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Minutes of the meeting of the National Executive held at Kalki Buildings, Madras on Sunday and Monday, June 22nd and 23rd, 1969

Present:

Prof. N. G. Ranga - In the Chair
Mr. C. Rajagopalachari
Prof. M. Ruthnaswamy
Mr. B.P. Singh
Mr. Dahyabhai V. Patel
Mr. H.M. Patel
Mr. J. Mohammed Imam
Mr. S.S. Mariswamy
Mr. G. Hanumantha Rao
Sardar Basant Singh
Mr. J.M. Lobo Prabhu
Sardar Ram Singh
Mr. G. Latchanna
Mr. P.K. Deo
Mr. K. Sundaram
Mr. C.C. Desai
Mr. K.K. Kuruvilla
Mr. Sundermani Patel
Dr. R.C. Cooper
Mr. N. Dandekar

Mr. Harihar Patel -	By Invitation
Mr. Budhan Rai Verma	" "
Prof. P.J. Shroff	" "
Col. Tej Singh	" "
Mr. V.T. Sreenivasan	" "
Mr. T. Sadasivam	" "
Mr. Mandhata Singh	" "

1. The National Executive condoled the death of the President of India Dr. Zakir Hussain, Sir H.P. Mody, Dr. K.C. Bhagel, M.P., Mr. Ramaseshia (Orissa's Health Minister) and Mr. Ambashankar Trivedi, M.L.A. and observed a minute's silence in honour of their memory.
2. The Minutes of the meeting of the National Executive held in New Delhi on February 16, 1969 were confirmed.
3. The General Secretary informed the meeting that Office Bearers of the Party (at the State level) from States not adequately represented in the National Executive and who were actively associated with organisational work had been invited to attend this meeting so that the Executive could have the benefit of their experience when discussing the state of Party organisation. Of those invited, the following were unable to attend :

Mr. Jaideepsingh of Baria, Mr. Budhi Prakash, Mr. Yashwant Kumar Chaudhary, Ch. Hardwari Lal, Mr. Munshilal Chamar, Mr. S.B. Datta, and Mr. T. Parmanand.

4. Report of Linguistic States Sub-Committee

The report of the Sub-Committee appointed by the National Executive (in pursuance of a decision of the General Council) to study the problems and situations resulting from the formation of Linguistic States was tabled. It was decided to consider the report at a later meeting.

5. Matters referred to the Executive by the Central Parliamentary Board

Dr. K.M. Munshi

The Executive considered several communications received from certain office bearers and members of the Gujarat Unit of the Party expressing their strong resentment against the statement issued by Dr. K.M. Munshi in support of the Congress Party's candidate Mr. S.K. Patil, in the Banaskantha Parliamentary by-election held in May this year.

The General Secretary reported he felt it necessary to issue a press statement soon after Dr. Munshi's statement so as to emphasise that the position taken by Dr. Munshi was not that of the Swatantra Party.

The General Secretary also reported that this matter was discussed by the Central Parliamentary Board which met earlier in the day and he conveyed the Board's view that the National Executive should take note of Mr. Munshi's statement as being unfortunate. Arising out of the discussion that followed the National Executive took the following decision nem con :-

"The National Executive of the Swatantra Party deeply regrets that Shri K.M. Munshi, a Vice-President of the Party, should have thought fit to support the candidature of Shri S.K. Patil the Congress candidate in the Banaskantha Parliamentary by-election for which the Party had put up its own candidate Shri Manubhai Amersey. It was surprising and most unfortunate that Shri Munshi issued his statement in support of Shri S.K. Patil."

In this connection the President, Prof. Ranga observed that while he shared the unhappiness of the National Executive over Dr. Munshi's statement and supported the above decision he would like to remind members of the fact that Dr. Munshi's association with the Party had undoubtedly been a great asset even though he was presently inactive due to poor health.

6. Disciplinary Action against Mr. V.K. Potdar

The General Secretary reported that the Maharashtra Regional Executive had had taken disciplinary action against Mr. V.K. Potdar (former Secretary of the Sholapur District Unit) and debarred him from holding office in the Party for a period of one year ending 28th February 1970 for certain acts of grave indiscipline. Mr. Potdar had preferred an appeal to the National Executive against that decision. The National Executive after due deliberation and consideration of Mr. Potdar's appeal, rejected it.

7. Next meeting of the General Council

The Bombay Regional Unit's invitation to hold the next meeting of the General Council of the Party in Bombay towards the end of September was accepted.

8. Review of current affairs and political problems

(i) Communist Menace:

The Executive discussed the threat to the democratic institutions and to the security of the country posed by the activities of the so-called Naxalites. Several members gave first hand reports of the menacing activities of these Naxalites. The National Executive adopted unanimously the attached resolution (Annexure A).

(ii) Presidential Election:

The General Secretary drew the attention of the Executive to a letter received from Mr. George Fernandes, General Secretary of the Samyukta Socialist Party, forwarding a resolution of their Party which called upon all political parties to persuade Mr. Jayaprakash Narayan to stand as a candidate for the office of the President of India. The National Executive, after due discussion and deliberation was of opinion that the SSP's proposal could not be supported. Mr. Jayaprakash Narayan had already announced that he was not interested.

In this connection the National Executive recalled the Prime Minister's earlier suggestions that if possible a non-party man should become the next President. It was felt that this was the right approach and that a person not involved in party politics, who was of unimpeachable character and standing, and familiar with parliamentary processes and problems in India over the last 20 years, should be chosen for that high office. And from this standpoint, the Executive thought Pandit Kunzru or Mr. Subba Rao (whom the Party had sponsored last time) would be the type of person who ought to be considered for the high office. It was therefore decided to approach these two gentlemen (in that order) for their consent and then to request all parties (including the Congress Party) to consider and unanimously accept the Swatantra Party's recommendation in favour of Pandit Kunzru or Mr. Subba Rao.

The President, Prof. Ranga was requested to informally approach the President of the Congress Party and the Prime Minister and convey the Swatantra Party's suggestion. Similarly he was requested to discuss this matter with leaders of the other opposition parties to accept Pandit Kunzru or failing him Mr. Subba Rao either as a unanimous choice of all Parties (including the Congress Party) or as the candidate of the opposition parties.

[The meeting then adjourned for lunch and reassembled at 3 P.M.]

(iii) Situation in Telengana

The General Secretary read out an extract from the Minutes of the meeting of the Andhra State Executive held on June 8 in support of a separate State for Telengana. The State President, Mr. G. Latchanna explained in detail the background of the Telengana movement and the reasons why the Andhra State Executive had taken the position that the best course, having regard to all the circumstances as they had developed, would be to concede the demand for a separate State. After discussion the Executive adopted the attached resolution. (Annexure B).

9. Review of negotiations with the BKD and the Jan Sangh

The President, Prof. Ranga, reviewed the efforts made by the Swatantra Party in the past to achieve a closer relationship in one form or another with other democratic opposition parties, particularly the Jan Sangh and the BKD. He reported on the meeting with the BKD and the Jan Sangh in New Delhi on May 26 and 27 and said that while a number of issues were discussed and the wide areas of agreement were noted, there still remained certain matters where there were differences which needed to be narrowed down.

In this connection he clarified that so far as the Swatantra Party was concerned, it had not called off negotiations with the Jan Sangh. At the same time the impression Mr. Masani and he had gathered was that the Jan Sangh was at best only interested in a United Front in Parliament and not in an outright merger. He further pointed out that the position taken by Mr. Masani and himself during these talks was in line with Rajaji's recent articles and statements in Swarajya calling upon democratic opposition parties to close ranks on the basis of an agreed emergency minimum programme. Prof. Ranga added that he had invited Chaudhary Charan Singh to this meeting of the National Executive, but that the latter was unable to attend and had deputed the Vice President and General Secretary of the BKD (Mr. Takathmal Jain and Mr. Prakash V. Shastri) to attend the meeting on his behalf. While Mr. Takathmal Jain had been unable to come, Mr. Prakash V. Shastri was in fact in Madras and would be invited to participate in the discussions the following morning.

In the discussion that followed, members were generally agreed that the present critical political situation called for an early get together of democratic parties and that if an outright merger was not immediately possible, because of certain important differences not immediately capable of being resolved, at least a United Front of those parties in Parliament and State Assemblies should be attempted.

As regards merger, members felt that the position to be taken by the new Party on a number of issues like minorities, official language, Kashmir and Nagaland, Pakistan, Nuclear Weapons, the ownership or control of Large Scale Industries needed to be worked out carefully; and there was also the question of name, flag and symbol of any new Party which might be formed on merger.

In this connection a letter from Mr. Masani to Rajaji reporting on the talks on May 26 and 27 was circulated. And a letter from Maharawal Iaxman Singh of Dungarpur, President of the Rajasthan Unit, wholeheartedly agreeing with the proposal to achieve an early merger, was read out.

It was agreed that when Mr. Prakash V. Shastri would join the discussion the following morning these and other connected issues should be discussed at greater length.

The meeting then adjourned for the day.

The adjourned meeting of the National Executive met at Kalki Buildings, at 10 a.m.

Present:

Prof. M.G. Ranga
Mr. C. Rajagopalachari
Mr. B.P. Singh
Mr. Dahyabhai V. Patel
Mr. H.M. Patel
Mr. J. Mohammed Imam

- In the Chair

Mr. S.S. Mariyawar
Mr. Sundermani Patel

Mr. G. Hanumantha Rao
Sardar Basant Singh
Mr. J.M. Lobo Prabhu
Prof. M. Ruthnaswamy
Sardar Ram Singh
Mr. G. Latchanna
Mr. P.K. Deo
Mr. K. Sundaram
Mr. C.C. Desai
Mr. K.K. Kuruvilla
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Mr. V.T. Sreenivasan	" "
Mr. T. Sadasivam	" "
Mr. Mandhatta Singh	" "

Review of negotiations with the BKD and the Jan Sangh (Contd.)

The meeting resumed its discussion of the problems arising out of the suggested merger. At this stage Mr. Masani was invited to join the discussions.

He explained the various issues involved and the issues tackled at the meeting held with leaders of the BKD and Jan Sangh in New Delhi on May 26 and 27.

Mr. Prakash Vir Shastri was invited to join the meeting at 11 A.M.

Welcoming Mr. Prakash Vir Shastri, the President Prof. Ranga said that the presence of Mr. Shastri indicated the keenness of the BKD in achieving the objective of bringing into being a national party capable of taking over the reins of power at the Centre. He invited Mr. Prakash Vir Shastri to make his remarks.

Giving reasons for the BKD's anxiety to achieve an early merger of democratic parties, Mr. Prakash Vir Shastri said that recent developments particularly after the mid-term elections had convinced the BKD that while on the one hand the Communist parties were rapidly gaining strength, the Congress party on the other, was fast disintegrating. This was a dangerous development threatening the country's security and democratic way of life. The BKD was therefore convinced that the only way to fill the vacuum caused at the Centre by the disintegration of the Congress and to arrest the growing influence of the Communist was for like-minded democratic parties to get together and form a formidable national party which could make an effective bid for power.

In a reference to the Jan Sangh Mr. Shastri said that though in the beginning they evinced interest in a merger, as indicated by the fact that the Jan Sangh's National Convention in Bombay had appointed a sub-committee to negotiate with other parties, their subsequent actions had given BKD the impression that the Jan Sangh was not really interested in any merger but only in limited arrangements like United Fronts inside Parliament and the State legislatures. According to Mr. Shastri the absence of the President of the Jan Sangh from the meetings in New Delhi on May 26 and 27 (despite the fact that the meeting had been arranged to suit his convenience) and the fact that the representatives of the Jan Sangh who were present did not possess the necessary authority on behalf of their party had further convinced the BKD that the Jan Sangh was not serious about merger. It was against this background that Mr. Charan Singh issued a statement that he would not negotiate with the Jan Sangh any further.

However, Mr. Shastri made it clear that it was not the intention of the BKD to bang the door on the Jan Sangh; indeed, he said that talks could be resumed with them as soon as they gave evidence of their seriousness in regard to this matter.

Mr. Shastri also referred to the discussions the BKD was presently having with the PSP and said that reports in a section of the Press that the PSP would not participate in any proposal that involved the Swatantra Party or the Jan Sangh were incorrect. No such condition had been put to the BKD representative who attended the PSP's National Executive in Mysore recently. Mr. Shastri added that Chaudhary Charan Singh had, indeed, made it clear to the PSP that in the event of the talks being successful the name of the new party would not contain the word "Socialist" although the "social justice" and "social welfare" objectives of the PSP were acceptable to him.

- * This was followed by a general discussion with Mr. Shastri. Annexure C sets out briefly the questions that were raised and Mr. Shastri's views concerning them.

At the close of the discussion it was decided that the following statement (which was drafted with Mr. Prakash Vir Shastri's concurrence) be released to the Press:

"The National Executive of the Swatantra Party having considered the reports made by Prof. Ranga and Mr. Masani on their talks on 26th/27th May with the leaders of other parties on the merger issue, and after having discussed the matter with Mr. Prakash Vir Shastri, General Secretary of the B.K.D., has decided to have further talks with the BKD and continue their efforts jointly with the B.K.D. to evolve a broad-based democratic party to meet the emergency arising out of the growing Communist violence and subversion in the country and to fill the vacuum caused by the deterioration in the Congress party. The Swatantra Party will strive for maximum cooperation, including merger between all democratic parties on the basis of a common programme. The National Executive authorises the President, the General Secretary of the Party and Mr. Masani to continue talks on its behalf with the leaders of other parties."

On behalf of the National Executive Prof. Ranga thanked Mr. Prakash Vir Shastri for having accepted his invitation and attended the meeting. Mr. Prakash Vir Shastri and Mr. M.R. Masani then retired from the meeting.

10. State of Party Organisation

The Executive then took up for discussion the state of Party organisation, concerning which the National Headquarters had already circulated to members a note on the subject. Almost all members participated.

Due to lack of time the discussions were inconclusive. It was decided to continue it at the next meeting of the National Executive to be held in August in New Delhi.

The meeting then terminated.

Annexure 4

SWATANTRA PARTY

National Executive, June 22/23, 1969

Resolution on the Communist Menace

The Swatantra Party has always held the view that the Communist Parties be they of the Left, Right or the Naxalites should be outlawed. There is not much to choose between these three Parties, except as regards their strategy and tactics, since all three of them have as their aim the destruction of Indian democracy and the imposition of one-party dictatorship as in the Soviet Union and China.

In this context the National Executive of the Swatantra Party views with deep anxiety the growing subversive activities of the Chinese Fifth column in India who go by the description 'Naxalites' and are now the self-styled Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist). This new Party has openly proclaimed its aims as follows :

- (a) that armed struggle alone is the main form of struggle,
- (b) that the situation in India is ripe for revolution and that it will be the business of this new Party to make the Revolution, and
- (c) that unquestioning allegiance to the Communist Party of China will be the hallmark of this new Party.

The National Executive of the Swatantra Party therefore strongly condemns the inaction of the Union Home Ministry in regard to the subversive and violent activity of the Communists including the so-called Naxalites in various parts of the country and demands that these be put down with a strong hand.

Annexure B

SWATANTRA PARTY

National Executive, June 22/23, 1969

Resolution on Telengana

The National Executive of the Swatantra Party condemns the irresponsible part played by Shri Brahmaananda Reddy, the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, in at first instigating and then provoking the Telengana agitation in the early stages.

The National Executive is satisfied that the situation is now wholly out of control so far as the Government of Andhra Pradesh is concerned. The Executive therefore demands that the Central Government should take immediate steps to restore law and order and ensure the safety of persons and property in Telengana, even by imposing the President's Rule if necessary.

The Central Government should then quickly explore all avenues for solving the problem of not only restoring the confidence of the people of Telengana in the Government of the State but also of bringing about harmony and good relations between all sections of the State and consider whether it is necessary for this purpose to constitute a separate Telengana State.

Questions discussed with Mr. Prakash Vir Shastri

Q 1. Why is the BKD so insistent on a merger straightaway? Why not, to begin with, closer working in Parliament and State legislature as a United Democratic Front?

A 1. In the first place, the experience of the short-lived SVD Government in UP had convinced Mr. Charan Singh that such arrangements were unworkable. So long as the partners in a United Front retained their separate identities, they were tempted to seek party gains at the expenses of the other parties. Secondly considering the growing and organised Communist threat, the BKD was of the opinion that a United Front would not be strong enough to challenge that threat effectively or to fill the vacuum caused by the impending disintegration of the Congress Party at the Centre and in the States. He underlined the fact that the results of, and the developments after, the mid-term elections had radically changed the political context and that what must be aimed at was not a coalition of Parties in Opposition, but the formation of a strong national democratic party capable of taking over the reins of power.

Q 2. What were the BKD's views in regard to the following :

Minorities, Language, Kashmir, Nuclear Weapons, Large-Scale Industries?

Mr. Dandekar explained that while these and other matters would undoubtedly be thrashed out in negotiations between the representatives of the various parties, members of the Swatantra Party's National Executive wished to know the views of the BKD on these important issues.

A 2. Minorities --

Mr. Shastri referred to the proposed Amendment to the Constitution in regard to reservation of seats in Parliament and State Assemblies and said that while the BKD was of the view that such reservation should no longer be continued the fact remained that there were large numbers of Harijans and those belonging to scheduled castes and tribes who were members not only of his party but also of the Swatantra Party. Therefore, the BKD had decided that they would ask for the gradual removal of reservation of seats by reducing the number of reserved seats at the rate of 1/3rd at the end of every five years so that after 15 years the reservation of seats would disappear altogether.

In regard to Christian missionaries, he said that the BKD's view was the same as that of Mahatma Gandhi viz., where Indian missionaries were available, foreign missionaries should not be permitted, particularly in the sensitive border areas where their activities must be regarded as objectionable.

Language

The BKD's view was that Hindi should not be forced on non-Hindi speaking States till such time as those States were ready to accept Hindi.

Large-Scale Industries

The Bharatiya Kranti Dal's Manifesto states that the Private Sector should be excluded from large scale industries which should be owned, or at any rate effectively controlled, by the State, whereas the Swatantra Party's policy was quite different in that it did not make any such exclusions and believed in free enterprise.

Mr. Shastri said that in regard to controls there were always degrees of control and this was a matter of detail which could be settled. In regard to large-scale industries, this was a matter open for discussion, negotiation and agreement between the Parties.

Other Matters:

Similarly, all other areas of disagreement would have to be discussed; and given an attitude of "give and take", these should be capable of an agreed approach.

- Q 3. If the process of merger has to be gradual - i.e. at first only the two parties (BKD and Swatantra) should merge - with an open invitation for others to join, would there be everytime a new Party with a new name, a new flag and a new symbol? Instead, why should not the Swatantra Party and BKD jointly attempt a multi-Party merger ab initio?
- A 3. Mr. Shastri agreed that efforts should continue for a merger of more than two parties. He also agreed that it would not be possible to change the name of the new party, its symbol and flag everytime another Party decided to merge. Therefore it was necessary to keep the merger question open till such time as at least one ~~other~~ ^{major} Party in addition to the BKD and the Swatantra Party agreed to come together.
- Q 4. Pending such a development would it not be possible for the Swatantra Party and the BKD to form a United Democratic Front in Parliament and State Legislatures?
- A 4. The BKD's National Executive had not given thought to this. However, Mr. Shastri felt inclined to agree with the suggestion and would put it to the National Executive of his Party.
- Q 5. Should we not make an effort to get parties at the State level composed of dissident Congressmen to join our negotiation?
- A 5. The BKD has been in touch with some of these parties. However, Mr. Shastri was of opinion that we should not wait for them to make up their minds but continue our negotiations in the meanwhile.