

Prime Minister: Somebody asked me about Rajaji's remarks about the Congress. For a variety of reasons, including my great respect and affection for Rajaji, I would prefer not to enter into any argument with him. Of course, sometimes if something has to be said in reply, no doubt I shall say it. But I do not quite know what to reply to. I read rather carefully the reports of his speeches, and apart from abuse of the Congress, I am yet to find a single argument or a single proposal. Rajaji is a very able man, a witty man. He says his first duty is to shoot the tiger than to think what to do of the carcass. May be, they will have it stuffed and put it up somewhere, may be in the office of the Swatantra Party. But the whole thing is really amazing. Such a lot of noise without any content! It really surprises me. What is the content, I want to know. As I have said — and I mean it — I welcome the formation of the Swatantra Party, because I want people to discuss, to talk about these matters, to argue. We want a live democracy, not a tame one. So I welcome it. But my difficulty is that except for strong language I fail to understand anything. Yet when I venture to ask: What is the content or what is the programme? I am told it is like the tiger asking "Why do you want to shoot me down?" Naturally what am I to say about it. It is rather most extraordinary.

Everything is permissible to one of Rajaji's position and age — that is all I can say — whether it is logic or ill-logic. One thing I would hope for is that a man of his great experience and wisdom would at least not continually speak in anger. His speeches are solidified anger. Let us discuss the ———

Questions: Censored?

Prime Minister: I said solidified. What is the Swatantra Party? As far as I can see, it is the political projection of the Forum of Free Enterprise. It is just that. There is nothing else in it and so you see the gentlemen who had been notorious in that Forum of Free Enterprise, sitting in the front row of Rajaji's audiences and becoming members of his body and committees and, no doubt, easing the strains if any financial help is needed.

Question: One of the leaders of this party, Mr. Shroff, wrote that you were elected by the vote of the illiterate people of India. He wrote in the Current and it was distributed to everyone. It said that Mr. Nehru was elected by illiterates.

Prime Minister: But he is perfectly correct. Is not he correct? The misfortune is that the illiterate people are not likely to elect Mr. Shroff. You see how the argument goes — If you logically follow it, 'Don't allow the illiterate people to elect,

that is, don't have this type of democracy. Therefore do this'. I say the whole thing, if ultimately followed up, leads to sheer fascism, argumentatively or any way. There is no escape from it. I don't say it will lead up to it. I am sure it will not. But this is the first beginning of the fascist approach, talking about democracy and freedom, really objecting to that freedom on the ground that people are not sensible enough or wise enough to follow the right lead, and, therefore, the right lead should be imposed upon them.

Question: Rajaji's criticism is largely based on the point that the Congressmen have become corrupt and are not working towards the socialistic pattern of society.

Question: Also there is day-to-day interference in the administration by Congressmen. Will you like to comment, in the light of a report of a senior I.C.S. Officer of the Bombay Government with the Govt. has released, saying that a large part of the time of Collectors is spent on writing on the V.I.P.s?

Prime Minister: That is a different thing entirely. I entirely agree with that comment. That is, so many people, Ministers or others touring about, and the Collector has to receive and wait on them and has to waste time. I have been raising my voice against that, in my own case. It is absurd. When I go somewhere, why should everybody gather? Why should all the Ministers gather, let us take, when I reach Madras. Why should a row of Ministers and Judges and others really wait, and waste their time and my time?

Question: To get the Congress ticket next time

Prime Minister: No. The Judges do not require Congress tickets. Why should you drag them from their courts? It is perfectly right. When Rajaji talks about interference by Congressmen in the administration, presumably, I don't know, his knowledge must be more of Madras than the rest of India because he lives there.

Question: If you go to mofussil towns, you hear the complaint even about criminal cases. If I will cite you my own instance. Even in criminal cases, it has been said that if somebody is related to an important M.L.A. or M.P. he gets away scot-free.

Prime Minister: If Rajaji makes that complaint, it must be from his experience or what he has heard in Madras. My own impression is - it is difficult to say anything definite - that this kind of thing, which used to be very considerable, is infinitely less now, because of the repeated attempts on our part to stop it. We cannot stop it completely, because complaints right or wrong they do come and it may be, if you like, our failing. But it is much less than it was, but it there undoubtedly. And I think to make that a major issue surprises me. I do not know if anybody has made a major issue except Rajaji. We criticise it and try to stop it. But I take it that Rajaji must have necessarily been thinking of Madras. He is hardly thinking of the Punjab sitting in Madras.

Question: Have you received any complaints about Madras?

Prime Minister: I am saying that, what I have said frequently that it is rather invidious to compare Governments and others. But one thing stands out so much, and I have said it, that the two most efficient State Governments in India are Madras and Bombay. I have no doubt about it. I have some knowledge of all the State Governments. They face their problems their difficulties with sheer efficiency. That does not mean that in Madras or Bombay there are no failings. Everywhere they

are. And, therefore, I am a little surprised that Rajaji should say something which presumably refers to Madras. I cannot say if people in Madras have not interfered in the administration here and there, may have.

Question: At what stage do you propose to treat this Swatantra Party, which calls itself Conservative Party of India, seriously as a Party and not just one or two sayings of Rajaji.

Prime Minister: Do you mean to say I do not take it seriously now? I take it very seriously but the person who does not seem to take it very seriously as far as I can make out is Rajaji. He is treating it as a joke, more or less.

Question: They have got a definite economic programme at least which entails some political thinking, some political programme also.

Prime Minister: I take it seriously but the economic programme so far as I am able to make out, nobody has said what it is, except, freedom from everything, the free enterprise programme. Now, the unfortunate thing is that now only Rajaji but many people younger than him, associated with him now in this Party, have not quite got out of the 19th century yet. Rajaji of course had his roots in the 19th century or may be earlier. But there it is. It is difficult to argue and suppose if I give you rather a silly example - I hope you will forgive me. When we started talking to the Portuguese Government many years about Goa, their answer was that in the 14th century the Pope gave them a Papal Bull about Goa and the rest of half the world. Now am I to say in reply to the Portuguese Government about the Papal Bull 500 years ago. Bulls are over, either you accept or do not accept. You cannot argue about a Papal Bull of the 14th or 15th century. So my difficulty is this kind of various bulls being issued now by other popes and semi-popes. What am I to do about them. There must be some point to argue. What is the point? Abuse is no argument. It is obvious there is no argument at all. I cannot take bulls seriously, I may take the Swatantra Party seriously.

Question: The position is this. Not that what Rajaji is saying. Your criticism has been mostly on the basis of what Rajaji says. The position is that all the reactionaries of the country have combined under a party which is being adequately financed and has got a large control of the media of mass communication. What action does Govt. propose to take or the Congress Party propose to take against it as such?

Question: It is after the Nagpur resolution that this Party has come into existence. There is some significance about the time of its birth.

Prime Minister: Yes. Undoubtedly it has significance and as you have gently hinted at many of you gentlemen, or your newspapers stoutly support all this reaction. Now if I may say so, in all humility, that there are a few odd hundred millions of illiterate people in this country, so-called illiterate - I don't call them illiterate - who also have a say in the matter. That is the great mass of Indian opinion. It is for them to decide what should be done, ultimately in the final analysis. Let us discuss these matters quietly without anger and if India, the people of India, want to do something, they will do it in spite of the Congress and in spite of the Swatantra Party. So it is. In spite of any party they make a mess of things occasionally, then rise afterwards by experience. I don't think you need get unnecessarily excited over the matter, of course we should be vigilant.