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Statement adopted by the Central Parliamentary Board of the Swatantra Party on 20th March, 1971 in New Delhi.

The Board has reviewed the results of the General Elections to Parliament. It takes note of the landslide victory of the ruling party with the consequent defeat of a large majority of the Swatantra Party's candidates for election to the Lok Sabha. The Board is also intrigued to note the incredibly huge majorities that, in the case of many constituencies, appear to bear little relation to all other manifestations of public opinion. All the same, the Board feels that, as good democrats, the Swatantra Party should accept the popular verdict and its implications.

2. The attempt to claim that the Prime Minister and her Party have been given a mandate to amend the Constitution as they wish is unfounded and belied by the figures of voting. The Prime Minister and her party have in fact not succeeded in getting more than 43.64 per cent of the votes polled and have failed to reach anywhere near getting a majority of those who voted or even one-fourth of the entire electorate. In most countries of the world where some system of proportional representation prevails, the Prime Minister would not have been able to form a Government without entering into a coalition with like-minded parties in order to secure a majority in the Lok Sabha. The newly elected Lok Sabha does not reflect fairly the will of the people, which has been grossly distorted by an absurd over-representation of the ruling Party and a cruel under-representation of all Opposition groups including the Swatantra Party in terms of the popular support mobilised by them. Thus, while it took the Prime Minister's Party only 180,144 votes to get a member elected to the new Lok Sabha, the Swatantra Party had to poll 553,683 votes or more than three times as many to get a seat.

3. The people of India will expect the new Government to perform certain basic tasks such as the maintenance of law and order and the assertion of discipline on the one hand and the maintenance of stable prices, the removal of unemployment and the reinvigoration of the stagnant economy through a courageous reversal of the Statist policies that have brought the country to its present plight on the other. The Prime Minister and the new Government will no longer be able to shelter behind any excuse such as dependence on the Communists and other parties but will be clearly accountable to the people for their actions.

4. While any analysis of the causes or reasons for the pattern of voting abide deeper study and fuller information, it is clear to the Board that, apart from a revival of the cult of personality and the use of money power, one of the principal reasons for the defeat of the candidates of the Democratic Front was the absence of a common programme which they could project.

5. When the National Executive of the Party met in Madras on January 8 and decided nevertheless to join the Front under protest, it had recorded its "sense of deep disappointment at the abandonment of the effort at establishing a democratic alliance or front with a common programme" on 3rd January, 1971.

6. It had always been the Party's view that a democratic alternative was what the country needed and that nothing less than a full-fledged alliance with an agreed programme and only one agreed candidate in each constituency supported by all the parties to the Front could provide such an alternative. The abandonment of the effort at a common programme had proved to be a gift to the Prime Minister and her party who had used it with devastating effect throughout the campaign.

7. The Party has had, unfortunately, to share in the debacle resulting from the loss of credibility on the part of the Front due to prolonged vacillation and delay from June 28, 1970, right up to the end of the year, culminating in the absence of an agreed programme and the attribution to it of the slogan 'Indira Hatao', which the Swatantra Party for one had never accepted.

8. The Party's small Group in the two Houses of Parliament would now have a heavier responsibility and a more significant role to perform in upholding the values of democracy and individual liberty. It is therefore important that they should function on their own and articulate the distinctive Swatantra approach and policies. Thus, while members of the Party in Parliament should staunchly resist any tendency that might develop towards authoritarianism through efforts to truncate the Freedom of the Press, weaken the position of the Supreme Judiciary or undermine the Fundamental Rights embodied in the Constitution, they should not hesitate to continue to give support to such measures of the Government as would build the nation into a prosperous and free society, ameliorate the lot of the masses and be otherwise in the country's interest. The Swatantra Party should play the role of a determined but not a factious Opposition.