

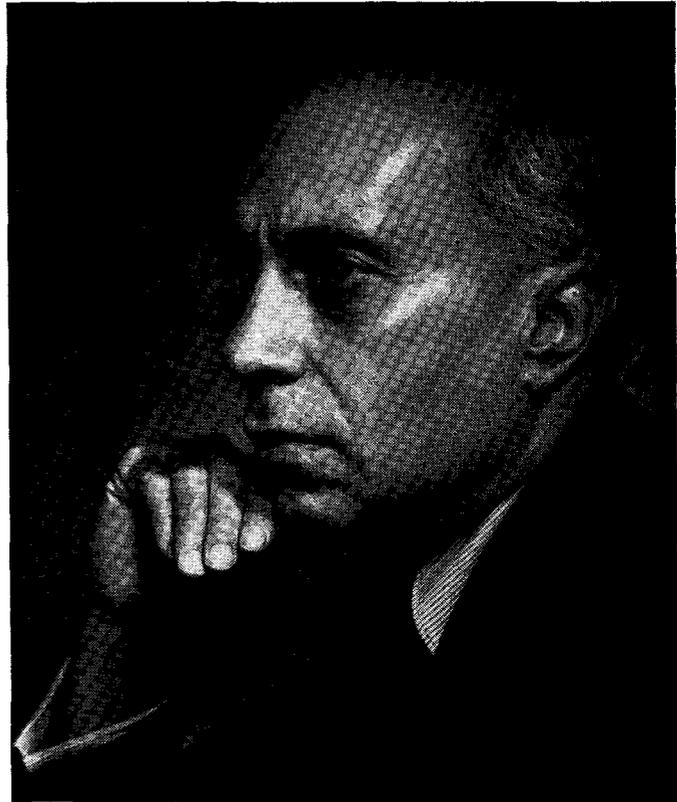
## A Glowing Light in the Gray Gallery of Leaders

**"Nehru: A Political Biography,"** by Michael Brecher (Oxford, 682 pp. \$8.50), and **"Nehru and Democracy: The Political Thought of an Asian Democrat,"** by Donald Eugene Smith (Longmans, Green, 194 pp. \$5.25), between them, reveal the contradictory personality of India's Prime Minister. The author of *"The Life of Mahatma Gandhi,"* Louis Fischer, evaluates the two books.

By Louis Fischer

**I**N THE gray gallery of world statesmen, the few colorful figures glow all the brighter: Chairman Khrushchev, Chancellor Adenauer, General de Gaulle, President Sukarno, and, not least, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. These are all older men. There are no Pitts or Napoleons. Nehru is seventy. Yet he seems eternally young. Perhaps it is because he is so photogenic and handsome, a fact stressed by Professor Brecher, the serious author of "Nehru: A Political Biography." Probably it is also because, on the threshold of his eighth decade, Nehru's mind is not set. He still gropes for the truth. Self-loving yet self-critical, public-spirited yet self-centered, he gives the impression of a man addressing a huge audience and talking to himself. The result is an image of doubt and honesty. Nehru can proclaim a principle and yield to expediency, embrace an ism and reject its dogma, make a show of strength and succumb to pressures. He is an attractive bundle of contradictions: an agnostic who rules a religious people, an aristocrat devoted to the masses, an intellectual clothed with power, a Socialist collaborating with adamant conservatives, an Easterner who is Western (Gandhi called him "more English than Indian in his thought and make-up"), a rebel whose explosions of wrath against his imperious father and the irresistible Mahatma almost always ended in obedience.

Both books under review show Nehru ever changing and growing within the constant shell of his personality. Professor Brecher had the advantage of a number of extended talks with his subject, access to many invaluable unpublished letters by and



—Karsh-Ottawa-PIX.

Nehru—Gandhi called him "more English than Indian in his thought and make-up."

to Nehru, and years of careful research in England, India, and elsewhere. His authoritative biography now takes precedence over all its predecessors and even over the autobiography of the 1930s ("Toward Freedom"). It is scholarly, indeed a bit too scholarly, for I miss the actuality of the hot, churning, crowded, troubled, undisciplined 400 millions. Nevertheless the country's history and problems are clearly delineated, and even the man emerges from this "political biography"—if only as a by-product of the wealth of data.

For instance, there is no attempt to analyze or even illuminate Nehru's relation to women or of women to him. He married Kamala Kaul in 1916. In 1931, he took her on a vacation to Ceylon. "On this trip," he wrote, "we seemed to have discovered each other anew," and he commented on their "new and more intimate relationship." In 1934 Kamala developed pulmonary tuberculosis, from which she died two years later. Meditating on her death, he remarked, "Why we had just begun to know and understand each

other; our joint life was only now properly beginning." From talks with persons very close to Nehru I gather that many women, white and brown, have adored him and he has been interested in them, but he has never loved, and sex played a minor role in his life. Does this explain his bouncing energy, his temperament (which Brecher calls "mercurial"), and his extrovert love of crowds, before whom, as he has admitted in an extraordinary written confession, he enjoys being the actor deliberately evoking desired emotions and reveling in the adulation? Listing Nehru's characteristics, Brecher adds, "Underlying them all has been an abiding sense of loneliness." The Nehru of 1958 is described as "a disappointed and lonely man . . . With the exception of Krishna Menon, Nehru no longer has close Indian friends."

Brecher offers no key to the Nehru-Menon relationship but refers often to the Indian Prime Minister's friendship with Lord and Lady Mountbatten, whose names head the list of Nehru's non-Indian intimates. Of Lord Louis

and Nehru, Brecher asserts, "From their first meeting in Malaya in 1946 they were drawn to each other," and he alludes to "a powerful mutual attraction between very similar personalities." But Lady Mountbatten "could understand him [Nehru] as most Indian women whom he knew could not."

Like all mortals, Nehru is the product of heredity, experience, and the influence of persons. ". . . during the first year of India's independence," Brecher asserts, "Lord Mountbatten exerted far more influence on Nehru's decisions than did his [Congress] party or Cabinet colleagues." Mountbatten was Britain's Viceroy during the anguished period when India achieved freedom and suffered partition. Brecher reports that in India "many Indians expressed the view that partition was never inescapable, that it was the conscious choice of Indian leaders, notably Nehru and Patel." Brecher assigns the "crucial role in the great decision" to Nehru.

**S**INCE Brecher wrote we have the testimony of one of Nehru's great contemporaries, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, President of the Congress party, the leading Moslem nationalist, an Islamic scholar of world repute. "If there is one man whose position approximated Gandhi's as the recipient of Nehru's complete confidence," Brecher states, "it was Azad." Posthumously, for alas the magnanimous Maulana died a few months ago, there appeared his autobiography, "India Wins Freedom," with a preface by Humayun Kabir, Azad's close associate and Minister of Cultural Affairs in the Nehru government. The book is dedicated, with consent, "For Jawaharlal Nehru, Friend and Comrade." Nehru saw the text before publication, and when asked at a press conference after it was published he agreed, with his usual noble generosity, that Azad's criticisms had validity. "Within a month of Lord Mountbatten's arrival in India [in March, 1947]," writes Azad, "Jawaharlal, the firm opponent of partition had become, if not a supporter, at least acquiescent toward the idea.

"I have often wondered," he continues, "how Jawaharlal was won over by Lord Mountbatten. Jawaharlal is a man of principle, but he is also impulsive and amenable to personal influence . . . Jawaharlal was greatly impressed by Lord Mountbatten, but perhaps even greater was the influence of Lady Mountbatten . . . Another person who probably influenced Jawaharlal on this question [partition] was Krishna Menon . . . I did not feel very happy about this, as I felt Krishna Menon often gave him

wrong advice." (More pungent personal reflections by Azad on Krishna Menon and others have been set down in a thirty-page memoir sealed and deposited in the national archives for later publication.)

Azad emphasizes that Nehru's biggest contribution to the disaster of partition antedated Mountbatten's advent. "Now," he relates, "occurred one of those unfortunate events which change the course of history. On July 10 [1946], Jawaharlal held a press conference in Bombay in which he made a statement that the Congress party would enter the Constituent Assembly 'completely unfettered by agreements and free to meet all situations as they arise.' . . . I must place on record," Azad says, "that Jawaharlal's statement was wrong." Azad, who, with Gandhi, Nehru, and Patel, negotiated for independence with the British Cabinet Mission of Cripps, Alexander, and Pethick Lawrence, affirms, and the official texts confirm, that Congress was clearly committed to the Mission's plan, faulty though it was, for a united India.

I attended that fateful press interview in Bombay, and when it broke up I said to Nehru in the presence of Mrs. Pandit, his sister, "You have changed the entire basis of the agreement with England."

"I am fully aware of that," he replied with a smile.

According to Azad, Nehru's incorrect statement that Congress was free despite its acceptance of the plan gave Jinnah the opportunity to make his demand for Pakistan effective. Jinnah had agreed to the Cabinet Mission's undivided-India scheme, Azad argues, "only because nothing better could be obtained." But now that Nehru announced Congress would not abide by the plan, Jinnah also withdrew from it. Violence followed. The Attlee government took alarm. When Mountbatten, in immaculate tropical whites and a long row of medals, stepped from his plane onto the dusty soil of India, the country was on the eve of the planet's worst unorganized killing, in which at least half a million Hindus, Sikhs, and Moslems were slaughtered

(Continued on page 29)

## The Man Who May Be President

**"Richard Nixon: A Political and Personal Portrait,"** by Earl Mazo (Harper. 309 pp. \$3.95), illuminates the complex character of the man who may be the next Republican candidate for the Presidency. For the past two decades William H. Lawrence has been the White House correspondent for The New York Times.

By William H. Lawrence

**E**ARL MAZO's account of the life and times of Vice President Nixon is, by all odds, the best biography of the controversial man who may be our next President that has yet appeared.

Happily, it is neither idolatrous, nor is it a "hatchet" job. What Mr. Mazo has put together is basically a reporter's report: a collection of facts—the good with the bad—about Mr. Nixon, his personal and political history, his temperament, his thoughts and beliefs.

Although it was prepared with the most complete coöperation of Mr. Nixon and his staff, including access to hitherto unpublished personal papers, the biography certainly is not the "campaign" book candidates usually arrange to have published.

There is, in this volume, a lot of praise for Mr. Nixon and his accomplishments; but there is also harsh criticism of the "malignant innuendo" of his campaign hyperbole and other actions. Both sides will find it useful source material next year—in the struggle for the Republican Presidential nomination, as well as, if he wins in the convention, in the battle for votes in November.

To Mr. Mazo, the Nixon personality is "singularly complex, a paradoxical combination of qualities that bring to mind Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt, Harry Truman, and Joe McCarthy,"



—Wide World.

President Eisenhower celebrates his 1956 victory with Vice-President Nixon. In the privacy of the White House he was almost made Secretary of Defense.