

New Twist To Poll Prospects Of Major Parties

From Our Political Correspondent
NEW DELHI, Jan. 4.—The SSP's inclusion in the three-party Front to fight the elections and the Swatantra Party's decision to stay out of it for the time being have given a new twist to the electoral prospects of the major parties. For one thing, it is likely to have an impact on the two important Hindi-speaking States of U.P. and Bihar.

This development has naturally heartened the Congress(O), but it is clear that the Ram Subhag Singh group has scored a point at the expense of Mr. Morarji Desai and others of his view. It was Dr. Singh's effort to widen the electoral front to include at least one recognized socialist party.

The acquisition of strength by the Opposition parties as a result of the new electoral Front was also underlined today by the sombre mood of Congress(R) circles, who are now having to reassess their chances in U.P. and Bihar in particular.

Members of the Congress(R) are, on the other hand, drawing some comfort from the fact that if the Swatantra does stay out of the three-party Front, it would adversely affect parties opposed to the Congress(R) in at least two States, Gujarat and Rajasthan, in which the Swatantra has a say.

The Congress(R) is also hoping that the SSP's inclusion in the Front would precipitate a crisis in it, forcing a division in the party.

EXPECTATION

However, it is the expectation of members of the Congress(O) and the SSP that the Swatantra Party will ultimately join the three-party Front. Mr. Madhu Limaye, for one, voiced this opinion today. With the new understanding reached between Mr. Rajagopalachari and Mr. Kamaraj, it is felt that the Swatantra would not want to go it alone in the elections.

It is understood that Mr. Masani's reaction to last night's developments arose out of his assessment that the SSP's inclusion in the Front without an agreement on a minimum programme would open the floodgates to the import of unacceptable policies.

It is the feeling in Swatantra circles here that, but for the question posed by the SSP's entry, the Congress(O), the Jana Sangh and the Swatantra could have gone ahead to announce an electoral agreement, leaving the minimum programme to be hammered out at a meeting on January 15.

Mr. Masani apparently feels that it is not enough to concentrate on displacing Mrs. Gandhi, but that the Front should present a credible alternative to the electorate in the form of a minimum programme. The SSP and the

Ram Subhag Singh Group in the Congress(O), on the other hand, would rather not import longer-term problems into the present specific question of fighting the elections to try to defeat Mrs. Gandhi.

One result of the three-party Front is the feeling in Swatantra circles that Mr. Nijalingappa has been less than fair to them in the manner in which he announced the new arrangement. It is clear that much patient work will have to be done to bring the Swatantra within the fold of the present three-party Front.

Limaye's Explanation

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BKD's association with the poll pact—after his meeting with Mr. Charan Singh this morning—therefore, seemed misplaced. The BKD leaders had obviously formulated their strategy after taking into account the party's chances in different situations. Mr. Charan Singh did not elaborate the point. All that he said was that "we are likely to get a larger number of seats as a result of our decision". He was hopeful of the BKD winning in 50 constituencies in U.P.

With Mr. Masani's departure for Bombay today, there was not much activity in the Swatantra camp today here. But both the Congress(O) and the SSP were confident that the Swatantra Party would join and accept the adjustment plan.

LIMAYE'S HOPE

Talking to correspondents, Mr. Madhu Limaye of SSP said he was sure that "Mr. C. Rajagopalachari will intervene and Mr. Masani's view would not prevail".

Mr. Limaye briefly explained the factors that led his party to decide in favour of adjustments with the Congress(O) and the Jana Sangh. It was obvious from his remarks that the SSP had played a major role in finalization of the new strategy—and the exclusion of the Swatantra Party. "We told the Congress(O) leaders that you already have an alliance with the

P.M.'s Formula On Telengana Rejected

HYDERABAD, Jan. 4.—The executive of the Telengana Praja Samiti adopted late tonight a resolution stating that the Prime Minister's proposal of a six-year freeze on the demand for a Telengana State was not acceptable to the people of Telengana, reports UNI.

The resolution appreciated the anxiety of the Prime Minister to solve the Telengana problem which was long pending and expressed its thanks to Mrs. Gandhi but pleaded its inability to accept her proposals.

SSP in Bihar and U.P. and that the Swatantra Party wants to come in (for its advantage). It cannot be allowed to dictate terms."

Mr. Limaye did not visualize any difficulty in the way of his party's adjustments with the Marxists. "We are retaining our freedom to ally with the Marxists. And the Marxists had not objected to our move for a poll pact with the Swatantra or Jana Sangh. All that they indicated was that they were opposed to all embarrassing poll alliances." Even the Congress(O), he said, may favour some kind of poll arrangement with the Marxists in West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Andhra Pradesh. He claimed that Mr. Rajagopalachari, too, was not averse to this idea.

He expected the SSP to win at least 40 seats in the Lok Sabha. The party planned to contest nearly 100 seats though the number may have to be reduced because of adjustments. Mr. S. M. Joshi, former Chairman of the party, was not willing to contest but he was being persuaded to change his mind. The party's Parliamentary Board will meet at Patna on January 6 and at Lucknow on January 13 to select candidates but the list would be finalized on January 15 at a joint meeting with other poll partners in Delhi. By and large, the SSP would re-nominate sitting members.

Mr. Limaye justified his party's attitude in insisting on mere adjustments—"We ask for a joint minimum programme, only for coalition Governments and not for alliances." The SSP and its partners had only one objective at present—to defeat Mrs. Gandhi.

CLARIFICATION

UNI adds: Mr. Limaye clarified that his party which till now was a member of the Eight-Party Combination in West Bengal will break away from the EPC if it entered into any pact with the Congress(R) or the Banga Congress.

He said that his party would continue discussions with the CPI(M) in West Bengal.

CABLE TO RAJANI

The general secretary, Mr. George Fernandes, today in a telegram to Swatantra leader Mr. C. Rajagopalachari, requested him to "urge" party chairman, Mr. Minu Masani, to join the electoral front of the Congress(O) Jana Sangh and SSP.

PTI adds: The Congress(O) leader, Mr. Morarji Desai expressed optimism in Ahmedabad today that the Swatantra Party would join the Congress(O)-Jana Sangh-SSP electoral Front. Mr. Desai, who was speaking to newsmen at the Ahmedabad airport before leaving for Bombay, said he might meet Mr. Masani in Bombay to bring him back to the negotiating table.