

Fair And Free Elections In India

By E. P. W. da Costa

The words "fair" and "free" have probably invoked down the centuries the greatest volume of controversy. In the twentieth century the use of the term "Free World" has in one sense filled the word "free" with the acrimonies of the Cold War. Throughout the last 200 years or so the pursuit for "fair" prices, particularly in relation to "fair" wages, engendered economic and political heat, the embers of which have not yet entirely died down.

It is not possible to assume that what are really personal ethical judgments on the degree of "fairness" in any political and economic situation will be shared equally by all in a community which has conflicting interests. Elections are basically instruments for the attainment and maintenance of power. As such, they invoke at once some of the most deeply-rooted emotions, vested or otherwise; therefore, too, the degree of fairness attributable to a particular election is generally related in individual minds with the end result. Are there any tests by which Indian elections over the last 25 years can be described, to an objective mind, as both fair and free?

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Therefore, in every single case the popular vote which emerged from the surveys was within the sampling error attributable to the small size of the samples used from 1957 onwards. This justifies the view that the official machinery of Congress governments or the Opposition did not greatly effect the end result. If there were very large unfair practices in the election, the results would not have tallied with the surveys so closely.

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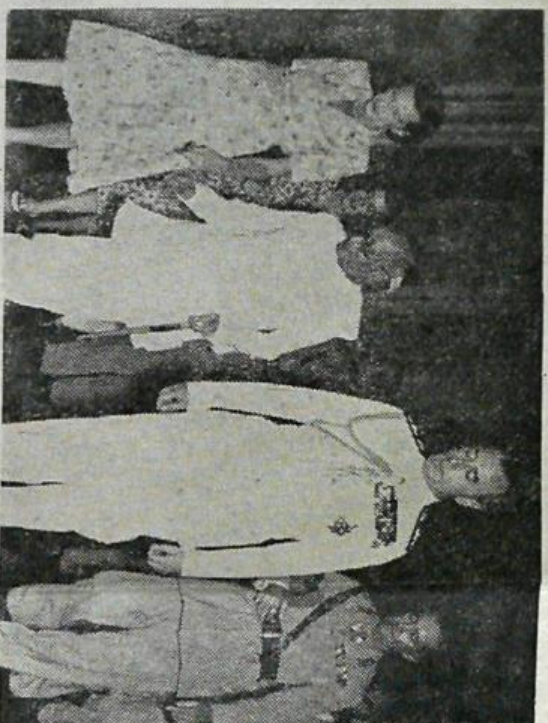
MEANS EMPLOYMENT FOR MORE THAN 12 PEOPLE



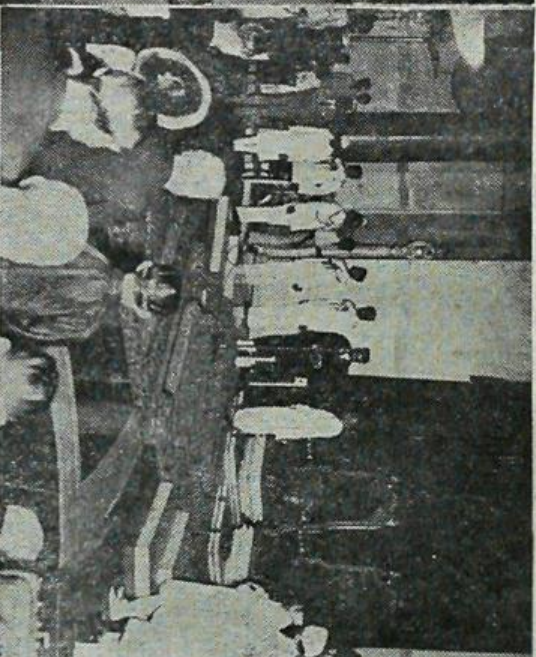
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Rajaji with Lady and Lord Mountbatten at Government House (now Rashtrapati Bhavan) after he took over as Governor-General in 1948.



Being sworn in as Governor-General on January 21, 1948.



With Sarojini Naidu, the H. R. H. Prince Agha



Remember

It is difficult to think of a world without Rajaji. For well over half a century he played a prominent part in India's public life, bringing into it a high standard of integrity and precision. It was my rare good fortune to know him intimately from the time he made his mark in Mrs. Besant's home rule campaign in the middle of the first World War and to be associated with him at several points in the freedom struggle and later in a free India.

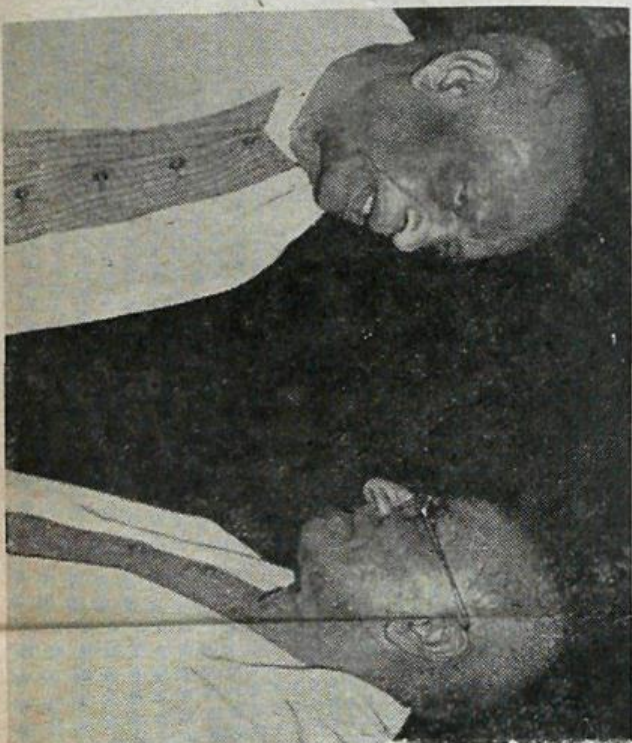
the British to create a time national government with a promise of full freedom for India at the end of War, would be negligible, was in a minority in holding this view; but he proved be right.

When I ventured to p

Memories crowd on me new hope for India. The great spirit of him. He was Gandhi-Irwin pact in the

With Prime Minister Nehru on Independence Day 1948.

Discussing a point with Sardar Patel.



such a contrast to Mrs. Besant in his advocacy of freedom for India. After her brilliant and passionate plea for our freedom in Gokhale Hall meetings in Madras, came Rajaji's quietly-spoken but irresistible argument in favour of the national cause.

He was drawn into a close association with Gandhiji when he assumed the leadership of the freedom movement, after the first World War. For a decade thereafter he was content to devote his great talents to the furtherance of Gandhiji's constructive programme, until Ramsay MacDonald, Britain's Prime Minister, committed his government at the R.T.C. in London to full responsible government for India as a member of a multi-racial Commonwealth.

For Rajaji this seemed to mark a point of departure from his previous activities. He saw in the declaration a

early thirties, owed a great deal to Rajaji's earnest effort behind the scenes to bring it about to enable Gandhiji to go to the second R.T.C. as the sole representative of the Congress.

In the subsequent developments right up to second World War, Rajaji played a great part. He provided the formula on which Gandhiji negotiated a settlement with the new Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, and enable Congress ministries to function in 7 out of the 11 provinces. Rajaji was the most successful among the Chief Ministers, setting an example for a clean, efficient administration.

On the outbreak of the War, he resisted, but unsuccessfully, the move of the radical elements in the Congress to compel the Ministers to resign. He knew that out of office the Congress party's capacity to persuade

with the Viceroy to accept suggestion of a representative Central government for period of the War, he rep that he could have agreed all Congress leaders were Rajaji's type. For not two years thereafter, undaunted by failure, he strove the help of friends like Sir Bahadur Sapru to seek a out.

When Stafford Cripps came to India in 1942 with an offer from the Churchill government, he turned to Rajaji for advice at every point of difficulty. Over a deadly threatening to wreck mission over defence arran

Ploughing land around Government House on July 1949, as part of "Grow More Food" campaign.



With American columnist Walter Lippman and his wife in November 1949.





Governor of Uttar Pradesh and Denmark on February 2, 1949.

With Thakin Nu, former Burmese Prime Minister.

ring Rajaji

ments, Cripps asked me if it, Rajaji, Sapru and my brother B. N. Rau could evolve a compromise formula. These three sat that night into the early hours of the morning and produced one that appealed to Cripps as satisfactory.

Later in the year came the Quit India resolution which he thought was a tactical blunder. But his personal relations with Gandhiji remained unshaken by differences on issues, however important they might have been. Out of prison he worked ceaselessly with friends like Sapru for a war-time settlement with Britain. Vindicated his other commitment.

day, one episode—our meeting with President Kennedy.

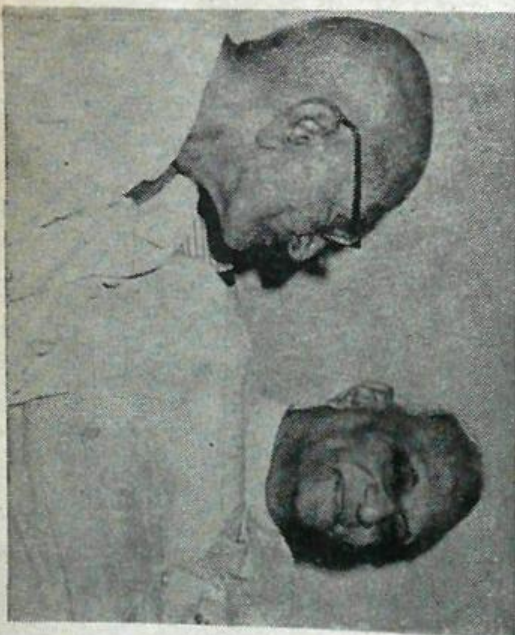
We had been warned that it was a very busy day for the President, and he could only spare 20 minutes. But Rajaji's presentation of the case was so convincing that Kennedy sat fascinated. The minutes sped well beyond an hour, but the President ignored his other commitment.





Nizam of Hyderabad receives Rajaji at Hakim Airfield in December 1949.

With President Giri



tion of his standpoint came later, at the end of the War, and he was considered the right choice as India's last Governor-General before the declaration of the Republic. In free India, as in the decades of our struggle, Rajaji followed the path he had carved for himself, never afraid of differing from his colleagues and preferring to be alone when he felt he was right.

After the failure of the Cripps Mission, Rajaji told an AICC meeting at Allahabad that only a National Government could possibly save India from a Japanese invasion and suggested a solution which implied acceptance of the principle of the country's partition as the price for Jinnah's support.

It needed great courage to put forward such a proposal. It was rejected and Rajaji was almost completely isolated. But convictions came first with him, and personal or party loyalties could not deflect him from the course he considered right.

Such men are rare, I have no regrets over his passing away at 94, though personally I feel a void within; we must be grateful to Providence for sparing this great statesman for so long to render a service to India of a quality beyond the capacity of ordinary mortals.

Only one regret I have: in 1962, it was my privilege to accompany Rajaji to New York, Washington and London on a great mission, the suspension of nuclear tests as a preliminary to disarmament. I remember vividly, as though it was yesterday,

men to a deeply moving appeal by Rajaji on behalf of defenceless humanity.

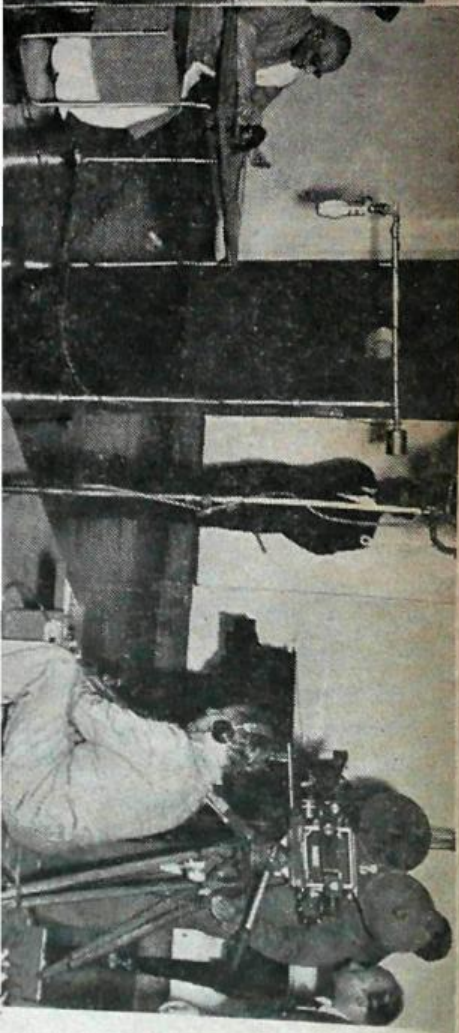
Finally, as the interview terminated, Kennedy gave him the assurance that something would be done; and later he told one of his officials present at the interview that never before in his life had he felt the impact of an ancient wisdom as he had done from Rajaji.

In reporting the results of the mission to Prime Minister Nehru, I mentioned this interview and suggested that Rajaji should be India's representative at all future World Disarmament Conferences. He seemed at first attracted by the suggestion, but other considerations came up and it was dropped. Such an assignment would have been an appropriate crown for a life of selfless service to India in a spirit of broad humanity.

—B. Shiva Rao

Farewell broadcast to the nation on the eve of laying down office on January 25, 1950.

Farewell party by Central Cabinet Ministers when he retired as Governor-General.



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Is the future likely to be as glorious in this respect as the past? It would be foolish to deny that there are several cynical views on the 1972 elections in West Bengal and that popular "management", both with money and some instruments of government on

its side, may help all parties in power. The danger may be real, even though exaggerated.

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