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On Krishna Menon

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" It is widely believed that Menon thought color prejudice was to blame for the girl's decision and that this feeling accounts for much of his present hostility to Westerners. Vincent Sheehan sees a look of "ancient and remembered wrongs" in Menon's smoldering eyes and concludes that he must have been dreadfully insulted or maltreated at some time. My own feeling is that it would be wrong to ascribe too much to his unrequited love, although, of course, if he had married and had children, he would probably be a different person today.

" One unforeseen result of Menon's blighted romance was that he and Nehru were brought together for the first time. After giving up his fast, Menon announced that he would stake everything on a giant rally in London for Indian freedom. He wrote to Nehru, who was in Switzerland at the time, and asked him to address the meeting. "who is this Menon?" Nehru asked when he got the letter. Minoo R. Masani, then a friend of Menon and now one of his bitterest foes, happened to be with Nehru and described the young Keralan in glowing terms. Nehru reluctantly agreed to go. He and Menon found immediate rapport.

" In 1938 Nehru and Menon met in Barcelona and toured the trenches of the Spanish Republican Army for five days. They underwent nightly bombing attacks. The experience moved Nehru deeply. "There, in the midst

of want and destruction and ever-impending disaster," he wrote later, "I felt more at peace with myself than anywhere else in Europe. There was light there, the light of courage and determination and of doing something worth while."

"Afterward, when he returned to London with Menon, he says that he "met people of all degrees and all shades of opinion." Purshottam Trikumdas, a leading Indian socialist who also visited London in 1938, told me, "Menon threw no one but Communists at me during my one-month stay. He did the same thing with Nehru."

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"Was Menon a member of the Communist party at this time? Like everything about him, the question produces more heat than light. The New Statesman says that the Labour party leadership "believed or at least alleged Menon was a Communist." Trikumdas says that Menon was a Communist card-carrier from 1937. Masani, a Socialist turned conservative, who has known Menon since 1926, says that Menon has been a "consistent fellow traveler" since 1936 or 1937.

On Indira Gandhi

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" One of the Indian students who volunteered to help Menon at the League was Indira Gandhi, then an undergraduate at Somerville College, Cambridge. "

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" When her mother became seriously ill, Indira accompanied her to Switzerland, where Kamala died in 1936. The following year she was admitted to Somerville College, Oxford, where she joined the British Labour Party. " I thought if I have to join something," she told me, " I'll join the Labour party." " Of course, she found Labour more politically congenial than the Conservatives. She got to know the late Ernest Bevin, Ellen Wilkinson, and other party leaders, and attended Labour rallies. Harold Laski's widow remembers her as a "mousy, shy little girl who didn't seem to have any political ideas."

" While she was at Oxford, Indira met Krishna Menon, a man who was often to re-enter her life and to influence it profoundly. "I saw a lot of him, or, rather, a lot of his office," she says, " because I worked for the India League in the afternoons and evenings. In the evenings he was usually away organizing meetings. He was very good at that. Menon gave you the feeling there was something worth-while to do for India. "

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On JP

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" By December 1939, even JP realized the situation and admitted that the Communist party "stood as the sworn enemy of the Congress Socialist party and of every other progressive organization with which it had worked before." Four months later, the CSP National Executive belatedly resolved to expel all Communist members. Large chunks of what the socialists had fondly considered their party broke off and openly joined the Communist party of India (CPI). South Indian CSP units defected en masse to the Communists. As one socialist leader ruefully conceded, the CSP was "all but finished."

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" Nowhere has Narayan's myth-shattering been more valuable than in the realm of Indian foreign policy. In a scathing speech in Bombay on November 11, 1956, he denounced the Nehru government's "perverse and false" view of the Hungarian uprising. The audience in the hall sat spellbound. Commenting on Krishna Menon's attempt to depict the slaughter in Budapest as Hungary's "domestic affair", Narayan said, "As an Indian I hang my head in shame that a spokesman of my country should have gone so far in cynical disregard of truth and the fundamental principles of freedom and peace that are said to guide our international conduct." He pointed out that India's vote in the U.N. General Assembly against the second resolution on Hungary (with only the Soviet bloc and Yugoslavia) was the logical consequence of Nehru's speech to the All-India Congress Committee a few days before, in which he largely parroted the Soviet line on Hungary.

With something of his old polemic zest, Narayan exploded, "It took him (Nehru) two weeks ~~to~~ make up his mind about an event the significance of which should be clear to any person acquainted even slightly with the situation in Eastern Europe It is too sad for words. To apply one set of rules to Egypt and another to Hungary is to make use of a double standard which, to say the least, is unworthy of this country. The sooner we renounce this double standard the better for India's honor, for the peace of the world, and for good will among nations. "

" Narayan's "double standard" speech echoed throughout India. He had given pointed expression to the educated Indian public's dissatisfaction with Nehru's equivocations on Hungary. His was the voice of loyal opposition. There could be no higher tribute to this success in this role than Nehru's long-winded attempts to justify India's original stand on Hungary even as he modified it to conform more closely to the facts. The Prime Minister had grossly underestimated his own public.

" The Tibetan revolt of March 1959 produced a similar situation; Nehru sought to minimize the struggle as merely " a conflict of wills." As the Chinese systematically crushed Tibetan resistance, he quibbled over the question of China's "suzerainty" or "sovereignty" in Tibet and finally concluded that there was no real difference between the two terms. In either case, he said, Tibet was China's affair.

"Narayan led the outburst of protest. He rejected the "mothbeaten imperialistic formula" by which Nehru sought to portray Tibet as a purely Chinese concern and asked: "Overseas empires are perhaps easy to spot, but why should it be so difficult to discern the reality behind the land empires whose contiguous territories create the illusion of a single nation-hood ?"

" He cited the historical record. China, he said, had not exercised suzerainty, sovereignty, or any other form of control over Tibet at any time from 1912 to 1950, when Chinese Communist forces invaded the country

and compelled the Dalai Lama to accept the so-called Seventeen-Point Agreement. At this time India told the U.N. General Assembly that Chinese troops had halted some 300 miles from Lhasa and that the Indian Government was "certain that the Tibetan question would be settled by peaceful means." After Peking broke its pledge to respect Tibet's autonomy, the Dalai Lama's government repudiated the Seventeen-Point Agreement on March 11, 1959, thereby provoking a full-scale Chinese assault. "

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