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**Masani takes hard knock as...**

# Swatantra is hemmed by ICS 'steel frame'

By BLITZ Correspondent

**M**ADRAS: Minoo Masani has taken a hard knock. He is reeling under the impact of the unkindest cut dealt him by Rajaji of all persons.

All his threats about keeping away from party posts could not succeed in lining the party behind him.

## HOPELESS

A two-day closed session of the Swatantra's General Council rejected two resolutions, authored by his supporters, for the sole purpose of paving the way for his return to the national executive.

Masani resigned from the executive when U. N. Mahda contested the Rajya Sabha seat from Gujarat, defying the party directive by defeating the official candidate.

Masani's contention was that, but for the Gujarat strongman C. C. Desai's organising this reprehensible revolt, the Swatantra leadership would not have been compromised so hopelessly.

## EYEWASH

He vowed to see the Gujarat unit superseded but could not have his way at the Delhi Executive meeting because of Chairman Ranga's opposition to him.

In Madras, he suffered a far more humiliating defeat. Though the National Executive formally expelled Mahida and debarred three other legislators from holding any position in the party, he knew it was an eyewash because, according to him, "small men had

been made scapegoats while bigger fry has been let go scotfree."

Neither he, nor Ranga, attended the meeting on the theoretically correct ground that their views should not intrude upon free discussions at the Executive.

Armed with palliatives suggested by the Executive, Rajaji frantically telephoned Masani to rush here to attend the General Council meeting at which he be re-elected to the Executive.

## BRAVE FIGHT

Though Rajaji sympathised with the high moral stand taken by Masani and Munshi on the Gujarat rebellion, as a practical politician he would take no risk with the loss of Gujarat being an imminent consequence of a tough posture.

Appreciated the reasons which prompted Masani to resign and hailed them as having saved, to some extent, the harm done to the party's image, and called for the creation of conditions to enable Masani to accept the membership of the Parliamentary Board and the Executive.

Spelt out how these conditions could be created. It proposed disciplinary action against Desai from working against Masani.

## REJECTED

To Masani's dismay, both these resolutions, which would have paved the way for his return, were rejected by the Council for the simple reason that Rajaji was opposed to them.

Now, Masani's an angry man. He has said that the days of the party are numbered if things go on as at present.

The party decision at Madras would recoil on it and harm it, he told newsmen.

What is he going to do? "I believe that to take off those like Munshi and myself and many others who believe in ethical and disciplined methods is to educate and arouse members of the party and appeal to the considerable fund of idealism that exists in the party ranks (not in leadership perhaps), so that this demoralisation may be eliminated."

## STEELFRAME

The threat implied in this statement is that Masani would not allow matters to rest where they have been left by the party organs. He will continue the rebellion by appealing to the ranks over the head of the leadership of which he is no more a part.

According to Dandekar, Masani had lost the gamble by a substantial majority. Masani's retort is that only a minority of 69 out of 170 was present at the meeting. This minority assertiveness is an indication of the party being in bad shape.

With the cleavage more sharper than ever before the Swatantra Party is in the doldrums. A significant feature is that new converts to the party from the old ICS steel frame are determined to keep the party under control.

Desais, Prabhus, Dandekars and the like make no secret of their contempt for professional politicians like the Masanis and the Munshis. And Rajaji has cast his lot with them.

*Cress*