

POLSTAR

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AN APPEAL TO CONG(O)

The reason given by Mr. M. R. Masani for resigning the Chairmanship of the Swatantra party is worth notice. It was that the present plight of the party "is a cumulative result of several shortcomings and mistakes" and that as party Chairman he should take his full share of responsibility.

Mr. Masani's step is an act of grace and honesty worthy of emulation. For him a sound principle of administration in political life was that when disaster overtook the organisation the man at the helm of affairs should take the responsibility for the debacle and hand over office to someone who might bring fresh ideas and an open mind to the task.

In the wake of the outcome of the mid-term poll the Congress (O) finds itself in political wilderness. The mood should be introspective, self-searching and penitential. Unfortunately such a mood is not yet visible among the top leaders of the party. The preoccupation continues to be with sensational, peripheral issues. Mr. Nijalingappa has not said a word about his responsibility for the party's debacle. Perhaps it is too much to expect him to quit now. The only redeeming thing appears to be that he is reported to have expressed his unwillingness to continue once his term of office is over.

Hereafter no more squabbling and hush-hushing at the top over leadership question can be allowed if the party is to survive in strength and vigour. The rank and file are not there merely to raise slogans, to obey orders and to suffer hardships. Their voice should be heard. Their experience at the grass roots level should be listened to and taken into account.

The Congress(O) stands at the cross-roads of its political existence. Who shall be the leader after Mr. Nijalingappa? The party needs a leader who shall be absolutely committed to socialism, the ten-point programme and shall firmly denounce the idea of flirting with the rightist and reactionaries, no matter what the situation or compulsion is. He should also be an opponent of parochialism and chauvinism and a deep-rooted adherent of national integration. Has the party such a leader with the required qualities to work for its rejuvenation? It has. A moment's thought will tell us that we have in the person of Dr. Ram Subhag Singh a leader who can build up the party and rehabilitate its image in the eyes of the people.

Dr. Ram Subhag Singh should be elected the President of the Congress (O) when the time for electing a new leader comes. It is equally important that leaders like Mr. Nijalingappa, Mr. Morarji Desai, Mr. S. K. Patil and Mr. Atulya Ghosh whose commitment to socialism is anything

but enthusiastic or sincere should be politely asked not to burden the party any longer. And the one all-important goal should be the establishment of a socialist society. All unholy alliances should be dropped.

In a State like Tamilnadu the Congress(O) should bear in mind that its real political foe is the opportunist and reactionary DMK under Mr. Karunanidhi. Hence its campaign and programme of activities should reinforce its socialist image in the minds of the people. As and when the Centre takes steps to implement policies that are in tune with socialism and the 10-point programme the Congress(O) should not hesitate to extend its support and cooperation. In this there shall not be any quarter for personal feuds and narrow prejudices.

Once the Swatantra was the political opponent of the Congress(O). In the recent mid-term poll the DMK became the common political opponent of both. If the Congress(O) can join with its erstwhile political opponent to fight the DMK what prevents it from joining forces with an organisation whose ideology it shares? May be it is not as simple as that. But such an elementary question cannot help cropping up in the mind of the common man. The drift of the whole argument in this editorial is this; the Congress(O) should play a constructive, positive role in the affairs of the nation. For this it has to be built up carefully to regain the old strength and stature. It needs a top leader who can "bring fresh ideas and an open mind to the task." It needs the leadership of Dr. Ram Subhag Singh and the vigour of youth. The sooner it gets this the better.