

MRM's Inaugural Address to the
Bombay Regional Convention of
the Swatantra Party, on Feb. 15, 1970.

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Mr. President, my colleagues in the Swatantra Party, ladies and gentlemen, this afternoon when we have a public meeting here on the sands I shall speak in Hindustani but I am told that at this particular small gathering you would prefer to hear me in English.

I am very happy to be here to inaugurate this convention of the Bombay Regional Party. I am particularly glad that the pandal in which we meet has been named after one of our finest and most esteemed colleagues, the late Mr. Charanjit Rai. I am very glad to see amongst us that Mrs. Charanjit Rai has been gracious ^{enough} to join us this morning.

MRM

Mr. Charanjit Rai was one of our finest colleagues. He was one of the treasurers of our Party and a member of our National Executive. He got elected from Rajasthan ^{to the Lok Sabha} and served with us there. I have not met many members of our Party who were as dedicated to our cause as he was. And his absence from our midst is a very big loss to us all which we still feel.

Many peculiar things have happened in our country during the past year. I cannot hope even to make a catalogue of them because that would take up more time than I would like to take. But to recall some of them - the dismissal of the Deputy Prime Minister, in the way that a chaprasi even should not be dismissed, the nomination of her Party's candidate by the Prime Minister, which a few days later she undid by stabbing him in the back and getting him defeated, and various other activities of the same quality ending with what Lalchandbhai had just described as the latest fiasco in Lucknow.

I think it would be true to say that two or three things have resulted from all these activities. The first and most deplorable is the lowering of the standards of our public life. They were bad enough for the beginning of 1969. I remember complaining about them in the Rajaji Birthday Lecture I delivered in Bangalore in January 1969. Since then things have got much worse. This does not bode well for our Young Democracy. And those of us who would like to see the democratic processes in India get strengthened in the coming years and decades have every cause for apprehension as to what kind of turbulent weather our country is now entering.

We should learn from the experience of our neighbours in Pakistan, Burma, Indonesia, other countries further afield like Ghana and Greece.

to the entire country. But there are a few people who don't see it that way - among them is our Prime Minister. She said at Indore on the 11th of February that the situation in West Bengal does not pose any serious threat to the country's integrity. An amusing statement coming from one who should be the first to rush to the aid of the people of Bengal and remove this cancer in our body politic.

As far as I can make out, ^{if} this situation in Bengal is allowed to continue for a long time we shall have another Viet Cong situation in Bengal. We shall have guerilla warfare and a group of terrorists who will call themselves the People's Liberation Government of India, with their accomplices in Orissa, Andhra, Kerala and other parts of the country. It is the job of the Prime Minister and the Home Minister to remove such a government, to give protection to the people of Bengal from this terrorism, to rescue Mr. Ajoy Mukherjee from the company in which he has strayed. But on the contrary people in Delhi are doing exactly the reverse.

Last week Mr. Jyoti Basu, the Chief of the bandits, visited Delhi to give an ultimatum to Mrs. Gandhi and Mr. Chavan. It is reported that he told them that if they did anything to weaken his Government and his position in the government, he would retaliate by bringing down the Indian Gandhi Government in Parliament. And the result was a pact - 'I support you, you support me'. With the result the next day one of the Calcutta papers had a beautiful cartoon of Mrs. Gandhi and Mr. Jyoti Basu holding up the same red flag and shouting "Indira-Jyoti Bhai Bhai".

Now this 'Bhai Bhai' slogan we have heard before. And the cost of the slogan we saw in 1962. If any of you want to read about the shame that Pandit Nehru and Mr. Krishna Menon brought on this country please read a very fine book by a brave officer - "Himalayan Blunder" by Brigadier Dalvi. I have checked with the highest in the land. It is a factual honest report of what went on and how these two politicians destroyed thousands of our men and the morale of our armed forces and accepted a defeat - a humiliating defeat - at the hands of our Chinese Communist enemies. Here's the price that is being paid today by this minority government on behalf of the whole country.

I shall not spend time on the economic situation and economic

policies - there are other occasions for that. But I want to refer to a really cheerful thing that can be discussed - one of the good things that has happened in India in the last few months. That is the judgement of the Supreme Court in the Bank Nationalisation Case. I think the entire country should be grateful to our Supreme judiciary for having kept the flag of the Constitution flying, for refusing to be intimidated by the climate of terrorism in the country and for having maintained the rights of the citizens in the face of an aggressor Government. So long as the Rule of Law is there all is not lost and as Mr. Lalchand mentioned we have also reason to be grateful to Mr. Palkhiwala, Mr. Dadachanji and the various lawyers who worked free of charge without charging a Rupee as fee for months and months and months putting aside their business to ensure the rights of the citizens.

This judgement, taken with the earlier judgement of Mr. Justice Subba Rao and others in the Golaknath Case, has vindicated the stand of the Swatantra Party in regard to the Constitution and the amendments. When we formed the Swatantra Party in 1959, Rajaji and we declared that we stood for the return to the Constitution that was enacted when the Republic was founded and for the reversal of all the unconstitutional amendments - 17 or 18 that Mr. Nehru had made in the 20 years that had gone between. We have not succeeded in doing it in the way we wanted. But to a large extent the Supreme Court has restored the balance in the Constitution in these two judgements - including the one that was read out a few days ago - by re-establishing the fundamental rights of the citizen to an extent that they had been eroded by the constitutional amendments and the previous judgements of the Supreme Court itself.

I have no time to go into the legal intricacies but I would like to say to those who say "but what has been gained, another Ordinance has come", let me tell them, that a great deal has been gained. This judgement does not apply only to banks. It lays down fundamental propositions of the right to property and the individual rights of the citizen that go far beyond the banks and will apply to every other walk of life, every service, every industry in future. It is a warning to them, to those who want to

the citizens' assets, to keep their dirty hands off the people. And that is why there is a lot of gnashing of teeth in the Communist camp, in the camp of those who would like to smash not only the Supreme Court but the entire democratic Constitution of this country.

Now we had warned this Government about where they were going. Several speeches were made - I made one of them, Mr. Dandekar made many others, Mr. Patodia made others. Well, we warned this Government that this Ordinance and this Act would be struck down. We pointed out the illegalities of this measure and we told them that if they wanted to nationalise the banks this was not the way to do it. Refer the Bill to the Select Committee, listen to good, legal advice and then bring a measure if you want which we shall fight, but at least a measure that will do credit to Parliament. We were ignored, as you remember. All rules of procedure were violated with the approval of the Deputy Speaker, Mr. Khadilkar, and the bill was rushed through in three days - a measure that should have taken a month or two for serious consideration. And the result we saw was the ignominious defeat of the Government at the hands of the Supreme Court.

I believe that the action taken last night is as unconstitutional as the action that was taken on the 19th of July. This is a gross misuse of the Ordinance making power to which the Government has resorted for the second time on the same issue. The Ordinance making power is ^{meant} for emergencies. It says very clearly, "that the President has to be satisfied that circumstances exist, for the Ordinance to be passed before Parliament can meet". This time this Ordinance has been passed one week before Parliament is due to meet on the 20th of February. I believe it to be as great a fraud on the Constitution as that which was perpetrated on the 19th of July. The fact that there are 7 days now and not 36 hours as in the last case is not very important. The point is that nothing would have happened if the Judgement of the Supreme Court had been respected, the banks had been allowed to function under their own managements for a few weeks until Parliament, after proper consideration, had passed another law. We of course would have opposed it, we will oppose it, but I am pointing out that the resort to the Ordinance making power is an illegality and a fraud on the Constitution. It seems like the Bopbous, these people will neither learn anything nor forget anything. And so in order to cover up their inefficiency, their incompetence

they try to make scapegoats of the Supreme Court. The Prime Minister reacted with an ungracious remark. "These are the kind of difficulties that are put in the way of progressive people like ourselves". But the 'progressive people' should atleast know their law. They should have competent legal advisors. A Law Minister knows his business, and not the present Law Minister who has made a fool of himself and the Government on repeated occasions - a merridistrict level politician who has been put in that office.

Now the Supreme Court has done its bit and as our President told you we have reason to be proud - that it was our initiative taken over the weekend of the Ordinance which has resulted in this victory. He said that the banks themselves have not distinguished themselves - managements of the banks have not distinguished themselves. Quite true - that is putting it a bit mildly. Not only did they not come forward - the boards of directors of these 14 banks - to challenge the Ordinance and the Act, not only did they not come forward to offer to pay the fees of the distinguished lawyers who were making these big sacrifices, they hid in their homes, refusing to call board meetings, refusing to take action in defence of the rights of the shareholders and they betrayed the trust that the shareholders had placed in them as their duly elected directors. And they repeated their cowardice only 4 days ago. When the Supreme Court struck down the Act, it was announced from Delhi by the Government that the position now reverted to what it was on the eve of the Ordinance of July and that the old managements were back in the saddle. I expected that these gentlemen whom we had helped, through the Supreme Court, to get back their right to manage their banks, would rush next morning when the banks opened, reoccupy their rooms, call board meetings, rejoice in what had happened, thank all those concerned, and resume management of the banks. As far as I know, and I speak subject to correction, not one bank had the credit of having a board which behaved like men and not like mice. Not one group of them called a meeting and functioned, although the Supreme Court had said, "this bank is yours". They hid in their homes and said "No, No, she will get angry, so we would better not touch it. Wait for

the next Ordinance to deprive us again." And the custodians sent a shameful telegram to the Prime Minister, pledging their loyalty not to the shareholders whose employees they are or were till last evening, but to the Prime Minister who had expropriated the shareholders. This is one illustration, Mr. President, of the disgraceful way in which large sections of Indian Business behave, which I had occasions to condemn repeatedly at public meetings. We believe in Free Enterprise not because we care for these businessmen and their ways but because we believe that Free Enterprise is an essential part of a Free Society. And we are ashamed that some of those for whom we stand behave in this cowardly, disgraceful way and let themselves and the country down. I was very glad that in this general demoralisation, the employees of the Bank of India at least showed some guts and some grumpton by demonstrating in favour of the judgement of the Supreme Court and saying, "we do not want any Ordinance or re-nationalisation". All honour to them.

Now all this leads us to the conclusion that we want to change this government in Delhi and that is our priority number one. But we must concede that this is a job bigger than anyone single party can perform. We certainly do not think that we can remove the Government at the Centre and establish an alternative Government by ourselves. But we can do it along with others. Obviously what the country needs today is to be able to see visibly an alternative Government that is capable of taking over from Mrs. Gandhi's Government with or without an election.

On 31 December, soon after I took over as President of our Party, I demanded that Mrs. Gandhi resign and face the people because I believe that she has no mandate to carry on as Prime Minister anymore. Her old mandate as leader of the Old Congress Party which has disappeared has lapsed. There is no Congress Party which won the ¹⁹⁶⁴ Election. Her new mandate for the Bombay resolutions she has not obtained yet, because those resolutions go beyond the election manifesto of the Old Congress Party in 1967. So whichever ^{one} looks at it, she is ruling against the spirit of the Constitution. It's true that with the support of the Communists and others, she can ^{carry} ~~camp~~ on without being overthrown in Parliament for the time being. But that's not good enough. Any Prime Minister of a democratic country placed in this situation would have themselves gone to the President, asked for a dissolution.

And that is her clear and present duty. But she's not likely to perform it because I know she'll be thrashed if she goes to the people. My own guess is that she'll lose half her seats in the present Parliament. And she knows it. So, she ^{will} run a 100 miles away from an election. She ^{will} ~~not~~ funk an election. She ^{will} ~~not~~ face the people, although she pretends they are behind her. If they are behind her let her go to the people, we are prepared to face it.

My colleagues tell me, "But where is the money, are we prepared?". I don't care if you are not prepared, if you have no money. But we are prepared to stand by the principles of democracy and face the people. Even with empty hands if necessary and ask for a mandate. But as I said we can't force a dissolution also unless people see an alternative Government. And as Maharani Gayatri Devi said yesterday at the Rotary Club this leads to the immediate task for all of us who claim to be democrats and patriots to get together on a minimum programme of good and clean Government, leaving aside our ideological pre-conceptions. Now I'm not suggesting that we will lower our flag by an inch. If there is one party ⁱⁿ India whose policies, whose warnings have been justified a hundred per cent it is our Party. Everything we have said for ten years is coming true, one by one. So we don't have to lower our flag. But we certainly can put aside, we can suspend, for the time being in the face of this situation. We can suspend parts of our objectives, for the sake of giving the country a democratic and good Government, which would preserve the integrity of the country, rescue West Bengal, and restore the law and order situation in this country.

(Mr. Ganapiah: "On the face of the Supreme Court judgement the Prime Minister should have resigned")

Mr. Ganapiah thinks there's one more reason to ask for the Prime Minister's resignation and that is the Supreme Court's judgement. Well that is between her and her democratic functions, such as it may be.

Now how to get together I have suggested is on a limited programme, where we do not, each of us, ask for a 100% satisfaction ideologically. That's not possible and if we approach it in this spirit there is no reason why the opposition Congress, ourselves, the Jan Sangh, the PSP and the SSP, among others, should not be able to offer the country a better alternative.

Acharya Kripalani, our elder Statesman, gave this sensible advice when he spoke in Gandhinagar to the Convention of the Opposition Congress where he

advised them to stop competing with the Prime Minister in demagey and to join with others in providing a minimum programme. I am sorry that yesterday and the day before that advice ~~has~~ not been taken. I am sorry today that we are the only Party in this country which has opposed frontally the re-nationalisation of the banks. This is unfortunately ^{true} ~~ture~~. The Opposition Congress leaders have unfortunately gone back to their old, mistaken policies by saying they also support the re-nationalisation of the banks. However, these are details as I said. The important thing is that we try to cut across these barriers and try to get together on offering the country an alternative Government.

And finally we come to our own party. This is a workers' Convention and I think it is fair that we should look facts in ~~their~~ face and consider how well we are fitted for our very vital tasks. We can play a very key role. We are the only Party that is a consistently liberal, democratic Party in this country. But are we geared for this task? Are we in a position where we can deliver the goods? I think you ^{will} ~~all~~ agree that a great deal remaining ~~to~~ to be done if we are to perform our role. We need two things in our party more than we have them today - one is greater dynamism and hard work, and the other is greater discipline. Both these are woefully lacking in our Party as we have seen during the past two years. Unless this picture changes we shall not do our duty by the country.

Now the mid-term Report to which your President drew rightly our attention is the most important document from this point of view. I do not know if it has been translated in Marathi and Gujarati yet. If it hasn't I think the Bombay Party has failed in its duty by not bringing our a Marathi translation of this Report. Every Party worker must have it in his hands, there should be Seminars and study circles, to study this report and understand it. Because the Party worker who has not read this Report will not be a good Party worker. He doesn't know what he is about. Now what this Report does is to look forward for the next two or two and a half years and chart a course for this Party. I cannot go through this Report with you, that is a matter of quiet reading on your part. But I can mention a little of what it contains, which is so important.

The Report says there is no need for changing our policies, no need for

swallowing socialism, as a price for saving the country. We don't have to do those things. But there's need for fresh emphasis, for re-presenting our policies and principles to the people in a more effective way than we have been able to do. And we have failed to do it in large measure. And the Report suggests 6 or 7 ways in which a new emphasis can be given to our work, to our approach to the common people. Now what are these?

The first is to stress that the Swatantra Party stands for change. It stands for radical change. It does not stand for the status quo. It detests the status quo. The Swatantra Party was not formed in 1959 to keep things as they were. No new Party was required for it, Mr. Jawaharlal Nehru was doing a very good job of the Status quo. We came into existence to change the status quo of Jawaharlal Nehru and the socialist Establishment. How can we stand for the Status quo? A status quo made by the Socialist Establishment for twenty years we are out to destroy. We want to smash the status quo. The status quo of State Capitalism/monopoly. The Status quo of the Five Year Plans and the National Planning Commission. The Status quo of Controls. The Status quo of Permit-Licence-Raj. We want to break these shackles on the people, to liberate them, to set them free in the manner that Mr. Ludwig Erhard set the German people free after the War, when he said "let the men and the money loose and they will make the country strong". We want the Indian men to be let loose so that they can make the country strong. This is the first thing that we have to point out.

The second thing that we want to point out is that we stand for modernization. We stand for making India a modern, civilized, strong State as Japan has become in our Part of the world. On this front we have nothing in common with the obscurantism of the Jan Sangh.

Mr. Atal Beharee Vajpayee, the Jan Sangh President made a speech, his latest speech, at Patna at their Convention where he said that three 'kinds' of Indians needed to be 'Indianised' and, I quote his words, "brought back to the path of rectitude". That is there are three kinds of Indians who are immoral, doing wrong things, who must be civilized and Indianised. One, according to him, was the Communists. He is welcome to them. The second was the Muslims which I think is a very unfair statement to make about people with a common religion, as if all other religions are not good Indians and not

citizens. And the third was equally objectionable - all those who adopt the Western way of life. Now I don't know what Mr. Vajpayee's conception of the Western way of life is, but I don't think I'd be doing him an injustice if I suggest that what he has in mind is the modern way of life. But there's nothing Western ^{There is nothing western} about Japan, there's nothing western about other countries in Asia and Africa which have taken up the Modernist Path. So what he objects to is the modernization of this country. Now let me say very clearly that we stand for modernising India in the way that Japan has done. It is not true to say that Japan has become Westernised. Anyone who visits Japan would know that while Japan has picked up all the benefits of Western technology, Western administration and management, Western Culture, at the same time Japan has maintained its way of life - the distinctive Japanese way of life. And you have only got to visit the Japanese home for a few minutes to realise that Japan is there. We want this to happen ⁱⁿ India. We certainly don't want to uproot our traditions. The Swatantra Party is based on the building of on our tradition, is based on the acceptance of Dharma but that does not mean that we want to remain obscurantist to turn back the path of progress. If Mr. Vajpayee wants to take on all the millions of young men and women in India, the forward evoking young people who want to modernize their country, he has taken a fulltime job on his hand. I wish him luck. But ^{we} have nothing to do with it.

Thirdly, we, in our manifesto, expressed great concern for the underprivileged for those who probably do not have a decent life. But putting it in our manifesto is not enough. We have to show concern for these sections of the people in our day-to-day work.

Then we want to reassure the minorities, that they have an equal and honoured place in our country. We have to get nearer to the youth of this country. We have to bridge the generation gap. I'm glad to see a fair number of young people here. It always gladdens my heart when at meetings I see that the bulk of our audiences throughout the country are young people. That is how it should be. I would like to see more young people on the platform of my Party. I am very glad that at the recent elections of the Party in Madras we got a lot of new blood in our National Executive, the majority of whom I think are new members. I am very happy that we have five Joint Secretaries - all new

and all very young. I was delighted when we were given this team of Joint Secretaries to help us. All young people, young men.

Then we have got to hark back ^{to} the consumer - the forgotten man in today's economy. For 20 years the consumer has been ignored, because there was a seller's market. We talk about the consumer being the king in a competitive economy - that is our philosophy - but we have not made him king, he is only a forgotten man. We have got to put him in the centre of the picture.

The farmer. We came into existence to protect the farmer and his land from collective farming at the hands of Jawaharlal Nehru. Now we have to go again to the aid of the farmer to protect his land from Jawaharlal Nehru's daughter, because let me tell you that the attack on the fundamental right to property which is being developed by her Communist & Young Turk friends is nothing but an attack on the right of the peasant to have his small farm. Already under the Constitution and with the judgements that have been passed the rights of rich people to their property have been very severely limited. If you read the judgements of the Courts, the amendments to the Constitution you'll see. But the one thing that has been protected is that the small man's farm, his hut cannot be taken away without proper compensation. So the attack on the fundamental right to property is the beginning of an attack on the homesteads and the little farms of our small farmers and peasants. Now all this can only be done if we show by day-to-day action and not only by passing resolutions, that we are apt to do at our meetings, that we want to identify ourselves with the lives of these people.

That brings me to the last point and that is learn something from that great political organizer, who was a little ahead of his times in many ways in the art of political management - Mahatma Gandhi. Mahatma Gandhi has been revered as a saint and then put on the shelf as all saints are. But he was also another thing of which I was painfully conscious ^{at} in my early years when I happened to be in opposition to him - that he was a very wise and astute political manager and a great organizer of the people. A great mass organizer. And his panacea for organizing people was constructive work. He used to say that your ideas may be beautiful, you may want to make India independent today we want to make India independent of State Capitalism. The ideas are good, people like them but you cannot sell these ideas and get people to follow you unless you give testimony in your day-to-day work of what you're doing for his

life. And so he had his programme of constructive work. Ours is different. Let me spell out before I sit down what I believe our programme of constructive work from today should be for the years 1970 and 1971.

It should be to organize different sections of the people who are today separate. Farmers first of all - farmers' groups, farmers' leagues, farmers' organisations to defend their right to land and a fair deal from the urban - oriented Government at the Centre.

Consumers. There should be consumer associations organized by the Swatantra Party. I am ashamed to say that this has not been done. In India the Consumer is still unorganized. Read what goes on in the United States. It's called consumerism. I was reading my last issue of the U.S. News and World Report. They are talking of a very strong improvement of consumerism. It has got so strong that President Nixon has appointed a woman member of his Cabinet to look after the interests of the consumers. In our country we have the very beginnings of this thought. There's a small group of enlightened ladies in Bombay who call themselves the consumer Guidance Society. Their's is an excellent work without any resources, without any encouragement from any of us for all these years. There should not be one little group like that, there should be hundreds in the country. Every mohalla, every ward in Bombay should have a good consumer society, an association to defend the interests of the Consumer. Against whom? Against two Parties. The dishonest shopkeeper who may be adulterating his goods, who may be giving short measure, who may be charging more than the price on the packet and the Government which is the biggest exploiter of the consumer. The little shopkeeper is a negligible quantity compared to the big pilferer in Delhi who takes away 1/3rd, 1/4, 1/5 the price of a product as so-called excise duty for doing nothing at all. If there is any case of profiteering in India it is the Indira Gandhi Government's profiteering. Port taking away from the consumer a large chunk of the price of every product - from matches to motor cars. And then wasting it on these wasteful state enterprises which have swallowed crores and crores of our rupees.

Another class to organize are the policy-holders of the L.I.C. - that State Capitalist monopoly - to defend their rights, to demand better profits, to see that they get good service. Shareholders have got to be organized. Listeners of All-India Radio have to be organized, licence holders, Radio

licence holders. In Britain there is a very powerful listeners' organization and the mighty B.B.C. quails when they go on a deputation and make a complaint they are listened to and put right because the listeners can boycott the B.B.C. even. They can refuse to pay the licence fee. This can also happen in India. If today All India Radio is being misused by Mrs. Gandhi and Mr. Gujral, the listeners have a remedy. Organize them and tell them that if you don't listen to us by next time we'll refuse to renew our licences. We won't listen to you. And see what happens to All India Radio and their licence fees.

Parents can be organized. Parents of school children. These are various examples I am giving you of the sections of the people who need to be organized.

Now to come to Bombay city, Mr. President, may I respectfully suggest that today when you pass resolutions condemning everyone outside our Party, which you have a right to do, you may consider at least for an hour sometime today concrete measures to organize two sections of people in the city of Bombay in which you function - the consumer and the bank depositor who has for a second time been filched of his rights yesterday by this Ordinance. They are two classes who are to be organized, who need to be organized for defence of their rights as citizens. Imagine the strength of the Swatantra Party in Bombay if this job, this constructive work can be done. You don't have to make it a Party job. Join with anyone who is prepared to join you in this. Make it a non-party activity but if members of the Swatantra Party, workers of the Swatantra Party are seen to be carrying the banner and picking up the cudgels for these sections who cover the entire city of Bombay, I can assure you that your branch will strike roots in the city in a way that it has not done inspite of our ten years of hard work. So I ^{would} honestly appeal to you don't leave Juhu this evening until you have considered concrete measures for two constructive jobs - how from tomorrow onwards to organize the bank depositors in Bombay city and the consumers in Bombay city. There is already a Bombay branch of the Bank Depositors' Association which exists in Calcutta, Delhi and elsewhere. All you have got to do is to throw our strength. Behind those are some of your own members today and make it a mass movement.

Similarly there's a consumer Guidance Society. Either join them or start a new body - it doesn't really matter. There's enough room for a multiplicity of these bodies in a big place like Bombay. But cooperate with those who are in the field. Strengthen their hands and make these two mass movements which ^{can} lead and the people will say that it is the Swatantra Party workers who came and took the lead. We don't have to preach our philosophy to them. They will see it in action. This little lesson that we should learn from Mahatma Gandhi I commend to you before I sit down. Thank You.
