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MINOO & MARXISTS

Whispering gallery

A good conduct certificate from Masani in public is the last thing that the Marxists would like. I had never expected that Masani of all persons would revise himself once again to give comfort to the "Marxists".

He indeed did at his New Delhi press conference on January 28. On that occasion he released his party's election manifesto which had been borrowed from the Cong-O.

The manifesto spoke of the "systematic efforts" being made from some quarters, "both within and outside the country to wreck the Constitution."

Efforts to wreck the Constitution in quarters outside the country! The Swatantra ideologue was closely questioned on this intriguing proposition. I might as well report the catechism in full.

Q. Which are these outside forces?

A. Moscow and Peking.

Q. Naxalites? you mean.

A. Naxalites—and CPI.

Q. What about the CPM?

A. Ask them (CPM).

Masani scrupulously avoided naming the CPM as a Constitution-wrecker. This of course is not an ideological proposition with him. In fact Masani's party had repeatedly called for a ban on both the CPI and the CPM in the past.

The sudden switch to fraternisation with the "Marxists" is a tactical proposition suited to the exigencies of the midterm election. An understanding with the "Marxists" in elections is not a new proposition. What is new is that even brother Minoo has been converted to the new faith.

The principal author of an unwritten alliance with the CPM at the hustings was Kamaraj. Since the Congress split Kamaraj has been keeping up a tirade against the CPI and Moscow while fraternising with the CPM and the SSP.

At the crucial Syndicate working committee meeting which preceded the June 1970 AICC meeting in Delhi the question of alliance with other parties was an important subject matter. It was the resolution that was passed at this AICC session that has now been adopted by the Swatantra as its election manifesto.

At this working committee meeting Kamaraj put forward the idea that the Congress should not bind itself into a front only with the Jana Sangh, Swatantra and BKD. The State units should

be free to forge pacts with anybody handy, he had pleaded.

Atulya Ghosh and Sanjiva Reddy wholeheartedly agreed with the Big Brother from Madras but Nijalingappa, Patil and Morarji were unconvinced. It was after this that Sanjiva Reddy described the Marxists as national communists in one of his public perorations.

It appears that after the Kerala midterm poll in which the secret understanding with the Marxists yielded a handsome dividend to the Cong-O even those who were opposed to the idea came to like it—at least as a paying proposition.

And during the hectic confabulations that recently took place among the grand alliance partners the Cong-O leaders vigorously canvassed this line and got the tacit approval of the Swatantra and the Jana Sangh.

It looks that besides the Swatantras, the Sanghis too have been converted. The Jana Sangh manifesto appealed only for the rejection of the "unholy alliance" of the Congress-R, CPI and the Muslim League. Not a word was said against the Marxists. Nor was any unkind word uttered by Vajpayee at his recent luncheon meeting at the Press Club.

This subterranean linkup will become somewhat apparent after the lineup of candidates is known. For this we will have to wait till the withdrawals take place.

But some small evidence of mutual help is already available from the incomplete lists of nominees in West Bengal. In all the by-elections that took place in Bengal the Cong-O lost deposits in all. In the byelection in Midnapur in March last year it got only 1,600 votes.

But the Cong-O is credited with the desire of putting up candidates in 213 out of the 280 Assembly constituencies. After such a record of disgrace in byelections this inflated electoral ambition is inexplicable except in terms of its wanting to help the CPM by cornering a section of the traditional Congress votes which would otherwise have gone to non-CPM candidates. Obviously this is an index of things to come.

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