

THIRTEEN YEARS AFTER

"Whither do we go and what shall be our endeavour" asked Prime Minister Nehru on August 15, 1947, which he called "the day appointed by destiny." He then reminded us: "We have hard work ahead. There is no resting for anyone of us till we make all the people of India what destiny intended them to be."

THESE words of the Prime Minister would naturally be recalled by us on this thirteenth anniversary of our independence. We would ask ourselves the question: how far has the nation gone, or rather the Prime Minister and his Government have taken the nation, towards what he then called "destiny's intentions"? We would ask how far the Government and the Congress Party have helped us "to build up a prosperous, democratic and progressive nation and to create social, economic and political institutions which will ensure justice and fullness of life to every man and woman"—declared by the Prime Minister then to be the objective for whose realisation the whole nation will endeavour?

Claims They Make

There would no doubt be Congressmen who claim that their party and the Government led by it have gone several steps in that direction. They no doubt claim many achievements that can be credited to their party and the Government headed by Prime Minister Nehru.

One of them has claimed that what he calls the Indian revolution is not only equal to but exceeds the three great revolutions of the world in the modern epoch—the American Revolution of 1776, the French Revolution of 1789 and the Russian Revolution of 1917. While these latter were all violent revolutions, which, therefore, led to painful results for the peoples of those countries, the Indian revolution, he claims, was based on non-violence.

"Acceptance of non-violence and persuasion," he points out, "has paid great dividends. The whole princely order has become a thing of the past and yet not one of the princes was killed. They have lost their power, prestige and substantial portion of their wealth, but because this social revolution has been brought about through non-violent means, these princes are today loyal citizens of India.

"Capitalists have been heavily taxed, landlordism has been abolished, vested interests of possessing classes have been curbed in every sphere of life, but nowhere has such curtailment led to the embittered feelings exhibited in the French or the Russian Revolutions.

"Internal peace and external friendliness have been the direct and immediate reward of the acceptance of non-violence and democracy as the basic principles of Congress ideology." (Humayun Kabir in India Quarterly, January-March, 1960).

While Prof. Kabir thus lists the "great achieve-

ments of the non-violent revolution" led by his party, a great debate is going on among the leaders of that very Congress. The central question involved in that debate is the present and

future of the Congress Party. Prof. Kabir himself is a participant in that debate and poses the question as to what will happen to the Congress after Nehru. He and several other leaders and ideologues the Congress publicly acknowledge that the only factor that keeps the Congress united is the personality of the Prime Minister.

by E. M. S. NAMBOODIRIPAD

The seriousness of the situation can be seen from one of the recent forthright statements made by Congress Pre-

sident Sanjiva Reddy on the state of the Congress today. Addressing the members of the Mysore Legislature Congress Party and Members of Parliament at Bangalore on July 24, the Congress President gave his opinion that "after 12 years of freedom, they as a people had degenerated." He asked: "Where is the zeal with which we gave up our studies and sacrificed all for the service of the country? Let us search our hearts."

He then made the revealing confession: "At the present day, every Congressman is presumed to be corrupt unless otherwise proved, while in law even the person accused is assumed to be innocent until it was proved otherwise. Why is it that the Congress is abused? Have we given any thought to this? There must be some smoke somewhere. There must be something wrong somewhere." (Hindu, July 25).

These Assam developments, it is acknowledged by all, can be compared only to the partition-eve fratricidal war between Hindus and Muslims. Prime Minister Nehru characterised them as "a tragedy of an extreme kind, not only for the present but, with all its implications, for the future." They led to "something new in our country, our own people becoming refugees, rendered homeless and having to be placed in camps."

Group rivalries in Congress are only one of the factors at the root of the

troubles in Assam. The anti-Chaliha group could take advantage of the linguistic tension in Assam only because that tension was there in the State. The Congress, however, cannot escape responsibility for the very existence of this tension. As a matter of fact, it was the policy adopted by the Congress leadership on the question of State language, the formation of linguistic State and the protection of linguistic minorities, that created the tension in Assam, as it had done and is still doing so in some other States.

Faking a so-called "nationalist" stand of ignoring the legitimate demand of the various linguistic groups in the country for the formation of their own linguistic States, as well as the demands of the tribal peoples for autonomy for the tribal areas, they sowed the seeds of discontent and disaffection among the various linguistic and tribal groups in the country. This discontent had to take the form of organised mass action before any concession was made to what was contemptuously called "linguism", "parochialism", etc.

It required a big and united movement leading to the sacrifice of a great soul—Potti Sri Ramulu—for the Andhra State to be formed.

It required big mass movements in other States for the States Reorganisation Act to be passed and new States formed more or less on linguistic lines.

Refusal Still

It required still bigger movements entailing enormous sufferings and sacrifices lasting for nearly four years for the notorious bilingual Bombay to be split and the States of Maharashtra and Gujarat formed.

Even when these new States were formed, the Congress Government not only went on repeating its opposition to "linguism", went on repeating that formation of linguistic States was wrong in principle; it refused to adopt the twin rational principles of village as the unit and contiguity in fixing the borders.

Furthermore, using the unfortunate fact that the Hindus and Sikhs in the Punjab are divided on communal lines, they still refuse to accede to the legitimate demand of the Punjabi people for the application of the linguistic principle in their case. To this end, they give encouragement to Hindu communalism which goes to the extent of denying one's own mother-tongue.

This same false "nationalism" of the Congress leadership has made them blind to the political aspirations of the tribal peoples. Even those

tribes inhabiting the various parts of the country, whose demand for regional or local autonomy has not been recognised as a legitimate demand to be conceded as part of building "a prosperous, democratic and progressive nation."

Furthermore, even in the case of Naga Land, there is no guarantee that the autonomy of the new State will be really respected. Seeing that the Central Government has in the last ten years been increasingly encroaching upon the rights of the 15 States of the country and that Manipur, Tripura, Himachal Pradesh and Delhi have been denied their democratic rights, it is difficult to believe that the Nagas who want full autonomy within the Indian Union will be allowed to exercise their autonomy the way they want to.

It was these policies of opposition to the formation of linguistic States, to the use of the State language as the language of instruction and administration in the States, to the protection of the rights of linguistic minorities in every State and to the autonomy for the tribal peoples inhabiting the various parts of the country that led to conflicts in the various parts of the country and have resulted in the tragic developments.

Mutual Hatred

It is true that liberal-minded Congress leaders did theoretically agree to the

CONGRESS POLICIES ENDANGER INDIAN UNITY

Congress leaders who have genuine sympathy for the tribals cannot extend their sympathy beyond the protection of social customs, manners and the culture of the various hill tribes. They cannot fathom the depth of the feelings and aspirations of the tribal peoples which go much beyond social and cultural fields. They cannot realise that what the tribal peoples ask for is nothing less than their own rule. They, therefore, cannot see that the tribal problem cannot be settled except on the basis of regional or local autonomy within a particular State and in the case of bigger tribes inhabiting larger areas, separate States within the Indian Union.

Reason For Conflicts

It was only after several years of protracted struggles by the armed Nagas of the Northeastern belt that they agreed to the formation of a separate Naga State. But even now, there are several other

principle of Assamese being the State language in Assam, except in those districts and regions where the Bengali or the tribal people predominate. But, despite this theoretical acceptance of the principle of Assamese as the State language and protection for the minority rights of the Bengalis and the tribals, the Congress as an organisation, in its day-to-day work and contact with the people, conducted itself not in the spirit of the unity of the Bengalis, Assamese and tribal people, but of their mutual hatred.

Bengali Congressmen would not be satisfied with getting protection for Bengali as a linguistic minority in the State of Assam, but would demand equality of treatment between the Assamese and Bengali languages. Assamese Congressmen, on the other hand, would refuse to take into consideration the fact that the Bengalis in Assam are not an ordinary linguistic minority, but is a big minority in the whole State with majority in a whole district (that

* SEE PAGE 17

WHY HAS CONGRESS COME TO THIS PASS?

* FROM PAGE 4

of Cachar) and therefore, they are entitled to special consideration which is not ordinarily given to small linguistic minorities in other States.

Both the Assamese and Bengali Congressmen refuse to realise that the tribals are not interested either in the Bengali or in the Assamese language or in English but in their own language and, above all, in regional autonomy.

The all-India Congress leaders in their turn are blind to the fact that over and above these complex issues of the language is the sense of frustration felt by the Assamese people that the development of their State is neglected by the Government. This erupted some time ago in the mighty demonstrations of the Assamese people on the issues of location of the oil refinery in Assam. The same sense of frustration is felt by the tribal peoples that their own development is neglected both by the Central as well as the State Government of Assam.

Do the Congress leaders at least now realise that the armed revolt of the Naga people and the fratricidal conflict in Assam are not accidental but are the outward manifestations of the simmering discontent that cannot be removed by showing an attitude of contempt for linguism and parochialism? Do they realise the folly contained in the unanimously adopted resolution of the recent Poona meeting of the AICC that the Congress Party will not countenance the formation of any new State—a resolution which had to be ignored in the matter of less than two months of its adoption when the Government of India had to agree to the formation of the new Naga State? Is this one development not enough for them to realise that there is something fundamentally wrong with the stand that they have so far taken with regard to the formation of linguistic States and the demands of the tribal peoples?

Modesty Will Do Good

It would, therefore, be worthy of the leaders of the Congress and of the Government if they are a little more modest in the claims that they make with regard to the 13-year-old record of their rule in independent India.

Nobody would object to their taking pride in the good things they have done, such as the adoption of a Republican Constitution, the elimination of princely rule, the abolition of the zamindari system, tenancy reforms in several States, the formulation of Five-Year Plans, the implementation of a policy of friendship with the Socialist and peace-loving countries of the world, etc., etc.

While taking credit for these things, let them not blind themselves to the obvious deficiencies and weaknesses of their rule.

REMEMBER

They Have

COMRADE Gajendranath Mali, undergoing a 25-year term in the Kakdwip case, who has already spent eleven years in prison, writing to E. M. S. Namboodiripad on July 1, from Dum Dum, says:

"We received your letter of June 9 on 29.6.1960. We are all very happy on getting the letter. We all firmly believe that one day the Communist Party will secure our release. We have told quite a lot to Comrade Bhupesh Gupta when we met him. We remind him of our long incarceration. It remains our wish that you will implement the desire you have expressed, even without our prompting, of carrying out your duty. We hope that success will attend your efforts. For your efforts please accept from us personally

and for the Central Executive Committee and the National Council our heartfelt greetings and revolutionary Red Salute.

"Please let us know soon what steps you are taking."



Comrade Pannalal Das Gupta, sentenced to 25-years, who has already having undergone eight years and eleven months of imprisonment writes to E. M. S. Namboodiripad from Alipore Jail, saying:

"We are very glad to receive your letter dated 9.6.1960. Everybody here appreciates your sympathy and concern for us, the long-term political prisoners.

"Please accept our sin-

Lest They Forget

LET THEM NOT FORGET that these deficiencies and weaknesses are of such a character that the unity in diversity that has always been the goal of Indian nationalism—India being a strong, unified nation but the various linguistic and tribal groups that inhabit it having the utmost autonomy within their own States and regions—is endangered. Let them realise that if they are not humble enough to realise their deficiencies and wise enough to find a solution that is acceptable to the most diverse linguistic and tribal elements in the country, the unity of the nation will not stand the test of history.

LET THEM NOT FORGET that while country after country in the colonial world of Africa has been able to throw off the yoke of colonial domination, the Portuguese rulers are still occupying a part of our country.

LET THEM NOT FORGET that despite two Five-Year Plans which have been formulated and implemented, the living and working conditions of the common people have not registered any improvement, that on the other hand, growing burdens of taxation, ever-rising prices of consumption goods, increasing unemployment, etc., are making their living conditions increasingly miserable.

LET THEM NOT FORGET that the fiscal and financial policies pursued by the Government are leading the economy to an extremely difficult situation in which our Ministers, Ambassadors and other representatives have to go from country to country begging for help.

LET THEM NOT FORGET that it is in the background

of these deficiencies and shortcomings in the matter of implementing national policies that the Congress as an organisation is finding itself in an acute organisational crisis. The group rivalries and factional squabbles which Congress leaders deplore and nauseam are not accidental but a degeneration of the once-great national organisation.

Why This Situation

If the Congress President and other leaders are sincere in their desire to rid their organisation of these evils whose existence they have themselves to openly admit, they have to turn the torch of criticism inwards. They have to ask themselves the question why the great national organisation, which, in the days of anti-imperialist struggle, had fired millions on millions of young and old in our country with the idealism of freedom-loving people, has now been reduced to such a state that, in the words of the Congress President himself, Congressmen are considered to be corrupt unless otherwise proved.

Such an attitude of humility and self-criticism will be in keeping with what the Prime Minister had said thirteen years ago: "We have achieved much, we have to achieve much more. Let us then address ourselves to our new tasks with the determination and adherence of high principles which our great leader has taught us. . . . If we aim at the big things of life, if we dream of India as a great nation giving her age-old message of peace and freedom to others, then we have to dedicate ourselves as worthy children of Mother India."