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My dear colleague,

As you are aware, the General Council of our Party is meeting in Bombay on April 17 and 18 in order to undertake what the Americans would call an "agonising reappraisal" of our Party's position and its future in the light of the results of the General Elections. These, in many respects, have turned out to be a disaster for our Party and indeed for our country. Our primary task at this moment will be to examine seriously what shape to give to the Party and its future so that the Party may help to maintain freedom in this country and to take it forward.

I am sure you must have given considerable thought to this matter since the Elections. I too have done my bit of heart searching. On such occasions, it is good to recall the advice that Gandhiji used to give: "Turn the searchlight inwards". It is in such a spirit of self-criticism that one should approach the current situation which calls for courage of two kinds - first the courage to carry on the fight for one's objectives, even though the form or method of this fight might change; and secondly, the courage to admit one's mistakes and to learn from them.

Among the conclusions to which I have come are :

- (1) That a great task of basic political education faces us all in India. This task is to educate the masses of our people, and indeed our elite also, on the values of democracy and the importance of the free institutions we have so far enjoyed; and to impart some understanding of the fundamental laws of economics.
- (2) That, if existing democratic Opposition parties such as ours are to play any decisive role in bringing about such an awareness and in successfully defending our democratic Constitution and promoting the acceptance of sound economic policies in place of the present misguided ones, they can only do so under a new and fresh leadership which should preferably be of younger people.

It is a sound principle of administration, whether in military, civil, business or political life that, when a disaster overtakes a country, army or organisation, the man at the helm of affairs should take responsibility for the debacle and hand over office to someone who may bring fresh ideas to the task and a new and open mind to bear on the problem. It is only thus that countries and institutions that are defeated are able to resuscitate themselves and rise again.

I believe that the present plight of the Party is the cumulative result of several shortcomings in the way of organisation and more recent mistakes in appraisal and strategy in so far as our joining in January 1971 in the conditions then prevailing the four party Front to fight these elections. As President of the Party for the past fifteen months, I feel that I should take my full share of responsibility for these mistakes.