

Heading for a split?

The mounting pressure of the RSS for total control over the Jan Sangh organisation has created serious tensions, almost a turmoil, within the party. This pressure had been working ever since the general election, but it has been greatly stepped up after the death of Deendayal Upadhyaya. The RSS bosses were afraid that the Jan Sangh having acquired an expanded mass base might tend to become too independent. The matter became urgent after Deendayal's death, as he was the main vehicle of RSS influence in the Jan Sangh.

Parliamentary Flabbiness. The RSS has always been concerned at what it calls the flabbiness of the Jan Sangh on the parliamentary front. It is frankly admitted in RSS and Jan Sangh circles that the compulsions of parliamentary politics have given an advantage over RSS workers to men with means and local mass influence who are able to grab Jan Sangh tickets. For a while a virtue was made of this situation and it was said that dedicated RSS workers did not hanker after seats in legislatures. But after the last general election, it was found that a large number of raw newcomers, completely ignorant of RSS traditions, had become the party's representatives in the legislatures.

This naturally tended to weaken RSS authority over the party and began to generate pressures for policies which the RSS could not fully approve of. It was therefore decided that during the Rajya Sabha and Council elections this year, this situation would be partially corrected by nominating RSS workers of some standing. Since the election to the upper houses is indirect, masses did not enter the picture. But the new policy evoked stiff resistance inside the Jan Sangh.

Delhi Clash: The most important manifestation of this resistance was in Delhi, where the tussle got intertwined with certain political pressures represented by Balraj Madhok and his friends. Delhi is an important centre of the Jan Sangh. The party here has won a position of absolute majority in the Union Territory and has sent as many as five party leaders to the Lok Sabha.

The issue came to a head over the choice of candidate for the Delhi seat of the Rajya Sabha. The local unit of the Jan Sangh nominated Narendra, editor of a local Urdu daily and a man with some pull with the power-

ful group of Arya Samajists of Delhi, Haryana and Punjab. The nomination was set aside by the all-India leadership and the party ticket given to Prof. Mahavir. Though the traditional discipline of the Jan Sangh finally prevailed and Mahavir was elected, it was almost 'ouch and go' and for a few moments it seemed as if the Madhok group which is in majority in the Delhi unit would revolt openly against the party's whip. The bitterness between the Delhi unit and the central leadership has since become very acute. Similar tensions have been generated in several other States, especially Madhya Pradesh and UP. There the clash is primarily of personalities while in Delhi policy issues also came to be involved.



Balraj Madhok
Will he revolt?

Vajpayee Shifts: Balraj Madhok has been openly pleading for a set of reactionary, pro-Swatantra, pro-American policies. That his political platform has been summarily and decisively rejected by the Jan Sangh is known and the credit for this has gone mainly to Vajpayee. But the irony of it is that in the process Vajpayee has come closer to RSS bosses while Madhok has fallen out with them. The latter is now becoming the chief champion of independence of the Jan Sangh from RSS domination.

Madhok is trying to rally all non-RSS elements in the Jan Sangh on the slogans of the party's independence and democratic functioning. On the contrary, Vajpayee who was at one time regarded as the natural leader of these elements because he fought for Jan Sangh participation in non-Congress fronts, including the Left parties, is beginning to lean more

and more on RSS support. In the tussle that has ensued the Madhok group can already claim some significant successes in Punjab, Haryana and UP.

This has its own implications for the political line of the Jan Sangh and of Vajpayee in particular. To meet Madhok's pressure Vajpayee is having to make concessions to his political line of a right-wing alliance against the Left parties, especially the Communists. He is also adjusting himself to the centrist approach of the RSS directed towards building an anti-Congress alliance which is also anti-Communist. This explains why Vajpayee when he was in Calcutta recently appealed to the SSP, PSP and BKD to leave the United Front and form a new front directed against the Congress as well as the Communists. He has taken the same line in relation to Kerala.

Prospects: While the tussle inside the Jan Sangh is rapidly gathering momentum, it is too early to say whether it will lead to anything like a minor or major split. But if the central leadership dissolves the Madhok-dominated Delhi unit, even a split in the Jan Sangh may not be ruled out. In that event the trouble will not be confined to Delhi but will have repercussions in other places also. Already all kinds of tensions are getting mixed up with the factional struggle. In some places it is Brahmins versus non-Brahmins, in others there is discontent against the UP-Maharashtra RSS axis; elsewhere the so-called modernists are fighting against the conservatives.

SWATANTRA

Behind Masani's Resignation

Minoo Masani's resignation from the National Executive of the party and its Parliamentary Board should be viewed in the context of the continuous effort by a section of the party leadership to elbow out the man who created the Swatantra. Some time back Masani had to give up General Secretaryship of the party in favour of ex-ICS man Dandekar. Earlier, he had stepped down from the leadership of the parliamentary wing of the party when N. G. Ranga was elected to the Lok Sabha. Masani's tragedy seems to be that he is too conservative for the business magnates who finance the party, too modern for the princely elements in its leadership, too much of a politician for the ex-ICS men who run the party machine and too ambitious for the few political workers who campaign for the party.

Rajas Vs Seths: Business magnate Madhu Amarsey, for instance, wants the party to function like the Democratic and Republican parties of U.S.A. with its own trade union and peasant wings. He will also prefer a more enlightened stand on the public sector and even on the issues of foreign policy. Masani whose Congress Socialist past still haunts him thinks that such activities will provide a cover for the Communists to infiltrate into the Swatantra and turn the party into a kind of half-way house to Communism.

Masani's attempts to draw the younger generation of businessmen from Bombay, Marwar and Gujarat and give them a dominating position in the party is, however, resented by the Swatantra's Rajas and Ranis. They think that it is only because of their traditional influence that the Swatantra was able to get so many seats in the Lok Sabha and certain State Assemblies. The conflict between these two sections led to the defeat of the party's official nominee in the Rajya Sabha election from Gujarat which became the immediate cause of Masani's resignation.

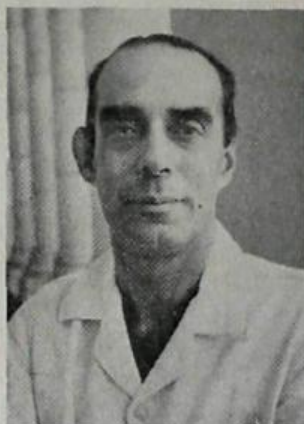
Caste Tensions: The struggle between the feudal elements and the business men in the Swatantra leadership is more acute in Gujarat because there it has got mixed up with some social and caste tensions. The Swatantra hoped to get into power in Gujarat in the last general election because it was able to win over the support of the richer sections of the peasantry called Pattidars and Patels. The Kshatriya feudals living on unearned income do not see eye to eye with the hard working kulaks who happen to belong to castes slightly lower in the social ladder than the Rajputs. The Gujarati rich peasant is turning to agro-industries and investing in cooperatives. This has helped in establishing close links between him and the big business.

The three trends are represented in the Swatantra leadership in the State by the Kutch Rajas, Bhailabhai Patel and H. M. Patel. Among them, Bhailabhai has the largest following because of his social, educational and political work. For some time former ICS man H. M. Patel was Bhailabhai's main rival in the party but lately the two have come to terms and the aging Bhailabhai has nominated H. M. Patel as his successor. Though 'H.M.', too, has acquired some popularity by his work in the cooperative movement, the feudal elements are not prepared to accept him as their leader. They know they cannot do without Bhailabhai, yet they are prepared to have a showdown with him on this issue.

Showdown: In the forefront of the preparations for a showdown were the Maharaja of Deogarh Baria, the Tha-

kore Saheb of Dhrol, the Maharajkumar of Kutch, the Maharajkumar of Bhavnagar, the Yuvaraj of Wankaner and the Maharaja of Idar. The opportunity for showdown was provided by the Rajya Sabha election; in fact, this became an occasion for the Kutch Rajas to establish links with the more conservative elements in the party's central leadership against those supported Bhailabhai.

In the 1962-67 Assembly there was a group of independents led by a former Congressman Babubhai Vaidya; it was with the support and help of this group that Masani was able to win the Rajkot Lok Sabha seat in the 1963 by-election and also get a Rajya Sabha seat in 1966 for Swatantra no-



Minoo Masani
Left in the lurch

minee Biharilal Antani. The understanding between the Swatantra leadership and Vaidya was that he would get the Rajya Sabha seat in the 1968 election. On the basis of this promise he also worked for the Swatantra candidates in the last general election without himself joining the party. Bhailabhai was a party to the agreement and he realised the utility of a politician of Vaidya's type for the party. However, when the time for giving party tickets for the Rajya Sabha election came, the Kutch Rajas refused to adopt Vaidya as their candidate. Instead, they put up a retired engineer who himself belongs to a princely family, U. N. Mahida. The State Committee could not come to any decision and sent to the Central Parliamentary Board of the party both the names.

In the board the Rajas supported Mahida. Former ICS men headed by C. C. Desai also joined them on the ground that Vaidya was a politician and a politician could not be trusted

to put across the party line loyally and faithfully. But Masani stood by his commitment to Vaidya. With the help of the politicians and businessmen in the central leadership Vaidya was able to get the ticket in spite of the Rajas and the ex-ICS men. But the last word lay with the Kutch Rajas who had a lobby of 38 members against about 30 of the Bhailabhai group in the Gujarat Assembly. All these 38 voted for Mahida and defeated Vaidya which provoked Bhailabhai to resign from party leadership. Immediately afterwards Masani also resigned.

Now it is expected that some others will follow suit with a view to force the issue at the coming meetings of the party's central bodies in the middle of the month at Delhi. But the possibility cannot be ruled out of the politicians and businessmen in the party's leadership coming to terms with the princes and the ex-ICS men. The Swatantra can hardly do without the traditional influence of the princes and the organising capacities of ex-ICS men. Masani may thus be left in the lurch.

Epidemic of Defections

There is no let up in political defections and floor crossings, which though not a new phenomenon have acquired special significance since the fourth general election. The lust for power and the desire to make easy money or grab ministerial positions have increased to such an extent that the people have started questioning the hallowed right of their elected representatives to part company with the party on whose platform they were elected if the latter goes against the people's mandate.

Even the appointment of a Committee on Defections by the Union Home Minister has not inhibited floor crossings. No wonder that soon after the appointment of the committee the Congress party in Punjab organised defections of 11 non-Congress legislators to reinforce its claim to form a Congress Government in the State.

Alarming Rate: The alarming rate at which defections take place can be judged from the fact that during the past 12 months ending on March 31, there were 438 cases of defection and redefection in the various State legislatures while only 542 cases occurred in the previous two decades. There is no political party free from floor crossings but the largest contingents moved in and out of the Congress. The other parties which had a high rate of defections were the Swatantra, the PSP and the SSP. Even the Jan Sangh and the Communists, despite