

RAJAGOPALACHARI

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TYAGARAYANAGAR
MADRAS -17

4321

28th July 1964

My dear Masani,

Murthi sent me recently a typed copy of Harvard
Erdman's article in Pacific Affairs about our party.

He has nailed down some lies uttered about us,
but on the whole, it damns us with faint praise. I am sure
you have read it. But for convenience I send the typescript
sent by Murthi herein enclosed. What shall we do with the
article? Leave it alone?

Erdman does not realise that we have been fighting
Hitler and the Nazis. The fallacy of this critic and others
who want us to succeed but feel we can't, is that ^{though} some statism
is necessary, ~~but~~ statism must be opposed and one can't attack
Hitler in a moderate way. We can't weigh emphasis in golden
scales when we deal with, not an educated electorate but a mass
of ignorant voters and an unscrupulous party exploiting them.

Yours sincerely,

encl: One article

C. Rajagopalachari

Mr. M.R. Masani
Bombay

INDIA'S SWATANTRA PARTY*

IN THE INDIAN GENERAL ELECTIONS of 1962, the Swatantra (Freedom) Party established itself as a considerable and highly controversial political force. Founded only in mid-1959, Swatantra must be credited with a strong showing by contemporary Indian standards for the performance of opposition parties. Polling about eight per cent of the popular vote, it secured the third largest contingent in the House of the People and the second largest total of state assembly seats. It is the principal opposition in the states of Bihar, Gujarat, Rajasthan and Orissa.

From the outset, the nature and role of the party have been hotly disputed subjects. It has been described as a party of "conservative rich peasants in the South, a few finance capitalists in the West, some Bihar and U.P. feudal atavism, and communalist chiefs in the North." It has been condemned by the Indian Communist Party as one of the "forces of dark, right reaction" and by Nehru as belonging to "the middle ages of lords, castles and zamindars" and becoming "more and more Fascist in outlook." One American scholar has labelled it "a communal conservative party", while a British observer has concluded that "the victory of this party could be an unmitigated disaster for India....." By contrast, its supporters see it as "a progressive liberal party" which will "slow down the Congress steamroller" by providing a non-communist, non-socialist, secular, and constitutionalist alternative to the ruling party. Barely surpassed by Swatantra literature itself was the enthusiasm of the American magazine *Life*, which contended that "the Swatantra program could really get that huge country moving in a direction favourable to free institution. The free world can wish this little party a big future."

It is tempting to conclude that these divergent estimates derive from different perspectives on key Indian problems, as polarized by the heat of political battle. This is to some extent true. In addition, however, this cleavage in critical opinion reflects the fact that the party is in some

fundamental ways an enigma. The following survey of Swatantra's elites, doctrine and electoral performance examines this problem.

At first glance it would seem difficult to generalize about the founding fathers of the Swatantra Party, except to say that they are all "comparatively older men" who are united in opposition to communism and to what they regard as the "statist" policies of the Congress Party. The founder-leader, C. Rajagopalachari (a Madrasi Brahmin, "the most astute intellectual among the elite of Indian nationalists," and an avowed conservative) was "a close associate of Gandhi, a veteran leader of the independence struggle" and is one of the country's most respected elder statesmen. President N.G.Ranga, an Oxford educated economist, a "veteran anti-communist ideologist", and a Congressman for many years, is best known as a leader of the kisan (peasant) movement in the 1930s. General-Secretary "Minoo" Masani, an economist educated at the London School of Economics, a management consultant, and a highly anglicized Parsi from Bombay, was one of the founders of the Congress Socialist Party in the 1930s but is now a militant anti-socialist. Treasurer Sir Homy Mody is also a very anglicized Parsi from Bombay and one of India's preeminent businessmen and financiers, but, unlike Masani, he has no radical past and no militant present. Senior Vice President K. M. Munshi, noted constitutional lawyer and literary figure and a former Congressman of very high rank, is involved deeply in Hindu religious and cultural affairs. V.P. Menon, one of the original "hard core" Swatantrites but no longer a top office-bearer, is a distinguished retired civil servant who is best known as the late Sardar Patel's assistant in the integration of the princely states. How can one characterise this varied group and what can be learned about Swatantra from an examination of it?

If space permitted elaborate biographical sketches, it would be possible to establish an important negative point--that, by and large, these leaders lack a background of, or commitment to, either hoary traditionalism or militant, authoritarian Hindu nationalism. There are no princes or landlords here,

nor any defenders of the historical position of the aristocracy and landed gentry. In the main, Swatantra's national leaders were friends of neither and some were implacable adversaries of both. There are no militant defenders of Hindu orthodoxy here, although some are quite orthodox Hindus, and Munshi (called "the most sophisticated ideologist of Hindu revivalism") favors orthodox observances at party functions to the point of irritating some of his colleagues. There are no "messiahs of backwardness" who wax eloquent about the days of Lord Rama, revel in the mystery and symmetry of the classical caste system, or defend technological primitivism as an end in itself--although both Rajaji and Munshi are close students and expositors of Hindu culture; Rajaji suspicious of wholesale importation of advanced Western technology; Ranga wary of too urban a bias among those who would guide India's destinies. There are no steadfast adversaries of Muslims, or of other minorities--although Munshi has drawn some unfavourable comments, and Rajaji indeed has such a long record of solicitude for the Muslim community that he has been violently condemned by many an ardent Hindu nationalist. There is no reason to believe that any of the leaders are less than dedicated patriots, but there is no one in their ranks who speaks for a unitary, militarized India, inspired by animosity toward Pakistan and cemented internally by a forcibly imposed common language. Whatever else the Swatantra elite may be, it is neither abjectly reactionary nor militantly nationalistic (in an authoritarian direction). In view of the charges frequently levelled against Swatantra, it is particularly important to stress these points.

Given these facts and given its avowed aversion to the radicalism of the left, the national elite invites the label "moderate". It is necessary, however, to specify more precisely what this entails in the case of Swatantra. The relationship of the leaders to the independence struggle provides one clue.

From this standpoint, two of the leaders--Menon and Mody--were essentially apolitical. Menon held aloof from politics entirely, entering government service in 1914, and rose to the position of constitutional adviser to the

Viceroy in 1942, the year of the "Quit India" movement which led to the imprisonment of many Congress leaders. Mody (only slightly more "political") is strongly attached to the perspectives of his great Parsi antecedents, Dadabhai Naoroji and Pherozeshah Mehta, and other "Moderates" of the early years of Congress. Far removed from the highly-charged Gandhi-Menru impulse, he chose to serve on the Viceroy's Council (1931-43) and to advance the cause of indigenous Indian business.

Although involved deeply in the independence struggle, Munshi and Rajaji were troubled by certain aspects of it, particularly in the 1930s and early 1940s. Munshi was initially attracted to the "Extremists," turned then to Gandhi, and was imprisoned in 1930 and 1932 for participating in satyagrahas (~~non~~-violent protest demonstrations). However, he also helped in the attempt to revive the Swaraj Party, which was more willing to work within the political framework of the British raj than was the Congress as a whole. Throughout, he devoted much time to educational, legal and literary work, ultimately withdrawing from the Congress in 1942 for personal reasons. Rajaji opposed the "radicalization" of the Congress in the late 1930s, rather grudgingly accepted the Congress order to terminate his ministry in Madras at the outbreak of World War II, was almost alone in his early willingness to countenance the demands of the Muslim League for Pakistan, and in 1942 finally broke with Gandhi over the "Quit India" resolution. Without in the least questioning their commitment to Swaraj (self-rule), it can be said that all four were conservative relative to the main thrust of the Congress, particularly in the 1930s and 1940s, and in different ways each was more willing to work within the framework established by the British than was the Congress leadership as a whole. At the same time, it is important to stress that none of them "dragged their heels" as did the overwhelming number of princes and landlords, who envisaged considerable demotion as a minimum, total oblivion as a maximum, when contemplating their future under a Congress government. Masani and Kanga do not share this moderate past but both were long-standing

anti-communists and remain free of any identification with the princely-land-lord conservative camp.

This non-militant, non-traditional aspect of Swatantra is further evident in the almost unique attraction that the party has had for the older generation of civil servants, judges and military personnel, who display a widespread feeling that the "politicians" are letting the country down. V.P. Menon is one example; others are J.M. Lobo Prabhu, I.C.S.(Retd), a leading Swatantra spokesman on economic affairs; T. Krishnamma, a retired Sessions Judge who is general-secretary of the Andhra unit; Lt. Gen. Nathu Singh, a retired army officer; and many more who hold party office, contribute regularly to Swarajya, or otherwise support the Swatantra Cause. For the most part, this group bemoans the decline of administrative efficiency and esprit de corps, corruption in all the services, the decline in educational standards, and so on, all of which are generally attributed to a too rapid democratization of politics, to the rapid extension of the area of political (as opposed to "expert" and "impartial") decision-making, and to excessive political interference in all spheres. They reflect, in short, more of an administrative mentality and a more "platonic" approach to public affairs; and they exhibit distress at what appear to be inevitable concomitants of the shift from the "detached" rule by administrators to mass politics and rule by politicians. Thus, rather than being conservative through the weight of indigenous Indian traditions, ^rthough respect for orthodoxy or a desire to revert to some nobler Indian past, many of these leading Swatantrites are influenced by more recent and more modern (although perhaps not less outmoded) traditions--those of the Congress "Moderates" on the one hand, and of the administrative state "above politics" on the other. At the same time, Swatantra's most articulate spokesmen display no "counter-revolutionary" tendencies. The net result is that added substance is given to the party's emphasis on constitutional propriety, administrative efficiency, fiscal responsibility, and so on--much of which is stressed by many parties and much of which would otherwise sound like so much empty, election-time rhetoric, or nothing more than an agreeable facade for vested

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interests old and new. Approaching Swatantra in this way helps to explain and to define somewhat more clearly the party's essentially non-traditional, non-militant, moderate outlook at the national level.

It was around this nucleus that Swatantra took shape; and by and large, its national elite has retained much the same character throughout the party's short existence. However, two developments are worthy of note. First, Menon no longer finds a place among the top office-bearers; and significantly the two men who presently serve with Munshi as Vice-Presidents are more "political" than he was. There is, on the one hand, S.K.D. Paliwal, formerly a power in the U.P. Congress, for years a close friend of Rajaji and Ranga, and a long-standing adversary of Nehru and socialism. On the other, there is Raja Kamakhya Narain Singh of Ramgarh, a fiery Rajput zamindar and businessman, a fierce opponent of the Congress, a leader in the futile struggle to have zamindari abolition legislation invalidated by the courts, and a would-be "Tory Democrat" among the tribal peoples in his area of Bihar.

The second development, of crucial importance, is the marked tendency in the northern states for the traditional conservative forces (the princes and landlords) to dominate the local Swatantra cadres. Swatantra in Bihar is controlled by the Raja of Ramgarh; the unit in Rajasthan, by the Maharawal of Dungarpur, the Maharani of Jaipur and, in general, by the Rajput clans in that state; the party in Orissa, by the ex-rulers who spearheaded the Ganatantra Parishad, which was merged with Swatantra after the 1962 elections, and even in Gujarat, where "commoners" are more prominent, the party received powerful support from some former rulers and from local Rajput and Kshatriya associations. While this is far from a homogenous group, the influence of Rajputs, over wide areas, is striking.

The effect of the latter development is not yet entirely clear and unfortunately it is not possible here to examine thoroughly any individual situations. One thing that may safely be said, however, is that there are both progressive and reactionary princes and landlords, and that Swatantra

has some of each. On balance, however, the formidable presence of this group as a whole does bring a markedly more traditional type of conservatism into the Swatantra elites, and this has generated considerable tension within the party ~~the~~ at all levels. The spirit of independence and the pride of former position, which animate many of the ex-rulers particularly, threaten national party discipline and weaken intra-party democracy at the state level. Thus the Raja of Ramgarh appealed against decisions of the Central Organising Committee of the party with the words, "If I am to function as the Instrument of the People's Will, then I must not be fettered from above and within." The amorphous balance-of-power situation within the party cadres, in part reflecting the divergent backgrounds and tendencies of those who comprise the Swatantra elites, is one factor that goes to make an assessment of the party a difficult task.

The hard-core of Swatantra doctrine is embodied in the party's twenty-one "fundamental principles" and in elaborations of and additions to these. In almost every line of its major policy statements, one will find evidence that the national elite is neither tradition-bound nor aggressively nationalistic in an authoritarian way. At the same time, in what remains unsaid and in the apparent lack of mass response to the party's basic doctrinal positions, one can see signs that Swatantra may not become what its national leaders ostensibly want it to be.

The twenty-one points themselves are predominantly classical liberal in tone. The first calls for equality for all, "without distinction of religion, caste, occupation, or political affiliation." This is followed by a defense of "individual initiative, enterprise, and energy" in all areas, with emphasis on the economic sphere. The subsequent points are best described as rigorously anti-statist, with attacks on "the policy of Statism," expropriation, "the conferment of more and more powers on the officials of the Government," "collectivisation and bureaucratic management of the rural economy," "crippling taxation, abnormal deficit financing, and foreign loans

which are beyond the capacity of the country to repay," and so forth. Favoring "minimum interference by the State" in all areas, the party demands "freedom of property," "just compensation for any property compulsorily acquired," and, to this end, "strict adherence to the basic constitutional rights", to be protected by "the full play of the powers of judicial review given to the courts by the Constitution." All are reminiscent of the "night-watchman state" idea, and party men are fond of the phrases "that Government is best which governs least" and "the business of the State is not business but Government."

Reflecting further the non-traditional tone is the fact that references to Gandhism are minimal and provide but a thin veneer on this basically classical liberal document. Gandhi's "cardinal teachings" are reaffirmed but the only one of consequence to which attention is paid is his doctrine of "trusteeship" which, in gist, means that the rich, the wise and the well-born are enjoined to use their advantages for the benefit of society as a whole. The emphasis on decentralized distribution of productive enterprise has a Gandhian ring but this is misleading because Swatantra clearly has in mind the decentralization of modern industry. The basic doctrinal aversion to Gandhian, economics is evident in the fact that there is no defense of small-scale, handicraft production because of the virtues it is presumed to foster. The party stresses only the encouragement of rural industries that afford supplementary employment in the small-scale processing of the products of agriculture! Absent also are the other favourite subjects of the "messiahs of backwardness" and of the militant Hindu nationalists, which were alluded to above. The contrast with the views of the Ram Rajya Parishad, Hindu Mahasabha and Jan Sangh is quite striking.

In response to repeated attacks, Swatantra leaders have vehemently denied that the party stands for laissez-faire. They contend that they oppose

- only "Soviet-style"-

only "Soviet-style" planning, as now undertaken by the Planning Commission, which they further hold is not accountable to parliament. Reference is made to the fundamental principles which justify state intervention, as, for example, to protect those who are too weak to protect themselves, to set up industries which the private sector is incapable of founding, to establish "adequate safeguards" for labor and to legislate against "unreasonable profits, prices and dividends, where competition does not secure the necessary corrective." The suggestion is sometimes made that these are underplayed by the party leaders in the interests of sharply differentiating Swatantra from the Congress the P.S.P., and other parties.

It may well be true that "the Swatantra Party has travelled far since the days when planning was anathema to its founding fathers" and that it is seriously attempting to develop "an alternative plan" of its own. Whether it will ever produce any significant plan and succeed in removing the stigma of laissez-faire remains to be seen. In the meantime, assertions such as Masani's that the concept of limited inability is "a sacred principle" and that the joint stock company is "an institution invented by the genius of man to increase industrial production" will continue to trouble those who believe that the state must play a large positive role in the creation of a new India.

In a much larger sense, however, Swatantra has a herculean task before it if it is to establish its bona fides as a progressive liberal party. Thus far it has been painfully silent when it comes to explaining just how it hopes to achieve equality for all, or what it will do to protect the weak when the strong are, in a sense, protected by the doctrine of trusteeship. Reliance on trusteeship and on individual initiative is insufficient to emancipate the Indian masses from their century-old burdens and afflictions, particularly where the harijans (untouchables), landless laborers, and other depressed groups are concerned. However, because of its virtual obsession with the task "of opposing statism, which is the greatest enemy of freedom," and its dread of the "brave

new world" of the Congress, Swatantra does not speak out against the many ~~suffering~~ suffocating influences of the old order or against the dangers ~~of the~~ to freedom which lie on the right. Largely for this reason the attack on traditionalism which is implicit in the party's fundamental principles, is muted to the point of inaudibility. But if the pressure from the left remains, as it almost surely will, will Swatantra ever articulate a genuine challenge to the old order? Swatantra is in a difficult historical position as concerns its professed aim of being a progressive, liberal party, and much of one's assessment of the party will depend on how one reads history, Indian and other. As long as Swatantra attacks only the left, it will represent a drastically truncated form of liberalism at best; and one need not go as far as Swatantra's adamant critics (who argue that no one in the party has any progressive ideas) to feel legitimate apprehension on this point.

The Swatantra fundamental principles also leave much else unsaid: no mention is made of foreign policy, national language, states reorganization, religious or social reform, prohibition, and other explosive issues in Indian politics. Partly in the interests of intra-party democracy, partly in order to make room for India's diversity within its doctrinal framework, but mostly because of its preoccupation with statism and its belief that attention should not be diverted from this to lesser issues, Swatantra simply does not speak "officially" on this wide range of issues; and, by the last of its fundamental principles, the party "gives to its members full liberty on all questions not falling within the scope of the Principles stated above."

This insistence on an almost exclusively anti-statist "line" must be stressed because to a very great extent the Indian masses do not yet seem to share the party's views on the matter. Many Swatantra members freely admit and express concern that Swatantra doctrine per se has not yet found appreciable resonance in the countryside. As a result, Swatantra has done three things: it has come to speak, at least "unofficially", on many issues which do not fall within

the purview of the fundamental principles ; it has sought by other means to gain mass support; and it has had to consider the possibility that it may simply not be able to reach the masses effectively on its own terms. Particularly in the way in which "non-fundamental" matters were approached, the leadership has revealed a good deal about its own character and about the historical position of the party in India today.

The approach to the question of national language is particularly revealing because virtually all Swatantra notables agree that English should be retained until such time as all Indians voluntarily agree to learn Hindu, i.e., almost indefinitely. They openly proclaim that English was one of the ~~index~~ ~~pendent~~ ~~struggle~~ two great sources of "national consciousness"--the other being the independence struggle itself. They bemoan the decline in the "leadership of the English-educated minority" and regret that "the psychological and social unity of educated men and women.....is being undermined" by ill-considered decisions in linguistic matters. It is this more than anything which infuriates its potential ally, the Jan Sangh, as well as a host of lesser groups which are pressing for exclusive use of indigenous tongues for all government business, as the medium of instruction in schools, and so forth. Also, it is this more than anything which reflects the modern moderate, upperclass temperament which is widespread in the national elite of the party.

On foreign affairs, Swatantra views are also in many ways striking. Long before the Chinese invasion in late 1962, Swatantra had insisted that non-alignment, panch sheel, and other pillars of Indian foreign policy would have to be replaced. While acknowledging, perhaps for reasons of expediency that under "normal" circumstances these might be appropriate principles, the Swatantra leaders insisted that with the "rape of Tibet" and the Chinese border incursions, the old notions had been rendered meaningless, if not suicidal. For adequate defense against China, Swatantra recommended joint defense agreements with other Asian countries (including Pakistan) and, if necessary, open alliance with the non-communist West. Here again Swatantra

was running well against the tide. Particularly in its insistence that India take the initiative in putting the Kashmir issue in the "deep freeze", it offended the Jan Sangh once more. Significantly, Swatantra alone of the major Indian political parties censured the Government for the seizure of Goa, claiming that it was a diversionary action designed to deflect attention from the failings of the ruling party and to enhance the prestige of the then Defense Minister, Krishna Menon.

On various separatist agitations, such as the Akali Sikh demand for Punjabi Suba and the D.M.K. claim for an independent Dravidian State, Swatantra runs afoul of one of the most difficult issues in contemporary Indian politics. Outright endorsement of such agitations would anger the militant nationalists, as, for example, the party's language position does not. Outright condemnation of the agitation would, however, deprive Swatantra of much possible local support in its battle against the Congress. In the event, Swatantra, not very successfully, has tried to have it both ways: it frequently defends these movements as legitimate expressions of the democratic rights accord with the aims of these agitations. While Rajaji has emphasized that the party is not "governed by its founder-leader's personal views on the official language issue and on the Punjabi Suba claim," this has not satisfied the lower levels of the party in the Punjab comes the following complaint: "We do not agree with Mr. Rajagopalachari's views on Punjabi Suba. His recent utterances have shaken our confidence in the principles of the organisation....They are trying to appease the Akalis and the Hindus simultaneously on the eve of the general election." This protest gives some idea of the difficulties ~~xxxx~~ which Swatantra confronts in dealing with people for whom a local issue, not statism, is the dominant concern.

These Swatantra formulations undoubtedly have a "Machiavellian" dimension-- particularly the Punjabi Suba and D.M.K. views-- but it still seems that they are more principled and ideologically-based than the critics admit. Retention of English has some support in non-Hindi areas but only among a miniscule

minority of the population; and especially when Swatantra insists on English ~~was~~ the medium of instruction, it antagonizes many ardent supporters of regional languages. Its insistence that India take the initiative in effecting a detente or a settlement with Pakistan is similarly not calculated for mass appeal for, insofar as strong feelings in the country are concerned, these tend to be hostile toward Pakistan. The Goa issue may never have bulked very large but Swatantra virtually stood alone in its adverse reaction. Finally, the ambivalent approach to the Akali Sikhs and the D.M.K. has tended to isolate the party from the prevailing passions in these areas. That Swatantra has ultimately addressed itself to issues not directly linked to "statism" is not surprising. That it insists throughout that the views expressed by individual leaders are "unofficial" and not binding is evidence of the ideological attachment to the anti-statist line. That even these "unofficial" views have relatively little mass appeal is further evidence of the preoccupations and biases of the leadership. In fact the liberal tone of the party's fundamental principles; the stress on such things as constitutional propriety, administrative efficiency, and judicial review; the penchant for adopting rather unpopular positions--all suggest the debt which Swatantra owes to the early "moderate" leaders of the Congress and all suggest the moderate, upper-class sentiments of the party's own leadership. The fact that they seem to be out of the mainstream of Indian political thinking on many issues has not seemed to deter Swatantra leaders very much.

Two items will suffice to suggest that Swatantra leaders are aware of the relative lack of success in bringing their own message to the masses. First, although the fundamental principles of the party owe relatively little to either Gandhi, Patel or Tilak, pictures of these three leaders were chosen to adorn the platform at the Preparatory Convention of the party in Bombay. The location of the meeting played

a large part in these choices, to be sure, but one of the convention's organizers acknowledged that "at least" the choice of Tilak--a militant Hindu nationalist and leader of the "Extremists" in the Congress--was inspired largely by the need to link Swatantra to a popularly intelligible Indian past and was not sincerely felt.

Secondly, Lobo Prabhu has addressed himself explicitly to the problem of mass appeal with the following words:

There is a little despondency in some quarters that while the Swatantra Party has convinced those who can think, it has still to reach the masses, less disposed to question their conditions. This idea has been vigorously spread by the Congress in order to emphasize the weakness of the Swatantra Party. But surely, if a Party's principles appeal to the educated and thinking classes, it ~~is~~ is a demonstration of the party being in the right.

Thus, at least one leading Swatantrite shows some signs of doubting the present mass appeal of the party program, although the thought that Swatantra may go the way of the ineffectual Liberal Party (the lineal descendants of the "Moderates") is probably too horrifying for many to contemplate. Many Swatantrites at least seem determined not to have this happen.

Marginal activities like hanging portraits of Tilak and others will not do much to enhance mass appeal and, as Lobo Prabhu's statement indicates, there is some doubt that the major positions advanced by the party--both as fundamental and non-fundamental principles--will find the desired response. Being "right" as Lobo Prabhu claims Swatantra is, is not synonymous, in the sense that it is neither abjectly reactionary nor aggressively nationalistic, but this does not guarantee wide appeal. In some cases it works against such appeal. Hence, we can raise two more key issues. Will Swatantra leaders ever feel sufficiently free from the leftist threat to articulate a challenge to the old order, developing the anti-traditional implications of the fundamental principles? Secondly, if its own ideology should prove unappealing to what lengths will it go in its determination to forestall the forces of statism? -Inability-

Inability to attract wide support on its own terms and inability to mount an attack on traditionalism, coupled with a "victory-at-any-cost" attitude in the battle against statism, will negate the liberal aspects and implications of Swatantra doctrine as it stands on paper. Uncertainty here magnifies the difficulty involved in both characterizing and assessing the nature and role of the Swatantra Party in Indian politics.

The pattern of Swatantra's electoral activities and successes only serves to underscore many of the arguments already advanced. Organizationally weak, in difficult financial straits, and unable to rally some of its potential supporters who feared government reprisals, Swatantra nonetheless did quite well in the election. But were its efforts and were its victories such that liberal-democracy was a major beneficiary? One cannot be optimistic here.

While Swatantra chose to contest only on its own program, it did negotiate with virtually every conceivable non-communist opposition party in order to avoid undesired multi-cornered fights. These efforts involved the arch-reactionary and obscurantist Ram Rajya Parishad, the militantly nationalistic and proto-fascist Jan Sangh, the frankly communal Hindu Mahasabha, and others whose commitment to liberal-democratic principles is highly doubtful, to say the least. Rajaji was quite emphatic that he would "ally with the devil himself" in order to defeat the Congress. But by deferring to illiberal parties simply to maximize the chances of defeating the Congress, the cause of liberalism receives little, if any, help. Furthermore, it is far from clear that a Swatantra-Jan Sangh coalition government (as could come about in Rajasthan, for example) would be a liberal regime. In this connection, is important to note the report that Masani refused to countenance a Swatantra-Hindu Mahasabha association in the Lok Sabha, because of the latter's frank communalism. But the Mahasabha is a negligible political force and Swatantra loses little by this move. Would the same response be forthcoming vis-a-vis the more formidable Jan Sangh, if the latter does not shed its more objectionable traits? Swatantra has not made itself clear here, nor is it likely

to do so. To build alliances on the belief that such groups will be "purified" by contact with Swatantra is to have a very weak foundation indeed, if liberalism be the goal.

A second important consideration is the extreme dependence of the party on the princes and the landed gentry for the bulk of its parliamentary strength. In Bihar, Orissa, Rajasthan, and only to a slightly lesser extent in Gujarat--the four states in which Swatantra is the principal opposition and from which the majority of the M.P.s come--the party's strongest showings came in areas where they had princely-landlord support. In many cases this involved dependence on ideologically weak elements and resulted in the election of people who were not only inexperienced but in some cases also incompetent, uninterested in serious parliamentary work, and illiberal. Many vehement critics of communism and socialism are to be found in their ranks but spokesmen for a broad-based liberalism, which is critical of both the dead weight of tradition and of right-wing fanaticism, are not much in evidence. Furthermore, in almost all ~~xx~~ cases where the Swatantra contingent is sizeable, it is outclassed by the smaller groups (e.g., the Jan Sangh in Rajasthan) and this is bound to affect any parliamentary alliances which are undertaken. But in most cases the Swatantra elite had little choice. The local notables had the appeal and Swatantra, by and large, had to take whatever it got. Significantly, no safe seats were enthusiastically provided for the more astute, more energetic, more experienced and more liberal Swatantrites, such as Masani. The more modern, more progressive, wing of the party is in danger of being submerged.

Masani himself raised the fundamental problem which manifestly confronts Swatantra when he insisted. "We should be careful not to depend on dubious elements. Our enthusiasm and eagerness to see the Party grow should not lead us to welcome people into our fold without the due discrimination." This is an admirable principle but the available evidence indicates that Swatantra will have a difficult time, at least electorally, without considerable depend-

ence on "dubious elements"--both inside and outside the party ranks. Particularly if the party is to establish itself as a "progressive, liberal party", it faces a steep ascent indeed.

What, then, may be said in conclusion about Swatantra? Is it liberal or conservative? Progressive or reactionary? Modern or feudal? Non-communal or communal? Swatantra's position in Indian politics demands that some tentative answers be suggested, but the preceding analysis shows why it is difficult to characterize the party simply, and why critical estimates may differ so widely.

To dispose of the simplest matter first, it may safely be started that Palmer erred in calling Swatantra a "communal" party for it makes no appeal to any communal or parochial interests in India today. Its ranks include all classes, castes and religions. It is conciliatory toward Pakistan and its leaders have generally been quite solicitous of the interests of Muslims. Its basic concerns, as specified in the fundamental principles, are far removed from the major communal perspectives. Its views on national language satisfy neither the militant pro-Hindi nationalists nor those who are adamant in their support for regional languages. Its support for the Akali Sikh agitation is not only "unofficial" but tentative and half-hearted. One must add that Swatantra is quite steadfastly secular and is committed to the observance of constitutional procedures. All of this is on the credit side of the ledger.

The other questions are more difficult, in large part because of the problems outlined above. While the top leadership, at the national level, is more modern and civilized in outlook than the epithets "feudal", "reactionary" and "fascist" would suggest, the state elites (particularly where Swatantra is ~~antixxxistsxxxmexatxkaxtinxsmexcxes~~ strong) present a less satisfying picture. All of the latter may be dedicated anti-statists, but at least in some cases the commitment to anything resembling liberalism is weak or non-existent, and the tendency to inject feudal patterns of

authority into party affairs is quite marked. The party doctrine is by no means "feudal", "réactionary" or "fascist", but quite apart from the party's faith in trusteeship and individual initiative as sufficiently potent forces to create a liberal, democratic India, there are disturbing signs. The anti-traditional implications of the twenty-one points are suppressed and, in its obsession with statism, the party pays little heed to liberalism on the right flank. Its organizational weakness and its inability to find sufficient response among the masses for its own hard core of doctrine, have made the party extremely dependent on local notables, who, in turn, are not only often inclined to assert their autonomy but also have the local strength to do so rather effectively. These same factors, coupled with the fact that Swatantra is one among many opposition parties trying to dislodge the well-entrenched Congress, have further led the party to ally itself with assorted reactionary and illiberal groups. While acknowledging that Swatantra is a non-communal, secular, constitutionalist party, with non-traditional, non-fascist and moderate national leadership and doctrine, it must also be acknowledged that the other facts mentioned threaten seriously to deprive Swatantra of its potential for being a progressive, liberal party.

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