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Strictly Confidential

148, Mahatma Gandhi Road.
Bombay 1.
15th May, 1968

To

Members of the General Council of the Swatantra Party.

Dear Comrade,

You will perhaps have seen in the press my letter to the General Secretary (copy attached—Annexure A) saying that I have not found it possible to respond to the invitation extended to me by the National Executive to withdraw the resignation I had submitted from that body and the Central Parliamentary Board.

2. It was not possible for me in the letter to the General Secretary, which was meant for publication, to spell out the reasons why I found it necessary to take this decision. At the same time, I believe that the interests of the democratic functioning of our Party demand that there should be no conspiracy of silence as between the leaders and that you, as an elected member of the Party's General Council, the supreme deliberative body of our Party, have a right to know the facts. It is, therefore, in the strictest of confidence, that I am outlining in this letter the unfortunate developments that led to the debacle in Gujarat and the present crisis.

3. I am sure you can imagine how much it must mean to me, who have worked now for eleven years for the ideals of our Party, including two years of work in trying to bring the Party into existence, to have to stand aloof from the administration and running of the Party's affairs. Yet I feel that, if I were to do anything else, far from serving the Party's interests, I would be letting down the objectives and ideals that we hold in common.

4. It is not as if the step I have had to take is a hasty or ill-considered one or that it is caused by an isolated incident. The disquiet to which I have given expression was felt by me for several years when, as General Secretary of the Party, I was better informed of what went on than perhaps anyone else. As far back as 20th May, 1966, I had written in a letter to Rajaji: "The basic fact of life with which I, as General Secretary, have to live from day to day is the lack of sincerity of purpose on the part of a considerable section of our State leadership in various parts of the country. Over a long period, the consciousness of this weakness and the somewhat limited success one has in dealing with it lessens the zest, determination and satisfaction with which one does one's task. We in the Central Office have been at the receiving end of so much sniping and needling that both Raju and I feel we have come to the end of our tether. The fact that we are working with altogether inadequate staff and are, therefore, strained to breaking point is much less erosive in its effects than this lack of response, not to mention appreciation or comradeship, to whatever one is trying to do." Towards the end of the letter, I had concluded by saying: "It would be very easy and pleasant to ask to be excused from carrying this burden during the next nine months, which looks like something of a nightmare in these conditions, and to confine oneself to writing and speaking for the Party on the ideological and policy-making plane. But I fear you would consider this a shirking of my duty and I realise that it would not be fair either to you or to Ranga to suggest this."

5. In my article in the *Swarajya Annual*, 1968, entitled "Swatantra—The Credibility Gap" (copy attached—Annexure B), I had gone on to sound a note of warning last January. Little had I imagined then that within three months such a shattering blow would be struck at the Party's credibility as that which fell in Gujarat.

6. The background to the debacle in Gujarat goes as far back as February 1966 when the Central Parliamentary Board nominated Dr. Beharilal Anantani as the Party's candidate for the biennial election to the Rajya Sabha from Gujarat due in March 1966. In doing so, the Board overruled the State Parliamentary Board's recommendation in favour of Mr. C. C. Desai on the ground that a tried Party worker, like Dr. B. Anantani, should have preference over a newcomer to the Party, like Mr. Desai. This decision evidently caused considerable annoyance to the leaders of the Gujarat unit and angry letters were received by me as General Secretary from the President and Secretary of the State unit protesting against this decision and threatening that in future the Gujarat unit would not tolerate any such "interference" on the part of the Central Parliamentary Board. The Party's strength in the Assembly then being only 26 members, while the quota of first preference votes required for getting a member elected to the Rajya Sabha was 31, the State leadership set out to secure support from the six-member Independent Progressive Group with Mr. Babubhai Vaidya as its leader. With the concurrence of the State President and his colleagues in the Assembly, Mr. Jaideepsingh of Baria, General Secretary of the State unit, was able to reach an understanding with this Group to the effect that, in return for their support for Dr. Anantani, our Group in the State Assembly would nominate Mr. Babubhai Vaidya as its candidate in the Biennial election to the Rajya Sabha in March 1968. I remember receiving a long distance telephone call in Delhi from Mr. Jaideepsingh asking whether I, as General Secretary, would concur in giving such an assurance, since the approval of the Central Parliamentary Board would be required to secure Mr. Babubhai Vaidya's nomination. When assured that this was in the interests of the Party in Gujarat, I gave my concurrence. Mr. Jaideepsingh thereupon confirmed the assurance to Mr. Babubhai Vaidya and offered to give it in writing, but Mr. Vaidya said that the verbal assurance of the persons concerned was adequate and nothing needed to be put in writing.

7. When the Central Parliamentary Board met in Bombay on May 26 and 29, 1966, I reported these facts to the Board. My report was corroborated by Mr. Jaideepsingh of Baria. The Board confirmed the arrangement that was entered into and this was embodied as follows in the minutes of the meeting:

"The Board's attention was drawn to the fact that Dr. Beharilal Anantani, the Party's successful candidate to the Rajya Sabha from Gujarat, was able to secure 31 votes and that this was achieved by arriving at an understanding with the Independent Progressive Group led by Mr. Babubhai Vaidya, as the Party's strength in the State Assembly was less than the quota required. The General Secretary of the Gujarat State Unit had, with the concurrence of the Party's General Secretary, Mr. Masani, given an assurance that in return for the second preference votes of the Independent Progressive Group, the Swatantra Party would ensure the election to the Rajya Sabha in 1968 of Mr. Babubhai Vaidya, the leader of that Group. In this connection, Mr. Bhailal Patel recalled the commitment made by him in 1962, with Dr. K. M. Munshi's approval, to Sumant Patel that, in return for certain assistance to the Party in the last General Elections, the Gujarat

unit would sponsor his candidature to the Rajya Sabha. He requested that this commitment should also be honoured by the Party. After discussing this matter, the Board decided that the commitment made on behalf of the Party to Mr. Babubhai Vaidya should be honoured and that he should be the Party's first preference candidate in the elections to the Rajya Sabha in 1968."

8. In the two years that intervened, the Central Office of the Party kept getting disturbing reports that the Gujarat leadership had no intention of honouring the commitment made to Mr. Babubhai Vaidya when the time came in March 1968. Two or three months before the election, I heard during a visit to Rajkot that Mr. Bhailalbhai Patel had asked Mr. Babubhai Vaidya for a certain amount of money in order to facilitate his election but that Mr. Babubhai Vaidya had declined to pay anything to persuade the Party to carry out its commitment. Later, Mr. Babubhai Vaidya confirmed this fact and mentioned that the amount to be contributed to the Gujarat Swatantra Party's funds was Rs. 3,000.

9. In correspondence with the Central Office, the latter were informed by the State unit that at its meeting on August 21, 1967, the State Parliamentary Board had agreed that the commitment given to Mr. Babubhai Vaidya should be honoured. Unfortunately, nothing was done by the State leadership either in the Assembly or outside to bring the fact of this commitment to the notice of the members in the Legislative Assembly and to make it clear to them that this commitment would have to be honoured by them.

10. When the Central Parliamentary Board met in Cochin on 27th January, 1968, it once again affirmed that Mr. Babubhai Vaidya should be the Party's candidate for election to the Rajya Sabha.

11. At this point, Mr. U. N. Mahida appeared on the scene. I remember he visited Mr. Daudeker and me in Bombay and pleaded that he should be allowed to be the *second* candidate of the Party if the strength of the Party and its friends warranted a second candidate. He repeatedly assured me, however, that the Party's pledge to Mr. Babubhai Vaidya would be honoured fully and that he had no intention of coming in the way of that promise being kept.

12. Despite all this, Mr. Mahida not only filed his nomination as a candidate for election to the Rajya Sabha but refused to withdraw it despite his being requested to do so in writing on 18th March 1968 by the President of the Gujarat unit who, however, went out of his way to state that he was asking Mr. Mahida to withdraw "reluctantly." Some leading members of the Gujarat Party in the Assembly nominated Mr. Mahida and refused to withdraw support for him despite a whip issued by the Leader of the Party. All this time the State leadership and the leadership in the State Assembly did little to help the Party's candidate. In Mr. Babubhai Vaidya's letter to Rajaji of March 31 (copy attached—Annexure C) he has stated two facts: (1) that the Leader of the Party in the Assembly, Mr. Bhailalbhai Patel, and the President of the State unit, Mr. H. M. Patel, and other office-bearers of the Party (with the exception of Mr. Jaideep-singh of Baria, who was away at that time) declined to sign the nomination paper of the Party's candidate and that it was left to a junior member to do so; and (2) that Mr. Vaidya was denied an opportunity to address the members of the Party in order to answer the smear campaign being carried on against

him and, when he was actually invited to address such a meeting, he was kept waiting outside and dismissed without a hearing.

13. The Thakore Saheb of Dhrol has, in a press statement published in *Phul Chhap* of 14th April, 1968, categorically stated: "I had filed Mr. Mahida's nomination after consulting Bhaikaka. Before I signed the nomination paper, I had taken advice from Bhaikaka and at that time a leading Swatantra M.L.A. was present." The Thakore Saheb of Dhrol proceeds to say in the press statement that Mr. Jaideepsingh came into the picture on the 19th of March and "it was then that Bhaikaka and H. M. Patel realised their mistake but then it was too late." From all this it is clear that the State leadership as a whole had till only a few days before polling failed to function in furtherance of its responsibilities to the Party.

14. It is also known that in the one or two days preceding polling day, five or six Members of Parliament belonging to the Party visited Ahmedabad and some of them, including Mr. C. C. Desai, a member of the National Executive, worked against the Party's candidate. There were reports from Delhi in the Gujarat press on the days prior to the National Executive meeting in Delhi that Mr. Pravinsinh Solanki was proposing to join the Jana Sangh along with some 30 Swatantra Party MLAs in case the Executive dared to take disciplinary action against the rebels. On 13th April, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, President of the Jana Sangh, told newsmen in Rajkot that the General Secretary of the Gujarat Party, Mr. Pravinsinh Solanki, had met him to discuss his joining the Jana Sangh along with other MLAs. Mr. Vajpayee said that no decision was taken but they had decided to meet again (*Phul Chhap*, April 14). Mr. Pravinsinh Solanki has denied that he saw Mr. Vajpayee in this connection, but Mr. Vajpayee has in a rejoinder repeated his earlier statement.

15. It is against this background that the National Executive met in Delhi on April 14 and took the decision that nothing should be done beyond asking the five MLAs who had sponsored Mr. Mahida's candidature to show cause why disciplinary action should not be taken against them. While this decision was announced in public, what was not announced was (what finds a place in the minutes of the meeting) that "it was accepted that the severity of the disciplinary action contemplated in the event of their explanation not being altogether satisfactory would exclude expulsion from the Party." Thus the rebels were told even before notices were sent to them that they need not expect any serious action to be taken against them. This leniency was perhaps caused by the fact that the National Executive must have known that their failure to take action against the Leader of the Assembly Party and the President of the State unit and its General Secretary, who had failed to carry out their obligations to the Party, and their ignoring the activities of the M.P.s. from Delhi, placed them in no position to take serious action against the five gentlemen on whom they had decided to concentrate their wrath. It was like the GHQ of an Army deciding to court martial five corporals while ignoring the activities of the colonels and captains concerned. Would it be wrong then to consider the published version of the action taken as eyewash to save face in public?

16. Evidently, the National Executive gave no thought to the repercussions on public opinion within Gujarat of the flagrant breach of faith committed by the Party though Mr. Bhailalbhai Patel, in a moment of candour, had told the

press in Gujarat immediately after the result of the elections that "after what has happened, nobody would have faith in our Party's word and, if somebody did so, he can be taken to be a fool." (*Phul Chhap*, 29th March, 1968).

17. The effect of all this on the Party's credibility in the eyes of the voters at the time of the next elections, if not earlier, should not need too much imagination to estimate. One would have thought that the National Executive would have considered ways of trying to erase this unfortunate development by presenting a new image and a new face for the Party in Gujarat. There were ways of doing this. One would have been for the President and General Secretary of the State unit themselves to tender their resignations in view of their failure to perform their obligations. Another would have been to dissolve the State Executive, which had failed to do its duty, and to replace it by an *ad hoc* committee which would work on a clean slate and help to restore the credibility of the Party. The admirable example of Uttar Pradesh, where the National Executive had, on the initiative of the State President himself early in 1967, dissolved the State Executive in a somewhat similar situation, could have served as a precedent. So much for the decision of the National Executive.

18. What about the Party's behaviour in Gujarat? According to press reports, Mr. H. M. Patel said in Ahmedabad on April 21 that the official candidate's defeat occurred "due to some misunderstanding" (*Times of India*, April 22). It was just as simple as that. Here again is an ostrich-like refusal to face facts. In fact, Mr. H. M. Patel on April 15 went to the extent of publicly accusing Mr. Babubhai Vaidya, the victim of the Party's breach of faith, of "ingratitude" for writing to Rajaji stating the facts about what happened to him (*Gujarat Herald*, April 16). At the same time, the *Swatantra Sandesh*, the Party's organ in Ahmedabad, levelled this charge of ingratitude and showered abuse on the unfortunate victim.

19. There is another decision taken by the National Executive at its recent meeting which should also be a matter of some concern to the Party, and that is the failure to take action against Mr. Bhagwanji Patel of Rajkot District who had worked against the Party's candidates for Parliament and Assembly in February 1967 during the General Elections. In that connection, I had written to Professor Ranga, our President, as far back as September 28, 1967 (copy enclosed — Annexure D). That letter was placed before the National Executive at its meeting in Madras on September 29 and 30, 1967. The Executive decided that a report should be called for from the Gujarat State unit on the anti-Party activities of Mr. Bhagwanji Patel. It appears that the Gujarat State Executive appointed an Enquiry Committee of three members to investigate into the charges. It is interesting to note that, though the complaint had emanated from the office-bearers and Executive Committee of the District unit in Rajkot, the office-bearers of the District unit were not examined or questioned by the Enquiry Committee. Neither was I, as one of the candidates against whom Mr. Bhagwanji Patel had worked, asked by the Sub-Committee what I had to say. Mr. Bhagwanji Patel was, however, seen by the Committee and his explanation recorded. Notwithstanding all this, the Committee could not help coming to the conclusion that Mr. Bhagwanji Patel had worked against the Party's Parliamentary candidate from the Rajkot constituency. The Enquiry Committee evidently made its report on 18th January, 1968. It is not known what the Gujarat State Executive did on receiving the report, but the draft Minutes of the meet-

ing of the National Executive in Delhi on April 14 record the Enquiry Committee's conclusion that Mr. Bhagwanji Patel was guilty of having worked against the Party's Parliamentary candidate in Rajkot in February 1967. The Minutes go on to say that "after considerable discussion, it was decided that, in view of the grave nature of the findings in this case by the Enquiry Committee, the President of the Gujarat unit should be requested to consider the report of the Enquiry Committee at a meeting of the State Executive and to submit its recommendation in regard to disciplinary action to be taken by the National Executive." Perhaps you might wonder why, after the finding that Mr. Bhagwanji Patel had worked against the Party's candidate, the National Executive should not have expelled him from membership of the Party without further delay in regard to activities which are now one year and four months old. In any event, by the time the General Council meets again, it will be known what action the National Executive takes in this matter.

20. While on this subject, it may not be out of place to invite attention to another decision of the National Executive at its meeting of April 14 which constitutes a major departure from the position of the Party in regard to the limits of freedom of expression permitted by the 21 Principles. Ever since the Party was formed, it has been clearly understood that the 21st Principle applies to individual members of the Party and cannot be extended to State units or other organs of the Party. Our leader, Rajaji, had put his finger on this truth as far back as August 1959 when he pointed out, in connection with our attitude in regard to a regional controversy then current in Western India, that the policy to be followed by the Party units in Bombay, Maharashtra and Gujarat could not be different on any issue, including the regional controversy in question, but they should all function as branches of a single Party. He had said that he was opposed to the right of the Gujarat unit to support Mahagujarat while the Bombay unit adhered to support a bi-lingual State. He had said, however, that freedom should be given to individual members. This position was maintained when several other controversies came up later such as Punjabi Suba, language, etc. At no time was a State unit of the Party given the right to take a different stand from that of the Party as a whole.

21. At its recent meeting, however, the National Executive has departed from the Party's earlier stand. The minutes of the meeting state: "In the light of Mr. H. M. Patel's explanation and the circumstances obtaining in Gujarat, the National Executive permitted the Gujarat unit to take a different attitude (made possible by the 21st principle of the Party)" in regard to the acceptance or rejection of the Kutch Award. We are not at the moment concerned with the merits of that Award or of the contradictory stands taken by the Party at the National and Gujarat unit level. What is significant is that a breach has been made in the integrity of the policy of the Party and a step taken in the direction of the Balkanisation of the Party signs of which have already been noticeable in the past year or two, in contravention of a Resolution adopted by the General Council in February 1965.

22. When I received Mr. Dandekar's letter of April 22 asking me to withdraw my resignation, it was this picture I had before me. I would like to think that not many members of the General Council would have expected me to respond to the request in these circumstances. As I had stated in my letter of resignation of March 29, my action was motivated by two considerations. One was to

atone to those who had been wronged by the Party's breach of faith and the other was to stimulate the conscience of the Party. Can anyone say that anything had happened since 29th March to meet either of these purposes? On the contrary, the attempt on the part of those concerned in Gujarat to brazen things out and the failure of the National Executive to take any action commensurate with the provocation offered drive me sadly to the conclusion that I would be failing in my duty if I did not maintain the stand I have taken in an attempt to repair the damage done to our Party's credibility.

23. Knowing that you will not be happy at the implications of the action I have taken, I would like to take the liberty of spelling out some other considerations of a broader nature which appear to me to strengthen the view that I have taken in the preceding paragraph.

24. The National Executive of a Party is not a deliberative body but in the nature of a Cabinet. There should be a broad similarity of approach on the part of its members towards the problems that come up before it for decision. As will be seen from what has gone above, I find that there is a clear difference of approach to the problems that face our Party between me and several members of our National Executive. It is better that they should be permitted to work out their policies without constant and repeated cleavages of opinion and divided counsel. For nearly seven years as the Party's General Secretary, I had sought to maintain the supremacy of clean methods and disciplined functioning within the Party. If I have failed to convince my colleagues of the need for such an approach, it is only fair that they should feel free to try out an alternative approach which they may consider to be more in line with the Party's interest. There are several good men amongst them. I would urge that nothing be done to rock the boat further. Otherwise, there is a danger of patchwork agreement and of undue pressure on, or violence being done to, those who hold a different view.

25. That this is not an imaginary danger was proved by the remarks made by our President at the end of the discussion on Party organisation at the last meeting of the General Council in Delhi on November 25 and 26, 1967. If you were present then, you will no doubt recall that, after I had stated my views while winding up the discussion on the Party's organisation at the request of our President, Professor Ranga made some sharp comments on what I had said. Among these, he mentioned the Resolution passed by the General Council at its meeting in February 1965 (quoted in Annexure B) which I had cited with approval but which he dismissed as one that had been passed merely to placate me as the Party did not wish to lose my services as General Secretary. Professor Ranga then went on to suggest to me that, since I was no longer the General Secretary, I should not any longer seek to impose my policies on the Party. I can assure our President and you that I have no desire whatsoever to impose any policies on those who do not believe in them and I was grateful to our President even as he spoke for opening my eyes to the fact that my attempts at maintaining certain standards of behaviour and discipline had done some violence to him and perhaps some others amongst our colleagues.

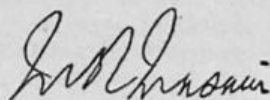
26. The issue facing the Party is a clear one. Does the National Executive accept its obligation to implement the General Council Resolution of February 1965? Are the decisions taken at their meeting of April 14, 1968, in accordance

with that Resolution? During my term as General Secretary, I had to endure a lot of sniping and misrepresentation for what was described as "Central interference" in the affairs of the Gujarat State unit simply because I was trying to give effect to the General Council's Resolution and consequential decisions of the National Executive and the Central Parliamentary Board. Is that Resolution still operative or is it not?

27. Another consideration that confirms me in my decision not to serve on the National Executive is that there should be some people in the Party who are free from responsibility for administration and are thus able to devote their time to what Gandhiji used to call "constructive work". This is what I have in mind today—that I should devote as much time as I can to the organisation of training programmes for young people in the principles of liberal democracy and clean and effective techniques of public work, developing greater contact with youth and other elements whom we have so far been unable to attract to our Party, while at the same time carrying on my work in Parliament and outside in furtherance of the Party's principles. You will have seen that in my letter to the General Secretary, I have offered that, if there were a clear and meaningful call from the Party to share in the responsibility of guiding the Party's affairs, I shall not fail to respond to the Party's call.

28. Today there is a feeling in our country that it lacks leadership. This comes of an attitude of most leaders of all political parties adopting an attitude which was aptly described by Lenin as "tailism." It is obvious that this kind of leadership has not done the country any good. A sounder concept of leadership would be one which links the acceptance of leadership of a Party with an acceptance by the Party of the policies and approach of a leader. This acceptance must, however, come from the heart and should not be one that is imposed by pressures, mechanical majorities or considerations of expediency.

Yours truly,



(M. R. MASANI)

Encl: Annexures

ANNEXURE A

May 13, 1968

My dear Dandeker,

I have received your letter of April 22, 1968, and have given it careful consideration.

How I wish I could agree with you and our colleagues on the National Executive of our Party that "in view of disciplinary action having been initiated against Mahida and the five persons who are known to have supported his candidature there remained no further cause for such a drastic act of atonement" by me as resignation from the National Executive and Parliamentary Board of the Party. In my earlier letter of April 10, I had made it clear that my resignation was final and was not intended to influence in any way the decisions of our National Executive. In any event, the decisions of the National Executive at its meeting in Delhi on April 13 and 14, far from leading me to the conclusion you suggest, confirm my feeling that I should adhere to the action I have taken.

The National Executive has failed to take the obvious steps that were called for in order to restore the credibility of the Party in Gujarat and a measure of discipline within its ranks. The minutes record something that was not mentioned to the press, namely, the intention of the Executive not to resort to any serious disciplinary action, such as expulsion, against the rebels even before notices to show cause were served on them! Further, the Executive appear to have ignored the failure of duty on the part of the Leader of the Opposition and the President and General Secretary of the State unit in Gujarat as also of certain Members of Parliament, one of them a member of the National Executive, who went to Ahmedabad a day or two prior to the elections to work against the Party's candidate. It seems to me, therefore, that the National Executive has in fact purported to court martial the corporals who were guilty while turning a blind eye to the colonels and captains who were involved. Would it be unfair to consider this kind of disciplinary action mere eyewash?

In so far as our Gujarat colleagues are concerned, the statement of the President of the Gujarat Party on April 15 dismissing the entire incident as a mere "misunderstanding" and his attack on the victim of our Party's breach of faith whom he charged with "ingratitude" for venturing to write to Rajaji stating the facts shows not the slightest awareness of misconduct or a desire to atone for it.

Quite apart from the failure to take an ethical stand, the attempt to turn a blind eye to what has happened is somewhat ostrich-like in that it shows a lack of political acumen about what is needed to restore the shattered image of the Party in the eyes of the people of Gujarat. I hope we are not going to develop the same cynicism about the sanctity of the Party's pledged word and the same contempt for the electorate which the Congress Party have been showing, with results with which we are all familiar. People are hankering for a little idealism and ethics in our politics and these they are not getting today. The Swatantra Party could supply these missing elements if it made up its mind to do so. I hope the time will come when the Party will appreciate that having a few spokesmen in whom the people have faith is even more important than adding to the number of its M.P.s and M.L.A.s.

As you are aware, the Party system and Parliamentary democracy are on trial and larger and larger numbers of people are losing faith in political parties and in the democratic process. I am sure you appreciate that, if our democratic Constitution is wrecked and the country turns to some form of authoritarianism, there will be very little scope left for the Swatantra Party or any other Party in the country. Therefore, it is more than ever necessary that all of us should put the country before Party.

In these circumstances, I feel I can do more for our own Party and the maintenance of democratic processes by staying outside the National Executive and the Parliamentary Board. I propose to do what I can in the way of what may be called "constructive work", such as training programmes for the building of a cadre of young workers. I shall continue to spread the Party's excellent principles both in Parliament and outside. I shall be ready to campaign for good candidates put up by the Party. In this way, I shall also be free to give expression to the suppressed feelings of the rank and file many of whom are not happy with the state of the Party.

If and when the Party realises the need for an acceptance of ethical and disciplined functioning, when it agrees that the means must be as clean as the ends, that it is quality and not quantity that counts and that people have a right to be told the truth, I shall be ready to respond to its call to share responsibility for guiding its work and organisation.

For these reasons, I shall be obliged if you will now kindly report my resignation from the National Executive to the General Council of the Party so that it may be able to consider the issues that arise when it meets in Madras on 1st June.

As there have been some ill-informed comments in the press and as you have been good enough to agree to my releasing to the press your letter of April 22 and my reply, I am doing so now.

Yours sincerely,
Sd. Minoo Masani

Mr. N. Dandekar, M.P.,
General Secretary,
Swatantra Party,
Bombay.

M. R. Masani, M.P.

There are two impressions about the Swatantra Party that have become more pronounced during the past year. One is that there is increasing acceptance and appreciation of the Party's principles and programme and of the vindication of its basic criticisms against the present Government in Delhi and the prevailing patterns of economic and foreign policies. The other impression is of an unwillingness of many people to take the Party seriously as an alternative to the Congress Party which has now ruled India for two decades. It would be surprising if amongst us some others have not had the same experience.

Hesitation in joining Swatantra ranks

While the first impression gladdens one, it does not call for further thought or action; the latter does. The lack of credibility to which I refer is corroborated by the failure of an adequate number of people to rally to the Party's ranks both before and after the last General Election in February 1967. Why did so many people prefer to stand as Independent candidates rather than under the five-pointed star? Why, after the elections, did the Independents in Parliament and elsewhere not rally round the Swatantra Party, which was the biggest opposition group in the Lok Sabha, and help it to become the Opposition? Why did the Jan Sangh and the D.M.K. turn down our offer to join in forming a bloc with over a hundred members in the Lok Sabha, which would have presented the country with a "shadow cabinet" and a ready-made alternative government? Why, above all, have dissident Congressmen in many States thought it worthwhile to unfold a ramshackle umbrella over their heads called the Bharatiya Kranti Dal with a leadership so obviously inferior to that of the Swatantra Party and with no programme to compare with our own, rather than adopt the Swatantra Party as their own? The answer obviously is that they have doubts about the Party.

Why is it that people are sceptical about the capacity of the Swatantra Party to achieve power and to deliver the goods? Since this criticism is not linked to the Party's policies and programme, it must have something to do with its organisation and the performance of the Party and its members.

I have been puzzling over this question for quite a while and would like to share my thoughts with readers of *Swatantra*, a journal that has rendered such yeoman service to the Party.

Is the Party stagnant?

The first thought that occurs is that the Party is losing the élan and dynamism of its early years and is tending to become somewhat stagnant. Too many people have been occupying the same positions in its hierarchy too long. There has been neither "job rotation", a technique that industry and business have developed with advantage, nor an infusion of new blood with the introduction into the Party's hierarchy of younger and fresher people. In that sense, it may

be said that the Party tends to suffer from a "hardening of the arteries" despite its young age. It was in an attempt to check this trend that I recently asked to be excused from occupying executive office in the Party for the coming two years, as I felt it was time someone set an example.

Lack of discipline?

The second obvious weakness of the Party is the relative lack of discipline in a country where no party except the Communist parties on the one hand and the R.S.S. on the other are richly endowed with that virtue. The large numbers of defections among our newly elected members of the Legislative Assemblies in Rajasthan and Gujarat have brought this weakness right out into the open, and it is no use shutting our eyes to it any longer. As General Secretary of the Party, it was my misfortune for seven long years to observe growing indiscipline of various kinds and a reluctance on the part of the national leadership to curb it. I had occasion, at the recent meeting of the General Council of the Party at Delhi, to mention some recent examples of such blatant indiscipline that had gone unchallenged.

Choice of candidates

When, therefore, the President of a State Unit of the Party recently complained that their inability to carry the State for the Swatantra Party and the defection of some of their members had been caused by the malpractices of the Congress Party, I felt sorry that no awareness had yet dawned that these reverses were due to the image of the Party having been badly damaged by the behaviour of some leading members of our Party in that State prior to and after the elections. In refreshing contrast is the admission of the President of the Rajasthan State Unit that these reverses were due to the bad choice of candidates, for which he and his colleagues in the State must accept responsibility.

We in the Swatantra Party have inveighed for the last seven years against the evils of Statism. A new kind of Statism, however, has recently been emerging within our own ranks which is, in its own way, as unfortunate in its consequences as the other variety we have been attacking. This Statism takes the form of claiming that the State Executive of the Party should be left undisturbed and unchecked in their activities by the National Headquarters of the Party, that, whether in the choice of candidates or in the expenditure of funds made available by the Party, their discretion should not be questioned, and that the National Headquarters should not do anything within their territory such, for instance, as setting aside a fraudulent election, without getting the State office bearers' prior approval or consent. Now these are propositions which, if accepted, would splinter any Party and prevent it from functioning as a national organisation. The Rajah of Ramgarh had made these demands on the Party several years back and when they were gently but firmly turned down, he intrigued against the Party and applied for membership of the Congress Party and had in consequence to be expelled for his indiscipline and disloyalty. Unfortunately, this experience does not seem to have given a final quietus to this kind of Statism. The Swatantra Party has rightly rejected tendencies of this kind which would result in Balkanising the Party and has insisted on maintaining its national character. Even as the Party was being born, Rajaji had insisted, in the context

The three weaknesses I have mentioned above, namely, hardening of the arteries, indiscipline and Statism, undoubtedly need to be checked; but some-

Cadres, cadres

The issue is a basic one. Is India one country and is the Indian citizen throughout the country to enjoy the Fundamental Rights under the Constitution? If the answer is in the affirmative, then the same principles cannot but apply to the Swatantra Party and its members. The Praja Socialist Party has receded and dwindled in the past few years precisely because it allowed the leadership at State levels to go each its own way and to weaken the national character of the Party. This is a warning the Swatantra Party will ignore at its peril.

The maintenance of this position the Party has taken is, in my view, a *sine qua non* of its growth and even its very existence. When a man joins the Swatantra Party in any part of the country, he does so not only because he accepts and the national leadership of the Party. By becoming a member, he expects certain Fundamental Rights in the party such, for instance, as his right to vote in elections freely and fairly conducted and his right to be consulted in the evolution of Party policies. If he were to be told that he would be left unprotected in case his rights were infringed by District or State office-bearers of the Party, he would certainly think twice before joining the Party.

"This is a fact which is commonplace in Britain where the Conservative, Liberal and Labour Parties are organised with National Headquarters in London, on the one hand, and Constituency organisations consisting of the candidate, the Agent (or Organiser), and local branch on the other. The size of our country certainly justifies our interposing an additional tier, namely, the State unit. But that cannot mean that the State unit should claim territorial authority, seek a monopoly of developing the Party in that area, and question "interference" by the Centre. The National Executive of the Party and the Parliamentary Board are there precisely to guide and direct the affairs of the Party throughout the length and breadth of the country, whenever it is necessary in the Party's interests."

"We must realise that there is only one Swatantra Party, and that is The Swatantra Party. Our leader, Rajaji, put his finger on this truth as far back as August 1959 in Bombay when he pointed out, in connection with our attitude in regard to a regional controversy then current in Western India, that there could not be one Swatantra Party in Bombay, another in Maharashtra and a third in Gujarat, but that these should all function as branches of a single Party."

This line of thought was reinforced when the General Council of the Swatantra Party, at its meeting in Bombay in February 1965, approved of a Statement on Organisation the relevant passage in which reads as follows:

General Council speaks out

of conflicting claims for Samyukta Maharashtra and Maharashtra, that there could be only one Swatantra Party in the country and that was THE Swatantra Party, and that its Maharashtra, Gujarat and Bombay units were only branches to carry out the Party's work.

thing positive is also required and that is the development of a cadre of Party workers, which is so far lacking. Lenin was right in stressing that "cadres decide everything". We have at one end a small leadership which is inferior to none in the country in its capacity, intelligence and sophistication. We have on the other a body of so-called "active workers" most of whom are really only passive members. The conversion of this body of members into really active workers is an immediate task.

In this context, the mere enrolment of members and the raising and spending of funds will not suffice. What is called for is the recruitment and training of a body of disciplined and dedicated men and women who are convinced about the principles of the Party and are prepared to carry its message to others. To put it differently, what the Party needs is to develop an infrastructure, at grass-roots level, which would provide a link between the leadership of the Party and the general body of citizens, particularly in the countryside, whom the Party's message has yet to reach.

This is a challenge to the Party which it must meet in the New Year if it is to justify the hopes that were aroused ten years back when it took birth.

(Sivarama Annual 1968)

Pallav,
Uchharang Nagar,
Rajkot 2
30-3-1965

Revered Rajaji,

It is with a heavy heart that I write this letter to you.

I was the Swatantra Party Official Candidate of Rayya Sabha from Gujarat and I have been beaten, although the party has a strength of fiftyseven in Gujarat Assembly.

I am not interested in post-mortem, but I take you as an apostle of truth and a fighter against untruth, and hence I put the following facts before you.

(1) You know we four friends wrote to you before last general election and requested you that Mr Masani should contest for the parliamentary seat of Rajkot. We promised all out help to Mr. Masani and acquitted ourselves to the best of our abilities, although a member of Gujarat Swatantra Party Parliamentary Board —Mr. Bhagwanji Patel—was working against Mr. Masani.

(2) Mr. Bhalalbhaj D. Patel and Mr. H. M. Patel were somehow against Mr. Masani and they were not very happy with my efforts. I feel they harboured an ill-will towards me from this day.

(3) I had another trouble also with Mr. Bhalalbhaj but I considered the chapter closed. The subsequent events show Mr. Bhalalbhaj did not pardon me for being straightforward.

(4) When Gujarat Swatantra Party Council meeting gathered for deciding their candidate for Rayya Sabha, in the presence of Mr. Dandekar, Mr. H. M. Patel engineered an opposition against me in the party and a number of members vomited venom against me and I was never given a chance to explain.

(5) The Central Parliamentary Board of Swatantra Party stood firm on its past promise and selected me as the Party candidate for Rayya Sabha. This should have clinched the issue and Mr. Bhalalbhaj and Mr. H. M. Patel should have started to work for me in all earnestness.

(6) I am sorry to say Mr. H. M. Patel and Mr. Bhalalbhaj did not reconcile themselves to the decision of the Central Committee and maintained an attitude of non-co-operation with me. I requested Mr. H. M. Patel to propose my name. But he quietly passed it on to Mr. Bhalalbhaj. Even Mr. Bhalalbhaj did not sign my nomination form. Finally Shree Digvijaysinhji of Wankar signed my nomination form and thereby suggested to the rebels that they can go on in their activities without any fear of disciplinary action. This was a subtle move, but any one with common sense can understand it.

(7) A meeting of the Gujarat State Assembly Swatantra Party Members was held and I was also invited to attend it. But when I went to that meeting, Mr. Bhalalbhaj quietly told me to go out and wait. I waited and waited, but I was

never called. I was never given the opportunity—in spite of my repeated requests—to address the Swatantra Party Assembly Members.

(8) Even during the personal contacts no member of Swatantra Party—except Yuvraj Shree Digvijaysinhji—accompanied me. And when I moved about with non-Swatantra M.L.As. they made it a point of complaint against me.

(9) Only when Baria Maharaja Jaidheepsinhji came to Ahmedabad I saw some propaganda going on in my favour, but it was too late then. Mr. Bhalalbhaji Pravinisinh—the State Party Secretary—came all the way from Delhi as if to assure the rebels that they need fear no disciplinary action. He never even cared to come and see me.

(10) Mr. Bhalalbhaji's resignation on 28th March was a pre-determined thing. The only person in Gujarat to have resigned in protest against my betrayal is Maharaja Jaidheepsinhji. Mr. H. M. Patel cleverly asked the Swatantra Party M.L.As.: "Do you want me to resign?" The answer was loud 'no', and the matter rested at that.

(11) Political parties are built up on healthy traditions. I am not a member of Swatantra Party and nor do I intend to be one, but any honest man in Swatantra Party will vouchsafe for the fact that I in company with friends went all out to help Swatantra Party. We tried our level best to avoid triangular contests and the results were encouraging. But the leaders of Gujarat Swatantra Party, in their prejudices, have blurred out this image and it would be very difficult to re-establish it. People have felt that they cannot put their faith in Swatantra Party. Mr. H. M. Patel and Mr. Bhalalbhaji have not realised the grave harm they have done to public life. Public life can never be built on intrigues and falsehoods. Gujarat Swatantra Party leaders have their antagonism against Mr. Masani for reasons best known to them (I have found Mr. Masani an honest man and that is just the reason why these intrigues cannot get on with him) and they have wreaked their vengeance on me as Mr. Masani's man.

Revered Rajaji, if this is the party you created for ousting the rotten Congress, I think—so far as Gujarat is concerned—you will have to face greater disappointments still. Swatantra Party of Gujarat needs large scale amputations more than the Congress. People are fed up with the Congress, but where is the alternative? Certainly not in the Swatantra Party in Gujarat. I would be happy to know your reactions.

Yours truly,

Sd. Babubhai P. Vaidya

September 28, 1967

To
Prof. N. C. Ranga,

President,
All-India Swatantra Party,
Bombay I.

My dear Ranga,

There are certain developments in regard to my constituency in Rajkot which I think it is necessary to bring to the notice of the National Executive of our Party, and I am taking the liberty of doing this through this letter to you.

2. In the weeks and months preceding the Jethpur Kisan Convention, which you were good enough to come all the way to attend, we became aware of the fact that there was intense personal rivalry between two peasant leaders in Rajkot District, viz., Mr. Ratibhai Ukabhai Patel and Mr. Bhagwanji Patel. With a view to try and prevent this antagonism from hurting our Party, I went all the way to Mr. Bhagwanji Patel's home in a village in Dhoraji Taluka accompanied by Mr. Dharasinh Patel, the Gujerat Party's Zonal Organiser, with a view to invite him to join the Party. I told Bhagwanji Patel that if he did so, we should be glad to elect him General Secretary of the Rajkot District Unit, which place had been kept vacant. Bhagwanji Patel kept stalling and said that he would join the Party, if at all, only on the eve of the next General Elections. He also failed to turn up at the Jethpur Convention despite his promise to do so, while Ratibhai Patel, as you know, responded to our invitation.

3. After the Jethpur Kisan Convention, Ratibhai Patel joined the Party and, in view of Bhagwanji Patel's declining to take up the position of General Secretary, he (Ratibhai Patel) was unanimously elected General Secretary of our District Unit. This action of ours was evidently resented by Mr. Bhagwanji Patel. 4. On 7th July, 1966, Bhagwanji Patel published in the local press an open letter addressed to me complaining that I had not bothered to represent in Parliament the problems of the farmers and others connected with groundnut production in Saurashtra. Since there had been a dozen occasions on which I had spoken and written about the mistaken and unfair attitude of the Government towards the groundnut growers, I sent him a reply pointing out how unfair had been his complaint and giving instances to disprove it. Since his letter had already appeared in the press, I too had to send my reply to the press.

5. On 4th August, 1966, I wrote to our State President, Mr. Bhalalal Patel, expressing my misgivings about Bhagwanji Patel's peculiar behaviour in the context of a news report that he had applied for membership of the Swatantra Party. I wrote:

"Bhagwanji Patel has been behaving in a peculiar manner in regard to his correspondence with me. He first addressed a letter to me upbraiding me for not raising in Parliament the issue of the ban on the export of groundnuts from Gujerat. Not only that, but he released a letter to the Press before I could reply to it. I sent him a reply on 7th July, which I too had to give to the Press as you and I had discussed when you were here in Bombay

9. Against this background, the Gujarati leadership decided to my surprise to nominate Bhagwanji Patel to the State Parliamentary Board over the opposition of Ratihai Patel. Although, I had strong mental reservations which I mentioned to Bhakaka and his colleagues, I persuaded Ratihai in the Party's interest not to oppose Bhagwanji's co-option to the State Parliamentary Board. At that time, I heard a report that the State President had accepted from Bhagwanji a large number of membership forms direct over the head of the District Unit. But neither were the forms returned to the District Unit nor any subscription received.

did not even have the courtesy to reply to my letter." drawing his attention to the Speech and hoped it would please him. He (promptly published in *Jai Hind* on 20th August) I wrote to Bhagwanji in the Lok Sabha about the evils of the export of ground-nut oil, therefore kept quiet for a while. Later however, when I was able to speak me, so as not to make the difficulties more acute, not to reply to him, and I published. When his second letter came, I consulted you and you asked before I received it. To that, I gave an immediate reply which was also letters from Bhagwanji Patel one of which he released to the Press even "This charge is of course completely false. As you will recall, I received two Patel to wonder whether I would win the seat during the elections.

Samaj or has given evasive replies. Further, this led Mr. Bhagwanji Masani has either failed to give replies to the letters written by the Khedut areas. According to the report, Mr. Bhagwanji Patel said that Mr. the problems of Kheduts and had failed to keep in touch with the rural Narendrasinh Jhala and Navin Patel that I was not taking any interest in the course of which it is mentioned that Bhagwanji Patel told in the *Nutan Saurashtra* of 15th October from their Dhoraji correspondent "In this connection, I would like to bring to your notice a Press clipping

visit to Dhoraji, as follows:

8. On October 19, 1966, I therefore wrote to Bhakaka again after the latter's

7. Efforts made by the District President, the Yuvraj of Jasdani, to meet Bhagwanji and try and work out some adjustment between him and Ratihai failed, since Bhagwanji evaded meeting the District President.

6. In his reply dated 17th August, 1966, Bhakaka informed me that he would handle the two quarrelling kisan leaders and said: "You need not reply to him." I bowed to his wishes and did not continue my correspondence.

last. It was a reassuring letter and I would have thought that he would have gracefully accepted it and closed the matter. Instead of doing so, he has addressed another letter to me on 23rd July where he persists in his complaint against me, joining the Party on one side and persisting in this attempt at creating a grievance on the other appear to me to be a little difficult to reconcile. I have deliberately not replied to his recent letter and would very much appreciate your guidance as to whether I should reply at all and if so, on what lines I should reply. Frankly, I have nothing more to add to what I said in my last letter. I can, of course, repeat what I said but that may not be considered satisfactory. What do you advise? Do please let me have an early line in reply in Bombay where I shall be for the next few days."

10. From the time it was decided that I should be the Party's candidate to the Lok Sabha from Rajkot and throughout my month-long campaign in the constituency, I received several reports that Bhagwanji had been going around various places in the district asking people not to vote for me and boasting that he would have me defeated. That he did not succeed is another matter, but the fact remains that his aim was to damage not only me but the candidates of our Party for the State Assembly from Jetpur, Dhoraji and Upleta.
11. Some time after the General Elections, four responsible members of our Dhoraji Taluka Committee complained in writing to the District President about Bhagwanji's anti-Party activities. The District President on 18th June, 1967, wrote to the State President asking that disciplinary action should be taken against Bhagwanji. In that letter, he also warned the State authorities that efforts were being made to validate certain outdated enrolment forms which had been got filled up by Bhagwanji a year earlier by changing the date of the receipt of these forms, which had remained in the State Office unused as the subscriptions for these forms had not been paid by Bhagwanji who had held back the amount. The District President pointed out that it would be most improper for the State Unit to accept enrolment forms from Dhoraji over the head of the Rajkot District Unit, particularly when these forms had been filled up by the persons concerned over a year back and should therefore be considered to have lapsed.
12. The Officiating General Secretary of the Party, Mr. N. Dandekar, also wrote on 5th July, 1967, to the Gujarat State authorities drawing attention to the complaint by the four members from Dhoraji and saying that *prima facie* the allegations would amount to misconduct of a very serious nature and would justify severe disciplinary action. The Officiating General Secretary asked that this matter should be discussed at the next meeting of the State Committee and the action recommended against Bhagwanji Patel should be reported to the Central Office for placing before the National Executive.
13. The Officiating General Secretary also drew the attention to the apprehension that certain enrolment forms which were not in order were being wrongly accepted and warned against such an irregular and improper procedure being followed.
14. Far from the Gujarat leaders responding to the request from the Officiating General Secretary of the Party and the President of the Rajkot District Unit, no action whatsoever has been taken to investigate into the indisciplined behaviour of Bhagwanji but, on the contrary, a hundred forms which had lapsed were accepted and the District Unit was informed that these hundred members, neither whose forms nor subscriptions had been received by the District Office, would be participating in the Party elections in Dhoraji Taluka.
15. On 23rd September, 1967, so-called elections were held in Dhoraji Taluka and Bhagwanji Patel was elected President of the Taluka Committee. He was elected on the Rajkot District Committee along with one of his own factional supporters.
14. The effect of thus imposing Bhagwanji Patel on the Rajkot Party as a Taluka President and a member of the District Executive Committee can only be

to disrupt the smooth working of our Party in Rajkot Parliamentary Constituency and to demoralise the loyal members of the Party in Dhoraji who had worked for our candidates in a most devoted manner and who had complained against Bhagwanibhai's indisciplined behaviour, to make my work as the Party's candidate more difficult and, if possible, to secure my defeat in the next General Elections.

17. I hope that the National Executive will agree that the elections in Dhoraji Taluka have been vitiated by the misuse of a hundred invalid membership forms and should be set aside and fresh elections should be ordered to be held by those who are duly enrolled, excluding the 100 enrolled members.

18. Apart from the technicalities of the matter, these developments have a wider significance for the discipline and morale of the Party. I would like the National Executive to give some thought to the unfortunate implications of developments such as these and the effect it would have on the minds of loyal Party members.

Yours sincerely,

Sd. M. R. Masani