

[Dr. Sushila Nayar]

Assam and Bengal. As the Prime Minister said, there should be an enquiry to bring to book the guilty people without any delay.

Secondly, the rehabilitation facilities have got to improve. I feel that the mere presence of a Central Minister in Assam will not do the job that everybody has in mind. To create that sense of security, to help in the job of psychological rehabilitation, to help the Assamese to express their repentance in action rather than in words, to help the Bengalis or the Bengali-speaking Assamese to settle down without fear and anxiety, I feel groups of workers are necessary, who will stay with them for a few months, just as Bapu took us to Noakhali, and posted us to each village individually, to guarantee the safety of the people, with our lives, if it became necessary. That is the type of approach that is necessary and I hope the Prime Minister and you, Mr. Speaker, will think in those terms and take appropriate action.

**Shri Jawaharlal Nehru:** Mr. Speaker, Sir, we have discussed during these three days a subject, which has naturally aroused tremendous feeling, more especially, of course, in Bengal and Assam, but to a certain extent all over India. It would not be surprising, therefore, that strong feeling and passion sometimes found expression here and even glimpses were seen by us of what lay inside the people's minds and hearts. Nevertheless, considering this very difficult and complex problem, we have dealt with it, if I may say so, with all respect, with a very large measure of restraint.

Indeed, if we once get out of the rather, if I may say so, superficial aspects of the problem and look deeper into it, the very magnitude and complexity of the problem is, if I may use the word, rather terrifying. It is a highly important subject today for Assam and Bengal, but as has been stated repeatedly by Members here, the problem is a much bigger, wider,

deeper problem. It is not merely a question of Bengalis or Assamese; each one of us is affected and affected in many ways.

Some people here might perhaps—though I hope not—imagine that the others are rather superior and these people, the Assamese, have not behaved well and the Bengalis may be in some ways got excited, but we are a cool-headed people, not being so affected, and we can take an objective view. Well, we are cool-headed because our heads have not been hit. Probably if they had been hit, we would have been not at all cool-headed. It is easy to be cool-headed in those circumstances. But I have felt sitting here, trying to listen, that my mind slightly wandered away. I almost felt as if I was in a haunted place; not only this Chamber, but this great country itself became a haunted place for me and for all of us, with all kinds of ghosts and spectres, pursuing us—ghosts of the past, ghosts of the distant past, ghosts of the recent past, of our feelings, of our conflicts and all that, because what we are discussing here, whatever we may say about Assam or Bengal, is really about ourselves—how we behave, how we feel, how we are excited against each other, how our superficial covering of what you like to call 'nationalism' bursts open at the slightest irritation.

We forget it; whatever we may be—Punjabis, Bengalis, Madrasis or Assamese—immediately it comes out, just as in other ways. We talk so much about communalism, meaning thereby religious, political conflicts—how other things are suddenly swept away, when communal passions are roused. It is not the Assamese who are guilty here or the Bengalis; each one of us is a guilty party. Let us realise that.

When we talk so loudly of our nationalism, each person's idea of nationalism is his own brand of nationalism, it may be Assamese nationalism, it may be Bengali, it may be Gujarati, U.P., Punjabi or Madras. Each one thinks of his particular

brand in his mind. He may use the words 'nationalism of all India', but in his mind, he is thinking of that nationalism in terms of his own particular brand of it. When two brands of nationalism come to conflict, there is trouble, each talking of nationalism.

So also while talking about Indian unity. We want unity of our own thinking, of our own brand. It is just like each person's orthodoxy in his own 'doxy'; other 'doxies' are heterodoxies. My nationalism is the real brand; yours, if it is different, is not the real nationalism. We all tend to think that way more or less.

We talk about enquiries and causes. We may go deep down into those enquiries and perhaps discover many things which we have forgotten, because as, I think Dr. Krishnaswami said,—he talked something about our social structure, about our close society we live in, not one close society, but numerous close societies all over. Of course, that is due to caste and other things. I am not going into it, but the fact is we live in close societies and groups, not only a Bengali close society or a Marathi or a Malayalee close society, whatever it may be. You will find that when you go abroad, wherever Indians are living in large numbers—not a few, of course—you will find a separate Gujarati club, a separate Malayalee club, a separate Bengali club and so on and so forth. They do not even have a single Indian club. Where they are in large numbers, you even have in some places a separate Gorakhpuri club. I remember this particularly, because the Gorakhpuri club of Rangoon once gave me a purse of Rs. 10,000. It is ingrained in our background, in our upbringing, in our social structure. Of course, they are social structures that are changing and breaking up. That is a good thing. But let us realise how the conditions we live in are completely different. We talk about nationalism bravely, but always at the back of our mind is that particular narrow type of nationalism which we think is nationalism, not the others.

We talk very proudly and loudly about tolerance and there is the whole of Indian culture. It is a culture of tolerance undoubtedly. But as compared to, let us say, Europe, in European history, as it shows itself, it is a tolerance of people, tolerance of conscience that we always had. But where it strikes the social habits, we are intolerant, we have been intolerant. A person may believe in God or believe in the negation of God, you put up with him. In other countries he might have been dealt with very harshly. Here, no, you can believe anything you like, but you must abide by the social rules that have been laid down by our caste. If you don't, you get into trouble. You are not only pushed out and exterminated but you are pursued in a hundred ways. This does not happen so much, I suppose, in cities like Delhi and Calcutta, where things are different. But even now in the villages it is a mighty power, and even in the cities for the matter of that, whether it is our marriage or some other ceremony, everything goes not by caste but by sub-caste, an amazing division. It is one thing which is unique in India, at least so far as my knowledge goes. You read in some of our newspapers here column after column of matrimonial advertisements. It is an astonishing thing. Whenever a foreigner comes he is surprised for he has never seen a thing like that—somebody, an Aggarwal, this and that of some sub-caste wanting a bride or bridegroom. My education having been somewhat restricted and limited, I do not even know the names of all these castes and I get confused.

**Shri Tyagi:** Why do you read them?

**Shri Jawaharlal Nehru:** That is a pertinent question. Fortunately, I do not reach them much, but sometimes they come before my eyes. As a matter of fact, it has come to my notice, not by reading them directly. I have seen them quoted in some English newspapers, a matter of great amusement for them. I have read it in a foreign paper.

The other point that I was trying to make was that we are sliding on the

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surface of things and we talk of nationalism and Indian unity. Of course, there is truth in it. There is truth in our nationalism. There is truth in our belief and conviction of unity. That is perfectly true. But I do say that the conception of Indian unity and that conception of nationalism is a peculiar one, limited to each individual or groups of one way of thinking. It is not the common idea of nationalism. My idea of nationalism or my group's is different from that of somebody. It is largely conditioned by our social system. For generations we have been brought up in our social structure of caste system and the like. It is not an easy thing to get out of them. And it pursues us wherever we go.

People talk that linguistic provinces have given rise to this. It may be that the idea of linguistic provinces has encouraged this idea. But it is much deeper than any linguistic province, and that is why I gave you the example of an Indian living in Rangoon, Singapore or Ceylon, places where there are many Indians—a few, of course, cannot easily separate like that—who always go by their caste group or language group. They hardly meet each other.

It is an amazing thing, and it is a terribly weakening thing. And if one good thing this tragedy in Assam has done, it has brought this skeleton out of our mental cupboard. At least, I hope it has brought it out so that we could see this very ugly thing, what it is. It is a bad thing, and it is there in our minds and hearts. It is no good any of us taking pride that we are above it, and we get excited. We may get excited about many things. We get most excited when that corner of our mind is hit. Then we get frightfully excited.

Our friend, Shri Hoover Hynniewta, yesterday delivered a very interesting speech, I do not know what about. He was so frightfully excited when he quoted the famous American: "give me liberty or give me death". Now, I do not know where death came into

the picture. I suppose the context was what the Assamese should have as their official language but he put it in the level of liberty and death.

**Shri Hynniewta** (Autonomous Districts—Reserved—Sch. Tribes): I said liberty to think, the most precious of our liberties. If I do not have the liberty, then I cease to be a human being. It is better to have death rather than to lose the liberty of thinking.

**Shri Jawaharlal Nehru:** You are perfectly right. Liberty of thinking, of course, is necessary. Nobody, not even the greatest tyrant has ever succeeded in taking away the liberty to think. Sometimes what the tyrants have done is to prevent the expression of the thought, the public expression of the thought. Thinking, nobody has been able to check yet, at any time.

Now, where is the question of liberty to think, or liberty just coming in at all! His conclusions may be right or wrong, but I am merely saying that if we are thinking of these petty matters, relatively petty matters we lose all our standards, all our mental equilibrium; we become unbalanced almost in our . . .

**Shri Jaipal Singh:** I think what he meant was liberty to think in his mother tongue, and not in Kashmiri.

**Shrimati Renu Chakravartty:** How does that come? That does not come into the picture at all.

**Shri Jawaharlal Nehru:** I am not criticising the hon. Member. I am merely pointing out a certain tendency. I can mention several hon. Members too, though not in criticism but to show how one is apt to be swept away. If he says he wants to adhere to a certain language he believes in, I accept that. If he says "I do not want a language to be imposed on me" I accept that. That is a different matter. But it is the context in which these things are said that matters, and sometimes, I venture to say, it becomes all wrong and all too narrow, an intolerant context, a context in which

it becomes curious and, curiously enough, the idea of tolerance becomes converted into intolerance over another language. It is a very curious thing, and even in this language question, if Shri Hoover says "I want the right to use or speak in my language" well and good. But, if he says "I am going to prevent the other fellow from doing this" there he is all wrong.

**Shri Hynniewta:** No, I cannot be that much mad.

**Shri Jawaharlal Nehru:** I know that. I agree that the degree is limited.

But my point is,—honestly, I am not dealing with this matter in a frivolous way—what I am venturing to submit to this House is this. The Assam-Bengal trouble is a very very serious aspect of our national problem, a basic thing on which the whole future of this country depends. In this matter everyone of us has to blame himself, and I gladly include myself. I do not know what I am. I cannot judge of myself, how narrow I am in my thinking. How can I say what I am when one cannot judge oneself? But each one of us is narrow, because of our traditions, our inheritance in social matters, not in high philosophical matters. When we come down to our traditions we have been accustomed to, each one, in the ultimate analysis, is confined to the little kitchen in his corner—not joining the other people, not allowing them to enter our kitchen, not eating with them or entering in marriage with them. Half of our lives have been spent in sticking to these limitations and rules. Now, is it not surprising? And that is the reason why we in India, individuals apart, of course, are amongst the most difficult to get on with a foreigner. Often, there are criticisms here, whether it is on foreign affairs or anything, why is this done and that not done, as if we command the world, as if we can order people about, not realising that sometimes the fault lies in ourselves.

People come from abroad. Sometimes they may discuss philosophical theories, but they find an odd society

in India with which they cannot easily mix. They are surprised. Nowhere else, or at any rate hardly anywhere—there are one or two exceptions—is this kind of thing found. So this mixture of the widest catholicity of thought or of philosophy which has made us great in many ways and the narrowest social life is a curious mixture. Of course, both do not apply to us fully now. We have outgrown them and we are outgrowing them. But they apply to us enough to affect us and to affect our political life. It did not matter much when we functioned in our own narrow grooves. But when we bring in democracy and open the door to every group to function as it wants, that ancient evil comes up. It comes up and comes into conflict with the other group which is coming up, the different groups each talking in its own language of nationalism coming up with the other nationalism.

What is, after all, what we call, communalism? When this question of Muslim communalism or Hindu communalism arose, you may well have described the two as Hindu nationalism and Muslim nationalism and you would have been correct. They were different nationalisms. They came into conflict with each other. The Hindus had the advantage because they grew up in this country and they could call their own communalism nationalist more easily because they were a part of India and had nowhere else to go to. The Muslims had a difficulty in that they could not put on that garb so easily. But the fact is that they were both communalism. They were both that communal type of nationalism—not everybody, I mean. I am talking about these various movements.

However, so this is the basic issue and we shall have to face this. We shall not face it by fussing about linguistic provinces and all that. It may be that has encouraged it—possibly it has. But it is deeper than that. And anyhow the linguistic provinces or whatever they are are there. We have to accept them. We are not going

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to cut up India again and again. We have to accept them for what they are. In accepting them we have to get used to the idea of living in peace and amity with each other and not raise this absurd bogey of language all the time. It is quite absurd, I think.

There are certain difficulties involved as Dr. Sushila Nayar said. In the rest of the world every educated man is supposed to know three or four languages. It is only in India that he resents being asked to learn a language. It is a most extraordinary thing. So it is a basic issue and it is a dangerous issue. We are not going to solve it by a debate here or by any committees or by anything else. But, at any rate, if all these events in Assam have made us think about these issues and make the country think, this is a good thing, because our first step towards taking any action is to be mentally aware to the question and then try to solve it.

I have ventured to say all this to try to create a background for our thinking because otherwise we live in an excited state and we shall not be able to take any step. My second point is this. We are dealing in this matter not with some malefactors, some mischief-makers, some scoundrels and the like. Of course, there are mischief-makers and malefactors. Get hold of them and punish them, whoever they may be. There can be no doubt whatever that in a matter of this kind you must respect nobody. I mean to say that you must not allow anybody because of party, because of some thing else or because of position to escape if he is a real malefactor. I admit it. There is no question about that. No party is going to flourish if it takes refuge in sheltering evil men. That should be quite clear. Let us punish them. But the fact remains that evil men flourish on such occasions because they are in tune with the mind of the multitude. That is a fact to remember. Evil men flourish only on such things. The scoundrel flourishes only on such things, otherwise he is an ordinary thief or a per-

son who commits arson. It is a Police case. But the moment he comes into tune with the mind of the multitude, it is another type of thing. That you have to see.

**Acharya Kripalani:** He can also create the mind of the multitude. I am afraid, here the case was that the mind of the multitude was created by these people.

**Shri Jawaharlal Nehru:** Naturally they act and react on each other. But the mind of the multitude has been created, if I may say so, by generations not by a speech, by years and years. Even here somebody quotes somebody who delivered a speech ten years ago or thirteen years ago showing a succession of events, what Shri Bardolai said and what the Governor of Assam said in 1947. That itself shows a certain connection. Why? Why did Shri Bardolai say that? The Governor was Syed Akbar Hydari at that time—not an Assamese person but an outsider.

**Shrimati Renu Chakravartty:** That was the Government's speech. Obviously he was doing it on behalf of his Government.

**Shri Jawaharlal Nehru:** Maybe, I cannot say. I doubt very much. A general sentiment may be there, but the words were his own. However, what I am saying is this. Here you go back 13 years. Why was that position 13 years ago? Let us think of it. Why was that position taken? Was it sheer cussedness. Why did that idea come into the head of apparently a good decent Assamese people and leaders. There must be some reason for that. I do not know. But I am merely pointing out these things. These are not sheer madness. When an idea comes to a good mind you have to have a reason for this. I say these things go far back. But I entirely agree with Acharya Kripalani that on such an occasion such things can be whipped up undoubtedly. Undoubtedly they were and that too in the course of several months.

I was in Assam earlier this year. I forget the month, maybe February or March or some other month. In front of the University I stopped for some kind of welcome by the students. They presented me with an address. Half the address was about language, just saying that they passionately want this language. At that time I knew and felt about it. I realised why it was quite so passionately felt. Anyhow I told them, "Well and good. It is a good thing. But this is not the time to raise this question. There are other more important things" or something like that. So this thing, of course, has been going on and the language question for them had become a symbol not by itself the language. It was a symbol of their individuality, of their existence as Assamese, of their future and all that. When a thing becomes a symbol like this, rightly or wrongly, it becomes difficult to deal with it. It becomes above reason. It is an article of faith or something. It gradually developed.

This has swept over practically, broadly speaking, every Assamese. Every Assamese felt that way about the language issue. Some felt it more, some less. Some wise men, like Shri Chaliha, feeling that way and yet seeing the other side too, seeing the consequences of some action tried to check this, tried to reason with it and tried to adopt a middle course because he is a man of vision and of tolerance. His attempt is always to win over people and not to enrage them. But broadly speaking this was the fact that language became the symbol of something. They passionately desired it. When this happens it is relatively easy for it to be exploited for wrong ends. That is where, as Acharya Kripalani perhaps intended, the wrong people came in and excited them, moved them to wrong action because the ground had been prepared for all that was happening.

My point in saying all this is that you must distinguish in order to deal with a situation like this between the evildoer and a certain symbol and mass opinion of a people. You have to dis-

tinguish and if you do not distinguish between them, if you feed both alike, then the evildoer becomes the hero of the people. You have to separate that. You must not allow him to become the hero of the people because anyhow you have to deal with the whole people. It is a very difficult thing and most difficult in a democratic society. You cannot do this. You cannot do it.

Many hon. Members have suggested various steps that the Central Government and other Governments should have taken. I do not think they have quite realised what the consequences of those steps might be either on democratic functioning or even on getting the results they aim at. After all, we aim at results, whatever the results are. We find, owing to a combination of circumstances, past history, peculiar feelings, whatever they are—I do not know whether they are justified or not—a certain feeling from the British times of the Assamese being suppressed, being sat upon, by the British, by others, being ignored, and then a certain release of that feeling coming. They expressed this release in curious unfortunate language. I am talking of 10 or 12 years ago as the language quoted shows. It shows rightly or wrongly this feeling of release. Why did they get that feeling which they had to express in this way? It was a kind of a resurgent limited nationalism coming up: bad because it was limited and good because it is a new spirit. You see good and evil mixed up. It is difficult to separate them sometimes. Any way, here is this problem which has led to these disastrous consequences.

In spite of being there, in spite of reading a large number of memoranda and papers, I would not venture to say positively and definitely, as definitely as many hon. Members, who probably know less than what I do about the facts, I mean, have done, about who is the guilty party. Of course, everybody knows as to what has happened. There is no doubt about that. It is a

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very grave tragedy, a bad thing, not only because it is an evil in itself, but because it is a novel feature of a people in one State being driven out either by force or through sheer panic, most of it by panic. I am sorry that anybody should go away by panic from anywhere, because, panic is so infectious that it is difficult to deal with it.

If I criticise the press, I do not mind if they have given wrong news or this and that. In a moment like this, one cannot balance these things because there is excitement. They may give wrong news. But I do think that what the press has erred is, they created or rather helped in intensifying a sense of panic. That is my objection. It may be that they themselves got so angry that they did it. I am not criticising them. But, I do think that in a situation which is a difficult situation, which is a panicky situation and you want to hold it—it is on the verge; you hold it or it goes to pieces—every little thing counts. If the press wants to hold it, they can help in holding it; if they do not, they can upset and we cannot hold. That is my feeling in this matter.

Evil happened there in a big way. We have to face this situation. Hon. Members have repeatedly blamed the Central Government and the Assam Government and all that. My colleague the Home Minister took upon himself the responsibility for what the Central Government did. I am not prepared to permit him to shoulder all this responsibility. I come into the picture too. I am at least equally responsible. We are all responsible certainly. If we have erred or if we have erred deliberately or unconsciously, then, judge us and punish us: either this House or the country. But, I must confess that, looking at this picture, thinking of it again and again, I may tell you that we have given a good deal of thought to it. If any one imagined that we have thought of it casually or ignored it, it would be completely wrong. I know that my colleague the Home Minister has lived a tortured life these

months, the month of July and later, because, there were so many things to trouble and disturb us. This Assam matter has disturbed him and troubled him more than anything, I know, both because it was bad and because, as I said, it was a symbol of evil, a symbol of our weakness, of our failings, disruptiveness, narrowness of mind, incapacity to function together, always a tendency to go to pieces. It was a terrible picture. It was a spectre of the old thing coming out. We felt that way.

It really is not clear to me and I do not understand what in these circumstances, the Central Government could have done: major thing or minor thing. Because, even in the latter half of June, we were worried, not too much worried. I never thought like that. After all, it was our misfortune that such events like this happen in various parts of India. Almost everyday, some odd thing happens. That certainly is our misfortune. We have become rather accustomed to reading this kind of thing. Bad as it was, we had no idea that it would develop in this way. For my part, it is only in the beginning of July that it came as a deep shock to me. Even before that, of course, we were writing as to what is happening, constantly in touch, by telephone, by letter, etc. I do not think it would be right for us to criticise, let us say, the Governor who told us on the 28th of June that he hoped that in two or three days time, this will die down. That was his judgment and he is not a man whose judgment we should not value. That was his impression. Maybe he was wrong. That is the impression he gave us. Then came the succession of events early in the beginning of July.

Immediately, the moment, in fact before the 4th of July, the Army was asked to go there. It is before the 4th of July and the Army was present in some part of Gauhati on the 4th of July and progressively afterwards, it came to other places, on the 6th to Shillong and so on. The Army was sent. That is the biggest thing that the Central Government can do.



Some one asked, why didn't you allow the Army to spread out and put an end to all these things, and why did you allow it apparently to function under the civil administration. That means, really, why didn't you declare martial law there and hand over the whole State to the Army? That is a possibility. It did not strike us because we do not think in terms of martial law. However, there it was. But, I do not think martial law would have made any immediate difference, because, the Army moves in special ways. The Army does not take risks. It moves in large columns here, there and everywhere. It is not like the police, you put one Army man here and two army men there. They do not like it at all.

**Shrimati Renu Chakravartty:** Are we to understand that the Army was called out on the 4th of July and between the 4th and the next eight days when all this havoc took place, the Army could not do anything?

**Shri Jawaharlal Nehru:** The Army did function where it could. When this kind of things happen at a hundred places simultaneously, . . .

**Shri H. N. Mukerjee** (Calcutta—Central): There is one report that for a two mile stretch there was continuous devastation of houses all over the place near Nowgong. This is the report which we have got from the Women's delegation—a two mile stretch of continuous devastation. I cannot understand why the Army cannot function.

**Shri Jawaharlal Nehru:** I have seen Nowgong. You are right. There is a big stretch. I cannot give you exactly an answer whether the Army was situated there or not. But, I do know that on the 4th it was in Gauhati. Gauhati is a central place. It went to Shillong on the 6th. It may be that it had not reached Nowgong then. On the 6th all this happened. You must remember that all this happened on the 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th; on 3 or 4 days they happened. It may be, within a day

or two it got there. It could not have got there more swiftly because of the simultaneous nature of these things.

I asked a Police Superintendent, what were you doing. Because somebody complained to me that he telephoned to the police station to come and protect him as he was being attacked or he was told he was going to be attacked that evening. He was a Bengalee gentleman, and he said that he had given notice to the police station that he had heard that he was going to be attacked in the evening or two hours later, but nobody came. So, I hauled up the policeman. He said: "Do you know, Sir, it was bedlam in my police station. Hundreds of calls coming from everywhere, and my having a dozen or twenty men at my disposal. There was perfect bedlam, what could I do?" I am merely narrating a fact, I am not justifying it. It shows that the police force was neither adequate nor competent—agreed. It shows, as has been admitted, that the administration collapsed. All that is agreed. I am merely narrating things as one found them. And all this happened practically in the course of four or five days, this intensive thing; from the 5th to about the 10th practically all this happened, and they just could not cover it during that time. Maybe, the Army could have moved more swiftly, whatever it was, I cannot judge, but there was no civil authority stopping them. In fact, ultimately the disturbed Areas Ordinance was applied to two miles of either side of the river Brahmaputra, and this was handed over to the Army.

**Shri Hem Barua:** Five miles on both sides of the railway.

**Shri Jawaharlal Nehru:** Quite correct, not the Brahmaputra. That meant really covering every city, practically every city. In fact, that was handed over to the Army.

**Shrimati Renu Chakravartty:** On which date?



**Shri Jawaharlal Nehru:** I could not tell you, I am sorry, but certainly when I was there, it was in the Army's possession.

**Shri Sadhan Gupta:** After the incident.

**Shrimati Renu Chakravartty:** Everything was over, and then it was done.

**Shri Jawaharlal Nehru:** No, no, not that. About the 6th or 7th or 8th, possibly in those days.

**Shrimati Renu Chakravartty:** Your version makes us even more worried, because it seems that the Army went there, and there are absolutely good roads connecting Gauhati, Nowgong, Jorhat and everything, and they cannot move, they are immobilised for days on end. It is a terrible admission.

**Shri Indrajit Gupta** (Calcutta—South West): How can they move unless the civil administration order them to move?

**Shri Jawaharlal Nehru:** Yes, that is true.

The Army wants to have fixed centres from which it can function, it wants to get places. Let us say Nowgong is a centre. It goes and sits down in sufficient numbers, then it probes out. It will not go out in small penny packets searching for people. It gets lost, it is afraid of getting lost. It is not used normally to dealing with this public kind of thing. However, I cannot explain what the Army did, I have not gone into that matter, nor am I competent to do so.

What I was driving at was this,—I am sorry, Sir, I have taken up so much time—that we have to remember that this is a matter in which evildoers have functioned, but they have taken advantage of powerful sentiments of the people which they themselves, as Acharya Kripalani said, may have incited. It is true.

**Acharya Kripalani:** If you do not mind my interrupting you for a little while, all your arguments come to this that this happened just like an earthquake or a flood, and such things may happen again and we will be helpless against those natural calamities.

**Shri Jawaharlal Nehru:** That is not my point. I am sorry that I have not been able to explain my meaning. I do not think so. It is difficult for me to go back again in my argument.

I have merely narrated as things came to us, and what I am begging this House to consider is this, how to deal with the situation. That is the problem before us. I am not going too much into history.

In dealing with the situation, you have to deal with the evildoer, you have also to deal with the mass sentiment, that is my point. And if you deal with the mass sentiment in the way you deal with the evildoer, then you cannot succeed. You can always succeed in the sense of martial law, that is not success, dealing with everybody through martial law. The moment you revert from martial law to something else, you come back to a worse position. That is the difficulty in dealing with it.

I speak subject to correction, and I am not for the moment including, what shall I say, Assamese Members or Bengalee Members here who may have gone to Assam, but I am rather thinking of others who may have visited Assam during these last few weeks, whoever they might be. Because they have gone there, they have probably got some reactions of the position there, or the situation there. You will find that they speak a somewhat different language from those who have not gone there. It is a fact to remember, because they have experienced something. It is not a question of reading a book, or reading Shri A. P. Jain's report. It is a feeling of sensing a situation which is highly important where masses are concerned. So, you will

find every one, as far as I know, who has gone there, to whatever party he belongs—it is not a question of this party or that—presenting a picture. For instance, every one of them has reacted rather strongly to the idea of a comprehensive judicial enquiry. Logically, the argument is absolutely right, it should be there, and I accept it, but I am merely pointing out how people react to it, having seen the situation there and realising that this might, instead of starting the healing process, hinder it, might create difficulties. It is a fact, it may be an unjustified fact, there it is.

Take another thing, see how this thing cuts across parties. I do not know, I honestly do not know, what the views of the P.S.P. or the Communist Party are about the language question in Assam, I have no idea, but I was reading the other day, four or five days ago, the Assam Branch of the Communist Party supporting the demand of Assamese as the State language. They are perfectly entitled to do that, but I doubt very much if the Bengal Branch will do that, that is my point.

**Shrimati Renu Chakravartty:** Now the Central Executive has adopted a resolution that Assamese will be regarded as the principal State language, and that the other groups should have a round table conference to find out their opinion. It is in Shri Jain's Report.

**Shri Jawaharlal Nehru:** I will not go into that.

**Shri Sadhan Gupta:** Every branch will follow it.

**Shri Jawaharlal Nehru:** What I saw was slightly different from what Shrimati Renu Chakravartty said,—slightly. It did not say "the principal State language", but "the State language", and that Cachar and other areas may do their district work in their local languages, which is a different thing. That is not your Central Executive resolution.

**Shri H. N. Mukerjee:** That was an old document, and it is only in the light of the experiences gained after that the new resolution is there.

**Shri Jawaharlal Nehru:** It is obvious the hon. Member knows more than I do about his party; how can I tell him?

**Shri Sadhan Gupta:** It is an annexure in the Report.

**Shri Tyagi:** It is a revelation to us.

**Shri Jawaharlal Nehru:** I think it is after the Report that a resolution was passed in Assam on the 28th or 29th August. It is after the Report.

**Shrimati Renu Chakravartty:** 17th August.

**Shri Jawaharlal Nehru:** The one I have read is of the 28th August. I am not wishing to press that. I am merely saying....

**Shri Vasudevan Nair (Thiruvella):** It was 28th July, and after that in August our Central Executive passed a resolution.

**Shri Tyagi:** Anyway, a fact is a fact.

**Shri Jawaharlal Nehru:** It does not really matter. I am sorry I have not got it here, because I really have a cutting with me, I have not brought it.

**Shri A. P. Jain:** It is in page 8 of the Report.

**Shri Jawaharlal Nehru:** I am not interested in your Report in this connection. I am saying something that happened after this Report was passed. I am saying something that happened three or four days ago. I think it was on the 27th or 28th or 29th August, or just at that time that the Assam Branch of the Communist Party passed a resolution.

16 hrs.

**Shri H. N. Mukerjee:** It is not a question of the Assam Branch of the

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'Communist Party passing a resolution. The Bengalis in the Brahmaputra Valley also supported the idea of Assamese as the official language. It was not because of the declaration of Assamese as the official language or the declaration against it that the riots took place. It has much deeper roots.

**Shri Jawaharlal Nehru:** This has nothing to do with riots. What I was pointing out was how this matter has cut across party lines; that is, the party branches have been pulled this way and that way by mass sentiment in that area. That is my point. Of course, a party may by its discipline pull them up. That is a different matter. But, for the moment, they are swept by the sentiment of that place. It is quite natural; if it is a mass party, it has to feel that way. This is the position. How are you going to deal with this?

Obviously, the martial law method is basically not going to produce results. The martial law method becomes necessary and essential where there is constant disorder; you have to quell it. Ever since, roughly, the middle of August, there was no disorder on that scale. There were incidents, individual incidents happening; true; undesirable; there was apprehension, fear, if you like, in the minds of people; true. But the Army was spread out. Even apart from the Government, the Army was spread out in most places, and nothing could happen on a big scale. Therefore, even the administration, on that date, because I was there then, was functioning with a measure of efficiency; the administration admittedly had broken down previously except in two or three districts. And although the Chief Minister Mr. Chaliha was lying ill, the other Ministers, I felt, were doing a good job of work there, hard work. It was very difficult then to retrieve what had happened, to pull back; they were working very hard and fairly efficiently. We decided to

give them special officers, competent officers from here and all that; we did send some officers, and we are still sending them. And we felt that the only way to control the situation, the best way rather, was through the government.

Now, it was possible to push the government out. What would take its place? Either President's rule or something else. There was no other Government there; we felt that if we did that, we have to function in almost a vacuum; that is, the support that we might get, the popular support, would be completely lacking. Everybody in Assam, every group and party was against it. Of course, we could impose our will by the Army. The Army was there, to some extent everywhere. The Government there was not opposing our will. They asked for our advice, and we gave advice to them, and they followed it. They asked the Governor for advice. The Governor would have been our agent. The Governor was working very closely with them. So, we felt that any other step would, though it might perhaps be advantageous for a few days or weeks, ultimately come in the way of all the processes that we were working for. And we decided, therefore, to carry on with this, and we thought, we were not sure at any time, when it might not be necessary to have President's rule; if it did not function, then we do it.

**Shri Jaipal Singh:** I only want a clarification from the Prime Minister. I am only trying to understand what the Leader of the House has told us. If once it is admitted that the administration has failed somewhere, but everybody says, no, do not come in, constitutionally, what is the position? Once they knew here at the Centre, are they not bound to step in? I am only trying to understand the position.

**Pandit Thakur Das Bhargava** (Hissar): Certainly not. The use of the word "May" in Article 356 shows it is discretionary with the President.

**Shri Jawaharlal Nehru:** But that surely depends; if I had been, for instance, in Assam, and saw the picture in Assam on the 6th or the 7th or the 8th, I would have said, yes, you must come in, there must be some kind of Central intervention. As a matter of fact, you must remember that Central intervention in a big way comes in when the Army goes there in a big way. It was there. Apart from sending the Army, the only thing we could have done was to remove the Ministry, and, maybe, send two or three senior officers there to assist the Governor. That is the only change. The real thing was that the Army was broadly in control of the law and order situation.

**An Hon. Member:** That is not the position.

**Shri Vasudevan Nair:** The Army could not move.

**Shri Jawaharlal Nehru:** That is not correct. The Army not only could move, but it was in full control of that two or three or four-mile zone on either side of the railways, and several towns were in that zone. Of course, some of the villages were a little further away.

I have taken a lot of time, but there are just one or two matters that I should like to mention. My point is, therefore, that we must look at this from this broad point of view, and look at it from the point of view of solving these basic problems there rather than putting some kind of *marham* or something and hiding the sores which will break out again. Therefore, we have tried to look upon it from that point of view.

We have separated two aspects. And the two do not go together. When you talk about judicial enquiry and talk about punishment, the two do not go together. One is judicial enquiry into basic matters; the outlook is different; the timing is different, that is, how long it will take. And if you mix the two up, those who

are to be punished will also be mixed up with the basic causes and remain unpunished. It will delay matters. The whole approach is different. Therefore, the two cannot be mixed up. It will be harmful to both, harmful to punishing those who are to be punished, and harmful for the other enquiry; it gets mixed up with smaller details of punishment instead of looking at basic causes. Therefore, the two have to be separate. We shall deal with the one as early as possible, and that can be dealt with best by local enquiries, good enquiries, good people conducting them, of course, and let those guilty be punished. As it is, there are four thousand or more people arrested. It may be that some of the principal instigators have escaped. Acharya Kripalani and other colleagues might remember the old days when there used to be Hindu-Muslim riots. We found, it was my experience, that after the riot, the peace committees that were formed invariably consisted of the biggest scoundrels in the place, both Hindus and Muslims. They came together.

**Shri Jaipal Singh:** Are they still there?

**Shri Jawaharlal Nehru:** We do not have those riots now. What I mean to say is that those who instigated the riots came together in these peace committees. There was some virtue in that, no doubt. I have no doubt that in Assam too, probably some of the peace committees functioning now may well have as members some of the instigators of the riots: How do I know? It is quite possible. "They may even go and show their generosity and help in other ways."

**Shri Braj Raj Singh:** You must know at least the agents.

**Shri Jawaharlal Nehru:** However, the point is that these have to be separate. I do submit that the mixing up of the two together is to lose both. And one is a thing which

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should be done, that is, the local enquiries, as quickly and as rapidly as possible, and then the other thing may be taken up.

I am not for the moment laying stress on a very important aspect which the Ajit Prasad Jain delegation has stressed and which all do, who know anything about it, namely that we are dealing in Assam as in Bengal with imponderables. These are not easy things to handle, dealing with popular passions, popular sentiments, very difficult things. That is why I beg of the press to be careful in dealing with these matters and try to start the healing process. Therefore, I beg of everybody to start that process, not suppressing a fact; I am not asking for any suppression, but to give a whole tone of healing. What should our look be? I am all for punishment of the guilty. But should we set out with a policy which looks a policy of revenge and reprisal, or of punishment, that is, punishing those who are guilty, of course? The basic policy is that we should have a healing, a getting together, because we are dealing with masses of people who have to live together; and they have to live in peace or live in hostility. That is the main approach of this. And if you accept that approach, then you have to measure and count every step from that point of view. Mind you, this does not mean being at all soft or lenient to those who are guilty, whether it is a party or whether it is an individual.

**Shri H. N. Mukerjee:** Yesterday, the hon. Prime Minister favoured competent high level judicial enquiries immediately on a regional basis. Does he reile from that position and make it more vague?

**Shri Jawaharlal Nehru:** Not at all; I want enquiries, local enquiries; as far as I can see, they have to be judicial; I cannot guarantee that

everywhere they must be, but presumably, they have to be judicial. 'Judicial' does not mean finding all the High Court judges of India and putting them there, but 'judicial' may mean a district judge or whatever it is. It means locally conducting these inquiries. I hold to that definitely, what I said yesterday, and I am prepared to repeat it.

As regards the other inquiry, I submit that it cannot just be held in the present atmosphere of Assam or West Bengal. It may be vitiated. There are too much passions about. You cannot get at the truth when a man's mind is distracted by passion, prejudice and anger. The basic thing is that if you take a step which actually prevents the return of the refugees, then you are not serving anybody's cause. That is the difficulty, because that is the main thing, to get them back and then proceed with other things.

So I do submit that the general attitude of the Government now in regard to this matter, which my hon. colleague, the Home Minister, and I have ventured to place before this House is, in the circumstances, probably—I am not dogmatic; I do not know what the future will bring—the best course to be adopted. Therefore, I would prefer this House to give its sanction to this policy being continued.

There is one small thing....

**Raja Mahendra Pratap** (Mathura): Please send the members of the Bharat Sevak Samaj and Sarvodaya and Sant Vinoba Bhawe.

**Shri Jawaharlal Nehru:** As a matter of fact, Sarvodaya people are working there, and they are working very well. There are plenty of good people working there.

**The Deputy Minister of Community Development and Co-operation (Shri B. S. Murthy):** Perhaps he wants to go there.

**Shri Jawaharlal Nehru:** Shri Atulya Ghosh referred to what I had said the other day about Independence Day and its celebration or lack of celebration in Calcutta or West Bengal. Now, I want to make it clear that so far as the annual party which is given on Independence Day at the Raj Bhavan was concerned, not holding it was entirely a matter for the Governor to consider in regard to the general circumstances. If it did not fit in with circumstances or was an irritant, then it should not be held. But what I feel—and I would submit this for consideration of some of my hon. friends—was not right at all was the display of black flags on Independence Day, not only display of black flags but forcible removal of national flags from many houses.

**Some Hon. Members:** Shame, shame.

**Shri Jawaharlal Nehru:** Please do not say 'Shame', because all these things were done when people were angry. When one is angry, there is no question about it. But the point to remember is that to encourage such a sentiment is not right. The individual who did it is not to blame because he was swept away by sentiment. That is what I venture to say; it represents a sentiment which would spread all over and India will come to great grief.

Among the amendments moved, I would accept the amendment moved by Shri Atulya Ghosh.

**Shri Atulya Ghosh:** There may be a misunderstanding. We were not a party to the black flag demonstration.

**Shri Jawaharlal Nehru:** I know that I am not directly accusing anybody, but it is not a nice thing on such a day to have black flags or to go about burning effigies, although they are perfectly justified in burning my effigy whenever they choose.

**Shrimati Renuka Ray:** I want to seek a clarification. The Prime Minister said in his speech yesterday that certain judicial inquiries, zonal 1019(Ai) LSD—5.

ones, would be set up immediately. Today he did not repeat it. I would like to know what is the position.

**An Hon. Member:** He said so.

**Shri Jawaharlal Nehru:** Nothing is going to be done immediately. It takes a little time to take any step.

**Some Hon. Members rose—**

**Mr. Speaker:** He has already answered questions. Shri H. N. Mukerjee had asked a question and he answered it.

**Shri Prabhat Kar (Hooghly):** May I ask one question?

**Mr. Speaker:** No more clarification is needed. I will put the amendment of Acharya Kripalani to the vote of the House.

**Shri Naushir Bharucha (East Khadesh):** I want my amendment No. 3 to be put to vote, because I take it that Government have accepted the policy contained in that.

**Mr. Speaker:** I will come to that. I will first put amendments which are not likely to be accepted by Government. In that order, I will take up the amendments.

I will take up Acharya Kripalani's Amendment No. 7 first.

**Shri Jaipal Singh:** Before you put it to vote, I would like you to reconsider your decision. You have got Nos. 1 to 6 before No. 7, which have not come up before the House yet. Your explanation is that amendments that are likely to be rejected by Government should be put first. Is that the correct procedure or do we not go in the order 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and so on?

**Mr. Speaker:** Under the Rules, the Speaker can pick out any amendment he chooses.