

March of the Nation
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Personnel

SEVEN

JUARY 16, 1971

That's the way it is... A.G. NOORANI

Ethics Of Electoral Pacts

Cong-O President Nijalingappa remarked on New Year's Day "It is all horse-trading" while deploring the decline of morality in politics. He wondered "where the country will go after all this". Two days later he himself demonstrated dramatically the truth of his remarks and the relevance of his warning.

The politics of the three-party front of Cong-O, the Jan Sangh and the SSP can only be understood if their basic assumptions are themselves properly appreciated. These assumptions clash diametrically with those of Swatantra Party Chairman M. R. Masani, but not with those of Rajaji, as will be pointed out later. Hence the denouement of January 3, 1971.

"For the present we have only a single-point programme — to defeat Mrs Indira Gandhi and her supporters," SSP leader Madhu Limaye triumphantly declared on January 4. Thus, what used to be a criticism by the SSP and the Cong-O's critics is now not so much admitted as flaunted boastfully.

VITAL QUESTION

As it happens this is not very far removed from Rajaji's view that the election would serve as "a referendum on the single question whether the country approves of Mrs Gandhi's plan to tear up the Constitution and annul the liberties of the people and replace democracy by totalitarianism".

Now, early in the year Masani had expressed himself against the "mere idea of toppling" of which the SSP has been so consistent and noisy an advocate. To him



M. R. Masani

The Jan Sangh and Cong-O fell in with this despite the Swatantra objection for three reasons: First, in their heart of hearts they are themselves mere topplers and no more. Secondly, they prize the mere contact with the SSP in an electoral pact despite the SSP's oft-expressed contempt for them, for it will lend them some of its radical lustre.

No matter how false be this lustre, it will be a good protection against the charge of being "right reactionaries" which they have not the spirit to counter on the strength of their own programmes.

BREACH OF FAITH

Finally, they clearly hoped that Rajaji would persuade Masani to fall in with the arrangements devised by the three parties.

That this meant a breach of faith on the part of Cong-O and the Jan Sangh is very evident. The agreement of December 20 was, after all, a tri-partite one. Reportedly, it envisaged a common minimum programme, adjustment on all the 523 Lok Sabha seats, and for joint campaigning.

Mr Masani owes it to the public to publish the text. This agreement was unilaterally rescinded by the duo, the Jan Sangh and Cong-O.

Vajpayee had actually signed it and so had Masani. Nijalingappa was given time to sort out matters with the SSP. Not only he but Vajpayee also backed out,

having signed it only the day before.

Yet the SSP-Cong-O-Jan Sangh joint statement speaks of offering "an alternative" to the country as if a mere negative can ever be a positive alternative. In seeking to justify this, the Jan Sangh President cited a precedent which goes against him: "Did we not, after the 1967 elections, when the Congress Party was defeated in several States, come together to chalk out a common programme and form governments?" Vajpayee asked.

DISINGENUOUS

Yes, indeed, and the net result was the mid-term poll of 1969. It is rather disingenuous of him after having signed a joint declaration to belittle its worth the next day by saying "a common programme is needed only for an alternative government, otherwise, the common programme will remain only on paper."

This is an erroneous view, besides. The people surely have a right to know what alternative the combine will jointly offer and all the more so after seeing their separate manifestos. If Mr Vajpayee means what he says, why has the Jan Sangh been issuing elaborate papers on eco-



Rajaji

CPI's General Secretary said that his Party would not come to an electoral alliance with the Congress (R) at the national level. The Congress (R), he said, consisted of many "reactionaries" and "right elements" whom the CPI will oppose. Electoral adjustments are another matter.

FREEDOM OF MANOEUVRE

But the cri de coeur came out when he said that Mrs Gandhi was trying to get an absolute majority for her Party and the CPI would try its best to thwart this plan. This proves once again that the CPI would like Cong-I to be dependent on it so that it could extract terms and eventually replace it.

It proves also that dependent as Mrs Gandhi has been on the CPI all these months, she has also retained a measure of freedom of manoeuvre which democrats would do well not to ignore.

As for the rest it is horse-trading all over, with Mr Nijalingappa offering to make Mr Charan Singh a "real" Prime Minister and the Prime Minister exploiting her position to bait the Telengana Praja Samiti with a 1977-brand Telengana. "Where will the country go after all this?" How tight Mr Nijalingappa is!



S. Nijalingappa

nomic plans and why the manifestos?

Turning to Mrs Gandhi's camp, we find that her problems with the CPI have increased. It is a measure of the depth of the discord that the Gujarat State Council of the CPI has refused to support an old friend like Mr Indulal Yagnik because he is being supported by the Congress (R) and will use its election symbol. At Vijayawada, on January 3, the



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There must, he stressed, be an alternative government available before the existing one is removed. The West German Constitution, indeed, gives sanction to the British maxim "The Queen's Government must go on" by providing that a motion of no-confidence can succeed only if the successor government is elected at the same time.

AGREED DECLARATION

In the light of this the events of the last few days tell their own tale. Apparently, on December 20, 1970, the leaders of the Jan Sangh, the Cong-O and the Swatantra parties had



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The next day came in the SSP. It refused to countenance a joint declaration to keep its over-ideological position unblurred presumably. All it wanted was an electoral adjustment designed to throw out the Government and let the morrow take care of itself.

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