

WHEN we think of Marshal Stalin, a panorama of the history of the last 35 years passes before our eyes. All of us here are the children of this age and have been affected by it in many ways. We have grown up not only participating in our own struggles in this country but, in another way, with the mighty struggles that have taken place in this world, and we have been affected by them. And so, looking back at these 35 years or so, many figures stand out; but perhaps no single figure has moulded and affected and influenced the history of these years more than Marshal Stalin. He became gradually almost a legendary figure, sometimes a man of mystery, at other times a person who had a rather intimate bond not for a few but with a vast number of persons.

He proved himself great in peace and in war. He showed an indomitable will and courage which few possess. Perhaps when history comes to be written about him, many things will be said and we do not know what varying opinions may be recorded in subsequent generations. But everyone will agree that here was a man of giant stature, a man who, such as few do, moulded the destinies of his age and although he succeeded greatly in war, a man who ultimately will be remembered by the way he built up his great country.

Again, people may agree or disagree with many things that he did or said. But the fact remains that he built up that great country, which was a tremendous achievement. In addition to that, and this was a remarkable fact which can be said about very, very few persons—he was not only famous in this generation but he was in a sense intimately concerned, if I may say so, with vast numbers of human beings. At any rate, vast numbers thought of him in an intimate way, in a friendly way, in an almost family way, certainly in the Soviet Union, and by many others too outside.

I have known people who were associated with Marshal Stalin or the work that Marshal Stalin did and who subsequently disagreed with him. They told me that while they disagreed with him, they felt a personal wrench because of the personal bond that had arisen between them and him, even though they had not come near him or had merely seen him from a distance.

So here was this man who created in his lifetime this bond of affection and admiration among vast numbers of human beings, a man who has gone through this troubled period of history. He made mistakes in the opinion of some or he succeeded—that is immaterial—but everyone must necessarily agree about his giant stature and about his mighty achievements.

So it is right that we should pay our tribute to him on this occasion, because the occasion is not merely the passing away of a great figure but, perhaps in a sense, the ending of an era in history.

Of course, history is continuing, and it is rather absurd, perhaps, to divide it up into periods as historians and others seek to do. History goes on and on. Nevertheless, there are periods which seem to end and take a fresh lease of life and, undoubtedly, when a very great man passes away who had embodied his age to a great extent in a certain measure there is an end of that particular period.

I do not know what the future will hold. But, undoubtedly, even though Marshal Stalin has passed away, because of the great hold he had on their minds and hearts, his influence and memory will continue to exercise people's minds and inspire them. He has been described by many persons, including some who have been his great opponents on the world stage, and those descriptions vary and sometimes are contradictory. Some of them describe him as a frank and even gentle person. Others describe him as hard and ruthless. Maybe he had all these features in him. Anyhow, a very great figure has passed away.

He was not technically head of the Soviet State, but Marshal Stalin was something much more than the head of a state. He was great in his own right, whether he occupied office or not, and I believe that his influence was exercised generally in favour of peace. When war came he proved himself a very great warrior. But from all the information that we have had, his influence has been in favour of peace even in these present days of trouble and conflict.

I earnestly hope that his passing away will not mean that that influence which was exercised in favour of peace is no longer to be available. Perhaps I may express the hope that this event may loosen all our minds a little from their rigidity in all countries, and that we may view the present problems of the world not in that rigid way which develops when people are continually in conflict and argument with each other but in a somewhat more responsive and understanding way, so that his death may serve to bring us more to think of this troubled world and to endeavour even more than before to secure peace in this world and to prevent any further disaster and catastrophes from happening.

[Mr. Nehru disclosed that when news of Marshal Stalin's serious illness came, he was reading a long report from the Indian Ambassador in Moscow about the recent interview; at which Stalin expressed his desire that world peace might not be broken.]

He expressed then, also, his goodwill for India and sent his good wishes to our country and to some of us. And it was interesting how he discussed with our Ambassador some of our cultural problems, showing a certain knowledge which was slightly surprising. He discussed—it may interest the House—the languages of India, their relationships, their parentage and their extent, and our Ambassador gave him such replies as he could on the subject.

So, while paying our tribute on this occasion, we may also hope that the world may be excited by this event into thinking more in terms of peace.

Notes

This tribute was delivered by Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru in moving the adjournment of Parliament in India as a mark of respect on March 6. The State Assemblies in India also stopped their debates to pay tribute. The reprint is by courtesy of the India News.