SWATANTRA PARTY

Election

MANIFESTO

1967

A Swatantra Party Publication

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I

1. After nearly twenty years of Independence, the country is today in shambles in all spheres of national life:

In the Political Sphere, the Constitution has been repeatedly violated and amended to suit the violations. Fundamental Rights are now no more than merely a chapter in the Constitution; and democratic institutions have so often been subverted that democracy itself is now in danger.

In the Economic Sphere, the tempo of industrial and commercial activity is at a low ebb and agricultural development has been shamefully neglected and hurt. Spiralling prices added to mercilessly high and improvident taxation have raised the cost of living. The burden of internal and external debt is crushing. Devaluation, which is proof of insolvency

in external finance no less than deficit financing is in internal finance, has made the situation worse because of failure to take the necessary follow-up measures.

In the Sphere of National Unity, as a result of the Congress Party's patronage of class conflicts, the country and the people are so divided that national unity, achieved in 1947, is fast disappearing. Linguistic controversies, water disputes and territorial claims and counter-claims, on the one hand, and disputes among landlords and tenants, students and teachers, employers and employees present a dismal picture of a country divided against itself.

In the Sphere of Public Morality, bribery and corruption, inefficiency and favouritism have become an established way of life. The greed for money and power and the scramble for jobs have become the main motivating forces. The moral decay visible in the older generation is creating a spirit of dangerous cynicism amongst the youth of the country.

In the Sphere of International Policy, there is no wise discrimination between friends and foes, but only a continuous prattling about non-alignment and co-existence, peace and disarmament, in collaboration with nations who are themselves openly committed to aggression to gain their own ends. No attention is paid to mutual defence in South-East Asia, so vital to the defence of India against aggression by China and Pakistan.

2. Two decades of uninterrupted rule by the Congress Party have produced this state of affairs. That

Party has demonstrated beyond doubt its total unfitness to continue in power.

3. There are some who argue, out of despair, that the only solution would be more concentration of power in the hands of the Government and the Congress Party and further curtailing of the citizen's freedom. The Swatantra Party emphatically rejects all suggestions of this kind, whether express or camouflaged. It believes that a solution does not lie in the direction of Dictatorship or Statism in the name of Socialism. The Party believes that only when the creative potential of individual endeavour and enterprise is released, developed and harnessed for the common good within the restraining framework of good government can there be significant moral and material progress.

4. Against this background, the Swatantra Party presents this Manifesto for public acceptance. The path to recovery from the present chaotic conditions created by the Congress Party's unbroken rule for twenty years will be hard and uphill. It will take time to undo the grave mischief caused by the conflicts encouraged and the ideological confusions and the extravagant Plans, superimposed upon the desire to monopolise power and to perpetuate it. These difficulties must and will be overcome.

II

5. Some nine and a half million people representing about 8·25 per cent of those who voted supported the candidates of the Swatantra Party for the Lok Sabha in 1962 when the Party was barely two and a

half years old. Even so, the Party has already become the leading Opposition in both Houses of Parliament and in three State Legislatures.

6. The votes cast for the Swatantra Party were by no means wasted. The small but gallant band of our MPs and MLAs have done the work of ten times their number.

7. What has the Swatantra Party already achieved?

★ Swatantra resistance has blunted the drive towards "Joint Cooperative Farming" or collectivisation of the land and has left the peasant in possession of his farm.

★ It delayed for a year, and has made for the present a dead letter of the Seventeenth Amendment to the Constitution, which sought to subject the peasant's land to arbitrary confiscation by Government.

★ Swatantra advocacy of the abolition of Land Revenue has compelled the Congress Government in some States to echo our Party's call.

★ By vigorously opposing Gold Control, Swatantra has helped the goldsmiths, artisans and rural people to get partial success in their struggle.

★ Swatantra MPs succeeded in liberating producers of food and other edible crops from the mischief of the Essential Commodities (Control) Amend-

ment Bill and prevented arbitrary confiscation of the stocks of articles seized by the executive.

★ The institution of Ombudsman for India, first advocated by the Party, has now found acceptance.

★ Swatantra MPs and MLAs have, in Select Committee, managed to reduce the mischief in various Bills introduced in Parliament and State Legislatures.

★ By subjecting each successive year's Budget to a searching scrutiny, Swatantra MPs and MLAs have helped secure reliefs in both direct and indirect taxes and a certain measure of reduction in expenditure.

★ The warnings given by Swatantra against the ruinous Third Plan and the inflationary policies of Government have proved to be correct and its forecast that Devaluation of the Rupee was the inevitable upshot of those policies has been vindicated.

★ The vigilance of our Legislators, in cooperation with other colleagues, contributed to the removal of several Ministers at the Centre and in the States from their positions for improper behaviour.

★ Several of our State Units have successfully exposed corruption and achieved notable reliefs for the people as a result of their activities.

8. Vote Swatantra; send at least a hundred

Swatantra MPs to the Lok Sabha next February, and we promise you the end of Congress misrule and

A New Government

With

A New Policy.

9. So too, send a thousand Swatantra MLAs to the Vidhan Sabhas with a majority in some States and it will be seen what Swatantra Governments can do to clean things up at the State level.

10. **Governments formed or backed by the Swatantra Party will:**

- ★ Pull the economy out of the ditch in which it has been landed by those in office during the past twenty years.
- ★ Cut Governmental expenditure.
- ★ Cut taxes, direct and indirect, and abolish land revenue.
- ★ Check rising prices by increasing production in field and factory and provide a stable and honest rupee.
- ★ Help the Farmer to grow enough to feed the people.
- ★ Free agriculture, trade and industry, as also Panchayats and cooperative societies, from the fetters of needless State control and interference.

- ★ End Permit-Quota-Licence Raj and thereby remove a major source of corruption and favouritism.
- ★ Dissolve the Planning Commission and scrap the disastrous Fourth Plan.
- ★ End all monopolies, whether in the State or free sector.
- ★ Restore fair and free competition in the service of the consumer.
- ★ Give back to the people what is theirs.
- ★ Restore respect for India in the eyes of the world.
- ★ Ensure free and compulsory elementary education.
- ★ Provide a better life to the people here and now.
- ★ Make today's prosperity the foundation of tomorrow's growth.

III

11. **Can all this be done?**

Yes, it can.
And this is how.

12. **Here is the Swatantra Party's Programme of Ordered Progress:**

The Common Man Comes First

13. The Swatantra Party stands, first and foremost, for the common man and for provision of his food,

drinking water, clothing and shelter under hygienic conditions through opportunities of gainful employment as the primary concern of Government.

14. The Swatantra Party believes in building a democracy in which the inviolability of personal freedom and of individual possessions and the incentives to individual effort form the basis and where economic power, as Gandhiji had envisaged, is decentralised and ownership is as widely diffused as possible. In such a society, the self-employed man, whether he is a farmer, artisan, shop-keeper or professional, has the fullest opportunity to thrive and grow without any arbitrary restrictions.

15. In a free and competitive society, the "consumer is king". It is in his service that all producers, including the State as also the biggest of industrialists, should be engaged.

16. The entire economy has as its foundation the provision of the infrastructure, that is, of certain essential services which have been badly neglected by the Congress Government during the past twelve years, such as the supply of water, electric power, highways and village roads, railways, waterways, ports, post, telegraphs and telephones and the provision of hygienic conditions in rural areas. These objectives are large enough to stretch the financial resources and managerial capacity of Government to the utmost and to give a sense of satisfaction to the most dedicated Administration.

17. The Party will uphold the principle that the

welfare of citizens is too sacred to be sacrificed to any dogma, theory or policy.

Agriculture

18. This is India's Basic Industry. It can provide enough food for our people, raw materials for our Industry and full employment. It is the foundation on which India's prosperity can be built. It should therefore be given very high priority. This will involve *inter alia* the repeal of the 17th Amendment, the acceptance of the right of tenants to a fair rent and security of tenure, the abolition of land revenue, the adequate provision of essential requirements such as credit, water, fertiliser, pesticides, seed and electric power, the provision of increasing incentives to the farmer, the acceptance of his right to the best price he can get for his produce in the free market and a guaranteed floor price. The Party stands for the creation of harmonious cooperation among owners, tenants, workers and all others concerned in agricultural production.

19. The essential food needs of the common man should be guaranteed, where necessary, by such measures as the provision of subsidised foodstuffs.

20. The Swatantra Party stands for the removal of all compulsory procurement and all zonal and other barriers to the free movement of agricultural products throughout the country.

21. The Party will undertake to expand irrigation of cultivable land by a scheme of digging wells whose

ownership will be passed on to the *kisans* on payment by instalments spread over a period of years.

22. The Party will strive for the formation of an All-India Famine Insurance Fund to strengthen the efforts of States affected from time to time by natural calamities.

23. The Party realises the important position of shifting cultivation in the economy of certain hilly and forest areas and assures the *Adibasis* (Scheduled Tribes) and others concerned of its support to their efforts to adjust themselves to the needs of progressive agriculture in order to improve their living conditions.

24. A considerable section of India's working population consists of landless agricultural labourers. Unlike industrial workers, they are unorganised and have been the worst sufferers due to under-employment, rising prices and the heavy incidence of taxation on articles of common consumption. The Swatantra Party stands for their protection by insisting upon:

- ⋆ just and adequate protection of those permanently employed in agriculture and all agricultural labourers;
- ⋆ a fair deal for the farmers who employ them;
- ⋆ growing opportunities for alternative employment in the countryside through land improvement schemes such as village road-building, drainage, soil conservation and reclamation and small scale rural industries;

- ⋆ a drastic reduction in the incidence of indirect taxation and arresting the rising cost of living;
- ⋆ provision of free house-sites and drinking water facilities;
- ⋆ provision of subsidised building material for their homes;
- ⋆ credit facilities for purchasing livestock and poultry;
- ⋆ abolition of hereditary debts and maximum relief from agricultural indebtedness in whatever form;
- ⋆ large-size Government farms, which are a source of recurring loss, and other cultivable Government lands being parcelled out in small holdings and let out to landless agricultural workers.

Industry and Trade

25. The immediate need is to change the stagnant and deteriorating situation by restoring vigour to the investment market and fostering productive investment by reducing taxation, progressively abolishing controls and providing incentives so that the investor, manager and worker may cooperate and increase production and productivity and share in the gains.

26. The Swatantra Party stands for a more balanced development in which small and medium labour-intensive industries have priority over capital-intensive industries with low and slow returns which have so far been favoured.

27. Until such time as they are able to give a reasonable return on the people's hard earned savings, there should be no further wasteful investment of the taxpayers' money in Government Sector industries which have failed to function effectively. Bokaro must be halted in favour of more fertiliser plants.

28. The Swatantra Party is opposed to all monopoly, whether in the State or free sector, and will seek to re-establish competition, wherever possible, for the benefit of the consumer. Monopolies, where tolerated, will be subject to essential control.

29. Where, owing to temporary scarcity of certain vital resources, regulation becomes inevitable, there should be a quasi-judicial authority to indicate the necessary priorities and allocations.

Labour

30. The Swatantra Party stands for a Fair Deal to labour, both industrial and agricultural. The Party accepts the workers' right to organise themselves in order to improve their conditions of life and work. Strong and responsible trade unions managed by the workers themselves and not, as at present, play-things in the hands of political parties are an integral part of a democratic industrial order. The Party stands for the workers' right to collective bargaining involving, where necessary, the right to withdraw their labour.

31. The Swatantra Party stands for closer association of the workers with the management of indus-

tries, so that a spirit of partnership may develop among all those engaged in production.

32. The Party stands for a good wage for a good day's work. Encouragement should be given to "progress sharing" through an increase in earnings of employees alongside of an increase in productivity without detriment to the overall aim of national prosperity through the reduction of costs.

33. The Party will strive to restore the Constitutional rights of State and State Sector employees and place them under the same labour laws as are applicable elsewhere.

Planning

34. The Swatantra Party believes in democratic planning by persuasion such as is practised in countries like France, Britain and the Scandinavian countries, and is opposed to the Soviet-type coercive planning which has failed so miserably here and wherever it has been tried.

35. The proposed Fourth Plan as it stands, which shares all the defects of the Second and Third Plans, which have brought this country to the brink of bankruptcy, should be scrapped.

36. The Swatantra Party will dissolve the Planning Commission which has become in effect a parallel Government unknown to the Constitution and which has shown its unfitness for its task and will replace it with genuinely expert advisory bodies with which Agriculture, Industry, Labour and other interests

would also be associated. The principal objective of such planning bodies should be to help Government to plan its own business.

Fiscal and Monetary Policy

37. The primary need is to provide an Honest Rupee and stable prices through:

(a) the abandonment of deficit finance and other inflationary policies and practices, including extravagant and wasteful domestic borrowing;

(b) a drastic cut in the wasteful bureaucratic expenditure of the Union and State Governments; and

(c) a substantial reduction in the incidence of direct and indirect taxes.

Banks

38. The Swatantra Party is opposed to the nationalisation of banks contemplated by the Congress Party which is utterly irrelevant to the country's problems and would retard development besides being fatal to monetary stability, security and saving by placing the savings of lakhs of small depositors at the mercy of a Government seeking to lay its hands on all available resources.

Foreign Loans

39. The Swatantra Party's repeated warnings against extravagant and wasteful borrowings from foreign

Governments have proved fully justified. No more Government-to-Government loans should be taken except for the purpose of strengthening and expanding the infrastructure. The flow of foreign private equity capital coming into the country at its own risk should be encouraged.

Gold Control

40. Gold Control should be entirely abolished.

The Constitution and Public Administration

41. The Swatantra Party deplores the repeated Amendments to the country's Constitution, which have resulted in a serious erosion of the Fundamental Rights of the citizen and pledges itself to restore these Rights in the Constitution to their original form at the earliest possible opportunity.

42. The Swatantra Party would end the State of Emergency which has been needlessly prolonged and which has been misused by the Congress Government for party purposes. Full civil liberties would be restored immediately.

43. All legislation will be such as respects the rights of the citizen to seek redress in the Courts on disputed questions of law.

44. The Party will give the country clean, honest, impartial and efficient administration. It will ensure that there is no interference by politicians, either of the ruling Party or any other Party, in the day-to-day administration, nor any by-passing or interfering with

the independence of the Union and State Public Service Commissions.

45. The highest priority will be attached to the restoration of law and order, the first duty of the State being the protection of life and property. The Party is of the view that whenever Government fails to provide this, just compensation shall be paid to the victims.

46. Justice should be speedy and inexpensive.

47. In order to check corruption and the arbitrary infringement of the rights of the citizens, the Party will continue to press for the establishment of an independent authority at the Centre and in the States on the lines of the Ombudsman in Scandinavian countries to investigate into the grievances of citizens and any administrative vagaries or injustices and to give due redress and other suitable authority for justice in regard to nonjusticiable executive decisions.

48. The Party stands for the satisfactory rehabilitation of ex-servicemen and their families.

49. The Party stands for a revision of the scales of pensions paid to retired low-grade government servants in line with the sharp rise in the cost of living.

Electoral Reform

50. The Swatantra Party stands for a reform of the electoral system which would

(a) reduce the influence of money power and the expenses to be incurred by candidates; and

(b) evolve a system such as would result in fairly representing the will of the electorate in Parliament and State Legislatures and reducing, if not ending, the distortion that is to be found in the composition of the present Lok Sabha and many State Assemblies.

International Relations and Defence

51. The Swatantra Party regards enlightened national self-interest as well as progress towards world unity as the bases of a sound foreign policy. Judged by this test, the Congress Government's foreign policy has been an utter failure as is clear from the continuing violation of our territorial integrity and our pitiable diplomatic isolation in the world.

52. The Swatantra Party believes that, when the country's territorial integrity has been violated first by Communist China and then by Pakistan, the concept of non-alignment has lost all meaning and our foreign policy needs to be reviewed and brought into closer relation to the realities of the international situation.

53. The Congress Party's oft-repeated opposition to military alliances is meaningless. In the face of the aggressive intentions and activities of some of our neighbours, proper defence alliances with reliable powers are not only expedient but legitimate. The Party regards Communist China as the principal menace to freedom in Asia and calls for the building of a system of regional security by the countries of South and South East Asia and Australasia in which it would like to see India play its proper part. It is in this direction that security lies. The Party stands for a more imaginative

policy towards the peoples on our borders so as to help the defence of the country as a whole and strengthen the bonds between us.

54. In this context, the Party supports the Government and people of South Viet Nam and their allies in resisting the aggression and expansionism of Communist China and its North Vietnamese satellites and deplores the suicidal attitude of the Congress Government which in effect gives aid and comfort to this country's enemies.

55. The Party stands pledged to a firm and vigilant policy in dealing with Communist China and for active steps to end its aggression and to reoccupy Indian territory in its possession at the earliest possible moment. The Party stands for the liberation of Tibet and for the recognition of the Dalai Lama as the Head of the Government of Tibet in exile.

56. While the Swatantra Party believes that normal and friendly relations between India and Pakistan are required in the interest and security of the entire subcontinent, it is of the view that Pakistani aggression last year has deprived Pakistan of whatever *locus standi* it might have had in regard to the Kashmir problem.

Education

57. In order to arrest the prevailing disintegration and the unfortunate spirit of cynicism and disorder that is sweeping the ranks of students and youth, the Party will:

(a) Introduce in education a spiritual element alongside of the humanities and sciences in

order to provide an adequate background of human values and national unity for the citizens of the future;

(b) provide free scope and encouragement to voluntary agencies to impart moral and religious instruction to the young without forcing any such instruction on sections belonging to other denominations.

58. The Party stands for:

(a) raising the quality of education in primary schools which should be the direct responsibility of State Governments;

(b) raising the status and remuneration of the teaching profession;

(c) the rejection of measures like the nationalisation of textbooks calculated to indoctrinate the younger generation;

(d) the vindication of the Fundamental Right of the citizen to educate his children according to his choice in an atmosphere untrammelled by official directives; and

(e) the autonomy of Universities and other educational institutions.

59. This is the age of Science and Technology. It is, therefore essential to make the people work and science-minded and technologically oriented, starting at the very first rung of the educational ladder and going right through to the technological application of science to agriculture and industry. To that end, the Swatantra Party would equip schools and educational

institutions with adequate laboratory and workshop facilities. It will also provide for the establishment of a large number of junior and senior technical schools so that youth without aptitude for literary education may turn from the middle school and high school stages to technical training to the benefit of the industrial development of the country and the solution of the problem of unemployment, especially of unemployment among the educated.

Religion

60. The Swatantra Party believes that, while every citizen should be free to choose his religious beliefs and be entitled to an unrestricted exercise of the right to religious freedom guaranteed by the Constitution, religion is of vital concern to the State as it provides a dynamic force for strengthening moral and spiritual values which furnish the motive and the sanction for right conduct even more than any law or regulation of the State.

61. The Rule of Law is an absolute essential for democracy, especially when the population is large and mixed and not a compact homogeneous body. But over and above the rule of law, we recognise the role of *Dharma*, a God-oriented inner law to be resuscitated and welcomed and fostered by the Government of the country. It is then that democracy will not be felt to be a tyranny of the majority or the dictatorship of a dominant party. The Swatantra Party stands for this and commends it to the people of all religions and denominations.

62. The Swatantra Party will, therefore, do everything possible to restore religion to its legitimate place in life and in particular:

(a) ensure respect for all communities in regard to their religious institutions and practices,

(b) secure for each religion the autonomous management and the full benefit of its endowed and other properties without interference from Government, and

(c) make incomes and properties of, and donations to, religious institutions and charities tax free.

Minorities and Backward Classes

63. (a) The Party will more faithfully and effectively carry out the provisions of the Constitution for the protection of the rights and interests of Muslims, Christians, Sikhs and other minorities including linguistic minorities, and of those who work under economic and social handicaps such as Harijans, Adivasis and other Backward Classes, who shall be listed, irrespective of their religion. The total eradication of untouchability will be actively pursued.

(b) The Party will not look upon an association for the protection of the rights of any class or community as a communal organisation to be discouraged or banned.

64. Despite warnings, the Congress Party has persisted in following policies which have resulted in disintegrating tendencies. Linguism is now becoming a

separatist force and a protective cover for those in power in the States to reduce all minorities to the position of second class citizens. The Swatantra Party will take steps to halt this deterioration.

65. The Party stands for the establishment of permanent quasi-judicial commissions for minority affairs at the Centre and in the States.

Media of Mass Communication

66. The Swatantra Party is opposed to all attempts at the establishment of monopoly or official control over the various media of mass communication. The Party is of the view that the operation of Broadcasting and Television Services and the Films Division should be entrusted to autonomous corporations and that other radio, television and film enterprises should be allowed to enter into competition with these statutory authorities.

67. The Party will do everything possible to sustain the independence of the Press against all attempts to bring it under the influence of the Party in office.

IV

CONCLUSION

68. This then is our Manifesto of what the Swatantra Party will do and hopes to achieve.

69. We stand in sharp contrast to the Congress which vies with the Communists in the pursuit of

power for the party as against the people by vesting economic power in the State. While recklessly pursuing ruinous economic policies, the Congress Party has sought to explain away its failures by hunting for scapegoats, such as the farmer and the trader, the goldsmith and other self-employed persons, the industrialist, the businessman and the banker.

70. The Congress Party has sought to conceal its guilt at having lost national territories by hollow assurances to recover them. And they are now reverting to the well established pattern of seeking to win the next General Elections

—by abuse of authority;

—by bribery and corruption;

—by false promises of a promised land to come twenty years hence;

—and by threats of reprisals against the supporters of their opponents.

71. Against all this, the Swatantra Party offers to the free choice of the voters the alternative of a constructive programme harnessed to the basic principle of enlightened self-advancement which for centuries has stirred men and women to their highest and noblest effort. Restrained and enlightened self-interest at the individual level and a service purpose at the State level are, we believe, the only sure foundations for progress in all fields.

72. If the Swatantra Party is returned to power in any State or at the Centre and invited to form a

Government it will be prepared to look outside the ranks of the party for the best talent available in the country and so provide the most capable government that it can.

73. Above all, the Swatantra Party seeks to restore in the body politic the Gandhian principle of giving first priority to the rule of *Dharma* as the true basis for enduring moral progress and material prosperity.