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NRB News 2009

The Traditional Netaji Birthday Assembly was held at Netaji Bhawan on the morning of 23rd January 2009. Professor Sugata Bose gave the welcome address.

The paperback edition of the third volume of Netaji’s Collected works, *In Burmese Prisons*, was ceremonially released on the occasion.

The Netaji Oration 2009 was delivered by Ambassador Alessandro Quaroni on “The Kabul Connection : Subhas Chandra Bose, Pietro Quaroni and Indo-Italian Relations”. The Oration was based on the private papers of Pietro Quaroni, Alessandro Quaroni’s father, and records in the Italian archives. Pietro Quaroni, as head of the Italian Legation in Kabul, helped Netaji during his escape and provided a false passport in the name of Orlando Mazzotta.
The Presidential speech was given once more by Shri Gopal Krishna Gandhi, the popular Governor of West Bengal.

Mrs. Krishna Bose, Chairperson of the Netaji Research Bureau, gave the vote of thanks.

Pramita Mallick and members of ‘Baikali’ presented the very moving opening music and an outstanding Netaji Birthday Concert was performed by Sasha Ghosal.
In the evening of 23rd January, 2009, the Sisir Kumar Bose Lecture 2009 was delivered by Professor Dominic Lieven of the London School of Economics on ‘Legacies of Empire: the British Empire in India in Comparative Perspective’. Professor Sumantra Bose was in the chair and moderated a post-lecture discussion in which Professor Sugata Bose, Professor Barun De, Professor Robert Travers, Professor Hari Vasudevan and others took part.

In the evening of 2nd July 2009 a renowned singer Aditi Mohsin of Bangladesh rendered Tagore songs in the Sarat Bose Hall.

On 2nd September 2009 at 6.30 p.m. the Sarat Chandra Bose Memorial Lecture 2009 was delivered by Ambassador Ronen Sen on “India-United States relations” in the overcrowded Sarat Bose Hall. Shri Gopalkrishna Gandhi, Governor of West Bengal, was the Chief Guest. Mr.K. Srinivasan, former Foreign Secretary, General Shankar Roychowdhury, former Army Chief and journalists Sunanda Datta Ray and Rudrangshu Mukherjee took part in the discussion. Professor Sugata Bose was in the chair.
Netaji Museum continued to be a major attraction for visitors from different parts of India and abroad. Many young students from disadvantaged backgrounds were allowed free entry. More visitors came in 2009-10 than in 2008-09. Distinguished visitors included Mr. Brajesh Mishra on 10th January 2009, Dr. Raghuvir Singh Kadian, Speaker of the Haryana Assembly and Mrs. Uttara Kadian on 13th January 2009, Mrs. Nira Benegal, wife of Shyam Benegal on 13th January 2009, Mr. Philippe Weli, Ambassador of Switzerland in New Delhi on 13th June 2009, Mr. Jin Matsubara, M.P., Tokyo, Japan, Pema Gyalpo, University of TOIN, Yokohama, Mr. Takahisa Ieda, Secretary/Aide of M.P., Japan, on 7th August 2009, Mr. Sam Pitroda, Ex-Chairman, Knowledge Commission, India on 28th August 2009, Mr. Dinesh Trivedi, Minister of State, Department of Health, Government of India on 28th August 2009, Mr. Ronen Sen, I.F.S. (Retd.) on 2nd September 2009, Mr. Hideaki Domichi, Japanese Ambassador in India and Mr. Fujio Samukawa, Consul General of Japan on 4th October 2009, a German Delegation headed by Dr. Nikolas Hill, Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg, Ministry of Culture, Sports and Media State Secretary and nine other members on 15th November 2009. On 29th December 2009 accompanied by his wife H.E. Governor of West Bengal Devanand Konwar visited Netaji Bhawan and Museum to pay homage to Netaji.
Scholars and students came to study as usual in the Bureau’s library and archives. In addition to the paperback edition of Chalo Delhi, the Golden Jubilee number of *The Oracle* and the four-volume CD and DVD set published by NRB were much appreciated by the general public.

Netaji Research Bureau produced a documentary film – ‘Doing Netaji’s Work’ – a history of Netaji Research Bureau directed by Subha Das Mollick on DVD.

Netaji’s Book of Life

Welcome Speech

Sugata Bose

Shri Gopalkrishna Gandhi, Governor of West Bengal, Ambassador and Mrs. Quaroni, Professor Dominic Lieven, distinguished guests,

On behalf of Netaji Research Bureau I am delighted to welcome you all to this historic Bhawan which this year will be a hundred years old. I think Pramita Mallick and her group sang a most appropriate song. It is truly an Amrita Sadan, a house in which immorality resides and you will have an opportunity about an hour later to hear more of her beautiful voice and also a concert presented by her and Sasha Ghoshal. This house has been a witness to the great saga of service and sacrifice that characterized our freedom struggle. It was built of course by Netaji’s father Janaki Nath Bose in 1909-1910, it was from here that Subhas Chandra Bose went to Presidency College, it was in an office here that he worked as President of Indian National Congress in 1938 and 1939. While the city slept Netaji’s Mahanishkraman took place from this house on the night of 16-17th January, 1941, as Sisir Kumar Bose drove his Rangakakabobu out in his Wanderer car on the first leg of the great adventure. The journey from Kolkata to Kabul in the guise of Md. Ziauddin was meticulously planned and relatively unimpeded. But Subhas Chandra Bose was in great danger for a month and a half in Kabul and may not have been able to make the transition from Rabindranath Tagore’s Deshamayak to the people’s Netaji without the help of an Italian friend Pietro Quaroni. We warmly welcome his son Ambassador Alessandro Quaroni, who will deliver the Netaji Oration this morning, based on his father’s papers. Pietro Quaroni was stationed in Kabul from 1936 to 1943 and later on became Italy’s Ambassador to the Soviet Union, France, West Germany and also to Great Britain in 1961. And his son Alessandro Quaroni has served as Italy’s Ambassador to many important countries including Libya, Austria, Sweden and the People’s Republic of China. On the backdrop behind me you see Subhas Chandra’s angelic face as Deshamayak in 1939 on one side and in disguise as Orlando Mazzotta in 1941 on the other. The picture in the middle was taken on 21st January 1939 as our poet welcomed in his abode of peace in Shantiniketan the Rebel President of the Indian National Congress two days before his forty-second birthday. I am very happy that my teacher Professor Rajat Kanta Roy, the current Upacharya of Visva Bharati, is present with us today and he is of course a very valued member of the Council of the Netaji Research Bureau. Now January 1939 was a turbulent month in Subhas Chandra Bose’s life as he contested for re-election against Mahatma Gandhi’s favoured candidate Pattabhi Sitaramayya. ‘It is doubtful if I shall be re-elected President for the coming year’, he had written to Emilie in December. ‘Many people are jealous of me’. On 29th January 1939 he triumphed. ‘The whole country is full of excitement over the election, he wrote again to Emilie on 11th February 1939, ‘but a terrible responsibility has come on my shoulders’ On 4th February Subhas Chandra Bose had issued a statement: ‘I have on some occasions felt constrained to differ from Mahatma Gandhi on public questions but I yield to none in my respect for his personality. It will always be my aim and object to try and win his confidence for the simple reason that
it will be a tragic thing for me if I succeed in winning the confidence of other people but failed to win the confidence of India’s greatest man. It would take a few more years for this prince among patriots and his stupendous achievements as leader of Azad Hind Movement to earn the complete confidence of the man he hailed as the Father of our Nation. As Gopalkrishna Gandhi, whom we warmly welcome once more as one of our very own, put it in his brilliant speech last year on this exceptional icon: ‘His saying over the radio that on achieving its purpose, the INA will transmute itself into a participant in the political programmes of the national movement being led by Mahatma Gandhi must rank among the greatest self-abnegations known in political history.’ Already by 1939 Subhas Chandra had allayed any doubts in the mind of India’s other greatest man. ‘Subhas Chandra’, Rabindranath wrote in his Deshanayak composition almost exactly seventy years ago, ‘I have watched the dawn that witnessed the beginning of your political Sadhana. In that uncertain twilight there had been misgivings in my heart and I had hesitated to accept you for what you are now ...Today you are revealed in the pure light of midday sun that does not admit of apprehensions. Today you bring your matured mind and irrepressible vitality to bear upon the work at hand. Your strength has sorely been taxed by imprisonment, banishment and disease, but rather than impairing, these have helped to broaden your sympathies – enlarging your vision so as to embrace the vast perspectives of history beyond any narrow limits of territory.’ The adjective ‘irrepressible’ was deployed by Bapu as well in his last letter to Subhas on 29th December 1940: ‘You are irrepressible whether ill or well. Do get well before going in for fireworks’. Gurudev knew that he may not join his Deshanayak in the fight that was to come. ‘I can only bless him’ he wrote, ‘and take my leave knowing that he has made his country’s burden of sorrow his own, that his final reward is fast coming as his country’s freedom’. That was the only reward that Netaji ever sought.

‘Netaji Research Bureau can give India much,’ Dr.Sisir Kumar Bose had claimed, on 23rd January 1971, the year that he had wanted Ambassador Pietro Quaroni to deliver the Netaji Oration. ‘We believe,’ he wrote in an essay titled ‘Netaji Bhawan and the Nation’, ‘that Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose like all men of destiny created his own immortality. We do not seek to assist him in this regard. We believe on the other hand that the present as well as the coming generations of India have much to lose if they fail to learn from his book of life.’ In the decades since we have done our best to preserve and open the fascinating pages of his book of life so that future generations may seek inspiration from it. It was a glorious life, deeply intertwined with the lives of his great contemporaries and the life of the nation struggling to come into its own. Today as we face an unprecedented crisis of ethics in our polity and economy, we need the benediction of the poet and the patriot, the saint and the warrior, more than ever before, to defy the adverse fate that threatens our progress. Jai Hind.
Let me say how honoured I am to have been invited to make a presentation at this year’s annual celebration of the Netaji Research Bureau. I have now devoted time to deepen my knowledge about the towering personality of Subhas Chandra Bose, his life, his inspiration and action, that have been and still are a subject of research by this Bureau. I would like therefore, first of all, to pay my own personal, most respectful tribute and respect to a memory that has by far survived the span of his life and has emerged and been vindicated as a fundamental contribution to the achievement of independent statehood in India.

Let me also offer my most respectful greetings to Prof. Krishna Bose, widow of the late Sisir Kumar Bose and through her to all the members of the Netaji’s family who are present these days and to all those who have participated in the research and studies in this Research Bureau. My special greeting goes to Prof. Sugata Bose who first established a contact with my son Michele, presently serving as a diplomat in the Italian Mission to the United Nations in New York, after my son was sought up by Shyam Benegal, asking him for recollections and pictures of my parents, as characters for his film “The Forgotten Hero” on Netaji’s life. I have not yet seen the film, but I am told it has been a great success, earning the Director and principal actor awards in Kolkata three years ago.

Such first contacts have prompted my own involvement in some research about the years 1936 to 1944 during which my father, as Italian Minister in Kabul, was involved, in promoting and enacting policies of the Axis powers in Afghanistan. It was mainly a difficult interplay with Afghan interests, its position of neutrality in the Second World War (formally declared in September 1939), the constant British and Soviet pressure to limit the presence and activities of Axis Legations in Kabul towards developments in and around India concerning the future of the Raj.

Allow me to put immediately a touch of modesty on my contribution to this Seminar, that has in so many years produced such a wealth of historical documents and contributions to the memory of Subhas Chandra Bose. My father should have delivered, in 1971, upon an invitation by Dr. Sisir K. Bose, the Netaji Oration of that year on Netaji’s birthday January 23. Unfortunately he was not able, very much to his regret, to honour his engagement, due to serious failing health that actually brought him to a premature death in June 1971.

It is therefore with a strong emotional feeling that I approach my task to try to partly render what would have been a certainly more precise, interesting and worthy contribution by my father himself on the events of those years and on his recollections and reflections on the persons and happenings concerned. I was myself in those years, a small boy from two to ten years old who enjoyed living in Kabul (happy to be
almost free of schooling except some private tuition, but also not involved by his parents in the happenings of the official and covert role of the Embassy and its staff). Also in later years, in spite of a lucky, loving relationship with my parents, both had remained very discreet in sharing details of their experiences in the long years spent in Kabul.

You will therefore forgive me if my contribution will have two aspects: one will be to summarize my research through my father’s private files and documents (many of them have been published, others I shall be glad to leave with the Netaji Research Bureau for further research) on his contacts and relationship with Netaji; the other will be an emotional tribute to the memory of my parents - my mother had very often a significant and courageous role, both in standing firmly by the side of her husband and keeping contacts and performing missions that were not to be conducted directly by a Head of a diplomatic mission. Besides these documents, my father gave some highlights of his years in Afghanistan in the form of personal recollections, copies of which I will also be glad to leave to Netaji Research Bureau.

It might be worth mentioning, as a personal background for my father, that his assignment to Kabul was mainly due to an uproar raised by an anonymous article (whose author was soon discovered) criticising some aspects of Mussolini’s foreign policy. Foreign Minister Ciano reacted angrily, my father was promoted but assigned to a mission in a faraway country. This turned to be - on the whole - a very positive development in the life of my parents: not only did they thoroughly enjoy their experience in Afghanistan but had the opportunity to get closely acquainted with India, its life, culture and vicissitudes. Furthermore, his eight years of “exile” in Afghanistan opened the way to Father’s second career as Ambassador to Moscow, Paris, Bonn and London. After Italy’s armistice with the Allied Powers in September 1943 the Italian Legation in Kabul had readily confirmed its loyalty to the King, not to Mussolini’s Government in Northern Italy. As the Government had to appoint an Ambassador to the Soviet Union, it was not only the geographical nearness of Kabul and the fact that he fluently spoke Russian (even before marrying his Russian wife) but also his “misadventure” of 1936 that put his name in pole position.

The circumstances of my father’s appointment to Kabul, did not, before that, subtract anything to his duty-bound endeavours in following and enacting Italy’s policy towards Afghanistan, to the Axis endeavours to create difficulties for the British rule in India, conducting these actions in a delicate interplay of some tolerance but also opposition of Afghan authorities.

This is where my father met and consorted with Subhas Chandra Bose, helping him in his escape to Europe after a difficult, sometimes breathtaking stay in Kabul. In their nightly meetings, he was keen to gather Netaji’s views and plans for the future of India, which he duly transmitted to Rome, with an overall positive assessment, to keep interest alive in Germany and Italy to the purpose and essence of his hope-filled mission to Europe. My father was also keen to persuade both Netaji (who was more open to this after the direct impression of support he had received from his own transit through the tribal territories towards Kabul) and Rome of the advantages of cooperation with elements of the Forward Bloc, already present and active in those areas, to sustain anti-British activities in the tribal areas. My father’s reports from Kabul have been published and I believe they are already available to Netaji Research Bureau.

So let me perhaps start on a personal basis by mentioning my father’s recollections about the Netaji’s adventurous escape to Afghanistan and his successive exit from this country. These are a precise follow up, to the first part of the adventure, as related in the “Great Escape” by Sisir Kumar Bose and complete it as far as Kabul is concerned.
My father remembers meetings he had with Subhas Chandra Bose in 1934-35 in Rome, when he was one of the officials entrusted to make him acquainted with the contents and aims of Italian foreign policy. When meeting him again in Kabul my father was able to recognize him more than his guest was, but confidence was immediately established when my father mentioned the name of a respected mutual friend, Gino Scarpa, former Italian Consul in Calcutta, well known in India beyond this specific assignment for having introduced in Italy Gandhi, Nehru and Bose himself. Scarpa remained a point of reference to any doubts about Netaji’s person and his political weight. Doubts had arisen about his real identity, during Netaji’s first attempts to establish contacts with Embassies, either directly or through his secretary Rahmat Khan, to seek assistance for his future plans. The coldest initial reaction was at the Soviet Embassy. In a later document, in my father’s files, there is a letter, written but never sent by Netaji, to the Soviet Ambassador, asking for an interview, establishing his credentials of leader of the Forward Bloc and as having always been a consistent friend of the USSR and worthy supporter of Soviet foreign policy.

The next contact was with the German Legation, actually an attempt of gate-crushing, met by the refusal of the cautious German Minister to receive him. Pilger later met my father at a reception in the Soviet Embassy and mentioning this happening, was quite happy to have his Italian colleague, stating his previous acquaintance with Subhas Chandra Bose, to show readiness to play a substantial role in subsequent events. Through contacts led by a German representative of Siemens, Herr Sommer, an appointment was made for a meeting in the Italian Legation on February 22, 1941. The first item of business was, of course, ways and means to ensure Netaji’s safe exit from Afghanistan. His presence in Kabul, as my father recalls, was surrounded by difficulties and dangers, because in spite of his disguise as Mohammed Ziauddin Khan, he had no knowledge of Pashto. In fact he was presented by Rahmat Khan (alias Bhagat Ram Talwar) as deaf and dumb, mostly dedicated to silent meditation, but his hideouts in the house of a friendly Indian businessman – Uttam Chand Malhotra - in the Bazaar and later in the residence of Haji Sahib and his wife, were subject to dangerous inquisitive curiosity. This is why Netaji, during his long stay in Kabul (more than 45 days) was gradually more and more taken care of by members of the Italian Legation (First Secretary Anzilotti as a reliable guide towards the Legation - with his guest often hidden in the trunk of his car to avoid curious eyes; Chancellor Crescini as a frequent host in his house outside the Legation compound, my father and mother as friendly hosts of many meals and lengthy meetings in the Legation’s Residence). The final contribution was given by issuing an Italian passport in the name of an Italian member of the staff, Orlando Mazzotta, that enabled Bose’s journey out of Afghanistan as an Italian diplomatic courier.

Plans had been canvassed for an eventual travel of Bose through Iran and Turkey, but the solution mainly sought for was a transit via Moscow to reach Berlin and Rome. At Netaji’s growing insistence, the German and Italian Ministers, jointly applied, through their capitals, to ask the Soviet Government to issue a transit visa. After a lengthy delay, this request was finally granted but, as it finally turned out, Moscow did not spell out explicitly its conditions in instructions sent to the Soviet Ambassador. His own interpretation was then that the visa should not mention the name of Subhas Chandra Bose but be issued on a passport of the German or Italian missions. Minister Pilger was happy once more to have his Italian colleague lead the initiative: thus an Afghan exit visa was stamped on the diplomatic passport of Orlando Mazzotta with his photograph subsequently replaced by Netaji’s so as to obtain the Soviet transit visa. The substitution of the photograph,
exactly to coincide with the Italian official seal, was not an easy matter for people not having this specific experience: my father remembers having been very proud on receiving the compliments of his Soviet colleague on the “quality” of the work done!

After having taken decisions and actions under his own responsibility, when Bose had safely crossed the Afghan border, my father shortly reported the whole operation to Rome. He based his decisions on a message of positive welcome of Bose to Italy that had been conveyed to him, on operative necessity and recommended that the Italian passport be reclaimed by the Embassy in Berlin upon Netaji’s arrival there. In fact the Germans chose to keep his identity as Mazzotta for a long time, and Bose signed many of his messages as such, just as he had used Ziauddin as signature before. Among other things, my father asked for the travel and other expenses met in Netaji’s route to the Afghan frontier to be reimbursed as he was travelling as an Italian diplomatic courier. Chandra Bose made the journey by a car rented by the Italian Legation and was accompanied (actually up to Moscow) by a German businessman, Herr Wenger, who arranged for successive lodgings, taking again care of his companion’s not existing knowledge of Italian.

Official and private recollections of my father about his correspondence with Netaji on the plans of his further “escape” (it was very much this because of the persistent curiosity of Afghan authorities about the identity of a suspicious presence in Kabul: whether discovering it they were going to take further radical steps or condone it on the condition of being in a position to ignore it, is still an open question) are a faithful testimony to Netaji’s extreme care towards planning details, exactly as it had been for his escape from India. Details on the preparation and issuing the false passport: after many suggestions exchanged, it was finally decided, after an “Europeanization” of his looks (the Germans had been prompt to suggest that he could much appear more Italian than German) it was decided on a casual meeting by chance of my mother, Crescini and Bose, all having a stroll on the road to Dharul Funun, outside Kabul, as the best opportunity to take a snapshot of a passer-by.

Netaji spent the last evening before leaving Kabul at the Italian Residence, with my parents, as he had many times before. He had always been relieved - after days of imposed solitude - to be able to talk freely, to reminisce, also to express severe judgements on Gandhi, and to refine his plans for the future. On the eve of his departure, my father recalls Bose as “having had a new shot of life and enthusiasm, like in a dream”.

Two letters of warm gratitude for help and hospitality received were addressed by Netaji to my parents. In the first he also asked for help to his host in Kabul, Uttam Chand, from the Germans to establish a more fruitful commercial activity. In the second, from Berlin, he reported on his first meetings there and expressed keenness to be informed about events in India through a channel that was agreed, via Rahmat Khan, before Bose’s leaving Kabul.

Further correspondence between Chandra Bose and my father, during most of 1941, was mainly focused on the follow up of this agreement, reached in Kabul before leaving, in three face-to-face meetings including Rahmat Khan. Substantially:

1) the principle and practice of cooperation between Axis powers and representatives of the Forward Bloc in the NWFP aimed at supporting and encouraging disruptive actions against British interests both in the tribal areas and in India proper.
Rahmat Khan was ordered by Netaji to inform and cooperate with the Axis Legations in Kabul “until instructions to the contrary” to planned actions and initiatives by the provincial tribes, German and Italian financial and logistic (such as arms, ammunition, means of communication) support was first promised and then actually provided.

2) a channel of communication (exchanges of reports on developments in the Provinces and India, seeking and receiving instructions from Chandra Bose in Europe) was to be established through Italian and German secret communication systems; a small operational base for Rahmat Khan and some chosen trusted people in Kabul, as well as means of transport towards NWFP areas was agreed upon and then paid for by the Axis Governments;

3) in this context my father’s specific insistence (both to Bose and in his reports to Rome) constantly appears to be that communications and supporting actions from Kabul should be performed only by the Legation’s staff or intermediaries carefully chosen by them: freedom of movement in Afghanistan was in fact extremely limited to non-Legation persons and diplomatic couriers, as long and as much available, could only be used to forward sensitive material. Equally, money transfers were only possible through Legation’s official accounts in the National Bank of Afghanistan.

4) in secret meetings in Kabul (after Bose’s agreement in principle with my father before leaving to Europe) also the possibility of terrorist actions both in the NW Provinces and in India (mainly attempts to sabotage Indian war procurement) was discussed between the staff of the Italian and German Legations, Rahmat Khan and a terror specialist named Sodhi.

5) Envisaging radio broadcasts of Indian propaganda from Europe, mainly to counteract British assertions that the Axis Powers were mainly looking for their own “conquest” of India, was strongly upheld. My father was constantly supportive of this aspect, and at his and others insistence, they came into being both by the broadcasts of Mohammed Iqbal Shedai’s “Radio Himalaya”, sending from Italy and Netaji’s own transmissions from Germany which were active before and during 1942.

Rahmat’s first mission was to deliver in Kolkata Netaji’s last version of his thesis on the Forward Bloc, a “message to my countrymen” and a letter to Sarat Chandra Bose in Bengali to authenticate the messenger and the writings.

A copious amount of reports, information and Bose’s comments and instructions was then exchanged between Rahmat Khan (always apparently acting on and seeking Netaji’s indications from Berlin) through Italian and German secret communications system. As often as he could my father was keen, in his comments, to impress on Rome his positive impression on the cooperation he had helped to set up and keenly to insist on financial and logistic help to be provided by the Axis Governments. His broader reports to Rome were basically in agreement with the ideas put forward by Netaji, presenting him as “the person appearing to have the strongest influence on India’s future policy and being among Indian nationalists the stronger most reliable realist, open to seek advice and gather help from outside to defeat British rule in India.”

Many of these documents have been kept in my father’s private records of his correspondence; having perused them, it would be difficult, in this presentation to gather how much of this material is already available in Kolkata, and to enter into a detailed examination of the contents. Beyond the outline given before I would leave the task of deeper examination (unfortunately most of the material I can provide is in Italian) to the eventual interest of your Netaji Research Bureau. Perhaps worth of a specific mention are two documents:
- a letter of Netaji, dated May 27, 1941, still signed Orlando Mazzotta mentioning the slow progress of his work in Berlin and the fact that, until a declaration regarding India’s independence is given by the Axis Powers, no “serious work” could begin. It seemed however to be useful and necessary to proceed on preparatory tasks, which Bose outlined in detail, for Kabul, the Tribal territories and India;

- a detailed assessment-report (equally in English) forwarded by “Bulka”(apparently Rahmat Khan) on behalf of the Secretary of the Provisional Central Committee, of the Congress Party, Abdur Rahman on activities in India and in the NWFP and the further periodical financial needs involved.

Co-operation and contacts with Rahmat Khan and, consequently the correspondence they involved, were brusquely interrupted in November by news reaching Kabul that R.K. had “disappeared” and my father first supposed he had been arrested. Not receiving further news, and with contacts practically interrupted, his telegram on April 2, 1942 follows saying that Rahmat had apparently re-appeared in Kabul: he was suspected now to be an agent of the British Government from India or, more likely, to work for the Soviets. Being now, anyhow, hostile to the Axis no more contacts had been sought with him and my father recommended to inform Bose in Berlin.

As we have seen, most of the correspondence between my father and Subhas Chandra Bose for many months in 1941-42 has been on co-operation between the Axis powers and the Forward Bloc against British interests in the NWPT and in India. Netaji was not specifically informed of previous Italian attention to the potential role of restive tribes on the frontiers of Afghanistan. Their fighting spirit and lawlessness had been a tradition of centuries. Even before Italy’s entry into WW II, reports drafted by the Ministries of War and Foreign Affairs, had been gathered in a “Scheme of Work for India”, drafted, for official consideration, in April 1941. The contents took full importance after Italy’s entry into the War, in June 1941, as it was fully understood that action of the tribes in keeping unrest, requiring a sizeable presence of British forces, terrorist attacks and sabotage of industrial war production in India, making recruitment of Indian troops more difficult and encouraging defections, were all consistent with Axis aims against a common enemy.

On his side, my father had fully seized, from Kabul the potential of tribes with important links and support in the Afghan population sharing anti-British sentiments. He was keen to seek direct contacts, especially with the tribe’s most respected leader, Haji Mirza Khan, better known as the Fakir of Ipi. An opportunity was given by secret meetings, outside Kabul, of members of the Italian aeronautical mission in Afghanistan and people close to the Fakir. A personal contact of my father to the Fakir was then established by an exchange of letters, offering and accepting a close co-operation (prompting requests on the Fakir’s side of financial, weapons and communication support) anticipating more decisive action if and when - as it seemed possible for some time - an Axis advance through the Middle East could reach and menace the frontiers of the Raj. Co-operation with the Fakir of Ipi was then based on personal trust and the careful choice of trusted emissaries. Whereas German contribution, financial and material support, developed to be more important in size, they fully accepted an Italian leading role in the contacts. The most memorable episode certainly was the daring contribution – the first foray of a disguised European in the tribal areas - of a mission, lasting more than two weeks, in June 1941, by First Secretary Anzilotti in their heartland and his meeting with the Fakir. Precise talking points were prepared and most of them received precise replies given from the respected leader. I am told that this specific event is already in the records of the Research Bureau, but perhaps not the lengthy report of Anzilotti on his mission (never sent to Rome because no safe couriers were available). His return to Kabul was fraught with special difficulties because Afghan authorities, on the prodding of the British, had started an active search for him and he had to dodge many traps.
My father’s personal record of his relationship with the Fakir is broadly testified in his memoirs. The knowledge in many parts of Afghan population of the support given by Italy and Germany to the tribes is emotionally mentioned there, remembering his frequent travels in a country as giving him the opportunity to feel “the open friendliness of people, deeply conscious and ready to fight for their liberty and independence: many times, people, coming out of nowhere with a large smile of their white teeth expressed greeting: Salaam Sahib, everything is quiet, do you need anything?” Mutual esteem and personal consideration is best testified in a final episode, related to my father’s appointment, in May 1943, from Kabul to Moscow: a few days before leaving, on one of his frequent visits to the Bazaar, he found in his pocket a written message of the Fakir: “I have learned you are leaving. I do not know exactly what is happening in your country and I do not like it. If you happen to face difficulties at home, come to me, with your wife and children, you will lack nothing and while you live among us, nobody will ever touch a single hair of yours. Today, tomorrow, it does not matter, whenever you feel like it, do not forget I am your friend.” Another sign of deep recognition (for her daring actions as intermediary and contact with representatives of the tribes) was the precious gift to my mother of a splendid gold-embroidered ceremonial robe and a dagger. As by her last wishes, we have donated these gifts to the Museum of the Italian Far East Institute in Rome.

As my father remembers, despite a comparatively modest contribution (in the face of lavish bribes from the British side) the tribes offered an enthusiastic cooperation in fulfilling missions meant to anticipate a hoped for advance by the Axis powers through the Middle East towards India. It never materialized in the wake of the shifting fortunes in the broader conflicts. He gave progressive warnings to the Fakir on not relying too much on an optimistic speculation so as not to risk too many lives of his warriors in actions against the British. This foresight, based on scattered news he was receiving in the latter part of 1942, won my father a further grade of consideration in the Fakir’s eyes: “I was torn” - my father writes - “between the Fakir’s and German impatience for action and my own foreboding on an adverse turn of the tide. The Fakir granted me a superior gift of prescience - of which I was not so sure - and gratitude for sparing too many losses of lives among his faithful.”

All along these contacts and actions it was my father’s constant task to have the Afghan Government partly shutting its eyes or condone hostile activities against the British from Kabul. It had been a constant policy of the Italian Government to provide economic assistance and some military support to the modernization of the Afghan armed forces. This was seen as a strengthening of confident ties between the two countries (both of the last kings of Afghanistan chose Italy as a refuge for their successive exiles). Although recognizing assistance received, the powerful Prime Minister was broadly felt as being basically pro-British, whereas other members of the Government were much keener to uphold a genuine neutrality, also in favour of the Axis powers, quite popular in a public opinion, basically anti-British and angrily aware and fearful of British or Russian pressures on the country. My father was able to play in keeping a fair balance in this dual attitude to preserve some freedom of movement for Italy. On many occasions he was able to score small victories, as in the difficult negotiation towards an honourable settlement between British pressure to see Anzilotti expelled forthwith without return and the solution obtained to have him depart on a temporary leave. Another improvement was achieved, after a lengthy debate on accepting, at the end of 1941, the British request of seeing the Italian and German small but active non diplomatic communities to leave Afghanistan - but with credible guarantees of a safe conduct and assistance - provided the presence of the Legations and a limited staff was retained. The outcome of this latter negotiation required, in its last phase, a special gathering of a
Loya Jirga which emphatically confirmed the value of neutrality in a policy-resolution my father and some of his Afghan friends were able to influence positively.

From September 1943, after Italy’s shift in the war as a co-belligerent with the Allies, my father, on instructions from Rome, was instructed to co-operate with them also in Kabul: lengthy sessions ensued with members of the local British staff, inquiring into the Legation’s and his personal role in support of hostile actions against British interests. While a bit surprised by some basic lack of information of their Secret Service (including points of incertitude about the real circumstances of Netaji’s escape to and from Afghanistan) his cautiously truthful replies were probably conducive to a successive “pardon” testified by his receiving the British agreement (on which he had some doubts) on his nomination in 1961 as Ambassador to the Court of St James.

As I am approaching the end of my presentation, let me draw some attention to a book “L’India e il Fascismo” – India and Fascism - recently (2002) published in Italy by a young historian (born in 1970), Manfredi Martelli. It appears to be the first in depth Italian study on relations between Indian nationalists and the Fascist Government, fruit of a lengthy research work and based on solid documents. I am glad to leave a copy of the book to the Research Bureau for further study. Unfortunately, this book is only available in Italian. I would try here to shortly summarize its contents.

The author recalls the first contacts, established in the thirties, with Gandhi, Nehru and Chandra Bose, from which Netaji emerged as the man of leading interest because his views appeared to be closer to the Italian points of view at the time: precisely in the thirties, Italy gathered it could play an important role also in the Far East, where its position was not tainted (as in the case of Great Britain or France) by policies seeking domination and exploitation. A speech by Mussolini at the end of 1933 testified a strong Italian interest in developing cultural - conducive to political - ties with Asian students and personalities. Fascist outlook on the world and its own interests was strongly hardened against the Allies, from the middle thirties onwards, by the sanctions that followed Italy’s forays in Eastern Africa which finally threw Mussolini in Hitler’s arms. Italy’s policy was aimed at fighting against the traditional colonialist powers and it considered itself in a better position as a potential ally of India not being tainted by the suspicion (as Germany, also strongly racist, and later Japan were) of having the ambition to extend their dominant power to the Indian subcontinent.

Mussolini never ceased to be personally favourable to Bose’s positions, as demonstrated by their successive meetings. The last, on May 5, 1942 after which Mussolini was again active to support, against German and later Japanese unwillingness, to have the Axis openly stating its support of Indian independence and nationhood. Mussolini’s personal warmness towards Chandra Bose was amply confirmed in supportive messages in 1943 and 1944 to the constitution and further action of the Provisional Government of Free India and Netaji was, on his side, further warmly grateful to Mussolini for support given to him and strongly encouraging towards Fascist endeavours to keep power through the Government in Northern Italy.

Martello’s book dwells at length on the rivalry that developed in Italy and Germany between the endeavours of Chandra Bose and Mohammed Iqbal Shedad to further attention and support towards the Indian cause. In fact, partly because of Netaji’s choice to give priority to seeking German support (in consideration of its stronger position within the Axis) Iqbal’s position in Italy became gradually more important, so as to become the principal point of reference to Italy’s Eastern policy. Of course Chandra Bose kept good contacts and support of friends in the Italian Foreign Office, but Foreign Minister Ciano gradually showed mistrust
towards Netaji and Italy’s policy in general grew more and more supportive (because of its interest in courting Arab support in the Middle East) of the Muslim element in the struggle for Indian independence.

Martelli records the Bose-Shedai misunderstandings and growing rivalry in detailed reports of their meetings in Italy in May-June 1941. A common, persuasive support by both on the need of a clear statement of support to India’s independence by the Axis emerged from a German-Italian policy meeting in December 1941 to which Chandra Bose, Shedai and Gulam Siddiq Khan were invited to represent India’s interests. I can make the full report on this meeting, as drafted by the responsible officer in the Italian Foreign Ministry, available for the records. As it emerges from the conclusion the result of the common proddings was only a German commitment to try to have Hitler-Ribbentrop reconsider their cautious attitude of not acting prematurely. It might be interesting to note that, at this meeting, a new element had emerged, Japan’s entry into war. Both Bose and Shedai expressed their apprehensions about Japan’s real war aims of dominating Asia and used this as a further necessity to gain Germany’s and Italy’s clear support for Indian national aims.

When recording, with well documented reports Italy’s gradual evolution to support and conduct a persuasive action on German’s hesitation (and initial Japanese opposition) towards Chandra Bose’s shift of his action from Europe to Asia (as materialized by his adventurous journey by submarine from February to May 1943) often cites, among others, my father’s reports, still from Kabul. They deal with the evolution of the situation in Asia and India (including comments on the future partition and creation of Pakistan) after Japan’s initial victories, and its repercussion on Netaji’s own plans and actions in creating a strong Indian political and military arm as a decisive national contribution towards a hoped for Japanese advance towards and into India. Documents and facts about these developments are certainly well recorded in Kolkata so I shall not dwell upon them.

I would however like to mention the final chapters of Martelli’s book as a very positive assessment of Netaji’s role in furthering India’s independence and nationhood. These correspond to my father’s own continued involvement, despite the fact that direct correspondence between him and Chandra Bose did not continue as in 1941-42, in Chandra Bose’s activity from Burma and Singapore. Also in the last words of his personal recollections (1957) on Subhas Chandra Bose he remembers with a touch of emotion his own feelings and gathers the effects of disillusionment felt by Netaji on the gradual failure of his best hopes of support of the fate of India. With these thoughts in mind, news of Chandra Bose’s accidental death reached my father in Moscow and memories of their friendly relationship were later renewed in a meeting, later in Paris, with Sarat Chandra Bose who wanted to collect my father’s contribution to a reconstruction of Netaji’s life after escaping from Kolkata.
DISGUISE, JEALOUSY, ESCAPE
GOVERNOR GOPALKRISHNA GANDHI'S SPEECH
ON NETAJI'S BIRTHDAY 2009

Professor Krishna Bose, Ambassador Alessandro Quaroni, Madam Quaroni, Professor Dominic Lieven, Dr.Sugata Bose, Dr.Sumantra Bose, Professor Bharati Roy in the audience, esteemed Upacharya Visva Bharati, Professor Rajat Kanta Roy in the audience, Professor Reba Som in the audience, distinguished dignitaries in the audience, artists, friends, ladies and gentlemen!

But unlike Ambassador Quaroni I have to say that it has been all too easy and not at all difficult for the Netaji Research Bureau to have me year after year at function after function without the slightest difficulty. You can’t keep me away. It is a great privilege for me to continue my association with this magnetic field, this Amrita Sadan and the historic work on historic transactions being conducted by historians and others interested in history from here. Friends, you do not need to hear from me on the subject of undying fascination for all of us - Netaji. You do not need more time to be taken by an itinerant visitor on the subject of permanent interest. But I must fulfill my own egotism and exploit to the maximum the undeserved facility of a microphone that I find before me. As the morning proceeded three words used frequently in the talks we have just heard, in the learned scholastic talks which we have just heard kept coming to me. These were disguise, jealousy and escape.

And as I thought of Netaji in his disguises I said to myself yes, disguise is the right word, but yes, it also leaves one dissatisfied. What is wrong about this word disguise in the context of Netaji? And I thought to myself that disguise, if it means the substituting of one’s natural apparel by another, is done for one’s own peoples’ dignity. It is much better than cosmetics for one’s own self interest. Disguise is a remodeling of one’s external appearance. But goodness knows one can wear one’s own clothes, bear one’s own name, and be utterly false to one’s own integrity. Netaji in the different attire that we see him in, using the different names that we know he used, is making a point which we may miss. All the variations in his attire were alternations, not alterations, and they were alternations in the attire of our quest for freedom, from one stage to another, moderate to non moderate, extreme to philosophical, spiritual to rationalistic. They were the apparel of patriotism in the varied and varying wardrobe of India’s destiny.

Jealousy - how simply and straightforwardly does Netaji use the word jealousy - to describe some of the political chemistry of 1938 and 1939. But if we think of the jealousy of those times and the jealousies of today, what an oceanic difference. We live in times when insults are hurled in public but apologies are made quietly in private. Those were times when disagreements were open and if anyone trespassed the limits of propriety, apologies were also open.
Escape, from this house he escaped. But again there is a dissatisfaction in my mind about the use or the appropriateness of the word escape to describe what happened. He escaped from confinement but restored hope. He exited from bondage but entrenched faith. By becoming dynamic in his physical movement, he established with almost terrestrial gravity the certainty of India’s future freedom.

Friends, the 23rd of January is not a repetitious annuity of a recurring anniversary. It is an occasion for us to do two things; one is to question time – why do you do this to us; why do you create a hope to extinguish it; why do you raise expectation to hush it; but then these are questions posed to the voiceless. There is a second thing - which is to ask to oneself; is idealism futile? Is cynicism going to be our staple? And here on this magnetic field comes the clear answer that idealism is not only not futile, it is natural and will renew itself beyond annuities - for idealism is natural for the survival of our species not just as an entity created by nature but as human beings forged in the crucible of evaluated and evolving values. I thank Krishnadi for her hospitality, Sugata for his generosity, and all of you for your fifth expression of patience with me.
Respected Prof. Krishna Bose, Hon’ble Governor Gopal Gandhi, Prof. Sugata Bose, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am highly honoured to deliver the Sarat Chandra Memorial Lecture, just on the eve of the 110th birth anniversary of this illustrious son of India. A brilliant lawyer, a passionate freedom fighter, and an eminent political leader, Bose remained, till his last days, an uncompromising opponent of partition and a strong advocate of socialism and secularism. The close and abiding comradeship of the brothers, Subhas Chandra and Sarat Chandra Bose, remains a unique phenomenon in the cherished legacy of our freedom struggle.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Given my varied experience, I had initially thought of sharing with you my perceptions on the evolution of India’s foreign policy over the last four decades, and how the policy affected our socio-economic development.

On further reflection, I felt it would be better to focus instead on India – US relations. This is because I found the recent vigorous debate in our country reflected a lack of awareness, or unwillingness to recognize the tectonic global changes in recent years. Some of us choose to remain frozen in ideological postures of a bygone era. Even more unfortunate were the pavlovian tendencies to see lurking threats to our sovereignty in any initiative involving the US. These reflect colonial-era mindsets which are out of tune with contemporary realities. These also do not reflect the confidence and self-esteem with which the new generation of Indians now approach the challenges and opportunities of a fast changing world.

Given the shared values and close affinities at the people to people level, it was expected that India and the US would be, as Shri Atal Behari Vajpayee said, “natural allies”. The conventional thinking is that this relationship could not flourish earlier, due to India’s perceived tilt towards the Soviet Union and its leadership of the Nonaligned Movement. Hence, after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, and the resultant irrelevance, or reduced relevance, of the Nonaligned Movement, it was widely assumed that the ideological and other constraints on the development of India – US relations would be removed, and our relationship would blossom. But it was not quite as simple as that.
The fact is that India–US relations had their crests and troughs during and after the Cold War period. During the height of the Cold War, it was with US collaboration that our green revolution was launched, our first nuclear power station set up, institutes of excellence in agriculture and engineering were established, defence cooperation was initiated, and we were the first country outside NATO and apart from Japan, to be supplied with a supercomputer. Even our intelligence services had closer collaboration with US and British agencies than those with any other country. Indira Gandhi deliberately chose to visit the USA before visiting the Soviet Union, despite Brezhnev’s visit to India shortly after her re-election in 1980. I witnessed the close personal rapport between Rajiv Gandhi and Ronald Reagan and also their wide-ranging discussions on global developments. The worst phases of India-US relations were during the Republican Administration of Richard Nixon and the Democratic Administration of Jimmy Carter.

In fact, it was during the years following the end of the Cold War that India–US relations were treated with benign neglect by both countries. The nuclear tests conducted by India and Pakistan in 1998, brought India and South Asia abruptly back on Washington’s radar screen. There was a renewed hyphenation of India and Pakistan, and a new assertion that India–Pakistani differences over Jammu & Kashmir represented a “nuclear flash point” posing a threat to world peace. Pakistani aggression in Kargil in the following year, prompted a more balanced US perspective. This was reflected by President Bill Clinton’s historic 5-day visit to India and 5-hour stopover in Pakistan during his last year as President.

The great goodwill generated by the visit of President Clinton to India was built upon and given new impetus since the assumption of office by President George W. Bush in 2001. The policy of the Bush Administration evolved during its two consecutive terms, bringing about a fundamental change in US perceptions of India. Our country was seen not in a sub-regional context, but as a rising global power with shared values and intersecting interests with the US. It was in the context of this larger vision that leaders of both our countries resolved to take a number of far-reaching initiatives to transform India–US relations into a truly strategic partnership.

The first significant milestone in this direction was the announcement by President George W. Bush and Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee in January 2004, of the NSSP – the Next Steps in Strategic Partnership – between India and the US. This envisaged cooperation in civil nuclear energy, space, high technologies and missile defence. Before I left for my assignment in the United States later that year, I was told that the conclusion of the three-stage NSSP process should be the culmination of my tenure. However, we accelerated the process and concluded the NSSP by the middle of 2005.

A number of initiatives were taken thereafter by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and President George W. Bush to revitalize India-US relations and take these to unprecedented heights.
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The most significant, and the most controversial, agreement was the India – US civil nuclear agreement. This was finally approved, against what appeared to be impossible odds, by the US Congress in September, 2008. The full extent of the impact of the civil nuclear deal was not realized in our country. The essence of the agreement and its implications got lost in the maze of technical and legal details. It was mainly projected in our country in terms of promoting our energy security, and in the US as strengthening nonproliferation and fostering closer partnership with the world’s largest democracy.

There were several other far-reaching implications. The singling out of India for exemption from a major international regime in force for over three decades was an audacious and historically unprecedented initiative by the US. It was an extraordinary one-time exemption from an international nonproliferation regime, set up and made progressively more restrictive by successive Democratic and Republican Presidents of the USA. The agreement ended the global isolation of India from nuclear cooperation and commerce. At the same time, the US led the world to acknowledge and accept India’s possession of nuclear weapons, without of course any intention of formally recognizing India as a Nuclear Weapons State under the NPT. The agreement was preceded by the US – led initiative to get a clean waiver from the guidelines of the 45-member Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG). This gave fresh impetus to a steady process of loosening of restrictions on the supply of dual use high technologies to India. This should contribute significantly and in diverse ways to our economic development and the well-being of our people.

The civil nuclear agreement represented the most high profile manifestation of the fundamental change of US perceptions about India’s position in the global security architecture. It was emblematic of the rapid transformation of India – US relations into a strategic partnership. This had implications in terms of how India is now perceived in many capitals.

Hopefully, the geostrategic, energy security, environmental, technological, socio-economic and other benefits of the agreement will be realized in full measure by the completion of remaining steps by both governments and some other governments as well.

There had been uninformed speculation about commercial interests being at the core of the US leadership role in freeing India from its global isolation from nuclear and other high technology trade. Suggestions have been made about the desirability of concluding commercial deals with countries such as Russia and France, while proceeding cautiously with the US. This kind of thinking is oblivious of global realities including close ties between US, French, Russian, German and Japanese companies.

I am convinced that a rapid growth of nuclear power generation in India will not be possible without domestic and foreign private sector participation, under a strong regulatory framework.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

While the civil nuclear agreement removed a major irritant and impediment in India – US relations since
the days of the Carter Administration, there was an even more important change in the US approach to India, which does not appear to have fully registered in our consciousness. Since our independence, the relationship was viewed in the US, to a significant extent, in the context of its alliance with Pakistan. This was most evident during the Nixon Administration’s open hostility towards India and its attempt to even get its new friend China involved in coordinated Sino-US moves against India during the Bangladesh liberation war.

It was during the Bush Presidency that the US position in this regard underwent a fundamental shift. Bush was, from the very beginning of his first tenure, very clear that India had to be seen not in the regional perspective vis-à-vis Pakistan, or even South Asia, since India’s largest neighbour was China and India was the world’s largest democracy. When President Bush and First Lady Laura Bush met my wife and me at our embassy, accompanied by his predecessors, President Bill Clinton and President H.W. Bush, after the tsunami in 2004, they were struck by how close Indonesia was to our territories: that it was India’s second largest neighbour followed by Pakistan, Bangladesh and other neighbours.

The US position evolved progressively in a positive direction during the two terms of the Bush Administration, effectively de-hyphenating Pakistan and India. Pakistan was no longer seen as a problem between India and the US, but as a common problem for both countries, especially, but not exclusively, in the context of the global threat of terrorism. India’s positive role in Afghanistan was appreciated. The notion of a special role for Pakistan in Afghanistan had few takers in Washington. Contrary to reports, there was no US pressure on India on resolving differences with Pakistan on Jammu & Kashmir or viewing this as a so-called “core cause” for terrorism.

The Bush Administration also had close consultations with India on developments in other neighbouring countries and our adjoining regions. These confidential consultations have continued with the Obama Administration, including on the Afghanistan-Pakistan strategy of the US.

Another important document concluded between India and the USA was the 10-year framework of defence cooperation signed in June 2005 in Washington D.C. We have a wide range of joint military exercises between our navies, armies and air forces. We have revived cooperation involving supply of US defence equipment to India. I had the privilege of commissioning ISA Jalashwa, our first naval ship of US origin. We have also received special protection suits for new aircraft in our VIP squadron, and concluded agreements on the supply of modern maritime surveillance aircraft and other equipment. The recent finalization of the End Use Monitoring Agreement should facilitate not only defence equipment sales, but also technology transfers, co-production, joint ventures and other forms of defence cooperation. The significantly enhanced level of trust between the two countries is manifested in US willingness to cooperate with India in high technology equipment supplies and also in transformative systems in areas of command and control, early warning and missile defence.

There has also been progress in India-US cooperation in space. This was reflected in the recent conclusion of an agreement on launches by India of US satellites or satellites with US components.
Though both India and the US, as major targets of terrorist organizations based in Pakistan, had close consultations on countering terrorism, there was lack of enthusiasm by agencies concerned in terms of operational cooperation. There has been improvement in this regard in recent years. This was demonstrated dramatically after the 26/11 terrorist outrage in Mumbai. The US promptly condemned the attacks, immediately acknowledged that it emanated from Pakistan, called for the perpetrators to be brought to justice, and steps taken to prevent such provocative attacks. Within a few hours of the attacks, I received telephone calls from President-elect Barack Obama and Secretary of State Rice, with assurances of not only American solidarity but of active US support. American agencies, including the FBI, promptly swung into action. They assisted us with vital inputs in our investigations – far, far more than any other country. Sadly, but not surprisingly, the reaction of the majority of countries, including those whose causes we consistently espouse, was ambivalent at best. One of our close traditional friends, was insensitive to the extent of calling for the immediate resumption of the India - Pakistan Composite Dialogue with the aim of reducing tensions and resolving differences, reminding us that both countries were nuclear powers.

Apart from these areas of geo-strategic importance, there were a series of India-US initiatives to strengthen our bilateral ties and our global cooperation. India-US trade was doubled in four years. The US remains our largest trading partner. In real terms, the US also remains the largest source of investments in India, as also the major source of technology transfers. We recognized that with economic reforms, privatization, reduction of state controls in India, most decisions on trade, investments and technological collaboration were taken in board rooms of companies rather than in government offices not only in the US, but increasingly in India as well. Therefore, a very high level India-US CEOs’ forum was set up to provide inputs to our Prime Minister and the US President. This forum had periodic meetings with our Finance Minister, Commerce & Industry Minister, Deputy Chairman of our Planning Commission and their US counter-parts. A private sector advisory group was also set up for providing suggestions to the India-US Trade forum, headed by our Commerce and Industry Minister and the US Trade Representative, which was the third such forum that the US had with foreign countries. The bilateral High Technology Cooperation Group was re-activated, with industry representation, and focused on information technology, biotechnology, nanotechnology and defence technology.

Numerous new institutional forms of high level interaction were established. I do not wish to catalogue all of these. I will, if you permit, briefly mention some of the more important ones. The new economic dialogue was co-chaired by the US President’s Chief Economic Adviser. The new energy dialogue was co-chaired by the US Energy Secretary. The Indian Co-Chairman in both these forums was the Deputy Chairman of our Planning Commission. Apart from nuclear energy, the Energy dialogue mechanism also addressed other potential areas of cooperation, such as clean coal technologies, oil and gas, energy efficiency and renewable energy technologies. Uneven progress has been made in these areas. Particularly in view of the vital interests of both India and the US in reducing dependence on imported fossil fuels, we should naturally give greater focus on cooperation in these areas. Similarly, in the light of our highly successful past
collaboration with the US and our concerns about global food security and better nutrition, we will, I am sure, suitably restructure the US-India Knowledge Initiative on Agriculture, and make it more viable and result-oriented.

With the signing of a Science & Technology Agreement, the setting up of a Bi-Natural Science and Technology Commission and a fund for promoting joint research collaborations amenable to commercial application we have made some good beginnings. These will have to be built upon, keeping in mind the need for commercial linkages and the stakes of US educational and research institutions in generating revenues from Intellectual Property Rights.

After being among the first countries to sign an Open Skies Agreement with the US, we succeeded in very significantly increasing the number of flights, including non-stop flights, between the US and India. We will also have to focus on greater capacity not only for maritime but air cargo handling.

Apart from some bilateral initiatives which I have mentioned, India and the US recently took a number of global initiatives. It was natural for President Bush and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to initiate and jointly launch the UN Democracy Fund in New York during or UN General Assembly Session, in the presence of Heads of State or Government of other countries. After the very effective cooperation of our Navies in the wake of the tsunami, we initiated a natural disaster management mechanism. We jointly embarked on cooperation in combating global pandemics. This is an illustrative, rather than exhaustive, listing of our global cooperation, which also covered tackling terrorism, narcotics trafficking, money laundering, illegal trafficking in arms and people, cyber security and other areas.

Among the major areas of future collaboration, higher education is an area of great potential, particularly with educational reforms being introduced, at long last, in India. The other promising areas are healthcare and green technologies.

I had the good fortune of being India’s envoy to the USA during the most rapid transformation this relationship had undergone since our independence. The questions I am often asked are related to the durability of the positive changes we witnessed in recent years.

There are good reasons for an upbeat outlook for the future. Firstly, our relationship with the US is based not on tactical considerations but on shared values of abiding relevance and on converging long-term interests on most global issues of concern. Secondly, with around 30 bilateral forums, our interaction with the US is more broad-based than with any other country. Thirdly, the relationship is of mutual benefit in terms of the two-way flow of trade and investments and job creation in both countries. Fourthly, there is growing recognition that India’s emergence as a major power, far from posing any threat, will contribute significantly to regional and global stability and prosperity.
Fifthly, the growing and vibrant Indian-American community provides a unique link between our two countries, and it will play an increasing role in promoting our relationship. Finally, there is strong bi-partisan consensus in the US on stronger ties with India.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This does not mean that our relationship with the US will be free of differences. India is not, and will never be, an ally, in a traditional sense, of the US. There will inevitably be issues on which India and the US will have differences of approach. This includes issues when there are no significant divergences in terms of our long term objectives. No relationship can be expected to remain static. Both countries will need to manage expectations and adjust creatively and with innovation. We will have to carefully calibrate our positions, highlighting and building on common grounds, and articulating our differences and defending our interests with the restraint and dignity befitting a country of our size and our civilisational heritage.

With this approach, I am confident that we will be able to deal with potentially contentious issues such as climate change, protectionism, multilateral trade talks, non-proliferation issues, and perhaps Iran, while maintaining and even accelerating the steady upward trajectory of India – US relations.

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Winter at Badgastein
- By E. Schenkl

The train leaves Salzburg at about 1 p.m. and wends its way southwards. Looking back one can see the castle of Salzburg saying farewell from the distance. It takes only a few minutes before the train reaches a narrow valley. The railway lines, a road and the river, nothing more finds room in this valley that is deep cut in the midst of gigantic mountains soaring high on either side. On and on the mountain railway goes and one can easily notice the change in temperature. It gets colder. The summits of the mountains at a distance begin to appear with a touch of snow.

Schwarzach St. Veit is reached, where one must usually change for Badgastein unless it is a through train. In half an hour’s time the train will get there (Badgastein). Up till Schwarzach St. Veit the train runs on the same level with the road but now it begins to climb, leaving the river and road down below in the valley. Near Hofgastein the valley broadens out. From the train the village looks like a picture drawn on a flat background or perhaps like a toy village in a box. The next station after Hofgastein is Badgastein which is reached at 3 p.m.

On leaving the train, fresh cold mountain air fills the lungs and one takes a deep breath.

Badgastein has been a health resort for centuries. In 1936, it celebrated the 500th anniversary. In ancient times people came there to find relief for their ailments through the hot springs. Today we know that the healing factor in this water is radio activity and doctors prescribe the use of the water for various illnesses like rheumatism, gall-bladder trouble, stomach trouble and general weakness and debility.
The treatment consists of two kinds – namely bathing or drinking, bathing being more important. In summer the place is crowded - people from all parts of the world are coming to find relief but it is also a rendezvous for the fashionable people, like actors, sportsmen, artists, writers and the like. The municipality of Badgastein has naturally provided for all their needs – big hotels, restaurants, cafés, concerts, cinemas and all the paraphernalia of modern civilization which people will not miss even when coming from the noisy towns. But this season does not last long - a few months and the village sinks back into the winter-sleep.

Coming here in December, one finds a different place and certainly a nicer one. Quietness everywhere. Snow covers the roofs, the trees, the streets like a white, soft mantle. The silent range of the snowy mountains with its hoary peaks looks down upon Badgastein.

The town itself, or rather village, is built on three terraces about 3500 feet above the sea level. Right in the centre roars down a gigantic waterfall in three cascades. A great view indeed! Dark fir tress on the slopes of the mountains help to make a harmony of white and green.

But also in winter people come to Badgastein. Only, they are more quiet types of mankind, those who want to enjoy nature and quietness. The place is also famous for winter sports and in the morning one can see these people go out with their skis. The fashionable folk are of course not here and the big hotels are all closed, giving the place a weird appearance. But prices are generally cheaper and even baths cost less. If one would like to combine treatment with work or rest or sports then winter is the proper season in Badgastein. There are no distractions of the kind that one finds in the big cities in Europe but there are plenty of these distractions in Badgastein in summer. No, I would not go to Badgastein in summer for anything, though it may be the fashion to do so.

Further, in winter the climate is at its best. The air is fresh and pure. Snow may be lying thick all round but it is a dry cold which does not depress like the London fog. It exhilarates because the sky is blue and a warm sunshine smiles on a silvery landscape. It is this combination of sun and snow which has a maddening effect on me and lures me as no city entertainments could.

In matters of walks, Badgastein has as much to offer. Aged folks walk for miles on the same level along the river bank and enjoy the babbling music of the river. Youthful individuals go up the mountains along hilly paths in search of adventure. And between these two extremes, one can enjoy a longish walk down to the neighbouring town of Hofgastein and walk back again. There is also a regular bus service between these two places.
From Badgastein one can continue the journey in the mountain railway southwards. Passing Bockstein and Mallnitz one comes to Villach, an important junction on the Vienna-Rome line. But at Villach the snow begins to thin off. From Villach a half hour’s journey brings you to the Austro-Italian frontier town of Tarvisio. And from Tarvisio the line goes down straight to Venice.

Apart from the bracing climate, Badgastein has hot mineral springs which used for bathing (or for drinking) serve as a natural tonic. These waters are the most highly radio-active in the world – that is why people come from all over the world. The usual course of treatment consists of twenty-one baths – with proper intervals in between. There are crowds of men and women who come every year and spend six weeks or a couple of months at Badgastein and go back entirely refreshed so that they may carry on for another two months with full energy and vigour. Why do not Indians try this health resort also?
[Translation of the text in Bengali]

From Netaji's Book of Songs, Mandalay Jail:

[Text in Bengali]

[English translation]

[Text in English]

[Continued in Bengali]

[Text in Bengali]

[Continued in English]

[Text in English]