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M.R.M.

No room for Right Wing Party

SINCE the advent of freedom, Indian politicians have flourished on slogans and shibboleths; and they have looked for scapegoats when the wind turned against them.

Of course, there was a Gandhi who could confess to "Himalayan" blunders; he could tell Justice Broomfield: "I knew I was playing with fire; and if I were set free I would do it again." But Gandhi was no politician, nor was Deshbandhu Chittaranjan who had the guts to admit at the Gaya Congress that the boycott of the legislatures was not a mistake, but a crime.

It is in that sense that one should welcome the resignation of M. R. Masani from the presidency of the Swatantra Party for the debacle it suffered in the recent mid-term poll. Masani has re-enunciated a sound principle: that when a "disaster" overtook a political organisation, the man at the helm of affairs should take over responsibility and hand over office to someone who might bring fresh ideas and an open mind to the task.

In a letter addressed to the General Council of the Party, Masani has gone on record that the present plight of the party was the cumulative result of several shortcomings and mistakes and that, as the Party president, he should take his full share of responsibility for them.

Socialism

Minocher Masani was drawn into the vortex of the freedom struggle during the epic civil disobedience campaigns that rocked the country in the thirties of the century. He cheerfully underwent long terms of imprisonment; and it was while he was in the Nasik Road Central Prison that, along with Jyaprakash Narayan and C. K. Narayanswami, he drafted the blue-print for a Congress Socialist Party.

The CSP attracted some of the best freedom fighters in the

Swarajist member of the Madras Legislative Council. Later, we were together in the Vellore Central jail. He became the Prime Minister of Orissa in 1937; and today, 34 years later, he returns to the same job.

India remembers that the incomparable Vallabhbhai Sardar was well over the biblical span of three score years and ten when he became the Deputy Prime Minister of free India. That man changed the map of this country; what had been but a mosaic under the British was converted by him into a monolith.

The poser

Compared to the septuagenarians and octogenarians hovering like bees round the honeypots of office, Masani is comparatively young; he is enjoying good health and his brain is as agile as ever. He has not threatened to quit politics as Rajaji did on more occasions than one.

But his resignation from the presidency of the Swatantra Party raises an important question:

INDIAN PANORAMA

By R. P. Aiyar

whether a Right-Wing party can flourish hereafter in India. The Swatantra Party was the only important party in the country to turn its back on Socialism and plump for private enterprise. The Swatantra had a clear-cut ideology, though it was associated in the popular mind with the erstwhile princelings.

Today, it is impossible for any party to sail against the wind of Socialism in the country. Time was when the Talukdars and Zamindars of the United Provinces could offer a

openly come out in favour of Socialism. In Lanka, Sirimavo Bandaranaike is heading a coalition including both the Trotskyists and the Stalinists; the United Nationalist Party was practically wiped out at the last election. It is the same story in most of the African countries.

The promises

It cannot but be otherwise in countries where millions have led a twilight existence for centuries. It is a measure of the wavering faith of the Swatantra that even Masani had to talk in terms of implementing the 10-point programme of the Old Congress. The Concordat of Princes is now willing to negotiate again.

It is quite on the cards that the abolition of the privy purses will not lead us to the Promised Land; an annual expenditure of about Rs. 6 crores is not such a crushing burden. But the abolition will have the same impact on the public mind as the Nationalisation of leading banks.

Promising an entrancing utopia to the befuddled electorate has become the stock-in-trade of every political party; and even the Swatantra could not be absolved from having fallen a victim to it. The gospel of hard work has rarely been popular in any country, least of all in this land of misers who wait like mice for something round the corner.

It was Lord Mountbatten who said that India is the country where the Rising Sun is worshipped. That explains the effortless ease with which the ministries in Mysore, Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh have toppled. The splinter groups of the Opposition are built round disgruntled personalities. Except the Communists and the Jan Sangh, none of them can be accused of possessing any ideology.

It was Chesterton who asserted that a Right Wing party can flourish only in a prosperous country; and no one would say that India is even a fast-developing country. We are among the lower foothills of economic freedom; and it will be decades before we reach the stage of some of the smaller countries of Europe.

Every party in the country has its eyes glued to the seats of power; as such, not one of them can think of a long-range plan whereby politics can be lifted to a higher level. Till that is done, a Right Wing party can never flourish in India. Most of our Left Wingers think Right but shout Left; till they are true to themselves, how can they serve the nation?



meet
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The stolen draft
which he had withdrawn out of
fence of the deposited Rs. 7,200
agreed to reconsider his sen-
their Lordships, however,
was upheld.
The conviction of Madhukar