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## Swatantra awaits healing touch

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NEW DELHI, May 24 — The Swatantra Party is looking up to the seasoned counsel of its elder statesman, Mr C. Rajagopalachari, to patch up the differences in the party leadership which have dogged it for the past three months.

Rajaji will address the General Council of the party on June 1 when it meets in Madras and he is expected to set the pace for the deliberations that would bypass the bitterness that has come to surface recently. His touch will heal the wounds that have appeared in some of the State units, many in the party hope.

The revolt of 32 Swatantra legislators in the Gujarat Assembly which led to the defeat of its official candidate for the biennial Rajya Sabha election and the consequent resignation of Mr M. R. Masani from the National Executive will come up before the Council meeting.

Mr Masani, who will not attend the Executive meeting on May 31, will attend the Council meeting and take a firm stand on the

question of party discipline. A substantial section of the Executive, as also the Council, is stated to be with him on this issue.

Mr Masani has already written to the Council members criticising the party leadership's soft attitude towards the rebels and an indirect assurance to them that they would not be expelled from the party for voting against the official candidate. He had expected severe action against them and further steps to improve the party image in the public mind. Resignation of the President and Secretary of the Gujarat unit or dissolution of the State Executive would have been welcome in the circumstances, Mr Masani has stated.

### Masani's plea

The Swatantra President, Mr N. G. Ranga, has, however, held that any precipitate action against the rebels might result in a rift in the Gujarat unit and divide the Parliamentary party as well.

The Gujarat episode is not the only instance of indiscipline in the party. It has been the worst sufferer of all the Opposition parties,

in the matter of defections. Besides Gujarat and Rajasthan, the UP unit has also suffered on this account and six of its 13 Assembly members have walked out of the organisation.

It has made a poor showing in the recent Haryana poll and the reverses in Dausa and Chaumu elections in Rajasthan have hit its prestige. The Council will be concerned with these issues in its two-day deliberations in Madras.

Many of the party leaders share the feeling that without building a cadre and a team of devoted workers the party would continue to suffer the severe jolts of defections and election reverses which might even lead to extinction.

The discontent among Swatantra legislators in Rajasthan because their leader, Maharani Gayatri Devi, can not devote more time to party work is also likely to be voiced at the meeting.

The freedom given to individual members to hold opinions not in consonance with the party policies being utilised by State units has also been objected to by Mr Masani.



Draft letter to the Prime Minister regarding the  
Swatantra Party's reactions to the Approach to the  
Fourth Five-Year Plan.

Dear Prime Minister,

I am grateful to you for your kind invitation to attend the meeting tomorrow to consider the paper on "Approach to the Fourth Five-Year Plan". In such a nation-building activity, we would like to co-operate with Government but, on further consideration, I regret to say that we have come to the conclusion that no useful purpose will be served by our taking part in the discussion tomorrow until it is clear that Government has an open mind in planning and is genuinely anxious to have the co-operation of the other parties.

Let me make it clear that we are not opposed to planning as such but we are definitely of the opinion that the concept of planning is overdone by Government by taking planning an instrument of all kinds of controls, licences and permits which are the bane of our political and economic life to-day but in which the Congress Party, I regret to say, believes for reasons which are obvious to any political observer. Our experience shows that controls are resorted to more for purposes of corruption and exercise of patronage than out of sheer economic necessity. Even where it is patent that controls impede production, they are practised because they give Government the power and the authority to hold people in check or put them under their obligation which they would not hesitate to exploit for various purposes.

Take the case of Food Zones for example. This year we have had a bumper crop and if there was any time when the Food Zones could have been abolished and the unity and integrity of the country could have been emphasized, it was this year. In much less favourable circumstances, late Rafi Ahmed Kidwai had the courage and the vision to abolish controls over food and history has shown that his action proved a success and there was increased production accompanied by free distribution and reasonable prices. It is the fundamental policy of the Swatantra Party that there is no need for Food Zones and that they should be abolished as early as possible and I take this opportunity to reiterate the same in no uncertain language. Again, although it has been clear that there is no need for control over distribution of sugar, Government has been hesitant in relaxing control over sugar for reasons which are not above board if ugly reports that are circulating in the country are to be believed even to a small extent. If these controls are removed, there may be a temporary rise in prices but that would surely stimulate increased production which, when achieved, would result in (a) reduction of prices below the previous levels, (b) elimination of middlemen and (c) avoidance of having to stand in queues which our people hate from the bottom of their hearts. Government has been relaxing the control over sugar gradually but has not had the courage and wisdom to abolish them altogether, with the result that increased production is affected and we are almost driven to the necessity of having to import sugar for maintaining reasonable ration. These examples can be multiplied, if necessary.

As regards imports and exports, there is again unnecessary emphasis on controls. Export promotion and export controls are contradictory terms and it is only in this country that we have the spectacle of policy of Government trying to promote exports through a system of export controls! Cases have come to our notice in which items which are manufactured locally are now allowed to be exported and some of them are allowed to be exported only to free foreign exchange countries. It is not realised that all exports are good, whether to free foreign exchange countries or to rupee payment countries, even where,