

to
fellow
congressmen

(xiii)

Deviculom proved that the electorate in Kerala did not find the Congress in opposition more acceptable than Congress in power. The victory at Deviculom focussed popular attention on the Communists all over the country. The excitement evoked by this bye-election is perhaps an indication of a new direction in people's thinking.

Deviculom also proved that it has become well-nigh impossible to win over the electorate by sheer oratory or even by subtle resort to communalism. Ten years of freedom apparently failed to provide a single rampart against the mounting discontent of a disillusioned people against the ruling party in India.

What are the factors that have led to this growing gulf of hostility between the people and the Congress? What is it that has brought about this new upswing of the public mind in favour of new leaders and new parties?

Deviculom has posed these questions rather sharply. The Kerala Congress, it should be evident from all that has been said so far, is incapable of learning from experience. But the same cannot be said of Congressmen in other parts of India. It is the sacred task of all honest Congressmen who subscribe to the high ideals of the Congress, to deeply ponder over these problems and devise ways to overcome the rot that has set in.

Mehr Chand Mahajan, retired chief justice of India, observed that 'in spite of progress all round, there is seething discontent about everything amongst the people in general, excepting, perhaps, the privileged ones. This discontent is growing in spite of plans of industrial and eco-

nomic improvement. Such intense discontent I have not witnessed during the long span of my life' ('Food: Fancies & Facts,' *Indian Express*, 8 October 1957).

But where indeed do the roots of this intense discontent lie? Some of the tallest in the land have not unoften referred to a crisis of morals and have regretted the falling norms of public behaviour. It may be that there is a moral crisis in the country; but what is even more true is the fact of an economic and a political crisis engulfing the nation. Moral standards are admittedly related to economic conditions in society. Thus the roots of the present discontent lie in the shortage of the most elementary needs of the population—food and other vital consumer goods. A cursory comparison of prices of essential commodities that prevailed in 1940 with those today will speak for itself. Price of wheat determines and regulates not only the price of other cereals but also other consumer goods. It has risen from Rs. 2.50 or Rs. 3 per maund to Rs. 25 and even more. Wages and earnings have also risen but not to the same extent. The purchasing power of the people has fallen, conditions of living have become more and more difficult and the feeling of dissatisfaction has become almost universal except for a handful who have grown richer at the cost of the people.

The legacy of British rule apart, the single source that has given rise to this growing misery of the Indian people is the ten-year-old rule of the Congress. The people had once reposed their faith in this Congress and given it support the like of which can hardly find a parallel in world history. Their expectations from the Congress were high indeed. They were confident that with the Congress in power their difficulties would be minimised, if not removed altogether. The seething discontent to which Mehr Chand Mahajan has referred to is explained by the fact that none of these popular expectations have been fulfilled.

In the years after independence, the Congress under Nehru's leadership, did evolve a programme of economic rehabilitation of the nation. Economic rehabilitation of such backward countries as India, ravaged by the imperialists in the course of more than a century of the most oppressive rule, is certainly no easy task. The evolution of a correct programme was the first necessity, and thanks to Nehru, this task was successfully achieved. It was realised that the first task is to remove the burdens on

our toiling peasantry, and land reform programmes received due emphasis. It was at the same time realised that agricultural rehabilitation is not possible without a corresponding development of heavy industries, and a programme of industrialization was also drawn up. And very correctly it was understood that our agricultural and industrial backwardness can be removed only by pursuing a socialistic path of development. The acceptance of the socialist pattern at Avadi and the unanimous acceptance of the socialist objective by the union parliament marked an important victory for the people.

But there was a snag in all these developments. As a commentator recently remarked, 'The view is widely prevalent in the country that barring a few leaders in the central government, the rest have no sympathy either for the plan or its objectives and dismiss both as "Nehru's fads" which one applauds in a mechanical fashion.' And further: 'As things are, not only the rank and file but even the second and third rank leadership of the ruling party is unaware of what the plan is about and what it seeks to achieve' ('The Week At Home', *Times of India*, 10 July 1958).

This apathy of not only the top but also the second and third rank leadership of the Congress towards accepted objectives and policies is at the root of all troubles. How else can one explain the failure of the government to implement many of the schemes listed in the plan. This apathy is nowhere more strikingly exhibited than in the field of land reforms. For eleven years after independence, the Congress governments have failed to provide an effective law against eviction of tenants. The Congress Working Committee at its meeting in New Delhi on 12-13 July 1958, commented that the progress of land reforms has been tardy.

Differences as to Congress objectives exist at all levels in the Congress organisation. A former chief minister of the Congress, Hanumanthayya, explained the situation candidly: 'As long as Mr Patel was there, this idea of socialism did not enter the Congress. It was only in 1957, when Mr Tandon resigned the presidentship of the Congress and Mr Nehru became both the prime minister and the Congress president that he thought of implementing the idea which he had nurtured for many years. A very strange thing happened at Avadi. Those very Congressmen who were

opposing socialism, raised their hands in favour of it. No provincial Congress committee had passed a resolution in favour of it, and no State legislature had ever thought of it. *What was not accepted for over fifty years was accepted within two hours.*'

Hanumanthayya continued: 'They in India had two or three great emperors, Akbar and Asoka being among them. Akbar was so great that he was not satisfied with either Islam or Hinduism and he founded a new religion called "Din Ilahi." *But this religion died the day Akbar died. This new socialism of Nehru will go along the same lines.* He says that democracy must be retained and socialism must also be implemented. Mr Nehru is in the same position as Emperor Akbar. He has devised this new political religion, viz., socialism. He borrowed some ideas from democratic countries, some from Russia and some from China and borrowed political ideologies of Western countries like the United States, and tries to evolve a new political philosophy. This is great work. The very lieutenants of Panditji, whom they trust so much at the present day, would be the very first to say that Mr Nehru is not here and so this new socialism should also go with him.'

Thus the tragedy of the situation is that an essentially socialist path of planned development is being implemented by a set of people who do not believe in it. What is even worse is their peculiar ideas and concepts which have resulted from a belief in self-omnipotence and failure to read and keep informed about new world trends and ideas. Here is the typical case of Dr B. C. Roy, chief minister of West Bengal. Siddhartha Ray said: 'Someone seemed to have convinced the chief minister that since the government did not carry on any trade, there should not be any question of trade unions being formed by government servant.' (*Indian Express*, 23 June 1958). Now this rather novel discovery about relationship between trade and trade unionism in relation to government would be regarded as on a par with the 'five finger' concept, and it is certainly amusing, but that does not help because the task of leadership is not so much to amuse people as to show results and remove poverty and nakedness.

We have noticed that one of the things which irritates our prime minister is the fact that while assailing his gov-

ernment's failures, the left opposition hardly has a word of praise for his government's achievements.

While there is much to be said about the prime minister's irritation, it has to be realised that what the people are primarily interested in is immediate relief. While full two meals may not be possible, everyone expects at least one. While comprehensive housing projects may be a long way off, people do yearn to see that the ghastly sight of millions sleeping on city pavements is at least reduced, if not eliminated. While radical reorganisation of the present land tenure may be postponed for a few more years, it is certainly desired that evictions are stopped forthwith, a fact accomplished by the Communist government in Kerala.

That is why when the officers of the planning commission and the government publish imposing statistics of achievements registered, it fails to impress the people. For what has not to be forgotten is the hard reality that hunger and misery, poverty and nakedness, and the constant stinting of the soul and the mind, which roused the best in the Indian intelligentsia in pre-independence days and made them perform deeds of valour and struggle against the foreign foe, is very much there in India today, and perhaps in a more intensified form. All the might of the British empire could not subdue the righteous anger and action that was thus generated by the sight of mass hunger and misery, and there is no reason why even a government under an eminent Indian like Nehru should not rouse the same sentiments.

Socialism means many things to many people, and while it cannot be confused with egalitarianism, it does connote one simple truth, namely, socialism means an end of all forms of exploitation. Whatever the government does, and howsoever contradictorily responsible spokesmen of the Congress may be expressing themselves, there is quite enough of affirmation of socialism, at least verbally. This affirmation of socialism has tended to increase in volume since the 'rent in the Congress armour' in Kerala. The fact, however, is that the wealth tax, the expenditure tax, and measures like the increase of excise duties cannot be taken as guarantees of socialist transformation. But postponement of a ceiling upon landholdings is certainly not socialism.

The Congress concept of socialism has remained undefined and vague, and howsoever it may have been inter-

preted or defined, it has never emphasised the reality that socialism means end of exploitation. A mediocre and a careerist who came to occupy a responsible post in the Congress top executive, wrote a series of articles ranging from the economics of Rashtrapati Bhavan to the economics of hydrogen bomb, and published it as an official Congress publication so that it may pass as the authoritative Congress view of socialism. It has, however, been universally acknowledged that there have been few such disappointing documents and, as is perhaps natural, not at one place does it make clear that socialism involves the ending of exploitation of man by man.

Almost as a tragic finale to this confusion about socialism, we read in the newspapers that of all persons, Sampurnanand, UP's chief minister, initiated in the meeting of the Congress working committee at New Delhi on 12 July 'a discussion on the philosophical basis of Congress ideology and programme in the concept of socialism' (*Indian Express*, 3 July 1958). Sampurnanand had just then returned from a trip to holy Badrinath on the Himalayas, where he reportedly thanked the deity for the success in the election petition against him filed by a Communist. We all know his predilection for astrology. How Nehru felt about this expatiation by Sampurnanand in the working committee, we do not know, but the fact is patent that UP's chief minister betrayed socialism and his life-long colleague, the late Acharya Narendra Deva, as early as 1937 for a mere ministership in the UP government.

What is, however, curious is the fact that the interpretations of the 'socialistic pattern' have largely come from avowed reactionaries in the Congress organisation. Their attempt is to present socialism as something sharply distinct from Communism, while at the same time leaving their own view of what socialism means undefined and vague. In their hands socialism is merely a weapon to fight the Communists.

Thus the conclusion is almost inescapable that socialism is increasingly being utilised by the anti-Communists within the Congress to wage war against Communism, and while that is almost the only use being made of the great orientation at Avadi, all attempts which seek concrete interpretation of the socialist ideology are effectively frustrated. We have before us the case of the almost still-born Congress

ginger group. A commendable objective of this group was to bring concreteness and clarity to the Congress concept of socialist pattern. The anti-Communists in the AICC secretariat submitted a note against it to the working committee and the group has since been almost forgotten.

The inherent dangers of such a vague attitude to socialism are obvious. It carries within it the seeds of dictatorship, for under such an approach all opposition will before long begin to be identified with the Communists. In fact, such an approach has already been brought to bear by the Congress chief minister of West Bengal. Recently he laid blame for all hunger demonstrations in Calcutta on 'disruptionists.' The press, too, did not escape uncastigated. An incensed columnist of the *Times of India* wrote: 'By his comment Dr B. C. Roy comes dangerously close to the type of Congress minister to whom the slightest criticism of the government is tantamount to Communist subversion' (8 May 1958).

Thus, while on the ideological plane the Congress organisation hangs on precariously to a confused and negative line, the rot inside the organisation continues to spread. There is mounting evidence that fine resolutions and lofty exhortations have failed to stop this rot. In almost every State the Congress is riddled with rival factions. Almost everywhere leading Congressmen are busy in manoeuvres and intrigues for positions of power. Ministers are more keen on cultivating their constituencies rather than helping to strengthen local Congress units. Many members in leading positions are keen on what the prime minister has mildly called 'jobbery.'

In the absence of common understanding and ideals, the Congress has tended to become a house divided against itself. An astonishingly large and influential section who have come to be Congress MPs, MLAs and are represented in the AICC, have little faith in and even lesser understanding of socialism, planning and technological and social progress. As prime minister Nehru said recently in the Lok Sabha in reply to a debate on government's resolution on scientific policy: 'In developing science and scientific approach in India, one had to contend with the 'split personality' or 'double thinking' of people living at one and the same time with the bullock cart and the atomic energy.' (*Indian Express*, 2 May 1958.)

In fact, these 'split personalities' today happen to be

hovering around the prime minister all the time. While the need is for greater ideological cohesion, Nehru is surrounded by men to whom he had pledged his loyalty but whose thinking is different from his. Indeed the weakness of the Congress at the present juncture can be adequately explained by the defection of its leading lights from the declared principles of the organisation.

The inevitable consequence is the disintegration of its structure and the decline of its prestige among the common people. And how can it be otherwise when personal aggrandisement rather than public service is the guiding motive of Congressmen. The newspapers are full of lurid tales of Congress disintegration. To refer to just one instance, in May 1958 was reported an attempt to murder UP minister, Mohanlal Gautam, at village Ahen in Aligarh district of Uttar Pradesh, when the police had to open fire. And while Gautam saw in the attempt 'the hand of a Congress faction which was against him,' the Aligarh district Congress committee charged the minister with complicity in the murder of a prominent DCC member. Again, according to a report from Jhunjhunu (Rajasthan), there was a free fight between two Congress factions 'in which lathis, stones and blows were exchanged.' (*Times of India*, 7 July 1958.)

It is a tragedy that this galloping deterioration is taking place with Nehru as its helpless witness. Nehru, indeed, finds himself strangely isolated and perhaps is not always informed of what goes on around him. His recent threat to retire and his agonised speeches at the Congress parliamentary party, and later at the AICC meetings reflect this very fact. Nehru's threat of retirement can only be viewed as an open challenge to this very exasperating situation, though the challenge was not pressed. And while the challenge was thrown only in the month of May, the working of his mind was clearly revealed on an earlier occasion, though apparently the fact went unnoticed. After Gauhati, in February 1958, Nehru declined to be a member of the Congress parliamentary board. Apparently, the horse-trading for parliamentary seats which has been going on inside the organisation proved unbearable for him and, with Maulana Azad no more, his sensitive mind decided to keep out of the whole show.

Indeed, there can be no doubt about the gap that

separates Nehru from his colleagues. While Nehru is an ardent socialist, his colleagues, if they had their way, will give private enterprise the full headway. The hiatus exists not only in economic policies but also in social outlook. Nehru believes in secularism, science and technology. The right-wingers are traditionalists, are for gradual change and take their stand on spiritual values. This distinction between the two trends is not only known in India but is also the subject of worldwide comments. Sundar Kabadi, reporting from London (*Indian Express*, 2 May 1958) on reaction to the news of Nehru's proposed retirement, said that Western observers thought that "The 'sacred cow' caucus in his cabinet is in ascendancy and the party is being drawn too much to the right to hold India's impatient millions." Lord Altrincham, the British peer who became famous for his candid remarks on the British Queen, writing in *The National English Review* on his impression of India after a 'visit to this country, noted that there existed a "potential threat" to "the new India" from "what may be termed the neo-primitive movement, which is a too literal and generalised application of Gandhian principle," and this involved an "attack on industrialisation and on what is called "giganticism" [i.e., presumably large-scale projects like the Bhakra Dam].' (*Indian Express*, 23 March 1958.)

Actually, since sometime past, there have been subtle attempts in some quarters to 'educate' the country on the need for the prime minister to retire not only from office but even from public life. That this had not gone unnoticed by the prime minister was revealed at a Delhi press conference. Asked whether the suggestion of a temporary retirement had not been sponsored by a 'rightist lobby' with certain ulterior motives, the prime minister replied (*Indian Express*, 5 April 1958) that even if he retired, he would not become totally ineffective. Further it might actually be to the disadvantage of the so called 'rightist lobby' if he retired.

The story of the hiatus between Nehru's social outlook and that of his colleagues is very old. Nehru had known it himself since his earliest years in the national movement. Tibor Mende quotes Nehru (*Conversations with Mr Nehru*, p. 21) as saying that he had doubts regarding the social aspect 'because I was not quite sure that our

colleagues were so socially conscious.' Then there occur passages in his *Autobiography* when 'with a wrench' in his heart he felt that his path was different from his colleagues. Again, he has recorded in his *Discovery of India* (p. 474) that when the national planning committee was constituted by the then Congress president, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, with Nehru as chairman, 'important elements in the Congress, under whose auspices the committee had come into existence, rather looked upon it as an unwanted child, not knowing how it would grow up and rather suspicious of its future activities.'

Thus the gulf between the secular and scientific approach and the revivalist and spiritualist trend was always there in the Congress, but during the anti-imperialist struggle, under the influence of Mahatma Gandhi, it had remained dormant and hardly ever expressed itself.

In the years that have elapsed since independence, India has witnessed events of such historic importance that the impress they left behind have emboldened people to pose new questions. A series of crushing blows have brought the system of imperialism to its knees. Resurgent Arab nationalism and the rising consciousness of the African peoples are delivering the last blows on the oppressive world system. The only mighty imperialist power left is the United States, but it faces the rising might of the Soviet Union which had been tremendously strengthened by the success of the Chinese revolution.

All these developments have deeply affected India. Of special importance is the new path of progress blazed in neighbouring China. Despite slanders and inspired propaganda, the fact of the growing strength of new China, and more especially of the new happy life of its millions, is undeniable. The Chinese Republic came into being in 1949, while India was free two years earlier. And the Indian people ask: If the millions in ravaged China can be assured square meals, why not in India? If corruption, jobbery and nepotism can be ended in China, why should they assume such seriousness proportions in India?

Indeed, China today beckons India, just as centuries ago India beckoned China with the message of the Buddha. This is, however, not to say that the savage class warfare which stained the soil of China with human blood is still slumbering in the womb of time in India. Far from it, we

hold that it will be the genius of India to bring about the happiness of the Indian masses without recourse to bloodshed and war which history made inevitable in China.

The fact is undeniable that no other organisation is better equipped by history to bring about such a peaceful transformation in India than the Indian National Congress. And this particular task of the Congress has become not less but more important since the recent gains of the Communist Party, especially the formation of a Communist-led government in Kerala. The Indian Communists are born out of the Congress and are profoundly influenced and conditioned by India's great national struggle. This is a patent truth and Communist rule in Kerala is a confirmation of this fact.

That is the reason why there need be no conflict between the Congress and the Communists. The acceptance of the objective of peaceful transition to socialism at Amritsar by the Communists is in a way a triumph for the Congress concept. It should be the task of the Congress to perceive the development in the correct perspective and, through suitable policies, to further ensure the peaceful development in India. It is expected of the Congress, as the parent body, to rise to the occasion at the present critical moment of our history and ensure united progress rather than fratricidal war.

In order that the Congress may fulfil this great task, it has to be realised by those who guide its destinies that leading a people is like sailing against a current, and if you do not progress, you retrogress; that in the art of leadership there are no highroads and only those can reach the summit who are not afraid of fatigue and difficulties.

The unfortunate situation, however, is that Nehru is the only one among the Congress leaders who possess the appropriate historical sense and the necessary highmindedness to look at things in the correct perspective. Nehru, though he may belong to the Congress, is more than a mere Congress leader. He is the leader of the nation, and he is well aware of this and his consequent responsibility.

But Nehru's greatest handicap is his colleagues. It is a far cry from knowledgeable Nehru to his ignorant colleagues. And ignorance seems to have hardened their prejudices. Power is all that they are after. And what after all is the essence of power that they seek? Tolstoy has said: 'The

strongest, most indissoluble, most burdensome and constant bond is what is called power, which in its real meaning is only the greatest dependence upon them.'

It is this 'greatest dependence' of the leaders on the party bosses with a view to maintain their power that lies at the root of most of the maladies of the Congress organisation. The dependence on the party bosses means overlooking their faults. Faults and factionalism lead to corruption. Corruption begets hypocrisy. And the most glaring hypocrisy is the way they affirm before Nehru but refute the very thing behind his back and even criticise his 'fads.'

We will quote only one instance. Nehru withdrew his proposal of retirement on 3 May 1958. While withdrawing his proposal he delivered a stirring address to the Congress parliamentary party bemoaning the deteriorating condition, the jobbery, etc., which he witnessed all round. And on 5 May 1958, took place the annual election to the executive committee of the Congress parliamentary party. *The Times of India News Service* (6 May 1958) reported: "The very brisk and excited canvassing witnessed during the annual elections to the executive committee of the Congress parliamentary party at parliament house this morning seems to indicate that Mr Nehru's exhortations about the evils of "jobbery" have not left a permanent impression on all those who promised to turn over a new leaf only two days ago.'

We may cite another example. At the AICC meeting which followed a few days later, Nehru spoke fightingly against communalism and revivalism found even among the top Congress leaders and bitterly criticised the shabby treatment accorded to Urdu, especially in Uttar Pradesh. The working committee followed up by adopting a resolution calling upon State governments to give Urdu its due place. These meetings were attended by the former and the present chief ministers of Uttar Pradesh, namely, Pandit Pant and Sampurnanand, both of whom among themselves hold the responsibility for the Urdu policy in the State. A few days later, however, a note of the UP government blatantly declared that the Urdu policy of the State was in accordance with the working committee resolution!

Now, this is a most amazing phenomenon. And this is part of the unseemly spectacle the nation is witnessing: of affirmation before Nehru and denial behind this back. There

is a gulf between Nehru's socialist ideology and the spiritualistic, revivalist trend of the right-wingers.

What makes this trend most dangerous is the manner in which all these Nehru-repudiating revivalists are united in their anti-communism. Anti-communism coupled with lack of faith in Congress objective of socialistic pattern carries within it the seeds of dictatorial trends.

While such is the situation inside India's premier national organisation, the Communists, standing united on their programme and policy, move forward from success to success. Their recent début was the government of Kerala followed by the Amritsar declaration. Here again the anti-Communists have revealed their shortsightedness by pooh-poohing the move as an eyewash, as hollow and false, without for a moment realising its impact on the Indian mind. Its impact is reflected in the fact that even such erstwhile critics of the Communists as N. G. Ranga and Rajagopalachari have welcomed it as genuine. Acharya Vinoba Bhave has also welcomed the move and asked people to believe the Communists.

Nehru has also welcomed the Amritsar thesis as a move in the right direction. That is not to say that he has given up his critical attitude towards the Indian Communists. Despite this, the Indian Communists have accepted him as the nation's leader. That again is proof of the fact that Congressmen and Communists, can yet live together and respect each other even as they criticise each other. This, in essence, is what has been called coexistence of parties. Coexistence of parties, and, if possible, mutual correction and supervision is the crying need of the day in India. Only this way can we hope for united progress of the nation.

The growing influence of the Communist Party in India has therefore to be viewed in the correct perspective. It need not arouse jealousy and a hate campaign, as is the way of the anti-Communists, but should lead on to cooperation for the people's good.

If this does not take place, it is again because Nehru's policies are not accepted by those who constitute the leadership in the organisation. In point of fact the non-Socialist revivalists have today become a halter round Nehru's neck, preventing him from doing the great work he can yet do in the service of the Indian people.

The vast ranks of Congressmen in India, and a sound

healthy core which is yet undoubtedly there at higher levels, are helplessly watching this looming tragedy. And the only way open to them is to look up to Nehru and eagerly wait for the day when he may with a big broom sweep the nodding mandarins—the non-believers, obscurantists and spiritualists—from positions of responsibility and power. Such a cleaning always helps an organisation.

It is in this context that Nehru's rôle assumes vital importance for India. In a way, aware perhaps of the dead-weight of his nonbelieving colleagues, he has already ensured against any further attempt by them to turn back the clock of history. The energetic way he brought about friendship between India and its great neighbours, China and the Soviet Union, his initiation of the five-year plans, acceptance through his initiative of the socialistic objective by the Parliament and the Congress—all these have already settled the future course of Indian history, and no right-winger may be expected ever to succeed in making our nation renounce these policies.

What, however, bewilders people is his continued loyalty to his doubting colleagues even when he knows that they do not believe in his foreign or domestic policies. Though they are unwilling he is dragging them behind him by the force of his personality. This may be good up to a point, but beyond that it cannot be regarded as conducive to progress and the best interests of the nation. Confucius has said: 'Continuous readaptation to suit the whims of others undermines excellence.'

Honest Congressmen—and they yet constitute a powerful body though for the present not vocal enough—sincerely believed that the long waited showdown with the right-wingers was near at hand when Nehru proposed his retirement. It was undoubtedly a great challenge, but it was not pressed. The verdict of the nation, however, was that the challenge if pressed to its logical conclusion would have augured well for the country.

Here it may be permitted to remind the prime minister of an anecdote. It was in 1937, when Sampurnanand was yet a leading light of the newly formed Congress Socialist Party. The scene was a hall in the Lucknow municipal office. The pradesh Congress committee was meeting to elect the pradesh president. The 'socialist' group headed by Acharya Narendra Deva had sponsored Sampurnanand and

the other group headed by the late Rafi Sahab had set up Mohanlal Saxena. Endless wrangles went on and Nehru's attempts to ensure an uncontested election had failed. Trembling with anger Nehru came to the microphone. He thundered: 'I am sick of these wrangles. If I talk to this person, he says that that gentleman does not agree, and if I talk to the other he mentions yet another person who is not agreeable. This is amazing and fantastic. For two-and-a-half people you betray two-and-a-half lakhs. This is intolerable. This is third rate. This is unbearable. This will be fought and given no quarter.'

It was a shattering speech. The PCC listened and then cheered Nehru. Soon after Sampurnanand came to the rostrum and announced his withdrawal, but added: 'I don't like this third rate talk of Jawaharlalji.' Hardly had he finished when Nehru dashed to the mike and shaking with anger shouted: 'I call it third rate, fifth rate, tenth rate, hundredth rate. I won't tolerate this. This is betrayal of two-and-a-half lakhs for two-and-a-half people. I will fight it out, I will fight it out.' And the PCC again vociferously cheered him.

The story is given from memory, but the event was so profound in its impact and was so engraved on the minds of those present that can hardly ever be forgotten. Once again a similar stage has been reached in India. For a few colleagues who do not believe in the declared objectives, the nation cannot be ignored.

This is to remind Nehru of the event in all humility. It is known that sincere Congressmen and the entire nation entertain very high hopes of him. And if the recent unhappy and undesirable trends in the Congress have any lesson, it is only this that a cleansing of the house is essential. That alone can save the Congress.

Expectations from Nehru are no doubt high despite his advanced age. He yet possesses the necessary power and influence to set the Congress on right rails. He has somewhere said that whenever the Congress dropped some backward-looking elements, it emerged stronger and more powerful. A similar dropping is the need of the hour. There can after all be no compromise between secularism and science on the one hand and revivalism and traditionalism on the other. Even when revolution is viewed as a continuity, socialism and laissez faire cannot go together.

Recent trends in south-east Asian countries, especially events in Indonesia and Burma show that there are great many things in common between nationalism and Communism. Soekarno and Nu have withstood the onslaughts of their respective national reactionaries, who were aided by imperialist foreign powers, by active cooperation with Communists. This only points out that genuine nationalism and Communism have very much in common.

The youth of India expects a lot from Nehru and he is no doubt called upon to take the greatest decision of his life. And whatever he may or may not do, no one can stop the onward march of India. Anti-communism cannot be India's way. The Indian way will be the unity of all progressive forces pledged to uplift our starving millions. There are influential elements within the Congress, now dormant, and also outside, for whom anti-Communism is not a religion. They are all common worshippers at the shrine of India's millions and it is their poverty and misery which unites them. These forces will assert themselves. They cannot be stopped. And they will ultimately triumph.