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Mr. M.R. Masani's message printed in the Souvenir issued by the Praja Socialist Party on the occasion of the Silver Jubilee Conference in 1959

I am glad to know that the Silver Jubilee of the Praja Socialist Party will be celebrated at a conference to be held in Bombay from November 8 to 9, and I am happy to respond to the invitation of my old friend and colleague Ganga Babu, the Chairman of the Party, to send my message and greetings and good wishes on the occasion.

I well recall how, throughout 1933, some of us, including Jayaprakash Narayan, spent many weeks and months in the Nasik Road Central Prison trying to work out the programme and plan of action of what was to take shape as the Congress Socialist Party in the following year.

The years that followed were, for some of us, of dedication to an ideal that absorbed all our enthusiasm and our energies. What is most pleasant in one's recollection of those days is the wonderful sense of belonging to a fraternity between members of which there was a great deal of affection and mutual regard, quite apart from such community of thought as may have prevailed and despite the fairly marked differences of approach which existed from the very birth of the Party. The fact that the Party has been good enough on this occasion to remember one like me who has strayed from the fold is an indication of the fact that, even when some of us parted from the main body of the group, our personal relations and mutual esteem remained unimpaired.

Why then do some of us find ourselves outside the communion of the Party today? Without going into a detailed analysis of issues and measures, I think it will be fair to say that, in so far as those who have discarded the orthodox tenets of Marxism or even State Socialism are concerned, there have been two determining reasons. Firstly, influence of Mahatma Gandhi. Secondly, a growing awareness of the unhappy implications of orthodox socialist policies, whether practised in totalitarian dictatorships or in democratic countries. In the result, some of us, while still accepting the ultimate ideal of a "free and equal society" feel that progress towards it can be made more expeditiously, more humanely and in greater freedom by policies other than those of State Socialism, which have by now made their contribution to present day thought. Those policies, in my own thinking, would be based on a synthesis of principles of Western liberalism and Gandhiji's teachings.

It is often said that Generals are apt to fight the current war with the weapons and strategies of the last one. Political warriors may not be altogether immune from similar habits. There is such a thing as a conservatism of the "Left" as there is of the "Right". Socialists, Liberals, Conservatives and Gandhians all have the love of freedom at heart. Their relative effectiveness in defending freedom and expanding its bounds lies, however, in their capacity to shift their sights from the older and receding threats of freedom to the newer and more dangerous ones that emerge with the flux of time.

Even so, a great deal remains in common between us all. When Khrushchev recently went round the United States posing the alternative of Capitalism versus Socialism, he was, of course, trying to fog the issue. The U.S. today is hardly a capitalist country in the Marxist sense, while Soviet Russia is, at best, a cruel caricature of socialism as Milovan Djilas, our fellow-fighter for freedom

has so well testified. The real issue before the world and before us today is that of a Free Society versus Totalitarian Communism. Liberals and Socialists can stand together against the common foe. This is not merely a theoretical formulation. Do we not see this in actual practice in Kerala today? Do we not see this in our common attitude in regard to Tibet's struggle for freedom and the Chinese Communist incursions into our own territory? Let us by all means argue about our respective remedies for country's economic ills. Let us, however, do so as friends and members of a community of free men, always remembering that the values we hold in common are much more seminal than the issues that divide us and that, whenever our democratic Constitution and our free society are threatened, we shall be found fighting together on the right side of the barricades. It is therefore, as a fellow-fighter in the cause of freedom that I salute this Conference of the Praja Socialist Party.
