

EXTRACTS FROM J.P.'s LETTER TO J.N. FROM URLI KANCHAN
(POONA) DATED MARCH 7, 1957.

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I should like briefly to state my view-point regarding the elections. I strongly feel that the huge majorities that the Congress party has enjoyed in the legislatures for the last ten years have been harmful to good government, and I look upon the continuance of this absoluteness of Congress power as being fraught with serious danger to the country's interests.....In the absence of a strong opposition party the only manner in which Congress power could be reduced to controllable proportions was by agreement amongst opposition parties to avoid contests between themselves. So, I advised them accordingly. In doing so I was not guided by dislike of or hostility to the Congress as you have repeatedly been suggesting but merely by certain dispassionate political principles. According to parliamentary democratic theory it is not necessary for the opposition to be better than the ruling party. Equally bad parties in opposition are a check on one another and keep the democratic machine on the track....

I should add that I was never worried by the cry of political instability in the country because I never thought the Congress was going to be driven out of office. My object at this election was deflation of the Congress which was absolutely necessary for the country and which would have been good for the Congress itself. And if in the meanwhile the political system was not changed, there would be five years in which to plan the replacement of the Congress with a sound opposition party. Unfortunately my advice was not heeded and wherever adjustments were made amongst opposition parties they were usually based not on general political principles as on self-interest.

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already sustained, particularly in Muzaffarpur and Lucknow, would lead to genuine heart-searching.

The fact that such an astute politician as Rajaji has been thinking more or less on the same lines encourages me to believe that I have not gone entirely mad in spite of all the ridicule and worse that you have poured over my head.