

Election Results

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Assessment by Political leaders and Political Scientists

1. SADIQ ALI, General Secretary, All India Congress Committee

THE results of the Third General Election are before us now. They will be commented upon from a variety of angles and conclusions drawn to suit each particular angle. There are, however, some broad facts as to which there should be general agreement. The broadest fact is that the election has been held in a peaceful, orderly, fair and impartial manner. Odd complaints here and there only emphasise the peaceful and impartial character of the vast arrangements made to record the free vote of the people. That in canvassing and influencing the mind of the electorate there was recourse to caste, sectional or other separatist and harmful propaganda is a different matter but the poll was held, by and large, in a fear-free and impartial atmosphere.

The country has expressed for the third time its confidence in the Congress and all its basic programmes and policies. This is clearly so in elections to Parliament. At the State level, if the picture is different in the case of some States, such as Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, it would be rewarding and worthwhile to inquire and investigate so that right conclusions are drawn as to the causes of the decline in Congress strength. If the Congress has reduced majorities as in U.P., Bihar, Andhra, Punjab, there is no cause for grave concern on the score of numbers, but reasons for the decline in strength should be correctly understood and grasped for future guidance. Maharashtra, Bengal, Madras, Gujarat, Mysore have substantial Congress majorities in their legislatures. Assam, despite all the trouble that had occurred there in the pre-election period and which could have harmed the Congress, renewed its confidence in the Congress in a fairly convincing manner.

The country, in opting for the Congress, opted for stability, progress and broad socialist policies of the Congress. For the various Assemblies it elected 1768 members. This represents a reduction of 172 seats from its earlier strength in various Assemblies in the preceding five-year period. This reduction is not evenly spread over all the States. There can, therefore, be no general and uniform causes for this decline. Reasons have to be sought for in the particular States in which this decline has occurred in any marked manner. There appear to be two principal causes for this decline. One is an effort on part of the rightist forces to appeal and organise elements in society which were adversely affected by the new pattern of things we are seeking to evolve in the country. The Jana Sangh was there on the scene before to provide a certain type of leadership but on account of its communal composition, its appeal was limited. A second and more secular form of leadership for these elements came from the Swatantra Party. What was lying suppressed, the anger and discontent of some elements of society, was expressed in the Swatantra Party and the policies it stood for. It is more in the rural areas than in cities that the Swatantra Party has gained a foothold, the reason being that local leadership came from some classes in rural areas. This explains their successes in Gujarat, Rajasthan and Bihar. Their success in the latter two States was aided by internal rivalries in the Congress organisation. If this rivalry is ended or substantially diminished, there would be no difficulty for the Congress to recapture most of the lost ground. The princes and princelings have still some appeal for the electorate. When the princes, after being in oblivion all these years, asserted themselves and appealed

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to the people for sympathy and support, there was response. But it would be a mistake to think that this response is any stable factor in the political situation of the country. We have seen how in Orissa the Gantantra Parishad, after casting a spell on the people over whom its leading members had ruled for long, lost a great deal of their charm and appeal when once the electorate realised what they could or could not do when they were again installed in power. The brief spell of power they enjoyed in the coalition Ministry in Orissa in 1959-60 served to disillusion them. There was no way of fulfilling the particular type of expectations they had raised. Even without being installed in power the process of disillusionment would have begun. Greater unity in Congress ranks and a more aggressive approach on their part further contributed to the decline in their popularity. The same phenomenon can be repeated in other States where there is more or less an analogous state of affairs.

The growth in the strength of Jana Sangh in States like Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh is a disturbing phenomenon. This has been partly aided by some internal weaknesses of the Congress. Jana Sangh was strong in Delhi too but when the local Congress closed its ranks and gave a determined fight, the Jana Sangh hold was appreciably weakened. Our people basically are free from communal venom but it is also not difficult for them to fall a victim to communal and sectarian propaganda, go the wrong way and do harm to themselves and the country. Once the forces of unity and secularism are organised, the communal parties can show no great strength.

The Communist Party has slightly increased its strength in West Bengal and Andhra. The Congress in West Bengal has, in this election, made an impressive exhibition of its strength and unity. It could wrest some seats from the Communist Party in the city of Calcutta where the latter was strongly entrenched for a variety of reasons. In Andhra, the increase in strength is largely due to factors other than any increase in the inherent strength of the Communist Party. The election has also not furnished any evidence that the Party has any widespread appeal in the country. Its strength is confined to a few States and to some pockets here and there in others.

The P.S.P. in spite of the good wishes it has from all those who are anxious for a healthy opposition party to be built up, has not been able to answer their expectations. In 1957, its total strength in the State Assemblies excluding Kerala and Orissa was 188. It has declined to 149 in the present election. In Parliament, the Party had 19 seats in 1957. The number has come down to 12 in the present election. If internal rivalries in the Congress organisation in Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar are a factor in their being able to secure 33 seats in Madhya Pradesh and 38 seats in Uttar Pradesh, no firm conclusions can be drawn about its inherent strength. We hope the P.S.P. will itself analyse and discover causes for its inability to forge ahead in the peaceful competition to win the favour of the electorate and enable itself to be the main opposition party in the country.

Among features of the election worthy of notice is the fact that the people have, in the process of making up their minds, considered the quality and past antecedents of candidates. If they adjudged the Congress candidate good, they had, in a great majority of cases, little difficulty in voting for him because, by and large, the people of India do subscribe to the basic policies of the Congress. No single cause, however, can be assigned for the success or failure of candidates.

How far caste and communal considerations have played a part in 1962 elections is a subject which deserves close study. We hope there would be some scholars in the country who would undertake a systematic study of this aspect of our elections. It does seem that a great majority of the Independents, in presenting themselves to the electorate, relied on these caste considerations for their success. Others are not free from blame. A systematic investigation of this particular aspect of our elections will, we are sure, yield valuable data.

The Third General Election has furnished further proof of the continued vitality of democracy in our country. Little ups and downs and some surprises and setbacks do not matter. This is inevitable in democracy. It is these ups and downs that reveal the impact of the various forces working in our changing society. Since democracy is exposed to all kinds of stresses, internal as well as external, the need for us all to be continually alert and

vigilant is obvious. If the Congress has to be specially vigilant, it is because there is no opposition party yet which can take over and give stable administration to the people. It is necessary for the Congress to do its own intensive thinking so that it is able to meet the challenge of rising expectations of the

people in every domain of life. Democracy, as a system of government and a way of life imposes a variety of demands on the people, the administration, the political parties and leadership in the country. The roots of democracy would be nourished and strengthened to the extent these demands are met. ●

2. ROHIT DAVE, M.P., *Editor Janata, Praja-Socialist Leader*

IN the commentaries on the results of the General Election there is a tendency to rely on the party positions in the various legislatures and on the votes polled by these parties. This is quite natural in view of the fact that the elections were fought by political parties ostensibly on the bases of their party platforms which the candidates were supposed to have submitted to. But a little familiarity with the trends of election propaganda, the issues that were raised, the nature of appeals issued, propaganda material produced, etc. should convince any impartial observer that a deeper analysis is necessary before any useful lessons could be drawn from the results of these elections. The major political parties have played their part, no doubt, in selecting candidates, in giving them party tickets, in providing them help in the form of organising meetings, making available funds and other material for propaganda, and providing speakers and workers to carry the message of the party to the doorstep of the electors. In spite of this formal fulfilment of the conditions for the operation of parties in the country, because of the intervention of other factors, an analysis strictly in terms of the support secured by the parties would not reveal the full implications of the election returns.

A more detailed analysis of the returns indicate that there is a shift towards the right as far as the members elected are concerned. It is estimated that more than 50 per cent of the members returned on the Congress ticket are of right persuasion holding the view that the Government should go slow in their programme of establishing a socialist pattern of society in the country. When one adds to this the sizeable vote bagged by the Swatantra Party and the Jan Sangh a definite shift towards the right is clearly discernible.

The question naturally arises whether it would be proper to interpret this as a shift towards the right in the thinking of the public. It is not easy to answer this question in categorical terms. There is sufficient evidence to indicate that the common man is not impressed by the efforts of the Government at planning, regulation and control of our economy or with the policies followed by them to reach desired social goals. Nor is there a clear appreciation by the public of the distinction between the objectives of a policy and its implementation. There is a tendency to judge a policy through the measures designed to implement it, and when these measures prove inadequate or lead to contrary results, not only the implementation but even the objectives of the policy come under adverse criticism by the public. To that extent whatever be the explanation, the fact remains that the public, or at least a vocal section of it, does not look kindly on the left orientation of the Congress policy and this disillusionment is partially reflected in the election returns.

At the same time there is convincing evidence to indicate that some sections of the community are benefitted as a result of the planned development of our economy and these sections are not confined exclusively to the richer strata of the community. A section of the middle classes both in the rural and in the urban areas fall in this category. These sections have voted for the Congress Party through conviction and with enthusiasm. Then, there is the third section of the people that have voted in favour of 'more radical' programme because of their dissatisfaction with the Government for their failure to establish a socialist pattern of society. Especially in rural areas the economically weaker sections have voted for the left programme when their persuasions did not interfere with

their loyalties to the erstwhile rulers in their areas.

It is therefore quite legitimate to assert that a part of the vote cast is definitely on ideological grounds in terms of what the voters considered to be their legitimate interests. Some have voted against the system of permits and controls, others in favour of the social welfare programme and still others against this programme on the ground that it favoured only a section of the community and not necessarily those who are in need of protective discrimination.

The question, however, is what is the percentage of such a conscious voting in this year's General Election. No dogmatic stand is possible on this question but some of the factors that have operated during the election would make an observer sceptical of interpreting the results in terms of a shift towards the right or towards the left.

One of the most significant factors that has vitiated the results is the part played by the money purse in the Election. Shri Jaya Prakash Narain has summed up the situation very succinctly when he said that the elections are becoming costlier and costlier and less and less representative of the public opinion in the country. The same point was elaborated by Dr. Rajendra Prasad when addressing the members of Parliament on the eve of his retirement. He said "There are reports, there are murmurs of things which should not have happened (in this General Election), which should not have been allowed to happen. And there is one thing to which I particularly draw your attention, and that is the cost of election". He went on to say, "It is not possible for a man of moderate means to depend upon himself and to depend on his own resources to get elected, if all the expenses which are valid are incurred, not to speak of other expenses which are not valid and, which we may not forget, are incurred nowadays by many of us". These are very forthright remarks and echo the sentiments held by a considerable section of politically conscious opinion in the country. According to one estimate the cost incurred by the various political parties must have amounted to at least 10 crores of rupees. The resources at the disposal of the various political parties varied considerably and so the contest was

more in terms of resources commanded by the contestants rather than the contest either among parties or among the different policies and programmes subscribed by the candidates. These disproportionate disparities in resources make it difficult to interpret the results in terms of parties and principles.

Another distorting factor is the strong pull of local issues evidenced in this year's Elections. It is very interesting to note that there is a great disparity between the votes polled by the different parties in State Legislatures polls and in the elections to the Lok Sabha. Every major political party has polled more votes in the Lok Sabha contest than in those for the Assembly seats. This shows that in the Assembly elections the independents with local reputation based on personal considerations have been able to attract the attention of the voters more successfully than they should normally do in the country where elections are fought on party lines. It is also worth noting that the disparity in the case of the Congress Party is significantly less, which would indicate either that if a party is well organised and commands adequate resources it can counteract personal factors, or that the Congress Party was fortunate in getting candidates that enjoyed local influence for one reason or another. Caste and communal considerations, traditional loyalty enjoyed by the family of the contestant in the locality, service to the local community — all these factors operate in a local pull and make the interpretation in terms of national issues difficult.

In spite of all these distorting elements operating during the elections, however, it would not be quite off the mark to assert that the returns do indicate an undercurrent of restlessness in the country today. Either the voter conforms to his traditional loyalties or swerves towards extremes either on the right or on the left. Either of these tendencies spell a threat to our democracy and has to be countered.

This analysis of the election trends suggests certain definite steps which need to be taken to save democracy in the country. It needs to be realised that our political parties will have to transform themselves into modern political parties with adequate resources and efficient organisation spreading all over the country

and in all the sections of the community. Principles and programmes are, of course, of paramount importance. No political party has a right to exist unless it stands for a definite and distinct policy and programme. But important as the policy and programme are they are not enough. In a mass democracy these have to be conveyed to the doorstep of the elector, into every nook and corner of this vast country. A mass democracy demands control over mass media of communication and propaganda and this demands sufficient resources at the disposal of each major political party. In our country the press is comparatively free but party press is almost non-existent. The general press would naturally devote space to a political party according to the position it enjoys in the country. But the press is also needed by a political party to grow and here the general press is of limited use. A strong wing of public relations continuously pouring out literature in an endless stream to educate the public opinion in favour of its policies and programmes, this might help in reducing the election costs though it would necessitate adequate resources at the disposal of the party.

What this would mean in terms of organised discussions on public issues and in terms of the right of an individual to contest an election and appeal to the community for his policy and programme is a very relevant consideration. But the experience in various countries with democratic set-ups shows that there seems to be no escape from this dilemma. An individual will have to appeal to the electorate through a political party. He may fight for his pet programme in the party of his choice first and then through it to the electorate. This is a tortuous process no doubt but in a mass democracy this is inevitable. If political parties are run on democratic lines it would not be impossible for a determined individual to catch the ear of the public. Organisation of the community on functional lines, of trade unions, kisan sabhas, small traders' unions, small industries unions, organisations of industrialists and businessmen — each one of such organisations can play a vital role in strengthening the roots of democracy in the country and in giving an opportunity to an

individual to have his say in the counsels of the nation.

If parties capable of functioning in a mass democracy like ours are to be developed a fresh thinking in our political life will become necessary. Already opinions are expressed by political leaders and political parties which bear testimony to the awareness of this necessity growing in the political field. Shri Masani has suggested electoral adjustments or understanding between opposition parties loyal to the constitution and free way of life. The National Council of the Communist Party of India has given a call for a national democratic front to unite all democratic secular and progressive forces, including those within the Congress in a common struggle. The National Executive of the PSP has emphasised 'the need of unity and even merger with the democratic socialist forces in the Country'. Shri Jaya Prakash Narain has advised the PSP to merge with the Congress. Dr. Lohia has evolved a formula for the merger of the Jan Sangh, the Communist Party of India, the PSP and the Socialist Party into an alternative party to the Congress.

Many of these suggestions sound impractical under present circumstances but they do indicate the direction in which the wind is blowing. Ultimately, as the social and economic changes gather momentum it would become more and more urgent to evolve three or four political parties commanding huge membership, vast resources, modern leadership and well informed secretariat. Only modern organisations can deal with modern problems on scientific lines. This should help in discouraging support to extreme positions largely due to the sense of frustration now prevailing among the masses. It would help in real issues being joined — the issue of social justice versus the preservation of traditions, of modern way of life versus the traditional way of life, of nationalism versus overriding international loyalties, of equality of opportunities versus the maintenance of the hierarchies in the community and so on. If the returns of this year's General Election can accelerate this process it would constitute a landmark in the history of our infant democracy. ●

3. Prof. BALRAJ MADHOK, *Zonal Secretary, Punjab and Kashmir Area, Jana Sangh*

THE third general Elections of free India have returned the ruling Congress Party in power once again both at the Centre and in all the States. As such they have made little difference in the over all political picture of the Country. From the composition of the new Central Cabinet it appears that there is going to be little change in the policies of the Government, both external and internal, as well.

But a closer analysis of the Election results, the pattern of voting and the relative position of different parties reveals a picture which is materially different from the one existing before the elections and points to certain new trends in Indian politics which are bound to have decisive effect on the future of democracy and political pattern of India in the days to come.

The most important of the new trends revealed by these elections is the steady but sure decline in the prestige and following of the ruling Congress party in spite of its monopoly of power and galaxy of big names. Its votes and seats both for the Lok Sabha and State Vidhan Sabhas have registered a definite fall so much so that in a State like U.P. which was hitherto considered to be a stronghold of the Congress, it has polled only 34% of the valid votes. It has ridden back to power on a minority vote of which the conscious Congress vote is just a fraction. Nearly half the vote obtained by the Congress is the vote for power and patronage that it commands and a major portion of the rest is made up of the communal vote of the Muslims, Christians, Sikhs and Schedule Castes in whom it has been rousing communal separatism in a planned way since freedom so as to keep them a close preserve for itself at the time of elections. But even these sections of the Indian electorate are getting disgusted with the Congress game of divide and rule and have begun to align themselves with other parties as well. The Muslim voters have in particular voted generally for Muslim candidates irrespective of their party affiliations.

It has thus become clear that the Congress party will not be able to survive another general election. In fact some important Congress workers and legislators have even

expressed the view that the Congress may disintegrate earlier than its opponents expect or even wish. That is why the Communist party is so assiduously trying to push its fellow travellers into the Congress so that they may entrench themselves while Nehru — Menon are at the helm of its affairs.

In any case a political vacuum is going to confront the country if an alternative to the Congress does not grow fast enough. The C.P.I. aspires to fill this vacuum with the help of its friends in the Congress and Communist arms from beyond the Himalayas. But fortunately the electoral support obtained by it in the elections is not very encouraging for it. Its votes and seats in Lok Sabha have virtually remained the same in 1952, 1957 and 1962 elections. It has literally been marking time in spite of the huge resources at its disposal. This is mainly due to the fact that the Communist Party because of its foreign inspiration continues to be a foreign element in the Indian body politic. Still it would be foolhardy to underestimate its potentiality for mischief and the threat it poses to the future of democracy in India.

The Praja Socialist party which had come out as the second biggest party in India in the first general elections of 1952 has maintained its steady pace of decline. Its vote has come down to about 7 millions from 12 millions and its strength in Lok Sabha has been reduced to 11 from 18. That is quite understandable. With the Congress having adopted the P.S.P. slogans and programme, the justification for the separate existence of the P.S.P. has been lost. It has yet to be seen whether it ultimately merges with the Socialist party of Doctor Lohia or splits up into pro-Marxist and pro-Congress factions to merge with the Communist Party and the Congress party respectively. The Communist Party has already started making overtures to it to make a common front with it in the name of Socialist unity. In any case the P.S.P. in its present form will cease to be a factor to be reckoned with in Indian politics in the days to come.

The emergence of the Swatantra Party as second to the C.P.I. in respect of seats in the Lok Sabha is a new development in Indian politics. As a political manifestation of

Indian conservatism, this party should have a future. But as it is, its electoral victory is primarily the victory of those powerful princely families who would have won whatever the banner chosen by them. It is yet to be seen whether the Swatantra party would be able to provide an ideological and organisational base to weld these powerful individuals into a coherent political force.

Incidentally the elections have proved that the much maligned princes still have a greater hold on the masses than the politicians to whatever party they may belong. Almost all princes who chose to contest the elections on whatever ticket have come out successful. There can be no greater condemnation of the Congress rule in the erstwhile princely states.

The only other party which has proved its mettle and shown promise of a great future is the Bhartiya Jana Sangh. Of all the opposition parties it alone has more than trebled its seats in the Lok Sabha and in the Vidhan Sabhas besides registering a substantial increase in its votes. It has been able to return Muslim and Sikh candidates also to the Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh Vidhan Sabhas respectively which has given a lie direct to the Congress

propaganda about it being a communal party.

The success achieved by the Swatantra party and the Jana Sangh in spite of the persistent tirade against them by Prime Minister Nehru and all the so called leftist parties points to a definite swing towards the right and has exploded the myth that socialism has the general support of the Indian people.

Another factor of far reaching significance for the future of democracy in India that has come to light in these elections is the role of money in winning the elections. In fact money has proved to be really the "*Amogh Astra*" in the election armoury of the Congress. It has been used to corrupt the illiterate and indigent electorate which holds the balance in almost all constituencies. This fact has created misgivings and doubts even in the minds of staunch protagonists of Parliamentary democracy about the suitability of the present system of elections to the Indian conditions. It has become imperative that some re-thinking is done about the system of elections so as to minimise the influence of money and Governmental Machinery if democracy is to be saved in this country. ●

4. M. R. MASANI, General Secretary, Swatantra Party

TO review the General Elections before the clouds of dust raised in the process have settled is neither very easy nor satisfactory. Enough has emerged, however, to justify measured satisfaction at the result in so far as the Swatantra Party is concerned.

Commencing with the State Assemblies, the results released by the Election Commissioner so far show that the Swatantra Party has won a total of 167 seats in the various State Assemblies as against 153 seats for the Communist Party, 149 seats for Praja Socialist Party and 115 seats for the Jan Sangh. To this total must be added 36 seats held by the Swatantra Party in Orissa as a result of the Ganatantra Parishad's recent merger with the Swatantra Party. Judging by this test, the Swatantra Party has now emerged as India's second party, though it must be conceded

it has a long way to go to overtake the first. The Swatantra Party has pooled a significant proportion of votes in several States, obtaining 26.54% in Gujarat, 18.52% in Bihar and 17.2% in Rajasthan. In each case, this was around half the Congress Party's vote. The Party will now be the official Opposition in four States, including these three and Orissa.

When it comes to the number of seats won in the Union House of the People, however, the result is disappointing. The Swatantra Party with 27 seats has two seats less in Parliament compared with the Communist Party which has 29. The Swatantra Party polled around 8 million votes. If even now the large number of Independent Candidates who have secured election to the Union Parliament would make up their minds to plump for the Swatantra Party, it could still emerge as the main Opposition Party and would provide

this missing component in our Parliamentary democracy.

One final fact to be noted is that the number of Congress M.P.s has dropped to 353 out of 500 while the popular vote of the Congress Party has shrunk to 45.24 per cent. Mr. Nehru's new Administration will thus be a minority government.

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One of the purposes of reviewing such a process as a general election is to draw appropriate conclusions and learn the appropriate lessons with a little self-criticism.

In so far as the lessons to be learnt by the Swatantra Party are concerned, the most outstanding among them is that, while ideas do count, it is organisation that counts a great deal more, particularly in a large and backward country like India. The widespread public acceptance of the Swatantra Party's policies and the general mood of revulsion against the Congress Party has not found adequate reflection in the results of the elections because it was the Congress machine that won. The moral is simple. The Swatantra Party has to build its own structure on a much sounder and more broad-based basis.

The second lesson is the need to deploy to the maximum effect one's limited resources of men and money. The fact that the Communists have slightly more seats in Parliament may well be due to the fact that while the Communists only put up 137 candidates for the Lok Sabha, the Swatantra Party put up as many as 172 candidates, thereby stretching its more modest resources in men and money somewhat thinner.

In my view, the third lesson is the need to adopt one's candidates in good time. Follow-

ing the bad habit set by the Congress Party of adopting a whole list of candidates a few days or weeks before the elections, the Swatantra Party in various States went one better by waiting to see the Congress list before making up its own mind! This tactic might appear to be clever-clever, but it does not work. The alternative strategy is to nominate candidates well in advance of the elections. All well organised parties like the British Labour, Conservative and Liberal adopt prospective candidates right through the life of the existing Parliament, with the result that the man so nominated is given the chance to nurse his constituency and show progress. Since the Swatantra Party believes in incentives as part of its economic thinking, it would do well to select its standard bearers and give them ample time and incentive to show results.

The final lesson of the limited measure of success is the need to eliminate or limit inter-oppositional contests. For the failure to achieve this, the Swatantra Party cannot be blamed, for this was the only opposition party which has been seeking vainly to forge an understanding with all the other opposition parties except the Communist Party. Such an adjustment would have avoided the large number of triangular and quadrangular contests which, when the figures are published, will show how, while the Congress Party is a minority at the Centre and in all States except four, it has managed to secure an unrepresentative majority in the Union Parliament and the State Assemblies concerned.

We have five years ahead of us. Will the Swatantra Party, which has made its take-off this time, make the grade in 1967? The answer to that will depend, as Mr. C. Rajagopalachari has rightly put it, on whether 'we have patience and grit enough to see this great task to its conclusion'. The real fight has only begun. ●

5. Prof. P. C. SHEJWALKAR, Prof. of Economics and Vice-Principal, Commerce College, Poona.

THE results of the Third General Election can be analysed from various angles and yet the analysis can never be expected to yield easy and simple conclusions about the reactions of the people. One thing is clear. Elections have now come to stay

in this country and the masses are determined to exercise their sovereign rights in their own independent way. This is, indeed, a very healthy development. Following are some of the broad and inescapable facts that emerged from the election results.

(A) It is a tribute to our illiterate masses riven by several parochial considerations, that they allowed the election to be held in a peaceful, orderly, fair and impartial way. This does not mean, however, that there was no recourse to communal, sectional or other fissiparous propaganda. Caste was exploited by setting up candidates belonging to the majority community. In winning over the voters, the emphasis in the election campaign was more on character assassination of the rival party candidates rather than on systematic elucidation of the philosophy of the party on whose behalf the contestants fought the election. In this connection, it must be candidly mentioned that the anti-Congress parties, particularly the Jan Sangh and the Swatantra Party, leaned heavily in their campaign on scandalising their opponents. The way in which Shri V. K. Krishna Menon and Shri S. G. Barve were vilified was very disgusting. On the whole, the anti-Congress parties appeared to have done more propaganda against Congress than did the Congress against them. The campaign of the R.S.P. was ineffective and feeble. The Congress propaganda attempted to show satisfaction with the prevailing conditions and its opponents tried to create irritation against the party in power. The expectation that the people, already sufficiently irritated by the rising costs, unemployment and shortages, would side with the opponents did not materialise. It is for this reason that I feel that the people exercised their sovereign rights in their own way.

(B) The overwhelming support given to the ruling party, however, was not necessarily a vote of confidence in the Congress and all its basic programmes and policies. I do not think that the voters considered ideological alternatives of different parties very seriously. The magnificent organisation of the Congress, coupled with the Prime Minister's personal popularity, was not an insignificant factor that influenced the public mind.

(C) But the major reason for the virtual collapse of the opposition was the absence of an alternative programme that would at once attract the attention of the masses and coupled with this was their feeble organisational power, lack of finance and a sharp division of ideologies and views among the opposition parties themselves. It was as if the people had no choice. They chose the only govern-

ment that was possible. When I say this, I do not minimise the inherent strength and popularity of the ruling party but this is to indicate that the party that has been brought back to power for the third time cannot afford to be complacent and rest on its oars.

(D) The extreme right represented by the Swatantrites and Jan Sangh was neutralised by the extreme left advocated by the Communists and their fellow-travellers. The masses in a stagnant country such as ours are bound to be conservative in the sense that they do not like the country to swing radically to extreme right or extreme left. The people always opt for stability and continuity. It was natural that they were afraid, or rather reluctant, of moving in any extreme direction. Our people want a middle-of-the-road party which will enunciate progressive socialism along with democratic freedom in every sphere of life.

(E) The most distressing fact discerned was that the Praja Socialist Party otherwise a middle-of-the-road progressive party, lost its face entirely and gave way to rightist forces. If, in 1952, there was a 'danger' from the left, here is now a challenge, howsoever small, from the right. The vested elements which were adversely affected by the socialistic pattern of our economic plans centred around these forces. The religious appeal of the Jan Sangh gave it an easier access in the rural parts of the country. The royal families of the princely States have also some appeal for the illiterates. This appeal, however, is limited and may not last long. Its force emerged stronger only in those pockets where the Congress was riven by internal dissensions and the leftist parties had not systematically organised. The Swatantra Party, just three years old, has become the chief opposition party in Rajasthan and Bihar and also a strong bloc in Gujarat. The Jan Sangh is the leading opposition in Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh. I think much of the strength which these parties and also the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam in Madras State could obtain was more largely due to the protest which the adversely affected wanted to show to the Congress than to the acceptance of the philosophy of the respective parties. At one time, it used to be taken for granted that the internal squabbles in the ruling party could be easily taken advantage of by the parties with a socialistic

and progressive pattern. But now it appears that the socialistic forces should not establish themselves even in those regions where the Congress was faction-ridden. I believe this is a challenge to the progressive organisers. The emergence of the right in some States cannot therefore be considered as a permanent shift in the public opinion in a country where a large section of the masses is always under a poverty line.

(F) The performance of the Communist Party was unexpectedly poor. It could increase its popularity in West Bengal, Andhra and Kerala. Had the elections to the State assemblies been held in Kerala, the ruling coalition would most probably have suffered a severe blow. The paradoxical situation in Kerala, where the party which musters a better support cannot, for constitutional reasons, oust the rulers who have earned less confidence, is an interesting case-study for political scientists. A very poor record by the Praja-Socialist and leftist parties (other than Communists) has given them one more opportunity to reconsider two alternatives in the interests of the parties concerned and also in the larger interests of preserving healthy democracy. The first choice is for all the leftist parties to unite together and obtain vitality sufficient to put out a challenge that socialism of the socialists is more dynamic than that of the Congress. If this is not feasible for one reason or another, the other way is for the Praja-Socialists to return to the Congress fold and help the ginger group in the Congress to give a more energetic twist to the already disclosed socialistic policy of the Congress. The Congress has already taken the wind out of the sails of the Praja-Socialist Party by accepting the principle of democratic socialism. The merger of the P.S.P. with the Congress will enable the progressive section both in the Congress and the Praja-Socialist Party to translate this pious sentiment into practice.

(G) An overwhelming victory for the Congress in Maharashtra came as a pleasant surprise even to the Congress circles. Its

success was, no doubt, anticipated even by the opponents. But what appeared to be the prominent characteristic feature of the enlightened public opinion in Maharashtra was that the masses in this part of the country gave a studied, determined and open-eyed blow to the opposition parties. The crushing defeat of the Jan Sangh and the Swatantra Party in Maharashtra cannot, by any standard, be said to be accidental. The Jan Sangh, in particular, had established a sound organisation and organised a vigorous campaign in Maharashtra. The Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti was also bluntly told that it could not thrive on an out-dated issue and by organising a motley of heterogeneous groups together. The public supported the Maharashtra Ekikaran Samiti in the disputed area where the border issue was still a live one. Surely, this is an indication, seen elsewhere exceptionally, of the determined public opinion based on intellectual thinking. Moreover, had the Samiti shown decent performance in the municipal corporations where, at one time, it was in majority, it would not have suffered a crushing defeat. This indicates one more feature of the election. It is this that as and when the masses will become literate and enlightened, they will be in a better position to consider the quality of the performance of various parties and the individual record of the candidates in a clearer perspective. The personal popularity of Shri Yeshwantrao Chavan also contributed, in no small measure, to the Congress success in Maharashtra. It is suggested that the Congress victory was on account of hero worship of Nehru at the national level and Chavan, Roy or Nadar at the State level. But this is, more or less, true even in advanced countries. Churchill and Roosevelt also contributed very substantially to the astounding success of their parties in their respective countries. In fact, considering this as universal truth, the opposition should learn a lesson from this that they must also, steadily but determinedly, build a cadre of loyal workers from whom will automatically emerge, one day, the hero worship for some of their leaders.

