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Masani quits Party post: will Nija and Basu follow?

BY R. M. LALA

NEW DELHI The day Swatantra leader M. R. Masani resigned from the National Executive and the Parliamentary Board of the Party, he told me, "I thought it was about time that somebody made a Gandhian stand."

In his letter to the Party's General Secretary, Masani, who with Rajaji has been the main architect of the Party, stated the reasons for his resignation. He said that he had given, on behalf of the Parliamentary Board of his Party, a solemn assurance to a candidate in Gujarat that he would be selected for the Rajya Sabha seat in 1968. "A score of our members violated this agreement," he said. He accused them of joining hands with the opposing Congress Party and defeating the very candidate they were supposed to elect. (The leader and the deputy leader of the Swatantra Party in the Gujarat Assembly have also resigned from their posts.)

"Act of atonement"

In his letter Masani says, "This is unfortunately not an isolated case, but one more example of how the general demoralisation of the country is finding its way into our own ranks." He concludes, his resignation is "an act of atonement to those who have been let down by this breach of faith on the part of some of our colleagues, in the hope that this may stimulate the conscience of our Party."

Since the Party was founded in 1960, Minoo Masani has been its General Secretary until a few months back when he resigned to "give others a chance". During this period he substantially helped in making the Swatantra Party the second largest in the Indian Parliament. Known for his integrity, keen intellect, organising capacity, Minoo Masani is author of a number of books and was one of the founders of the Congress Socialist Party with Jayaprakash Narayan and Asoka Mehta. Since then he has veered considerably to the Right.

His partymen concede his outstanding qualities but some complain he is intolerant, domineering and over-ambitious. Masani believes that his present move will serve as much-needed shock treatment to bring the erring members of his Party to their senses, and will inject into the Indian political scene some semblance of morality.

Sitting on the verandah of his

room in Tuglaq Road last Saturday he spoke at length about many things. Most striking was the story he related about his father, the late Sir Rustum Masani. When Sir Rustum was Vice-Chancellor of Bombay University, Minoo was a struggling young barrister with few briefs and even less of an income. The Dean of Law placed the name of Minoo among the examiners for the LL.B exams. At a meeting in the University, Sir Rustum located his son's name on the list of examiners. He said, "What is this? My son on the examiner list? I won't have it so long as I am Vice-Chancellor."

The Dean of Law protested in vain that Minoo had got in on his own merit.

That night at supper Sir Rustum mentioned what had happened at the University meeting. "There is enough nepotism in the country and I won't add to it," he told his son. Minoo replied, "Do you realise father you have deprived me of the chance to earn Rs 2000?"

After supper Sir Rustum went into his study and emerged five minutes later to hand Minoo a cheque for Rs 2000. "Here is the income that you have lost," said the father. Minoo had no heart to cash the cheque.

Twenty-four hours after meeting Masani I met the leader of another political party, an MP who has been a driving force in politics for the last 20 years. He said "I am in the same position today as Masani was two days ago. The choice before me is to obey my conscience or compromise." He spoke with feeling of how his party was being controlled by certain interests, its growth throttled and policies confused.

Will he be the next to resign?

He spoke about a colleague of his who was high and mighty and enjoyed power without responsibility. It was a new thought to him when I said, "You may be the one person who can change him. He may need your help."

"I'll be quite frank with you," came the reply. "I don't like him."

He said that to change another person he may need to change on some points himself. Leaders of all political parties face this question of how to get on with their colleagues. Neither Congressmen nor the Communists are free from this clash between personalities within their party.

Congress President Nijalingappa when questioned on a recent report that 60 of his Party wanted a closed-door meeting snapped, "If they don't want me, I'll get out."

I understand from Calcutta that Jyoti Basu, former Deputy Chief Minister of Bengal and leading Communist-Marxist, does not see eye to eye with many of his party colleagues and finds it difficult to work with them. They can't drop him because he has been the public image that wins votes. To win, he needs them too. But how long will he be able to continue this relationship?

"Super-Gandhian" approach

Could it be that politicians now need to consider some new way to answer differences where their own colleagues are concerned? Something even beyond the Gandhian approach is now needed. One might say a "super-Gandhian approach". It may require something more than just pointing a finger, or even resigning on a moral issue, a laudable thing to do. It may require the capacity to see where one's own self is wrong, courage to admit it to one's colleagues.

Defections which are ruining our democracy are the result not only of ambition for office but also of unresolved differences with party colleagues.

The old ways have failed. Why not try something new and give hope to the millions?

SO THEY SAY

I have done nothing improper by becoming the Chief Minister.

MR BHOLA PASWAN SHASTRI
Chief Minister of Bihar

I have not quite got the hang of the situation there (in Czechoslovakia).

S. A. DANGE
Chairman of the Communist Party of India

All was not well. Neither was everything unwell.

Y. B. CHAVAN
Union Home Minister
(referring to communal riots)

MADRAS

DMK's

FROM

MADRAS Chief Minister Annadurai has been in the United States of America will tour that country from April 17. He will visit Japan and the Far East days before returning the background of his for over one year as the Minister of Madras, this visit of great value to his Government.

America and Japan during the last few decades "practical wisdom". And anyone else in the country realises that it is the leadership in India to outlook towards depend work and faith in their

Madras has been one of the states, well administered political leadership of the DMK since Independence, ever since Independence, even earlier. This of the Congress Party decades of power rests equally surprising contrast office of the DMK. The assurance of complete control affairs of the State until Madras has established

Throwing things

It's the thing nowadays
To be able to throw

Words
Stones
Criticism
Bombs
Stained glass at clergymen
Scorn at God.

Everybody does exercises to
improve
Their biceps and triceps.

Baby throws things at Daddy
Daddy at the workers
The workers at employers
Employers at the Government
The Government at the rest of the
world
The world at the moon.

I hope the moon doesn't
take offence.
He only has to lean over
the edge and drop.

JEAN McALL

amongst the electorate would have to continue. Mr Annadurai has proved himself a true Gandhian by this one big step at a time when many Congress ministries are giving up this policy for the sake of increasing their states' revenues.

The one-rupee-a-measure rice subsidy has also been a highly imaginative policy. In the two major cities

with thousands of unemployed and counselling patience and discipline to the workers.

The DMK Ministry, well settled in its saddle, has been stressing that there is urgent need for a fresh reappraisal of Union-state relations so that the dependence of the states on the Centre for everything, big or small, may be ended.

WEST BENGAL

Firm stand pays off in student riots

FROM S. K. MUKHOPADHYAYA IN CALCUTTA

STUDENT VIOLENCE is assuming an ugly shape in West Bengal. Hardly a day passes when there is no disturbance in some educational institution and of late young boys of 10 to 14 years have come out in the streets,

joining processions and hurling bricks and stones at the instigation of others. Guardians and teachers have been helpless spectators.

The climax was reached on Tuesday

CONTINUED ON PAGE 13

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