

NATIONAL AFFAIRS

THE SWATANTRA and campaigning capacity, the seeds of a barely concealed dictatorship are deeply implanted in Mr. Masani's personality. Like many other clever people, he cannot brook rivals in cleverness.

By its very nature however, the Swatantra tended to become a party of cleverness rather than a party of basic emotions. A party of vested interests, of privilege of status quo, cannot afford idealism.

That is how too many clever people—represented by ex-ICS officers like Mr. B. Rama Rao, Mr. H. M. Patel, Mr. C. C. Desai and Mr. N. Dandekar — rallied round the Swatantra.

No political party in democratic India can sustain so many leaders with so few humble enough to be willing followers. The results have been demonstrated in Gujarat, in Rajasthan and more recently in Haryana.

MISTAKEN

In Gujarat, the party would not respect Mr. Masani's commitments. In sheer umbrage he resigned from the National Executive. If he expected an upheaval, an emotional disturbance, consternation such as was felt when Gandhi or Nehru administered similar "sack treatment", he was sadly mistaken.

Here was a strange case of the party's creator not being able to understand the character of the weapon he has made. It has broken in his hands.

This was in no way unexpected. Since his resignation, no one in the party had rallied to his support. Only at the very last, the

Bitter Pill for Minoo



MASANI
Strange case ...

ageing Mr. K. M. Munshi gave him backing. But the Kulapati's pull in Gujarat is as near to cipher as makes no difference.

Prof. Ranga, the Party's Chairman, and its leader in the Lok Sabha was so much at variance with the stand taken by Mr. Masani and the Kulapati, that he did not even attend the meetings of the National Executive and the General Council. In today's political climate, no party can afford road-rolling tactics.

REVOLT!

Mr. Dahyabhai Patel, the party's leader in the Rajya Sabha has remained conspicuously silent. Mr. Patel brought nothing to the party except the aura of a big name—the name of his father, the doughty Sardar.

But that counts for little in the excited circles of Swatantra top brass; and Mr. Patel is obviously clever enough not to play a crude, open, risky hand.

The Swatantra's troubles should normally have been regarded as catastrophic. But the current political atmosphere does not permit of such a view.

Over the entire ideological gamut, every party from the extreme left to the extreme right, is splitting and breaking. The Swatantra is only one of many sick parties.

The significance of the turmoil in its ranks must be sought elsewhere. There is room for the lurking suspicion that many Swatantra supporters are beginning to feel that they can go back home to the Congress. The climate there is becoming more congenial.

If the Swatantra has begun to crumble, it may be because its promoters and supporters are beginning to feel that it is no longer necessary.

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