminous delicate humour of his two letters to Gandhiji from prison, after his incarceration in 1922. Here they are:

(I)

Three months' Simple is too little, but if *Swaraj* is won by you earlier it makes no difference. I hope when I come back, you will have finished the *Swaraj* work and got back to your normal occupation of research into dietetics.

(II)

...I...am completely shut out from all politics, news and newspapers. What an ideal condition which, I know, you are enjoying!

The greatest common measure between thoughts, words, and what the jail authorities would allow, and what I need write to you at all, is but little.

Your eyes would flow with delight if you saw me here in my solitary cell spinning—spinning not as a task imposed by a tyrant faddist, but with pleasure. Between spinning and beautiful *Ramayana*, I have been spending practically the whole of the time left me by the agony of eating, washing of dishes, etc. The spinning wheel I have is a real beauty. It is a life companion and younger brother in my cell.

This *Ashram* is very much less congested than yours at Sabarmathi and I wish more people understood the real advantages of this retirement and discipline.

In his later years Rajaji scaled many a pinnacle of success but he

"never could capture

The first fine careless rapture"

of that early fine mood of self-discovery,

Some had compared Rajaji to Chanakya, others with Hitler, still others had endearingly called him the Pussyfoot Johnson of India. It is true that no Gordian knot of diplomacy that Chanakya could ever devise could unnerve him. As an administrator, he stood no nonsense, an ex-Civil-Resister beyond compare, he shrank from no measure, however stern, to curb abuse of liberty. In theory, at least, he could be as ruthless as Hitler: one of his *bon-mots* that attained celebrity in the days before Independence was, "We must begin our Independence with a liberal measure of hangings to make it bear fruit." As a Prohibitionist, he was perhaps more successful in his region than Pussyfoot Johnson was in America.

"Shankaracharya of South Indian politics" would not be an inapt description of him as a political leader. Disparaging tongues dubbed him "the lost leader," which was utter nonsense, besides being puerile. He never bartered his principles for gain or for expediency. The only figure with whom to my mind, he could be appropriately compared was that of Bhishma—the doughty warrior of the *Mahabharata*, with a relentless will and matchless self-abnegation, who thought nothing of making the greatest sacrifice that a man could be called upon to make for the sake of *dharma*, terrible in war, great in peacetime, a man deeply versed in the scriptures, who did not spare himself for not having kept, what the Buddha called, the principle of "right living"; the father-figure to whom came all those to whom he had pledged his sword as well as those who had felt the edge of that sword—to gather wisdom from his aged lips, as he lay on his bed of arrows, battle-scarred, bruised and battered, but with his mind unruffled but serene, awaiting the great call to the Valhalla of the brave. What tainted Bhishma's judgment was his eating of the salt of his unrighteous *Kautilya* masters. Buddhi has been described as *Karmaanugaami*, handmaid of our way of life. Non-violence, as Gandhiji pointed out, becomes tainted when it takes power. It was assumption of power that coloured Rajaji's judgment and opinions. He had willy-nilly to obey the dynamics of the machine of which he became a part. And whatever we do, our intellect, that handman, rationalizes.

See opposite page