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Meeting of the members of the Congress (O), Jan Sangh, B.L.D. and the Socialist Party as well as members representing D.M.K., R.S.P. and some independent political workers and Sarvodaya workers was held in Bombay on 20th and 21st March 1976 to review the developments that have taken place in the country after the declaration of the Emergency on the 26th June 1975. Shri Jayaprakash Narayan was available for advice and guidance. The following statement was released to the Press on behalf of the meeting:

The Emergency promulgated then is now being continued though there is no sign of internal threat of any kind. Suppression of all civil liberties, severe curbs on the press and erosion of the authority of the judiciary still continues. To top it all, the life of the present Lok Sabha has been extended by a year though its five years mandate has come to an end. What has happened during the past nine months has convinced us that the Government has been deliberately destroying our democratic structure brick by brick and now has established an authoritarian regime which it wants to perpetuate.

We congratulate the people of India on the peaceful resistance they have offered in vindication of their democratic rights. We salute the thousands of detenus who continue to suffer for their faith. We give a solemn pledge that it shall be our constant effort to restore our democratic polity in full, never allowing narrow or partisan considerations to stand in our way.

There was complete unanimity that democracy and democratic values as we understood them had been dealt an all but fatal blow and in our view it was of the first importance that democracy should survive if the freedoms which every self-respecting individual values - freedom of speech, freedom of association, freedom of communication and movement, freedom from fear - are to be preserved. If this first and prime objective - restoration of democracy and democratic values and restoration of civil liberties - is to be realised, then those who are of that view must come together in one party with an agreed policy and programme. There was unanimity on the use of peaceful means and on the total rejection of all forms of violence.

We have welcomed the impartial and reasonable suggestions made by the Acharya Sammelan under Acharya Vinoba's guidance because it is our considered opinion that they could be helpful in evolving a national consensus on the various socio-economic problems facing the country, without destroying our democratic federal fabric.

We hold that firm faith in peaceful methods in and outside the Parliament and tolerance of dissent are the corner stones of a genuine democratic social order. Our co-operation will always be there to all endeavours to resist dictatorial tendencies or to formulate a code of conduct applicable to all parties for the preservation and strengthening of democracy.

With this end in view, it was decided to set up a Steering Committee composed of the following members with powers to co-opt: (1) Shri H.G. Goray - Convener, (2) Shri H.M. Patel, (3) Shri Shanti Bhushan and (4) Shri G.P. Tyagi, to draw up such a policy and programme for a single unified democratic opposition party. It will also be the duty of the committee to ensure that the process of integration is completed in the shortest possible time, not exceeding two months.

The following members were present:-

Acharya Kripalani  
Shri Charan Singh  
Shri H.G. Goray  
Shri H.M. Patel  
Shri Shanti Bhushan  
Shri Om Prakash Tyagi  
Shri Tridip Chaudhary  
Shri Narayan Desai  
Shri S.M. Joshi  
Shri Unasankar Joshi  
Shri Krishna Kant  
Shri Mawalankar  
Shri Nijlingappa  
Shri Babubhai Patel  
Shri Uttamrao Patil  
Shri Era Schalsian  
Shri Sequedra  
Shri Digvijay Narayan Singh  
Shri Yashunath Thatte

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