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As an old Trade Unionist who had worked with Miss Maniben Kara in the thirties, Mr. M.R. Masani today made an appeal to her and other reasonable leaders of trade unions to call off the railway strike immediately. "An orderly retreat," he said, "is always preferable to a disorderly rout." Mr. Masani supported government's attitude in the disputes with the employees of the Indian Air Lines and the Railways but deplored the methods of intimidation on both sides in the current railway dispute and sympathised with the railway employees who had been so badly led and handled. Mr. Masani was addressing the Rotary Club of Bombay on "Reform or Revolution?"

As a result of twenty years of Statist policies inspired by Marxist ideology, India was now faced with a political, economic and moral crisis which could be resolved either by reform or revolution. What was needed was nothing less than a 'U' turn or a complete reversal of the current counter-productive policies and plans. reversal The question was who could or would be able to do this.

While noticing some straws in the wind such as the reduction in Income Tax rates, the withdrawal of the government monopoly in the food grain trade and the firm resistance of Labour indiscipline, Mr. Masani said a reversal of policy on the part of the Prime Minister and her government was something devoutly to be wished but doubted whether anything more than a zigzag in place of the 'U' turn could be expected from those at the country's steering wheel. He was equally sceptical about a change of government secured by electoral means because most of the leaders of the old political parties had lost their credibility and lacked the capacity to deliver the goods.

If these constitutional outlets failed, a revolution would become inevitable. Gujarat and Bihar were pointers. Mr. Masani saw only two stable and hopeful factors in the country — the Armed Forces and Jayaprakash Narayan.

When all other avenues of changes were blocked, history showed that, as in Indonesia, Ghana, Chile and Portugal, the armed forces were sucked in to fill the vacuum. As a democrat, Mr. Masani hoped that the necessity for military intervention could be avoided. In his view, a Gandhian Satyagraha led by Jayaprakash was the best way out.

But it was no use passing the buck to either Jayaprakash or the Army. Every citizen had a role to play in preserving democracy and working for a prosperous India.

M.R. Masani
(M.R. Masani)