

## 18. ROUND THE WORLD

When one goes 'round the world', unless one is a government minister, an administrator, or a student, one is generally very frivolous about things. For myself, I find it exceedingly difficult to draw the line between frivolity and seriousness, and at times I have felt that the most serious things in life are probably those that express themselves in frivolity. Going 'round the world' is sometimes a pretty disgusting affair, packing and unpacking and leaving a town almost as one arrives in it, and in these days of air travel one is often bewildered and feels that one sees nothing and begins to hanker for the days of the bullock-cart when one could know the warm details of strange people among whom one travelled.

I started from Calcutta on a 'round the world' flight and went in a westerly direction, sometimes going up and down, north and south, but always westerly, and came back to Calcutta. This was in 1951, and I found for myself that what my geography teacher had taught me at school was correct, and the world was round.

Until I reached Rome there was nothing much to report. In fact I had seen that part of the world fairly often, except that at Rome I was held up for about ten hours because a revolution had broken out in Bangkok and the plane that was to carry me onwards from Rome to Frankfurt had been delayed because of this revolution. What the revolution was, I might tell you when we get to Bangkok, but anyhow there was a revolution.

Rome was a great city in the past, is to this day in some ways a great city. It is the entrance to modern civilization, to the civilization of which Europe has been the lord and master. I venture to add that it does to a certain extent depict the weaknesses and failings of the civilization that one finds right

up to Rome, from Calcutta or further eastwards to Rome, Nevertheless, one starts feeling in Rome that one has entered a different world. Westwards, Rome to Honolulu, stretches this different world, of good food, good clothes and good houses, as if, in an experiment, the past three hundred years of human history had cut our world into two. Well north of the Equator, excluding China, is this world of comparative comfort, and southwards, except Australia and the like, is the world of misery, dirt, disease, and dismal poverty.

Germany has indeed been one of the most remarkable spots of this European civilization and in some ways its most terrifying spokesman. Some German poet or scholar likened man to a dynamo in a matchbox, and if there is one country in the world that typifies this, that is Germany. Twice it stood up almost alone against the world imagining that it would accomplish the trick, but it was mad. The German people have somewhat realized that they have been mad, at least in recent history, but not every body is convinced that, with a little more cunning, the venture might not succeed. After all, the world is a most horribly complicated place, and the line between good and evil is certainly not the one usually drawn. That Hitler was evil can only be doubted by a lunatic. But was he so definitely more evil than Churchill or Stalin? If history should be evaluated more according to consequences than motivations, the two primarily individually responsible for the freedom of India as of many other countries were Gandhi and Hitler, the one good and the other evil. That should certainly not make us worship evil. It should certainly make us wary of choosing between one evil and another, for the evil that has won decks itself up in colourful motivations, often only for a short while, but sometimes almost forever.

Life goes on in Europe almost as usual. In spite of war's devastation and destruction, there is no other city in the world which has a more luxurious appearance than Frankfurt, a strange contradiction. The shops of Frankfurt are laden with the choicest consumer goods, and the buildings that are being

put up have an exuberant exterior. I cannot say how far this is the attempt of a sick person trying to persuade himself into the belief that he is healthy. The Germans are a very clever people. They have up till now given of themselves and their abilities to the existing civilization, and it is debatable if they will be able to help give birth to the new civilization.

Of politics and a little frivolity I now give a brief idea. Almost all my old German friends are dead, either in war or in concentration camps. I occasionally meet one, when I am in Europe, and Werner and I were in the university together. Werner Oertel is now mayor of a small-sized village in Germany, and as he had told me three years earlier, not this time, I am probably his only old-time friend left in the world. A German saying that to an Indian, that he is his only friend, because all his German friends are dead, that is our terrible and lonesome world. Some of his relations are alive, and so we thought we might knock around Frankfurt a bit, and that knocking around a bit meant knocking about till six or seven in the morning. There were cafes and restaurants and dance places where that part of the Frankfurt population which was uprooted from Berlin, tries to live as if they were in Berlin. What happens when nostalgia affects the mind: in that crowd of Germans and amongst German writers, butlers, musicians, and the rest of them, I, an ancient Berliner, was a greater kinsman of these expatriates from Berlin than the other Germans who had not lived in Berlin. That again is one of the strangest things of life and about the most appealing and refreshing when national, caste, and religious barriers are pulled down and a bond such as this, that I and they had lived together in Berlin and remembered some of the songs that were hits fifteen to twenty years earlier, makes up a new and distinct entity that destroys old rigidities.

I was pretty late for the International Socialist Conference. I reached there almost at the close. There had barely four hours left, and of course there was no question of their revising any of the resolutions that they had already passed after seven

days of long deliberations. But their resolution on war and peace was something which I could not quite stomach. They were generous enough to ask me to express my opinion on it freely, frankly, even if I were in outright opposition to it. They had adopted the free world's viewpoint against the totalitarian world's viewpoint, of the western democracies against the east European communism, a viewpoint which I could not accept. I made my objection perfectly clear and said that for me there were three worlds: the Atlantic world, the Soviet world, and a world which refuses to associate itself completely with either. They were very courteous in listening to me.

Some of these Germans came along enthusiastically at the end of my speech, the Britishers also. The Britishers are very mature in their conduct and manners, and the International Secretary of the British Labour Party, for instance, told me that he was surprised how much he agreed with me and said that he agreed with me 75%, to which I said I hoped that the day would not be distant when he started agreeing with me about the rest of the 25%. That was the kind of talk with the Britishers. The Germans said that they were very happy I had come even at the last moment, and they were very glad to hear that other voice which had not been raised at the conference and which needed to be raised, at which I was happy. I asked these Germans, "Why don't you speak it out yourself?" They were thorough people. Their answer was that they could not do it because it would not come out of their innermost recesses, I could because I felt it far more deeply than any European could, and furthermore they were not in a position to do so.

From Germany I went to Yugoslavia, which in one word is a communist country trying hard to be socialist. When I said at one of their press conferences that I disliked communism intensely although I liked the Communist Party of Yugoslavia more than many socialist parties of Europe, there was considerable amusement, but also a great deal of bewilderment and annoyance. After all they are a communist

country, and to talk like that in a communist country is somewhat annoying, at least to the diehard communists. And the editor of their great paper *Borba* could not prevent himself from asking me the question, did I mean Stalinism when I said that I disliked communism? I said that I would leave that to him to interpret, but as I was concerned, I disliked the whole doctrine of communism with its poisonous teeth which had further degenerated into Stalinism, and if communism would include decentralization of economic and political power, if it included the use of good means, then of course, I would consider it a kindred doctrine alongside of socialism.

This communist country, Yugoslavia, is trying hard to decentralize its factories, which have been handed over to more or less decentralized management. A committee of three managers and supervisors for every factory, a manager up to now appointed by the respective department of the state, the president of the trade union of the particular factory, and the president of the works committee, which is an elected body—these three persons from a committee of management for the factory. Alongside, Yugoslavia has put through certain laws whereby political power is in a certain measure handed over to the Constituent Republics and almost autonomous districts. I understand that they have gone further in recent months and have permitted individual factories to enter into relationships of export and import with foreign concerns. That is something surprising. That a single factory should be empowered to deal with foreign countries for export and import is something which has got to be thought over, and, if it succeeds, it will probably be the answer to the somewhat valid charge against state management that it covers up inefficiency.

When a factory is run inefficiently, but is state managed and state owned, that inefficiency, cannot be uncovered, and inefficient personnel and managers can go on drawing their salaries from the state industry. Should each individual factory be allowed to enter into export and import relationships with foreign factories and concerns, then inefficiency could be

easily uncovered, and there would be lots of punishment—I do not mean legal punishment, but economic punishment—to factories which run inefficiently, but also economic reward. Can I, however, say that the Yugoslav decentralization of economy and politics corresponds to the Indian Socialist picture of decentralization? To some extent, yes. And yet in one vital direction, no, because in management and administration they are decentralizing, but in the use of machinery and capitalization they are pursuing the same methods as America or Russia, that is, trying to achieve a higher and yet higher capitalization. Some of their leaders seem to be aware of the problem, because when the attention of Moshe Pijade, who is one of their big men, was drawn to it, he said, yes.

New machines will probably have to be invented and manufactured continually, and yet some of their leaders seem to think that no matter how high the rate of capitalization and how big the factories, with decentralized control and management everything will be all right. I cannot find my way to agree with such a view. Decentralization of management and administration must go alongside of decentralization of technology, because one cannot very well have a centralized and mass production technology and try to introduce decentralized management on the top of it, kind of superimposed decentralization from the outside on a centralized section of the economy.

The Yugoslavs have also been trying to achieve a great measure of equality. When I was there the usual gap was 1 to 6. The lowest income being 1 and the highest 6. Probably the most equal country in the world, where inequality is removed to the greatest possible extent, but then Mr. Kardelj, their foreign minister, told me that they could not bear the strain, and they were, therefore, thinking in terms of 1 to 10. I asked them a question: are all these gaps verily in substance what they seem to convey in form? Under a dictatorship it is always possible to so alter these gaps as to make them meaningless

through all kinds of privileges and facilities and the system of double prices. In India we are familiar with such a system of double prices, a rationed sector and an unrationed sector, a government sector and a non-government sector, so that a certain type of people can have the same commodity at fantastically lower prices. For instance I often have had experiences of dak bungalows, rest and circuit houses, where charges are very low, but where one can get accommodation only if one has a permit from authority, and naturally only those can get permits who are a part of the government or on the right side of the authorities concerned. With such privileges and facilities these apparent gaps would be meaningless.

We are all comrades, and I do not particularly mind irritating people even if they happen to be prime ministers or foreign ministers, and also foreigners, for after a time they realize that what I say is not out of malicious intentions. So I got an answer and I was told that Yugoslavia would before the year 1951 was out, end the system of double prices, at any rate make it impossible for a communist to buy things at a price cheaper than the usual price that other had to pay. The system of double prices awakens in me automatically a sense of awkwardness and a certain suspicion that it is probably being used by authority for purposes as in olden times of privilege. Palaces and big houses of olden times have changed hands. I would say that half of them have been converted into secretariats and homes for government ministers. The king moves out and the dictator moves in: the biggest industrialist moves out and the foreign minister moves in. Nevertheless, it would be ridiculous to confine one's attentions to this half, because the other half of palaces and big homes have been converted into rest houses for authors and writers, workers, peasants, commercial artists, labourers. I could see that in their summer capital, Bled, somewhat like Nainital, a beautiful town, and I was told there were rest houses for students, wearied in spirit after a great deal of study, who could

take a week off and go and stay there in that beautiful capital. So look at both sides of the picture; half of the houses converted into government houses, and the other half into all kinds of resorts and rest houses and places for play and sport for the mass of the population or its large segments.

The Yugoslavs are a very brave people, and if for nothing else they would fascinate me because right in the lion's mouth they have had courage and bravery to say no to its dictates, and to go on following their own national policy, such as it may be. A people such as that instantaneously attracts one's admiration, and not instinctively alone but also for other substantial reasons, that such courage on the part of small nations is the guarantee that someday we shall gain a world from which the international caste system will have been abolished, from which the Brahmin nations and the Pariah nations will have been eliminated, and all nations will strive and work together on the firm earth of equality. That at any rate is to me the great thing about Yugoslavia.

There are of course other features of attraction. For example, my air hostess from Frankfurt to Belgrade was called Meera, which in Slav means peace, and has come to symbolize devoted passion in India, probably another example of the physical and cultural approximation of humanity. Meera was a splendid woman who did her job very well, fed us exceedingly well. The Yugoslavs are very good eaters. In fact, an afternoon tea was almost like a lunch or dinner. But when I happened to meet her accidentally on a Belgrade road, for a while I could not recognize her, until I was told by one of the secretaries of the Communist Party who was accompanying me, "Can't you recognize her? That's Meera, your air hostess." And then of course I scratched my hair and said, oh, yes, that is Meera, because she had changed herself into a donna, looking all fancy and beautiful. But unluckily with persons like me, probably because of their middle age, probably because of a curiously unhelpful and a somewhat fading reputation, it was not possible for me to meet Meera except for that fleeting one

moment on the road.

There were youth brigades. The one I saw consisted of nearly 70,000 young boys and girls, predominantly from Yugoslavia but also comprising an international centre, because most socialist and liberal youth organizations from the rest of Europe, particularly from Scandinavia, had sent their contingents.

The communists can be very good tempters. Sometimes they put special cars at one's disposal, special trains, and it was a wonderful lovely special train, probably used by Marshal Tito. I was glad to have travelled in that. I hope, however, that we shall be able to achieve a socialism in which there will be no special trains. I know that a number of persons who go all over the world, government delegates and others, and particularly such as have not been to Europe in their younger days, are infatuated with the red carpets that are placed for them in all these countries and come back with glowing accounts. That is a weakness that we have to guard against. Now that we are free, we must not be taken in by red carpets and special trains and good food, and perhaps also by other beautiful and lovely things that are thrown in.

A railway was being constructed by voluntary labour, a railway 90 miles long with bridges and embankments, and I saw many of these contingents at work and did a little digging myself. I have done digging in India with the spade when one has to bend, but the digging in Yugoslavia and in all European countries is done with a shovel. You stand erect, bend a bit. There is a long handle, and you use the pressure of your foot in order to push that shovel into the ground. You dig up a much larger mass of earth than with the spade, and then you lift some and throw it away. The digging was done quite splendidly by these young boys and girls, who also looked very charming and beautiful, because the girls had just their bathing suits on. A railway was being constructed in fun, and I believe that these girls and boys were gaining some delight and health and perhaps also a broader perspective. I cannot forgive myself for

not remembering the name of a German-speaking Yugoslav girl, who put me such intense questions for so long. Then there was that Chinese girl in Hong Kong, Catherine, I think, who wanted to know from me if a girl could do all that a boy could. What lovely faith, that she should put me this question, perhaps her heart's deepest cry, or as a matter of that, any woman's, for this world is not unto woman what it is unto man. I can now understand Charlie Chaplin. These little girls induce the desire to mould them, to cushion them against the world. That reminds me of my interpreter, Anna, who appeared to have a story to tell, but who was not communicative enough, and whom few would call pretty, but I would.

In the ultimate picture of Marxist society, we are all the time told that the stage will come when government and police and the army and the rest of them will not be necessary, because the state, according to communist thinking, is the result of a clash of classes, and so long as there is class struggle, there is disharmony and policemen and judges are necessary. After the cessation of classes and the state, things will be administered and men will not need to be governed. This is the whole Marxist theory of the abolition of the state. In actual practice, however, far from abolishing the state, what they do is to abolish all other parties, except their own, namely the Communist Party.

I used to raise this question with the common Yugoslav communist: what about democracy in your society? Sometimes I irritated them, but nevertheless I stuck to my question, and they gave all kinds of answers, only one of which drew my partial sympathy. They said that they were surrounded by hostile forces, and therefore, it was not possible for them to give the same liberties to anti-social elements as, say, a larger country like India with vast elbow room could afford to give. Apart from this reasoning, the Yugoslav communist have started thinking in terms of another category. When they are asked about permitting the growth of other

political parties and systems of thought, they say that they are wishing to achieve a condition in which even the Communist Party will cease to exist, the withering away of the Communist Party. And if they should be able to achieve such a withering away of the Communist Party, although under conditions of dictatorship, their claim is that they would have laid the basis of the withering away of the state and the dictatorship. One tries to achieve democratic objectives either by way of permitting other political parties to exist alongside the Communist Party or one can approach the same aim by trying to weaken and dissolve the Communist Party, so that no party exists. And after you have achieved the condition in which no party exists or there is a multiplicity of parties, with the abolition of classes, you would probably be able to achieve the withering away of the state. I am merely giving you their reasoning. They are doing a lot of thinking about it; that at least consoles me. Although a large part of their argument is self-deceiving, it satisfied me to this extent, that the Yugoslav part of mankind is familiar and aware of these various problems that are being raised. I must add the postscript, as I am editing this speech eight years after it was made, that familiarity with problems without correct sights has been of a little use to Yugoslavia as to India.

As I have tarried so long in a single country, there will not be much time to go 'round the world', and I will therefore, skip over to the U.S.A. I had been familiar with America through stories and books, and I have sometimes made the claim that I have perhaps known her better than many Americans themselves. Anyhow the actual thing bewilders, and particularly when I had to rush about from city to city. It is a huge mass of country. One does not perhaps receive the fullness of the impact all at once. I do not think I was particularly bewildered by the immensity of their technological achievements, may be because I was jealous, that would be the American explanation, may be, because I believed that it was a mark of a dying civilization. But the thing is utterly

bewildering, whether it is New York or San Francisco or even their smaller towns. In a small town of 5,000 in America there is probably a lot more electricity used than in Hyderabad and Secunderabad taken together. I would venture to suggest that it might equal the amount of electricity used in Bombay. To talk of the amount of electricity used in New York, I suppose that the whole of India does not use that much electricity.

These are certain impressions which impinge on the mind, and as I had to do a lot of looking at American towns from above, I also felt at times that it was a technicolour civilization. All kinds of lights, green, blue, red and white, and one does not know which hue, and it seems to be almost always day no matter what time one travels. Heaps and heaps of light underneath you, this is the bewildering achievement of technology in the U.S.A. When I returned to my houses in New York, both temporary houses for two or three days (I stayed with Mr. Garry Davis, who is the world's first citizen, and Steve, the televisionist), I was bewildered but quickened.

Garry tore up his passport in Paris and created a good deal of noise for himself and, with that single act, became as popular a foreigner as Winston Churchill over all Europe. He is fascinated by Mahatma Gandhi and is a remarkable young man, but I wish he had some more impersonal width. He has now gone back to the U.S.A. and has not yet asked for his citizenship papers. There is a great deal of hue and cry. He is the first individual to have deliberately and designedly torn up his passport, saying that he did not believe in national citizenship, which brought him into all kinds of difficulties. He was also in French prisons half-a-dozen times or so, and was almost at once released because every time some French people came to his rescue. Steve was in the theatre and television trade. His parents were vacationing in Europe, and we had the run of his splendid apartment. He told me that Greta Garbo, whom, and Einstein, I had wanted very much to see, was in private the opposite of what she was in public; gay to friends while publicity had presented her as stark and

forbidding. Steve made some effort, but my ill-luck would have Greta in San Francisco when I was in New York and also the reverse. Steve once drove me from New York to a certain Barr's College, over a hundred miles away, at a terrific speed. On the way, we stopped for a few minutes at his country house. To this day, I do not understand how he could own this huge place, acres and acres with trees and rocks and a river flowing amidst. He did not appear to be so rich. His cottage was somewhat of a dream, simply built out of primitive materials but in a modern way, and they had built it themselves without workmen. A deep freeze gave us all that we wanted, milk for coffee, strawberries and cream, and much else, although Steve told us he had not been there for several months. A domestic servant in America would easily cost between Rs. 1,000 and Rs. 1,500 each month, and so machines do the work instead, and the American people are to that extent more democratic and self-working.

Coming back home to the sixteenth floor of a house and that was only midway, because the whole was 32 floors-I got the immensity of the whole town. For a mile or two, houses go up to not less than 30 floors, some 40, 50, 60 and 70 floors, and it gives you a kind of image at one or two in the night. There was nothing else for me but to look at it. The immensity of New York had not quite impinged on my mind in the earlier days because they were rushing me from one meeting to another and I was trying to talk to people and listen to them. Even on Broadway there was not much of an impression, except of course as the Danish girl said, who was also probably a little jealous of American achievements the same as the poor Indian was with his background of at least 7,000 years, that in America everything seemed to grow bigger and bigger; the rose grows bigger, and so on. This Danish girl was terribly annoyed; everything seemed to grow bigger and bigger in this land of the Americans. I had half a mind to turn 'round and ask her, "Are you not glad about it because you wanted everything to grow bigger and bigger in your own Europe?" But I prevented myself

from asking that cruel question. You know how the European feels towards the U.S.A., the very same way as we have at times in the past felt toward Europe. They had taken a lead over us in the technological field, and now the Americans have taken a lead over them, and this naturally causes a great deal of jealousy. I hope that the people of India will not indulge in any such jealousies. Let us once and for all realize that this is a civilization which is dead, although of course even as a corpse it can still go on for another fifty years and lead the world into many battles and wars, may be, other incidents of unhappiness and cruelty, but if a man realizes that it is dead and past, at least it has no relevance to the future of the human race, then he can sit back and smile and also laugh.

Well, this was New York, with immense buildings for a whole mile or two, and what did it strike me like after midnight? Some moments a beautiful ghost, other moments a frightful ghost, but always a ghost. I do not believe in ghosts, although even at this age I am somewhat frightened of them. Only with difficulty would I be able to go to a burning ghat or a cemetery away from habitation all by myself around midnight on a dark night, because spirits are then supposed to move about freely, so I was told in childhood by people of mischief or ignorance. I know this is all hocus-pocus, but it is a little frightening. And this night in New York was one to those rare occasions when I felt a war would be horrible, that a war would really be horrible. If all the enormous acres and acres of buildings were to be destroyed by some bomb, not to talk of destruction, but the enormous number of human beings that would lie buried or smoked out beneath the buildings—the very idea sent many shivers through my mind. But war rarely moves me in a primary way, may be because we are able to take a detached and purposive view of human affairs or perhaps because we do not have New York in our own country, may be because we are jealous and selfish, or perhaps because I am not particularly fascinated by the Bombays and Calcuttas in my own country. Whatever may be the reason, the idea of a

war being so frightening does not impress me except on those rare occasions of which seeing America was one.

A very generous old man charged me once with that accusation. He said that it appeared as if I particularly did not mind a war breaking out. He thought that I wanted the destruction of American and European and Russian material achievements as a result of war, so that at the end of it we in India or elsewhere would be on a par with Europeans. I seemed to produce that impression on his mind. Luckily his wife, who was perhaps more deeply generous, said, "Now look, he does not produce that impression on my mind." The husband and wife argued between themselves. I have a defender. If I do sometimes give this impression of not being sufficiently frightened of war and its prospects, it is not because I am not aware of the extent of human misery and suffering, but because I believe that this civilization has run out its course. It is dead, and the sooner it is buried the better, whether the civilization is in New York or Moscow or London or elsewhere, particularly as it is symbolized in those beautiful ghosts and those frightening ghosts of New York. It may also be that the daily misery of mankind is more acutely with me, as it is with every coloured person. If somehow the habitual and the usual could move us as much as the occasional and the critical the daily grind of poverty and its misery would mass up to very much more than the consequences of a war. Furthermore, it is just possible that I am more deeply anti-war than those who shout it for to fight war one has to fight inequality.

I will now skip on to Oak Ridge. That is the place where the atom bomb is produced, in the Tennessee Valley, where there is a big huge dam, and where the officer concerned was a typical American bureaucrat, or he might have been a typical Russian bureaucrat, or he might as well have been a typical Indian bureaucrat. I had not been in my bed for about 50 hours, rushing about in trains, automobiles, and planes, and when I reached his office, he said: "Forget the statistics, forget the development of Tennessee Valley and its dams; forget

whatever industrial development might have taken place; see what is at your back." I was far too wearied to look back. I thought the man was indulging in some kind of a dramatic gesture, but when he repeated his demand I looked back and saw it was a copy of the American Declaration of Independence. But then I was far too wearied to say anything and for half-an-hour permitted this man to deliver to me a lecture on American history, on independence, on republican institutions, on democracy, and so on, until an Indian who was with me was very annoyed and asked him to stop giving all that lecture, as I knew more about the history of America than the lecturer himself did. But bureaucrats are bureaucrats, and they just do not realize what fools they make of themselves on occasions.

From Tennessee Valley headquarters to Oak Ridge we moved around that town where the workers of the atomic plant lived. Their houses are gay, although they are neatly patterned in rows and give an impression of uniformity, dead uniformity, but they are gay no doubt, with their verandas and flowers and good food for their children to eat, of course, a lot to eat and a lot to wear, until when one drives around a bend after having gone through this workers' town, it is just there, this establishment of death so beautiful to look at.

It is a place in a wooded area, a thickly wooded area. Tall and graceful chimneys going up, silver-grey and slender chimney; unless you knew it was a place manufacturing the atom bomb, you might take it for a factory of some celestial toys or the like. Tall, beautiful, graceful chimneys, but what are they sprouting forth? The atom bomb. It would not be enough to accuse a statesman or a particular system of the guilt of the atom bomb. The atom bomb to my mind is a natural and inevitable conclusion of existing civilization. It was there, the famous Oak Ridge. We could not of course get into it. Not even the President of the U.S.A. could get into it without proper authorization, so they say. We kept on looking at it from about three miles. The car sped, and I looked at it. It had

the same effect on me as Mephisto, who talks intelligently and looks handsome in a certain type of drama. Perversely enough, the Oak Ridge establishment gave me hope that perhaps some day we would have one world.

The average American is open to broadening dream. He has a certain fund of generosity. But the kind of basic ideas that are put into him sour the relationship between the ordinary American and the visiting foreigner. When it comes to ideologies and foreign policies I had increasing difficulties with liberals, socialists, and with the professors and political organizers, and so forth, because all the time they put before me a moral question. "Now is not this a moral question," they asked "The fight between Russia and America?" Russia is a country which has concentration camps, and which denies civil liberties, and so forth. How could I as an Indian keep away from this moral struggle between Russia and the free democracies? That was their eternal question to me. To which I said that the existing civilization had already become irrelevant to me. Whether it was the American part of the existing civilization or the Russian, they are both equally irrelevant. And I assured them that I was not judging them from a high moral pedestal. I did not talk to them about Mahatma Gandhi or non-violence or the great Indian past of spirituality, and, in fact, I assured them, and truly feel, that Europeans and Americans are far more spiritual than us as far as current conditions are concerned. Nevertheless, the existing civilization has already become irrelevant to the world of tomorrow, for the Oak Ridges, the New Yorks, and the Moscows, and the big mass-production factories are irrelevant to the new world that we are striving to create from which poverty will be banished. And therefore, I told them that it was not from a high moral pedestal of equal condemnation of both the systems that I refused to choose between them.

They said, "exercise your choice, even if you remain militarily neutral, but ideologically you must make a choice," to which I said that it is not merely a case of military neutrality

or saving one's own skin, but a case of ideological irrelevance, because I have come to the view that existing civilization in both its manifestations of America and Russia is irrelevant to the total human situation of tomorrow. Therefore, I was not willing to take sides, and this was the situation which I sometimes tried to put also in terms of ancient Indian ideas. The theory of rebirth and deeds may not be valid as far as the individual goes but it appears to be valid as far as nations and groups go. I believe every nation or continent has an accumulation of past deeds. We have a certain type of accumulation in India. In the past few hundred years, our accumulation has been very dirty, insofar as we were subjects and victims of foreign rule and tyranny, but in this accumulation is not included any element of exercise of tyranny over any other people. The European and American accumulation of past deeds has included exercise of power over the fate of other peoples. This exercise has given them not only economic and military power but has also imposed upon them responsibilities and duties and burdens and, may be, also prejudices and certain basic directions from which they cannot easily depart. So I tried to put before them this idea. I said, look, you have your accumulation. You probably cannot get rid of it just as we cannot get rid of ours. But then, our accumulation of past deeds has been such that we can probably make a fresh departure. You probably cannot. Why then can't you have a little understanding towards peoples who don't have that load of history to carry on their backs, at least of the recent imperialistic and cruel history, who can make fresh points of departure in human affairs?

Of course, it took me a great deal of time to distinguish between the Socialist Party's position and that of the government because most often my listeners tended to get confused. They thought that it was all alike. They said that the Socialist policy and the government's policy were similar because they both wanted to keep away from this Soviet-American conflict. The two policies are really not alike,

because the Socialist policy is one of creating a new civilization and of co-existence with approximation while the government policy is one of bare co-existence. Create a new civilization, a new source of strength, which could compel the two hostile systems of capitalism and communism to approximate to one another which would be so attractive morally and ideologically to the peoples living under the warring systems and would then cast covetous eyes at this third new system that is springing up. A student of history will be familiar with how often Catholics and Protestants were asked to co-exist but never did so until there was the third system of industrial civilization which made them believe that it was a good thing to co-exist. When people bring up this question of a uniform foreign policy for all nations, I would ask for consideration of the various accumulations but no matter what the accumulation, each nation must strive to get rid of excesses and blemishes of the past accumulation, of the bad things.

European nations have too many bad things in their recent past. That gives them strength and also an enormous capacity for mischief. France has certain accumulations with regard to Africa, England with Malaya and Kenya, and Russia is achieving all kinds of accumulations with regard to Eastern Europe. And then, Azarbaijan and Turkistan, they are all colonies which were once enslaved by the Russian Czars and have now become part of Russia. America has also accumulated a great deal in the American hemisphere and elsewhere, and I now come to the question: is America imperialist? I was asked this question sometimes in friendly conversation, other times in a very irritating kind of way, when traffic jams of language occurred. I like the American people immensely but am doubtful of their civilization. That is my state of mind. If I were permitted to go to Soviet Russia, my ultimate reaction would probably be similar: I like the Russian people immensely but am doubtful of their civilization. So this doubt about their civilization used to come up and then they asked, "Do you take America for an imperialist country?" A rather difficult question to answer, particularly

because of the emotional surcharge accompanying it.

I will not fight about words. Of course America does not exercise direct political control over other countries. It is not imperialist in the old sense of the term. But every American woman looks a princess, or almost every American woman. And what is the cause? Probably a great deal of racial mixture that has gone on, and even more the amount of orange juice and milk and vitamins that they are able to consume. If our women had that many glasses of orange juice and milk and also vitamins, they would also look like princesses. And their dresses are already designed on that pattern.

While talking to a crowd of Americans, I called American women princesses, and suddenly I looked into the eyes of an Indian woman who was in my audience, and then I wondered what this Indian woman would think of me giving such exclusive tributes to American woman. That was Nataraj Vashi's wife. I got flabbergasted and said, if American woman are princesses, Indian women are goddesses, which indeed bogged me down further. One of the delights of impromptu speaking is precisely such turns in the speech, unknown even to the speaker, and the fantastic speed with which the mind copes with the whims of the tongue. But I had after all to live in the midst of Indian women, and it is always worthwhile to talk about them. That was no mere flattering tribute, but what I really feel about India's women, goddesses. Goddesses are fairly wayward. Look at your own mythology. They are above the law, and they are piquantly willed and go about doing things in a way out of the rut of custom. They entrance so, if these wayward goddesses had that amount of vitamins and orange juice, what would they look like? Probably some hitherto unknown celestial temptresses.

Djerja, the Yugoslav Ambassador in India, had once something terrifically beautiful to say about Indian woman. He went about the length and breadth of the country and said that he could not see a single farmer or working-class woman. I knew that, as an artist he was working up to something very

beautiful about Indian women. He said that travelling from Delhi right up to Lucknow through all those villages those peasant women came into his view with their queenly gait, and their hands and their faces, all mellowed by the influence of centuries and centuries, and the grace in their faces, so said Djerja, and they are not my words, the grace and the mellowed refinement of the face, figure, and gait of our women made him feel that they were all queens and princesses.

That is the good European's way of looking at Indian women. I would only add to it that the European woman looks entrancingly frank and innocent and pretty like the clear waters of a rippling brook. What she and the Indian woman actually are is quite another matter; we are talking of looks. Djerja did not tell a lie. I don't tell lies. If at all, there is a slight exaggeration inevitable in the telling of new truth, of a new and pleasant taste, sight or sound. Even when I told the Japanese Geisha that she was the most beautiful person that I had ever met, I did not tell a lie. It was in the company of the president of the Buddha Worshippers Association of Japan, Reverend Riri Nakayama, and the president of the Christian Worshippers Association, a woman, was also with us. The two of them had given me a fabulous dinner; we were five, and the dinner must have cost over Rs. 700, so I was told. There were three Geishas and they sang and talked so well and coaxed us into eating and put eats into our mouth I told one of them, who looked after me, called "The Glorious Days of the Morning Sun" or "The Luminous Particles of the Evening Moon," that she was the most beautiful person on earth. That was not a lie. It was the truth. It may be that the truth was only momentary. Not every momentary truth need have direct consequences. What would turn it into a lie is if I ever denied it in my subsequent speech or behaviour; what turns it into an apparent lie is the train of routine associations that mankind has learned to build with words. Japan is the only country in the world where I had a woman give me an answer which floored me. When one knocks around the world, one gets into

such situations, and so this remarkable woman of Japan said: "You are the most wonderful person in all the world that I have met." I was flabbergasted. I told this woman what has been told me by women of other lands. I have met German women and American women and Slav women, and, of course, Indian women, all kinds of women, but not one of them had ever returned me this answer within the first few hours of our acquaintance, save the daughter of Japan. I was at a loss for words, who never am.

It is not only American women alone who make me talk of America's privileged position. America has an annual production of steel going up to 110 or 120 million tons. One hundred and ten million tons produced annually against the 50 million tons of steel produced in the USSR, against the 1.5 million tons, now 2 to 2.5 million tons, of steel produced in India. The American who is unemployed is given five hundred rupees a month as unemployment allowance in certain conditions. When I had to travel from Honolulu to Cyano, I got worried because I was staying with pretty Astor's family, a Korean married to an American, where only one person was employed, and the others were unemployed and one of them was to accompany me on my air flight, until their family set me at rest. They asked me not to bother, for, after all, the fellow was drawing one hundred dollars as unemployment insurance per month. Against that what of the salaries and wages in India? I could string together any number of such statistics, realities and appearances and details of production, to show the ease with which one lives in America. I must talk again of Steve who drove 120 miles at the speed of 90 m.p.h. on fantastic roads and gave me coffee, strawberries with cream, and made eggs sunny side up and toast and yet another fruit salad inside of ten minutes or less in his country cottage, which he had not visited for months, where he had no servant but a "deep freeze". The Indian middle classes have come up to refrigerators. Compare it all to the mass in India.

Whether one calls the situation imperialist or not is a

totally meaningless question. Let us not use that word, but the fact remains that the utter disparity in the living standards of America and India is there. A younger cousin or brother who has been turned out of a house or is not allowed into it, where the older brother lives in comfort and luxury, will not be reasonable enough to believe that big one has earned his money through the dint of hard labour. He will always be actuated by feelings of envy or disgust that the other fellow lives so well and he has to live a dog's life. The American may well say, are we brothers? To that my answer would be, not necessarily; if you don't choose to be so, not at all. Therefore, don't bother about our opinions. If you do not look upon the whole world as a single family, you must not bother that poorer peoples have feelings of resentment and discomfort against you. We may not be able to prove that your richness is the result of our poverty. That is not at all necessary.

Some kind of thinking, particularly communist thinking, tries to prove that American richness is the result of Indian poverty and takes a great deal of tortuous delight in establishing that fact. That is all nonsense. If American richness is the result of anything, it is the result of exterminating the Red Indian, who was the original inhabitant of the U.S.; it is the result of using every fresh wave of European immigrants as some kind of colonial labour; it is perhaps the result of using the whole of South America for investments and trade purposes, but as far as India is concerned the direct link is very difficult to establish. But that is neither here nor there. Whether American richness is the result of their own hard labour is something I would not argue about with an American. I would merely say the world has these enormous disparities. You are the big one and we are the small one, and therefore if you don't recognize the world as a single family, don't expect us to have a related policy or ideology, foreign and internal, because you are the rich people and we are the poor people, and you go ahead your way and we go ahead our own. And so long as these disparities exist in this

world, whether they are called by the name of imperialism or any other, I would say the world is sick and upside-down and there can be no peace in it.

When they used to talk about foreign aid and the like, my continual answer was, forget about foreign aid. You think of yourselves first and then think of foreign aid. Walter Reuther has thought of foreign aid. Walter Reuther, the President of the Automobile Workers' Union of the USA, has thought in terms of 25 billion or 25,000 million dollars aid to the world, an enormous huge amount, but Truman thinks in terms of two billion dollars, and there is a senator called Connolly who says, don't give any assistance to Asia. Among Walter Reuther, Truman, and Connolly, I think I prefer Senator Connolly to President Truman, because Senator Connolly is frank and honest about it, and would not want to make a joke of foreign aid. If you want to give foreign aid, think of the world as a single family, and if you think of it as a single family the aid will have to be in Walter Reuther's terms.

Again I have tarried too long on the USA. Walter Reuther is, incidentally, a barber's son, and he was the American talker I like most. Beautiful language he spoke with a lot of taste and thrust and spice. President Truman too speaks the language of fishermen, and to that extent I like the American president more than anybody else among his compatriots. He has been known to write a harsh letter to a music critic who criticized his daughter and I don't know whether I should tell you—he called this music critic a son of a bitch. President Truman of the USA, writing in that kind of style! I enjoyed it tremendously, a big politician becoming human and descending into somewhat vulgar language. I think I would prefer that to another who is always high up in the air; he pretends to represent the people but is never one of the people himself. I would indeed like the people to curb their vulgarities.

Walter Reuther, the barber's son and a beautiful talker, gave me an idea about socialism and the Socialist Party in his

land. He was at one time a socialist, but he has ceased to be so. There are many important persons in the USA who began as socialists but have ceased to be so. That is the condition of American Socialism, a rather bad condition. Reuther said that if you want to propagate socialism theoretically in the USA, you are bound to fail, because the Americans are a pragmatic people. They would understand things singly and item by item, but if you wanted to ram an ideology down their throat, if you for instance wanted to raise this issue of nationalization of industries, the Americans, even the common man, would be upset about it, and say, well, what's wrong with this system of private enterprise? We have got enormous factories, they are running. Therefore, Mr. Reuther said that instead of talking about the theoretical plank of socialism, it would be worthwhile to talk pragmatically of certain planks which the socialist programme might also outline for America. He told me that in the year 1955 he would press the demand for a guaranteed annual wage for every worker in the automobile industry. Guaranteed annual wage, 52-week wage, whether the worker has worked or not. The worker is willing to work, but if he does not get work, that's not his fault, it's the fault of the employer, now that's the reasoning which the ordinary American would understand. Well, this worker is prepared to work, is willing to give his free enterprise of labour. But look at that fact capitalist; he says factories have to be closed down and he has jolly well got to pay the worker when he closes down his factories. He gets his profits when his factories are running, and why can't he pay his workers when he suspends working his factories? In the year 1955, Mr. Reuther will present his demand for a guaranteed annual wage. He has already won certain favourable situations. This much for pragmatism on the American scene.

I met socialists, honest, sincere, in the town of Milwaukee, the only major town whose mayor is a socialist. Some of them told me in disgust, the American people, let them suffer another depression, let them go through another war, let them

be poor, before they listen to our message of socialism. Something is indeed lacking in this type of socialism. But that was precisely what socialists of Milwaukee and some other places told me. These bloated, comfortable, smug, bourgeois workers have Buicks to drive. Let them in the future suffer pangs of unemployment, because then of course there won't be this insurance to pay, then they will listen to the message of socialism. To that, I would say that socialism must not be a creed alone of poverty and must also thrive in conditions of comparative comfort. American socialism would do well if it took up increasingly questions of foreign policy, world government, national medical service, if it took up a civil disobedience campaign on the issue of the White and Negro, and if it also linked up the question of war with that of world parliament. In short, American socialism should on the one hand take up questions of want, whatever they are, in its own land without fright, and on the other include the wider world of want in its foreign policy as though that were a domestic matter. The fight for equality is almost always waged on the front of greatest inequality.

I always asked American youth to violate laws and start Satyagraha whenever questions of foreign aid came up. I said that the best form in which they could assist a people like ours was to practice civil disobedience in their own country. You have the White and the Negro, white and black, and let there be a thousand young men and women who violate these laws and get into prison, refuse to get out on bail and live there for a year or two, and if there are a thousand or two thousand such Americans, that would produce a far greater effect on the health of the world than any amount of money that you may pour down the Indian rat hole, than at least the paltry amounts that you are now supplying. Americans are only bolstering up Mr. Nehru of the corrupt Congress government or Mr. Gopalan of the angry communists. I believe that the Americans are doing a very bad thing, insofar as their aid is not sufficiently large and so directed as to bolster corruption, and

also insofar as they are not thinking in terms of a worldwide international authority which would pool all resources and distribute them where they are wanted most.

The accident of lack of time may have served the design that I should talk of Thai, Bali, Malaya, and Lanka in conditions of expansive and leisurely calm. In Hong Kong, the two worlds divide clearly on this 'round the world', although Tokyo gave notice that it was with difficulty keeping on the margins as the pleasant, prosperous, white world. I would add just one more story from Japan. My hostess, Khanum Singh, twice champion of India's female tennis, and what a glorious woman, I wish there were many of such in the country's diplomatic personnel, told me of the Japanese woman's habit of razoring her face once or twice a week. Khanum had two maids. She had them summoned for my inspection. One of them was non-cooperative, presumably out of considerations of pride, but the other was willing to be inspected, though somewhat curbed by the stares of her companion. It is true, Japanese women gently move the razor against their faces. Most do it once a week, some twice. That gives them a soft, unbroken look. If the cost in touch is not too great, the gain in sight is notable. No matter what happens to the world, these simple realities of touch, sight, taste, and sound would forever govern existence, and there is need to tell one of what the other does to improve looks, particularly of such improvement as is not too expensive or loud.

To the speech are added impressions recorded in Calcutta on October 21, 1951 after rounding the world:

### FRANKFURT AND GERMANY

Not knowing whether the old courtesan is trying to recapture her former looks if she is beautiful and has eternal youth; the most thorough people on earth and yet unable to sunder the strings of European civilization.

## YUGOSLAVIA

A communist country trying in a partial way to turn socialist; a brave people who want to secure peace by their readiness to lay down their lives for it rather than buy temporary peace through paying the price of freedom.

## USA

The land where all women are princesses and where the egalitarian's dream of treating a duchess like a skivvy and a skivvy like a duchess is near realized; a people generously anxious to give but far too sure of itself want to take; the most virile people on earth about to illustrate all human history hitherto that, if beauty sours into profligacy, truth also turns in cruelty; a very faint possibility that they might yet mingle hard with soft, truth with beauty.

## HAWAII

Where one is kissed on arrival and kissed on departure and in between Madame Pele hisses fair but venomous warning through a tiny blowhole if one steps too near the edge of the world's largest yet active orator, Halemaumau.

## JAPAN

A face that is drawn and sad in repose but ripples with merriment and action in movement; a peerless discipline alone prevents tumbling together of base and structure and harmony is away.

## HONG KONG

A beautiful tumour which Peking and Taipeh both feed on and the British juggler is able not to let slip out of his fingers;

where the twin evils of conformism and co-existence are evident and where the people might yet attempt co-existence with approximation.

### THAILAND

The King of Asian opportunism; while all Asian governments are in varying measure opportunists, the Thai government is the cleverest and most successful; a large bit from India and a bit from China and a third bit from elsewhere have produced a witty and carefree people, whose contribution may yet be unique.

### SINGAPORE AND MALAYA

The meeting place of the Indian and Pacific oceans and of various races and peoples and therefore a pilgrimage. But the mind is not yet so free nor the heart so big as to turn this pilgrimage into a living shrine of the physical and cultural approximation of humanity.

### INDONESIA

Same as in India, wanting to change but taking it easy, too damnably easy, Indonesia may yet play a large part in achieving the new human civilization of activity and poise.

### CEYLON

A beautiful bit of Asia that was trying to be Europe, is now baffled, and may some day try to be human.

With all their difference in looks and manners, all humanity is far from home and the night is dark. Among other activities, a willed programme for the physical and cultural approximation of various people is essential.