

SWATANTRA PARTY

FIFTH NATIONAL CONVENTION

Bhubaneswar, October 5 & 6, 1968

1600



PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

by

N. G. Ranga, M. P.

THE SWATANTRA PARTY

Fifth National Convention

Bhubaneswar, October 5 & 6, 1968

Presidential Address

Dear Rajajee and Delegates,

I AM COMING straight from the drought-stricken areas of Andhra. What a heart-rending sight and experience it has been. Quite a number of our delegates come from similarly distressed areas of Mysore, Orissa, Rajasthan, Madras and West Bengal. This land of Orissa has had to suffer from such famine in some part or the other during the past 5 years. I have myself been witness to such a terrible calamity in Dhenkanal, Bolanghir, Koraput, Ganjam districts a few years ago and the sights of those famished, emaciated and skeleton-type men and women and their near-dying children haunt me so many times. Our Orissa party workers and their leaders Shri P. K. Deo, R. N. Singh Deo did splendid relief work. This All-India wide drought has set in, so soon after unprecedented floods have devastated vast areas of arable land and the standing crops in Assam, Gujarat, Rajasthan and washed away many a village and damaged. It is provisionally estimated that the total losses sustained by our lakhs of peasants would come to 2,000 crores. The costs of rehabilitating themselves cannot be less than half as much.

These calamities have to warn us not to be too jubilant over the reported break-through achieved in crop yields on the food front and to try to find a way out of these recurring sufferings of our masses. One thing is clear; break-through over yields and bumper crops is not enough answer. The millions of peasants in the affected Famine and Flood Zones derive so little benefit or consolation from them.

We, of the Kisan movement have been clamouring for the

re-introduction of the pre-Montford era's All-India Famine Insurance Fund and Rehabilitation, but on a vastly larger scale, to which the Centre and States would make annual contributions on a fifty-fifty basis. In the debate we had in August in Lok Sabha, I suggested that the Centre should contribute 200 crores per annum and the States another 200 crores. This must be a permanent Fund, and during years of normal seasons, without any untoward floods or drought, it goes on accumulating, except for the contributions to rehabilitation and protective works. I would recommend to our Party and also to all the public workers who cherish the interests of our people and kisans, to demand the development of such an All-India Insurance Fund. Its objects would be two-fold—to relieve the distress of the affected masses during such calamities and to rehabilitate the social economy of the areas in famine and flood zones by constructing the irrigation, drainage works such as reservoirs, tanks, wells, embankments, in a planned manner, with suitable grants from this Fund, to supplement whatever annual or occasional grants made by concerned Governments for specific works.

Crop and Cattle Insurance

The Kisan Movement has been asking ever since 1925 for Crop and Cattle Insurance. Some of the State Governments began to flirt with that idea just before the 1967 general elections, possibly as a bait to the kisan voters. Now we are told that the Central Government has some experimental Schemes but so few State Governments are willing to join in the proposed scheme. Such an insurance can become practicable only after the establishment of the All-India Famine and Flood Protection Fund, so that while problems of relief and rehabilitation created by calamitous, large-scale vicissitudes of seasons as in this year would be met by the latter, the year by year localised failures of crops caused by failure of rains, visitation of floods, pests, other vagaries of seasons can be tackled by crop insurance. Therefore, I wish to warn kisans not to be deceived by election-

motivated offers of crop insurance schemes, or experiments thereof, but to insist upon the establishment of both the Famine and Flood Protection Scheme and Fund as well as the Crop Insurance Schemes, started as complements of each other.

Rural Water Supply

The serious social and economic troubles and losses sustained by way of wasted labour and debilitated health, sustained throughout the year because of our neglect of sources and schemes for drinking water facilities comes to the fore, during these periods of drought. Tanks and wells go dry, streams do not yield any spring-channel water, and people and their cattle are obliged to trek for 3 to 7 miles to scour up dribbles, cup-fulls of dirty, unhealthy, withal precious water for drinking purposes, not to speak of bathing or washing. There is great need to develop tube-wells, deepen the tanks and wells, with rigs, filter points and pumps etc. All this developmental and protective work will have to be shouldered by the proposed National Fund.

Housing

The housing conditions of our Harijans, Adibasis, Agricultural workers and large sections of lower middle classes in rural areas and working classes in towns are very deplorable. House construction has not been keeping pace with the rising population, with the result what have been tolerable habitations degenerate into slums and festering abodes of so many social evils. Our party has been keen on the development of an adequate national plan for housing for people. So, we have moved a non-official resolution in Lok Sabha and it evoked response from all sides of the House. But it is typical of lop-sided Congress priorities that it has refused to accept our demand, though it is able to find 100 crores more for the Bokaro dream. We have been pressing for the supply of zinc sheets or tiles either freely or at subsidized prices to such of the workers as are willing to provide walls for their huts.

Education

Elementary education is the other national need which has been neglected for so long in such a criminal fashion. Could it be because the Congress has discovered a vested interest in the continued illiteracy of the masses? I sincerely hope that the Orissa Coalition will succeed in providing maximum possible resources for the speedy development of elementary education and effective elimination of adult-illiteracy. Here is a field for constructive work for Swatantra workers to organise anti-illiteracy centres, such as night schools, adult educational groups and contribute their share in a dynamic manner for the removal of illiteracy of our people.

This is the Human Rights Year in this Development Decade. Wherever we turn, we find that Human Rights are in great danger of being further ignored and assailed. On this great worldwide issue, all political parties and public workers have to make their stand clear. Rev. Martin Luther's assassination is only the most painful reminder of how the most prosperous and scientifically advanced Americans fail to accord equal and honourable Civic Rights and economic opportunities to their big minority of Negro or Coloured brethren. In our own land, we have had many a rude shock to warn us how our society has not done enough for Harijans and is not yet determined enough to rid itself of the blot of untouchability. We have failed to substantiate by our public and private activities, the outlawry, by Constitutional declaration of untouchability. When Bapu was alive, our national workers engaged themselves so sincerely in so many social activities and movements calculated to awaken, educate and uplift the Backward Classes, Adibasis and Harijans. But since 1948, this most indispensable activity has been ignored and the State has come with all its boastful grants to blindfold the public and silence our social conscience.

We have established adult franchise but failed to buttress it by social education and fraternal uplift of our Bahujans.

The Swatantra movement has to shoulder its share of the national responsibility to befriend our Harijans, Girijans,

Backward Classes and all other under-privileged sections of our society and make its sincere contribution in according the necessary opportunities for all these broad but long-neglected and suppressed masses to enable them to appreciate and enjoy the Human Rights, enshrined in our Constitution. Hence our call to the people to observe the Human Rights Day, not only on the date fixed by the United Nations, but also on the Birth Day of Bapu, who is the greatest champion of the Human Rights during this Century.

The country is grateful to Justice Subbarao and his colleagues for having set the seal of the Supreme Court on the Constitution's Chapter on Fundamental Rights and refused to recognise the right of Parliament to amend it, in the way that Jawaharlaljee has succeeded in getting Parliament to pass that infamous anti-peasant Seventeenth Amendment to the Constitution. We are opposed, therefore, to the Private Member's Bill introduced by Shri Nath Pai and supported by Government, seeking to make even this most sacred Chapter, open to amendment by Parliament. We are convinced that if this Chapter is placed at the mercy of the changing moods of Parliament, the Fundamental Rights of our people would be in great jeopardy. Therefore, I appeal for the observance of a National Day of Protest against this Bill and the Government's shameful support to it.

The brutal and unashamed, unprovoked invasion of Czechoslovakia by the U.S.S.R. and her other allies of the Warsaw Pact and the brazen misuse of veto at the Security Council against the resolution condemning that aggression are rude reminders that this world is not much different from middle ages or of the recently condemned Hitlerian invasions. This Soviet Communist display of all the rigours of imperialism and intolerance of even moderate cultural norms, initiated by one of their own loyal communist allies is positive proof that there cannot be guarantee for Human Rights and National Sovereignty for any small country and its people, even in the face of the U.N. Charter. All the hopes and happiness cherished by us in the post-war days of emancipation of the African, Asian and

Caribbean nations are thus dashed to the ground. We are reminded by Soviet Russia's continued occupation of Czechoslovakia and her muzzling and brain-washing of its leaders that the national independence of the small nations which have so recently donned the robes of sovereignty with such high whims and fancies, imperialistic greed, cultural aggression and political interests of the Big Powers.

Bapu used to say that India was fighting for the freedom of all subject nations. When, in these post-war decades and so rapidly in the wake of India's attainment of national freedom, almost all the Asian, African and other nations, big and small, were wresting their national freedom from Western imperialism, Indian people rejoiced; with the feeling that Bapu's hopes were being realised. I shudder to think how Bapu and the noble martyrs of our national struggle would be turning in their graves over this failure of India to raise her voice — in the name of her government — in condemnation of this most unjust Soviet aggression and occupation of the peaceful Czechoslovakia and India's abstention at the Security Council.

Rajajee has rightly called upon Indira Gandhi to resign in atonement of her failure. On the other hand, she is proud of having decided in that shameless manner in virtue of her leadership. Will the Congress Party have the moral courage to wrest her resignation for having thus betrayed Indian nationalism and world cause of Human Rights?

Soviet Satellitism

For some time now, Government of India has been sedulously edging its way into the Soviet orbit of internationalism. Taking advantage of the growing detente between U.S.S.R. and U.S.A., Jawaharlaljee, Shastri and Indira Gandhi have got us into the Soviet sphere, without making any formal announcement. They have been giving the impression that Soviet Russia is our saviour, so far as the much-beloved Kashmir is concerned. Then they have developed the Rupee Trade with U.S.S.R. and her Warsaw Pact allies. Recently they have grown so bold as to

broadcast their readiness to dovetail our so-called democratic centralised planning into the Communist controlled economic planning. Tashkent Pact was the Acme of Soviet achievement. But little did our Government realise that in the wake of it, Soviet Russia has been building up her friendship and political alliance with Pakistan. Even as recently as six months back, India's Prime Minister was told by Kosygin, soon after he toured Pakistan about his decision to supply arms to Pakistan but she would not divulge that vital fact to the country. We are obliged to U.S.S.R. that she was bold and callous enough to announce her decision to supply arms to Pakistan and thus help her to destroy the moral sanctions of the Tashkent Pact by stepping up her arms race with India, just on the eve of our President's visit to Russia. Could there have been a more abject surrender of our self-respect as evidenced by our failure to cancel the President's visit or a greater national insult that U.S.S.R. could hurl at us. Our spokesmen in Parliament have therefore rightly characterised this degradation of India as that of a Soviet Satellite.

No wonder, Indira Gandhi did not dare condemn or deplore the unconscionable Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, as befitting a Satellite. The queer thing is that the Warsaw satellites have demonstrated greater courage and freer criticism than such a Government and such a Prime Minister deserve to be dismissed by the Nation. Alas! the Congress Party has no conscience or patriotic fervour to respond to nation's urges.

It is the universal national wish that our country should not become or allow herself to be reduced to the ignoble level of Satellitism. Our Party has been urging a radical re-orientation of our foreign policy, by the abandonment of the Non-Alignment policy, which became outmoded in view of the detente between U.S.A. and U.S.S.R. and positively, dangerous in the wake of China's unprovoked invasion of India and unjust occupation of a part of our sacred territory. It has now become clear, in the light of the present developments, that Indira Gandhi's Government has reduced India into a Satellite of the U.S.S.R.

Since the Tashkent Pact, which has proved to be a debacle for India — U.S.A., and other nations of the democratic West seem to have reconciled themselves to let U.S.S.R. consider India as falling within her sphere of influence. So, our Party's slogan on this front is "Down with Satellitism and "Free India from Soviet sphere".

Indo-Pakistan Relations

India and Pakistan must learn to live in peace with each other and sign and honour a "No-War" Pact. Swatantra Party and Rajajee in particular have been pleading with both, for all this decade, to stop their arms-race and abandon their hostile-postures. It was Rajajee who took Jawaharlaljee to task for failing to respond to Ayub Khan's offer to Joint Defence Council. But when Pakistan's only response to our appeals for friendship and Jawaharlaljee's offer of "No-War Pact", was the unilateral and unprovoked aggression, for the second time and third times, over Kutch and Kashmir and Punjab, Swatantra Party declared that Pakistan had lost her locus-standi for any claims for participation in Kashmir affairs. Our Party hailed the Tashkent Pact, with the sincere belief that Pakistan has agreed to pursue only peaceful means in the settlement of all outstanding issues of mutual interest. But most unfortunately Pakistan has failed to return our properties which were seized during that war, refused to stop the arms race, carried on a campaign against U.S. supplies of arms for our defences against China, bullied U.S.A. and now, U.S.S.R. to supply more and more arms and continues to receive arms from China. It is in this context that I deplore the growing dependence of our Government on U. S. S. R. and its failure to take such broad-minded steps in Kashmir as to ensure a really broad-based, representative democratic regime.

National Integration Council

The need for national integration is ever-lasting in a huge, ancient, multi-lingual and multi-racial country like ours. It

stands to the credit of Shri K. M. Munshi for having drawn the attention of our people to growing forces of disintegration, owing to the many disruptive and thoughtless policies of Jawaharlaljee. Like so many of his moves, Jawaharlaljee monopolised that National Integration Conference also and turned into one of his sounding boards. It became a still-born babe. When the present Prime Minister wanted to revive the Council, I advised her not to repeat the earlier blunder and impose the Prime Minister as its Chairman and also not to take upon herself the responsibility of choosing its personnel but to invite either Rajajee or Radhakrishnan to be the Chairman and let the Steering Committee of leaders of all political parties select the members. She would not pursue any such democratic procedure. She made it another Government show. So, I declined to take part in that Srinagar Conference or in any of its Committees. The S.S.P. has also refused to join it. As anyone who knows how political and social currents are moving in our country, this effort is also doomed to fail. The Jan Sangh leaders are disillusioned with it. Neither the Communal nor linguistic minorities derive any consolation or strength from it. On the other hand, the Andhra Government has conceived a monster, from the umbrage given by that Council in the shape of its Press Control and Censorship Bill. Even the Home Minister has had to admit that it goes far beyond the Integration Council and the Punjab Act, which it pretends to copy and is also otherwise objectionable. The Home Minister and Prime Minister and their Party President have failed, between them, to settle the border quarrels between Maharashtra and Mysore. They also are unable to persuade Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat to reach even an interim agreement over the Narbada waters. If there is anyone who is an obstruction to National Integration, it is this Indira's Government. If real National Integration is to grow, then this Government should make way to a more patriotic and nationally representative and determined Government.

All are agreed that our national defences should be strengthened. We have all permitted Government to raise our defence

expenditure upon the huge sum of over a thousand crores. Yet, will that be enough, in view of the mad arms-race to which we are being challenged by Pakistan and our common suppliers of arms, namely U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. ? Can our national economy bear such ever-rising burdens of defence ? Even if it may not be possible for the statesmen of India and Pakistan to achieve some understanding to stop any more armament race, surely it is in the immediate national interest to agree to sign the Non-Proliferation Treaty and thus gain the goodwill of its principal sponsors and also assure ourselves of some protection from Atomic Powers!

We reiterate our support to the decision made by Nehru-Shastri Governments not to develop the Atom Bomb, as such a wise policy would save us from another crushing burden, and would act as a damper on others who may be suicidal-minded enough to venture upon Atomic Bomb experiments.

We Stand for Non-Exploitative Society

Let me remind the public that our movement has emerged in answer to the call of our helpless peasants for such a political platform to defend their self-employment and proprietorship over their holdings. When Jawaharlaljee threatened them in 1957-59 with the blessings of Vinbohajee and with all the powers of his Congress Party and governments to displace their self-employed rural economy by state-sponsored co-operative farming and state farms. We found that the artisan masses as well as the entrepreneurs of our industrial and commercial enterprises, small and big, were similarly in need of a platform to protect their legitimate rights to make their creative contributions through their initiative, enterprise and willingness to serve society through competition with each other and demanding no monopoly privileges as State enterprises do. So we made common cause with them. We have made it clear from time to time that we do not believe in the principles or practices of exploitation of one group or one individual by another or giving freedom or scope to any institution and enterprise to exploit the whole or part of the Society.

I challenge any political party or any public spirited and impartial institution to point out even one major national issue on which we have swerved from this uncton that we placed before ourselves. I declare that we have opposed and attacked on every occasion, whatever instance of exploitation had come up before Parliament. We have pursued this faith in non-exploitative society in a scrupulous and zealous manner.

The Swatantra Party has been so sincerely and patiently pleading for the utilisation of surplus wealth of the very rich and fortunate people for public good, as per their individual or family decisions, according to the Gandhian principle of trusteeship. It has been appealing to the princes too to act as trustees for the utilisation of their privy purses. But it can never be a party to the abrogation of their Fundamental Rights, nor will it countenance the dishonourable and unashamed Congress-cum-Communist proposals either to confiscate their rights or to dishonour the national pledges given to the princes, in return to their agreement to integrate their State with the rest of India. Swatantra Party seeks to protect individuals from the tyranny of intolerant and aggressive groups or local cliques; and to strengthen the rights of various classes of toilers against the totalitarian claims of government and their proteges; in short Swatantra Party is the champion of the small man, the weak and under-privileged and the basic freedoms of all human beings, without which society ceases to be human or merciful or progressive.

Planning

When the going was good, Jawaharlaljee affected indifference to our Party's warnings that his planning was all wrong-headed, it was dream-based and not resource-based and the deficit budgets, misuse of Nasik Press. When we asked for a plan holiday and demanded that the Five Year Plan should be spread over to seven years, he and his hair-brained advisers scoffed at us. The Plan holiday has become an established fact though not admitted as such. Rajajee's repeated exhortation to fall back upon Annual

plans has taken practical shape in the yearly plans, though the fourteen carat government would not admit it.

The Planning Commission has come out with its "Approach to the Fourth Five Year Plan" and sought our co-operation in reaching a national consensus. This is yet another diabolical move of theirs to palm off their plan as being based on the consultations and implied consent of all parties to the basic assumptions and priorities of their plan.

It is surprising to find that quite a number of experienced industrialists and students of economics have allowed themselves once again to be deceived and tantalised by the so-called frank admission of the planning commission that quotas, licences and permits are not an end in themselves and as far as possible they should be relaxed. A careful study of this "Approach" in conjunction with Mr. Gadgil's revealing speech in Bangalore a few weeks before the publication of the Approach and the unscrupulous and callous misuse made of these three diabolical weapons of controlled economy since 1952 would convince anyone how this plan also contemplates and seeks the approval of people for more discipline in allocating scarce commodities, in price-fixation, in withdrawing producers and even consumers goods from internal consumption so as to push up exports at subsidized prices.

The Administrative Reforms Commission has recommended that the Prime Minister should not be the Chairman of the Planning Commission. When I was consulted, I advised her not to impose herself upon that Commission. She turned a deaf ear and assumed its Chairmanship. Our Party has refused to have anything to do with this plan. For the same reasons, we have abstained from co-operating with the Commission in becoming a party to their National Consensus.

I wish to warn the nation that this Government is unfit to prepare and implement a truly democratic plan. This Government is bent upon destroying peasant and artisan self-employed economy. Its 17th Amendment is a Damocles Sword held over peasants' proprietorship of their holdings and its Gold Control Order goes

against the goldsmiths. Wastage, mounting price-spirals and corruption are its bye-products.

Bias in Favour of Statism

I have been struck with the malignant influence upon this generation of the Congress M.P.s of propaganda carried on by Communists, Socialists and Jawaharlaljee in line with the pre-war theories of nationalisation and state enterprises. So many Congress M.P.s. display such a pathetic faith in the magical qualities of state ownership and management, ignoring the glaring facts of their mismanagement, high costs, inefficiency, corruption and heavy losses, as disclosed by the reports of the all-party parliamentary financial committees. The sixty and odd state enterprises, including the three gigantic steel mills have landed the country in the huge expenditure of about Rs. 3,000 crores and in recurring losses, mounting up to 50 crores per annum. Yet, Congress M.P.s go on supporting every communist or socialist cry—however wild or one-sided—against any prosperous enterprise financed and managed by private enterprise. It is almost impossible to disabuse their mind and shake them from their unthinking faith in nationalisation. The only way to save our nation from the evil effects of their passion for such ruinous economic policies is to throw them out of power. Knowing this only too well, Rajajee, Masani, Dandeker, the Forum of Free Enterprise, Prof. Shenoy and others have been carrying on their tireless campaign, despite all the propaganda and prejudices engendered by totalitarians, to educate the people to have confidence in their own enterprise and initiative and in the need for reorienting the State policy, away from these costly public enterprises, and their prop, the dogma of nationalisation. I am glad that the Swatantra-Jan Congress coalition cabinet of Orissa has courageously appointed Enquiry Committee to study the economies of their State Enterprises and to make radical changes in their ownership or management if such are called for. As we have so often said, Swatantra Party is not opposed to State Enterprises or nationalisation as such, if they are proved to

be economical, efficient, and beneficial to the public and social economy.

Strikes and Gheraos have become the order of the day because this Congress Government has lost the confidence of every section of our people, from the Police to the Secretariat staff. The L.D.C., U.D.C. and other staff and their leaders have refused to meet the Home Minister, Deputy Prime Minister and Prime Minister to settle their disputes, because even they have lost their confidence in them. We know that many of the demands of these employees, whether in the Secretariat or outside are reasonable, as they arise out of the rising spirals of prices, consequent upon the never-ending inflation and rising tax-burdens. We have been warning but in vain during the whole of this decade against these evil consequences of their wrong-headed planning and inflationary budgets. But Smt. Indira Gandhi and her colleagues refuse to see in this infectious and inevitable strike fever the real vote of no confidence in them and they would rather hang on to symbols of power than invoke the active co-operation of all the democratic parties in Parliament.

It is for the ruling party to realise the utter inadequacy of their Cabinet to face the national challenges and seek the co-operation of all the democratic parties for achieving a national approach.

Indian Democracy in Crisis

This year (1968) has had a bleak record for India's democracy. *The United Front Ministries fell in Haryana, West Bengal, U.P., Bihar and Punjab.* The most unfortunate thing is that their fall was not much regretted; so great was the political confusion and administrative weakness that preceded their dismissal, though all of them were not equally blameworthy. Some of them like the Bihar United Front have weakened the age-long impression that Land Revenue should be a permanent halter round peasants' necks. They have all reduced Land Revenues, even while the Congress Ministries were enhancing it.

The Mahamaya Prasad's Ministry did succeed in tackling the terrible drought and consequent famine situation most honestly,

energetically and satisfactorily. Certainly Congress if it had regained the Ministry could not have achieved half as much success, yet it fell for political and caste reasons.

The Charan Singh Ministry almost succeeded in stream-lining the administration and laying the guidelines for non-interference by politicians in the day-to-day administration. But the Chief Minister's praise-worthy insistence upon the supremacy of the Rule of Law proved too much for the political elements and parties which had been demoralised by the previous prolonged Congress regimes into accepting communal and caste, personal and political goondaism as a matter of course.

The West Bengal United Front Ministry should never have been allowed to play ducks and drakes with people's Fundamental Rights as was done in Naxalbari and Gherao demonstrations. But it suited the purposes of the Fellow Travellers in the Congress and discredited goondagiri of the Congress circles not to ban Communist Parties and not to play fair with Indian democracy.

On the whole, the S. V. D. or United Frontism, thanks to the mischievous and unscrupulous activity of the Congress by wielding the powerful and demoralising weapon of defections, its associates, money and offers of political compensations has proved a comparative failure because, the United Front's majorities were themselves conjured up by defectors, and thus based on their unstable loyalties. Moreover, those United Fronts formed in such a hurry were not based on any pre-election, well-thought out common programmes, formulated with the responsible view to implement them, as has been the case with the Orissa experiment. They came together in a hurry, by a chance; somehow agreed upon some tentative minimum programme for immediate mutual satisfaction and forbearance. They had to be watching every day, over their shoulders, over every issue and decision and as to what might be their fate on the morrow. No wonder they proved a three seasons' wonder.

Fortunately our Orissa friends of both the Swatantra and the Jan Congress did seriously hope to gain majority and capture power. So they formulated their common election manifesto

with their eyes on their ability and need for implementing them. As good fortune would have it, their leaders both Shri R. N. Singh Deo and Pabitra Mohan Pradhan had had earlier experience of working together in the Mahtab's coalition cabinet and they were bent upon making their comradeship yield good results to the people. I am extremely glad that their ministry has abolished the burdensome Land Revenue and so many Panchayat imposts as their very first move. They have also been aided by a number of ministers of the earlier coalition. The success of this United Front Ministry in tackling the rehabilitation of the cyclone victims and drought-stricken people is an object lesson, in that the administrative officers served the people honestly and enthusiastically in harmony with the high standards set by Deojee and Pradhanjee.

The outstanding feature of 1967 general election was the absolute majority gained by the D. M. K. and the crushing defeat suffered by Madras Congress thanks to the joint initiative taken by Rajajee and the D.M.K. leader Shri Annadorai in achieving pre-election United Front. The D. M. K. Government braved the financial risks and began to supply a measure of rice for every rupee and thus set an example in serving poor people. I am sure, all of us would wish that their leader Shri Annadorai would soon regain his health and resume his statesmanly leadership of the D. M. K.

What lessons are we to draw from these experiences of the United Front ministries? So long as they do not follow the example set by the Orissa United Front and so long as they are brought together merely as patched-up power-combinations as much for keeping out the Congress as for enjoying power, more or less in the same way as the previous Congress ministries, as had happened in Haryana, Punjab, Soshit Dal Bihar and even in West Bengal, they can only demoralise Indian democracy, weaken people's faith in genuine opposition to the Congress and pave the way for the return of Congress into some respectability. The slogan of keeping out the Congress at any cost and by all means, which held the field in 1967 has therefore lost all its moral, even

material, justification. To defeat the Congress, break its monopoly of power and free the people from their traditional reliance and for bearance of the powers that be, is a progressive move. I am glad that this slogan given by Rajajee for two years before 1967 general elections has mobilised anti-Congress forces so well that by the middle of 1967, Congress was pushed out of power in majority of the States.

Unfortunately our people have not developed sufficient political wisdom and strength to force the defeated Congress to play fair with our parliamentary democracy and be content to be the role of responsible parliamentary opposition. They have not been able to punish the Congress for developing and using in such a shameless manner the weapon of defection.

I have been mooting the possibility of inviting all non-Communist democratic parties and groups into an almost all party cabinet, in all those problem States where no one party is able to get a big enough and reliable majority. It could be tried as an experiment in one or two States. But it has not yet come to be adopted by the major democratic parties.

Rajajee has been suggesting "All Talents Cabinets", carrying on honest administration in a non-partisan, non-caste and non-factionous manner and helping the people to enjoy once again the supremacy of Rule of Law. This too has not yet come to be hailed as a practical solution.

Rajajee has also propounded the idea of having a National Democratic United Front or Union, to displace the Congress and also to save the country from the Communist-oriented policies and planning, permit-quota-license Raj of the Congress and liberate the people from the evil influences of fellow-travellers, communists in Congress and socialist clothes. Such a union would become possible only when the bulk of Congressmen choose to shake themselves free from their power-mad Soviet friends. We may have to wait for some time to persuade large enough number of Congress MPs in Delhi, MLAs in the States, in the light of the habitual blunders of these Congress Cabinets to let their innate patriotism to assert itself and to adopt Rajajee's wise counsel as

much in their own long-term interests as in the interests of India's democracy and honour.

Many wise political observers maintain that before Congressmen can be expected to adopt such a radical and far-sighted line, efforts should be made by the other democratic parties to come as close to each other as possible. Shri Masani has been trying for some years to achieve such a consummation. Rajajee has himself offered unconditional merger with the Jan Sangh, giving freedom to members to act according to their conscience on all issues that do not fall within the common agreed programme ; that is, according to the twenty-first principle of the Swatantra Party. Unfortunately, even such an offer did not persuade the Jan Sangh to agree with us. Later on, an effort was made in Parliament to persuade the non-Congress democratic groups to get into a Democratic Front for parliamentary purposes, keeping intact their respective party organisations, disciplines, flags and symbols. That too has not so far yielded any results.

Recently, B. K. D. leaders were good enough to suggest a merger into yet a new party with our Party, B.K.D., P.S.P. forming the nucleus. No sooner had this move reached the press, the P.S.P. leaders indulged in vituperative abuse of us and condemned B.K.D. leaders for having mooted the possibility of all of us joining together.

If we sympathetically examine the declarations of the principal leaders of the Jan Sangh at their latest convention and B.K.D. we would find more points of agreement or coincidence with ours than points of difference. So Rajajee's advice to all democratic opposition parties to approach each other with a view to find basis for mutual co-operation, becomes even more practicable in the present context.

But the question of symbol has come to assume a special electoral significance of material value, since its popularisation by press, pamphlets, demonstrations and platforms costs so much in money, labour and time. The Congress and Communist parties have come to enjoy the highest advantage in this respect since

they have been popularising their symbols among our illiterate masses since 1952. Hence the justifiable hesitation displayed by so many to respond to the well-meant move made by some friends to scrap our respective symbols and merge ourselves into another new party with yet another new symbol and thus welcome a new disadvantage vis-a-vis the long established parties. Rajajee has once again suggested that we might be content, for the time being, with only a Joint Front, as in the case of Orissa United Front, both for parliamentary and Assembly purposes and also for electoral campaigns, as in these mid-term elections. As early as 1955, Jawaharlalji, Prakasam and myself reached such an understanding, formed the United Congress, set up our candidates and fought the elections under our separate election symbols, on a common programme. What he suggests is that all the parties may retain their separate identities, leadership and discipline, their election symbols etc. but that they ought to agree to hammer out a minimum programme of common objectives in the field of practical politics and present a leadership.

In Andhra, Sardar Latchanna has achieved such a Democratic Front thanks to the statemanship of the Jan Congress. I think it would be wise for democratic opposition parties to be patient with Indian democracy and its 70% illiterate voters, who are more under the influence of unscrupulous, predominantly social, communal and even Panchayat-cum-co-operative pulls. Short cut solutions were tried in 1967-68 through the S.V.D.s and they seem to have only strengthened the strangle-hold of either the Congress or such other gangster-type political elements upon our untutored electorate. Congressmen have displayed their vulnerability and capacity to shake the Congress dust off their feet for the sake of sheer power and even for money. The behaviour of Congressmen in U.P., more especially in Bihar and M. P. shows on what quicksands does the tent of Congress power stand.

Such groups or clusters of caste-leaders cannot continue to enjoy public confidence, even in our far-from-ideal democratic

elections for a long time. By 1972 we of the democratic opposition should be able to shake more people from out of their political slumber and social cynicism. After all those who were in elementary schools in 1952 — the first general election — are today's voters and they have had the benefit of listening and participating in political campaigns in all subsequent general elections. They have also witnessed the failure of Congress and demoralisation of its politics and politicians. We have to try to reach these young voters. Gradually the dead-weight of illiterate voters, given to influences of money, drink, caste, political brokers is likely to go down. Rs. 1872, these new generations of voters may help us to tilt the balance in favour of healthy elections and democratic progress.

Therefore I would like to exhort our party workers to follow Rajajee's advice and carry on our educative campaign patiently, passionately and persistently.

We have a Gandhian message to give to the people. We have a hope to hold out to the suffering masses. What we believe in are essential, inescapable and basic verities of human beings in their social activities. That is, we believe in Human Rights and civil liberties. We work for progress and prosperity of all sections and classes of people. We are opposed to exploitative productive and distributive activities or institutions. We are convinced that self employment is the best economic basis for every honest worker or peasant, conducive to his freedom and happiness.

We work for communal harmony and freedom of worship. We stand for the improvement of the social, economic conditions of labour, both industrial and agricultural and so we try to help them to gain protection from exploitation, honourable and responsible partnership in the constructive management of industry. We will try to develop and help in implementing a nation-wide housing programme, on a people-cum-government partnership basis. We will ensure the achievement of minimum standards—economic-cum-social—for workers, teachers, N.G.O.s. and all other toilers. In the same way, we

would protect peasants from all types of exploiters, vagaries of weather and markets.

Ourselves

We will very soon be ten years old, in our Swatantra Party, though the swatantra movement is much older. During these ten years, we have had the benefit of Rajajee's sage-advice and active assistance on every important occasion and the present position achieved by our Party in parliament and in our country is so largely due to his prestige, guidance, writings and active leadership.

Similarly, we have received wise counsel and assistance from our veteran colleagues, Sarvashree K. M. Munshi, Sir H. P. Modi and Prof. Ruthnaswamy.

I pray that you join me in paying our homage to these noble veteran leaders.

Shri Masani has so ably served our Party as General Secretary for more than eight years and helped us in laying sound foundations for our Party. We are grateful to him.

We wish to remind ourselves on this solemn occasion, the services rendered by the late Sardar Bahadur Lal Singh, Shri Jinaraj Hegde, Shri B. Ramachandrareddi (by whose invitation the first meeting in Madras took place in 4th June 1959), when this Party was founded by Rajajee and also the Late Uddham Singh Nagoke, the Late V. P. Menon and other veterans who has been associated with the first moves of our Party during its infancy.

I request you to permit me to skip the usual function of reviewing the achievements of our Party during this decade and go straight to some of the problems that face us to-day in view of such reviews offered by several of us in the Souvenir. Suffice it to say that we are still hoping to be able to reach the requisite strength in the Lok Sabha to become shortly for the first time after Independence, the recognised Principal Opposition. We occupy that position in the Gujarat, Rajasthan and Andhra Assemblies, either by ourselves or in co-operation with others and Sarvashree

Jaideepsinghjee of Baria, Laxman Singhjee of Dungarpur and Sardar Latchanna are our leaders of the Opposition.

Shri R. N. Singh Deo, the Leader of our Party in Orissa has assumed Chief Ministership, on behalf of both Swatantra and Jan Congress. I wish to congratulate him and his colleague Sri Pabitra Mohan Pradhan, the Deputy Chief Minister for the harmonious working of their coalition and for their successful, honest and democratic administration and for the love of our peasants displayed by their Government, by abolishing the much-hated Land Revenue.

We have yet to gain an effective foothold in a number of States and broaden our base in some other States. But this can be possible only if the local public and their leaders evince active interest in the ideals of the Swatantra movement and develop the Party Units.

Such local leaders have a significant role to play in creating the proper and fertile atmosphere for any such democratic movement as ours, with such programmes based more on intelligent appreciation of public issues and mutual co-operation, than on hates and spites. Wherever such leaders were good enough to come forward, to enthusiastically accept our Party and develop it, with all their supporters, our Party has made rapid progress. Therefore, it is the duty of the Party as a whole and its national leaders to be considerate towards the political moods and social moorings of our local leaders and rival pulls against our workers and try to achieve mutual respect and adjustment, conducive to harmony and progress of our movement. Ours being a multi-caste and linguistic society, and our people being unaccustomed to modern organisations moves of discipline, we cannot be too careful in gaining and retaining the support of the State leaders. Even the long established Congress and Communist Parties have had to make a painful compromise with their theoretical norms and rules, in order to help the people and their local leaders to toe the line with the general trend of their decisions.

It is high time that our party begins to spare some of its re-

sources for the development of associate class and group organisations. On the labour front, we made a good beginning but we must enable these independent unions to have a national platform. Similarly, we have to render what assistance we can to the Bharat Kisan Sammelan to develop its State units. I am glad to say that the Andhra Kisan Sammelan has built up powerful cadres of workers from grass-roots levels thanks to the Indian Peasant Institute and Sammelan leaders. It carried on effective mass campaigns against Land Revenue enhancement and Seventeenth Amendment. Recently an effort is being made to develop a Swatantra Women's Front. Sardar Latchanna has done good work on the Backward Classes Front. Let us remind ourselves that the Congress, Socialist, Communist Parties and Jan Sangh have developed in all these directions. Our Party workers and leaders ought to promote social and economics of all the toiling and under-developed peoples and help them to make their approaches to our Swatantra movements through their appreciation of our genuine services. To progress in all these varied directions, we need ever-growing cadres of workers. I am glad that the Andhra and Orissa Parties have been running a number of Swatantra Workers training camps and recently Shri Masani has been organising the Leslie Sawhny Programme of Training for Democracy. We need more and more of them.

All this means money. What we get from our membership fees is so little. There is a clamorous demand for its reduction. So I appeal to all Swatantra lovers to offer their generous donations, not only at the time of elections but also at all times and enable us to discharge our organisational duties satisfactorily.