

of law and order, and presumably inaugurate a new policy or rather breathe new life into old ones which have failed so signally to work.

A minor stir in Congress circles has also been hinted at over the issue of the selection of the future President, on which, it appears, the Congress Party itself, not to speak of all the members of the Constituent Assembly, have not been of one mind. The two names that emerged were those of the present Governor-General and the President of the Constituent Assembly,—leaving aside for the moment Dr. Ambedkar, whose name was also canvassed in certain quarters for this high office, partly in recognition of his work in framing the new constitution and partly as a Gandhian gesture for healing and putting a seal on the fissure in the ranks of our society of which we, and the Congress, have been duly, and understandably, both apologetic and ashamed. Of the two contestants to whom the field has been left, the points both for and against are strikingly in apposition. Rajaji possesses *in excelsis* all the qualities that would be needed for such an office of State. His urbanity, grace of manners, high intelligence, tact and diplomatic skill are indeed unrivalled. In addition, he is equally-qualified to hold his own against other heads of State in any country in the world. This is a matter of no mean consideration when we are not airaing at a policy of isolation for the future of this country. Against Rajaji's elasticity, Babu Rajendra Prasad presents the solidity of the old guard. He has never swerved or slackened, tripped or fallen. He is the idol of his home province, which Rajaji is not. Perhaps this alone brings out the contrast between the two contestants in the sharpest perspective; for one who will have to cement the unity of India, it is not enough to be an idol of any one province. Perhaps if Dr. Rajendra Prasad were not such a pillar of strength for Bihar, he would be more warmly accepted by other provinces. If he is chosen for it, his new office will bring him to resolve disputes in which his home province may be involv-

ed with others. That Rajaji does not command that solid following in Madras gives him a unique position in all-India affairs,

But there is one point which, unfortunately, weigh against Rajaji and which may finally decide the issue in favour of the trusted old guard of the Congress to which Rajen Babu can certainly claim to belong. There are sections in the Congress, by no means small or without influence, who have not yet forgotten that Rajaji once left the Congress to plough a lonely furrow nor have they forgiven him for it. That eventually the Congress followed Rajaji's lead and virtually accepted the position that he had taken up earlier in the war, does not seem to weigh yet with this section of the Congress. True, logic is not on their side, but then logic does not always rule human affairs.

It would be with a sad heart that the country will bid farewell to Rajaji when he invites the President of the New Republic to take over charge after the inauguration of the Republic. Per-

haps there is yet time to 'rectify what will indeed be a minor tragedy—that so competent a person and one so admirably suited to fill this high office is to depart at a time when he could have shed lustre on the office that he must yield to another.

There are occasions when party loyalties must be tempered with reason. Is it not true that in departing from the Congress, when reason suggested to him the Tightness of his decision, Rajaji showed no less intellectual courage than any of his colleagues? Perhaps the courage of conviction that he showed to such high degree on that occasion entitle him to greater respect than the country will be showing him by declining to make him the first President of the Indian Republic To confer this honour on Rajendra Prasad will certainly be a gesture to the orthodox Congress, but it will be an empty gesture and mock heroics, since the Government which run in the name of the Congress owe little allegiance to this loyalty and the Party conclaves do little about it.

Conference In Colombo

OVER Colombo hang two dark clouds: Red China and the forthcoming general election in Britain. Red China is creating a problem not only in Colombo but also in Washington and at Lake Success. Faced with recognition of Red China by Burma, India, Pakistan, Ceylon and Britain, President Truman has turned a somersault. He has backed out of his reported decision to adopt a "positive"—and military—policy towards Formosa; the Truman Doctrine will not be applied to Formosa. Though shipments of war materials to the remnants of the Kuomintang Government will continue under EC A arrangements, President Truman will not help Chiang with military and civil advisers.

This decision of President Truman under the pressure of world developments is a major defeat to his Secretary for War, his joint chiefs of staff and to those Republican politicians who share Gene-

Lai MacArthur's view that Formosa is essential to the defence of the United States. Time alone will reveal whether President Truman's final decision not to back up discredited Chiang in Formosa will mark the beginning of the end of bi-partisan foreign policy in the United States. Meanwhile, the possibility of a comic situation arising out of non-recognition of Red China by some Commonwealth members and Foreign Powers cannot be ruled out altogether.

Though the matter is highly technical and relates to procedure, the Nationalist China representative can, by the use of the *veto*, retain China's seat in the Security Council as long as Nationalist China is recognised by some members of the United Nations. Alternatively, there is the possibility that the United States representative who does not recognise Red China, may be sitting in the Security Council

with Mao's representative, while those Powers recognising Mao maybe forced to sit in the General Assembly with Chiang's representative.

These complications apart, reports emanating from Colombo indicate that Red China may create a assure in the Commonwealth camp. Canada, Australia and New Zealand do not seem to be as enthusiastic over granting diplomatic recognition to Mao as other members of the Commonwealth. There are deep and sinister implications of the possibility that while some members of the Commonwealth have already recognised Red China, a few may postpone or withhold such recognition. It may be too premature to cry wolf, but the possibility of a rift in the Commonwealth cannot be dismissed offhand.

True, Mr. Ernest Bevin is not in favour of a Pacific Pact. True, too, Britain has recognised Red China. But the outcome of the forthcoming general election cannot be predicted with certainty. If the Conservative Party win the elections, the British Government's attitude towards a Pacific Pact in particular and towards the general policy of combating Communism in Asia may undergo a fundamental change. With the recent change in governments in Australia and New Zealand, the possible defeat of Labour in Britain may disrupt the whole balance and relationship of the new Commonwealth.

Mr. Churchill and his Party are committed to accepting the changed concept of the Commonwealth. Even in the event of a Conservative victory, the status and position of the Asian members of the Commonwealth are not likely to be challenged. But some Asian members of the Commonwealth, including the Republic of India, may find themselves in disagreement with the Conservative Government's positively militant policy towards Communism. At the moment, the policy enunciated by Pandit Nehru finds wide acceptance in the Commonwealth: That the safest antidote to Communism is to fight poverty and colonialism in Asia is now widely

endorsed.

There is, however, the distinct possibility that if the Conservative Party wins the elections in Britain, there may be a shift in emphasis. Mr. Churchill's combative attitude towards Communism will evoke warm response in Australia, in New Zealand, in Canada, in South Africa as well as in the United States. Will, or can, Asian members of the Commonwealth view without anxiety and apprehension the possibility of a more emphatic anti-Communist Anglo-American policy? Throughout Asia, America is now suspect. As it has emerged, Point Four has only deepened the sense of frustration in Asian countries. Monetary aid contemplated under Point Four is too inadequate. And, America is suspect because of her insistence and emphasis on air and military bases as conditions to aid in men and money.

This is the main shadow that hangs over the Colombo Conference. This is also the reason, basis and justification for the apprehension that the Colombo Conference is being held approximately a month too early. Asian members of the Commonwealth are immediately and mainly concerned with the Commonwealth's future policy in Asia. As long as that policy remains centred on fighting poverty and raising the standard of living in the distressed areas through active and adequate aid in men and money, there is no likelihood of a rift within the Commonwealth. But any departure from this sane policy under pressure of changes in the complexion of governments in Australia and New Zealand and of the possibility of a similar change in Britain can only complicate and confuse matters.

There are other problems facing the Commonwealth as a whole and individual members of this Brotherhood of Nations. There are complex problems relating to the relationship between the various members of the Commonwealth. These problems are being glossed over; whether their solution can be indefinitely postponed is another matter. This is one of the issues on which the future of the Commonwealth de-

pends.

Internal issues apart, there are the problems of the Commonwealth's relationship with America on the one hand and with Europe on the other. There are three possibilities. Will Britain and the Commonwealth become the forty-ninth state of America? Or, will the Commonwealth move away from Washington and establish itself as a strong, united, powerful third bloc? Or, finally, will Britain align herself more and more with Western Europe, leaving the Commonwealth to disintegrate from within and to die a natural death?

Changes in the party in power in New Zealand and Australia and the implications of the forthcoming elections in Britain have focussed fresh attention on these fundamental Commonwealth issues at stake. Whether the Labour or the Conservative Party win the elections in Britain, these problems will have to be decided once and for all. If Labour is voted back to power, there may not be any immediate necessity for a re-examination of the Commonwealth concept. But there is the possibility that the Conservative Party may assume office and power. This is the other shadow that hangs over the Colombo Conference. In retrospect, it is doubly apparent that the Colombo Conference is being held a month too early. This is an unmitigated misfortune. For, even in Asia, time cannot be made to stand still. And, developments in China, uncertainties in Burma, in Indo-China and in Thailand and the developing Communist threat call for immediate and urgent treatment and action in Asia on proper lines.

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