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"The explosion of an atomic device by Communist China and the fall of Mr. Khrushchev combine to present this country with a situation which calls for what Mr. Dulles once described as an 'agonising reappraisal'," observed Mr. M.R. Masani, M.P., General Secretary of the Swatantra Party at a press conference here this morning.

If the Indian people did not wish to yield to communist Chinese atomic blackmail and concede to it hegemony in Asia, with the consequent erosion of our own national independence and our gradually subsiding to satellite status, there were only two alternatives before the country; the first, to enter the nuclear race and try to create an independent nuclear force; the other, to rely on the deterrent provided by the U.S. nuclear umbrella. Mr. Masani's choice was clearly the second alternative.

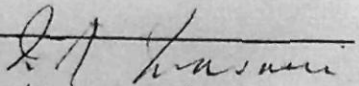
In Mr. Masani's view, it would be most unwise for India to be provoked into joining the nuclear race. A nuclear force, in order to act as a deterrent, must be vastly superior to that of the enemy and it was highly problematic whether India would ever be capable of achieving such superiority over Communist China.

Any attempt to manufacture and stockpile atomic bombs and to develop the capacity to deliver them would require such a massive diversion of national resources that it would starve both agriculture and industry and shatter our entire economy. In this context, Mr. Masani discounted the attempt in certain quarters to give an impression that the cost would be within our reach. Any such attempt would bring further miseries on our already suffering people and threaten our economic and political stability. "The greatest beneficiary of the resulting popular discontent," said Mr. Masani, "would be the Indian communists, the enemy's Fifth Column. We would thus have played Peking's game to perfection."

In so far as Soviet Russia was concerned, after the way in which Khrushchev, on whom New Delhi had depended so much, had been removed from the scene, opening up the possibility of a restoration of the Moscow-Peking Axis, it would be more than ever folly to rely on Soviet military assistance.

The correct strategy would be for India to be protected by the best and only deterrent available which is the U.S. umbrella. It was this that had in fact protected many weak nations in Europe and Asia including India from being overrun by communist imperialism during the last decade. In this context, it was significant that Mr. Harold Wilson, the British Labour Prime Minister, accepted this view and was seeking to abandon the independent nuclear force which the Conservatives had tried to create. This did not mean that the work being carried on for the development of atomic energy for peaceful purposes should be discontinued.

Referring to President Lyndon Johnson's assurance given on October 18 that nations which did not seek nuclear weapons could be sure that if they needed U.S. support against the threat of nuclear blackmail they would have it, Mr. Masani pointed out that what India needed was not the assurance that U.S. nuclear retaliation would follow an atomic attack on India but that the enemy should be deterred from making such an attack at all. "The chief value of the deterrent is its unconditional and automatic nature. For the Chinese communist regime to be left in no doubt about the automatic nature of the U.S. umbrella over India and thus to be deterred from any possible atomic attack on this country, it is essential that India, together with other free Asian countries, should come to the necessary understanding for mutual security with the U.S.A.," said Mr. Masani.


(M.R. Masani)