

NATIONAL PRIORITIES FOR 1970

M. R. Masani, M.P.



A SWATANTRA PARTY PUBLICATION

NATIONAL PRIORITIES FOR 1970

M. R. MASANI, M.P.



A SWATANTRA PARTY PUBLICATION

NATIONAL PRIORITIES FOR 1970

(Transcript of a press conference addressed by Mr M. R. Masani, M.P., President, Swatantra Party, in New Delhi on 31 December 1969.)

I: Introductory Remarks

First of all, let me wish you all, what is coming in a few hours' time, a happy and satisfactory New Year and we all hope it would be a good one for our country also.

I thought I should share a few thoughts with you at this juncture. The first thought that comes to me is that, in the euphoria of the rival Congress session at Bombay, the question whether the ruling party has a mandate to give effect to its economic programmes appears to have been overlooked. Nobody seems to have mentioned it. As far as I can make out, the original mandate which Mrs Gandhi had got from the people in 1967 has expired as a result of the breaking up of the Party and her losing her majority. For the proposals made at Bombay and elsewhere, she has no mandate at all to legislate or carry out those policies, and democratic practice requires that she should go to the people for a fresh mandate.

I would, therefore, like to suggest that, if she knows her constitutional duty, she will dissolve Parliament and go to the people and get a mandate. If she does not, then it is obvious that she recognises that she does not enjoy the confidence of the people and is not prepared to face them. I would be inclined to agree with her in that! My own feeling is that if she goes to the polls, she would be decisively defeated at the present juncture.

Price 25 paise

Printed by S. R. Krishnan at Inland Printers, 55, Gamdevi Road, Bombay 7 and published by S. V. Raju for the Swatantra Party, National Headquarters, 143, Mahatma Gandhi Road, Bombay 1

I think her so-called popularity is grossly exaggerated. I for one do not think it extends beyond the bigger cities and urban areas. Even there my own impression is that her main support comes from two classes in the cities—one is that class of businessmen which wants to make a quick rupee through permit-licence-raj and the other class is what the Marxists would call the lumpen (rag) proletariat, the rootless sections in the cities who have been well-known to support the Fascist parties in Germany, Italy and other parts of the world. I think these are the two classes from whom real support comes to her.

I believe the need for a change of government is more than ever acute because the security and stability of the country require a change. What can be more dangerous to the stability and security of the country than a minority government, particularly when it depends for its survival on Communist support? I think this poses a threat to the security and stability of the country. Nor is this government, in my view, capable of dealing with any of the major needs of the country.

I would like to suggest for your consideration that there are four things which almost every one of us would accept the country's needs call for, namely, first, a clean, efficient and prompt administration which is at present utterly lacking; the second is the restoration of law and order, particularly in Bengal, but also in the bulk of the country where there has been an abdication of the obligation to provide law and order; the third is hard work and increased production; and the fourth is a pragmatic approach to our problems, free from ideological emphasis or preconceptions. As far as I can make out, this government is incapable of providing any one of these four needs.

In so far as the economic programmes that have emerged from the Bombay session are concerned, they give no answer to two of the prime needs of the

country, one of which is a stable price level or, if you like, a stable rupee, and the other is more jobs, more employment to cope with the growing unemployment. So far as a stable rupee is concerned, there seems to be galloping inflation in the last few weeks. The official figures for the week ending 12th December 1969 show that there has been an increase in the circulation of currency notes, money in the hands of the public has increased by Rs. 50.53 crores during that one week. If you take two weeks, that is, the fortnight before 12th December, the figure is Rs. 125 crores; that is to say, more and more currency notes are pumped into the system. This inevitably means increasing inflationary tendencies, a rising price level, and consequent suffering to the people.

As for jobs, we all recognise that without more production there cannot be more jobs. The policies that have been suggested in Bombay give no hope of increased production. Indeed, all the policies suggested are going to retard production in various fields. It was interesting to find in one of the dailies of yesterday a Finance Ministry estimate of the effects of nationalisation of industries, all of which show no increased production or output but a loss, which is not at all surprising. What can be expected from a party whose President makes the remark, which Mr Jagjivan Ram did in Bombay, that distribution is more important than production? Distribution of what? Of something that does not exist? Can one distribute what one has not produced? It is interesting that Mr Jawaharlal Nehru, while speaking in Kathmandu in the middle fifties gave the answer to Mr Jagjivan Ram when he said: "Socialism in a poor country means only the distribution of poverty".

Finally, there is talk of abolishing the fundamental right to property. There can be no other fundamental right without a man's right to property. If a man does not control his environment he cannot exercise any other fundamental liberty. In other words, a pauper

is not likely to enjoy the rights of a free press, freedom of expression, freedom of association or freedom of movement. It is only through control over one's physical environment that to some extent one is able to operate as a free man, as Karl Marx said. That is why he wanted the proletariat to revolt. But, while saying so, he made a big mistake in coming to a wrong conclusion. Instead of saying that everyone must therefore have property, so that everyone may be free, he came to the conclusion that everyone must be deprived of his property! The marxist Congress Party led by the Prime Minister wants to follow that policy at a time when Marxism itself has become out of date.

Here I would like to refer to what Justice Hegde said a few days ago in Bangalore when he answered the suggestion that the present Constitution comes in the way of progressive social and economic legislation. He said it was not so. I quote from *The Hindu* of 28th December 1969:

"To Mr. Hegde's mind the criticism made by some that the fundamental rights guaranteed under the Constitution were incompatible with the social goals envisaged in the Constitution and that they should therefore be scrapped did not appear to be well-founded. There was a Constitution which provided for securing the interests of the society as well as of individuals composing it. Experience had shown that legislatures and governments were likely under stress of circumstances to ignore basic human rights. Therefore it was necessary to safeguard the individual against the State. The best Constitution was that which harmonised individual rights with his social duties."

I think this is a wise statement, coming from the quarter it does.

The motive for this attack on property as a right can only be the intention to take the farms away from the peasants. Of all forms of property this is the least

vulnerable and undoubtedly you cannot take away a man's four acres or eight acres under the present Constitution because the Courts will not allow it. It appears to me that the new attack on right to property can only be aimed at the system of peasant proprietorship which exists in India. You will remember that a similar attack was started by Mr Jawaharlal Nehru after the Nagpur Resolution in 1959. That, in fact, was the provocation for the coming into existence of my Party. That attack was beaten back. It seems to me that this attack is going to be revived by another misguided attempt to co-operativise or collectivise the farms. This is the first shot of the coming attack on peasant farms, however small they may be. If that is so, we shall certainly lead the fight against any such attempt, as we led the fight against joint co-operative farming and as we led the fight against the Constitution (Seventeenth Amendment) Bill in 1963. We would like to appeal to the rural population throughout the country to beware of this danger and to rise against it and wage a war in defence of the basic way of life in the countryside—of a small farmer cultivating his own land.

All this inevitably leads to the need for an alternative government. That alternative government is not so far visible. I for one do not claim that my Party can single-handed do this job. It will be wise for all other parties to recognise that in the present political situation no single party can do that job of replacing the present government. I am very glad, therefore, that a strong opponent of coalitions like Mr Morarji Desai has now veered round to the view that coalitions are now inevitable. As you know, I have been talking of the era of coalitions for the last few years. I am glad that it is now becoming an accepted fact, a reality. There is no democratic country in the world where one party is always in majority. So, often, a coalition government is a normal democratic way of life. In West Germany, Italy, Israel, Scandinavian countries, in so

many parts of the world, there are permanent coalitions since the Second World War and yet no instability. Therefore, we need not worry.

My Party stands for a combination, the coming together of all patriotic and democratic elements in the country, cutting across present party alignments, leaving out the Communists alone. The issue is not one of "left" or "right". These are meaningless terms. After all, all parties accept a mixed economy, which Mrs Gandhi commended recently in Bombay. The difference is only on the question of emphasis, how much of each element in a mixed economy, and what should be the emphasis from time to time. This is something which is negotiable between Liberal democrats like myself and Social democrats. There is no barrier. It is a matter of argument, negotiation, give and take. These economic differences, in my view, are negotiable. What is not negotiable is the security of the country, its independence, its democratic way of life under the Constitution. So, we want all patriotic and democratic elements to come together.

I, therefore, welcome Acharya Kripalani's very sane advice, given at Ahmedabad, that opposition parties like the Opposition Congress, the Jan Sangh, and the Socialist parties should stop competing with the Prime Minister in her demagogy. The opposition would do better for itself if it were to give up competing with the ruling party in socialist slogan-mongering and engage itself in building a broad-based, patriotic, democratic front so that it could provide a clean government. We have been saying always that we would like to bring together people on a minimum programme of the basic needs of the country. I have listed them as good and efficient government, the restoration of law and order, hard work and more production, and a pragmatic approach to our economic problems. We think that if the parties in opposition which believe in democracy agree on these four

points or something of this nature, it should be possible, even immediately, to provide the country with an alternative government.

Before I end, may I take a few minutes to refer to my own Party, which has elected me as President for the next two years? We are a party of change. We came into existence in 1959 to change the pattern of socialism which has been imposed on the country during the last twenty years. We, therefore, stand for drastic change and the liberation of the people from the shackles of controls, red-tape and Statism. We agree with Dr Ludwig Erhard, the maker of the German miracle, when he said: "Let the men and the money loose; and they will make the country strong". This is the policy of liberalisation which Mr Dubcek, for instance, was trying in Czechoslovakia when it was run over by the Soviet Red Army.

Our basic creed is free competition, a free market economy plus Gandhiji's theory of Trusteeship. We believe in the Gandhian path to social justice, as opposed to that of Karl Marx.

We stand for modernism. We want to modernise this country so that it can come up to the level of the more advanced countries of the world. Take Japan, for instance. It is emerging as Super Power No. 2 in the industrial world, next only to the United States. We do not see why we should not follow that path.

We have nothing in common with obscurantism. For instance, Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee of the Jan Sangh is quoted in *The Indian Express* this morning* as saying that there are three classes of people who need to be brought back to the "path of rectitude" and "Indianised". One of them is the Muslims, the second is the Communists and the third, I am rather interested to hear, are people who like the Western way of life. By this, I presume he means the modern way of life. If that is so, I am afraid he is up against quite a

* 31 December 1969.

number of people because, as I understand it, there are lakhs and lakhs of young men and women in this country who want nothing more than to modernise this country. If anyone wants to turn back that tide, wants to turn India back from the march towards modernism, he will find it a very difficult task indeed. We have nothing in common with the state of mind which wants to turn its back on modernism. We are essentially a Party which believes in progress—modern techniques, modern management, modern administration, and thus catching up with the rest of the world.

The National Executive and the office-bearers elected in Madras on the 27th and 28th, I find, are a new team with a lot of young blood; particularly the five Joint Secretaries that the party has elected to help us, each of them is a new man to the national leadership and a young man. I know that they are all dynamic young men. The key-note of the leadership of the Swatantra Party will be dynamism and discipline. We believe that Indian politics are now entering a period of a war of movement, a turbulent period, when a Maginot Line mentality of staying put and defending one's position will not do. We will have to show a lot of initiative and drive. So, the first key-note will be dynamism. The second will be discipline. You are aware of the fact that I have been arguing within my Party for having disciplined and ethical methods of work. Since the Party has placed me at the helm of affairs, I assume it has accepted the plea that I had made. If that is so, then I expect the new Executive to provide full support in putting an end to the kind of indiscipline which, unfortunately, we have been witnessing for the last year or two.

II: Questions and Answers

Question. You said something about production. What about distribution?

Answer. We want the most equitable distribution of the fruits of production. This equitable distribution has been achieved in industrially advanced countries, which are liberal and democratic, by a variety of methods, most of which are fiscal in nature like taxation. Then, there are measures of social welfare to raise the floor, which has been done with great success in the United States, Scandinavia, Australia, New Zealand, Switzerland, and Japan. We believe that equitable distribution is very important and we should achieve it as much as we can. But, while doing so, we must not kill the incentives that lead to increased production as has been done in India during the last two decades. So, distribution follows production. It is only when you increase the size of the cake that you can give everyone a larger slice. We want to maximise production but we find that the marxist Congress and the Communists are content with a small cake and think as Mr Nehru said, of distributing poverty. We want a very much bigger cake so that everyone gets a bigger slice.

Q. How do you exercise distribution—by fiscal measures or by control?

A. We want a free market economy coupled with minimum control. There is no country in the world with more social and economic equality than the United States. There is no country where there is more equality than Sweden or Switzerland. All those countries follow liberal democratic methods and they have free market economies supplemented by social control.

Q. May I draw your attention to your earlier remark that Mrs Gandhi has forfeited her right to be the Prime Minister of the country in view of the fact that

she has not sought any fresh mandate? As the budget session is five or six weeks away from now, could you throw a little more light on what you will do in the intervening period? If Parliament is not dissolved soon, are you going to discuss this matter of bringing down the government with other parties? What are you going to do in that direction during the next five or six weeks' time?

A. You are quite right. If she does not accept the plea, then obviously those who believe that she has forfeited her mandate and does not enjoy the mandate have to think of bringing her government down during the next session of Parliament and the session that follows after that by attacking her policies.

Q. My question was very precise. The budget session is five or six weeks away from now. During this intervening period if she does not choose to dissolve Parliament, are you going to force her to do it by discussion with other opposition parties? Are you going to do some preparatory work?

A. I took over only three days ago. But I certainly say that those who believe that a change of government is called for will have to make concerted efforts to bring about a situation where a change can be brought about whether or not there is dissolution of Parliament.

Q. Can you indicate some definite or precise course of action?

A. Since I took over only three days ago, it would be a little premature for me to do so.

President & P. M.

Q. How is the Prime Minister to dissolve Parliament? It has to be done by the President. Is the President bound to accept the advice tendered by the Prime Minister?

A. We have a certain concept of the duties of the President. If you ask my personal view—it is a constitutional issue and there is no question of any Party

having any view about it—as a member of the then Constituent Assembly, I feel that the power of the President to dissolve Parliament is unfettered. The discretion in the matter of dissolving a legislature, both at the Central and State level, is absolute and unfettered. Now, how each President would exercise his discretion is his affair. But, certainly, in the Western countries where similar conditions have existed—France, Italy, Germany and so on—before ordering a dissolution, the President normally tries to find out if any other combination of parties can form a stable government with majority support. If there is any such coalition, then he invites the leader of the coalition to form a government and test his backing in the House. If there is no such coalition, he dissolves Parliament. I do not think the President is a puppet. That is not what our Constitution says. But I was not referring to the right of the President to accept or reject the advice tendered by the Prime Minister. I was referring to the moral duty of the Prime Minister to advise the President to dissolve Parliament.

Q. You made a reference to the speech of Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee at the Patna Session. Are you suggesting that at the moment the Swatantra Party would find it difficult to have any truck with the Jan Sangh?

A. I said that everything is negotiable except the security of the State by Communist infiltration and take over. The only thing that is not negotiable is the security of the country and its defence against totalitarianism. Surely, a difference of opinion on how much of modernism to accept is a domestic issue. We can negotiate that in a democratic way. So it is not an insuperable barrier.

Q. Do you think that it would be easier to negotiate with a person like Mr Balraj Madhok rather than with Mr Vajpayee?

A. This is not a matter of personalities; this is a

matter of the fundamental approach to problems of the two parties. I would not go into personalities.

Q. During the course of his speech he* made the remark that the Swatantra Party is a front.

A. I do not know if he made any such remark and if so what he meant. I would not take that remark very seriously. I would take it as a compliment. A front is bigger than a party.

Q. I want a clarification on what you said earlier. If the Prime Minister does not seek dissolution of Parliament, would you suggest that the President on his own should dissolve Parliament?

A. I do not think that is the President's job, when the Prime Minister can rely on a majority with Communist support. So, unless there is any emergency, the President would not do that as long as the Prime Minister enjoys majority support.

Q. Can the President deal with Parliament in the same way as the Governor dealt with the Assembly in West Bengal?

A. In West Bengal the government was removed because it had lost its majority and refused to face the Assembly. Mrs Gandhi has not shown any reluctance to face Parliament. So, what I have demanded of the Prime Minister is not a constitutional demand but a political demand.

Q. She has a majority all right.

A. That is true. But supposing twenty-five members shift their loyalty from her party, she will not have the majority. Then, leave alone the Communists, there is the support of the DMK, which may or may not be there in the future. So there is nothing permanent about her majority.

Q. If you remove the frills and go to the essence of the economic policy resolution which the Congress Party adopted in Bombay, don't you feel that there is more stress on a welfare society than a socialist society?

* Mr A. B. Vajpayee.

A. I am not gifted enough to be able to distinguish the essence from the frills. But I do not think what you say is right. I think the policies that were adopted in Bombay are the antithesis of a welfare society. They have the hallmark of totalitarianism where power would be concentrated in the hands of a few and "surplus value" as Marx described it, would be squeezed out of the people and there would be very little left with them. So I am afraid it is the other way around, where the common people would be ground down for the glory of those in power, which has been so vividly described by Djilas in his book "The New Class".

Q. There is a contradiction in your statement. On the one side you admit that the Prime Minister has got the majority in Parliament. On the other hand, you say that she as a minority leader should advise the President to dissolve Parliament.

A. I do not find any contradiction. I said that the Prime Minister should advise the President to dissolve Parliament because she has lost the mandate with which her party was returned at the last elections because the party has now broken into two. Therefore, the old mandate has expired, and a new mandate is needed for new measures proposed. So she should ask for dissolution to get a fresh mandate. Where is the contradiction?

Q. By implication are you suggesting that it is the Prime Minister's absolute right to advise the President to dissolve Parliament?

A. On the contrary, the President could say "No, I will not accept that advice". He can use his discretion. I am not here to advise the President on what he should do. It would be presumptuous on my part to say what the President should do. He has his discretion which he should exercise. I am only saying what the Prime Minister should do. I am not arguing constitutional rights and wrongs. I am arguing that political morality, democratic morality, government

of the people demands a fresh mandate when the people are not behind you.

Q. As leader of the Swatantra Party, which would you prefer? Would you prefer the dissolution of Parliament and facing the electorate or the President exercising his discretion, or whatever you call it, and calling upon the other parties, or a combination of such parties to form an alternative government?

A. I am not called upon to make a preference now. My view is that a dissolution of Parliament is better than this government.

Q. Would you be prepared to face the electorate?

A. Obviously, while asking for dissolution, I cannot refuse to face the electorate!

Q. I think you said that the President has absolute discretion in this matter.

A. That is at the constitutional level. I do not go into the relationship between the President and the Prime Minister. Opposition leaders have a right to advise the Prime Minister; but I do not think they have a right to advise the President.

Q. Is it your case that Mrs Gandhi by the resolutions adopted at the Bombay Congress session has gone beyond the programme put up by the party?

A. I find that several new commitments have been made not only in Bombay but even at the earlier Delhi session of the AICC where, for instance, the question of privy purses was discussed. That was not in their Election Manifesto. I do not think she has a right to change the Constitution without going to the people. There are so many other things. Take, bank nationalisation for instance. So, whatever is not in the election manifesto, there is no mandate for it.

Q. Would you care to supplement what you mentioned about the economic programme?

A. I said that Acharya Kripalani's advice should be borne in mind, by which I meant that the old Congress, the Jan Sangh, SSP and PSP should stop trying

to compete in terms of who is more "progressive" and put before the country, as I am trying to do, what is good for the country, without considering how progressive or reactionary you look. I would like the Organisation Congress to consider this. It might have made mistakes in the past, but it could mend them. Take, for example, the nationalisation of General Insurance. Assuming it forms part of the old programme of the Organisation Congress—I do not know whether it was in their 1967 programme or not; it might have been there—I would still suggest that there is no need to stick to it after the failure of nationalisation in so many fields. Surely, the party is entitled to say: "We thought it will be beneficial to the country, but we find it is not; so we have given it up". We would like that kind of approach on the part of the Opposition Congress.

Q. There are some people who are arguing this question of a fresh mandate on moral grounds. By various kinds of mass enthusiasm it has been shown that the Prime Minister enjoys the support of a vast majority of the people. Therefore, the defection of a certain number of legislators and their forming a united front in Parliament is not going to vitiate this position of her support from the masses. In other words, the Prime Minister has on occasions got the support of the people, over the head of the elected representatives, on certain vital or controversial issues which amounts to a fresh mandate. So, in the light of that, could it not be argued that there is no point in referring to the loss of mandate so long as the Prime Minister continues to get her measures through Parliament with such majority as she can manage with or without alliances?

A. Technically, a Prime Minister in a minority or a Chief Minister in a minority has a right to carry on so long as he can get his measures through the legislature. Many a time there have been minority governments in England and elsewhere. In Kerala, there was

a minority government some years back. It is perfectly legitimate. It is not immoral. But when half your party leaves you and joins the opposition, I would imagine that good parliamentary practice demands that you should go to the people and renew or refresh your mandate and give the people a chance to decide whether they still want you or not. I am not denying the government the technical right to carry on with Communist support.

Q. So you demand it because the present government is reduced to a minority government?

A. And also because she wants to adopt new measures.

Q. If there is mid-term elections, no one party will come in majority and there will be more or less the same position. Secondly, even though it is said that this government is reduced to a minority, it is having a majority in the House on every voting that is taking place of at least a hundred.

Coalitions

A. The second part of the question is not very important. The first one I have answered. No single party today is in a position to claim majority support of the people, nor is this likely to take place after the elections. That is why I welcome Mr Morarji Desai's latest statement on coalitions, because he was a very strong opponent of coalitions. So my answer is: "No, if there is an election, no one party will get a majority; only a combination can get it."

Q. It is said that Mrs Gandhi is now carrying on with Communists. If after the election she is able to form a government in conjunction with some leftist parties, and that combination far outweighs the present combination, which would you prefer—the present position or that?

A. I do not envisage that. Because of her alliance with Communists and other "leftist" parties, after the election her strength in the Lok Sabha would go

down by 50 per cent. I believe the majority then would be for the non-Marxist parties because people want democracy and their faith in democracy is unshakable.

Q. How do you visualize the prospect of the Opposition Congress, Swatantra, Jan Sangh, PSP and SSP, which you say believe in democratic values, coming together and taking up the challenge which Mrs Gandhi and her supporters are throwing?

A. I think the prospects are not bad at all. I can only put it that way. Until one makes some attempt in that direction, it is no good making any pronouncements on the subject. I would say that my impression is that the prospects should not be bad. At least I would like to think that there is enough patriotism and attachment to democracy among these parties to make such a thing possible.

Q. Have you had discussions with any of the political leaders or do you propose to do it?

A. So far, I have not done it. But doing so would be only natural.

All India Radio

Q. Do you share the criticism of the All India Radio by Congress Opposition and some other parties, the long-standing complaint that it gives more publicity to the ruling party and less to opposition parties?

A. I am glad you brought up this point. It is a point which I should have mentioned, perhaps. We feel very strongly on this point. The essence of democracy is free discussion and dialogue. We had mentioned this in our Election Manifesto of 1967: "The Swatantra Party is opposed to all attempts at the establishment of monopoly or official control over the various media of mass communication. The Party is of the view that the operation of Broadcasting and Television Services and the Films Division should be entrusted to autonomous corporations and that other radio and televi-

sion enterprises should be allowed to enter into competition with these statutory authorities. The Party will do everything possible to sustain the independence of the Press against all attempts to bring it under the influence of the Party in office."

So far as the press is concerned, our position is very clear—that it should be completely free from any governmental influence. So far as AIR is concerned, we hoped that the Chanda Committee Report would be implemented. But, unfortunately, a major recommendation made by the Chanda Committee, namely, that there should be an autonomous corporation for broadcasting and television on the lines of the BBC in England has been consistently kept down. Mr Gujral said two days ago that this matter requires very serious consideration and it cannot be done in a hurry. I was amused to read this, considering two or three years have passed since the Chanda Committee Report was published! One should have thought that even for a major matter, this would be enough time to come to a conclusion.

We want to go beyond that. We want the Australian pattern where there is a statutory corporation but, at the same time, private enterprise is also allowed to enter the field. We think this is an improvement over the British practice. We want an Indian counterpart of the independent BBC which will operate under a liberal democratic pattern. We would be very happy if the Chanda Committee Report is carried out. We do want to press it in the coming months. I think the Chanda Committee's conclusions have been amply vindicated by the kind of developments to which you have referred and the feelings which were given expression to during the last few months.

Q. Do you prefer a corporation or a parliamentary committee?

A. We do not feel happy about a parliamentary committee. What we want is the absence of political control or interference. It may be better to have a

parliamentary committee than a Minister. To that extent, it may be an improvement. Yet, I think the answer given in Ahmedabad that there should be a parliamentary committee is a little off the track. What we want is no interference from either Ministers or Members of Parliament so that it will be a really independent and worthwhile service. Mrs Gandhi's reply to the criticism that was made that AIR has been used for her party purposes was: "No, it is used for government purposes". But that is exactly our charge. It should be used for the nation and not for the government. So, we should keep all political influence out of the media of mass communication which would tend to make them monopolistic. We want the TV, radio and the press to be completely independent and free from any outside influence.

Q. The Prime Minister has remarked that every party has inner conflicts. In that context, last time when Mr Dandekar was elected President you were opposed to that and there were difficulties. Do you think that now your party is free from internal conflict?

A. I think you have got your facts completely mixed up. I was not at all against Mr Dandekar. He was my own nominee and I wanted him to take my place as secretary. My resignation was from membership of the National Executive, three months after the election of Mr Dandekar as General Secretary. I resigned on the issue of a certain act of breach of faith on the part of an important State unit at the time of the Rajya Sabha elections in March 1968, whereas Mr Dandekar's election was in December 1967. So the two are unconnected. That resignation of mine I do not regret and I think that the warning that I sounded seems to have been vindicated by the fact that the Party has now asked me to take charge of this post. Indiscipline does not pay.

Q. What about Mrs Gandhi's remark about inner conflict in the Swatantra Party?

A. I am not aware of it. Perhaps Mrs Gandhi knows more about it! My election was unanimous. So also the election of the General Secretary. There is no conflict that I am aware of.

Q. You want dissolution of Parliament. Of course, it should be done by the President on the advice of the Prime Minister. You have put it that she is heading a minority government. None of us here believe that the Prime Minister on her own would go to the President and suggest that Parliament should be dissolved. I think this would never happen. So, how are you going to ensure that she really goes to face the electorate?

A. The only way is to create conditions where the situation in Parliament and the country is such that she cannot carry on.

Q. You mentioned, SSP, PSP and like-minded parties coming together and the possibility is not bad at all. Have you not seen some of the inner party conflict, intra-party conflict, in the SSP where Mr Raj Narain has been disowned by his own party? How can you have alliance with such parties?

A. I am not very much concerned with it. We must create the broadest possible front or combination of all patriotic and democratic elements, cutting across party lines. I am not bothered about party labels. I want to deal with human beings. The majority of the Indian people are not in any one of these parties. I want to approach the citizens. I am not talking of Parliament. Let me tell you, I am thinking of a broad-based national democratic front in India, not in Parliament, which would be much bigger than these five or six parties as they exist today, because there are millions of people who are not pledged to any one party. I do think that the non-party people should come into the front for defending the democratic constitution of this country from totalitarianism. I was thinking of something bigger than these parties which

would provide an alternative government to this country.

Q. What is your latest party position?

A. We have lost two Members of Parliament and three MLAs in Gujarat. I would not be able to give the latest position off hand.

Q. Towards the development of a national democratic front you say all is negotiable except some basic things and, to that extent, your party would be able to adjust in regard to certain policy programmes. But this runs counter to what you have stated at page 2 of your speech where you say:

“Do we need to change or modify our policies? In my opinion, there is neither need nor call to change our policies.”

I take it that to that extent there will be no flexibility on the part of your party.

A. I think it is quite obvious that when you have a major national crisis or emergency you have to give and take. You may not give up or modify your policies; but you may agree to suspend them.

Q. What is the view of your party on the privy purses? How can there be agreement on that between parties?

A. The issue of privy purses need not stand in the way of the national front coming into being. It is a temporary issue which will recede in the next few months. It is possible that on economic matters my emphasis may be different from that of the Opposition Congress or PSP or SSP. All of us will have to leave aside our dogmas. It does not mean our policies change, but we sink our differences in order to achieve a major purpose.

Orissa — A Model

Take Orissa. We have there an example of a good coalition. The Orissa coalition government has stood firm and stable in spite of its majority being only

twelve. We have always been told that Mr Attlee was able to manage the British House of Commons with a majority of only four, and that was possible because the British are a disciplined democratic people. In Orissa, the fact that the coalition government could remain stable and give clean administration is a pointer. We fought the elections on a limited programme with our junior partner, the Jana Congress. We went to the people saying that we were going to form a coalition if we got a majority. We also gave an assurance that even if we got a clear majority single-handed, the other party would not be left out so that it would be a broad-based coalition government. If such a posture could be adopted in the central sphere today by three or four parties, I believe that an alternative government could come into view and the whole political situation could be transformed by the emergence of such an alternative government. So I think it is a rather reasonable view that these economic differences can be sunk, that we do not have to modify our policies, but for a period of five years in the interest of the country we would be called upon to make some sacrifices, drop some of our emphasis on policies in deference to the wishes of other parties.

Q. Supposing the Communists agree to join you on this minimum programme?

A. The experience of the countries of the world is too profound for a student of the Communist movement like me to accept that suggestion.

Q. If Mrs Gandhi agrees to have coalition with your party, would you agree to it?

A. If Mrs Gandhi breaks her alliance with the Communists and agrees to adopt an anti-Communist posture, then our differences with her would be negotiable like our differences with the PSP or the SSP. But that pre-condition must be fulfilled, namely, no alignment with the Communists.