

Masani challenges new Congress claim

By A Staff Reporter

MR. M. R. MASANI, president of the Swatantra Party, addressing the Rotary Club of Bombay on Tuesday, gave some figures to claim that the Congress success at the polls was not as great as was made out to be.

Mrs. Gandhi had secured 43.64 per cent. of the votes cast. Since only 54.81 per cent. of the electorate had voted, this meant that 23.91 per cent. of the electorate had voted for her party.

In other words, out of four people one had voted for the new Congress, one for other parties and two had not voted at all.

He felt there was a great deal of ballyhoo and exaggeration about the results. An example was Mrs. Gandhi's own claim that "the entire people had voted for a direction in which the country should go." At best, he described it as a "respectable" vote.

'BOW TO WILL'

As for the four-party alliance, he said that, so far as the losers were concerned, they had only one thing to do—"bow to the will of the people."

Mr. Masani attributed the defeat of the alliance to its failure to provide a credible alternative government and the SSP gate-crashing into the alliance and jettisoning the agreed programme.

He said: "In many constituencies the front proved to be the kiss of death for the Swatantra Party candidates who would have done much better on their own."

He also told the gathering that the front no longer existed. "At

least we are no longer a party to it."

Of Mrs. Gandhi's Government, Mr. Masani said it could not continue with excuses and alibis. The new Government would be clearly accountable for all its actions.

He warned of a serious crisis resulting in another two years, when the cheers had died down the garlands had shrivelled and the expectations of the people had turned sour.

The success or failure of the present Government would be decided on two fronts — political and economic. It would have to restore law and order and some discipline in national life and it would have to pull the economy out of its present morass.

According to Mr. Masani, this could only be achieved by a complete reversal of the economic policies practised for the last 20 years.

Earlier, the club presented its best air-hostess and purser awards to Miss Purveen Vachha and Mr. Suresh Hemmadi of Air-India.

The guests, including Mr. J. R. D. Tata, were welcomed by Mr. Pravinchandra Gandhi, president of the club. Mr. J. Waisa, a member, proposed a vote of thanks.

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