

'Swatantra will end State capitalism, exploitation'

Hindustan Times Correspondent

4471

New Delhi, Feb. 13—Describing the Congress (N) as a party of "status quo and stagnation," the Swatantra Chairman, Mr M. R. Masani, today claimed his party was really revolutionary, determined to end State capitalism and the people's exploitation by the Government.

With full faith in the supremacy of the Constitution, Mr Masani said his party, unlike the Congress (N) and its allies, wanted to establish a "property owning democracy." Agreeing with certain basic formulations of Karl Marx, he said the remedy did not lie in depriving people of whatever they had. Instead, everybody should own property.

He charged the Indira Gandhi Government with efforts to subvert the peoples' Fundamental Rights which could not be abrogated, irrespective of the number of seats captured by Mrs Gandhi. The Supreme Court had ruled that even Parliament could not abridge Fundamental Rights.

However, he did not see any threat of confrontation between Parliament and judiciary, since in the forthcoming election to the Lok Sabha, she would emerge "much weaker," frustrating her own "gamble." There was growing realisation that she was taking the country towards "planned chaos."

Govt. failures

Addressing a luncheon meeting at the Press Club of India, the Swatantra leader recounted the failures of the Government which symbolised "drift and incompetence." Mrs Gandhi's so-called dynamism was actually geared to retention of her political power.

Mr Masani admitted that the four-party Front had not been able to reach an agreement on all the seats. He was also unhappy to note that instead of the anticipated straight contests there had been "a proliferation of candidates" in most of the constituencies.

Asked about Mr Morarji Deasai's talk of merger between the Congress (O) and the Jan Sangh, Mr Masani said it should be viewed

in the long-term perspective and not in the context of the present elections.

Referring to his party's support to Gen. Cariappa in North-East Bombay against the Jan Sangh candidate, he said the Jan Sangh could have no grievance since it was a "free" seat not allotted to any party. Gen. Cariappa was a great soldier. Besides, the Jan Sangh itself had set up candidates against the Swatantra, nominees in Junagarh and Dandulka in Gujarat, earlier held by the Swatantra Party. Further, the "Jan Sangh is sitting on its hands and has not moved a muscle to get me a single vote in Rajkot."

Poll campaign

He denied reports that the Congress (O) was not working for him in Rajkot. Except one Zila Parishad president, all others were campaigning for him, he claimed.

Mr Masani expressed his gratification that the manifestos of his party, the Congress (O) and the Jan Sangh showed "no major contradictions on major issues." The Samyukta Socialist Party was the only exception.

Quoting the English proverb "better late than never," he hoped that the meeting of Front partners on Monday would result in a joint electoral appeal and poll programme.

About the recent hijacking of an Indian plane to Pakistan and its likely impact on elections, Mr Masani said the hijacking and the subsequent attitude of the Pakistan Government were deplorable. He fully supported the stand taken by the Union Government on the issue.

Mr Masani agreed with the complaints that the Soviet Union was trying to influence the elections. It was not a new phenomenon in Indian politics.

He deplored the misuse of official machinery, including T-10 planes, by the Prime Minister at practically no cost for election campaigning.

In reply to a question on the SVD tactic in U.P., he categorically stated "Chief Minister, Mr T. N. Singh, must resign."