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Undoubtedly, the most momentous development of the past half year has been the major step forward that has been taken in the direction of the consolidation of all nationalist and democratic forces in India to cope with the threats that are posed to the country's security and its democratic Constitution. I refer to the Resolution of the A.I.C.C. adopted in Delhi on June 28.]...

[The AICC resolution represents a constructive attempt at polarisation on the right lines. These lines, as the National Executive of our Party has repeatedly stressed, are not between the so-called "Left" and the so-called "Right", neither of which exist except in Marxist jargon, nor between socialists and non-socialists, which is hardly the issue before the country, but between those who are pledged to maintain our democratic Constitution and the country's independence on the one side and those who are out to destroy our Constitution and establish a dictatorship which would be a satellite of either Moscow or Peking on the other. In regard to this line of demarcation, the resolution has given a correct lead to the country.

The programme which has been placed before the country by that resolution is a constructive and pragmatic one free from bias and prejudice. It is a middle-of-the-road programme such as advanced countries are practising with great success. It is one which should be as acceptable to Democratic Socialists as it is to us Liberal Democrats. There may be some things in it which do not appeal to all of us. That is only natural. But it does provide a worthwhile basis for discussion. In our National Executive's earlier decisions we have

stressed that everything is negotiable except the security of the country. Here is an opportunity for us to show that we mean what we say and that we are prepared to enter into the process of give and take with those with whom we may not agree fully on economic or social affairs but whose patriotism and love of freedom we accept.

It is in this spirit that on June 29, I as your President responded to the call of the AICC. The National Executive have yesterday endorsed that response and have recommended that we should be authorised to enter into negotiations and discussions for the consolidation of national democratic forces. This will have a tremendous influence on the country. It will transform despondency into hope among a large number of people.

I know Rajaji has been somewhat depressed by the confused welter of voices that has gone up during the last three weeks.]

Perhaps one of the reasons for the hesitation and confusion of the past three weeks in certain quarters is that the fog of confusion that enveloped this country as a result of twenty years of the cult of personality of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru has not yet been completely dispelled. The kind of vulgar Marxism, with perverted ideas of what is "progressive" and what is "reactionary", that was fashionable during that period and which many of the so-called intellectuals in our country accepted, despite the efforts of a few of us, has still not lost its influence among the educated classes. Labels and slogans continue to obscure reality.

How else can one explain the strange caste system that our Socialist friends have created in this country and the concept of untouchability that they practise when they repeatedly announce that they cannot possibly join hands with non-socialists even to fight the communist threat to India?

Do they mean

that Chancellor Willy Brandt, the leader of the biggest Social Democratic Party in the world, has ceased to be a socialist by joining hands a couple of years back with the conservative Christian Democratic Party and this year with the liberal Free Democratic Party to head a coalition government? Do they suggest that President Saragat, a veteran of the Italian Socialist movement, has abandoned socialism by cooperating with the conservative Christian Democratic Party of Italy and accepting nomination as President of the Republic at its hands? Or is that they are in an intellectual fog, are living in the past and are unable to realise that, while differences between socialists and non-socialists are negotiable, those between totalitarians and democrats are not? That, at least, is our understanding, and I for one would appeal to my socialist friends to catch up with the times and realise what the interests of the country demand of us all.

The justification for a combination of nationalist and democratic parties and elements in this country was provided a long time ago by that great man, Edmund Burke, when he said that "when bad men conspire, good men must unite." It is in that spirit that Rajaji and our Party have been prepared to subordinate our own ideological axioms and indeed the interests of our Party to the greater good of the nation.

The Prime Minister and her Government are becoming satellites of the Soviet dictatorship abroad and tools of the Communists in India on whose support they depend for their continuance in office. Hence the need for a change in Government at the earliest possible moment. Hence the need for all good men and true to come together for this purpose.

It is necessary to stress the high priority that these objectives should occupy in order to meet the doubts and hesitations of many good people including some valued colleagues who have expressed their doubts about the need to dilute the clear-cut ideology of the Swatantra Party and the concern of members of minority communities and modern men and women who are unhappy at the prospect of association with the Jana Sangh. Such doubts cannot be brushed aside

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summarily and can only be met by a patient attempt to explain the need for a correct order of priorities. There can be no doubt that there are certain aspects of the pronouncements and activities of the Jana Sangh that do not appeal to many of us. We have little in common with those who would seek to "Indianise" Muslims or others who adopt the modern way of life. We want India to be a strong, modern, 20th Century country like Japan. Obscurantism and communalism are alien to us.

May I, however, reassure those who have expressed these doubts that we have every hope of weaning the Jan Sangh away from their fears and prejudices about Muslims and some other minorities and have no intention of compromising our fundamental position in regard to a modern, non-denominational Indian society? After all, what is being discussed is an agreement to work together on a concrete programme. The resolution of the AICC offers such a programme for consideration by our Party and other parties. I am glad to say that, in so far as the rights and liberties of the minorities are concerned, that programme is sound and categorical and leaves no room for communalism or sectarianism of any kind. This is what the resolution says:

"In a country such as India with its wide variety of ethnic origins, religions and languages, the treatment of minorities and backward classes assumes great importance. There should be complete equality as between citizens irrespective of their birth, religion, ethnic origin or caste and all forms of discrimination based on such considerations should be removed. The guarantees provided in the Constitution for the protection of religion, language and culture of all such groups should be respected and enforced. There have to be special measures taken for the uplift of the poorer and more backward sections of the people. The prompt redress of the grievances of such sections should be the responsibility of the Government.

"Equality of opportunity and education is a prin-

ciple that should not only be accepted but be worked out in every legitimate and equitable manner. The provision of adequate employment facilities in all Government services is another urgent task that has yet to be adequately fulfilled.

"A Commission on Civil Rights should be set up. It will look into and help correct discrimination against any section of the people in education, employment, economic activities etc. It will ensure effective assertion of equality of opportunity in economic and social life. The Commissioner of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes as well as the Commissioner of Linguistic Minorities will become a part of the new Commission."

If a plank in the platform of the new national democratic bloc is established in some such terms, could we not legitimately claim that, far from making any compromise with communalism, we are in fact evolving a broadbased consensus on the firm basis of adhering to a non-denominational democracy and a firm opposition to any attempt to discriminate on ground of religion or ethnic origin? I think that we would have a right to claim that in forging such a consensus we would be good friends of the minorities and of the tribal and scheduled castes in our country. As I see it, a broad based front of democratic and nationalist parties and individuals which we seek to develop will consist predominantly of those who are wedded to these values and can be trusted to see that they are adhered to by all who work together.