

Democrat's Dilemma



M. R. MASANI, M.P.

LET us consider the state in which we find our country today. Economic bankruptcy, with our Rupee falling steadily lower and lower in the markets of the world. It was only a year ago that we devalued the Rupee. Already it has sunk well below the level of devaluation.

There is moral decay, scandal, charges of corruption testified to by those who have been appointed to investigate them, as happened recently in the case of the head of a former State Government.

The recent General Elections raised our hopes. Our democracy showed its vitality. But it is an unfinished victory. We fell just a little short of our targets. For this probably we shall have to pay a very heavy price. When I spoke in the Lok Sabha immediately after the Elections on the President's Address, I said something I would like to repeat because it is

becoming more and more obvious. I said on March 21: Our entire political system is on trial. If members on this side of the House feel that only the Government is on trial, let me be candid with them and say: No; we are almost as much on trial as those who sit opposite. The whole political system is on trial — the system of Parliamentary democracy in which we believe. All politicians are on trial today and if we fail either on this side or on that side, then there is the danger of the whole lot of us being swept into the dustbin of history as our counterparts in Pakistan, Indonesia and Ghana, to mention only three countries have been consigned to the dustbin of history.

Having sat in the Lok Sabha for the last two or three months since then, I can only say that there doesn't seem to be any kind of response to this challenge. What we see is on the contrary a great deal of self-seeking, an almost univer-

sal pursuit of party advantage with very little thought of the country; constant indiscipline and defiance of the Chair in violation of the first rule of every game that you must bow to the umpire or referee. A lot of noise is created in an attempt at intellectual intimidation of the other side, whatever it happens to be, and very little sense of national purpose.

Now, in this situation, what is a democrat to do? There is a real problem here which I would like to consider.

Every day that the Congress Government is in office, the country drifts to economic disaster and political chaos. But if we throw this Government out and form a non-Congress Government like the Governments in Punjab, UP, Bihar and Bengal, then the Communist Fifth Column comes into the Government and we only accelerate the drift to chaos and destruction. This is a real dilemma. I call it the Democrat's Dilemma. What is an Indian democrat to do under such conditions? He can neither prop up the Congress Party in power nor can he bring it down. For if he does, a vacuum is created for the communists to step in. Our Party, the Swatantra Party, has decided that we will not sit in a Government with Communists. We will not be a Party to a coalition government in Delhi of which Communists are members, because we know what has happened in other parts of the world. We know what is happening in Bengal today.

Oct 67

not be able to counter the rising unemployment figures by any drastic reflationary measures by October without endangering the pound. He has dismissed devaluation as an alternative solution to deflation.

Achievements

What government achievements can Wilson marshal to his defence? In his two years as Defence Minister, Mr. Dennis Healey has drastically pruned defence expenditure. He has cut down the military aircraft industry to a size more suitable to Britain's financial resources and greatly diminished responsibilities overseas. Large numbers of troops are returning from Malaya and Singapore and by the mid-70s these bases — on present policy — should be completely wound up. All British troops should be out of Aden by January 1968.

There has been a modest improvement in the balance of payments situation. The Government's hopes for a large surplus by the end of this year have been dashed by the effect of the Arab-Israeli war and the closure of the Suez Canal on Britain's overseas trade. The government has also been unlucky in that its deflationary efforts coincided with a down-turn in world trade and in particular with a slowdown in the industrial development of Germany and America, two of Britain's largest customers. The continuing application of sanctions against Rhodesia which has Labour Party support has also had an adverse effect on Britain's balance of payments. In short, the economic situa-

tion is not likely to mend dramatically for another six to nine months, and the government accepts this.

Mr. Wilson's long-term hope, and the one in which he has the greatest support from the majority of British voters, is his application for Britain to join the Common Market. He can offer this as an eventual solution to Britain's economic difficulties and as an alternative to Britain's declining political role East of Suez. On the other hand, should France succeed in keeping Britain out, Wilson will have to bear the brunt of the electorate's disappointment. He has in any case placed himself in a very vulnerable position now that he has assumed full responsibility for the success or failure of his government's economic policy.

Conservative Opposition

But Mr. Wilson does not have to call a General Election for another three and a half years. At the moment he has little to fear from the Conservative opposition. The Conservatives have so far not succeeded in establishing themselves as an effective opposition party — which may to some extent be due to lack of positive leadership from Mr. Heath. Those in the Conservative Party who saw Mr. Heath as an effective counter-balance to Mr. Wilson as another economist, highly valued for his skill as a negotiator in the previous British attempt to join the Common Market, have been disappointed. In spite of the Labour government's declining popularity in the country and spectacular

Conservative gains in the by-elections and local council elections earlier this year, Mr. Wilson still has a higher rating in the opinion polls than Mr. Heath who has not succeeded in catching the electorate's imagination. In the latest opinion poll, the percentage of those who considered Mr. Heath a good leader of the Conservative Party declined by 4% to 28% while 50% thought he was not. The Conservatives also have the disadvantage that Wilson successfully laid the blame at their door for Britain's enormous balance of payments deficit on his accession to power in 1965. Mr. Heath has diagnosed Britain's economic ills and proposed long-term solutions but he has not been able to offer any remedy for Britain's present situation.

But although the Labour Government is losing voters, time is on Mr. Wilson's side — barring a major economic recession. He is in complete political control of the Labour Party. His television appearances are highly effective. But he badly needs one of his current problems — Rhodesia, the Common Market, the economy — to "break" in his favour.

Conservatives can claim that when it comes to a general election, the electorate will vote for the party more than the leader, and that public opinion is steadily moving their way. They feel that Labour's economic problems will continue to weigh them down and that the electorate will ultimately vote against them on those grounds. But that is for the future.

anti-communist, but I do not want that to happen in our country. I think we should save our country without going through some of those horrors. But what are we to do with these Sukarnos of ours? Some of them go on saying there can be no coalition government in peacetime. We must rule alone. They have got 38% of the people behind them but they don't want to share power. Now I ask these people — 'If you say there can be no coalition in peacetime how is the Republic Government to be carried on

if in the next elections you lose your majority? More than half the countries in the world today have coalition governments in peacetime, for the simple reason that no one party gets a majority. And the King's Government or the Queen's Government or the Republic's Government has to be carried on. You cannot have anarchy in a country because you don't want a coalition. So these backward children, who cannot think in clear terms, have to be educated to realise that when you do not have 50% of the people

behind you it is your job to form a coalition government, to form a broad based government which can stand up against external dangers and against internal threats.

I am an optimist and I would like to think that we shall win through. But I would be failing in honesty and frankness if I did not say that, watching Parliament, sitting there and watching things happen, I would not put our chances of survival higher than 50-50. I think it is an even chance that democracy will survive.

LET'S TALK ABOUT CHEMICALS

And there is a lot to talk about — for chemicals are essential requirements of an expanding economy and find a wide range of use in industry.

Agriculture too depends on chemicals — on chemical fertilisers for healthy, abundant harvests.

**IN AGRICULTURE AND INDUSTRY —
DMC FERTILISERS AND CHEMICALS**

**THE DHARAMSI MORARJI
CHEMICAL COMPANY LIMIED**

Regd. Office: 317/21, Dr. D. Naoroji Road, Bombay 1.

Factories :

Ambernath, near Kalyan (Maharashtra)
Rumhari, near Raipur (Madhya Pradesh)



Then what do we do? This is a very real problem which all of us will have to face in the coming weeks and months.

To me there does not appear to be any short cut. In a democracy you have got to educate your masters. We have got to educate the people about the reality of this problem. Unfortunately, time is running out. We cannot take too long over this education, otherwise we shall be destroyed before we are educated. It is a very dangerous and difficult situation.

Government of Democratic Unity

But I think there is a third way out, — neither a Congress Government nor a non-Congress Government with Communists in it. I conceive it is the duty of good democrats, including members of my Party to work for a new Government in place of the present one in which all democratic must come together but the Communists are kept out. The democrats must come together irrespective of party labels and today's barriers. You can call it a Government of all Talents if you can leave out subversion! You can call it a National Government, but it is a very ambiguous phrase because a national Government, most people would say, should include the Communist Parties also. Therefore I reject the slogan of a National Government.

I would call it a Government of Democratic Unity. A Government representing the unity of all democrats to save

the country from external and internal threats. Can such a Government be formed? I believe it can. I believe that such a Government can be formed provided a hundred Congress members of the Lok Sabha can decide to turn their backs on Pandit Nehru's disastrous policies and join hands with us to form a new Government. More or less this is the arithmetic — we want a hundred Congress MPs to join in forming a coalition government with the Opposition Parties minus the Communists. I believe this can be done, but the process of education on all sides has to go further. On the opposition side, the blind hatred of the Congress, which they richly deserve for their misdeeds for twenty years, has to be controlled. I am not against anger with the Congress, I feel angry also. But we have to control that anger when worse evils appear on the scene. That does not mean we have to line up behind Mrs. Indira Gandhi and take the country to perdition. We have to throw her Government out the first moment we can. But we shall have to replace her Government with something better, not something worse. And if a hundred Congress members of Parliament had the patriotism and the intelligence to realise that they have come to a dead end, that this is not the path, then I think that this can be done tomorrow. But where are these hundred intelligent, patriotic Congress members of Parliament? There are many in the lobbies, many in the Central Hall, but none when it comes to the floor

of Parliament. Congress today are the backward children in our liberal school. If we cannot do this, if we shall lose the race — because this is a race between the intelligence and patriotism of the Indian people on the hand and the onset of disaster, this Vietnam descending on us, on the other. Because that is what Naxalbari is going to be. It is not going to be another Telenaga. It is going to be a Viet Nam. Who is going to win this race? This is the big question.

The Path of Dictatorship

If we lose the race, then I am afraid our young democracy will die and we shall follow the path of Pakistan, Ghana and Indonesia. What happened in those countries? The politicians were selfish, the politicians wrangled among themselves; the politicians forgot the country; they clung to power when the people had lost confidences in them. In the end the people turned against all politicians, threw them all out and turned to the Army to save them. In Pakistan, it happened in a peaceful way; in Ghana also it happened luckily in a peaceful way because Nkrumah happened to be away in Peking at the right moment. But in Indonesia where Mr. Sukarno simply refused to hand over power years after he had lost the confidence of the people, something very terrible happened. In the end, the people took the law into their own hands and 500,000 men, women and children were butchered because they were communists or pro-communists. I am an