

SWATANTRA PARTY

Fourth National Convention

New Delhi, December 12 & 13, 1966

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PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

by

N. G. RANGA, M.P.



THE SWATANTRA PARTY

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Presidential Address

Dear Rajajee and Delegates,

We are all grateful to the young and dynamic Swatantraites of Delhi for having welcomed our Convention in this Capital city - the citadel of Indian democracy, the birth-place of our democratic Constitution and the harbinger of so many revolutions that have fashioned our culture and ennobled our people. The calamitous happenings along the Parliament Street on this year's Seventh of November have demonstrated how the Congress regime has exhausted the precious and hard-won faith of our people in its capacity to provide a stable, honourable and progressive national leadership to this democracy - the greatest in its population.

What happened on November Seventh outside Parliament, just as the No-Confidence Motion was being discussed in Parliament is an indication of the sheer inability of the Congress Government to face a crisis and retain public confidence. The callous and calculated killings of the tribal people and their Maharaja of Bastar warned us how the Congress Government was coming to treat people as its enemies.

WE are meeting here during the Birth-day week of Rajaji which augurs well for the future of the Swatantra movement. We join the millions of our countrymen who are celebrating the 89th birth-day of this remarkable man who inspite of the severest strain is enjoying vibrant health in mind and body. May God bless us with his presence for many years to come and give us the benefit of his guidance so that this dear land of ours might avoid the pitfalls it is facing today and develop into a strong and mighty nation.

castigated as the License, Permit and Quota Raj, with all the attendant evils of discrimination and corruption. It has undermined the time-honoured sense of security and natural incentives arising from ownership of land - from self-management and self-employment, by its calculated manouvers against the vast mass of our peasantry, through the infamous 17th Amendment to the Constitution. It has blotted out all opportunities for future generations of peasants to rise to the same level of advancement and fulfilment as is open to all other classes, through its ceiling laws, imposed so discriminatively upon agriculturists alone. It has been nurturing, with all its many and varied patronage, the weapon of cooperative farming, as its favourite alternative to cultivating of land by the small peasant having ownership over his holding. It has been developing the power-looms as its weapons against the one and half crores of hand-loom weavers.

The debacle of Devaluation of the Rupee has highlighted the banditry practised with all the solemnity of Reserve Bank operations on the people's Rupee during all these 19 years, through such tricks as Deficit Financing, Ways and Means Advances, PL 480 borrowings, Small Savings Schemes and advances to Public Enterprises. The result has been the unconscionable pauperisation of the masses, through the fall of the value of the poor man's rupee and dreadful rise in the prices of all consumer goods as well as producers goods.

We appealed in vain to Congressmen in and outside Parliament ever since 1952 to protest against the drift of their leadership towards the Five Year Plans of the Communist pattern. We have told them repeatedly that the corruption that is instinct in the exercise of statism through a controlled economy would further accelerate the fever caused by 'disease of political power' enjoyed by the Congress for too long. We advised them to rise in revolt against these evil

Students, the sensitive nerves of any body politic, have been registering the rapid loosening of the chords of understanding and rapport between them and the ruling party and its ministries. Students have participated in 28 strikes in 1963, 100 in 1964, 240 in 1965 and 202 upto this October and there were police firings in the following order, one in 1963, 13 in 1964, 41 in 1965 and 40 so far in 1966. Even as Jawaharlal Nehru's regime was dragging to its close, the students began to sound their gongs of disillusionment and discontent. The slightest upset or annoyance, such as an increase in bus-fares, school fees or any slight upset at Cinema or Coffee Houses proved to be the last straw, leading to painful demonstrations. The remonstrances from Jawaharlaljee, and his successors and even from the Rashtrapati as well as the frantic appeals by the various cadres of Ministers have failed to arrest the avalanchic alienation between the people, especially their youths and Congress leaders. All this boded ill for India's democracy.

Who but the Congress Government has been responsible for this dangerous development? By their callous and calculated piracy on the Fundamental Rights their deliberate campaign against peasants and people's rights to land holdings and all other properties, against the freedoms of person, speech, meeting and even thought and their misuse of the Emergency Regulations resulting in the violation of the very Constitution by which they want all the people swear, they have set such an unparalleled of political immorality and moral decrepitude.

The Congress Party's love of power has led it towards more and more controls over the day to day activities, means of livelihood and ways of life of peasants, and workers, merchants and even entrepreneurs. The Congress regime has come to degenerate into what Rajajee has so aptly

and privileges which have been their actual or potential possessions and facing all the pains and punishments which are so far the only possessions of the opposition in Indian democracy. The emergence of Jana Congress in successive States, from out of the "dissident" Congressmen is the continuing justification for the farsighted and patriotic initiative taken by Rajajee on 4.6.1959 in revolting against the Congress and founding the Swatantra Party, as a democratic alternative, bidding fair to guide the people along Gandhian ideals, standards and approaches, towards a truly democratic welfare society in the spirit of the original chapter of Fundamental Rights in our Constitution.

I venture to prophesy that many more Congressmen would soon be ranging themselves against the official Congress because either partisans or themselves are not selected as Congress candidates. In the past such public men used to stand as Independent candidates and on support such Independents. Now, it is possible that large section of them may choose to support the Jana Congress candidates. Though this is not the most desirable way for them to seek to provide leadership to the predominantly unpolitical Indian electorate, it is certainly better than continuing to remain in the Congress Party and encouraging it to go the way of Sovietism and thus destroy the very foundations of our fundamental freedoms.

But why do so many of them think of forming yet another political platform, called Jana Congress? Does not this indicate how greatly the Nehruism of the Congress has demoralised large sections of their rank and file and prevented them to thinking freely about the political needs of our people and the historical justification for the Fundamental Rights of our masses, and the Gandhian approach to our national problem?

I appeal to them, now that they are freeing themselves

trends of the Congress in power. But while they refused to listen, it augurs well that some well-known columnists, who are still on the side of the Congress have at last begun to recognise the truth in what the democratic oppositionists have been saying for ever so long.

For instance, one of them has observed thus only a fortnight ago.

“The Congress Party is peculiarly vulnerable to scandalous things said in the whisper galleries of this very sick capital city because of two factors. The first is its own scandalous performance in dealing with known cases of corruption, when they concern men of their own party. The second is a deep-seated guilt complex about its consistent record of bungling and failure in the management of the nations affairs.

The columnist bewails that “because the Congress Party has lost all confidence in being able to enforce good order and efficiency, it resorts more and more to government by gimmicry, in the vague hope that it can keep the Communist challenge at bay by adopting a programme, indistinguishable from the left conception of regimented Socialism, with its paraphernalia of controls and restrictions and expropriations. —There is a limit to how far the Congress can compete with the left in offering carrots to the electorate. That limit has been nearly reached and there is still no prospect that a better life is opening up for the people”. We are glad that more and more Congressmen are coming to find it impossible to bear any longer the painful and mortifying moral degradation and political chicanery that have come to be the hallmarks of Congress politics. I wish to congratulate all of them on their political courage in deciding to part company with the Congress, turning their back on all the alluring powers

be in the Governmental sphere or in private employment. It would work for the all-round development of our productive resources and for a welfare society with Fundamental Rights as its basis and with the Directive Principles as the load star to guide it in its endeavours to achieve the progress and welfare of our masses.

To this end, the Swatantra Party has formulated its Election Manifesto. I appeal to the dissident Congressmen, whether they have joined the various Jana Congress parties or not, to try to overcome the prejudices, engendered by the Congress propaganda against the Swatantra Party and realise that so far we have been trying to shape the Swatantra Party, under the guidance of Rajajee and so many of us who have devoted so many decades of our public work to serving so genuinely the toiling masses. Here is a golden opportunity for them to join forces with us and develop this Party into a much more effective national alternative leadership to that of the Congress.

Even Congress leaders are reconciled to the possibility of the Congress failing to secure clear majorities in the Assemblies of two to four States (after the 1967 General Elections) and also for the emergence of non-Congress ministries in two or three States. They assume that they would achieve a clear Congress majority at the Centre. What would be then the role of the Union Government, vis-a-vis, the State Governments? It is clear that the extra-constitutional National Development Council would then not be the Rubber-stamp entity as it has been, nor would the equally extra-constitutional Planning Commission be able to dominate the N.D.C. or the State Governments. Neither these two entities nor the Union Government itself could manage to settle the priorities regarding the allocation of national finances and other resources in minerals, materials and men

from the emotional attachments and trammels of power politics, to give an unprejudiced consideration as to why so many of us who had played an honourable role by the side of Mahatma Gandhi for so many decades, during our National Revolution and who have worked for decades in the highest councils of the Congress, have thought it fit to found and build up the Swatantra Party.

Why did we break away from the Congress? Because we found that under the unfortunate leadership of Jawaharlal jee, the Congress was bent upon destroying the occupational freedoms of the self-employed masses of peasants, artisans, shop-keepers, professional men and entrepreneurs, subverting the peasant proprietorship and agro-social economy of our rural masses and introducing by fair or foul means collectivisation of lands through name-sake cooperative farming and converting more than 50% of our land-owning, and self-employed cultivators into the slaves of the Governments and its beauracracies and political chiefs. Because we felt convinced that the cooperative and collective farming and the ceiling Acts, masquerading as Land Reforms would and could pave the way, ultimately, for the destruction of all those fundamental freedoms which are the bed-rock of any genuine democracy and free society. Also because, the Congress has chosen the suicidal and political path of competition with the communists, in its insatiable passion for power and domination over Indian political life at any cost. It stands to the eternal credit of Rajajee, the Bishma of our age, to have shown this Gandhian way for all lovers of freedom and champions of humanism of democracy and believers in Human Rights.

The Swatantra Party stands for the genuine and progressive needs and rights of the toiling masses of our country, notably the peasants, artisans, proletariat and traders. It is opposed to all types of exploitation and monopoly whether it

ship for the State Governments, if and when and where the Congress fails to get a majority. They have also to declare to the people their total opposition to the imposition of Governor's regime, as has happened in Kerala. Such a declaration in advance of the General Elections would prepare the public to prevent the Congress from repeating its unholy practice of grabbing control over State Governments by their devious methods.

Once the mosaic of non-Congress and Congress ministries at the States levels comes to take shape, after the elections, the federal aspects of our Constitution would come to be invoked in order to enliven our democracy at its ground-roots and salvage our State autonomy from the debris of federal directions, supervision and controls, which have been imposed by the so-called Grants-in-aid and other carrots.

In the light of these and other needs and possibilities for coordination at a new political level and resolving of differences and conflicts arising from different politico-economic approaches of different ministries, it is necessary to consider whether a Union ministry, formed by one party alone depending upon its mere majority in Parliament would be able and could be trusted to work our Federal Political and Constitutional structure merely on its own decisions. Therefore, I wish to warn the nation that it would be necessary for some other means - political and economic - over and above, the central ministry, to provide a broad-based all-party National Council to advise, help and guide the Union Ministry in its relations with the States Ministries.

We have unfortunately been following the British practice of forming our ministries on the basis of majority rule. Though it is more than 16 years since our Constitution has been passed, the country has failed so far to outgrow the pre-

as has been done till now, because, the Union Ministry could not then pose as the mouthpiece of National leadership. The Union Ministry would have to realise, even if it is based upon Congress majority in Parliament - which is itself doubtful of achievement by the Congress, that an inescapable need would then arise for achieving a genuine national consensus between the approaches of ministries, formed by non-Congress majorities and the genuine needs of different States as visualised and propagated by them and their capacities for raising their local financial resources and floating their State-loans and attracting entrepreneurs, from their own States, other States and foreign countries. There would arise the need as well as demand for replacing the present Planning Commission by a more democratic, cooperative and broad-based Advisory Council to help both the Union and State Governments to achieve a real national consensus regarding a more genuine federal and better pattern for balanced development. Let us be fore-warned that the Congress President assumes that what was done in Kerala after the failure of any Party achieving a clear majority could be repeated in other States, under similar circumstances. The axiom, adumbrated by Congress Home Ministers and Governors that no coalition or Joint Front of a number of political parties formed only after the elections, without any pre-election assurance to the people of their post-election cooperation or Joint Front would be recognised for the formation of a Ministry, is not conducive to the development of democratic responsibilities of Assemblies and cannot be accepted as being in national interest. It was conceived and acted upon only to perpetuate the Congress domination indirectly through the Governor's regimes even when it has failed to secure majority in the Assembly. The non-Congress parties which are aiming at replacing the Congress ministries have to forewarn the public that they would insist upon their right to form either coalition ministries or united fronts and thus offer alternative ministerial leader-

assurance to the electorate of their continued non-Congress political existence and public service. Let us hope that these Jana Congress will join the ranks of democrats and liberals and strengthen the efforts of all of us who are resisting totalitarianism and statism.

It is fortunate that for the first time, all political parties have come to give first priority in their Election objectives, to their determination to achieve good, clear, efficient, and impartial governance. Rajajee has appealed to all political elements to vote against the Congress on the primary ground, that its governments have failed to provide such a governance- the least that could be expected from any ruling party.

Our long suffering masses have demonstrated in unmistakeable terms through the various Bands, Strikes, Marches, agitations, Satyagrahas, petitions and other mass demonstrations, their disgust with the Congress rule and their yearning for atleast good and honest governance and freedom from this corrupt painful and costly control administration. So I hope that all democratic parties would lay special stress on this burning need and deeply felt desire of the masses during the forthcoming general elections. If only they highlight this readiness of theirs to cooperate with each other in fulfilling this primary, principal desire of the masses, I feel confident that it would be possible to prevent the Congress from gaining clear majority in Parliament and in many State Assemblies and thus belie the prognostications and hopes of the Congress-oriented Daily Press and give the much needed chance for Indian democracy to achieve a national leadership by a real national consensus.

It is with this end also in view, that the Swatantra Party has tried with much success to reach understanding on the basis of electoral adjustments, so far with the Jan

Independence political united front as was then embodied for the National Congress and develop an evenly-balanced bipartisan or multi-party politics. Mahatma Gandhi envisioned such a national disability, so long as the Congress leaders persisted in exploiting the unique advantages accruing to them and whosoever would trade in the Congress name, and therefore, advised the then Congress leaders to liquidate the Congress and let the political leaders and workers to form their parties, in accordance with their political, economic and social faiths and principles and thus provide the nation the opportunity to make their choice for political leadership, without in any way being enticed or enslaved by their former political favourite front; That the results of that initial betrayal of Bapu's last testament by the Congress have resulted in national betrayal is writ large in the Indian political horizon. The present disarray among Congress ranks in almost all States, the degeneracy of Congress into groupism, rival coalitions of castes and unscrupulous combinations of amoral and corrupt leaders and the accelerated growth of political corruption and bankruptcy of statesmanship in cabinet circles and so many other evils have flown directly from the failure of a considerable section of good Congressmen who did not like this degradation to turn their backs upon the temptations of office and powers. Whenever general elections approached, a good number of Congressmen found it possible to break away from the attractive and adhesive folds of the Congress and get themselves elected as Independants. In most cases the Congress party was unprincipled enough to tempt and regain them into its own fold and thus sabotaged all possibilities for the healthy break up of the unhealthy and amorphous and unpolitical power combination that the Congress has come to be.

I hail the emergence of Jana Congress in place of rebel Congressmen standing as Independent candidates, with no

them by the present control Raj of the Congress. For instance we will seek to establish independent, non-political, quasi-judicial commissions to decide all matters connected with the administration of permits, licences and quotas ; also to supervise the administration, elections and auditing of the Panchayat Raj and cooperative institutions and management of Religious endowments. These commissions would be provided with necessary powers and requisite staff and needed cooperation from the concerned administrative departments to enable them to discharge their administrative and judicial functions.

This Congress Government has failed so miserably on all fronts especially so on the food front, the most vital. We charge the Government with primary responsibility, if any human agency can be held responsible for the continued crisis on the food front. Thanks to its cruel offensives against peasants and its failure to offer minimum incentives to them and its morbid policies of pauperising the rural people through uneconomic procurement prices, compulsory levies, zonal controls and pulverization of the food trade, its dependence on food imports has gone on increasing from two million tons at the beginning of the First Plan to the 10 million tons during last year. Due to the present draught, famine and floods in Rajasthan, M.P., Andhra, U.P., Bihar and Orissa, now the targetted need has reached 15 million tons till the end of this winter. Its failure to heed the voice of its own master AICC to abolish the zonal controls and its morbid attempt to foster and tighten controls on the famished people and the criss-cross dialogues between the State and the Union Governments over their responsibility for the continued crisis demonstrate how dangerous it is for our people to allow this Congress Government to remain in power any longer.

Sangh etc. and also with some State-parties, in regard to some states. I hope that a more broad-based understanding will come to be achieved for similar electoral adjustments, if not at State-levels, atleast at the constituency levels.

I am glad to assure the public that we are doing our best to develop such a broad-based electoral appeal from the opposition in Gujerat, Rajasthan and Orissa, in cooperation with the Jan Sangh to enable them to throw the Congress out of power, with the assurance that we would be able to develop in cooperation with other democratic parties, alternative parliamentary leadership competent to provide a non-Congress ministry. I appeal to the people to place their faith in us, and give us the opportunity to serve them in the true Gandhian manner.

We have taken the initiative, so long ago, in demanding the appointment of an independent non-political quasi-judicial authority like Ombudsman of Scandinavian countries, to be appointed unanimously by Parliament at the Centre and by State Legislatures at the States levels to investigate into charges against the political heads of the Governments including the Chief Ministers and Prime Ministers. We shall certainly try to establish these institutions whenever and wherever we get the political opportunity to do so. We will also press for similar institutions to weed out corrupt officers and control authorities who abuse powers entrusted to them in an arbitrary manner.

We make bold to work for a clean, honest, and efficient government and achieve it, whenever and wherever we are enabled by the people to gain majority because we believe in freeing the ministers and their departments to the maximum possible extent from many discretionary powers and responsibilities which have come to be heaped upon

majorities once again as we are convinced that we would be serving a public purpose in weakening the Congress hold over our administration. We will try our best to respect and raise Parliamentary decorum and decency and maintain honest politics and public life. We shall see that the present trends in Indian public life to subvert public morality and democratic ways of life are effectively countered. We will make the service of our people in the Gandhian manner, the guiding motto for our legislators and organisations.

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We claim to have served the peoples cause, especially in U.P., Gujerat, Andhra, Rajasthan through our work in the State Legislatures and also through the peaceful Satyagraha and agitations we have organised to strengthen the demands of Kisans and others. We were able to obtain a full-bench judgement against the Andhra Government Land Revenue enhancements, with the result that Government had the ignoble necessity to go in appeal to the Supreme Court against the peasants. Our demand for abolition of Land Revenue was strengthened by more than 750 satyagrahis who underwent incarceration demanding relief for peasants. We were the first to discover the dangerous import and mischevious intent of the one clause bill on the 17th Constitution Amendment. We developed nation-wide protest against it and utilised every available constitutional and political opportunity to fight against it. This battle on behalf of the peasants is still raging.

The most urgent responsibility of democratic opposition parties is to do their best to prevent this discredited and power-sodden Congress Party from beguiling the voters into giving them majorities in the States where the opposition is as yet too weak. I appeal, therefore, to our masses to defeat the Congress in the General Election, and thus discharge their patriotic duty at this juncture.

It is now for the peasant masses to bestir and strengthen Swatantra Party and enable it to grow to be their biggest democratic champion to challenge effectively the Congress Party in all legislatures. From our side, we assure the Kisan masses that we will continue to justify Rajajee's assertion that the Swatantra Party is the Kisan's champion, par excellence.

We assure the public that we will do our best to reduce their majorities and if possible, prevent them from gaining