

# Towards Doom

## C.Rajagopalachari

*Rajaji analyses the assertion of Sri Jawaharlal Nehru that if India followed the Swatantra Party the country will be doomed, and shows that apart from prejudices and predilections, it has no basis in fact.*

*"I look upon; an increase in the power of the State with the greatest fear, because although while apparently doing good by minimising exploitation, it does the greatest harm to mankind by destroying individuality which lies at the root of all progress."*

**Gandhiji 1935**

The Swatantra Party has pointed out what policies of the present Government will reduce food production and kill individual initiative and interest which are at the bottom of all progress.

Mr. Jawaharlal Nehru says he is convinced that if India followed the new Party, the country will be doomed. Violence of language arises out of a defence complex and is in the inverse ratio of internal confidence. Would Mr. Nehru be good enough to state which one of the 21 principles\* of the Swatantra Party will take the country to doom? Or, is he again thinking of the personalities in the Party against whom he has rooted prejudices? Prejudice is not reason even when it is a Prime Minister's prejudice's Does the Swatantra Party lead the country to doom because it proposes to keep before itself the cardinal teachings of Gandhiji maintaining faith in the people and in the efficacy of truth and non-violence?

Or, is it because the new Party is opposed to the practice of political pressure being put on officials to deflect them from the course of just discharge of their duties that the Prime Minister is unhappy?

### **Fair Deal for Labour**

The new Party is pledged to a fair deal for labour in field, factory, shop and office and, to the principle of conciliation whenever any conflict arises. Is it this that will lead to doom? The Swatantra Party has declared that the cost of public administration should be considerably reduced. Does Mr. Nehru object to this and fear doom on that account? The Swatantra Party stands for efficiency and honesty but; is against the expansion of the bureaucratic machine as a substitute for efficiency. Does Mr.Nehru consider this to be a dangerous doctrine? If the work that belongs inherently to private agency is given as a monopoly to officials, inefficiency and corruption are bound to ensue. Expansion of supervisory machinery will not achieve anything but extra expenditure. Has not Mr.Nehru sufficient evidence for this? The new Party opposes crippling taxation, abnormal deficit financing, and the taking of foreign loans beyond repayment capacity. Does the Prime Minister feel that this attitude is disastrous because his own policies involve all this that is objected to? Which then of the Swatantra Party's principles will take the country to doom? Surely it is not priority to the basic needs of the people, food, water and housing, for which the Party stands. Does he believe that a violent disturbance of the structure of ownership and management and the transfer of the work of cultivation from owners interested in out-turn to artificially formed bodies, official or unofficial, interested in faked reports will increase production? Does he not confound egalitarian doctrine with the technique of increased production?

### **Competitive Enterprise**

The Swatantra Party's industrial creed is that the incentive for production and expansion lies in competitive enterprise and it holds that the State should provide for safeguards against unreasonable profits, prices and dividends when there is not adequate competition to act as a

corrective in these respects. Does Mr. Nehru receive advice from his experts that State management without irrational subsidies from the general revenues has reduced real cost of production in any field which alone can lead to reduction of prices?

Finally does Mr. Nehru hold that disaster awaits the country because the Swatantra Party stands for every effort being made to foster and maintain the spiritual values in life and to resist the dominance of a purely materialistic philosophy of life?

I have exhausted all possible grounds for Mr. Nehru's conclusion about the Swatantra Party's dangerous emergence, except, of course, his inveterate prejudice against non-revolutionary and non-exhibitionist policies.

Cooperation is one of the universally admitted principles of good life; but it is not logic to use this general word to justify something wholly different, viz., the merger of, ownership of all land to enable the State to take one step after another towards collectivisation and progressively advance the move towards centralisation of all power. Socialism is centralised comprehensive planning and State ownership of all resources.

### **Dictatorship of "Party Bosses"**

The truth contained in the words of Gandhiji quoted above has been amply demonstrated. Power taken over by the State leads not only to the undermining of individuality but inevitably to favouritism and party politics in the course of the exercise of that power through the machinery of administration. It is this that makes party bosses and members to hold on to the erroneous policy and to the practice of intervening in administration. The recent exhibitionist decentralisation activities are as unreal as the decentralisation of authority in the Soviet State. Gandhiji put it in a nutshell to Mr. Louis Fischer in 1946: "Socialism is either dictatorship or arm-chair philosophy? It is no longer arm-chair philosophy. It is dictatorship -dictatorship not of the proletariat, but of the party bosses. We are told that there is a war on against poverty and so all powers should be given to the Central authority such as must be and are given during war-time. It is remarkable how the spirit of dictatorship unveils and confesses itself. A figure of speech is strained in order to make a claim for dictatorial authority to control everything from the Centre in the name of planning and on the analogy of military strategy. The two wars, the one against military aggression from outside, and the other against internal diseases and defects areas different from one another as violence is different from non-violence. The tactics of the one is poles apart from what the other requires, and it is entirely misleading to use the military phrase to justify the over-ruling of the Constitution.

*At the Chandigarh session of the AICC, held in October 1959, Sri Jawaharlal Nehru, attacking the Swatantra Party and its principles, said:*

*"Mr. Rajagopalachari has got a medley of companions in the Swatantra Party and it is difficult to know what their stand is. But, broadly speaking, he stands for the perpetuation of the traditional system, leaving the big industrialists to go ahead and do what they like. Ultimately, they will change the system but on a different plane than I would like it to be. But I don't see how by means of that traditional system you can ever get rid of the problem of poverty. Therefore, I cannot imagine how any person can base any approach on merely perpetuating the traditional structure."*

### ***The following is Rajaji's reply:***

#### **A Medley**

Our nation is a medley. No one can deny this or ignore the fact. If I have a 'medley of companions' in the Swatantra Party, I believe it is not only natural but also fair. It is not a good thing that this large nation should be governed by anything that approaches the homogeneity of a clique. I take the reproach of the new Party being a medley as a compliment, Mr. Nehru has been brought up in the tradition of British politics and he puts his trust in the uncontaminated homogeneity of a ruling party;

but it will not do for a nation or a country such as ours which will not fit into any framework built on the models of British political history.

The Prime Minister refers to this mixed character of my 'companions' to explain why he cannot understand our stand. I fear he tries to find out our stand from the prejudices he has developed in respect of the various personalities who have publicly associated themselves with the Swatantra Party and he has not cared to study the principles accepted by the Party as constituting its stand. Our 'stand' is not to be guessed by psychoanalysis but is to be seen in the principles we have agreed to and set out for public information with more clarity and precision and with greater brevity than one can find in any of the Congress pronouncements or the Prime Minister's speeches. Mr. Nehru's difficulty in understanding what the Swatantra Party stands for is of his own making. If one proposes to understand what a party stands for by recalling one's own prejudices and pre-conceived notions and guessing motives of the personalities concerned, one must fail. One will only come round that way to one's own preconceived ideas and prejudices. The straight and easy path to understand our party is to read what has been said in the 21 short articles of the Party's foundation document. There is no ambiguity or prolixity in it.

### **Stability**

If this procedure were followed, it could be seen that the Swatantra Party does not intend either to 'perpetuate' anything or leave the big industrialists 'to do what they like.'

If the Prime Minister means that we seek to perpetuate spiritual values and preserve what is good in our culture and tradition, we plead guilty. We object to the cultivation of bleak uncertainty in life and occupation which has resulted from the present Governments policies and forecasts. We object to the growing wasteful expansion of the authority of the hierarchy of officials over citizens and their occupations, which is the necessary result of socialism. We want a sense of stability and incentives for individual effort. We want a strict adherence to the guarantees specified in the original Constitution which are so necessary for promoting incentives and producing true wealth as distinguished from the circulation of paper money. 'The party stands for higher production and expansion which are inherent in competitive private enterprise. We have not forgotten the need for adequate safeguards for the protection of labour and against unreasonable profits, prices and dividends where there, is no competition or where competition does not secure the necessary corrective. This surely is not 'leaving the big industrialists to do what they like.'

On the other side, our Party is opposed to leaving the Government 'to do what they like.'

We do not want the State to enter the field of trade and distribution in which officials are notoriously incompetent, whether they attempt to carry on directly or through chosen favourites more experienced but less honest than themselves. We are firmly opposed to the imposition of regulations and controls which must follow the faulty policy of Government trying to do what should be left to private enterprise and free competition. One fault brings in a train of other faulty steps.

### **Dismal Failure**

It is not clear what the Prime Minister refers to as 'traditional system' to which he is opposed. We all understand his modernity; but phrases of that kind do not carry us far. What he considers as traditional and therefore out of date may be just what is and what has proved itself as good. It is needless to point out that there is no virtue in replacing systems simply because they are 'traditional'. The Prime Minister admits that tradition has its uses. Survival is a proof of fitness, not of worthlessness. What is sought to be introduced, namely, state-management, in various forms, has been found to be a dismal failure besides being oppressive and far too expensive for the tax-payers.

The main and most important point is the failure to realise the fundamental importance of agriculture beyond paying lip-service to it and making attempts to redistribute ownership. Neither redistribution

of ownership nor tinkering with the various forms of tenure prevailing in the various regions of our country will add a single iota to the productivity of the soil. Indeed, as has been observed by good authority, all the evidence points in the other direction. Ambitious and showy schemes of State-owned industries are not going to help us in the greater production of food grains.

### **Colossal Waste**

Plans to furnish employment on a widespread basis are more important than concentrated show places of immense size. Our resources are limited. The capacity to borrow and beg - its success is essentially political - is not a true or lasting resource. What we can get by way of taxes and public loans should be husbanded with greater foresight and skill than is now being done now. Colossal waste characterises irrational plans such as nuclear power enterprises which are too costly even for nations much better placed than ourselves. All these errors flow from the fundamental unwisdom of trying to be 'modern' where we cannot afford to be. Nothing can equal this stupendous folly and snobbery of turning to the Atom for industrial energy in India at this stage of scientific progress. If the Swatantra Party cannot be comprehended by Mr. Nehru, it is due to causes resting in him and not in the party.

Mr. Charan Singh, who was responsible for introducing many far-reaching agrarian reforms in, Uttar Pradesh and who resigned his office in the cabinet of that State preferring it to surrendering his convictions about the futility of the Nagpur resolution, has written a book on the subject of the Government's plan to increase food production through joint farming. Like Prof. Ranga, he was born in a peasant's family. At least the preface of his book must be read by those who from their seats of power in Delhi seek to change the life of the peasantry.

Not average income but average character lies at the root of all success and all failure of plans in this country. Nothing is being done about this, but everything that is being done saps this fundamental asset. In addition to the exaltation of mammon, class hatred is preached and explained as inherent in the Congress programme. The Swatantra Party is not ashamed to adopt a creed of harmony and a sense of moral obligation and for this purpose to stress the tradition of the land. What we get out of this, however small, is of the highest value. What we get out of conflict and compulsion, seemingly however large, is impermanent and worthless.

### **Class Hatred**

In answer to our charge that the policies of the present Government are generating the poison of class hatred, both the Prime Minister and the Congress President (his daughter) say from the new capital of Punjab that conflict and hatred are inherent in feudal conditions. They do not deny, but seem on the contrary proud of their wrong approach and glibly talk of fierce claws and sharp teeth. Everyone knows whose claws and teeth are now red and sharp. After twelve years since Gandhiji's assassination, the Congress has on the eve of his birth anniversary this year definitely and openly opted for hatred and conflict. This is most deplorable. They talk of feudalism. Where is feudalism in India now? No one is forced to work or yield anything by force or tradition to his superior. The Zamindari system of (collecting land revenue has been abolished, not by the new socialist Congress but much before socialism was adopted, more than twenty years back, and perhaps some of us in the new party were more responsible for the abolition than others now in the Congress. Tenancy reform too had been taken up in the pre-socialism days. Those who in Bihar for generations thought the land they tilled was their own are now made to pay to Government fifteen times the annual tribute they had been paying to the liquidated zamindar. In fact, the Government has become a single all-State Zamindar and a worse type than those who have been turned out, one who seeks to get purchase money from those who owned the land as if they were now being given fresh land.

### **Witch-hunting**

The present talk about feudalism is just like reviving a ghost for the purpose of witch-hunting.

The boot of tyranny is on the other foot now, whether it be agriculture or industry. It is nonsense to describe the relationship between management and workers as one of feudalism. No industry can get on without workers or without management. It is not a case for abolition or hatred but one for harmony. The formulae of feudalism and inherent conflict are parrot copies of exploded communist slogans. It is a matter for profound grief that apart from seeking to make expropriation and interference with individual freedom of occupation lawful there is now an open commitment to a, programme of deceptive phrases to generate and intensify hatred and disharmony. It is an irony of fate that this coincides with Gandhi week this year.

The glorification of technology and the ridicule of the customs of the people may pass for modernity. The substitution of new superstitions for old is going on apace. It is all tragic irreverence and folly and intoxication of power and position. The people of India must pray that the gods may bless their rulers with a little humility during their brief tenure of office.