

The Gandhi Information Zentrum, Germany
(An Account of its work based on a conversation with Peter Ruehe)

For Peter Ruehe, a computer-programmer by profession, building up the Gandhi Exhibition and the Gandhi Information Zentrum (Centre) in West Berlin, has been almost a single handed labour of love.

When he first came to India five years ago, at the invitation of a close friend and colleague at the Institute for Theoretical Chemistry, University of Berlin, where he worked, he knew very little about this country and practically nothing about Gandhi. His knowledge of Gandhi had been fashioned by whatever little he had read of him, at school, and the book "Freedom at Midnight". Therefore he thought it would be a good opportunity to see India and get to know its people more closely if he travelled with an Indian friend.

So, his visit to India in January '83, became a voyage of discovery. As he stayed with friends and relatives of his friends, he had the opportunity to know the country more intimately than an average tourist. It was not India's ancient past that moved him so much, although he appreciated the beauty of India's ancient temples and palaces, but the recent past, and the problems that the country faced today. While in Bombay he happened to see the "Gandhi" film, and it opened before him, whole new vistas of approaching not only India's problems, but problems which faced the

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world as a whole. At about this time, he chanced to visit Mani Bhawan Bhavan, see the exhibition on Gandhi, and also read his autobiography. This left a deep lasting impression on him: for Gandhi expressed so beautifully and clearly many of the ideas that were as yet nebulous in his own mind. In his personal life, even prior to his coming to India, it had been a time of change. He had decided to adopt a more simple lifestyle, trying to do with the minimum of amenities that are considered