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A Note on the Future of Swatantra Party

By

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1. The idea to form an United National Front to fight the immediate danger in the form of Indira Congress was good. It was rightly guessed that straight fight should be given to the Congress (R) avoiding splitting of the votes.

2. It was a folly to have not insisted on a common minimum programme for the National Front, and on the other hand, to have accepted the S.S.P. as one of the partners of the Front. This could give an impression only to the effect that the Front was neither a rightist force, nor the one opposed to radical socialism, not even the one with the aim of forming a Government or of working as an effective opposition, but was the one formed with the only grand aim of opposing Smt. Indira Gandhi.

3. We, the workers at district level, cannot help expressing our grave surprise at the wisdom of our leaders, who agreed to a share of about 75 seats only, out of the 520 Lok Sabha seats. The proportion is unjust, illogical and severely bad — of having let down the interests of the party at the national level.

4. Now the Lok Sabha results are out. The elections have proved to be a clean mockery of democracy. We cannot draw any lesson from these elections and base our future plans on them. The Indira wave is as much fleeting as it is strong. This aspect is too important to be neglected.

5. According to us, the reasons for Congress (R) success, particularly in Mysore State, are as follows:-

- (i) The Muslims, Christians, and other minority people supported the Congress (R) as much with a reluctance, due to the participation of Jan Sangh in the Front.
- (ii) The Harijans fully supported them due to the fact that (a) their party was headed by a Harijan (b) they believed Congress (R) to be "New" Congress, which, they thought, had emerged afresh after kicking out the vested interests, which was called the "old" Congress.
- (iii) All classes below the lower middle class supported her as the trick played on them by Smt. Indira Gandhi, presumably on the advice of the politically cunning communist leaders of Russia, in the form of Bank Nationalisation and the abolition of privy purses, had worked miraculously. It was widely believed that she sincerely intended to help the poor even to the extent of her not bothering to liquidate the rich and the princes.
- (iv) A very large majority of women voted Indira Congress, forced by the psychological compulsion of coming to the aid of a lady, who was supposed to be getting cornered by the men of opposition only for the reason that she belonged to the opposite sex.
- (v) So far as Mysore is concerned, the Vokkaligas, who have a grouse against the ruling Lingayats solidly supported Indira Congress, more to oppose the Lingayat dominated Congress (O).
- (vi) A good percentage of the educated voters did not vote.
- (vii) The electoral rolls were gravely faulty.

6. The bewilderingly large percentage of votes polled by Congress (R) is not a vote against rightist ideologies. The voters could not have a grouse against leaders like Sree Masani, Prof. Ranga and so on.

The vote is also not in favour of socialism, as is evident from the defeat of socialist leaders like Sree George Fernandez, Sree Hem Barua and so on. Sree Naval H. Tata could poll surprisingly a high percentage of vote than what Sree Fernandez could (who lost his deposit) is a good pointer to prove that the trend in the elections was neither pro-socialist, nor anti-rightist. It was pro-Indira, pure and simple. The entire Country wanted to support Smt. Gandhi. The nation was convinced that she alone could help the poor. They did not bother about ideologies or the method through which she was to help the poor.

7. It is this all too important aspect on which the Swatantra Party has to base its future plans. A big country of 55 crores cannot depend on an individual for its progress. Moreover, we, the Swatantrites know the mental make up of the person in whose hands the people squarely placed the destinies of the nation. She started building up her image by a despicable act. She continued only in this vein. She has proved herself to be a person who wants to place her own interest above that of the nation. It is only in such a dangerous phase of democracy, the opposition parties have to turn out their best. Swatantra is not a party which is there for the sake of opposition. It is there to stop certain developments and to offer alternatively some constructive programmes. This is the testing period for this young party to prove to the public that it is not merely one among the many parties that are dabbling in politics, but is one which is the most responsible and the most meaningful, probably, next only to the Communist party.

8. (a) Smt. Indira Gandhi has to lose the popularity she has unexpectedly gained now. The poor people who have voted her have not done so because they loved her qualities. They have voted so that their poverty might vanish as if through the waving of a magic wand. They are, therefore, going to be surely disillusioned sooner than later. Smt. Gandhi has no magic wand to wave and to remove poverty. The cost of living has to go up and unemployment has to get graver as days roll by. She is, then, sure to resort to her favourite stunts to keep the hungry millions expecting further and further. But she will soon come to a pitch when she can hold on no longer. The disillusioned and the desperate millions, will, then, surely throw her and her party out with more force than with which they brought her up. This is bound to happen.

(b) Congress (R) is composed of the most diverse elements that could be found anywhere on earth. The only common interest or the cementing factor there is greed for power and self, of which EVERY member of the Congress (R), all over India, is a victim. We have no reason to believe that there could be a single individual - including Smt. Gandhi - who is motivated by serving the country. It is, therefore, anybody's guess that their leader should find it difficult at first, and impossible later on, to hold this motley crowd together and much less to mould it into a dedicated and wellknit group. The party has to split itself sooner or later. Personal rivalries and ideological differences are sure to crop up sooner than we could expect, undermining the solidarity of the Party. Strong undercurrents will work against the interests of their own Party. Once it starts, the tendency for it will be to grow wider. In the absence of a great common ideal or of a great leader, the dissensions can never be patched up.

9. Therefore in the event of the millions of Indians wanting to throw Indira Congress, in the event of Indira Congress getting split itself into two or more warring groups, there will not be a political Party which can come forward to form a Government. The history of the P.S.P. and the S.S.P. are coming to a close. The Communist parties are not wanted by the people. The Jan Sangh has only a limited appeal. If, in such an eventuality, the Swatantra cannot emerge itself with a strength worthy of gaining the confidence of the people, there is surely going to be chaos, confusion, disorder and lawlessness.

I am sure the Russians are foreseeing such a situation. Such a condition, as all know, will be a God - send to the Communists. The Russians will become more active and there won't be any organised party to stop the waiting, disciplined, dedicated Communists from taking control of the situation, and finally of the Government.

10. A true Swatantra worker, therefore, has no time to lose now. Destiny seems to have selected the well-meaning Swatantra workers to take charge of the future of this Country. But each one of us has to qualify himself for this sacred, but onerous job. It will not be out of place here, therefore, if a little self-introspection is made. This becomes necessary to find out for ourselves how and where we have so far failed and how we can improve ourselves.

11. The Swatantra Party today is composed of persons, each one of whom is there because he is convinced of what the Party stands for. Its present strength is in its individual members. It has no collective strength. No attempt worth the name has been made at any time to bring such members into an intimate group. Personal contacts between the leaders and workers is almost absent. No leader of any standing has ever thought of touring the states - let alone districts - to develop that intimate contact which is so much necessary to draw out the best in an individual. Periodical contacts, at least through circulars, instructions, guiding points are not maintained.

To give a recent example. The district units were kept in such darkness when the talks were going on in Delhi to form the National Front. The poor Swatantra worker had to get his guidance from the newspaper reports !

Even after the poll results were announced. It is one week at the time of writing this, since the full results are known. The Swatantra workers are so gloomy and upset - not only about the future of their Party, but also about the future of this Country. Even at the hour of such a gloom, the leaders never thought it necessary to contact the workers, console them, tell them of the future plans, enthuse them for more of dedication and so on.

Not all the workers of the Swatantra Party all over India will have the same amount of strength of their convictions. The poison - carrying current sweeping hundreds of politicians off their feet and delivering them at the feet of Smt. Gandhi can also sweep off quite a few Swatantra workers. The leaders have failed utterly to stand by the workers in such an hour of crisis.

This may also be one of the reasons for some Swatantra M.L.A.s to be defecting to the other side. When the conviction he has acquired for himself is not reinforced by the influences of the periodical contacts with his leaders, many a legislator will find it wanting in himself to resist the temptations of defection and its easy gains. The first, and probably, the last duty of a leader is to take all the workers with him. Collecting finances, holding conferences, issuing press statements etc., do not, by themselves, constitute the requirements of leadership. They are necessary, no doubt. But they are of secondary importance.

CONTACTS OF ALL INDIA LEADERS WITH WORKERS AT DISTRICT LEVEL is a must.

12. A suggestion with regard to the future plans of the Party may not be out of place here. The suggestion is confined to Mysore State only. It can be adopted in other states too with little modifications depending upon local conditions.

At the time of writing this, the political situation in the State is in a fluid condition. The Congress (R) may or may not form the Government. Elections to the Assembly are going to be held within a year at the most. The Congress (O) in the state is in a dilemma. If it does not get dissolved, it will remain as a dying force, composed mainly of a community - Lingayats.

The P.S.P. has merged itself into Congress (R). The S.S.P., Jan Sangh and the Communist parties have proved themselves in Mysore to be not wanted by the electors.

13. The Swatantra workers in Karnataka, who have some experience of the elections may not hold two opinions about the fact that the Swatantra principles really go home to the peasant, the shop-keepers, the employee and the educated person. If the Swatantra has not emerged itself as a mighty force in Karnataka by now, it is not because that the people wanted it to be otherwise, but because the Party was not proposed, at any time, to be built on an all State Basis. Logical planning and scientific methods were never employed to build the Party. It should be the experience of every worker in the State that there cannot be a more fertile State in India than Karnataka for growing the Swatantra crop with its roots fixed firmly and deeply.

14. The political position in Mysore will not be different from what is previously discussed about that of the Country as a whole. If the Swatantra does not emerge itself as a Party with the required strength to form the Government, there will be a big political vacuum in the State. The Congress (R), however much corrupt it becomes, will be the only Party that will have to be elected to form the Government. The alternative may be President's rule, if the power greedy Congress (R) breaks itself. The Swatantra Party, therefore, owes an obligation to the electorate to strengthen itself from now on. It is imperative to build the Party in the State on the following lines.

15. (a) The National leaders of the Party should immediately tour the whole state and hold workers' meetings in every district headquarters. This contact has to be kept repeated at an interval of every two or three months.

(b) With the help of the State and District leaders, these contacts must be used to :-

- (i) enrol new and influential persons in the district as workers.
- (ii) inform the workers of the plans of the Party and the political situation of the State and the Country.
- (iii) approach rich persons so that local Party funds are boosted.

(c) The Party has to put up candidates in all the 212 constituencies of the State.

(d) Each candidate could be paid a maximum amount of Rs. 15,000/- by the Party towards the election expenses. Such of those who could find their own money could be persuaded to meet their own expenses.

(e) A total amount of 25 lakhs will have to be found for this State. A large portion of this amount has to be raised within the State itself by the joint efforts of the National leaders, State leaders and the District leaders, and the balance met from the Headquarters. Rich people have to be warned of the grave danger facing them in the form of socialism and they have to be persuaded to part with sizable amounts.

(f) The elections in these 212 constituencies have to be fought not so much with the aim of winning the elections as to discharge the duties of a responsible and respectable Party by warning the people of the dangers in voting the insincere socialists to power. If our campaign is oriented more towards educating the public than to grab their votes, the prestige of the Party will be very much enhanced in the eyes of the public and its sincerity and selfless dedication for the betterment of the people will be really appreciated. This will stand the Party in good stead when, at a later date, the people will have got disillusioned about the false promises of the Congress (R).

(g) The campaigning has to be scientifically planned and systematically carried out. Scores of varieties of literature on different subjects must flood the entire State. Only such of those who can competently interpret the Party policies should be made to speak. The National leaders - two or three of them, at least - should extensively tour the State addressing the public.

16. A working plan prepared by the Coorg District Party President, Raj Kumar R. Ghorpade and his associates has to be immediately implemented to organise the Party, and it could be very profitably followed in other States.

17. The National Headquarters of the Party has to build the Party in Madras, Andhra, Orissa, Rajasthan and Gujarat at least, on the lines specified for Mysore State.

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