

Swatantra Party

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THE DEMOCRAT'S DILEMMA

By M. R. MASANI

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MUST INDIA GO THE Vietnam way? asked Mr. M. R. Masani, M.P., Deputy Leader of the Swatantra Party in Parliament, addressing a public meeting at Sapru House organized by the Delhi Swatantra Party Unit on July 27. The speaker answered "No", but made this negative answer conditional on certain developments in the coming months and years.

According to Mr. Masani, two essential elements in the Vietnam phenomenon are: (1) A combination of internal and external subversion with Communist guerrilla bases operated from across the border; (2) The absence of a broad-based democratic government which could rally the bulk of the people behind it.

The threat to India's independence and her free way of life will have to be met at two levels. The front paw of the Chinese Communist advance, whether in Naxalbari or elsewhere, must be eliminated before it can become a permanent base for subversion and civil war. The present lull in Naxalbari and Bengal is deceptive. The Left Communists are lying low because their extremists have got out of hand and caused them embarrassment. There will, however, be more Naxalbaris to come, and the situation will recur with increasing gravity. The existence of a common border, which does not exist in Andhra or Kerala, can create a situation where Telengana will look like a picnic. Nothing less than a ban on the Left Communist Party and the elimination of Communist Ministers from the West Bengal Cabinet is necessary. Those measures should be the starting-point of a counterattack in defence of Indian nationalism and democracy. Failure in this will lead to major bloodshed later.

The other level at which action is necessary to save democracy is the removal of the present Congress Government at the Centre. Every day it remains in office only accelerates the drift to disaster. The Government's economic policies, which have failed completely and brought the country to a complete mess, are persisted in by the Congress, who seem to have learnt nothing and forgotten nothing. The Government's home and external policies are completely out of line with public opinion, as was evidenced by its policy on the West Asian war. The Congress of today is a set of Sukarno who are clinging to power after they have lost the confidence of the people.

On the other hand, the non-Congress Governments which have accepted Communists into their ranks are opening the door to dangerous infiltration into the Services and sensitive points in the administration. With the exception of Orissa and Madras, these non-Congress Governments are also failing to live up to their promises and are creating disillusionment among the people. There must be an end to the nonsensical idea that anybody who opposes the Congress is acceptable. What have consistent democrats and nationalists in common with the Left Communists in the West Bengal Government, who are responsible for brutal violence and terror and are threatening to convert our country into another Vietnam?

The contradictions of this false idea have led to a climb-down by the SSP. They started with the brave proclamation that they would withdraw from any State Government which did not deliver the goods within six months, but they have now admitted failure and declared that they will support even the worst of these Governments in order to keep the Congress out. The result of this policy will be that the people will either turn back to the Congress Party, or lose faith in parliamentary democracy altogether.

It is for this reason that the Swatantra Party has decided not to join any coalition Government at the Centre in which Communists participate. In this connection there is very little to choose between the Right and Left Communists. Both are Fifth Columns of their respective mentors. Peter Sagar's recent

book *Moscow's Hand in India*, and the broadcasts of "Radio Peace and Progress" from Tashkent, prove that the Soviet Government is interfering flagrantly in India's internal politics.

One way out of this democrat's dilemma is the establishment of a Government of Democratic Unity. This is the alternative for which the Swatantra Party is working. While the Communists should be excluded, there should be room in such a government for all democratic opposition parties and for those Congressmen who wish to join in saving the country. The process of political education is proceeding, but unfortunately, Congressmen are the backward children in our political school. Time is running out. There is a race between the intelligence and patriotism of the Indian people on the one hand, and economic collapse and political chaos on the other. There is an even chance of survival.

The entire class of politicians and the system of parliamentary democracy are on trial. There is a general feeling that Government and Parliament are letting the country down. Never in my thirty-five years of political life have I known the atmosphere to be as murky and stifling as this. While all parties and politicians must share the responsibility, that of the Congress Party is the heaviest. Only two days after they had deplored defections from their own ranks in Madhya Pradesh, the Congress Parliamentary Party yesterday welcomed an opposition M.P. into their ranks!

If politicians and political parties do not pull themselves together in time and get together across party barriers, they will, like their counterparts in Burma, Pakistan, Ghana and Indonesia, be consigned to oblivion.

