

740

For favour of publication

Bangalore, June 9.

"Any attempt at assessing Jawaharlal Nehru's contribution is premature at this stage," said Mr. M.R.Masani, M.P., General Secretary of the Swatantra Party, while addressing a public meeting at the Town Hall this evening on "The End of an Epoch" with Mr. M.A.Sreenivasan in the Chair. "This is a time more suited to putting questions than to answering them," he observed.

Mr. Masani said that it was particularly sad that Prime Minister Nehru should have been removed from the scene just as he was about to engage in a major effort at achieving amity between India and Pakistan. The hopes of millions throughout the sub-continent had been aroused by the announcement that Prime Minister Nehru and President Ayub Khan were to meet in the third week of June. These hopes should not be allowed to die. He welcomed the recent statements by President Ayub and Mr. Lal Bahadur Shastri and hoped that the two would pick up the thread that had fallen from Mr. Nehru's hands.

Referring to Dr. S. Radhakrishnan's observation that an epoch in the country's history had come to an end, the speaker thought it was likely that the post-Independence era, with its hangover of nationalism and paternalism from British rule, would now give place to a new phase. It was good that the transition should be smooth and that the exaggerated fears expressed at home and abroad about the expected chaos and disaster were already being belied.

Among the changes that might be expected to unfold in the months and years to come, Mr. Masani mentioned the following: (1) Federalism would function better and States Rights would come into their own. These trends would be strengthened if in 1967 the Congress Party's monopoly over State Governments was broken. (2) There would be greater realism in our international policies. The Age of Innocence had come to an end with the collapse of Panchsheel. Greater attention was likely to be paid to our relations with our neighbours in South and Southeast Asia. (3) Sounder economic priorities were likely to gain favour and agriculture would receive the attention due to it in place of an obsession with heavy industry. The next year's Budget would give an indication as to how far such a trend may be expected to mature. (4) The Cabinet system of Government where there was joint responsibility and the Prime Minister was primus inter pares would have a better opportunity to function. (5) A period of political realignments was ahead of the country and a better political balance was likely to emerge.

These changes, observed the speaker, could not be expected to take place automatically. These trends have to be fostered and strengthened.

The Indian people, it was said, tended to look back at the past. "It is time," concluded Mr. Masani, "that we faced the future with the new problems and new perspectives it brings. We cannot move forward if we keep looking backwards."

---

*M. R. Masani*

(M. R. Masani)