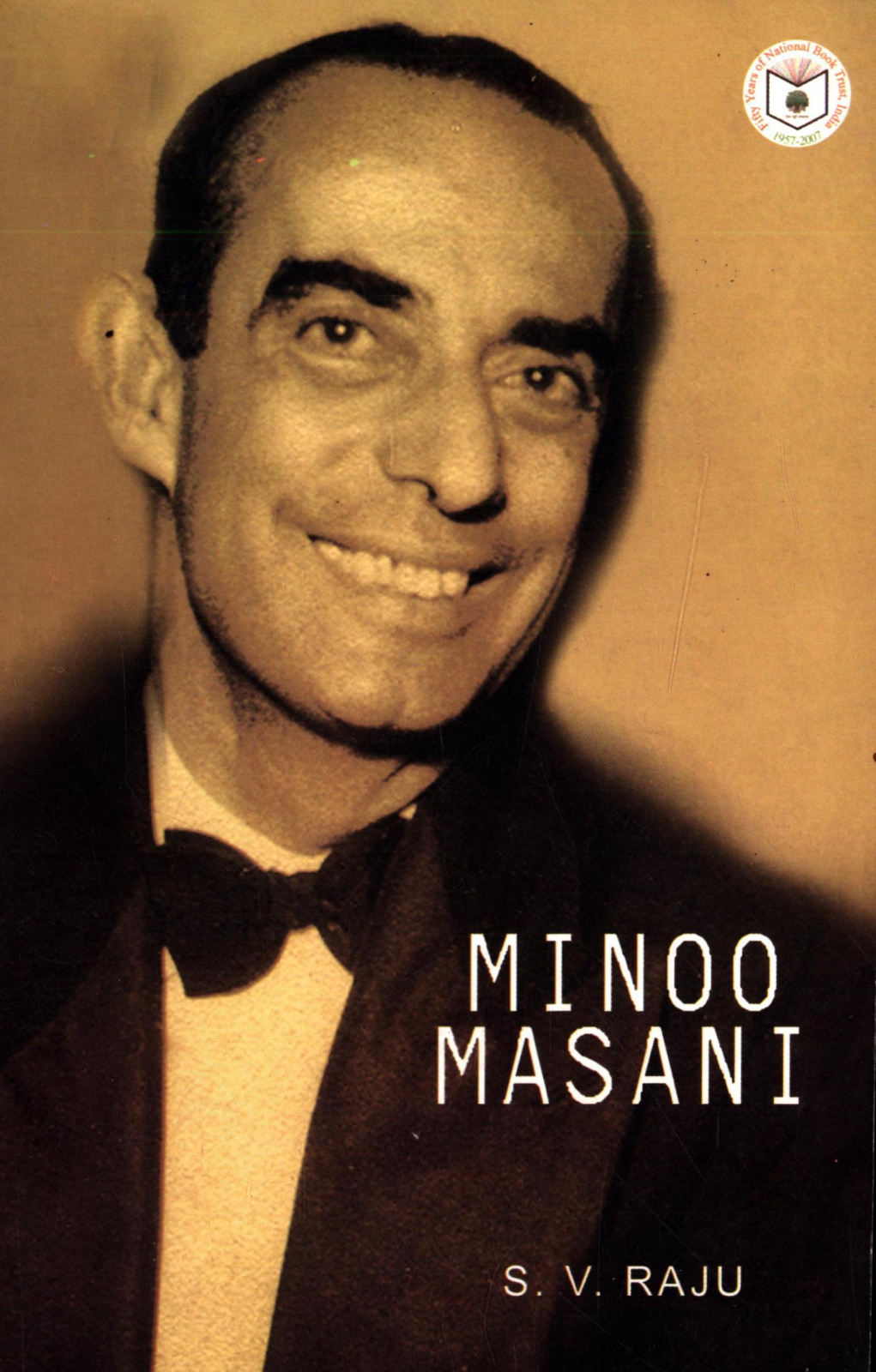
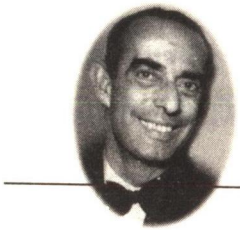

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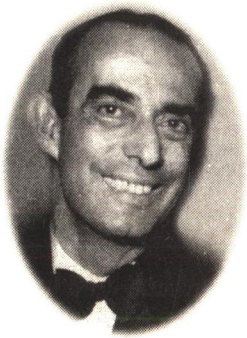
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NATIONAL BOOK TRUST, INDIA

ISBN 978-81-237-5079-8

First Edition 2007 (*Saka* 1928)
© S.V. Raju, 2007
Rs. 40.00

Published by the Director, National Book Trust, India
A-5 Green Park, New Delhi - 110016

To

Sheela

Who was there for Minoo
when he needed her most

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Acknowledgements

The author would like to express his grateful thanks to Dr. R. Srinivasan, retired professor of political science, Mumbai university, for his guidance and support and for going through the manuscript suggesting changes from the perspective of an intellectual; to my colleague Mrs Kashmira Rao, for proof-reading and while doing so critically examining it from the perspective of an average reader and telling me if I have been able to tell the story of Minoo Masani his life and work intelligibly; to my typesetter and friend and man for all reasons Narendra Kotak for his help in scanning the pictures and for putting up cheerfully with my numerous calls on his time for one thing or another, in the course of writing this biography. I would also like to express my grateful thanks to Dr. Baldev Singh, Chief Editor and Joint Director of the National Book Trust, India for enabling the story of Minoo Masani reach a much wider readership. Also much appreciated is his sympathetic understanding of the interruptions, natural and man-made, that delayed the completion of this manuscript.

Introduction

This book is the story of a principled politician—an oxymoron in current political dialogue. Today the word politician draws sneer and derision. That it was not always so we seek to establish in this biography of Minoo Masani whose life and work spanned the greater part of the twentieth century.

Masani was a man of many parts. He began as a lawyer who gave up his practice to participate in the freedom struggle; an author whose *Our India* written for the young brought him popularity and fame; a parliamentarian of repute with great respect for the institutions of parliamentary democracy; a crusader for individual liberty who evolved into a Liberal in the best traditions of Dadabhai Naoroji and Gopal Krishna Gokhale; an intellectual who traversed the political spectrum from Marx to Mahatma Gandhi—from socialism to Swatantra.

In the political game in India success is measured in terms of offices held. If this be the yardstick then Masani, like his friend Jayaprakash Narayan, has been a failure. But how does one measure a man's achievement if he deliberately chooses to reject opportunities if acceptance means compromising with his beliefs. A clue is provided in Masani's report of Sri Prakasa's (an eminent member of the Congress Party) encounter with Nehru who used strong language to pull up Sri Prakasa for daring to suggest the

partition of Kashmir. Sri Prakasa, who was then Indian High Commissioner in Pakistan, lumped the scolding and continued in office rather than annoy Nehru. Prakasa narrated this incident to Masani when he was Governor of Tamil Nadu. Commented Masani: "Here was an example of one of India's biggest tragedies—the inability to stand up to someone in authority."

Masani had been very close to Nehru from the early nineteen thirties and, along with men like Jayaprakash Narayan and Achyut Patwardhan considered to be part of Nehru's inner circle of friends. Immediately after independence, Masani was very much a part of the then Congress establishment. Despite emerging differences with Nehru in economic and foreign policy matters, Nehru nominated Masani as an expert on the UN Sub-Committee for the Prevention of Discrimination and the Protection of Minorities. When Masani crossed swords with the Soviet Union's representatives questioning their claims of having settled the minorities problem in the USSR, he knew fully well that he was displeasing Nehru. His fears were justified when he was withdrawn from the UN Sub-Committee. In the first volume of his autobiography Masani had this to say about himself: "Swimming against the tide became so much of a habit, it is almost a part of my nature, I wonder whether in later life, particularly in my political activities, the patterns of my habit asserted themselves."

It is easy to be in the opposition if the individual concerned sees little prospect of power. But to be near it and yet reject if it meant compromising with one's principles, required courage and integrity of a high order. And these qualities Masani had in abundance.

Many years later when he had the opportunity to frame the policies of a political party he brought into it many of the principles he believed in and fortunately shared with C. Rajagopalachari or Rajaji, as he was better known. Rajaji

too loved swimming against the tide and often differed with Gandhiji. For instance, Rajaji preferred to quit the Congress rather than support the Quit India movement launched by Gandhiji. So it was natural when Masani sought to set benchmarks for political behaviour and action, he could count on Rajaji's support.

Masani was both a politician and an intellectual. This was the norm among politicians in India before independence. Almost everyone—Dadabhai Naoroji, Pherozeshah Mehta, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Srinivasa Shastri, Lokamanya Tilak, Mahadeo Govind Ranade, Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru (the list is very long)—was either a writer or a teacher or both. Qualities sadly lacking in politicians that have emerged in post-independent India where the qualities required in the political jungle are altogether different and not very worthy.

The principles of the short-lived Swatantra Party drawn up by Masani with Rajaji's blessings were high on ideals which, sadly in the Indian context inhibited the organisation's growth.

These were: Embargo on the formation of Swatantra fronts in the labour and students' movements. Political parties not to exploit labour and students to attend to their studies first. No participation in *satyagrahas, bandhs* and such forms of protest as every activity should be within the law. All protests should be within the framework of legality. These restrictions were in Indian conditions, prescriptions for failure.

For Masani, means were important and, if in the process the organisation collapsed, so be it. For, in his view, the organisation was not an end in itself but only the means to an end—the end in the case of the Swatantra Party being good governance and strengthening parliamentary democracy.

Dr R. Srinivasan, Professor of Political Science at the

Bombay University (since retired) who edited *Freedom and Dissent*, a volume of essays in honour of Masani on his 80th birthday, in an assessment of Masani's contribution wrote in his introduction to the volume:

> Minoo Masani in many respects represents a vanishing species of public men and it is not unlikely that the next generation will see almost none of his type. He should be basically regarded as one of the remaining liberal intellectuals who dominated the earlier era of modern Indian politics. The earlier school of liberalism of the pre-Gandhian era was trained in politics by personal precept, example and interactions. The relationship between Ranade, G.V. Joshi and Gokhale is well-known; similar personal links were not uncommon. Gandhi almost missed being a member of the Servants of India Society; also, Pherozeshah, Wacha, Gokhale, Krishnaswami Iyer, V.S. Srinivasa Sastri were all tied by personal friendships. However, the generation of Masani had little, if any direct contact with the earlier generation of liberals. In fact, they were intellectually in opposition to that school, and worshipped at new shrines.
>
> The Liberal tradition had always emphasized the urgency of fully utilizing the existing political institutions and through creative use of these, extending benefits for the government, recruiting new participants to the political process, educating them in new values and making civic politics a co-operative endeavour. His tenure in parliament was not only a bright period in his political career, but will also remain an important chapter in the history of India's parliament. He brought to bear the same passion to public affairs that Gokhale did in an earlier decade but free from the restraints which Gokhale had to labour—for he was an equal to the highest political officer in a free republic.
>
> While those who are politically aware do know of Masani and his contributions, there is another Masani for many others; who know him as the author of *Our*

India and other books that they read at school either in English or in translations. New consciousness and a new awareness were created in tens of thousands of school children who were educated for the first time in civic values but in so disarmingly an engaging manner. This brought some of the creative latent talents in him; for he has remained basically an educationist in the best sense of the term. His capacity for conveying complex ideas in a simple manner is enviable. Alone of our political leaders Masani is able to empathize with generations far younger to him. It is this rare quality that he shares with Rajaji that makes him have a wide rapport across different generations.

What is common to the Liberals, Gandhi and Masani, is the stress they lay on raising the tone of public life. All of them have emphasized the need to spiritualize politics and this can be done only in the full glare of public gaze. This stress on open politics stresses other values, which are central to Masani—the freedom to opt out, to choose and to stand by one's convictions.

Masani's public life has been spent far more in the ranks of the Opposition than in the government. This was the lot of the Liberals in modern India and in a sense this is something that ought to be praised and commemorated.

Dr Srinivasan refers to *Our India* that brought fame and fortune to Masani. In his life of 92 years of which almost 60 years were spent in public life, he retired from politics thrice and each time he came out with books mainly for children! *Our India* was produced during his first retirement; *The Growing Human Family* after his second; his two-volume memoirs and *We Indians* after his third retirement.

The Masani classic was *Our India.* Written in 1940 it sold over a million copies and was translated into almost every Indian language. Writing about the book in his memoirs, Masani described it as "a book for children

something like an economic geography of an elementary nature. *Our India* appealed to the national pride of the Indian and gave expression to his discontent. The book did a wonderful job for me. A whole generation was brought up on *Our India,* and sometime later prescribed as a general reader in schools and colleges." Then there was the *Growing Human Family,* his next book for children which Masani felt was better than *Our India* but did not do so well in sales. There were two more books for children: *Picture of a Plan* and his last one in 1989 *We Indians.* A full list of his publications can be found in the end pages of this book.

Masani was a great believer in organisations. Even 'truth needs wings' was a popular quote with him. And so when something needed to be done in the public sphere, Masani would get the justification ready for such action not only explaining the cause but proposing an organisation to deliver the message to further that cause.

Among the organisations he founded were the Democratic Research Service (DRS) established in November 1950 to disseminate information about subversive communist activities; another was the Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom (ICCF) established in November 1951 as part of an international movement of intellectuals, poets and writers to combat Soviet propaganda among intellectuals; a fourth was the Indian Liberal Group set up in 1964 to promote the principles and philosophy of Liberalism and function as a think tank for the Swatantra Party; a fifth was the Leslie Sawhny Programme (LSP) for Training in Democracy set up in 1968 with a syllabus of training which included training in leadership, citizenship and in the principles of Liberal Democracy and finally, in 1985 the Project for Economic Education as part of the LSP to educate the common man on economic issues particularly in the context of a liberalising economy.

There were qualities in Masani which deserve high

praise but which were not taken to kindly by many he had to deal with particularly in the political arena. For instance, his obsession with time and punctuality. Even a two-minute delay in keeping an appointment would invite a rebuke. The status of the person did not matter. Nor could anyone call on him without an appointment. For party leaders in India to meet people by appointment is just not the done thing. When people dropped in without prior notice or appointment he would fret and fume and most of the time the poor person who 'dropped in' would get a lecture on time management. It is common practice in India when the time for a public meeting is announced, it is earlier than when it will really start. Therefore it is taken for granted that if the announcement said that the meeting would start at 5 p.m. it means 5.30 p.m. or even 6 p.m.; but not for Masani. He would arrive at the venue of the meeting five minutes before the announced time and literally explode if it did not begin as scheduled.

As a chairman of meetings he was hard to beat. While everyone who wanted to speak got the chance, he was ruthless in enforcing the time rule irrespective of who was speaking. If someone, whatever his status, rambled on and took time, Masani would cut him short in mid sentence and ask him to make his point. This did not endear him to such people.

Masani had a quality which many of us lack—keeping issues and personalities apart. For instance, once he very vehemently disagreed with K.M. Munshi, then a vice-president of the Swatantra Party. Munshi even started walking out when Masani ran after him, brought him back and pacified him. After the meeting was over I saw him charmingly and genuinely solicitous over Munshi's health. This was not a question of his blowing hot and cold but a compartmentalised mind responding to specific issues. Unfortunately not everyone took this kindly. He earned

epithets ranging from a mild 'he is a difficult man' to the angry 'he is an arrogant man'. 'Difficult' Masani certainly was but not arrogant instead strong-willed. He was clear in his priorities, clear in his objectives and did not hesitate to spell them out in unambiguous terms. He did not make any conscious effort to be liked.

Above all, he would not permit actions that violated party policies or decisions unless there were good reasons for departures from the norm. If not, then he had no hesitation in disciplining the member, not very much concerned with the defaulter's position in the hierarchy.

In the course of an article that J.R.D. Tata wrote for the volume of essays honouring Masani on his 80th birthday, he made some interesting observations:

> Until Minoo Masani joined Tatas in 1941, I knew him only by name and reputation as a young controversial socialist politician who, starting as a militant advocate of Marxism, had gradually turned into an equally militant opponent, while claiming throughout to be a firm Gandhian and democrat. This baffled or infuriated many, including his political comrades and peers of various parties and hues, who not unnaturally, considered him either as a dangerous revolutionary or a turncoat or opportunist whose debating brilliance, integrity and organising talents were, however, never doubted.
>
> I was fascinated by these conflicting aspects of his personality and political philosophy, which my politically untutored mind interpreted as those of a born rebel who, while he saw in the Russian Revolution the dawn of redemption from the gross injustices and shameless colonialism of nineteenth century capitalism, was too intelligent to swallow, wholesale, Marxist dialectics. Yet, like many other dreamers of the time including Jawaharlal Nehru, he believed that, somehow, freedom could be made to co-exist with Marxism.

Considering Minoo's early exposure to the Marxist fervour of England's youth after World War I, then to the turmoil and throes of the freedom struggle and, last but far from least, to the glaring economic inequalities prevailing in India, he seemed predestined to be the stormy petrel of Indian politics that he duly became.

Increasingly disillusioned though I myself grew to be with Indian politics where, apart from slavish acceptance of a misconceived socialism, the acquisition and retention of power seemed to be the main motivator of Indian politicians, Minoo was one of the few I continued to admire and respect despite my disagreement with most of his political credo. I understood his denunciation of Marxism which he had so fervently advocated earlier, and I admired the courage and honesty he displayed in admitting he had been wrong. I therefore had no hesitation, despite the doubts expressed by some of my colleagues and friends, in welcoming him into Tatas in 1941 when he retired from the political field. In those sixteen years that Minoo spent with us, my regard and affection for him grew. As I came into closer contact with him and listened to him and read his writings, I became increasingly surprised that a man of his intelligence, character and un- compromising integrity had been denied inclusion in the top leadership of the country...

Although our minds often operated on similar, if not common, wavelengths, we both were somewhat impatient by nature, and I sometimes baulked at the speed at which he wished me to take decisions which I usually did in the end, but only after pondering, perhaps beyond need, over possible implications or ramifications...

We found no difficulty, however, in agreeing with each other on two matters. One, the need for industrialists to adhere strictly to their social responsibilities as trustees of shareholders, consumers, workers and society, all of which Jamsetji Tata himself had made a part of the Firm's

philosophy from the start. The other, in regard to the need to develop a real partnership, based on mutual trust, between management and labour...

One of the most striking traits of Minoo's character is his deep understanding of human relations, somewhat unexpected in an 'ex' fiery political activist. All in all, Minoo Masani was, and still is, a remarkable human being whose talents and character, sadly for India, failed to be recognized and used as they could have been to the country's great benefit.

I will end this introduction on a personal note. My association with Masani began in December 1959 when he took over as General Secretary of the Swatantra Party. First as head of the Central Office of the Party; then managing the many voluntary organisations he had started including editing the journal *Freedom First*.

To begin with, it is not easy to work for him. He was not only a hard taskmaster but could be unreasonable in what he expected from those who worked under him. Those who accepted his domination quietly could not survive him long. But those who stood up him (remember the Sri Prakasa incident where he deplored the Indian's inability to stand up to authority?) he respected. I recall at least three occasions when I was exasperated to such an extent that I wanted to leave. Each time he would be contrite after the event and apologise in writing.

Another frustrating characteristic was his penchant to treat almost every issue as a matter of principle. There were many in the top echelons of the Swatantra Party's leadership who complained that Masani was a 'purist'. One of them was N. Dandeker. A retired ICS officer he was himself a man of great ability. He once told me, and I quote from memory 'Minoo has a first-rate mind but does he have to be so stubborn? Can't he realise that between the white and the black there is a gray? Isn't he aware we are functioning in

India and not in England or USA?' Many admirers and friends of Masani shared this feeling of frustration. This is a fact. If he had only been to able to see the gray, he would not have quit politics thrice.

I have often wondered what would have happened if the Swatantra Party had, by some miracle, come to power in Delhi. I am convinced that we would have found Masani not on the Treasury Benches but in the Opposition! Government's compromise and programmes and policies of parties get diluted when they assume office. In such a situation Masani might have agreed to a small change here or a minor modification there but would have refused to compromise and left the government. Other than Jayaprakash Narayan I have yet to see anyone so totally disinterested in office and its perquisites if it involved sacrificing his principles. He proved this by resigning from the Chairmanship of the Minorities Commission because the government that nominated him to the position reneged on its terms of reference of the Commission.

If there was one characteristic that shone above all else in public life, particularly in post-independent India (again with the exception of Jayaprakash Narayan) it was financial probity and intellectual integrity. These two alone are enough to disqualify him as a *'Neta'* and set him apart as an outstanding citizen of India.

1

EARLY YEARS

Religious persecution by Muslim invaders in the 8th century forced many Zoroastrians to flee their native country, Persia, and secure refuge in India. As these refugees came from the plains of Pars in Persia they came to be known as Parsis. Many of them who had set sail from Masan in Persia landed in Sanjan in Gujarat. Hence Masani or those who came from Masan, belonged to the priestly class.

The Masanis, like so many of their brethren, settled in Navsari in Gujarat. One of their descendants Pestonji held a job in Bombay as Head Timekeeper in the Great Indian Peninsular Railway (better known as GIP, now the Central Railway) on a monthly salary of Rs. 100. His son Rustom Masani, a writer and a journalist was also the Secretary of the Bombay Municipal Corporation and later vice-chancellor of the University of Bombay. He had distinct literary interests and wrote on a variety of subjects. He was knighted by the British colonial rulers but renounced his title some years later in protest against British repression of the Quit India movement and the arrest and imprisonment of Mahatma Gandhi in 1942.

Rustom Masani and his wife Manijeh had four children—Minoo, Keki, Mehra and Pesi. Though not wealthy they managed at considerable personal sacrifice to give their children the best education then available including higher education abroad in the fields of their choice. As a result, all four of them distinguished

themselves. Minoo Masani became a barrister. Keki qualified as a psychiatrist; Mehra entered government service retiring as Deputy Director-General of All India Radio and Pesi became a mathematician.

This biography is about Minoo Masani, their eldest son. For purposes of this biography we shall refer to him as Masani.

Masani's early schooling was at Bombay's Cathedral High School and the New High School, now known as Bharda High School, from where he matriculated in 1921. Bharda High School produced a number of eminent Indians, among them Yusuf Meherally, Minoo's classmate. As a schoolboy Masani played cricket and hockey and also took violin lessons from Count Odone Savini, an Italian who had settled in Bombay. Another of Savini's pupils was Mehli Mehta whose son Zubin Mehta was to become a world famous conductor of classical music.

Masani's father wanted his eldest son to become a doctor, but he chose law instead on the advice of Yusuf Meherally. After passing the matriculation examination Masani entered Elphinstone College in Bombay, another educational institution that produced a number of distinguished Indians including India's Grand Old Man Dadabhai Naoroji who was a professor in this college. After graduating, Masani went to London in 1925 where he studied Law at the London School of Economics and took the LL.B. degree of the London University; qualifying as a Barrister at Law from Lincoln's Inn.

As a student in London, Masani took active interest in student politics. Attracted by the policies of the British Labour Party he became an ardent socialist. Student unions in England were organised along party lines. He was an active participant in the students union of the London School of Economics, generally referred to as the LSE, and was soon elected to the Union Executive with the support

of the Labour Party. Interestingly, when Masani contested for the presidentship of the Union as a candidate of the Labour Party, he was opposed by V.K. Krishna Menon, who had been an LSE student for some years before Masani. Krishna Menon contested the election as an independent candidate. As a result, both lost, the winner being a candidate supported by the Conservative Party!

By the time he graduated as barrister, Masani also became a committed socialist and an admirer of the Soviet Union. In 1927, ten years after the Russian Revolution of 1917, he joined a group to visit the 'Workers' Fatherland'. That was the period of the New Economic Policy (NEP) in the Soviet Union introduced by Lenin. The NEP was somewhat like the mixed economy that prevailed in India for almost forty years after independence. The NEP allowed some amount of private enterprise. There were shops run by private individuals alongside state-owned shops; there were even private taxis. Masani was deeply impressed by what he saw and experienced.

1927 was also the year he met, for the first time, Jawaharlal Nehru who had accompanied his father Motilal Nehru, to London. Masani was delighted to find Jawaharlal Nehru an even greater admirer of the Soviet Union!

After completing his education Masani returned to India in 1928 as a devout socialist and a Marxist and joined the Bar of the Bombay High Court. He wrote about his experiences in Soviet Russia in a series of gushing articles in the *Bombay Chronicle* edited by S.A. Brelvi, a respected journalist and a passionate nationalist.

2

IN THE FREEDOM STRUGGLE

Masani obtained a place in the chambers of F. Coltman, the only English barrister then practising in the Bombay High Court. As already mentioned, Masani returned from London, a barrister and a socialist. Soon he got more involved in India's freedom struggle than in the practice of Law. Though he continued his practice for the next thirteen years, he got very few briefs. This was not surprising because during this period he was more a freedom fighter and less a lawyer.

It was his dear friend and classmate Yusuf Meherally who influenced Masani to join the Congress and participate in the freedom struggle. When in 1932 Gandhiji launched the Civil Disobedience movement for the second time* he called on Congressmen to break the law, court arrest and imprisonment and fill British jails. From time to time batches of Congress workers defied the law and were arrested, among them Yusuf Meherally. He, however, wanted Masani to join the movement, not to get arrested, but to assist secretly by organising a continuous supply of volunteers who were prepared to go to jail!

---

* Gandhiji had suspended the movement when the British rulers invited him and other Indian leaders to a Round Table Conference to discuss self-rule for India. The Conference failed. Gandhiji returned to India and revived the Civil Disobedience movement.

First Imprisonment

Following Meherally's arrest, Masani began mobilising volunteers who were prepared to break the law, face police lathis and go to jail. He used to move in taxis, changing them every few hours to avoid being recognised by the police. He found the taxi drivers were most cooperative and did not mind being arrested when driving freedom fighters in their vehicles. But it was only a matter of time before the police caught him and on 2 May 1932, detained him on suspicion of being a Civil Disobedience activist. He remained in detention for two months and was released with a warning. Under the law two months was the maximum that a detainee could be kept in prison without trial.

Second Imprisonment

In January 1933, Masani was, on his request, appointed president of the Bombay Provincial Congress Committee! Unlike today when politicians seek office, most often for selfish purposes, in the days of the Civil Disobedience movement, Congressmen sought office to get arrested! On 3 January 1933 Masani made it known that he would be presiding over a public meeting at Bombay's Chowpatty beach. Since, under an ordinance, public meetings were banned, Masani was defying the law and courting arrest. Not surprisingly the moment he got up to make a speech, the police swooped on the meeting and arrested him. He spent that night in police lock-up and was produced before an Indian magistrate next morning. On pleading guilty he was sentenced to one year's rigorous imprisonment. After spending fifteen days in Bombay's Arthur Road prison he was transferred to the Central Jail in Nasik.

Nasik Jail proved to be an enjoyable and educative experience. All the intellectual pursuits that Masani enjoyed he found in prison. Prisoners were confined in single cells

from 6 pm to 6 am. During the day he was in the prison yard along with other political prisoners—whom he described as "the elite of Bombay, Gujarat and Maharashtra." These included men with a "sense of humour" like B.G. Kher, N.V. Gadgil, Chandulal Desai and Bhulabhai Desai; and the Gandhians, "a fairly grim lot" like Morarji Desai, Shankarrao Deo, the Kumarappa brothers and K. Mashruwalla. Masani found life in the yard interesting with never a dull moment with activities like study circles, debates, athletics, and even an occasional dance performance. There were frequent feasts which were "made possible by collecting sugar and milk over a couple of days to make *shrikhand* (sweetened yoghurt)". In a letter to his mother Masani informed her that he had read about a hundred books. He was released in the beginning of December 1933.

Back in Bombay, after a year's absence, Masani decided to resume his practice. To his amazement he found that the then Advocate General Sir Jamshedji Kanga tried to get Masani debarred on the charge that Masani had been found guilty of convening an unlawful meeting at Chowpatty on 3 January 1933 and that he was guilty of misconduct under the Indian Bar Councils Act. Along with Masani were also two other Parsis, Phiroze and Keki Bharucha, both lawyers and who too, like Masani, had been arrested and jailed for their role in the Civil Disobedience movement. The case was heard by a Bench of the Bombay High Court, presided over by Chief Justice Sir John Beaumont. The court held that merely being involved in an unlawful association did not render Masani unfit "for the exercise of the legal profession". Sir Jameshedji Kanga lost the case but he was not the one to give up. According to Masani, being "a Parsee of the old mould and an old time loyalist" Sir Jamshedji Kanga appealed to the Privy Council in London. In Colonial India

the Privy Council was the equivalent of our Supreme Court. It was known as "the King in Council".

M.C. Chagla, then Secretary of the Bar Association (he was to become free India's Chief Justice of the Supreme Court and later Union Law Minister), wrote to M.A. Jinnah who was in England, requesting him to appear for his fellow professionals, Masani and the Bharucha cousins. Jinnah declined saying that as a matter of principle he never appeared in court without charging a fee! Fortunately Gandhiji's friend H.S.L. Polak agreed to act as a solicitor while D.N. Pritt K.C. and Wallach appeared for Masani and the Bharuchas free of charge. The judgement of the Privy Council delivered by Lord Blanesborgh disallowed the appeal saying "the circumstances were not such as to justify them in advising His Majesty to grant the Advocate General of Bombay special leave to appeal." Exulted Masani, "Three cheers for British justice!"

Third Imprisonment

Ten years after his second incarceration Masani courted arrest for the third and last time in February 1943. This is how it happened. Six months earlier on 8 August 1942, the Indian National Congress meeting at the Gowalia Tank Maidan in Bombay had passed the historic 'Quit India' resolution moved by Gandhiji, demanding that the British get out of India. The day after this resolution was passed, many Congress leaders were arrested and jailed. While most of them were imprisoned in Ahmednagar Fort in Maharashtra, Gandhiji was detained in the Aga Khan's Bungalow in Pune. Masani, who had quit politics some years earlier and was a Tata executive when the Quit India resolution was passed, was restless because of his close relations with JP, Ram Manohar Lohia and Achyut Patwardhan who were bound to be clapped in prison. He decided to be proactive in the underground activities and

placed himself at the disposal of those who took over the guidance of the Quit India campaign after all the members of the Congress Working Committee had been jailed. His role in the underground was to participate in the publication of an underground journal called *Ninth August*. It was a cyclostyled fortnightly edited by Achyut Patwardhan. Masani managed to evade arrest for almost six months and wrote a column in *Ninth August* entitled "Censored News - And Uncensored Views".

On 9 February 1943, Gandhiji went on a 21-day fast to atone for the violence that had vitiated the Quit India movement and to protest against the British Government's acts of repression and oppression. Gandhiji's decision shocked millions of his followers who feared his fast might prove fatal, Masani among them. He decided to come out into the open. And so he met J.R.D. Tata and explained to him that he would like to resign from his job, and offer Satyagraha in Pune to protest against Gandhiji being allowed to die. J.R.D. Tata allowed him to resign but told Masani that he could return to his job after his release.

Masani took a train to Pune and, on arrival hid in the house of a friend. Leading twenty-five men and twenty-five women volunteers with the national flag aloft, Masani began marching in the direction of the Aga Khan's bungalow. They had hardly moved a hundred yards when the police rounded up the processionists. Masani spent the next two months in Pune's Yerwada prison.

Around the time of his release in April 1943, Dr D.D. Gilder, a Congressman and Mayor of Bombay courted arrest. As the Mayoralty fell vacant, the Congress asked Masani to contest the by-election. After obtaining permission from his employers, he contested and won, to become the youngest Mayor at the age of 38—a record that was to last for over forty years.

Perhaps the most important event that took place involving Masani during this period was the formation of the Congress Socialist Party during his second imprisonment in Nasik Jail.

3

THE SOCIALIST YEARS

During his second imprisonment in Nasik Jail in 1933, Masani was in the company of Jayaprakash Narayan (or JP, as he was more popularly known) who had been imprisoned a few months earlier. They had met before and so the two were not complete strangers. Both were socialists but with a difference. Masani's socialism was the British Labour Party variety with a strong commitment to democracy even if he was, as he confessed, a "starry-eyed admirer of the October Revolution in Russia". JP's socialism was more communist in its orientation influenced as it was by the American Communist Party, when he was a student in the United States. Both were to be cured of their communist virus, Masani earlier than JP. But both were such strong nationalists that they chose to ignore this difference for the sake of their common cause—a free socialist India. The other socialists in Nasik Jail were among others, Ram Manohar Lohia, Achyut Patwardhan and Yusuf Meherally.

They dreamt of a socialist India and for this it was necessary to get the Congress to accept the socialist ideology, as there were many shades of ideology in the Congress, each trying to gain dominance. As they did not wish to splinter the freedom movement and accepted and recognised the Indian National Congress as the instrument to lead the freedom struggle, they decided to form a socialist party and name it the Congress Socialist Party (CSP) which would not be an independent party but a part of the Indian

National Congress. With so many leading socialists in Nasik Jail they worked on the programme of the CSP.

Soon after his release in December 1933, Masani travelled to Allahabad to meet Jawaharlal Nehru and seek his support for the new party. In a letter, which he personally handed over to Nehru, Masani wrote:

> Dear Pandit Jawaharlal,
>
> Some of us Congressmen in Bombay who are socialists are attempting to form a Congress Socialist Group or Party.
>
> We feel that the lead you have given to the Congress and to the country by emphasizing the necessity of taking up a consciously socialist and anti-imperialist position should be followed by the organization of socialists within the Congress.
>
> The Group, it is proposed to form, would carry out the purpose you have in view by placing before the Congressmen and the public of our province (or, may be presidency) a programme that would be socialist in action and objective.
>
> The Group would do socialist propaganda among rank and file Congressmen with a view to converting the Congress to an acceptance of socialism. We would also carry on propaganda among the workers (and peasants) at the same time participating in their day to day economic struggle.
>
> It would hearten us to know that in the formation of such a Group we shall have your approval and support.
>
> Yours fraternally,
> M.R. Masani

Nehru asked Masani to stay with him at Anand Bhavan the Nehru home in Allahabad and welcomed the "formation of socialist groups in the Congress to influence the ideology of the Congress and the country". Masani was ecstatic.

Nehru and he got on extremely well from the very beginning. Both were modern and Westernized gentlemen. They would meet often and Masani came to develop considerable affection and admiration for him, though it was never uncritical. "I must have soon become one of Jawaharlal's 'pet young men' and I shared that distinction with JP, Ram Manohar Lohia and Achyut Patwardhan," observed Masani in his autobiography.

Encouraged by Nehru's declaration of support of the ideal of a socialist Congress, Masani and his comrades formed the Bombay Presidency Congress Socialist Group at a meeting in Bombay on 24 February 1934. Purshottam Trikamdas, an advocate whose own role in the freedom struggle was enviable, and Masani were elected secretaries. Later, Purshottam Trikamdas was replaced by Yusuf Meherally. The CSP decided to convene their first national conference at Patna, in Bihar in May 1934.

About the same time, the Swaraj Party (like the CSP, a party within the Congress) also came into existence. There were now two parties within the Congress; both devoted to the freedom movement but with different strategies in their approach to the freedom struggle and with differing economic policies. The objective of the Swaraj Party (actually it was a revival of a party with an almost similar name that existed in the 1920s) which was led by what Masani described as "constitutional and parliamentary-minded people among Congressmen" was to influence the Congress Party to give up the path of Civil Disobedience involving breaking the law and courting arrest. Instead, the Swarajists with a "long and fine record of public service" favoured the path of constitutional struggle preferring to use the legislatures set up under British law to progress towards freedom, and, while doing so, gain experience as legislators. The socialists in the CSP on the other hand, with an avowedly Marxist orientation, wanted to "organize the

peasants and workers for the purpose of participating in the struggle against imperialism and Indian vested interests allied to them". The Swarajists too decided to convene their national conference in Ranchi also in Bihar in May 1934.

So, here were two developments taking place simultaneously within the Indian National Congress, a mere fourteen years before India was to achieve freedom. If Gandhiji's advice to the Congress on the eve of independence to dissolve the Congress had been taken, free India may have seen the emergence of a two-party system with both parties subscribing to democratic principles, but one socialist and the other which could be broadly described as liberal-conservative.

Socialist Masani was invited by the Swarajists to attend their conference. When Dr B.C. Roy moved a resolution on the programme of the Party, Masani moved an amendment that the Swaraj Party should undertake "the organisation of peasants and workers for the purpose of participating in the struggle against imperialism and Indian vested interests allied to them". And at this conference of liberals and conservatives, Masani's amendment though defeated got as many as twenty six votes against forty!

On 21 and 22 October 1934, on the eve of the All India Congress Committee session (better known by its short form the AICC), delegates of about a dozen provincial socialist parties and groups functioning in different parts of the country, but all functioning under the umbrella of the Indian National Congress, gathered in Bombay for the Second All India Congress Socialist Conference. The agenda was to form an all India political party comprising these provincial parties and groups with the sole objective of pressurising the Congress to take to the socialist path—to move away from Gandhi and towards socialism.

Masani played a key role in this effort. In an article that he wrote on the eve of the conference, voicing the

socialist view of the then political situation in the country, Masani pointed out that the Congress was composed of three parts:

The first, which formed the majority, consisted of active Congressmen who were supporters of Mahatma Gandhi and carried out constructive programmes of the Congress namely, *khaddar*, fight against untouchability and prohibition.

The second were Congress leaders, namely, the Congress Parliamentary Board, who were men of "great intellect and influence" but who had chosen the path of constitutionalism "more out of demoralisation through defeat rather than of intelligent conviction". This was obviously a reference to the Swarajists.

The third were the socialists who were planning an all India political party and were made up largely of youth. Even though deprived of the leadership of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, who was then in jail, "the CSP" noted Masani with satisfaction "has become an effective minority movement in the Congress and bids fair to challenge soon the hitherto unchallenged supremacy of Mahatma Gandhi".

The importance of such a socialist party remaining within the Congress and not as a separate party lay in the fact that only by remaining within the nationalist movement would it have been possible to ensure the establishment of a socialist State when India became free. At the same time being a realist Masani was aware that "these three forces—Gandhism, Constitutionalism and Socialism" would join issue and in the resultant struggle between the three, Gandhi and the Parliamentary Board would succeed in keeping the socialists under control.

But there was a left wing in the CSP (mainly communists who had infiltrated into this group) which argued that "socialism and Congress were contradictory terms". Jayaprakash Narayan rejected this demand. He

asserted: "The Congress Socialist Party is not the party of any one class. It is not the part of the working class alone. It is a political party uniting on its platform all anti-imperialist elements and its task is to lead such elements to the overthrow of British imperialism and the establishment in India of real *Swaraj* for the masses."

The CSP conference adopted a constitution and the party within a party came into being in October 1934. The key elements in its economic policy were: "All power to the toiling masses, economic planning, nationalisation of key industries, government's control over foreign trade, abolition of feudalism and landlordism without compensation, redistribution of land and cooperative, and collective farming."

Jayaprakash Narayan was elected General Secretary and Masani, its Joint Secretary. Being part of the Indian National Congress, the CSP was allowed a representative in the Congress Working Committee. The CSP nominated Achyut Patwardhan for this job.

For the next six years till almost the end of 1939 Masani traversed the length and breadth of India, tirelessly propagating the socialist ideology as the ideology of free India; participating in a variety of functions ranging from trade union conferences to district and state level conferences of the CSP.

He took an active interest in the trade union movement. At that time in 1934 there were three trade union organisations: The National Trade Union Federation run by moderate trade unionists led by N.M. Joshi who had, in fact, established the trade union movement in India which was not affiliated to any political party or grouping; the All India Trade Union Congress, most of whose leaders were with the CSP; and the Red Trades Union Congress, the trade union wing of the Communist Party of India (CPI).

In its idealism believing in the solidarity of the working

class, the CSP took upon itself the task of uniting the trade union movement, even though the CPI described the CSP as "social fascist". The CPI's attitude was in line with the policy enunciated at the Sixth Congress of the Comintern, the Communist International organisation based in Moscow, which controlled and directed the activities of the communist parties throughout the world. The CSP succeeded in bringing about unity within the trade union movement. In the process the communists captured the All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC).

Masani's address as the chairman at the Fourth Annual Conference of the All India Congress Socialist Party at Lahore in 1938 covered a wide canvas ranging from a review of the world situation and an assessment of the freedom struggle to the nature of the CSP and its role as a party within the Congress.

> Essentially, what do we Revolutionary Socialists, whether in India or abroad, stand for? From all the various policies and tenets that go under the name of Socialism, I would pick out the abolition of private property and the evolution of a classless society as the essence of Socialism. I would say that the basic conceptions underlying our creed are those of Equality and Liberty. Nothing is Socialism that does not insist on the abolition of private ownership of the instruments of production, distribution and exchange and the building up of a classless society.

At the same time they give a clue to his subsequent renunciation of socialism arising from a mind that refused to submit to any kind of ideological orthodoxy.

Despite this dedicated labour, both intellectually and physically, to spread the philosophy of democratic socialism and developing the CSP as a force to reckon within the Congress, Masani first gave up his office and later his primary membership of the CSP. Why did he do that? The next chapter tells you why.

4

THE CRUSADER AGAINST COMMUNISM

Masani had visited the Soviet Union in 1927, when he was a student at the London School of Economics. Eight years later, in 1935, another opportunity to visit that country presented itself. The Socialist League and Stafford Cripps, a left wing leader in the British Labour Party, invited Masani to visit England to talk to British socialists and to speak at a conference in London about developments in India "to prepare for mass resistance against War".

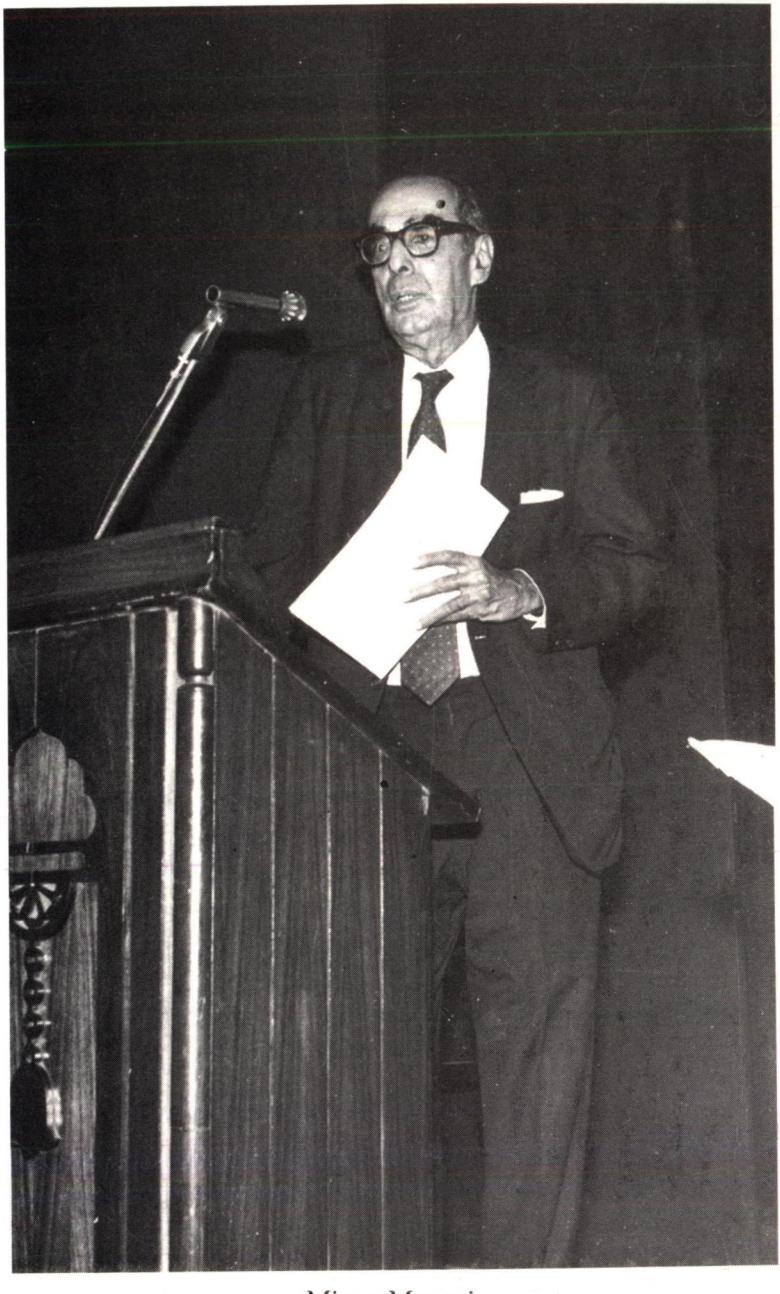
Jayaprakash Narayan, with whom Masani developed a lifelong friendship, encouraged Masani to accept the invitation. He suggested that Masani should also visit Moscow and enlighten the Communist International or the Comintern, based in Moscow and totally controlled by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), about the Congress Socialist Party. In fact JP wanted Masani to try and persuade Moscow to jettison the Communist Party of India and support the CSP with its "more intelligent application of Marxism to the Indian situation"! This request may now sound strange, even naive, but it was typical of JP who trusted people and believed in their innate goodness and sincerity. It also showed how most 'leftists' like him and Minoo Masani, were prepared to accept the bona fides of the Soviet Union.

Masani visited London, spoke at the conference, expressed the CSP's solidarity with the British socialists and being with them against war. He then travelled by ship to

the Soviet Union in August 1935. He returned from this second visit, with his admiration for the Soviet Union undiminished.

On his return to India he recorded his impressions in a 90-page booklet titled *Soviet Sidelights* with a foreword by Jawaharlal Nehru. *Soviet Sidelights* was an unabashed paean of praise for the Soviet Union. Things that met with his expectation received high praise. Other things that did not were uncritically explained away. In the concluding chapter of *Soviet Sidelights* Masani attempted a balance sheet of his assessment of the Soviet Union, 18 years after the Bolshevik revolution:

> What has happened in the past 18 years on a sixth of the surface of the globe is much more than an experiment. It is achievement at a speed and on a scale hitherto unknown in the history of the human race. That is not to say that socialism has been achieved or that the Soviet Union is a heaven on earth. For one thing, it is doubtful if one can build up a completely socialist society in a capitalist world, like an oasis in the desert, any more than one can have perfect health and security in the midst of pestilence and disease. But that apart, even the limitations of material resources and equipment and of human nature do not vanish quite so quickly.
>
> There are those who say that the Soviets have abandoned their goal and fallen back on State capitalism. They point to the inequality that exists in Russia to justify their statement. Inequality there undoubtedly is. And it is substantial enough to be disturbing to all socialists who see it—at the contrast between the luxury in which the Commissar and his wife were living and the poverty of those living only a few hundred yards away from them. While the basic wage in a factory is in the vicinity of 150 to 200 roubles per month, there are Soviet citizens—managers of trusts, authors and actresses—whose monthly income comes to well over 5,000 roubles.



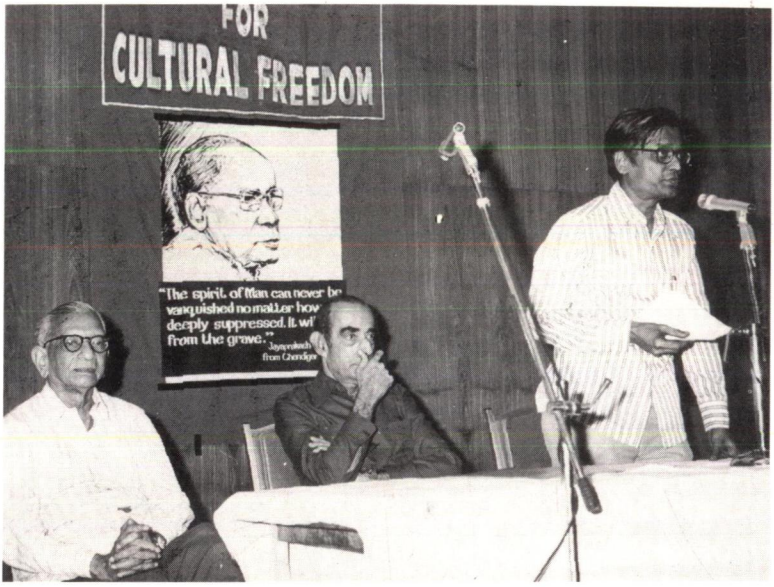
Minoo Masani



With C Rajagopalachari (Rajaji)



Addressing a press conference in Madras, 1967



With V B Karnik and S V Raju at a function organized by the Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom.



With Nani Palkhiwala (addressing) and M R Pai.



With N Dandekar, A D Shroff, Piloo Mody and B K Mistry (left to right) addressing a meeting in Mumbai.



With Sheela

> The soft and hard classes in trains, the half-a-dozen rates of theatre tickets and the restoration of office-titles in the Red Army go ill with an equalitarian regime. The airy dismissal of equality as an essentially bourgeois conception by Comrade Molotov, the Chairman of the Council of Peoples' Commissars, is hardly calculated to soothe the Socialist conscience. Socialism, *does* in the rough, means equality.

Like so many who were to 'recant' later, Masani could not close his eyes and ears to the news that was filtering out of the Soviet Union of the brutality with which Stalin was eliminating his rivals in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the liquidation of millions of farmers who opposed his policy of forced collectivisation of farms.

The Communist International at its meeting in Moscow in 1935 declared a policy of United Front with other parties and groups in India. This was a change from their policy of not joining hands with 'reactionary' and 'bourgeois' parties. Hitherto, in so far as India was concerned, the Indian National Congress and Gandhiji were considered reactionaries. Consequently the Congress-led freedom struggle was not to be supported by the communists. On the contrary they had actually started a 'League Against Gandhi'. This was a mistake because not only did it not succeed but proved counter-productive alienating many people. The Comintern finding that their party in India was making no headway, changed their policy to get friendly with these very same bourgeois parties, infiltrate them and take control of the freedom movement. The new policy came to be known as the policy of the United Front.

Analysing this change Masani commented:

> The stiff sectarian policy adopted in 1928 in the hope that capitalism was nearing its end had failed badly and crippled the communist movement everywhere. In every

country communist parties had got badly isolated. This itself might not have mattered very much if it had not led to the rise of Hitler and the need to search for allies for Soviet Russia in the face of this danger. This need of the Socialist Fatherland called for a comprehensive change in strategy the world over." And this led to the policy of the United Front. The Communist Party of India fell in line with the Soviet policy worldwide of an 'Anti-Imperialist People's Front.'

Arising from this change the language and tenor of the Communist Party of India towards Gandhiji, the Congress and the freedom movement was revised. JP, Ram Manohar Lohia, Achyut Patwardhan, Asoka Mehta, Masani and other leaders of the Congress Socialist Party welcomed the CPI's collaboration with open arms. But they soon discovered to their dismay that the CPI's change in tactics was to capture the Congress itself. It was soon clear that the United Front tactics were not however in the spirit of cooperation in a joint anti-imperialist struggle but meant to isolate the national leadership from the rank and file and capture the larger organisation for Communist Party ends. In other words to infiltrate and capture the national movement.

With the socialist leaders welcoming the communists with open arms it was not very difficult to infiltrate the CSP and through it the national movement itself. A meeting of the CSP in January 1936 decided not only to cooperate with the CPI but also admit individual communists to membership of the CSP! This decision led to a number of communists being given positions of organisational responsibility in the Congress Socialist Party.

Comrades E.M.S. Namboodiripad and Sajjad Zaheer were nominated Joint Secretaries of the CSP at the national level; P. Sundarayya was given charge of the CSP in Andhra; A.K. Gopalan and P. Ramamurthi of the CSP in Madras (now

Tamil Nadu). The communists even made it into the Congress when Z.A. Ahmed and M. Ashraf were appointed by Pandit Nehru to important positions in the office of the All India Congress Committee (AICC). In fact, according to Masani, it was the Congress Socialist votes in the AICC that made these persons members of the provincial and All-India Congress Committees. This was of great help to the communists because apart from membership of the Congress Socialist Party it gave the communists cover, for at that time the Communist Party was illegal.*

Soon after their entry into the CSP, complaints started pouring into CSP head offices from all parts of India against the communists. The reports said the communists were claiming that they would not permit any other party to entrench itself in the trade union movement. The CSP's decision was to prove very profitable to the communists but it spelt disaster to the CSP. The communists managed to capture the All-India Kisan Sabha and the All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC), both creations of the CSP. The communists attempted to capture the CSP itself at its Lahore session in 1938. Masani, with the support of Yusuf Meherally, Ganga Saran Singh and Farid Ansari, managed to defeat this attempt. Masani who was the first to understand communist intentions sought to have them expelled from the CSP. When he failed, he resigned his office and a little later, as we shall see presently, from the CSP itself. He was followed by Ram Manohar Lohia, Achyut Patwardhan and Asoka Mehta who resigned their offices in the CSP when they failed to persuade their Party to throw

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* This cover was to prove very valuable to them in building up their organisation. After India attained freedom 'Comrades' E.M.S. Namboodiripad, P. Sundarayya, A.K. Gopalan and P. Ramamurthi were to become leading members of the Communist Party Marxist (CPM); 'Comrade' Sajjad Zaheer became secretary of the Communist Party of Pakistan.

the communists out. However, they retained their Party membership.

World War II broke out in September 1939. The Congress offered to cooperate in the war effort if the British would give an assurance of Indian independence after the war. The British did not respond to the offer and the Congress asked Congress ministries in the various states to resign. The CSP welcomed this decision as it was in keeping with the CSP's oft-stated position that the Congress should not cooperate with the colonial rulers by remaining in the provincial governments. However in keeping with Gandhiji's stated position that in "the new dictionary of Satyagraha there is no enemy", and that in his opposition to British rule his goodwill was with Britain, the Congress decided on a kind of passive neutrality. The CSP was also against giving any support to the British in their war effort. This was not to the liking of the communists who having already infiltrated the Congress wanted to ensure that both the Congress and the CSP did not to take an anti-war line. This was because at that point in time Stalin had a pact with Hitler. Since the Soviets were friends of Hitler, any war against Hitler was, for the communists an 'imperialist war'; hence the British war effort must not to be supported.

Already disenchanted with the Soviet brand of socialism, the communist attempts to capture the CSP was the "last straw" and Masani resigned from the primary membership of the CSP "JP giving way under the pressure of the Working Committee was for me the last straw. I felt very badly let down by yet one more act of vacillation on his part. For me this was the final proof that I had no place in the leadership of a party which did not know its mind on fundamentals". On November 11, 1939, Masani resigned from the Party which he had helped to

conceive in Nasik Prison in 1933.

Masani's rejection of Marxism and his subsequent crusade against communism can be traced to these experiences. In his essay "Why I oppose Communism" which he wrote in 1956 he observed:

> Soviet communism has today turned its back on every single generous and progressive impulse of the October Revolution and, in place of the 'free and equal society' of which Lenin talked, one finds a new caste system marked by growing inequalities and an industrial feudalism which is based on slave labour.
>
> Looking back, I find that my opposition to communism dates back to the Great Purges of 1936 and the years that followed. By 1938, I was pleading in articles that the sooner the ideals of socialism were disentangled from the practice of Soviet communism the more likely were those ideals likely to be preserved.
>
> The basic issue between democracy and communism is a moral one which none of us may evade. The fundamental difference is as to the true nature of Man. I am for democracy because, with all its inadequacies and imperfections it is based on the freedom to choose. It enables wrongs, sooner or later, to be righted. The voice of protest is never totally silenced.
>
> I believe that Man is not merely raw material for social experiments but an end in himself; and the free inquiry of the human mind is the basis of all progress. I am opposed to the Communist system because there is no room in it for the intellectual attitude which I was early to learn from H.G. Wells: 'I do not care if I am for a time in a minority of one against all mankind, because in the long run if I have hit off the truth, that will win; and, if I fail top hit it off, I shall have done my best'.

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* Minoo Masani, *Bliss was it in that Dawn*... pp. 156. Forty years later he was to resign from the office of President of the Swatantra Party for similar reasons though the 'fundamentals' then were different.

Disillusionment with Soviet Union, the treachery of the communists and disappointment with his socialist friends were compensated when he turned to Mahatma Gandhi and his philosophy.

5

THE GANDHIAN INFLUENCE

The socialists in the CSP were no admirers of Mahatma Gandhi. On the contrary they were admirers of Marx, his disciple Lenin and the Bolshevik revolution in Russia. So naive and innocent were the founding leaders of the CSP, that Jayaprakash Narayan went to the extent of asking Masani on his visit to the Soviet Union in 1937 to convey to the leadership of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union that the CSP would be a better bet than the Communist Party of India in advancing the cause of socialism in India!

The CSP leadership, Masani included, were of the view that the policies of *satyagraha* and non-violence would not lead India to freedom. While they respected Gandhiji as a person and accepted his leadership of the freedom movement, the socialists had an air of condescension if not a sense of intellectual superiority when it came to Gandhiji's prescriptions for social and political ills.

In May 1934 Masani received an invitation from Gandhiji to accompany him for ten days on a walking tour through Orissa. This tour was dedicated to the removal of untouchability. How did he receive this invitation when he could not even recall when and how he had first met Gandhiji? "I can only surmise that, as my father was well-known to Gandhiji, he must have arranged a meeting between us. My purpose in accepting the invitation, frankly, was to explain to him why we were right and he was wrong."

Masani's description of the tour programme is worth quoting. He learnt that the routine was more or less similar on most of his walking tours, of which there were many:

> The daily programme during our tour was more or less fixed. We would get up at four in the morning for a prayer meeting of which, for me, the best part was the pleasure of hearing and singing the hymn *Raghupati Raghava Raja Ram*, an essay in community singing with rhythmic clapping to emphasise the beat.
>
> Around 5 o'clock, the group would set out and walk for about four miles to the next village which was to be our stop for the day. The place where we camped was some school or hostel and Gandhiji, soon after arrival, would start meeting local workers in ones or twos or in groups. The progress of constructive local activity, the fight against untouchability and the problems that bother the workers would be discussed. Just before sunset, we would start walking through the twilight again and camp for the night in another village some four miles away. We thus covered two villages in a day.

Gandhiji gave Masani an hour in the morning and an hour in the evening every day. "This had meant twenty hours of discussion while walking by the side of Gandhiji, one of his arms resting on my shoulder and the other resting on the shoulder of Agatha Harrison, a Quaker devotee of Gandhiji. Agatha Harrison was deeply interested in our discussions. She requested Gandhiji that we talk in English. I thought then that it was rather unkind of him to refuse to do so and insist on speaking to me in Gujarati, which she could not follow. Gandhiji was prepared to spare the time to talk to her separately and explain to her what passed between us but he would not speak to me, a fellow Gujarati, in English!"

Masani thought he had 'softened' Gandhiji's objections to socialism but admits: "Little did I know of the mailed

fist under the velvet glove! Gandhiji's objections to socialism and nationalisation, for instance, were very different from mine. He did not believe in government ownership and control. He said that a factory should be run by those who worked in it on the basis of 'Trusteeship' for the community. He called this socialism. I remember thinking to myself how illiterate Gandhiji was about political terminology! The pay-off came when I was in Yugoslavia studying 'workers' control' in 1955 and was told by the Yugoslav communists that the management and workers running an enterprise as trustees for the community was their idea of communism. I told them ruefully that I had heard of it first in 1934 from that 'old reactionary' Mahatma Gandhi."

At the end of the ten-day tour Gandhiji made an offer to Masani that he would give him "a free hand in any village or group of villages" he chose anywhere in India to try out his ideas provided he stayed in that village continuously for a year. Naturally Masani was flattered by this offer. "Obviously Gandhiji, impressed with my earnestness, wanted to find out whether my enthusiasm would survive a year in an Indian village and also how I would modify my approach after understanding the mentality of the Indian peasant. In a way, it was a great compliment but unfortunately, I did not accept his offer. I was too keen to pursue my path as a propagandist for my ideas. Also, I had felt that it was some kind of a trap by which he hoped to convert me to his way of thinking! I think I did him an injustice in harbouring this suspicion."

Before leaving the Orissa tour with Gandhiji, Masani left with him a questionnaire including his views on socialism and the Congress Socialist Party and the resolutions adopted at the First All India Congress Socialist Conference. A few days later he received Gandhiji's reply—two typed pages. In a covering letter dated 29 May 1934 Gandhiji wrote *inter alia* "With Reference to the resolutions

I would have very little to say against them if your programme was sound which for the reasons I have given does not appear to me to be so. The resolution is perhaps bombastic; it is certainly prolix..."

It is important for the reader to know Gandhiji's answers to Masani's questions, because they were part of the process that led Masani, ten years later, to reconsider socialism and publish his seminal and well-known essay. Fifteen years thereafter Masani was to join C. Rajagopalachari in founding the Swatantra Party based on principles deeply influenced by Gandhiji's philosophy.

> The first item that Gandhiji dealt with was 'the abolition of the rule of Indian princes' which he described as 'an arrogation of power which does not belong to the Party or which belongs as much as the power to abolish the Portuguese and French authority in what is called Portuguese and French India would. It may be unfortunate; but the dismemberment of India is a fact, which may not be ignored. It is surely enough to concentrate upon what is called British India. In principle too, I am not for the abolition of the rule of the princes; but I believe in its reformation and modification in consonance with the true spirit of democracy.'
>
> Another item he dealt with was 'the progressive nationalisation of all the instruments of production, distribution and exchange' which he described as 'too sweeping to be admissible. 'Rabindranath Tagore', he said, 'is an instrument of marvellous production. I do not know that he will submit to be nationalised.'
>
> Regarding the 'state monopoly of foreign trade' Gandhiji asked a counter question: 'Should not the State be satisfied with all the power it will possess? Must it also exercise all the powers in one swoop, whether such an exercise is necessary or not. The elimination of landlordism,' he said, 'clearly means usurpation of the *Zamindari* and *Talukdari* tracts. I am not for the elimination

but for just regulation of the relations between landlords and tenants.'

To me, Gandhiji's comments now appear to be extremely reasonable and practical. Indeed, my own view later, came very much in line with what he had to say, but at that time his answers shocked me. I found them 'reactionary' and did not feel that they reflected the reasonable spirit in which Gandhiji talked to me throughout (the walking tour).

Masani wrote back to Gandhiji saying that his answers did not do justice to Gandhiji's own "progressive" views: "I felt that to publish what you had sent in that form would have two results. First, it would make hundreds of young Congressmen feel that you were irreconcilably hostile to their ideals and would strengthen the tendency, which already exists on the part of socialists to leave the Congress. Secondly, it would encourage attacks on us by Congressmen of the right wing. I do not think that you would welcome either of these developments." Masani offered to withhold publication till he could meet Gandhiji again. Gandhiji's response proved why the appellation 'Mahatma' conferred on him by the people was so appropriate.

Instead of taking offence he agreed to meet Masani. He invited him to join him at Igatpuri railway station while he was travelling down to Bombay. "This was typical of the generosity which he was to show repeatedly to many of us young socialists," conceded Masani. Travelling with Gandhiji in the train from Igatpuri to Mumbai (a two to three hours' journey), Masani asked him to reconsider his views. Yet again Masani was struck by Gandhiji's response. "I can only wonder now at my impertinence, but he was very generous," Masani observed. "He called his secretary (his secretary with a typewriter always accompanied him—in that respect he was extremely modern) and he started to dictate a reply which when it reached me was carefully

stamped with the serial number 4126. His earlier letter to me from Kendrapara in Orissa was numbered 4125. Gandhiji's second letter dated 14 June 1934 was much more positive and cooperative than the earlier one and ran as follows:

> My dear Masani – I have read the questions you had left with me as also the Congress Socialist Party's programme.
>
> 'I welcome the rise of the Socialist Party in the Congress. But I can't say that I like the programme as it appears in the printed pamphlet. It seems to me to ignore Indian conditions and I do not like the assumption underlying many of its propositions which go to show that there is necessarily antagonism between the classes and the masses or between the labourers and the capitalists such that they can never work for mutual good. My own experience covering a fairly long period is to the contrary. What is necessary is that labourers or workers know their rights and should also know how to assert them. And since there never has been any right without a corresponding duty, in my opinion, a manifesto is incomplete without emphasising the necessity of performance of duty showing what that duty is.'
>
> The important difference was that he stopped short of hitting at our slogans. Side-stepping the issue in typical Gandhian manner, he said, 'You would not want me at this stage to examine your programme clause by clause, but if you so desire and if you do not mind consulting my convenience, I would appoint for you a time when I could discuss with you, and those whom you may wish, the whole of your programme in detail.'

Commenting on Gandhiji's reply Masani clarified: "When I use that phrase 'Gandhian manner' I am not being facetious. It is true Gandhiji was an astute politician as well as a Mahatma, but he was a statesman and there was

nothing opportunistic about him although he contradicted himself on many issues."

Is it any wonder then that Masani considered Gandhiji as the "greatest man he had ever known".

In June 1947, Pyarelal, Gandhiji's Secretary, alarmed at the communists' efforts to "brainwash Gandhiji and confuse the issue", invited Masani to prepare a note for Gandhiji on the communists. This Masani did and also sent him a copy of *Socialism Reconsidered.*

Replying to this letter on behalf of Gandhiji, Pyarelal wrote: "Bapu has read with keen interest your brochure on socialism and was very struck by some of your observations on Stalin's Russia."

It is clear that Masani who began as a caustic critic of the Gandhian philosophy ended as a believer and was greatly influenced by Gandhian thought; but what lessons did Masani imbibe from Gandhiji?

"Gandhiji," wrote Masani, "was a revolutionary in many senses other than purely political. To the modern young man I was then, he had appeared an old fossil. He was a Hindu who believed in the caste system, even though in an idealised and a rarified form; he advocated celibacy, was opposed to contraception, and was a prohibitionist. But under cover of his conservative crust there was a real revolutionary at work." To illustrate his point, Masani narrates an incident that happened in Gandhiji's Ashram. There was a man in the Ashram who became attached to a woman worker who was married but whose husband had deserted her but would keep showing up every few years. The man and the woman worker took their problem to Gandhiji. He advised them to get married and live together. When it was pointed out that this would amount to bigamy under the law of the land, he brushed aside the objection and said that unjust laws should be broken. So far as he was concerned, the woman was free to marry. Of course

they must be prepared to go to jail if prosecuted, but on coming out they must resume living together. They agreed and Gandhji attended the ceremony and blessed the union.

The lesson that Masani learnt from this story was that it was not only British imperialist laws that he was prepared to defy, but any law, social or otherwise, which he felt was unjust and did violence to the individual conscience. "*Satyagraha* could thus be used for social reform as much as for political change."

Some other lessons that Masani learnt from Gandhiji:

- One must distinguish between a system and the human beings who run it. The system may be evil and may have to be destroyed but the human beings involved in it may not be bad men.
- Ends and means are interlinked and that the end does not justify the means. If the means are tarnished, even a good objective gets vitiated.
- Beware of the glorification of the State and the importance of decentralisation of economic and political power.
- Do not cling to a doctrine or a line of action that had become outmoded. Consistency in such matters is the virtue of an ass.
- Turn the Searchlight inwards.

In the concluding chapter of his memoirs *Bliss was it in that Dawn* Masani reminds the reader to remember that "It was an Indian hand that killed Gandhiji. It is Indian minds and Indian tongues that have since been engaged in killing his spirit".

6

RECONSIDERING SOCIALISM

There were two reasons for Masani moving away from socialism—his disenchantment with the 'Left' in general and Marxism in particular. The second was the influence of Gandhiji, which we discussed, in the previous chapter.

A London School of Economics brand of socialist of the British Labour Party kind, Masani had the opportunity to see for himself the early beginnings of socialism of the Marxist-Leninist variety when it was just ten years old (the Bolshevik revolution of October 1917. His first visit to the Soviet Union was in 1927). Ten years later during a second visit to the Soviet Union in 1937 he had the opportunity, once again, to observe it at close quarters. The first visit was as a student. The second as a socialist politician and a participant in India's freedom struggle.

The seeds of Masani's disenchantment with the ideologies of the 'Left', particularly Marxism-Leninism or communism as it is better known, were laid after his second visit to the Soviet Union. In *Soviet Sidelights*, the little book he wrote and published after this visit, while being all praise for the Soviet Union, he also raised some doubts, which indicated his discomfort with some developments not compatible with socialist thought. But he swept these under the carpet as did so many others like Bertrand Russell and Arthur Koestler who too were ardent admirers of the 'Soviet experiment' only to be sadly disillusioned but who resisted accepting the truth for a number of years. Perhaps what

triggered Masani's public expression of these doubts and led to his disillusionment was the behaviour of communism's votaries in India—the Communist Party of India (CPI).

His disillusionment-with Soviet communism led him to question Marxist dogma and to a rethinking of his socialist beliefs. The result was a seminal essay entitled *Socialism Reconsidered,* which he wrote in March 1944, nearly five years after he had quit the CSP. The essay questioned some assumptions of Marxism. In his preface to the first edition he wrote: "The purpose of this essay is primarily to encourage among socialists in India a re-examination of methods and a re-definition of objectives... It is possible that the doubts I have raised will disturb and irritate some of my friends, who will feel I am guilty of heresy. To them my plea is that it is the facts that are disturbing and that those who want to see justice done in the social and economic spheres cannot afford the luxury of closing their eyes or shutting their mouths...

Indeed many of his socialist friends did not forgive Masani for his 'heresy'. In fact, as he noted wryly in his memoirs, an article reviewing his essay in the Socialist Party's organ *Janata,* was entitled 'The Fallen Angel of Socialism'.

Though some like Jayaprakash Narayan, Achyut Patwardhan, Kamlashankar Pandya, Yusuf Meherally and Asoka Mehta remained friends, other, more dogmatic comrades in the CSP treated him with some amount of disdain. So close was his relationship with Yusuf Meherally that when Masani decided to resign the primary membership of the CSP, the former, even while disagreeing with Masani's decision, actually helped him draft his letter of resignation!

On the other hand, Rajaji, a critic of Masani's socialist views during the days of the freedom struggle, wrote to

him: "Your pretty little book is as full of truth as it is handsomely got up." Rajaji had not changed his basic positions in economics and his general approach to men and matters. Masani had moved closer to accept many of the beliefs held by his father, Rustom Masani and moved away from Jawaharlal Nehru. This was to cost Masani dear in terms of the fishes and loaves of office in free India three years later, in 1947 after India attained independence.

Socialism Reconsidered marked a turning point in his public life. It was not an overnight development but began as far back as 1934 when he spent 10 days with Gandhiji in Orissa and after his second visit to the Soviet Union in 1937. His suspicions about the Soviet Union were further strengthened with his experience of having to work with the communists and deal with their ideological gyrations and tactics.

Masani was not an emotional person. He rarely allowed his heart to rule his head. I say this with conviction based on a relationship that lasted nearly four decades. It was this quality that repeatedly came to the fore when he felt a change in the direction of his thinking was called for.

"There are at least four assumptions of Marxism—there may be more—which I believe need to be re-considered" wrote Masani in his essay:

> The first of these is that the abolition of private property and its nationalisation will automatically bring in economic democracy and a classless society. It has now been shown in Russia that it need do nothing of the sort.
>
> The second Marxist assumption that needs reviewing is that the Dictatorship of the Proletariat is a possible and indeed a necessary transition state to socialism! The theory was that having served its purpose the dictatorship would evaporate and indeed, as Lenin following Engels put it: 'The State will then wither away'. In Russia the Soviet Government shows not the slightest

tendency to relax its complete stranglehold on individual liberty of every kind, much less to 'wither away'.

A third Marxist assumption that appears unable to stand a review of the past two decades is that socialism can be achieved by appealing to the collective selfishness of the working class and its collective hatred for the property owning classes. Unfortunately the appeal to the collective selfishness of the workers leads quite as often to their becoming a party to exploitation and injustice. We have already seen how the British working class, being given a minor share in the profits of the Empire, have become through the Labour Party, a party to the perpetuation of imperialism, which is the very antithesis of a world socialist order...

Yet another belief—and one held till now by all socialists is that socialism is the only alternative to capitalism. I must confess I held this view myself till round about 1937 or 1938. You had somehow to destroy capitalism and then, as day follows night, socialism must dawn. But *must* it? Is there not a third 'something' that is likely to emerge? ...

The questioning of the four assumptions of Marxism that we have found necessary amounts perhaps to nothing more than a shifting of the emphasis which the socialist must lay in the remaining period of the twentieth century. Looked at in this light, the nationalisation or State ownership of property needs definitely to be put in its proper place. Now that it is seen that what matters is not ownership so much as control of property, nationalisation is no longer the kernel of the matter. Besides, it is coming, whether we want it or not...

Who owns the State? That is the question of questions. Precisely because collectivised economy endangers individual liberty and political democracy, these have to be placed right in the centre of the picture of socialism in the years to come. These are the danger points of socialism. Respect for the human personality is likely to be the field on which battles in the second

half of the twentieth century will rage thickest, and no one has a right to be called a socialist who does not rally to the defence of the Rights of Man.

If individual liberty and political democracy are as essential a part of socialism as economic equality, it is necessary that the methods of achieving socialism, should fit the end. This calls for a repudiation of the Communist slogan that 'the end justifies the means' which more specifically means that in practice everything—lying, deceit, murder—is justified so long as it helps the Communist Party... Socialism can only be achieved by clean means with clean hands. Without intellectual integrity and adherence to truth, we shall get lost in the woods.

The problem for people placed like us therefore appears to be one of devising a method of social change which is dynamic and which yet eschews the violence of a *coup d'etat* and of the dictatorship which must inevitably follow. It is here I believe, that Mahatma Gandhi has made certain contributions to the development of political thought which every Socialist, who wishes to enrich his armoury and to devise ever more efficient weapons with which to bring about the social changes which he desires, must carefully study.

Masani had travelled from Marx to Gandhi but without giving up on socialism. His was not an uncritical or blind acceptance of 'Gandhism'. As he explained in *Socialism Reconsidered*, "Gandhiji's teachings do not constitute a well-knit system of economic thought, nor need we accept them indiscriminately, but it is pertinent to note that Gandhiji has always stressed the importance of economic equality. 'The whole of his (constructive) programme' he has said 'will be a structure on sand if it is not built on the solid foundation of economic equality'."

In 1947, three years after the publication of *Socialism Reconsidered*, Masani was invited by the Bombay university's

School of Economics and Sociology to give an address in their Silver Jubilee Lecture series. This gave him an opportunity to share with the students of the university and the public the outcome of his reconsideration of socialism. He called it 'A Plea for a Mixed Economy'. Masani may not have been the first Indian politician to propagate this form of economic organisation though he was among the pioneers in promoting this concept. It found its way into India's Five-Year Plans.

Masani's 'Mixed Economy' was a middle-of-the-road recipe—where the state and the citizen had roles to play in the economy even while ensuring that the freedom of the individual and an open society were safeguarded. The Soviet experiment had convinced him that political power combined with economic power would result in the oppression of the people. In any case is "State ownership and management of industries the answer to our needs?..." he asked. In his advocacy of a Mixed Economy he said *inter alia*:

> The rejection of a policy of State ownership and management of industries need not lead one to be content with the *status quo*. I put it forward, not as a poor substitute, nor as a mere half way house to the real thing but as a better, more scientific and more modern method of working for the same ends than the so-called 'scientific socialism' of the nineteenth century...
>
> There are certain things that need to be stressed in making an approach to the Mixed Economy. The first is that our approach must be free from dogma of any kind. The second thing to stress is that India is big enough for all forms of production to be tried out at the same time and since we are still at the beginning of our Industrial Revolution, the mere nationalisation of existing enterprises would in any event touch only the fringe of the problem that faces us. The third factor in our approach is to make the fullest use of the great

> contribution that has been made to economic thought in our country by Mahatma Gandhi, namely, the emphasis on decentralisation of industry and of its control. The fourth thing to do is to shift the emphasis from the State to increasing workers' control over industries and to foster the partnership of Labour both in the administration of industry and its fruits. Fifth and last, the Mixed Economy will depend less on ownership and management and more on control to see that the interests of the community reign supreme.

In this context a favourite aphorism of Masani comes to mind. He would often say, "You cannot replace something with nothing. You have to replace something with something better." He therefore concluded his lecture by articulating the kind of Mixed Economy he had in mind:

> Based on these ideas, the structure of the Mixed Economy would be somewhat as follows: There would be three sectors. The first would be a very small sector of existing industries, which may be nationalised. It needs to be made clear at this point that there is no need for the acceptance of any *a priori* nationalisation of basic and key industries. That is a dangerous fallacy, too easily conceded even by opponents of such measures. We have seen that State ownership and management are bound to impair efficiency and retard industrial progress... Nationalisation should therefore extend only to exceptional cases. In such a case, it would be a wise safeguard to provide that no industry can be nationalised until a Royal Commission—or whatever takes the place of a Royal Commission in a republic—has publicly investigated the condition of the industry and recommended its nationalisation.
>
> The second sector would be a very much bigger one and that would be of fresh Public Enterprises. These would be mostly new industries or new units in existing industries, established to the extent that free enterprise

> is found to be unable to meet the country's needs. In the case of both these sectors, the relations that are established between the public enterprises and the political authorities who control them on behalf of the community will have a decisive influence on both the efficiency of these enterprises and the welfare of the country.
>
> The third and largest sector of industry would be that of free enterprise. It should be realised as Louis Fischer has put it, that 'private enterprise is today a public utility'. It should be encouraged and provided with all the necessary incentives, with minimum controls for the purpose of planning and co-ordination. Such controls would obviously vary from, say, 5 per cent in one industry to perhaps 25 per cent in another.
>
> Such a programme of State *plus* free enterprise is in fact the only practicable programme that any government of India can possibly adopt in the coming years...

In the next ten years he would further refine his thinking on the economy and on the limits to state authority. What needs to be noted is that he was prepared to discard any dogma that not only ran contrary to his basic belief in the centrality of the individual in society but also on empirical data that was then available.

7

EARNING A LIVING

When Masani resigned from the CSP in November 1939 it was not only from the Party but also from politics itself. This was prompted by a personal reason—that of earning a living. He had not been very successful in his practice at the bar. He had few cases and little income. He termed it as desultory and half-hearted because he gave all his time to the freedom struggle.

None of his colleagues in the CSP was happy with his decision. In fact after reading his letter of resignation Ram Manohar Lohia wrote back: "Few letters have upset me so much as yours. I only hope that it is a passing phase with you. I may sympathise with your reason for looking out for any suitable job but I will certainly not be able to understand or appreciate your action. You have arrived at a stage when no job can be suitable for you, unless it gives you free scope for political activity. I think you ought to get into touch with Narendradevji and Jayaprakash. The Party must revive on proper lines or else the Left will be thoroughly disrupted. No other man is gifted with the necessary organisational ability to do this job."

As it happened Masani was lucky enough to find an employer in a commercial organisation who gave him enough scope for indulging in politics and which not only enabled him to keep his job but also, six years later, contest the elections to the Indian Legislative Assembly in 1945 as a Congress candidate.

When that happened JP wrote to him: "I cannot tell you how happy I feel at this. Not because it means honour to you, but for two things: it means a great gain to the Congress Party in the Assembly, and second, which is more important to me, personally, it signifies your re-entry into politics. I was never able to reconcile myself to Indian politics without M.R. Masani, and I always considered it to be a major mistake in your life to have left active political work. The fact that even now you intend to keep up your connection with Tatas does not detract from the importance of your new decision. A man must live, and it is far more honourable to live by one's labour than in other ways that many of us are compelled to adopt. I wish you every success in your new work."

But during the years between 1928 and 1939 Masani found that life, as a socialist, was emotionally satisfying but hard. The biggest sacrifice he had to make, he confessed, was the denial of the comforts of his father's home. From the time he began the work of organising the new Party his entire way of living had changed. Till then he had been staying with his parents in their house on Versova beach as his income as a barrister was not enough for him to have his own house. "Soon after the establishment of the Bombay Socialist Group in the beginning of 1934," he wrote, "I found that my father disapproved of my activities. His objection was to the fomenting of class struggle, which he considered undesirable. My father was a Liberal of the classical school, and, with some justification, he felt that our activities disrupted social harmony and peace. On one occasion my father told me clearly that he did not like propaganda for class war being conducted from his home."

Masani started looking for employment that would supplement his meagre income as a barrister to be able to live on his own. The Janmabhoomi group of newspapers in Bombay had started an English daily called the *Daily Sun*

and Masani took up a job as night duty Assistant Editor of this paper on a salary of Rs. 150 per month. Night duty was convenient because during the day he could practice at the Bombay High Court and carry on his political activities as Joint Secretary of the Congress Socialist Party.

Unfortunately *The Daily Sun* soon closed down and at the end of 1934 the problem of earning an income arose once again.... This was solved "in a manner typical in Indian political life" by seeking assistance from moneyed people who were keen to fund activists in areas they considered were in the national interest. Two well-known elderly gentlemen supported Masani financially with a monthly contribution of Rs. 50 each. They were Dr A.S. Erulkar, a physician, and Purshottam Kanji, a Gandhian who ran the Khadi Bhandar. This money supplemented by lunch at Bombay's Grand Hotel paid for by his father who was then a director of the hotel, kept Masani, the socialist, in politics!

Having resigned from the CSP and his decision to retire from politics, Masani began once again looking around for employment. "I was tired," he wrote, "of eking out a miserable existence on the meagre bounty of one or two who thought my being in public life worthwhile. I wanted the dignity and economic independence that come of earning one's own living." This was to leave a permanent impression on his life as I can personally testify. Years later, when he was General Secretary of the Swatantra Party, whenever a young man met him and wanted to join politics, the first question Masani would ask him was what he did for living. If the answer was in the negative he would tell him, 'first be gainfully employed and then come and see me.' To be able to participate in political work a person should have an income of his own independent of politics. In other words, he discouraged politicians who lived off politics.

Aware of his son's plight Rustom Masani introduced

him to A.D. Shroff who was then a Director of Tatas for a job in the Tata organisation. Shroff introduced Masani to J.R.D. Tata. This was in 1940. "I remember" Masani writes "J.R.D. Tata saying that there would be no danger of their putting me in charge of Industrial Relations and Labour matters in view of my socialist views." In 1941, Masani was appointed as Secretary of Tata Chemicals. Soon thereafter he was appointed Head of Tata's Public Relations Department. He was also given an additional responsibility as an Adviser on Industrial Relations.

In 1954 Masani had moved from public relations to the Chairman's Office i.e. J.R.D. Tata's office, as his Executive Assistant. This position brought Masani into a close association with Tata. One of Masani's qualities was to be absolutely clear about his job responsibilities whether in a commercial organisation or holding office in a political party. Masani listed his responsibilities as J.R.D. Tata's Executive Assistant:

> To try and lighten his (the Chairman's) burden and to stop him from being involved in needless routine so that he might have time to attend to his policy-making functions;
> to protect him from the flood of visitors and petitioners by whom persons in such position are inevitably besieged;
> to help the Chairman in gathering material for various addresses and speeches he had to deliver from time to time.

Masani's tenure in the Tata organisation, which lasted for sixteen years, was very fruitful benefiting both the organisation and Masani. Two areas deserve special mention. One was in the area of industrial relations particularly the Tata Iron & Steel Company or TISCO, in Jamshedpur. The second was in the realm of the Social

Responsibilities of Business (known in contemporary terms as Corporate Social Responsibilities or CSR).

Though Masani had jettisoned much of his socialist baggage, he continued to believe very strongly in its social justice aspects. In fact, he used to mention that social justice was not the monopoly of the socialists. He also believed voluntary organisations, like trade unions for instance, gave strength to the democratic system. He was a fervent believer in collective bargaining and the right to strike as fundamental freedoms and free trade unions (not linked to political parties) as a counterpart of free enterprise in a free society. He also championed the concept of workers' participation in management. In 1955, as a member of a group organised by the Industrial Welfare Society of London, Masani visited West Germany and Yugoslavia to study how their experiment with workers' participation in management was working in the Federal Republic of Germany and in Yugoslavia. He was much impressed with the way it was functioning in Germany though he was warned by both the employers and the DGB, the German trade union organisation, that neither in England nor in India should one seek to copy the experiment as "the German workers' sense of discipline and capacity for hard work could not be easily reproduced elsewhere".

The Yugoslav model, Masani discovered, was Gandhian in nature even if Yugoslavia was under communist rule. He had detailed discussions with the Yugoslav communists and was in for a surprise! To put it in his own words: "The Yugoslav communists rejected nationalisation and state ownership of the Soviet pattern as reactionary state capitalism which had nothing to do with Marxism or communism. It took the form of workers' control, that is, those who run a plant from the manager down to the unskilled worker as a whole." At the same time he took note of an important fact that the experiment

had worked fairly well only because of the power and authority of President Tito and was not likely to have worked as smoothly in a free society. Nevertheless, Masani viewed workers' control, even if not being altogether genuine, as a step forward and in the right direction. "When my Yugoslav communist friends talked about getting back to the laws of the market and of trusteeship by those who owned the plant or the factory, I told them that this reminded me of Adam Smith on the one hand and Mahatma Gandhi's advice to me during our Orissa walking tour in 1934 on the other".

Deeply influenced by what he observed in these two countries, Masani collaborated with J.R.D. Tata in introducing the concept of workers' association in management in the Tata Iron and Steel Company in Jamshedpur. In 1956 an agreement was signed between the Management of TISCO and the Tata Workers' Union. "The agreement provided for increasing and widening the scope of a certain measure of joint consultation and association that had already been there. A three-tier structure was reared with departmental committees at the base, a joint works council and a joint town council as the next step forward and a joint management council at the apex." Masani noted in his memoirs that the scheme worked well, not only ensuring harmonious relations but in times of communal rioting, such an arrangement helped the restoration of law and order and prevented communal influences from infecting the Tata workforce.

The second concept, to which Masani felt he had contributed his bit, was in the area of the Social Responsibilities of Business. In this he worked in close cooperation with Jayaprakash Narayan and J.R.D. Tata. While the concept itself blossomed ten years later in the form of a 'Declaration on the Social Responsibilities of Business', its origins can be traced to the *Bhoodan* movement

(gift of land to the landless) launched by Acharya Vinoba Bhave in the early fifties. Jayaprakash Narayan was pro-active in supporting Vinoba Bhave and the organisation he founded (the All India Sarva Seva Sangh) but widened the scope of the movement by introducing the concept of *Sampattidan* (gift of wealth or money). "The idea was that, since the landless to whom land donated as *bhoodan* was distributed had no capital, those with surplus wealth or income should contribute a fraction of their resources to enable the All India Sarva Seva Sangh to give them a plough or a brace of bullocks or some seed to start with."

Masani supported JP by himself becoming a *Sampattidani* and agreeing to contribute a tenth of his net annual income. He did this for the next twenty years. Along with JP, Masani canvassed support from persons with means. As a result, J.R.D. Tata agreed to an annual contribution of one-sixth of his net income after paying taxes for five years. Mill owner Dharmsey Khatau, decided to contribute a sixth of his annual expenditure as *Sampattidan.* Another mill owner to respond was Arvind Mafatlal.

Ten years later, in March 1965, on JP's initiative, Masani organised an international seminar at the India International Centre in Delhi on the Social Responsibilities of Business. Though the seminarists came from different backgrounds, both professionally and ideologically, they were able to agree on a 'Declaration on the Social Responsibilities of Business.' What did this Declaration imply? It implied that "unless conditions were created in which businessmen could breathe freely, it would be unrealistic to expect any acceptance of far reaching social responsibilities".

Based on this, the Declaration then spelt out the various responsibilities of business towards the shareholder, the worker, the consumer, and finally, the community. It ended with a mention of the significance of management and recognition of its role for education and social change.

Even though Masani was now a business executive, politics was not far away. The Quit India movement was launched from Mumbai on 8 August 1942. On 9 August members of the Congress Working Committee were arrested. Masani was then secretary of Tata Aircraft Limited. Not wanting to embarrass his employers by overtly participating in the Quit India struggle, Masani quietly participated in the underground movement by helping with the publication of an illegal fortnightly journal called *Ninth August* edited by Achyut Patwardhan with a column entitled "Censored News—And Uncensored Views". When, on 9 February 1943 Gandhiji undertook a 21-day fast while imprisoned in the Aga Khan's bungalow in Pune to protest the British government's acts of repression and oppression, an already restless Masani could contain himself no longer. He resigned his job and courted arrest. But before leaving for Pune, he met J.R.D. Tata to inform him of his decision. J.R.D. Tata simply told Masani to come and see him after his release. Some months later, after his release, Masani did that and rejoined Tatas. Altogether he spent 16 years as an executive in the House of Tatas with two breaks. One when he was in jail for a couple of months for his participation in the Quit India movement and the other for 16 months when he was India's Ambassador in Brazil.

He resigned his position in Tatas in 1956 before filing his nomination as an independent candidate for the Lok Sabha from the Ranchi parliamentary constituency which he won.

Masani set up his own management consultancy firm in 1958. The consultancy brought him a decent income so that he did not have to live off politics.

8

CONGRESS MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT

During the period 1945-51, i.e., on the eve of India's independence, the parliament in Delhi had three different names performing three different functions: The Indian Legislative Assembly, the transitional Provisional Parliament and the Constituent Assembly (an expanded version of the Indian Legislative Assembly). These three avatars of the same parliament launched India into a parliamentary democracy in 1952 when the Indian Republic's first General Elections brought into being the first democratically elected Lok Sabha based on adult franchise.

With the Second World War ending in 1945, the British government called for fresh elections to the Indian Legislative Assembly in Delhi. The electorate in these elections were income tax payers and therefore comprised mainly the literate middle class. The Assembly consisted of one hundred forty members. Of these one hundred were elected, and forty were nominated by the Viceroy. Of these forty, twenty-six were officials and fourteen non-officials.

Sardar Patel had Masani nominated as the Congress candidate to the Assembly from Bombay. He won comfortably. This marked the start of Masani's parliamentary career in 1945. Towards the end of 1946 the Indian Legislative Assembly converted itself into the

Constituent Assembly* to draft the Constitution of India. Alongside this task, the Constituent Assembly also functioned as the Provisional Parliament from 1947 to 1952.

Masani's maiden speech as a member of the Indian Legislative Assembly in 1945 lasted ten minutes and was mainly a demand for the release of Jayaprakash Narayan and Ram Manohar Lohia who were in a prison in Agra. His speech so impressed Sir John Thorne, the Home Member in the Viceroy's Council, that he met Masani soon after the speech and asked him if he would like to meet JP and Lohia in prison. Masani accepted the offer on condition that no official would be present at the meeting. Thorne agreed but put a counter-condition that Masani should let him know on their (JP's and Lohia's) "state of mind and how they felt about things". Masani saw no harm in this and agreed. He met JP and Lohia in the Agra prison and found them in "reasonably good spirits and quite cheerful".

Subsequently, through a letter from JP, Masani came to know that Thorne had met them and was likely to meet them again before deciding if they could be released. JP's letter to Masani had also something more to say—appreciative comments about his speeches in the Assembly. JP wrote:

> ...Yes, I read the report of your maiden speech in the *Times* (we get the paper daily and like it immensely, the best English daily in India I think) as also the reports of your other speeches. Judging from the reports and the press comments on them, I am afraid you were mistaken in your estimate of the probable contribution of M.R. Masani to the Congress Party's work in the Assembly. That shows among other things, that while I am not

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* The Constituent Assembly was made up of Members of the Indian Legislative Assembly; members elected by proportional representation by the State Legislative Assemblies and representatives of the Indian Princely States.

always wrong, you are not always right!

About the maiden speech, do you think it right to concede that only those who are too gentle to kill flies should be at liberty? Of course it is well-known that the Empire suddenly went non-violent in 1942, but I don't think it is equally well-known that civilized practice has, since then, been to allow freedom only to those who believed in non-violence."*

It must be remembered that in the Indian Legislative Assembly, the Indian National Congress played the role of an opposition party till the formation of the Interim government in mid-1946. Not many may remember the Royal Navy Mutiny in 1945. Speaking on an adjournment motion moved by the Congress Party on the subject, Masani saw the Mutiny as the growing inability of the British government to control their own forces. This was typical of Masani, as we shall see presently. He did not use the occasion to berate the Viceroy's nominees who occupied the Treasury Benches. Rather than support the mutineers, he took the government to task for not being able to put down the Mutiny. Speaking in the Assembly he appealed to the British to leave the country while there was 'still an army, navy and air force left in the country'. He pointed out that the situation had been brought under control and that the government's prestige has been preserved with the cooperation of men like Sardar Patel in Bombay and Gazdar in Karachi. It had been preserved because our leaders of all parties were prepared in the interest of this country to

* This praise for Masani's speech in the Assembly, reminds me of the not infrequent praise he received publicly from Rajaji in the columns of *Swarajya* and at other times in letters to him every time he delivered an important speech in the Lok Sabha. I had the opportunity to read these letters (often they were handwritten by Rajaji on postcards) when I worked with Masani in the Central Office of the Swatantra Party.

endorse the call of the authorities. The defence secretary, Philip Mason, author of *Men Who Ruled India*, considered by scholars to be a classic about the Indian Civil Service, complimented Masani: "That was a wicked speech Masani but I enjoyed it."

Masani did well as an opposition spokesman in the Assembly. In a conversation with JP, Jawaharlal Nehru told him that he was not satisfied with the performance of the Congress Party's members in the Assembly except Masani. Masani's role as a Congress legislator in the opposition ended when in mid-1946 the Interim Government was formed with Nehru as the Chief Minister and Liaquat Ali Khan (of the Muslim League) as the Deputy Chief Minister and Finance Minister. Masani now found himself in the treasury benches because the Congress Party to which he belonged was in a coalition government with the Muslim League.

Finance Minister Liaquat Ali Khan introduced his budget on 28 February 1947. Masani described it as a "vicious budget obviously designed to give a parting kick to Indian industry before the partition". Little did Masani realise that the effect of this "parting kick" would be felt for the next four decades in free India. For the first time Masani found himself out of sync with Nehru who supported the Liaquat Ali Khan Budget. Along with some Congress members Masani sought to make the taxation proposals in the Budget (Capital Gains Tax and Excess Profits Tax) less severe. Being Congressmen they could not oppose it but they managed to have the Bill referred to a select committee of parliament. With Sardar Patel's approval Masani and fellow Congressman K.C. Neogy put in minutes of dissent. The Sardar, records Masani, "was furious. Being a realist he saw what this would lead to." The Select Committee's report resulted in some improvements in the taxation measures.

To Masani, as to many other Congressmen, differences over the Liaquat Ali Budget revealed publicly, for the first time, divergence of views between Sardar Patel and Nehru. From then on till the Sardar Patel died, there were frequent clashes between the two as they did not see eye to eye on many issues. For Masani too this was the first of many skirmishes he would have with Nehru. He observed: "The beginning of the rift between Jawaharlal and myself came when he became leader of the Government and I, a Congress middle-bencher. Much of the zest in parliamentary life seemed to vanish for me. I was only really happy when again in opposition from 1957 onwards." Be that as it may, it was the Indian Legislative Assembly that honed Masani's skills as a parliamentarian.

On the eve of Indian independence, the Indian Legislative Assembly transformed itself into the Constituent Assembly-cum-Provisional Parliament. The Constituent Assembly had its first meeting on 9 December 1946 when Dr Rajendra Prasad was unanimously elected as its President. It completed its work of drafting a Constitution for India on 24 January 1950. Dr Rajendra Prasad was unanimously elected as the first President of the Republic of India.

During this period of 38 months, Masani was appointed India's Ambassador to, Brazil, but he resumed his seat in the Constituent Assembly 16 months later. How did this happen? Before accepting his ambassadorial assignment he had consulted Sardar Patel who assured him that on his return from Brazil, the Sardar would arrange a by-election to enable Masani get back his seat.

What role did Masani play in the making of the Indian Constitution? Masani on the eve of independence had turned from a 'socialist' to a 'Gandhian Liberal'. This was evident from the many positions he took in the debates in the Constituent Assembly. He played the role of a

conscientious dissenter ever mindful of the values that made for a meaningful democracy. He was a member of the Advisory Committee of the Assembly and its Sub-Committee on Fundamental Rights. "There was a running battle," records Masani, "throughout the Constituent Assembly's tenure and its committee between those like myself who believed in individual liberties and those who put the State first." One such "battle" concerned the Common Civil Code. Masani initiated a proposal for the insertion of a clause in the fundamental rights chapter of the Constitution that it was the State's responsibility to establish a uniform civil code. Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, Hansa Mehta, and Dr Ambedkar supported Masani. But the majority disagreed. The supporters of the common civil code had to rest content by recording their dissent in a Minute which said: "One of the factors that has kept India back from advancing to nationhood has been the existence of personal laws based on religion which keep the nation divided into water-tight compartments in many aspects of life. We are of the view that a uniform civil code should be guaranteed to the Indian people within a period of five to ten years."

Another clause that Masani tried to get passed and lost by five votes to four said: "No impediments to marriages between citizens shall be based merely upon difference of religion." The four who voted with Masani were himself, the two ladies and Dr Ambedkar.

Proportional Representation or PR was a favourite subject with Masani. He had studied the subject in depth and it was natural therefore for him to try his utmost to get PR into the Constitution of India. So, when the question of safeguarding the right to representation of minorities, whether political, ethnic or religious came up, and when K.M. Munshi moved that 'as a general principle, there should be reservation of seats for different recognised

minorities in the various legislatures', Masani tabled an amendment pleading that in a system based on universal adult franchise there would be no need for reserving seats for Harijans or any other minority if voting was by the method of proportional representation. He was supported by Dr Ambedkar who spoke for the Harijans, by the spokesmen of the Anglo-Indian and Christian communities and by members belonging to the Muslim League. They were prepared not to insist on reservations if voting in elections was by the method of proportional representation.

Sardar Patel who was in the Chair opposed the proposal on the ground that accepting Masani's proposal would lead to shifting coalitions and instability as in France. What the Sardar wanted was the emergence of a two-party system and a strong government backed by a decisive majority in Parliament. He was afraid that if PR was accepted it would give rise to a large number of small parties. Masani was unable to convince the Committee that the number of parties was not so much a result of the electoral system as of "national temperament". He argued that Indians were not like the Anglo-Saxons, with their predilection for compromise. Indians were more like the Latins—the French, Italians and Latin-Americans—"with their proclivity for splitting and splintering." Reservation won, PR lost.*

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* Today, despite the 'first past the post' system, the splintering of parties has reached such levels that according to Election Commission of India, we have as many as 63 registered parties and 718 unregistered political parties in the country! Also coalition governments have come to stay both at the centre and the states distorting the verdict of the electorate. Moreover the system of reservations has spread its tentacles to every imaginable activity with constant clamour from one or another caste/religious/ethnic group wanting to be included in the reserved category.

Masani noted with regret that as a "result of reservations being accepted for the Harijans, India is still plagued with the phenomena which have resulted in the exploitation of the Harijans by unscrupulous and corrupt leaders who have used them to get into the Union and state Governments. It is also the cause of a great deal of corruption in our national life which has come from the buying and selling of votes of many scheduled class members in our legislatures". At the same time Masani won a victory of sorts when he and Sir Homi Mody, who was also a member of the Constituent Assembly, rejected the reservation of seats for the Parsis.

When the Constituent Assembly discussed the allocation of subjects to the Centre and the States, Masani's proposal that Planning should be on the States' list was accepted only partially by being placed on the concurrent list.

The appropriateness or otherwise of republican India conferring titles was something on which Masani had clear views strongly held. He was for abolishing titles. "The idea of a man putting something before or after his name as a reward for services rendered will not be possible in Free India," because, he argued, "not only in subject countries but even in so-called free countries, titles become dangerous and a source of corruption both to those who bestow them and to those who accept them." Therefore when an official motion on the subject, which among other things said: "No title other than one denoting an office or profession shall be conferred by the Union," Masani moved an amendment wanting the words "other than one denoting an office or profession" deleted. The amended resolution would read "No title shall be conferred by the Union". Masani's amendment was put to the vote and lost.

After the Constituent Assembly concluded its work the Provisional Parliament carried on till the first General

Elections of 1952 and Masani continued as its member.

We had earlier referred to the rift between him and Nehru. How did the rift happen? We have seen Masani during his socialist days almost hero-worshipping Nehru; their shared enthusiasm for the Bolshevik revolution in Russia; Masani's keenness in Nehru taking a proactive interest in the CSP and disappointment that on occasions Nehru was not being socialist enough! But with his growing disillusionment with the policies of the Soviet Union, with communists and communism, as also his realisation of the inadequacies of Marxism, he found himself unable to convince Nehru just as he had found it difficult to carry his comrades with him in the CSP on the nature and disruptive role of the communists.

It was Masani's case that Nehru refused to believe or did not want to believe that the Soviet Union or for that matter Stalin could be that bad. This refusal to accept reality or brush reality under the carpet had a bearing on Nehru's economic and foreign policies. An anecdote recorded in his memoirs explains areas of agreement and disagreement with Nehru and how the possibility of Masani being appointed Food Minister did not materialise.

> Some time during the life of the interim government, John Mathai casually told me that there were reports that I was being thought of as Food Minister in the new Cabinet. *The Statesman* had already referred to this. He added that Nehru was seriously thinking of this. He then asked me a question: 'If you were taken into the Cabinet, who would you support, Nehru or Patel?' I immediately realised that my answer, which would no doubt be reported by Mathai to Nehru, would decide whether in fact I would be Food Minister or not. I decided to be frank and take the consequences. My reply was that the question of supporting one against the other did not arise. From my point of view the question was—who would

> vote on the same side as I on various issues? I had no doubt that Nehru and I would be in unison on issues concerning minorities and the non-denominational character of the state and the approach to modernisation while Sardar Patel and I would agree on issues of foreign policy and communism. I am afraid that answer did it. I was never asked!

Issues such as India's attitude to the Korean war that broke out in June 1950; the expansionist designs of the Soviet Union particularly in the Near and Far East; the invasion of Tibet by China in 1950, often described as India's betrayal of Tibet, brought into sharp focus the increasingly divergent world views of Masani and Nehru. The exchanges between Nehru and Masani would form an interesting study of the evolution of parliamentary debate, which in recent years has deteriorated considerably. Both had their basic perceptions influenced by cold war considerations. While Nehru generally supported the position taken by the Soviet Bloc, Masani tended to take the American and Western European position generally described as the "free world". In retrospect, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the retreat from Eastern Europe of the Soviet Red Army resulting in an avalanche of information on life in and under Soviet hegemony, largely justified the positions that Masani took in the heydays of the Cold War.

Differences apart, the fact that there could be such sharp exchange of views with criticism of Nehru's policies that too by a member of his own party should be considered as a tribute to Nehru whatever position he took on the Cold War. If parliamentary democracy has been institutionalised, irrespective of the current poor quality of debates, it was because Nehru would not have it any other way. And Masani on a number of occasions praised Nehru for the role he played in nurturing and strengthening

parliamentary democracy in India.

When towards the end of 1951 the life of the Provisional Parliament was coming to a close and the first General Elections were in the offing, Masani was fairly certain that having been an outspoken critic of Nehru and with Sardar Patel having died in November 1950 it was highly unlikely that he would be given the Congress Party's nomination to contest the general elections to the Lok Sabha. Rather than run the risk of his nomination being rejected even if recommended by the Bombay Pradesh Congress Committee, Masani decided to stay out of the elections. And stay out he did by accepting an invitation from the American Institute of International Education to tour American Universities from coast to coast and was away from India throughout the election campaign, returning to India only after the first General Elections were over.

9

THE EMERGENCE OF THE SWATANTRA PARTY

Masani skipped the 1952 General Elections. Though disenchanted with the economic and foreign policies of the Congress Party, he did not formally resign but ceased to be its member by not renewing his membership.

Ram Manohar Lohia had correctly predicted in his letter to Masani way back in 1939 when Masani resigned from the CSP that "no job can be suitable for you unless it gives you free scope for political activity". But what Lohia did not expect when he wrote that letter was that the company he worked for would not object to his engaging himself in political activity provided it did not affect his work and did not involve opposition politics. He had already served in Tatas for 16 years with brief breaks. The first when he quit to participate in the Quit India movement of 1942 and courted imprisonment; and the second when he was appointed India's ambassador in Brazil. In both cases—when he was released from jail and when he resigned his ambassadorship—thanks to J.R.D. Tata's generosity and Masani's own managerial competence, he returned to his job in Tatas. He remained a Tata executive right throughout his tenure as a member of the Provisional Parliament/Constituent Assembly.

By 1956, already disturbed by the sharp turn to the 'Left' that the country was taking as a result of the Second Five Year Plan with its emphasis on the State occupying the 'commanding heights of the economy' and the increasing

influence of the communists in the governance of the country, Masani's political instincts convinced him that "the time had come for a new political initiative by which the monopoly enjoyed by the various socialist and communist parties could be broken". What he had in mind was a liberal party with policies and programmes distinct from the other political parties, which were merely "various versions of the collectivist paradise, which had been presented to the Indian people since Independence". Always a man who rarely allowed too much time to lapse between thought and action, he realised that with General Elections due in 1957 round the corner there wasn't enough time to organise such a new party. He consulted a number of friends including Col. Leslie Sawhny, a colleague in Tatas. Col. Sawhny, who had taken premature retirement from the Army soon after independence, agreed with Masani's analysis of the situation. The two also agreed that with the second General Elections round the corner it was too late to found a political party but that if they could persuade some senior citizens, not necessarily politicians, to contest the elections as independents and if they succeeded it would serve a dual purpose. There would be in parliament some members who would speak up against the statist policies then being followed and champion the cause of a free economy. In addition to Masani himself they were able to persuade some of their friends to contest as independent candidates in the 1957 elections to the Lok Sabha. They were: Homi Mody, a member of the Constituent Assembly, a banker and an adviser to the House of Tatas; S. Goyal, a businessman; R.V. Murthy, a journalist and editor of *Commerce*; H.R. Pardivala, a lawyer; and Eric D'Costa, a journalist and editor of the *Eastern Economist*. Masani was the only one to win.

J.R.D. Tata welcomed Masani's attempt to return to parliamentary politics as being in the public interest. But he cautioned him that should he get elected as an

independent, which meant sitting in the opposition to the Congress government, he would have to resign his position as an executive in the Tata organisation. Masani realised that J.R.D. Tata was doing so "in the interests of the shareholders of the Tata group of companies". Masani did not wait for the result of the election but submitted his resignation before leaving for Ranchi in Bihar to file his nomination as an independent candidate.

As a Member of Parliament, Masani was entitled to a salary, allowances and perks which in those days was much less generous than what they are today. So while the 'earning a living' problem was not so acute as in his socialist years, he prepared himself to get into business should he get elected. Sixteen years in Tatas had exposed him to a variety of disciplines ranging from industrial relations to public relations, including personnel and corporate management. He decided to take up the profession of management consultancy and set up his own firm which he named 'Personnel & Productivity Services'. PPS specialised in personnel management and industrial relations, productivity, organisation and methods, management training and development, and public relations. With a staff of eight, including two or three senior consultants who were experienced persons from industry, Masani managed to get a reasonable income that enabled him to indulge in what he enjoyed most—politics. Profession and politics proved to be a good mix, though he never allowed the one to interfere with the other.

Now that he was back in parliament he joined a grouping of independent MPs which went under the name of the Independent Parliamentary Group. The Steering Committee of this group consisted of Jaipal Singh, leader of the Jharkhand Party who had sponsored Masani's candidature as an independent and lent him his party's symbol; Frank Anthony, the nominated member

representing the Anglo-Indian community; and Maharaja Karni Singh of Bikaner. Masani was elected a member of this committee. Almost simultaneously he set in motion efforts to form a liberal democratic party. As already mentioned this was among the primary reasons for his wanting to get back to parliament. Among the very first persons he turned to were his former colleagues in the erstwhile Congress Socialist Party.

Here a digression is called for. The socialists in the Congress were opposed to the partition of India. JP was unable to persuade Gandhiji to speak against it when it came up for decision at the AICC meeting in June 1947. Gandhiji told JP that while he opposed partition he would not speak against it and appealed to JP not to divide the Congress Party. The CSP moved a resolution opposing partition. It was defeated by 157 votes to 29. The AICC adopted the resolution to the partition of India.

Members belonging to the CSP did not participate in the proceedings of the Constituent Assembly. They accused the Congress of "selling out to British imperialism by participating in a bogus Constituent Assembly". The CSP held an All India Socialist Conference in Kanpur to which they invited Masani as a fraternal delegate. Masani attended the conference but failed to persuade JP and the socialists not to boycott the Constituent Assembly. In 1948 the Socialist Party left the 'Congress' and became an independent political party.

The Socialist Party contested the first General Elections in a big way and was a major contender for power. They were beaten badly. Not long thereafter the Socialist Party split in two—the Praja Socialist Party (PSP) and the Samyukta Socialist Party (SSP). The first acknowledged the leadership of Jayaprakash Narayan while Ram Manohar Lohia led the other. Those who followed him came to be known as Lohia socialists.

Now to get back to Masani's efforts to form a new liberal party. He got in touch with Ganga Saran Singh or Ganga Babu who was then chairman of the PSP. In a carefully worded letter Masani confided that he was working towards the emergence of "a new party of a liberal colour" and assured him that "there was a great deal of common ground" between liberals like him and the social democratic leaders of the PSP that Ganga Babu represented "insofar as our basic approach to democracy and the threat of totalitarianism were concerned". Masani even offered that if the PSP would drop the Socialist label Masani "would be prepared to go a long way in accepting social justice and the objectives of socialism in the programme of the new Party". After consulting his colleagues Ganga Babu turned down the offer. He said that a majority of his colleagues were not in favour because the rank and file of the PSP were so dedicated to socialism that "they would defeat such an effort if it was made" by the leadership of the PSP. Commenting on the failure of his effort to convince his socialist friends from the past, he wrote:

> I thought then, as I do now, that this was nothing short of a major tragedy. Indian socialists, it appeared to me, were still living in the past when the main threat to freedom and social justice came from capitalism. The new threat to these values from the direction of the state with its totalitarian character did not seem to bother them very much. They remained wedded to doctrinaire slogans of 'nationalisation' and 'equality' which Twentieth Century socialists of the West like Hugh Gaitskell and the Socialist Union in Britain and the German Social Democratic Party had left far behind. Who knows what could have happened if liberals and democratic socialists in India had joined hands at that time to form a progressive national democratic party? The whole history of India might have been different and happier. Certainly, the

> miserable failure to produce an alternative government for the country in 1970 might have been averted. I have always felt that the conservatism of the 'Left' is as pernicious as the conservatism of the 'Right'. The inability of good men to turn their guns from old enemies to new ones has led to many a tragedy, and this was one of them.

This rebuff did not deter Masani from going ahead with his plans. He got in touch with C. Rajagopalachari and Jayaprakash Narayan. Masani was in search of a leader for the proposed party. And it is in this context that one gets an insight into Masani's awareness of his shortcomings. He had no illusions about his inadequacies as a political leader even as he was clear about his competencies. The following evaluation of himself, very unusual for a politician, speaks for the man:

> I never had any illusion about the fact that I personally lacked the political appeal of the kind that a country like India needed for the purpose. I had always conceived my role in Indian politics as an effective Number 2 man, who could run the machine efficiently provided there was a leader who had the necessary charisma. Such was the role I was able to play along with JP in the 1930s and with Rajaji in the 1960s.

And what was, in Masani's view the kind of leader that India needed?

> My definition of an acceptable leader in India was a home-spun and earthy personality with deep roots in the Indian tradition which I unfortunately lacked. This of course would also be reflected in one's way of life, one's dress and a certain austerity and abstinence from allegedly Western 'evils' such as drink and ballroom dancing.

Rajaji pleaded ill health and old age to be able to lead the new party and Jayaprakash Narayan asked to be excused as he no longer believed in the party system but favoured a partyless democracy and was engaged in the Sarvodaya movement.

The progress towards a new party made little or no progress through 1957 and 1958. And then in 1959 came the opportunity that Masani was waiting for. At its meeting in January 1959 the AICC adopted what came to be known as the Nagpur resolution on joint cooperative farming. This resolution was viewed by many, even within the Congress, as an assault on peasant proprietorship. The opposition to the resolution was led by Choudhary Charan Singh who was then Revenue Minister in the Congress-led government of Uttar Pradesh, himself a farmer and a peasant proprietor and a strong opponent of collective farming. Though the AICC adopted the resolution by a big majority, the fact remained that a large number of key Congressmen were extremely unhappy with the direction in which the Congress under Nehru's leadership was taking the country—which was towards a form of socialism more akin to the Soviet pattern than to the Western European model of democratic socialism.

In the course of the debate on the President's address in parliament Nehru referred to cooperative farming and agrarian reforms. Since the President's address lays out the ruling party's policy, its adoption by parliament is considered as endorsement of such policy. Masani moved two amendments on behalf of the Independent Parliamentary Group. The amendments hoped that the references to cooperative farming and agrarian reforms in the President's address did not refer to the proposals for joint cooperative farming and for ceilings adopted by the ruling party.

Drawing attention to the brutal manner in which the

Soviet Union had collectivised agriculture, Masani said in his speech during the debate:

> It seems to me that there are two alternatives with which we are faced. One is that an attempt will seriously be made to implement this programme of destroying peasant proprietorship after three years and to bring in collective farming. I hope such an attempt will not be made. But, if it is made, it can only be by threats, by coercion, and I do not hesitate to say that, if such an attempt is made, it will unfortunately lead to civil war and bloodshed and the death of thousands of people in this country. I think anyone who thinks he can persuade the peasants of India to give up their lands and become serfs again for a super-zamindari in Delhi or the State capital; is living in a fool's paradise.

Replying to the debate, Prime Minister Nehru clarified that while he was for joint cooperative farming, he did not agree with collective farming. Accepting that the peasants of India were conservative, he asserted that no Act of Parliament was going to be passed and that if the farmers of India decided on joint farming, they should not be prevented from doing so. With a majority of Congress Party members evidently not in support of the move, the Nagpur Resolution was never implemented.

Meanwhile outside parliament, addressing an agricultural convention in Madras, Rajaji said that the 'threats' coming from the Prime Minister to make the politicians and the people submit to his plans, with remarks like "if you do not agree with us, you get out of the party", smack of 'Hitlerism'. The Farmers Federation of India organised protest demonstrations. Prof. N.G. Ranga, a Congress MP and like Charan Singh a strong votary of peasant proprietorship, resigned from the Congress and crossed over to the opposition benches. He went on to form the Krishikar Lok Party.

The Nagpur resolution and the debate in parliament that followed have been discussed here in some detail because it is this resolution that was the 'tipping point' leading to the emergence of the pro-farmer, pro-market economy Swatantra Party. Rajaji who had earlier declined to participate in the formation of a new party giving his old age the reason (he was 80) changed his mind and, in fact, not only announced the formation of the party but christened it the Swatantra Party at a public meeting in Chennai on 7 June 1959. A closed door meeting which included Rajaji, N.G. Ranga and V.P. Menon that preceded the public meeting adopted a set of 21 principles which Rajaji had drafted, and a press statement announcing the names of the office bearers of the new party with Prof. N.G. Ranga as President. Rajaji offered the presidentship of the new party to Jayaprakash Narayan, who happened to be in Madras at that time. JP once again declined the offer on the ground that he had given up party politics.

The Preparatory Convention of the Swatantra Party to inaugurate the party and adopt a statement of principles was held in Bombay on 1 and 2 August 1959. As Chairman of the Organising Committee, Masani spoke first and spelt out the need for a clear-cut alternative to the ruling Indian National Congress and how the Swatantra Party could fulfil that role. This speech, more than the many others he delivered in the next decade, sets out the new party's character as a middle-of-the road party that tries to marry the social justice thrust of the Socialists of the CSP variety, with liberal emphasis on individual freedom, his right to dignity, and the right to property.

Those of you who read this and are now in your thirties or even forties, will be able to better understand the nature and state of politics and economy that had developed in India a decade after independence and which was established policy till almost 1989, from a perusal of the

highlights from this speech.

> The coming into existence of the Swatantra Party marks, in a way, the end of the post-Independence era into which had overflowed the agitational politics of the struggle for Independence...It marks the beginning of the functioning of normal parliamentary democracy in a country whose freedom has been well and truly founded on the rock of a democratic Constitution. The emergence of the Swatantra Party is a sign of the growing political maturity of our country.

He then went on to list some of the adverse consequences of the then ruling party's policies since independence.

These included:

1. The policy of joint farming, land ceiling and State monopoly in the foodgrains trade which would seriously injure food production and the harmony of rural life.
2. Interference by political bosses in the administration of the country and the pressure brought to bear on officials in the issue of licences. This was already leading to destroying public confidence in the system.
3. Excessively high taxation that had hurt not only the tax payer but the consumers as well already being hurt by creeping inflation
4. The expansion of our (Five Year) Plans and the shrinking of our resources making simultaneous progress.

"Intolerance does not simply occur;" said Masani, "it is being elevated into a principle. In the result, the main features of our economic life today are fear, hesitancy and uncertainty as to what the government will do next. For the first time, a political party has come forward to say openly these things which were already in people's minds."

"At last" said Masani, "there is a broadbased political party in India which provides a clear alternative to the

policies of the ruling party, by putting the individual right in the centre of the picture and rejecting lock, stock and barrel the methodology, as opposed to the ideals, of socialism, which is more accurately described as State capitalism."

To set at rest any doubts about the Swatantra Party's leadership and basic philosophy Masani affirmed "Under Rajaji's inspiring leadership, the Swatantra Party will seek to adhere to the eternal verities. We shall seek to guide the country back from Nehru to Gandhi. We draw inspiration from our own country's great cultural heritage and her spiritual traditions".

10

THE RISE AND FALL OF THE SWATANTRA PARTY

Soon after the establishment of the Swatantra Party on 7 June 1959, Rajaji lost no time in setting up the Central Office in Madras. He nominated S.Y. Krishnaswamy, a retired ICS officer, as General Secretary and put him in charge of the office. Why did Rajaji choose S.Y. Krishnaswamy and not Masani as General Secretary? Masani gives a very mundane reason why he remained a member of the *ad hoc* Central Organising Committee while Professor N.G. Ranga was nominated president at the 7 June meeting. He missed the 7 June meeting because of a delayed Indian Airlines flight from Calcutta where he was on professional work.

In a rather rueful narration in his memoirs Masani recalls how a delayed flight prevented him from participating in a 7 June 1959 closed door meeting in Madras convened by Rajaji. Masani was in Calcutta on 7 June and had booked himself on an early morning flight to Madras in good time for the meeting. But the flight was delayed and he spent the larger part of the day waiting in the VIP room at Dum Dum Airport, in the interesting company of Sir A. Ramaswamy Mudaliar. He finally arrived in Madras at 5 p.m. and rushed to Woodlands Hotel only to find that the proceedings had already concluded. Rajaji, Ranga, V.P. Menon and a score of others were waiting for him to arrive to sign the press statement which embodied the results of their meet that day.

The communique to be released to the press was in two parts, the first was a set of 21 principles which Rajaji had drafted. Masani found these unexceptionable and had no hesitation in endorsing them. The other contained the names of the office bearers of the proposed organisation. Masani was disappointed because most of them were from the South, their average age was much too high and youth was conspicuous by its absence. He felt they "were getting off on the wrong foot". He was equally disappointed with the choice of the president of the Swatantra Party but with everyone eagerly waiting for him to sign he "simply did not have the nerve to challenge this and seek to reopen the entire matter".

The next morning, Masani met Rajaji and while telling him how much he liked not only the name of the party but also the 21 principles, he was not, at the same time, very impressed with the names of office bearers of the organising committee. To remedy the situation Masani suggested that the Madras meeting be treated as the conception of the baby and its birth could take place at a formal function a few months later when people from various parts of India could attend, and the list of office-bearers and the committee revised. Rajaji agreed. Consequently the Swatantra Party was formally inaugurated by Rajaji at a Preparatory Convention held in Bombay on 1 and 2 August to which reference has been made in the previous chapter.

Between June and October of 1959 the new party's organisational development was rather slow. Rajaji was convinced that if the party he had founded was to become strong organisationally, acquire a national character and make its impact on India's politics, it had to be driven by a dynamic and nationally known person. Masani filled the bill. He was not only a founding member of the party but also the moving spirit behind its coming into being. He was also nationally known more as the author of the best-seller

Our India than as a politician, itself an advantage.

So that October Rajaji wrote to Masani inviting him to be the General Secretary. In his reply Masani raised two problems. The first was organisational. Masani wanted "clearly demarcated lines of authority and functions". The second was of course the perennial problem of 'earning a living', a problem that had been with him from the time he entered the freedom struggle and which was among the reasons for quitting politics in 1939.

Rajaji's response was typical of the candour with which he dealt with issues—big or small. Dealing with the two problems he wrote back:

> As for the personal problems that arise from it, we must face them somehow as we did in 1920. The present crisis is as big as what we then had to face. Your powers and responsibilities as General Secretary will cover the entire field of the party administration until our Constitution is passed. It will only be limited by your own discretion as to whether you should take others into consultation—me and Ranga of course you will try to satisfy! How can we convert the potentiality of our party into fact unless you throw yourself into this responsibility with all the courage and tact you command?
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> As for the office I would prefer Bombay to Delhi (and Calcutta to either if it were possible). I think we should think of Delhi only when we are 10 lakh strong in membership. Wherever the work can be efficiently done from should be our place. It is easy to mistake expense for efficiency. Whether it be Bombay or Delhi, I shall be far from the office, but this does not matter. The balance of consideration must be your convenience and efficient control.

Masani accepted Rajaji's offer and was elected General Secretary of the Swatantra Party by the General Council at its meeting in Hyderabad on 9 December 1959.

On a personal note, while this was going on between Masani and Rajaji, I was being interviewed by Masani for a position in the Central Office of the Swatantra Party. The moment he decided to accept office as General Secretary, I received a telegram from him from Hyderabad informing me that he was appointing me Office Secretary of the Central Office and asking me to report for work on 16 December 1959. Our office would be in a building exactly opposite the building where he had his management consultancy firm.

Thus, before getting into the nitty gritty of party administration, he first got the basic infrastructure right to do justice to his new assignment, an assignment however not entirely new, if we recall that over twenty years earlier he was Joint Secretary of the Congress Socialist Party, second in command to Jayaprakash Narayan who was then the CSP's General Secretary. This time he was second in command to C. Rajagopalachari, who, though not holding any office in the Swatantra Party, was the real power behind the throne, though, true to his word, he did not interfere in Masani's work as General Secretary unless there were compelling reasons. There was also a tacit understanding between the two that Rajaji would take care of the affairs of the Tamil Nadu unit of the party and would ask for Masani's help when needed.

Rajaji was the architect of the Swatantra Party and Masani was its builder. This does not mean that his contribution to the ideological formulations of the party were negligible. As already mentioned elsewhere, he was that rare combination of intellectual and organisation man. The secret of the close working relationship between the two that stretched for over a decade was a trait they shared—clear thinking, a logical mind bereft of emotions. This was of great value when taking hard decisions. It was, therefore, not surprising that the two worked with very few

differences on fundamentals even if on details of execution differences cropped up on rare occasions. And when a fundamental difference did arise between them 12 years later, it led to the break-up of the party they had created. We shall come to this later; but in between was a story of success that neither could have imagined was possible though publicly both Rajaji and Masani stated that they were not fully satisfied with the party's organisational growth and performance in two general elections.

As General Secretary Masani brought to his new assignment his experience as a party organiser (CSP: 1933-1939) and as a corporate executive (Tatas: 1941-1957). He had been a member of Indian Legislative Assembly, the Provisional Parliament and the Constituent Assembly for 6 years (1945-51) and, at the time of his election as General Secretary, he was a Member of Parliament having been elected to the Lok Sabha in the General Elections of 1957. He was eminently qualified and Rajaji had chosen correctly.

Those were the days of single party dominance. The Congress had a steamroller majority in parliament and was in power in most of the state assemblies. The real power and authority lay in Delhi. Masani's organisational strategy was built on emphasising the need for a strong presence of the party in the Lok Sabha. Towards this end, he concentrated on building the party into a strong organisation. "This involved both good housekeeping and efficient field organisation."

Almost from the time he began his tenure as General Secretary it became clear that a majority of the party's leadership in the states was not very pleased with this Delhi-centric policy. But Masani was convinced that he was right. For instance, if a state unit, for example Bombay, printed its letterhead as 'Bombay Regional Swatantra Party ' or Bihar as 'Bihar Rajya Swatantra Party', he would at once point out to the state chief concerned that the letterhead was

defective and should read 'Swatantra Party, Bombay' or 'Swatantra Party, Bihar'. He would emphasise that there was only one Swatantra Party and that was *the* Swatantra Party, with its head office in Bombay and the party functioning in the various states were its branches. He was clear in his mind that while India was a federation of states and state governments should enjoy considerable autonomy, the Swatantra Party was a unitary party. Essentially this arose from his distrust of politicians based on experience going back to his socialist days when he found that during his organisation tours, party members would nod their heads indicating agreement with what he was saying but the moment his back was turned, often do exactly the opposite! "Slovenliness, sloppiness and almost always saying 'yes' without meaning it are traits that are only too common amongst our politicians." He realised that this was not making him popular or liked. But he did not mind it. He would often say: "I was elected to be 'effective' not 'popular'." And he practised what he preached. He did not spare himself or the central office where disciplined functioning was concerned. His first instructions to me were clear. He told me, and the words still ring in my ears: "Remember this is the Central Office of the Swatantra Party. I am in charge and I will not permit this office to be used as a caravanserai by anyone, even if he claims to be an active worker of the party. It will function like any commercial office and observe regular hours. If I find that you are unable to carry out these instructions you will have to go".

During his tenure as General Secretary, Masani organised as many as five national conventions at Bombay, Patna, Agra, Bangalore and Delhi. Every one of these were models of efficient organisation. The opulence and *tamasha* that mark conventions of political parties in India were absent. He organised and led the party in the General Elections of 1962, 1967 and 1971. The party's performance

in the first two was truly remarkable. In the 1962 General Elections the party, which was barely three years old, contested 170 seats to the Lok Sabha and 1038 seats to the various State Assemblies. Of these 25 were returned to the Lok Sabha and 207 to the state assemblies (Bihar 50, Rajasthan 36, Gujarat 26, Andhra 19 and UP 15). Arising from these results the party was recognised by the Election Commission as a national party with its own symbol—the star. Masani himself did not contest the 1962 General Elections so that he could concentrate on organising and directing the party's election campaign. He returned to parliament a year later in 1963 through a hard fought by-election from the Rajkot parliamentary constituency in Gujarat.

In the 1967 elections the party contested 175 seats to the Lok Sabha and 973 to the various State Assemblies. Of these 44 were returned to the Lok Sabha and 256 to the State Assemblies (Andhra 29, Gujarat 66, Madras 20, Mysore 16, Orissa 49, Rajasthan 48 and UP 12).

With 44 members in the Lok Sabha it emerged as the single largest party in the opposition. In the state assemblies it was able to form a principled coalition government in Orissa, was the official opposition in the Rajasthan and Gujarat legislative assemblies and had significant representation in the Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu legislative assemblies.

This impressive performance in the general elections of 1962 and 1967 was a reflection not only of the wise leadership of Rajaji and Masani's organising abilities but also of the high morale and popularity of its leaders at the state level. They reflected a strong sense of purpose. Its objectives were clear and had been encapsulated in the 21 principles Rajaji had drafted and adopted at the Preparatory Convention. This was followed a year later in March 1960 when the first National Convention held in Patna adopted

a Statement of Policy under the title "To Prosperity Through Freedom", a document that clearly set it apart from other political parties. The Swatantra Party adopted a Constitution that was remarkable for its brevity and clarity. Those who participated in the Patna Convention were a veritable who's who of well-known figures, some already famous and some others well on the road to fame.

Masani's first General Secretary's Report (he had been in office for less than three months) spelt out what ought to be the tasks of the Swatantra Party and how to achieve them. It was obvious that one of his objectives appeared to be no less than making India the largest democracy not only quantitatively but qualitatively as well!

> 'What is the task facing the Party and its organisers?' he asked in his Report and answered, 'It is primarily that of educating Indian public opinion to the validity and soundness of the Party's aims, principles and policies. It is that of harnessing and mobilising the potential sympathy and support into a mass movement. It is of providing the Indian people with an alternative government. Finally it is that of providing the country with a new government when the people call it to that high responsibility. To state the task is to show its immensity, its almost frightening proportions... How is this tremendous challenge to be met? What are the elements out of the fusion of which this weapon may be forged?'

Masani listed the requirements. His blueprint for the kind of party organisation he had in mind.

- **Leadership:** He said, had been provided by Rajaji "in a way that has extorted admiration from even the Party's staunchest opponents".
- **The Message:** What is the message that the Party is seeking to convey? This had been provided in the form

of the 21 principles adopted at the Preparatory Convention in Bombay seven months earlier and which was elaborated at the First National Convention when it adopted its Statement of Policy: 'To Prosperity Through Freedom'.

- **Its Delivery:** The organisational channels through which this message can reach the country. "In countries with a long record of democratic functioning, it has been recognised that a political party's success, like that of a business concern, depends on an observance of sound principles of organisation and management. In our political life, the importance of 'good house-keeping' is, however, only too often obscured by a passion for ideology or the stress of prejudice. While sacrifice and sincerity are held in high esteem, indiscipline, the failure to perform an obligation undertaken, to turn up at a meeting in time or at all, or neglect in answering a letter or a Party circular is taken lightly. Not enough attention is paid to the establishment of a sound organisational structure, the division of functions between different limbs and office-bearers and the establishment of clear lines of responsibility."
- **Party Cadres:** The former Marxist and socialist that Masani was almost three decades earlier, he had not forgotten that political parties need trained cadres. "One of the Swatantra Party's immediate tasks," he said, "is that of finding, training and throwing into the field of action a large number of men and women carrying the Party's message and spreading it to the most distant villages and towns".
- **Training the Cadres:** "The placing of the right man in the right position of influence within the organisation... Our eagerness to see the Party grow should not lead us to welcome people in our fold without due discrimination. In the pursuit of importance and number, the weightage that needs to be given to quality should not be overlooked. People are tired of the old faces and the old voices. They look for new thinking. It will be a

good policy for us to attach more value to new and unknown people, preferably the young. It is essential but not quite enough that a party worker should be devoted and sincere, and capable of mixing with people of all classes. It is also necessary that he should have a firm grasp of party policies and be competent enough to popularise them, as against the superficialities of socialist slogans. The need arises for the training of party workers. Study circles and training camps need to be organised throughout the country in order to equip them for their important task."

- **Party Members:** "The Swatantra Party is a mass party and its doors are wide open to every man or woman who accepts its principles and policies." While enrolment of members on a large scale was important, Masani already aware of the post-independence evil of bogus membership that had surfaced in the Congress warned against a similar development in the Swatantra Party. "Whatever may happen, we must guard against following the Congress Party's practice of enrolling 'bogus' members to make easy passage to office in local committees." For this purpose he said the Party would institute machinery for strict inspection and scrutiny of membership registers and account books of State parties in order to ensure that no malpractices are allowed to creep in.
- **Party Literature:** The preparation and distribution of literature embodying the "Party's thought and policies in all the principal languages. These will include the party's principles and statement of policies plus talking points for speakers that will be available to party organisers and speakers".
- **Choosing Candidates Early:** The early nomination of prospective party candidates to parliament and state assemblies and to nurse constituencies. Masani's rationale for this innovation was: "In India it is the general practice to nominate candidates only a few days or weeks before nomination day. May I suggest that the

Swatantra Party break away from this practice and decide not to nominate its candidates through a Parliamentary Board sitting like a Railway Book office issuing 'tickets' to aspirants. I can anticipate certain objections that may be raised but I believe that on balance, the adoption of this democratic practice will yield very valuable results when the time comes."

- **Funds:** "Money is the last but by no means the least of the elements that go into the development of a political organisation" said Masani in his Report, adding: "In case there are any persons in the Party who at its inception, thought, along with the Congress leaders, that the Party could rely on the rich men of this country, I hope they are by now cured of this delusion".

Having marked the direction and manner in which he, as General Secretary, intended to pilot the Swatantra Party, Masani ended his report with a clear political statement:

> The fact is that the Congress Party is now on its way out. The question is who shall replace it: a democratic party such as the Swatantra Party or a communist dictatorship? Whatever else it may or may not be able to achieve, it will be a service that the Swatantra Party renders to the country that it seeks to divert into democratic channels the natural discontent with the government of the day which otherwise might have led India to 'go the China Way' after Chiang Kai-shek. As I said at the Bombay Convention, communism is the Swatantra Party's Enemy Number One. While any discussion of whether or not our Party should consider cooperation with other democratic Parties during elections is premature, one thing is certain—that in no circumstances should any such cooperation with the Communist Party of India be considered by us. On this point there can be no room for ambiguity or equivocation in our ranks.

While Masani called for considerable organisational discipline he was equally insistent that in matters of personal beliefs members will be free to hold their opinions. The following passage from the Statement of Policy clearly endorsed Masani's vision of a party that assured considerable internal democracy to its members:

> The Swatantra Party is a Party with a difference. It believes that the present trend followed in India and elsewhere by which political parties dominate more and more the thoughts, activities and lives of their members is one that needs to be reversed. The Party holds that democracy is best served if every political party allows freedom of expression to its members on all matters falling outside the fundamental principles of the Party. The Swatantra Party therefore gives its members, whether in Parliament, legislatures or elsewhere, the fullest liberty on all questions not falling within the scope of its Principles and Statement of Policy. In particular, members of the Party will, in contrast to the way in which dissenting members of certain other parties are treated, be given opportunity to express themselves in regard to the formulation of the Party's policies.*

The roadmap he had drawn up for the Swatantra Party was unambiguous and a departure from the beaten track.

The 1971 General Elections which were called a year before they were due when Indira Gandhi split the Indian National Congress. There were now Congress parties—The Congress (I) or the Indira Congress and the Congress (O) or Congress Organisation led by K. Kamaraj and men like Morarji Desai referred to as 'the Syndicate'. The Congress (O), the Jan Sangh, the Socialist Parties and the Swatantra Party formed a coalition which came to be known as the

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* Swatantra Party, First National Convention, March 1960. General Secretary's Report published by the Central Office of the Swatantra Party.

'Grand Alliance' and started working on a common minimum programme. Suddenly the socialist component led by George Fernandes and Madhu Limaye said that what was required was a slogan that would unite the parties and countries against the Indira Congress and that slogan was *'Indira Hatao'*. Masani and N. Dandeker, the Swatantra Party's president and General Secretary respectively, who were the party's representative in the coalition working out a common programme and allotment of seats, protested and appealed to Rajaji to insist on the necessity of a common programme and not a mere negative slogan.

The National Executive met in Madras on 8 and 9 January 1971. Masani and Dandeker sought to get their resolution not to become part of the alliance but seek only seat adjustments, adopted. This was vehemantly opposed. The attack was spearheaded by Professor Ranga and supported by Rajaji. Masani for the first time was not able to carry through a resolution.

Rajaji ordered Masani to go back to the negotiating table with the coalition partners and work out the allocation of seats and not to insist on a common programme. Masani asked to be excused and Rajaji asked Dandeker to take over the negotiations on behalf of the party. The Swatantra Party which had in the previous two General Elections put up over 170 candidates was allotted a measly 59 constituencies. Of these only 8 were elected. Though Masani had warned of disaster if the alliance was to contest on a negative slogan and not on the basis of an agreed programme, he took responsibility for the party's poor performance and resigned his presidentship. Also he announced his retirement from party politics.

For the first time Rajaji and Masani differed on a fundamental issue. This led to the party's break up three years later. Rajaji did not live to see this. But Masani did. In April 1973 (in the absence of Rajaji who had passed away

on 25 December 1972) Masani was invited to deliver the inaugural address at the party's Sixth National Convention in Madras on 14 April 1973. The party was in a demoralised state. And so, in his inaugural address he tried to bring a message of hope and cheer that all was not lost and the party could beckon success once again provided it returned to its moorings as "a party with a difference". This did not happen because the then party leadership led by Piloo Mody had other ideas.

This became clear when Swatantra Party met in a Convention for the seventh and last time in Delhi in August 1974. Despite his retirement from politics he made an appearance at this convention to play a role that he was most at home—leading the opposition to the then leadership's proposal to dissolve the party. Most of those who had spoken at the Preparatory Convention on 1 and 2 August 1959 including Rajaji were no longer alive. The few that were still there could be found on the dais supporting the move to kill the party. Masani advised that the party wait for a call from Jayaprakash who had launched a struggle against misgovernment and dictatorship instead of dissolving itself.

The then leadership moved a motion empowering Piloo Mody to decide if the Swatantra Party should dissolve and ask its members to join a new party being floated by Charan Singh and Raj Narain, whose own party the Bharatiya Kranti Dal was in the doldrums and had, like the Swatantra Party fared very badly in the 1971 General Elections. Masani's argument that zero plus zero was equal to zero and *de facto* merger of a national party like the Swatantra Party with a regional party like the BKD was not advisable fell on deaf ears. The first was that the leadership sitting on the platform, were not prepared to listen as most of them wanted to give up their responsibility of running the party in the various states, and the second reason was

that the convention was rigged as a majority of the delegates had been brought in buses from the neighbouring states of Haryana and UP Masani's motion to keep the party alive was lost by 50 votes. The party that Rajaji and he had founded with so much hope and enthusiasm was no more.

11

A MODEL PARLIAMENTARIAN

As the reader is already aware Masani was a Member of Parliament for about 20 years. During this period he sat in the opposition benches for a year in 1945 when the 'ruling party' was the British Viceroy and his Council; for roughly five years from 1946, first as a member of the ruling coalition (comprising the Congress) and then upto 1952 as a member of the Provisional Parliament which saw the transfer of power from the British to the Congress Party and also functioned as the Constituent Assembly to draft the Constitution of India. In free India he was a member of the second Lok Sabha from 1957 to 1962, and, after a gap of a year, again from 1963 to 1971 sitting in the opposition benches again. The purpose of this laboured enumeration is to state the fact that in Masani's parliamentary career—he had the experience of sitting on both sides of the fence—as a member of the ruling party (the treasury benches) and as a member of the opposition (the opposition benches). This inculcated in him respect for the parliament and heartily concurred with its description as the 'temple of democracy'. It also developed in him considerable skills as a parliamentarian. Above all he understood well that being in the opposition was not to view the treasury benches as enemies; that the opposition party was as much a part of the process of governance and an integral part of the law-making process as the government itself—the British concept of "Her Majesty's Opposition or in the Indian

context as the 'President's Opposition'. That it is not the job of Parties in the Opposition to say 'No' to everything the government of the day says or does".

There were a number of times when, as Deputy Leader of the Swatantra Party in the Lok Sabha including a year as leader, he reached out a helping hand to the government even while being critical of its policies.

We have seen one instance when, instead of taking advantage of the Naval Mutiny in 1945 to cause discomfort to the British government in India, he said that his party supports the government in dealing firmly with the mutineers underlining the belief that discipline in the armed forces must be maintained at all costs.

When Indira Gandhi was the Prime Minister she sought Parliament's approval to devalue the rupee in view of the precarious foreign exchange situation. The opposition parties saw this as an opportunity to bring the government to its knees. Masani as leader of the opposition, consulted economists including Prof. B.R. Shenoy who said that what the Prime Minister wanted made sense. However, the support to the government should be accompanied by a promise of follow up measures so that such a situation did not recur. Masani was able to persuade the Swatantra Party in parliament to support the measure and voted with the government. That the follow-up measures were not taken is another matter. The point is that though in the opposition the Swatantra Party did not oppose for opposition's sake. The issue was dealt with on merit and for the national good and not turned into a matter of political advantage.

Despite their differences on political and economic issues Jawaharlal Nehru and Masani shared an intense and passionate regard for the institution of parliament. They wanted to develop traditions and precedents on the lines of the British House of Commons. One of these was respect for the speaker. The story is told that Nehru sent for G.V.

Mavalankar, the Lok Sabha Speaker. The speaker declined saying that if the Prime Minister wished to see him he should come to the speaker's chamber. Nehru went to the speaker's room and apologised. This is a tradition that has been followed since.

But there is another tradition that Masani sought to set, which unfortunately is observed more in the breach—speaking beyond the time, allotted by the speaker. This is what Masani had to say on this subject:

> By and large, I strongly object to being asked to perform unless have something to say, or to put it differently, something on my chest or on my mind that I want to get off. Unless there is this compulsion, I have never seen any reason to get up to speak either in Parliament or elsewhere. My second inhibition has been with regard to the time taken. Most members of Parliament apparently find no difficulty in continuing to speak even after the time allotted to them is exhausted and the Speaker has rung the bell two or three times. They end in an undignified manner when the Speaker has to shout them down and make them end their speech.
>
> I have tended to err on the other extreme and to follow the old adage: 'Get up, speak up, shut up.' By and large, I have kept within the time allotted to me—whether it was the usual 15 minutes or on occasion when I was the spokesman of the party and opened the debate on the Budget or spoke on international affairs for the 45 to 50 minutes that was my ration. Indeed, my sensitiveness on this point sometimes led to my sitting down even before my time was exhausted. I remember once or twice Sardar Hukam Singh (when he was Speaker) asking me why I had terminated a speech so abruptly and my telling him it was because I saw him leaning for- ward a little impatiently in his seat. I felt he was about to ring the bell. As it turned out, he assured me that he had no such intention.

Another was leaving the House when the Speaker was still in the Chair. The British tradition is not to leave the House with your back to the Speaker. Masani always ensured that he walked backwards and when he neared the door to turn round and walk through the door.

A ritual that repeated itself at almost every session in the sixties and the seventies was the 'No-Confidence Motion' even if the motion was sure to be defeated. Masani was able to persuade his party not to support such motions unless there were good reasons to do so but he was still not prepared to support it unless there was an alternative. After one such Motion on July 1970 he explained the Swatantra Party's position when the Motion was being debated:

> You cannot fight something with nothing. You have got to fight something with something better. I do not want to remove Shrimati Indira Gandhi until I can put in her place a better Prime Minister and a better government. I do not want to bring chaos to the Centre... We want, therefore, an alternative government to come into existence before we remove this government.

Another matter that bobbed up at fairly regular intervals was the question of MPs salaries and allowances. Each time it came up Masani would persuade his party to oppose such bills on the ground that it was unfair for MPs to raise their salaries themselves. And, he would go on to ask what have the MPs done that they should sanction increases for themselves!

For ten years from 1959 to 1970 Masani opened the debate on the Finance Bill which follows the introduction of the Annual Union Budget. He took this task very seriously. As soon as the Budget was introduced Masani would fly down to Bombay and hold discussions with businessmen and industrialists and the various chambers of commerce. If need be he would go to Calcutta and even

Chennai for a similar purpose. The visitors gallery in the Lok Sabha would be full to capacity not only when the Finance Minister presented the Budget but also when Masani rose to initiate the debate on the Finance Bills. Almost all his speeches were published by the Central Office of the Swatantra Party and distributed widely.

He was, as he correctly observes, "the main theorist in our (the Liberal) attack on the entire complex of state capitalism, planning and the controls which went by the compendious title of 'socialism'." A perusal today of his Budget speeches in those years will reveal the interesting fact that many of the suggestions he made on how to achieve economic growth including tax reforms are now official policy, the many controls, permits and licences he demanded be abolished began disappearing in the 1990s. These were Swatantra Party policies which he was enunciating in parliament year after year for ten years.

It is mentioned elsewhere in this chapter that both Nehru and Masani were keen to introduce many traditions and practices of the British House of Commons. One of these was that the chairmanship of important financial committees like the Public Accounts Committee and the Estimates Committee should be chaired by members of the opposition. Until 1967 this practice had been ignored in India, and the Congress by virtue of its massive majorities, had "cornered the chairmanship of all three financial committees," viz. the above two and the Committee on Public Undertakings. After the 1967 elections the Congress with a reduced majority had to agree to an arrangement whereby the speaker would nominate an opposition leader as chairman of the Public Accounts Committee while Congressmen would be nominated to occupy the other two chairs. As leader of the single largest opposition group, and therefore functioning as the *de facto* leader of the opposition, and with the concurrence of other opposition parties the

speaker nominated Masani as chairman of the Public Accounts Committee for the years 1967 to 1969. Actually the position was for one year but at the end of the first year, the speaker requested Masani to continue for one more year. He informed Masani that he was making this request because the leaders of the Congress and other parties as also the permanent officials of the secretariat attached to the committee had asked him to persuade Masani to carry on for another year. "Throughout the two years," reports Masani, "I found that the Committee was determined to do the right thing after an objective examination of the subject. This enabled it to function effectively and harmoniously, giving unanimous report on all subjects, irrespective of the party affiliation of its members."

A member of parliament, or, for that matter, any legislator, is not only accountable for his performance in the house but is accountable to the constituency that elected him. Between 1963-1971 he represented the Rajkot parliamentary constituency. He promised the electorate that he would visit Rajkot three days each month unless he was unable to come due either to health reasons or was overseas. He kept this promise and did so with unfailing regularity. He maintained an office with a full-time office secretary to facilitate contact with these constituents. He had also made a promise that he would submit regular reports to the constituency of his work in the Lok Sabha and the grievances of his constituency he had attended to. This he did with unfailing regularity. He had employed a Gujarati knowing person in his Mumbai office to read the Gujarati papers from Rajkot and draw Masani's attention to developments in his constituency taking *suo moto* action whenever called for.

12

JP, TOTAL REVOLUTION, THE EMERGENCY AND AFTER

In June 1971, Masani resigned from the presidentship of the Swatantra Party and also announced his retirement from politics for the third and last time. The first retirement was in 1939 which lasted till 1942; the second was in 1952 when he left the Congress by the simple expedient of not renewing his membership. This lasted till 1957 when he re-entered politics and succeeded in entering the Lok Sabha.

Around the same time, his friend and his leader in the CSP Jayaprakash Narayan, though still in the Sarvodaya movement and continuing to believe in a partyless democracy, but deeply disturbed by the increasing authoritarianism of the Central Government in Delhi and the intolerable corruption and incompetent governance in Bihar, organised people's protest rallies spearheaded by student leaders. JP's non-violent agitation hitherto confined to Bihar soon snowballed into a national movement with his call for a systemic change, nothing less than a Total Revolution. And, as in Bihar, it was led by young men and women who had formed the *Chhatra Yuva Sangarsha Vahinis.* The people's response was unprecedented. JP once again appeared on the national scene a towering personality and an alternative to the Congress led by Indira Gandhi. It turned into a confrontation between the Bihar government and JP, and soon thereafter between JP and Prime Minister

Indira Gandhi, whose hold on power was now seriously threatened. Supported by the government in Delhi, the Bihar Chief Minister sought to suppress the massive demonstrations including an assault on JP. The story of the movement for Total Revolution has been told by Sudhanshu Ranjan in his biography *Jayaprakash Narayan, Prophet of People's Power* published by the National Book Trust, and by Masani in his books *Is J.P. the Answer?* and *J.P.'s Mission Partly Accomplished.*

Though Masani did not take part in the movement for Total Revolution on the plea that he had retired from active politics, he played the role of a chronicler, analysing the movement for the public on the one hand and as an adviser to JP offering constructive criticism, cautioning him (and Indira Gandhi too) against a confrontation that could have dangerous consequences both for JP and the country. He feared that democracy itself was in danger. In his book *Is J.P. the Answer?* he warned: "An outright victory might only be possible for those in office by a seizure of power and the establishment of a dictatorship, accompanied perhaps by more brutal repression than anything British rule had perpetrated in this country." Since JP himself was not interested in taking over the leadership of the government and there was "no question of displacement of the one by the other but of a sharing of power by the two," it ought to be possible for an adjustment between JP and Indira Gandhi.

Unfortunately, events overtook such efforts at peace making. On 12 June 1975 the Allahabad High Court, in an election appeal, set aside the election of Indira Gandhi. When she refused to heed the judgement, JP and others in the opposition parties decided to demonstrate outside her residence and held a rally on 25 June to force her to resign. Indira Gandhi moved swiftly, imposed an Emergency on the country and arrested JP and other opposition leaders and thousands of party functionaries on the midnight of

June 25. Masani described it as a 'constitutional *coup d'etat*' and the country was under a dictatorship for the next 18 months.

Masani did not consider Indira Gandhi's 'coup' as either a Communist or a Fascist dictatorship but as a limited form of authoritarianism, which could turn into totalitarianism or revert to democratic procedures. In other words it was still reversible. "In such a setting," he asked, "what was the proper role of a liberal democrat? The Liberal," he said, "should neither romanticise the situation nor be afraid. He should endeavour, to whatever extent might be possible within the limits of legality, to assert the rights of the citizen and to seek to expand the bounds of freedom; for, in such a climate even normal calm and courage have a therapeutic value". He had a reason for giving such advice because Indians, even during British days, were not as afraid as they were when the emergency was declared. "The universal absence of courage, which then prevailed, is hard to imagine," he wrote.

"The Liberal, maintaining a sense of history, would also be aware that there were historical reasons for such developments, and that a resort to demonology explains little. Bearing this in mind, the Liberal would endeavour to find common ground between the warring parties and to heal the wounds of a divided nation." Clearly he was actually working out a prescription of how he should behave!

Masani was then editor of *Freedom First*, a monthly he had founded in 1952. Under Emergency regulations all newspapers and journals had to submit to censorship. When the censors objected to certain material that were intended for publication in *Freedom First*, Masani suspended publication of the monthly and, in a letter to its readers he explained that he was not prepared to accept pre-censorship and would seek judicial redress. In the atmosphere of fear

then prevailing, it took him more than a week to find a lawyer. He found one in Soli Sorabjee whom Masani described as "a redoubtable champion of editors in distress". Soli Sorabjee pleaded the case in the Bombay High Court which upheld *Freedom First*'s stand and struck down most of the censor's objections as arbitrary and unwarranted.

In his book *The Law of Press Censorship in India*, Soli Sorabjee described the situation as it prevailed during the first few weeks of the Emergency:

> The question that was uppermost in the minds of all was whether dissent was permissible at all and, if so, what were its limits. An authoritative judicial decision in the matter was the need of the hour. Since courts cannot decide any legal issue without an actual controversy arising before them in the regular course, somebody had to bell the cat. Who was going to perform this feat? It was Minoo Masani who took up the gauntlet.

In October 1975, with the Emergency in its fourth month, Masani accepted an invitation to address the All India Civil Liberties Conference in Ahmedabad. He took the opportunity to speak up against the Emergency pointing out that the declaration of the Emergency was in fact a culmination of what had been going on in the country since independence. "The first was the character of our public life, the fragility of our democracy, and the absence of an infrastructure of grass roots vigilance and voluntary organisations without which the political parties floated on top with no roots below." The second was the enormous economic power in the hands of the state, which was not compatible with democracy. "Hitler was not an accident. Stalin did not come out of a vacuum. These people came to the top because certain social and economic conditions existed which facilitated their emergence, of which they could take advantage.... It was in this spirit of historical

enquiry that we should accept our own share of the responsibility in letting our people down."

With JP's health rapidly deteriorating he was released and admitted to the Jaslok Hospital. It was here, on Masani's persuasion, that JP signed a "Political Testament" before Soli Sorabjee and a Notary Public. This was to be released should JP die. His kidneys had been very badly damaged during the four and half months of solitary confinement in detention at Chandigarh and his doctors considered his condition to be very critical.

When JP launched his movement against corruption and maladministration in 1974, leaders of opposition political parties other than the communists, impressed with the mass support he was getting from the people jumped on to his bandwagon. It was in this context that JP invited Masani in early 1975, to be a member of the Coordinating Committee comprising opposition leaders. With his sorry experience four years earlier when the very same opposition leaders in the 'Grand Alliance' dumped the common programme and opted for the "Indira Hatao" slogan despite his pleas and protests Masani politely declined the offer. The members of this Coordinating Committee were later to be part of the Janata Party government in New Delhi. This was to come later.

Meanwhile, on 18 January 1977, in a surprise move Indira Gandhi dissolved the Lok Sabha and called for General Elections in March. While the Emergency regulations had not been lifted they were largely inoperative during the period of the election campaign and the elections. JP immediately convened a meeting of the Coordinating Committee of opposition parties' leaders and invited Masani once again to join in the discussions. Once again Masani declined the invitation and had grave misgivings of their ability or desire to stay together for even for a reasonable period of time. As he put it, "My sense of history

told me that JP and the Indian people were asking for a grim disappointment and a defeat of their thesis that what happened (the overwhelming victory of the Janata Party at the polls) was India's Second Liberation." He was to prove right once again.

The Janata Party took office in Delhi amidst great euphoria and expectations. But sadly disappointed even Masani who had hoped that "the cataclysmic experience of the Emergency and the fact that most of them had been in prison together might have shaken the politicians of the non-Congress parties out of the rut of their old ways of thinking and behaviour and induced what Gandhiji would have called a 'change of heart'."

Masani publicly declared his misgivings at a meeting of the Bombay Rotary Club on 16 August. He was, therefore, surprised when the Home Secretary, Government of India, called him over the phone and said that the Prime Minister and the Home Minister wanted to nominate him as the chairman of a newly formed Minorities Commission. It would be a three-man Commission made up of three members: R.A. Ansari, retired Chief Justice of the Jammu and Kashmir High Court, and Professor V.V. John, Vice-Chancellor, Rajasthan University. Masani put two conditions if he were to agree to be so nominated viz., he would not accept any remuneration as he did not wish to become a government servant and be subject to government servants' rules but compensated for his travel and residential expenses in Delhi; and the Minority Commission would be made a statutary body to guarantee its independence.

Both conditions were accepted and he was appointed chairman of the Minorities Commission effective from 23 February 1978. Three months later, on 31 May 1978, Masani resigned. He gave three reasons for his action:

1. The Commission was assured that the Government would consult the Commission on all relevant matters concerning the minorities and give considerable weight to the Commission's recommendations. On the very first occasion this was ignored when the Government decided to amend the Aligarh Muslim University Act without consulting the Commission. Thus ignored, the Commission went ahead nevertheless on its own, and discussed the matter with the AMU's Vice Chancellor and others concerned and submitted its Report to the Government. The Government did not circulate this report to the MPs. When the contents of the Minorities Commission became public knowledge, particularly its recommendation that the AMU was a Muslim Institution and its cultural identity must be maintained, the Government informed the House that the Commission's recommendation had been rejected.
2. No Amendment to the Constitution of India had been tabled to enable the Minorities' Commission to become a statutory body and thus acquire teeth. It became clear that the Government had no intention of doing so.
3. The Commission would be independent of the Executive. Despite this it was being treated as an office attached to the Home Ministry. After three months the Commission had not even been provided with an office or adequate staff.

The Minority Commission chairmanship was the only official position that Masani had held in free India other than the Ambassdorship to Brazil in 1948 which position he retained a little longer—for 18 months. Masani returned to Bombay back to his profession of management consultancy taking assignments that came his way; writing a column for *The Statesman* managed and edited by his friend C.R. Irani, who gave Masani full rein to say what he wished on any subject that he wished; travelled abroad to attend meetings of the Liberal International of which he

was a Patron. Also by 1981 he had already written his two-volume political memoirs.

In May 1981 he founded the Society for the Right to Die with Dignity, to campaign for the right of persons who were terminally ill to end their life if they wanted to. In 1985 he added a new dimension to the work of the Leslie Sawhny Programme for Training in Democracy by creating the Project for Economic Education. He could feel the first breeze of economic change and realised that whether the various political parties in or out of power wanted it or not India had to move away from socialism towards a free economy. He wanted to seize the opportunity to educate the people on basic economic issues so that they would understand what was happening and welcome economic change instead of opposing it. And this involved organising numerous discussions, seminars and conferences and the publication of papers on a wide range of issues ranging from the economic to all other things that could have an impact on the economy.

And finally, in 1989, he wrote his last book, once again, for children which he called *We Indians*. If *Our India* written in 1944 was the prologue, *We Indians* was the epilogue. It was almost his 'Last Hurrah' because his sight started giving way. Doctors whom he consulted, in desperation in India and abroad, gave him little hope. He died metaphorically when he found he could no longer read or write. After a prolonged illness he died on 27 May 1998 and was cremated as he had wanted at Mumbai's Chandanwadi crematorium without fuss and without any religious ceremonies.

Books and Pamphlets Authored by Minoo Masani

1939 *India's Constitution at Work* (with C.Y. Chintamani)
Soviet Sidelights
1940 *Our India*
1944 *Socialism Reconsidered*
Your Food
1945 *Picture of a Plan*
1947 *A Plea for a Mixed Economy*
1950 *Our Growing Human Family*
Co-operative Farming, the Great Debate
1951 *Neutralism in India*
1954 *The Communist Party of India—A Short History*
1967 *Congress Misrule and Swatantra Alternative*
1969 *Too Much Politics, Too Little Citizenship*
1970 *Liberalism*
1975 *The Constitution, Twenty Years Later*
Is J.P. the Answer?
1977 *J.P.'s Mission Partly Accomplished*
1977 *Bliss was it in that Dawn ...*
1981 *Against the Tide*
1989 *We Indians*

Printed at M/s. Bengal Offset Works, New Delhi - 110 005.

This book is a brief biography of an outstanding Indian, Minoo Masani. A participant in the freedom struggle, thinker, author, parliamentarian and politician, Masani became an overnight celebrity as the author of a book for children *Our India*. A runaway bestseller which appealed to the national pride of the Indian. Masani was a member of the Constituent Assembly and later a Member of the Lok Sabha between 1957 and 1971. He will be remembered as a thinker and principled politician who traversed the entire political spectrum from Marx to Gandhi and a close associate of C Rajagopalachari in founding the Swatantra Party which was the largest party in the opposition in the fourth Lok Sabha. He was the doyen of the liberal movement in independent India. Even though he retired from politics in 1971 he stoutly opposed the Emergency through *Freedom First*, the journal he edited. In short, his life was a saga of value-driven politics.

With a Masters in Political Science from the Mumbai university, **S V Raju**'s association with Minoo Masani spanned almost four decades between 1959 and 1998 in various capacities—as chief, employer, associate in pursuing 'lost causes' and friend managing many of the organisations that Minoo Masani founded. In this book he pens the knowledge that results from an intimate relationship on the advantage and disadvantage of being Minoo Masani.

Rs. 40.00 ISBN 978-81-237-5079-8

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