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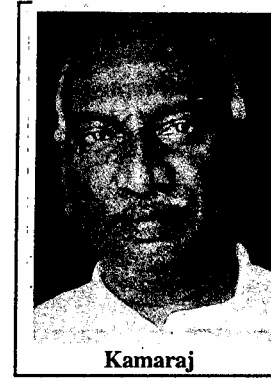


C. S. AND I : POLITICAL TWINS - II

□ R. VENKATARAMAN

It is not as if C.S. and I had no differences between us. C.S. spoke at the A.I.C.C. meeting at Amritsar in 1956 in support of a Dhakshina Pradesh consisting of Tamil Nadu and Kerala. C.S. genuinely believed that the whole of the country, divided purely on a linguistic basis without regard for viability, interdependence on common resources and national unity, was not in the interest of the country. On the other hand, I thought that, when the whole country was being divided into States on the basis of language, one single unit of two States coming together would not lead to harmony. Besides my experience with the Andhra separation was not a pleasant one; charges of neglect and step-motherly treatment of one or the other State were made and caused disharmony, bitterness and hatred. This made me feel strongly that it was not worth trying the experiment again.

After that speech of C.S., there were murmurs that C.S. would be dropped from the Cabinet. But Kamaraj never raised any objection or asked C.S. about it. He let the



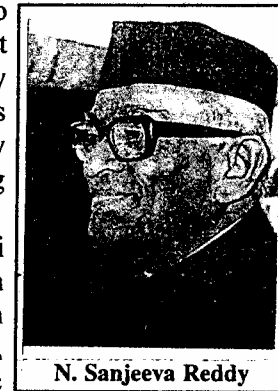
Kamaraj

wave pass and subside. When some people tried to get Kamaraj's reaction, Kamaraj simply said that it was the personal view of C.S. and shut out all further questions.

It happened again when, in

1965. I spoke at a public meeting that the Cabinet form of government was leading to dissidence, floor-crossing and instability and that the country should explore an alternative form with a fixed Executive like the Presidential form. I followed it up with a Resolution at the A.I.C.C. meeting at Durgapur to that effect. But Kamaraj merely said that I was expressing my views and nothing more.

The Avadi Congress, held in Chennai in January, 1955, was a historic milestone in



N. Sanjeeva Reddy

* Shri Sanjeeva Reddy is one of the Founder Members of the Bhavan



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भारत गणराज्य

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Indian polity. It adopted "Socialistic Pattern of Society" as the goal of the Indian National Congress. Both of us enthusiastically supported the move.

During the period 1957-1962, the Union Government had decided on the establishment of the prestigious Bharat Heavy Electricals. The then Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, Shri N. Sanjeeva Reddy, was staking the claim of Andhra Pradesh for its location. I was also actively canvassing on behalf of Tamil Nadu. The then Minister for Industry, Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri, was in a dilemma.



Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri

One day, when I was pressing the case of Madras (as it was then called), Shastriji expressed his difficulty. Then I suggested to him splitting up of the project into two and allotting the boiler part to Tamil Nadu and the electrical part to Andhra. I chose the boiler part as a number of ancillary industries like valves could develop around it.

In the 1962 General Elections, C.S. contested for the Lok Sabha. Many members of the State legislature were keen that he should continue to do the good work he was



भारत गणराज्य

doing in the State. They freely gave expression to their wishes in both the Assembly and Council. But C.S. said that "one should go when the going is good" and assured his friends that he would still be doing his best for Tamil Nadu. I continued in the State Ministry.

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BHEL Project

The B.H.E.L. Project in Chennai was lagging behind because the Central P.W.D. was unable to prepare the area for construction. I suggested to C.S. that, instead of the C.P.W.D., the State Government could be entrusted with the task. We had a meeting in Chennai and C.S. set a stiff target of three months to prepare the field for construction. We accepted it and fulfilled the condition by deploying the resources of not only the State P.W.D. but every other department. This may appear to be a very small thing. But to change what was C.P.W.D.'s domain required enormous grit for a Minister. C.S. proved that he had it.

C.S. had always the courage of his convictions. In 1965, some enterprising Civil Servants of the Union Home Ministry

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issued a circular that, with the lapse of 15 years from the commencement of the Constitution, the Hindi language had become the official language. That meant English had ceased to be the official language under Art.343 Clause 2. A violent anti Hindi agitation erupted in Tamil Nadu. The Central Civil servants from the non-Hindi speaking areas became apprehensive of their future. C.S. and O.V. Alagesan (who was a Minister of State at the Centre at that time) totally disagreed with the interpretation and resigned from the Council of Ministers. In the annals of Indian Republic, there were hardly two or three instances of a Minister resigning his office on a matter of principle. V.V. Giri as Union Labour Minister resigned disagreeing with the Government on its interference with the award of the Bank Tribunal in 1953; Lal Bahadur Shastri resigned owning moral responsibility for the Ariyalur Railway Accident in 1956 and C.S. and Alagesan resigned disagreeing with the Ministry's circular on the official language in 1965. C.S. was then Minister for Food and Agriculture. But Lal Bahadur did not accept his resignation as, in my view, he regarded



Shri O. V. Alagesan



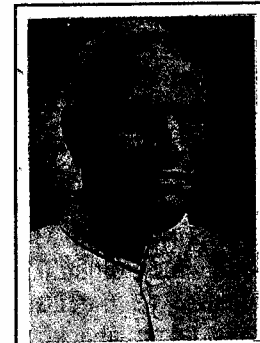
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C.S. as indispensable to Government.

Food Self-sufficiency

C.S. had already set in motion a programme for food self-sufficiency in the country. India was facing an acute food shortage. Ashok Mehta and C.S. visited the United States to plead for larger P.L. 480 supplies. They even agreed to the devaluation of the Rupee for larger U.S. aid for the Fourth Plan. President Johnson promised food and aid.

At that time, the American Air Forces bombed the civilian population in Vietnam. The world was aghast and it condemned the bombing. Lal Bahadur, then Prime Minister, issued a statement condemning the aerial bombing of civilians. Result: food and aid from America all evaporated into thin air.



V. V. Giri

At this stage C.S. showed his grit and determination. He formulated a two-fold strategy. One, application of Science and Technology and modern methods of cultivation and two, remunerative prices for the farmers. Till then, the farmers' interest took a lower priority than cheap food for the masses. This resulted in the farmer neglecting agriculture and economising on the vital





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inputs like fertilisers, good seeds etc. C.S. also spotted talented men like B. Sivaraman, I.A.S., who was then Chief Secretary of Orissa and Dr. M.S. Swaminathan, agricultural scientist and provided them with all facilities. The Green Revolution was born.

At the time of our independence in 1947, India produced hardly 50 million tons of foodgrains and was unable to feed its 360 million population. Today, we produce more than 200 million tons of foodgrains and feed one billion population comfortably. We have disproved Malthus, the prophet of doom, who said that the growth of population would outstrip production of food and that war and pestilence would bring about reduction in the population.

Devaluation

In 1966, in pursuance of the promised American aid, India decided to devalue her currency. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi urgently summoned me to Delhi. I did not know why I was called. Actually, I was taken straight from the airport to the P.M.'s office. Indiraji asked me what I thought of devaluation as a measure to meet the exchange crisis. I was taken aback. I blurted out that it would be disastrous for the economy and that prices would shoot up and the economy would suffer irreparably. Then she called L.K. Jha and asked him to meet my objection. After a wrangle for half an hour, Jha finally said it was a "political decision" and left. C.S. and the Union Finance Minister Sachin Chaudhary strongly



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supported devaluation while I had publicly stated that the decision was 'politically unwise and economically unsound'. Independently, Kamaraj had opposed it also, though I did not know it when I expressed my views.

By 1964, Madras had achieved a national record of installing on an average one factory under the Factories Act a day. We had installed 400 factories in one year. Power development was steady and the shortage, if any, was due to accelerated growth of industries. Other notable additions to Madras were the location of the Defence Tank factory at Avadi and the installation of Atomic Power Plant near Mahabalipuram.

When we faced the 1967 general elections, the Congress Party both at the State and Centre looked like sweeping the polls. But it was that party that suffered major reverses.

No gamble is more unpredictable than an election gamble. Both C.S. and I stood for election to Lok Sabha and both of us lost the election in 1967. The twins could not be separated in joy or sorrow.

R. Venkataraman

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(To be concluded)**

January 15, 2001
New Delhi