

II. Election Review

Just as at the time of formulating the electoral strategy and the concrete tactics of electoral alliances, so in the work of assessing the results of the elections, conflicting points of view expressed themselves in the Party after the election campaign was over. These differences were clearly expressed in the two draft reviews of the election results presented to the National Council—one prepared by Bhupesh Gupta and the other by P.C. Joshi. We are giving below some relevant extracts from the two drafts:

P. C. Joshi, for instance, wrote in his note submitted to the National Council: "The Congress losses to the parties of the right also create the pre-conditions for building better and more

friendly relations between the Communists and Congress leaders as also their cadres. The initiative for achieving this new shift cannot obviously come from inside the Congress. It has to be unfolded by the Party. The Party cannot afford to remain sunk in the mire of sectarianism for the simple reason that the discontent against the Congress, which, during the first and second general elections, was going left and mostly towards our Party is now going towards the right. The Party, therefore, has to make a new turn for its sheer survival and the sooner it makes the turn, the stronger it will grow."

On the tasks of the Party, P. C. Joshi wrote in the same note: "From this National Council it must be clearly formulated that the first and foremost task of the Communist Party is to launch a national crusade against the right on the basis of the correct application of N.D.F. tactics and thus emerge as the most far-sighted and boldest national vanguard of the Indian people. If we fail to differentiate today between the extreme right and the Congress leadership headed by Nehru, if we fail to evolve tactics that will help to isolate the right, we would be failing to rise to the responsibilities of the post-election situation."

Dealing with the question of allies in this national crusade, against the right, Joshi continued: "It is also necessary to clearly see that the rise of the right has created a new climate inside the Congress itself amongst its thinking and advanced elements and has created the pre-conditions for our winning them as allies in everlarger numbers. A very clear indication of this is the election and post-election speeches of Nehru against the right. Their significance and limitation both should be carefully assessed by us. I think the importance of our seizing Nehru's positive statements is obvious. It is our task to develop them further."

Further, "the present alignment in the country has to be changed against the right. The main responsibility is of the Party but it cannot do it alone. It must seek and win allies. If the rise of the right is a big negative factor revealed by the elections, there is also a newly-revealed positive factor which is stronger than ever before and that is a new awakening and far less anti-communism inside the Congress itself."

Bhupesh Gupta, on the other hand, drew the conclusion from the election results that they 'have fully confirmed the correctness of this approach and understanding—the line of the National Council'.

He also underlined the strengthening of the right reactionary forces, but warned, 'while there must be no underestimation of the communal and right reaction, there need be no exaggerated or alarmist appraisal either. The first may lead to sectarianism and the neglect of the task of drawing all secular and progressive forces in struggle against right reaction, the other may lead to tailism behind the Congress and bourgeois leaders. Nonetheless, it has to be admitted that these forces have consolidated better and grown faster than the organised forces of the democratic opposition. By all accounts, this is a very dangerous trend in our political life.'

It would be clear from the above extracts that the crux of the differences is the same question which had repeatedly been raised for nearly a decade: against whom—the Congress or against its opponents from the right—is the Communist Party to direct its main fire?

According to one view, the forces of right reaction, communalism and separatism had become such a serious danger and threat to national unity, democracy and the working class movement that the Party should take upon its shoulders the task of uniting with the so-called 'middle of the road' forces (which, according to this view, included the Congress) in order to thwart the forces of right reaction, communalism and separatism.

This view was contested by others according to whom the growing forces of right reaction, communalism and separatism could not be stopped by strengthening the ruling Congress party; for, it was the policies and practices of the ruling Congress party that generated such discontent among the people that a mass political basis was created for the forces of right reaction, communalism and separatism to operate on.

In view of the sharp differences, the National Council had to postpone a detailed review of the general elections to the next meeting of the NC. However, it adopted and issued a short

statement on the election results which rejected the line of united front with the Congress advocated by P. C. Joshi and others. In the resolution reviewing the elections it placed before the NC, the CEC stated:

'While the situation demanded that the most determined efforts to prevent the growth of reactionary and communal forces or separatist trends in the various parts of the country, the Congress is, however, by its policies, facilitating their rise and growth. Furthermore, the deterioration in the living standards, together with the corruption that is rampant in the ruling party, is giving rise to widespread discontent among the masses of the people. This popular discontent provides a fertile soil to all sorts of demagogic and adventurist elements that spell ruin to the country's future to gather new strength and acquire new bases for their operations. The Council, therefore, came to the conclusion that the general line of the Sixth Congress of our Party of striving to build the unity of all democratic and popular forces in the struggle against right reaction and of directing into popular channels the discontent of the masses against the policies of the Government which hit the people, rather than allow the forces of right reaction to take advantage of this to consolidate themselves, should be carried forward.'

Finding that this resolution was being supported by the majority of the National Council, S. A. Dange and others pleaded that it was unnecessary to go into a post-mortem examination of the elections, and succeeded in having no election review at all.

The differences between these two points of view came to ahead several months later, in March 1963, when a large number of by-elections were sought to be faced by the central leadership of the Party in accordance with the line of 'preventing the electoral victory of right reaction at all costs'. But, before dealing with that development, it is necessary to examine the changed inner-Party situation between April and October 1962. For, it was this change in the situation that enabled the central leadership to boldly come out with a line which they were not able to advocate openly either at the Sixth Congress or at the subsequent National Council meetings.