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Draft Minutes of the Fourth Meeting of the National Executive held at Kallid Buildings, Chetput, Madras, on Monday, 20th July, 1970.

Present:

Mr. M.R. Masani (in the Chair)

Mr. C. Rajagopalachari
Prof. M. Ruthnaswamy
Mr. R.N. Singh Deo
Mr. N. Dandeker
Mr. Dahyabhai V. Patel
Mr. J. Mohammed Imam
Mr. N.K. Ganapaiah
Mr. Harihar Patel
Miss Kusum Kumari Joshi
Mr. Johnson Vallikrappen
Mr. Madhu Mehta
Mr. Budhi Prakash
Mr. Tribikram Tripathy
Mr. Piloo Mody
Mr. H.M. Patel
Mr. S.S. Mariswamy
Mr. J.M. Lobo Prabhu
Mrs. Louella Lobo Prabhu
Dr. H.V. Hande
Mr. Lalchand Hirachand
Mr. N.K. Somani
Prof. R.K. Amin
Mr. Y.G. Gowd
Dr. R.C. Cooper

By Special Invitation

Mr. Raj Ballabh Mishra.

I. Confirmation of Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting of the National Executive held in New Delhi on April 11 and 12 were confirmed.

II. Leave of Absence

The General Secretary informed the meeting that Mr. Latchanna had conveyed his apologies for not being able to attend the meeting due to his preoccupation with Panchayat Samiti Elections, despite the fact that the dates of the meetings of the Executive had been shifted in response to his request.

Prof. Ranga had similarly communicated his inability to be present.

III. Arrangements for General Council meeting

The Executive was informed of the various arrangements made for the General Council meeting the following day and the 22nd and in particular the fact that it had been decided that the deliberations on the 21st, dealing with resolutions of a political nature would be open to the Press.

IV. Political Situation

The President reported on the discussions he had had with leaders of other political parties particularly the Congress(0) and the Jan Sangh and his Press interview on 29th June welcoming the AICC(0) resolution calling for the consolidation of all nationalist and democratic forces in the country.

Mr. Masani observed that this was in line with the earlier decisions of our National Executive calling upon Democratic Opposition Parties to get together. Mr. Masani also reported that he had suggested in his press interview that the first step should be the formation of a bloc in Parliament. He read out a telegram from Maharawal Jaxman Singh the leader of the Party in the Rajasthan Assembly welcoming the AICC(0) resolution and expressing the view that the need of the hour was nothing less than a merger of the Swatantra Party, the Jan Sangh and the Congress(0).

The Executive had before it a draft resolution on the political situation. In the discussion that ensued the following participated :

Mr. Lobo Prabhu, Mr. Lalchand Hirachand, Prof. Ruthnaswamy,
Mr. H.M. Patel, Mr. N.K. Garapaiah, Mr. Mohammed Imam,
Mr. Piloo Mody, Mr. Y.G. Gowd and Rajaji.

While there was unanimity in regard to the need to welcome the AICC's call, the fears of the minorities in regard to our association with the Jan Sangh were expressed by Mr. Lobo Prabhu, Prof. Ruthnaswamy and Mr. Mohammed Imam. In the light of the discussion, a draft resolution in the form attached (Annexure A) was unanimously recommended to the General Council for adoption.

As a corollary to this decision, the National Executive decided that the Party's members, units and legislature parties be called upon to desist from activities of any kind which would involve a call or action for the overthrow of any State Government run by a Party with which the Swatantra Party has indicated its willingness to enter into a Front or which may form part of such a Front in future. The Party should, however, continue to perform its legitimate function as an Opposition of exercising vigilance and criticising on merits the policies and activities of such governments.

The following draft Resolutions were then taken up for discussion and were recommended for adoption by the General Council in the forms attached (Annexure B to F) :

1. West Bengal Situation
2. Cambodia
3. Nationalisation of Cotton and other Distributive Trades
4. Land Grab agitation in Bihar
5. Agricultural Wealth Tax

V. Party Organisation

(i) Fundamental Rights Campaign

The General Secretary reported on the initiative taken by the Party in organising a campaign for the defence of Fundamental Rights. Several lakhs copies of a leaflet on Fundamental Rights had been printed and distributed in the various States with the assistance of National Headquarters. Thanks to the Party's initiative, other parties including the Congress(0) and the Jan Sangh had now started taking interest in the campaign.

Prof. Ranga had been able to persuade former Chief Justice Subba Rao to be the Chairman of a non-partisan "Fundamental Rights Front" which was planning to hold its first Convention in New Delhi on August 30.

(ii) Anti-Naxalite Day

The General Secretary reported that the response to the National Headquarters call to the Party's Units to observe May 24 as anti-Naxalite Day had been heartening. This was the first time that the National Headquarters had sent its circular to Units at the Primary and District levels in addition to the State Units.

(iii) Farmers' Association

Mr. Ganapaiah explained the need to organise Farmers' Associations at all levels on the lines of the All-India Agriculturists' Federation. The General Secretary was requested to pursue the matter and issue a circular to the Party's Units on the need to consider this suggestion seriously and set up Farmers' Fronts at the State level.

(iv) Selection of candidates for the next General Elections

The General Secretary was asked to take note of the suggestion made by Mr. H.K. Ganapaiah in regard to the desirability of selecting candidates for elections well in advance. The consensus among members was that the suggestion implied the need for an early decision in regard to the formation of a United Front of Nationalist and Democratic forces. The earlier such a decision was taken the better it would be for purposes of ensuring that the Party's candidates were in position well in advance of the elections. At the same time, the feeling was expressed that, irrespective of whether the Swatantra Party was to form a part of the United Front arrangements or not, the Party's organisation should be strengthened.

(v) Next National Convention

The Treasurer of the Party and the President of the Bombay Regional Unit, Mr. Lalchand Hirachand, conveyed the invitation of the Bombay Regional Unit for the next National Convention being held in Bombay City in the first half of November this year. The National Executive, while thanking the Bombay Unit for its invitation decided to leave a final decision in regard to the venue and date to the President and General Secretary of the Party. The General Secretary was requested to enquire whether any other State/Regional Unit desired to play host to the National Convention. A decision in this regard should be taken as early as possible.

(vi) Financial Position

The Treasurer reported that the position in regard to funds at the National Headquarters was far from satisfactory. While he was doing his best to collect funds, the Treasurer said that the response to efforts to collect funds since the last meeting of the Executive had not been encouraging. Among the reasons were a change in the attitude of the donors towards the Party. The general state of indiscipline, the activities of Mr. C.C. Desai had, among other things, contributed to throwing the Party into bad odour with those who were hitherto assisting the Party.

However, 10,000 letters had been sent to people in various professions under the joint signatures of the President, the General Secretary and himself asking for contributions and another 25,000 letters had been sent to the shareholders of the Central Bank of India Ltd., seeking from them a 2% contribution from the compensation that would be payable to them as shareholders on the ground that it was largely on the Party's initiative that shareholders had been enabled to secure enhanced compensation. The response was awaited.

Several suggestions were made by members particularly the need to give more publicity to the achievements of the first Swatantra-led government in Orissa through such media as a documentary film which could be made use of by the Party's Units throughout the country. The National Headquarters was asked to follow-up the various suggestions made during this discussion.

(vii) Amendment to title of National Headquarters Bank Account

The present bank account of the National Headquarters of the Party is titled "Swatantra Party". This has created a certain amount of confusion as cheques meant for the National Headquarters had sometimes been credited in the account of some Party Units.

To remove this confusion, the following Resolution was adopted unanimously :

RESOLVED that the Current Accounts of the National Headquarters in various Banks presently titled "Swatantra Party" hereinafter be titled as Account "Swatantra Party National Headquarters "

VI. Orissa Situation

The President of the Orissa Unit, Mr. R.N. Singh Deo, gave an account of the functioning of the Coalition government in Orissa. The President, Mr. Masani who was in Orissa the previous week, reported that he had had useful discussions with the Party's State leadership on the one side and Dr. Harekrushna Mahtab, Mr. Pabitra Mohan Pradhan and other leaders of the Jana Congress on the other. During these discussions the work of the coalition government in Orissa during the last three years was reviewed. There was general satisfaction expressed at the clean and stable government provided by the State Government. Several shortcomings in the administration were also mentioned. Some concrete measures to improve the administrative performance and public relations were suggested. The unanimous feeling was that the relations between the two partners of the coalition had been close and harmonious and that no other possible combination could provide a stable and clean government to that State. It was therefore felt that nothing should be allowed to be done to disturb the smooth functioning of the coalition until the next General Elections. Mr. Masani further reported that it was agreed to have a similar meeting after three months. The National Executive expressed its satisfaction with our performance in Orissa except for the feeling that the good work being done in that State deserved wider and better publicity.

VII. Situation in Gujarat

The President of the Gujarat State Unit, Mr. H.M. Patel, reported on recent events in Gujarat, particularly our efforts to dislodge the Hitendra Desai Government and gave reasons why the attempt had failed. In Mr. Patel's view the conduct of the Party in Gujarat during the last few months had brought it credit and maintained Party unity. In this connection, he referred to a note on Gujarat prepared by the National Headquarters that had been placed before the meeting and stated that it contained some comments which in his view were not objective and betrayed a lack of balance.

Arising out of the discussion and in consonance with the Draft Political Resolution that had been recommended by the National Executive to the General Council, the National Executive decided that its directive of February 16, 1970, permitting the Gujarat Unit to work for the defeat of the Gujarat Government was no longer operative and had lapsed.

VIII. Mr. C.C. Desai

The Resolution of the Gujarat State Council at its meeting on 19th June requesting the National Executive to reconsider Mr. C.C. Desai's expulsion from the Party was then taken up for consideration.

There was a full and frank discussion in the course of which Mr. Patel and Prof. R.K. Amin conveyed the view and feelings of some of their colleagues on the Gujarat State Council. In view of the overwhelming consensus at the meeting that no further action was called for in the matter, Mr. H.M. Patel's motion for reconsideration was rejected and it was decided that the decision of the National Executive expelling Mr. Desai for gross and persistent indiscipline and disloyalty to the Party should stand.

IX. Mr. Jaideepsinhji's membership of the Central Parliamentary Board

The President, Mr. Masani reported that despite repeated requests both at the personal level and through correspondence, the leader of the Party's Group in the Gujarat Assembly, Mr. Jaideepsinhji of Baria, had declined to serve on the Central Parliamentary Board. He had repeated his disinclination recently when notice of the meeting of the C.P.B. held that morning was sent to him. In view of this, the Central Parliamentary Board nominated Mr. H.M. Patel, President of the Gujarat State Unit, to the Board. It further decided that the Deputy Leader of the Party's Group in the State Assembly, Mr. Liladhar Patel, be invited to meetings of the Central Parliamentary Board as a special invitee.

X. Party Election appeals

The Executive's attention was drawn to the fact that disputes relating to the recent Party elections (which concluded last December) continued to be received by the National Headquarters. While a time limit in respect of appeals against decisions by Election Tribunals had been prescribed in the Constitution, no time limit had been prescribed for the lodging of complaints in the first instance. The National Executive decided that no complaints received by the National Headquarters after 31st July, 1970, would be entertained.

The meeting then terminated.

Annexure A

SWATANTRA PARTY

GENERAL COUNCIL

JULY 21, 1970

Draft

Resolution on the Political situation.

Recognising the grave threats facing the country, the General Council of the Swatantra Party welcomes the call given by the All-India Congress Committee of the Organisation Congress at its meeting in Delhi on 28th June, 1970, for a consolidation of national democratic forces to meet the threat of communist subversion and open up the path of ordered progress resulting in a better and richer life for the people. The Swatantra Party whole-heartedly responds to the Congress Party's appeal.

The Swatantra Party has been urging such a movement for the past twelve months since the possibilities of a worthwhile polarisation of forces in Indian politics opened up with the split in the Congress Party and the National Executive of the Swatantra Party adopted resolutions on the subject at its meetings on August 30, 1969 and February 16, 1970.

The issues on the basis of which the AICC has invited all democrats and patriots to come together are:

- "(a) the unity and security of India;
- (b) the defence of the constitutional liberties of the people and preservation of democratic institutions;
- (c) the maintenance of law and order; and
- (d) establishment of a secular society based on principles of social and economic justice and equality of status and ensuring effective opportunity to all to earn livelihood and attain a basic minimum standard of living."

The programme provides a constructive and pragmatic approach to the country's problems and a useful basis for discussion. While there would always be room for differences of opinion on details, the General Council responds positively to the AICC's call.

There is little time to lose and it is essential that concrete steps be taken forthwith for the consolidation of National Democratic forces. The General Council therefore authorises the President of the Party to enter into appropriate arrangements.

The General Council calls upon all members of the Party throughout the country to bend their energies to the success of this movement to "Save India" in which the Party will now be participating and to eschew scrupulously any action which might cut across this vital national task.

SWATANTRA PARTY

Annexure B

General Council

21st July, 1970

Draft resolution on the situation
in West Bengal

The imposition of President's rule in west Bengal earlier this year was greeted with relief and hope by the people of that State. Relief because the endless bickering and the grim struggle for power on the part of the fourteen members of the United Front, particularly the CPI(M) had been brought to an end. Hope, because at last the peace loving citizens of this troubled State could look forward to effective Government which would bring a sense of security to public affairs. A review of the fruits of President's rule shows that these hopes have been belied particularly because of Mrs. Indira Gandhi's insistence on retaining Mr. S.S. Dhavan as Governor of West Bengal in spite of the fact that his actions and pronouncements as Governor have confirmed the charge of his being crypto-communist. The Communists, naturally, are taking full advantage of the situation and there has been in fact an increase in subversive and violent activities and in the propagation of the doctrines of Mao Tse Tung. Pressure from the CPI was responsible for abandoning the proposal to introduce the Preventive Detention Act for which there was an unanimous demand from the Police authorities and the Government of West Bengal and which was fully supported by Public opinion in the State.

The Swatantra Party takes a very serious view of the fast deteriorating situation in Bengal and note with dismay that the people are becoming despondent and demoralised.

If the situation is not tackled on an emergency basis, it is not unlikely that Bengal will soon be India's North Vietnam with the Communists in the rest of the country playing the role of the Viet Cong actively assisted by the Chinese Communists. The Swatantra Party is sure that there are patriotic persons even within Mrs. Indira Gandhi's Party who would not like to see this happen.

At this critical situation in the Nation's history, the Party calls upon all law-abiding and patriotic citizens to raise their voices against this suicidal policy of Mrs. Indira Gandhi.

The Swatantra Party resolves that:

(i) President's Rule be made purposeful and effective to ensure that law and order and the safety of life and limb is restored without delay, if necessary with the help of the Army.

(ii) Mr. Dhasvan, who has consistently given aid and succour to the Communists, be removed from office of Governor forthwith;

(iii) the Communist parties be banned in this State without further loss of time.

(iv) the civil Administration which has been infiltrated and demoralised by the Communists be restored to its full vigour and a sense of confidence brought back to its functioning;

(v) anti-social elements who have disrupted production, intimidated loyal workers and deliberately attempted to create chaos in industrial enterprises causing hardship and privation to workers who are being rendered jobless by the thousand and are rapidly bringing industrial production to a grinding halt, to be ruthlessly dealt with.

(vi) lands grabbed in violation of law should be restored to the owners

Answer C.

SWATANTRA PARTY

GENERAL COUNCIL

July 21, 1970

Draft Resolution on Cambodia.

The General Council of the Swatantra Party condemns the Indian Government's policy of servility to the Soviet Union. It feels that our country's future has already been heavily mortgaged to Mrs. Indira Gandhi's mentors in Moscow so that her Government may survive.

The General Council conveys its sympathies to the brave people of Cambodia in their struggle to survive as a free nation and congratulates all those governments of South East Asia who have gone to the succour of the Cambodian people.

In the war to destroy the freedom of South Vietnam, North Vietnamese regular forces and the Vietcong have used neighbouring Cambodia for base camps where their forces can rest, regroup and reenter South Vietnam. This "safe haven" across the border" was for many years endured with great forbearance by the Governments of South Vietnam and the United States in the hope that Norodom Sihanouk would be able to get these sanctuaries eliminated. When Sihanouk failed, the Cambodian s threw him out. Norodom Sihanouk turned to Communist China and has become a Quisling of Peking. The change of Government was naturally not to the liking of the Communist aggressors. North Vietnamese and Viet Cong forces entered Cambodia and occupied the entire zone along Cambodia's border with South Vietnam. It was against this background that South Vietnamese and United States forces at long last entered Cambodia to liquidate the sancturies.

The General Council congratulates President Nixon of the United States for his courage in intervening in Cambodia even at a risk to his own political future thus giving the brave people of Cambodia a breathing spell in their struggle to retain their country's independence.

The Government of India's policy on Cambodia is in reality an extension of their policy of Soviet ~~st~~ellitism. The resolution adopted by Mrs. Indira Gandhi's AICC exposes the lopsided neutrality of the Government of India when it calls for the withdrawal of American troops first before the Communist aggressors who were there much earlier are asked to leave. **For instance**, when India wanted the International Control Commission to be revived, Moscow opposed the move and India dropped it hastily. When the Indonesian Government, which is also non-aligned, invited India to a Conference in Djarkarta to consider the situation in Cambodia, the Government of India after initially not being averse to the idea declined to attend when Moscow attacked the Indonesian Government's initiative. When the Djakarta conference took decisions that were in line with our own stand, the Government of India welcomed them. Every single action of the Government of India in regard to the Cambodian crisis betrays its utter servility to the Soviet Union.

And now, the Government of India has gone out of its way to invite to this country Madame Binh who, like our Naxalites, is trying to subvert the government of her own country in violation of normal diplomatic procedure. Last June visas were issued by the Government of India to Sihanouk's envoys though they had no travel papers and only passports of a non-existent government which we have not recognised.

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Annexure D

SWATANTRA PARTY

General Council

July 21, 1970

Draft

Resolution on Government's proposal to
nationalise the Cotton and distributive Trades

The Swatantra Party is emphatically of the opinion that if the Government persists in its decision to take over the Cotton Trade and canalise cotton imports through a State body, the results would be:

- (a) the farmer who at present gets a good price by selling his crop to the highest bidder will be subject to monopoly procurement and will be compelled to sell his produce at a price arbitrarily fixed by Government
- (b) to render jobless over three hundred thousand persons who have acquired expert knowledge and are operating in the cotton trade and thus add to the country's unemployment problem
- (c) to destroy a mechanism perfected over the years which ensured a fair price to the farmer and quality control so far as the purchaser is concerned and through inefficient and bureaucratic procedures make the consumer pay a higher price for cloth to cover the heavy overheads which inevitably result from State Trading; and
- (d) concentrate one more important economic activity in the hands of government.

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The Swatantra Party congratulates the cotton and food-grains traders on their having decided to fight government's onslaught and pledges its support to them in combating these harmful measures.

Mrs. Indira Gandhi's Government appears to be bent on destroying whatever little is left of the economy in their pursuit of policies based on their Marxist obsession to concentrate all economic power in their own hands and create a regimented economy. Their recent proposal to take over the cotton, food-grains and oil-seeds trades is the latest example of utter disregard not only for the privations and misery of millions of cotton, foodgrains and oil-seeds traders but also their ruinous effect on farmers and consumers.

At a time when Government's energies ought to be concentrated on devising steps to increase cotton production, they are devoting their time and energy in making plans to take over the trade. All sorts of dubious arguments are being advanced to explain what is essentially an ideologically motivated action regardless of consequences including the prospect of over three hundred thousand traders facing unemployment and starvation.

The supposed objective of Government in taking over the cotton foodgrains and oil-seeds trades is to ensure to the producer economic and remunerative prices and to avoid the alleged exploitation of the producer and consumer by the "middle man". If past performance is any indication, this objective will most certainly not be achieved. State Trading has already shown Government to be the biggest profiteer and exploiter of both farmers and consumers.

SWATANTRA PARTY
GENERAL COUNCIL

Annexure B

JULY 21, 1970

Draft Resolution on Land Grab Agitation in Bihar.

The General Council of the Swatantra Party denounces the Government of Bihar's connivance at the violation of the Fundamental Right of farmers in that State. The Council congratulates the farmers of Champaran and other districts for their initiative in organising a Kisan Sena as also a Farmers Association to defend themselves against this onslaught by the Communists in collusion with the State Government. If the present government, which is actively encouraging criminal activities in the name of so-called socialism, is not removed at the earliest possible opportunity, there is danger of Bihar before long going the way of West Bengal.

The General Council of the Swatantra Party promises the farmers of Bihar the Party's unstinted support in the struggle they are waging to defend their farm, family and freedom.

~~The~~ Bihar State Government depending for its survival on the Communists has not only closed its eyes to Communist depredations but, judging by certain pronouncements of the Bihar Chief Minister, is actively conniving at the CPI land-grab agitation.

On June 25, the Bihar Chief Minister is reported to have openly exhorted landless labourers to grab lands, violently if necessary. This call to violence from official quarters is in total defiance of the oath of office to protect the Constitution. The Northern District of Champaran in Bihar lies at the trijunction of Bihar, Nepal and U.P. and the neighbouring district of Purnea borders West Bengal. Communists, whether they be in the garb of Naxalites or others trained in guerilla warfare in Communist China, infiltrate into Bengal and through Bengal into Champaran and Purnea. Recently at Sathi in the district of Champaran peasants were dispossessed of their lands by Communists with the active connivance of the police and local officials. Instead of protecting the peasant owners, they were actually threatened and issued non-bailable warrants and were compelled to surrender their land despite the fact that they were the lawful possessors of such lands.

for decades. Instructions appear to have been issued by the State Government to "persuade" landholders to part with their lands. Such "persuasion" in Communist jargon is a euphemism for coercion.

The land grab agitation launched by the Communist Party of India not only in Bihar but covering all India, explodes the myth about the CPI being different from the other Communist parties. They are all the same poison with different labels.

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Annexure F

SWATANTRA PARTY

GENERAL COUNCIL

JULY 21, 1970

Draft Resolution on Agricultural Wealth Tax.

The General Council of the Swatantra Party regrets the Union Government's decision to bring into operation the Wealth Tax on Agricultural Land including orchards and plantation. The Council is of the opinion that just when Indian Agriculture is looking up after many years, the imposition of this Tax at the present juncture would have a deleterious effect on food production.

The General Council is of the view that agricultural wealth tax should be kept in abeyance till such time as Indian agriculture comes into its own and the country no longer has to depend on imported foodgrains and the implications of such a levy on food production has been thoroughly studied.

Moreover, the imposition of this tax by the Union Government may constitute an encouragement on a source of revenue of State Governments, and has become a source of conflict between the Union and the States.

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