

Chapter V

C. RAJAGOPALACHARI AND THE SWATANTRA PARTY

I. Introduction

The formal decision to establish the Swatantra Party was made public in Madras on June 4, 1959. Only in the narrowest sense, however, does this tell anything about its birth. The date of conception was uncertain, although the period of gestation is known to have been long.¹ However, before starting to trace its birth and growth and the ideological position of C. Rajagopalachari within the Swatantra Party, let us describe how C. Rajagopalachari, a Congress stalwart over the decades, was drawn to the new party and became its father figure.

After Independence, C. Rajagopalachari held several portfolios in the Interim Government. He became the Governor of West Bengal in 1947-48, the Governor-General of India in 1948-50, a Minister without Portfolio and the Home Minister in Jawaharlal Nehru's Cabinet and the Chief Minister of the Madras Presidency in 1952-54. But most of these official positions of C. Rajagopalachari were of little official power. C. Rajagopalachari's self-righteousness, his opposition to the 1942, Quit India Movement, his lenient attitude towards the Communists and the Muslim League during the World War II had antagonized a large section of the Congress rank and file towards him. In fact, his post-war and post-Independent

official positions were mostly dependent on Jawaharlal Nehru's sympathetic attitude towards him. But let us analyse why Jawaharlal Nehru leaned towards C.Rajagopalachari during this period, since he (C.Rajagopalachari) was a rabid Congress rightist during the 1930's, and about whom, Jawaharlal Nehru once exclaimed.... 'As for C.Rajagopalachari is there a more dangerous person in all India?'²

During this period, there was both an increasing alienation and weakening of the left-wing elements outside the Congress and radical forces within the Congress itself. The decision of the members of the Congress Socialist Party in 1948 to leave the Congress had been a blow for Jawaharlal Nehru. Jawaharlal Nehru, sympathized with the general viewpoint of the Congress Socialist Party and liked many of their leaders. Jawaharlal Nehru was particularly sorry that Jayaprakash Narayan should have been lost to the Congress. In an effort to win back the socialists, Jawaharlal Nehru wrote to Jayaprakash Narayan : "I am greatly distressed at many things in India. But perhaps what distresses me most is the wide gap which is ever growing between many of us and the socialists."³ But these efforts and approaches of Jawaharlal Nehru towards the socialists proved fruitless. Jayaprakash Narayan was critical of Jawaharlal Nehru's general outlook. He commented, "you want to go towards socialism, but you want to help the capitalists

in that you want to build socialism with the help of capitalism. You are bound to fail in that."⁴

It was in this context that Jawaharlal Nehru relied heavily on C.Rajagopalachari. Moreover, C.Rajagopalachari's turning towards the Congress was encouraging to Jawaharlal Nehru. So, Jawaharlal Nehru favoured C.Rajagopalachari's continuance as the President of India after the promulgation of the Republic. But C.Rajagopalachari's past vacillations had not been forgiven by the rank and file of the Congress Party. They preferred Rajendra Prasad, the President of the Constituent Assembly. When this feeling in favour of Rajendra Prasad in the Parliamentary Party surfaced, Jawaharlal Nehru felt surprised and wrote to Rajendra Prasad hinting that he should announce his lack of interest in the office and propose C.Rajagopalachari's name. Rajendra Prasad declined to oblige and said he left it to Nehru and Patel to edge him out. What Nehru did not know was that Patel favoured Prasad and had arranged for widespread expression of opinion in Prasad's favour in an informal meeting of the party. So Nehru had to accept his defeat and let C.Rajagopalachari retire.

II. The Formation of the Swatantra Party

It has been part of the conventional wisdom about Indian politics that the right-wing political activity has been extremely ineffectual. Thus, two leading students of Indian affairs

have commented on the reactionary activity in the following fashion : "It is one of the paradoxes of the Indian politics that India's ancient regime, surely one of the oldest and most deeply rooted in the world produced no reaction Only a few minor local parties today stand for a full return to the rule of Brahmins and Khatriyas according to the precepts of dharma or traditional duty, and they are ineffectual."⁵ In a more general vein, another scholar has argued that Jawaharlal Nehru once observed that the opposition forces were not weak in India, ~~the~~ but obscurantism and inertia of the people were.

The weakness of conservatism more specifically was noted before independence by a Maharaja who commented that "it must seem strange in a country whose ways of life are so dominated by custom and tradition as India, there should be no political party which called itself conservative."⁶

On August 15, 1947, India gained independence from British rule. There was no doubt that the mantle of power would fall on the Indian National Congress. From the standpoint of India's conservative elements, as for all others, the future was clouded. Over the years of the British rule, traditional India had confronted numerous challenges. Many princely polities had been annexed, and those remaining had atrophied considerably. Conscious efforts at social, legal, educational, and other reforms, as well as changes flowing from the advent of rail-roads, modern communication, new

forms of industry and the like, seemed to strike at the roots of the Indian society. Over wide areas, erosion, if not sudden destruction, seemed to threaten indigenous institutions and values, and at least from the time of Rammohan Roy in the early nineteenth century, there were always articulate Indians who advocated changes, some modest, some to drastic, in traditional India.

Uppermost in the minds of conservative Indians in 1947 was the knowledge that Jawaharlal Nehru would probably dominate the scene, and this generated considerable anxiety. From the late 1920s onwards, Jawaharlal Nehru had explicitly identified himself with more radical elements in the country and had inveighed against the princely order, the landed aristocracy, the capitalist class, the defenders of socio-religious orthodoxy, the general stagnation of rural India and the like.

Jawaharlal Nehru did, of course, tower over the Indian political scene after independence, until his death in 1964, and in varying degrees, each of the groups against whom he had inveighed did face challenges during his tenure as Prime Minister. The princes had their states integrated into the Indian Union, and thus they lost their residual power, their status suffered and their economic position deteriorated badly. The same was true of the great landed aristocrats, both in the former princely states and in former British India. The

middle peasantry came ultimately to confront pressure for heavier taxation, ceilings on land holdings, a vague threat of collectivized agriculture and a variety of efforts designed to improve the general position of the lowest strata of the rural population. The business communities were confronted by a wide range of respective legislation, including prohibitions on entry into certain fields which were reserved for state-sponsored enterprises; limitations on expansion in other areas; quotas and excises, particularly in the textile field, intended to make hand-woven cloth more competitive; attacks on the managing agency system which had structured Indian enterprise since the nineteenth century; heavy corporate and personal taxation; and occasional intimations of nationalisation of the private sector. Legislation intended to reform Hindu family relations, inheritance, and other aspects of the traditional private law challenged the orthodox of whatever status or occupation.

Each of these moves produced adverse responses, but for the most part these responses were isolated efforts which did not develop into a cohesive force. Some princes refused, at the outset, to accede to the Government of India; one or two resorted to military resistance; and in 1951, some former rulers and landed aristocrats attempted to form Rulers' Union, to agitate against the integration of the native states and the decline of the aristocracy more generally. The landed

aristocracy, often in consort with former princes ~~and~~ former took their fight against land reforms to the courts. Non-aristocratic landed groups worked through many channels, including caste associations and such groups as All-India Agriculturalists' Federation (1958); while at the village level, the attempted rise of the depressed groups was countered in a variety of ways, including attrition in prolonged court battles, boycott of village councils on which they sat, refusal to respect elections, and a whole spectrum of more or less coercive measures, including the burning of homes and crops the destruction of cattle, physical assault, and so on. At the national level, the late President of the Republic, Rajendra Prasad, steadfastly opposed certain provisions of the social reform legislation and threatened to withhold his assent, or to resign from his office, unless modifications were forthcoming. The business communities, having tried to anticipate and to undercut Congress Planning efforts by advancing a development plan of their own in 1944, betrayed a crisis of confidence in the regime immediately after independence, and periodically thereafter they displayed anxiety over Congress policies, especially whenever there seemed to be a move toward Soviet style planning.

Many of these challenges were, thus, acutely felt and many of the responses were certainly conservative; yet there was no coherent, explicitly conservative response at the party level during the first decade after Independence. There were

many reasons for this, but the brief catalogue of challenge and response during the Nehru era suggests one important factor : the diversity of the social forces involved. In addition to major inter-group cleavages, however, there were also intra-group cleavages, based in large part on the historic social fragmentation of the Hindu society; and these also worked against the formation of a cohesive opposition force.

A brief glance at the historical record will show that even within a given group, viz. the aristocracy, the landed peasantry, the business communities, etc., unity was at best a remote possibility. With respect to the princely order, for example, it is clear that at almost every critical juncture in its history, it was beset by internal cleavages which seriously impaired its collective position. The story is told that sometime before the rebellion of 1857, a leading Indian ruler looked at a standard British map of the sub-continent, with British India coloured red, princely India yellow and commented that one day the princely India will also be red. Yet this sentiment was either not widely shared, or else, it did not matter, because at no time did the native rulers act on the maxim that it would be better to hang together than to hang separately.

Prior to independence, the great landed nobles of British India were virtually compelled to be better united, because they had to function within a somewhat more open and more reformist

environment. Over the years, the zamindars had organised themselves, at least locally, to petition the raj and eventually to elect representatives to the legislative councils, in which they had reserved seats. They amply demonstrated their conservatism by proclaiming and defending their elite status and by steadfastly opposing almost every significant piece of land reform legislation introduced by the British to ameliorate the conditions of the actual tillers of the soil. Throughout the years of the British Raj, however, differences between big and small zamindars were evident; each group, as in the case of the princes, was beset by religious and caste animosities. Furthermore, the political division of India into British and princely areas inhibited the development of associations which would bring together the zamindars and their closest counterparts in the princely states, the jagirdars.

Thus, while sharing many interests and aspirations vis-a-vis more democratic tendencies, the aristocratic classes never formed a cohesive opposition force, either at the national or state level, either under the British or after 1947. Both the aristocrats and the defenders of religious orthodoxy might be eminently conservative but their activities were inevitably fragmented.

However, it was the formation of the Forum of Free Enterprise in 1956 which was later responsible for the formation of the Swatantra Party. The Forum of Free Enterprise was a non-political organisation, formed with the avowed purpose of

educating the public opinion about the merits of free enterprise and the danger of excessive state domination and state control over citizens' activities. However, the Forum of Free Enterprise declared itself against the complete laissez-faire, because, according to its spokesmen, nineteenth century capitalism had no place in the contemporary world, and this was not due to the feeling of sheer expediency, but buttressed by considerations of rapid economic growth and for the maintenance of political democracy. In its decided view, nineteenth century capitalism is "as dead as dodo and can make no contribution to the industrial, social and economic development we seek."⁷

In an advertisement under the title, "what forum stands for?" it said :

"The Forum unreservedly accept the concept of a fuller and better life for all, equality of opportunity, eradication of unjust privileges; in fine, the establishment of a welfare state. Indeed, we hold that these objectives will be attained more rapidly, more effectively and with a greater degree of enthusiastic cooperation through free enterprise, than through any other system. Inherent in our acceptance of these social aims is also that of planned economy, and common existence of mutual interdependence of a state-controlled and a free enterprise sector. What we do not accept is the theory that state-owned sector should continuously expand until it dominates the national life.... will there be a regimentation of life, totally at variance with India's outlook and traditions, which have always

recognised the place and worth of individual in society."⁸

Apart from C.Rajagopalachari, Minoo Masani (a former founder of the Congress Socialist Party) had been criticising the Congress long before the Nagpur Resolution of 1959. In fact, in his book published in 1954, he drew attention to the dangerous polarisation⁹ of Indian political forces between the Congress and the Communist Party since consistent ideological opposition to communism had hitherto been negligible. He emphasized the importance of religion to keep India free from the threat of communism.

As an independent member of the Parliament, Masani made a pointed reference to the lop-sided ideological balance in the Indian Parliament. Three major parties, the Congress, the Praja Socialist Party and the Communist Party, all claimed to be, according to Masani, socialists. Thus, Masani asserted that no liberal or conservative or centre-party exists which is non-socialist. Masani and Jaipal Singh, member of the Independent group of the Parliament, on March 17, 1959, proposed the intention of the group of becoming the precursor of a new middle-of-the road political party which would stand for mixed economy and oppose cooperative farming and ceilings on income.

However, the immediate provocation for the formation of the Swatantra Party was the adoption of the Nagpur Resolution on co-operative farming by the Congress Party in January, 1959. Following are the extracts of the Nagpur Resolution :

(i) "The organisation of the village should be based on village panchayats and village cooperatives, both of which should have adequate powers and resources to discharge the functions allotted to them. A number of village cooperatives may form themselves into a union. All permanent residents of the village, whether owning land or not, should be eligible for membership of the village cooperative which should promote the welfare of its members by introducing progressive farming methods and improved techniques of cultivation, developing animal husbandry and fishery and encouraging cottage industries. In addition to providing credit and discharging other servicing functions, it will arrange for pooling and marketing the agricultural produce of the farmers and for storage and godown facilities for them. Both the panchayat and cooperative should be the spearheads of all developmental activities in the village and, more especially, should encourage intensive farming with a view to raising the per acre yield of the agricultural produce."

(ii) "The future agrarian pattern should be that of cooperative joint farming, in which the land will be pooled for joint cultivation, the farmers continuing to retain their property rights, and getting a share from the net produce in proportion to their land. Further, those who actually work on the land, whether they own the land or not, will get a share in proportion to the work put in by them on the joint farm."

"As a first step, prior to the institution of joint farming, service cooperatives should be organised throughout the

country. This stage should be completed within a period of three years. Even within this period, however, wherever possible and when generally agreed to by the farmers, joint cultivation may be started."¹¹

(iii) "In order to remove uncertainty regarding land reforms and to give stability to the farmer, ceilings should be fixed on existing and future holdings and legislation to this effect, as well as for the abolition of the intermediaries, should be completed in all states by the end of 1959. This does not mean any ceiling on income, as it is expected that, by intensive cultivation as well as by additional occupations, rural incomes will rise. Such surplus land should vest in the panchayats and should be managed through cooperatives consisting of landless labourers."¹²

(iv) "with a view to assuring a fair return to the tiller, a minimum or a floor price should be fixed reasonably in advance of the sowing season with respect to each crop, and arrangements should be made to purchase directly, whenever necessary, the crops produced."¹³

(v) "The introduction of the State trading in wholesale trade in foodgrains is welcomed and should be fully given effect to."¹⁴

(vi) "Every effort should be made to bring the uncultivated and waste land into cultivation. The Central Government should appoint a Committee to devise suitable measures for the utilisation of this land."¹⁵

The decision to form the Swatantra Party was taken at an informal meeting of the All India Agriculturists' Federation, an organisation mainly of landowners and rich peasants, in Madras on June 4, 1959. This meeting drew up a statement of the principles which was to form the basis of the Swatantra Party. To inaugurate the Party and to adopt its statement of principles, a preparatory convention was held in Bombay on August 1 and 2, 1959.

Masani, in his opening remarks, claimed that the Swatantra Party provided a clear alternative to the principles of the ruling party, "by putting the individual right in the Centre of the pictures and rejecting lock, stock and barrel the methodology, as opposed to the ideas of socialism, which is more accurately described as state capitalism."¹⁶ In his inaugural address, C.Rajagopalachari said, "we stand for the great principles enunciated by Gandhiji and constantly emphasized by him of maximum freedom for the individual and minimum interference by the state."¹⁷

The convention adopted the statement of principles of the party. It may be noted that soon after the formation of the party, it absorbed the Janata Party of Bihar, the Krishak Lok Party of Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan, the Indian National Democratic Congress in Madras. Later the Gram Raj Party of Uttar Pradesh, and the United Independent Front of Uttar Pradesh joined it. The emergence of the Party, therefore, may be considered a regrouping of the conservative forces in Indian society.

III. The Ideology of the Swatantra Party

There can be little doubt that India's native aristocracy was in large measure a self-consciously proud group which explicitly referred to and defended its extraordinarily privileged position in Indian society. Throughout the constitutional deliberations of the 1920's and 1930's, they insisted that their rights and privileges should not be ignored or encroached upon. In confronting the British, the aristocrats quite understandably emphasized their ungrudging support and sincere assistance to the crown. Many a British official frankly admitted the crown's debt to the aristocracy and regarded the final deposition of the native states in particular as illegal, immoral and a despicable sell-out.

While this style of argument commended itself widely to the British, it was not designed to appeal to the articulate, non-aristocratic elements in Indian public life, notably those who comprised the Congress, one defender of the native rulers thus insisted that the natural instinct of mankind is self-preservation and another insisted that we wish to preserve the individual and historical identity of our states which our forefathers carved out for themselves and handed down to us.

Such self-interested and fully conservative arguments could hardly suffice by themselves and the rulers were by no means oblivious of this fact. While admitting that they were conservative to a certain extent by tradition and instinct, the

aristocrats were insistent that they were the conservators of a great tradition, of an ancient civilisation and of a proud culture, which was superior to the dynamic, machine-made civilisation of the West which was to some extent being imported to India by the British and westernised Indians. The emphasis on the role of the princely states in the indigenous tradition and on Indian culture as superior to that of the west held out some hope for a more favourable response from the more conservative, non-aristocratic Congressmen.

Also indicative of their determination to exploit prevailing problems and sentiments, the aristocrats claimed that they were above communalism of the newer class of politicians, that they treated the people in their states as children rather than as subjects, instead of the complex, bureaucratic ^{coldness} of the British India.

Given such feelings, it is little wonder that most articulate aristocrats balked at any strong suggestion of the advent of parliamentary, democratic government on all India basis, especially under the auspices of the Congress. As one British supporter of the princes put it that democracy, as known in British India, they do not find alluring in part because it represented rule by the lower classes, an inversion of the traditions of three thousand years. Another referred to the Congress as subversive elements and bile producers which justified the conclusion that in such conditions, one can

hardly expect the Indian princes to sit in their Durbars with folded hands, while the lawyers, school-masters, money-lenders and industrialists decide the fate of India.

The aristocrats themselves, were no less critical of the Congress Party than the British who stood by them. One of the leading zamindars referred to the Congress as a new class of demi-gods and career politicians who exploit the ignorant masses for strengthening their own class rule; and he insisted that the Congress was an upstart body and had not built up the traditions of authority and command through time with a corresponding attitude of obedience among the masses. Many reiterated their prolonged hostility to the Congress ideas and scorned the talk of democracies and all such things, rejected the prospects of a Congress regime as one run by tradesmen who were not born to rule.

In the light of such sentiments, it is not surprising that many rulers, before the integration of the states, were quite outspoken in their insistence that they will never submit to being governed by British India, over many parts which princely states in former times held sway, and most emphatic was the statement that the princes fought and sacrificed their blood to win power and they mean to hold it. If the Congress wants to rob them, if the British should let them down, they will fight. In the event, these brave words were not matched by brave deeds, but two points remain clear. First, these words represent

the authentic voice of aristocratic conservatism, defending the rule of Khatriyas according to the tradition and precepts of dharma, although efforts were made to go beyond such defences, in order to appeal to non-aristocratic conservatives. It is abundantly clear, however, that the aristocracy did not look with favour upon the middle classes, let alone the masses. Secondly, related to this, was the fact that there was much smouldering resentment against the Congress regime which the ruling party had by no means able to obliterate.

Not all of the aristocrats were vehement about the Congress, at least in public. Before independence, many were disposed to assure the nationalist leadership that they were not reactionaries who wanted to effect a total princely restoration or steadfast conservatives who acknowledged the need for change but felt it must be gradual.

In some ways, the upper castes at the village level advanced positions comparable to those of the aristocrats. As one scholar has observed, the decline of the Brahmins and Khatriyas was not a happy thought for these classes, and the prospect of degeneration which would bring the Shudras and untouchables into greater prominence was an appalling prospect. Numerous village studies fully document this point. Upper castes complained that the lower caste, were now swollen-headed. They do not want to serve the upper castes and they cannot depend on them. Efforts by some government servants to work directly with

the lower castes at the village level, had generated coldness and even hostility from groups on the higher levels of the social hierarchy, who asked themselves whether the government was out to destroy the social system of the Hindus. One effort by prominent private citizens and government officials to gain temple entry for untouchables elicited the response that the government is mixing the maize with the millet. A wide range of coercive techniques had been employed by the higher castes to keep the lower castes in their place, and this in its own way is an important manifestation of conservatism, albeit of a less politically organised and sort.

Many middle peasants and substantial tenants have been quite willing to see the end of large-scale landlordism, without being any way solicitous to those who are subordinated to them; and they frequently condemn efforts to give land to the landless as contrary to dharma or else as unproductive. In these and other ways, caste Hindus demonstrate their sense of superiority either explicitly or implicitly to the depressed castes; and they demonstrate as well their refusal to confront the fundamental problems of rural India. Still, it is important to note that non-conservative vocabulary is often used to deny the claims of the depressed groups. Furthermore, it is also important to note that the exponents of these views are not necessarily sympathetic to aristocratic or Brahminical world-views ; many anti-khatriya and anti-Brahmin groups have challenged the

position of these superior classes, while steadfastly denying the claims of those who remain below them.

More difficult to come to grips with such straightforward manifestations of conservatism is a doctrine whose practical consequences are profoundly conservative, even though its exponents profess to want certain major changes in Indian life. This doctrine has as its core an image of an idealized village community, sometimes envisaged as having existed in ancient India. It has as its principal roots (i) the view that village India is real India; (ii) the reaction against imperialist arrogance and against the corrosive effects of British rule on traditional, village India, pitting the real India against the west; and (iii) linked to this, the virtually universal reaction to the dislocations of early stages of industrialisation, including the Indian variants of Luddite and utopian socialist themes. The association of Gandhiji's name, rightly or wrongly, with this strand of thought accounts in large measure for its potential emotional appeal.

Different exponents of this doctrine give it different twists and embellishments, but some major perspectives are almost universally shared. Of central importance is the view that the Indian village is, or was at one time, almost an idyllic, self-reliant, harmonious and spiritual little republic. The caste system, one of the most uniformly condemned aspects of

Indian life, was, according to this view, originally a plausible approach to the requirements of a division of social function and did not contain the rigidities commonly associated with it in recent times. Nor did it relegate a significant segment of the population to the position of untouchables.

The anti-western and anti-industrial themes are related to this one and are almost uniformly articulated. The introduction of machine-made goods, both foreign and domestic; the introduction of western legal procedures, western education, western political processes, and the like, is widely portrayed as a cause to the present distress. There is a general rejection of individualism, in favour of social cooperation and concern for larger social groupings. Specifically, there is a rejection of competition associated with laissez-faire economies, of the win-or-lose struggle associated with western legal procedures. The individual is to subordinate his passions and needs to those of the extended family, the caste and the village as a whole; and an important corollary of this basic view is the requirement that the rich, the wise and the well-born must use their advantages for the common good - the so-called doctrine of trusteeship. Because cooperation and harmony are major desiderata, conflict and coercion in any form are not permissible; and hence the notion of class war and even of legislation through majority rule are to be rejected. In so far as privileged classes use coercive techniques which are to be eliminated, education in

doctrine of trusteeship must provide the corrective. It is generally argued that the ideal can be approximated only in smaller communities unsullied by significant concern for material things; hence urbanisation and industrialisation along western lines must be resisted. Indian spirituality must be maintained in the face of western materialism.

The contention that such perspectives have conservative implications is based on the following considerations. First of all, for many exponents of these ideas, the principal dangers to the idealised village system lie not in the village itself, but in the forces outside the village which are undermining it. Hence, in many cases, there is relatively little attention devoted to the actual distribution of power in the Indian village. Secondly, when the rural power pattern is realistically examined and changes are deemed necessary, the latter are to be achieved through education in trusteeship. Thirdly, the pattern of constraints within the joint family and caste are often totally neglected, and these social groupings are looked upon as instruments of social welfare. Fourthly, while there is some attention given to the desperate plight of the lowest classes, there is less than passionate concern for their unhappy material condition because a concern for material affairs tends to erode concern for spiritual matters. Thus, C.Rajagopalachari supported Gandhiji's views that civilisation consists not in the multiplication of wants but in the deliberate and voluntary restriction of wants,

and he also supported the view that high thinking is inconsistent with a complicated material life, based on high speed.

From some vantage points, it is really immaterial whether one calls the exponents of such views conservatives, reactionaries, utopian socialists, or something else more or less flattering. In some respects, it also matters little whether one assumes that they genuinely desire the changes which they profess to want or whether one insists that they are frauds. The important point is that policies consistent with the model of idealised village would serve as almost a total bar to any major transformation of the Indian village. In other words, the doctrine supports the status quo in fact, if not in theory. Particularly for the lowest strata of the population, there is little hope for improvement, materially or otherwise. It is abundantly clear from the historical and current state of Indian village that there is no salvation for the lowest strata within that framework. And the entire history of mankind should be proof that privileged classes do not become trustees to any significant degree without substantial pressure from below or from competing elites who speak for the lower classes. Under existing and foreseeable Indian conditions, the village itself simply cannot provide the economic underpinnings needed to sustain a movement for the betterment of the lower classes.

If the commitment to cooperation, trusteeship, and the like precludes any major changes in the village in the interests

of the lower class advance the anti-urban, anti-industrial commitments clearly run counter to the interests of the urban industrial class. It is easy to see why the exponents of the idealised village did not endear themselves to untouchable leaders, or to India's captains of industry. To the untouchable, a defence of the village was a defence of his prison. To the industrialist, a defence of the village was more a nuisance than a threat.

Having discussed the ideological background of the Swatantra Party, let us look at the core ideology of the party. The anatomy of the Swatantra Party has been discussed in some detail by H.L. Erdman¹⁸, according to whom the leading figures of the Swatantra Party were all comparatively old men who were united in their opposition to communism, and what they regarded as the increasingly statist policies of the Congress, especially under Jawaharlal Nehru. Certain differences among the leading figures were obvious. Among the leading figures, Masani and Mody were Parsees, and others were Hindus. Of them, C. Rajagopalachari and K.M. Munshi were Brahmins, while Ranga was a clean shudra. Masani and Mody were highly westernised, and very clearly oriented towards modern business and industrial world, while the others in varying ways, were more in tune with the non-industrial world. To complicate the matters even further, Ranga and Masani were radical, relative to the main thrust of the Congress in the 1930s; while others were, in different ways, relatively

conservative. The diversity was apparent, so that it elicited the oft-heard, derisive comment that the Party was a melange or medley of fundamentally uncongenial bed-fellows.¹⁹ Thus, Erdman observed that Swatantra Party leadership was united in its opposition to communism. And the inner circle represented at least three major strands of thought - the idealised village, militant Hinduism, and modern industrial capitalism.²⁰

C. Rajagopalachari, in responding to Jawaharlal Nehru's charge that it was impossible to know what Swatantra stood for because it contained diverse elements, observed that "the straight and easy path to understand the Swatantra Party is to read what has been said in twenty-one short articles of the Party's foundation document. There is no ambiguity or prolixity in it".²¹ The heart of the Party's doctrine is, to be sure, embodied in these fundamental principles, in elaboration of and addition to these. Unhappily, these would not suffice to define the nature and role of the Swatantra, even if they were crystal-clear. Many of the conflicts and tensions revealed by a study of the social bases of the Party that emerged in the realm of the doctrine as well. None the less, attention must be paid to the official pronouncement of the Party, and the twenty-one point programme serves as the appropriate starting point.

If one had to categorise them en bloc and briefly, the twenty-one points programme could be called predominantly classical liberal in tone, suggesting a moderate, non-traditional outlook.

They reflect the general aversion of the national leaders to reactionary and to authoritarian national views; and they reflect, as well, the influence of the modernists in the realm of doctrine. The Indian heritage, especially via Gandhiji, is also present, but in an understated way, socialist rhetoric also intrudes in it.²²

The fundamental principles are important, moreover, not only for what they say, but also for what they do not say. Much is excluded from their purview, and on all such issues, the Party members are allowed to advance any position not inconsistent with a fairly narrow-reading of the twenty-one programme. Significantly, foreign policy, linguistic policy and religious and cultural issues in detail, receive little or no explicit attention within the framework of the fundamental principles. This reflects the conviction that the principal task of the Swatantra Party was that of opposing the Congress 'Statism', and those who can agree on this should not be divided by other issues deemed to be less significant.

The liberal aspects of the twenty-one points are abundantly evident. The first, for example, calls for equality for all, without distinction of religion, caste, occupation or political affiliation. This is followed by a defence of individual initiative, enterprise and energy in all areas, with emphasis on economic sphere. The subsequent points are best described as rigorously antistatist, with attacks on the

policy of statism, expropriation, the conferment of more and more powers on officials of the government, collectivisation and bureaucratic management of the rural economy, crippling taxation, abnormal deficit financing, and foreign loans, and so forth. In calling for minimum interference by the state in all spheres, with emphasis on economic spheres, the Swatantra leaders urged the restoration of private initiative in land, ship and factory alike, and emphasized freedom of property.

IV. Electoral Strategy and Performance of the Swatantra Party

Soon after its formation, the Swatantra Party projected the philosophy of economic liberalism, opposition to statism and state capitalism called socialism, and openly advocated competitive market economy.

Explaining the electoral strategy of the 1962 elections, C.Rajagopalachari stated that he would "ally with the devil himself" to defeat the Congress. The twin objectives of the Party for the 1962 elections were :

"I.... the achievement by the Swatantra Party of the position of the opposition in the Lok Sabha, thus providing an alternative government to the country."

"II.... the best possible representation of the Party in various State Assemblies, consistent with the first objective."²³

Keeping these objectives in view, the Party fielded 1038 candidates for the State Assemblies and around 170 candidates for election to the Lok Sabha. The performance of the Swatantra Party in 1962 elections was hailed by most sections of the Press in India and abroad and by people generally as satisfactory and as laudable achievement for a Party then barely two-and-a-half years old. The Party emerged as the second biggest Party in the country by capturing 207 seats in the State Assemblies as against 153 won by the Communist Party, 149 by the Praja Socialist Party and 115 by the Jan Sangh. The Party became the official opposition in four states — Bihar, Rajasthan, Orissa and Gujarat.

In so far as the elections to the Lok Sabha were concerned, the Party polled around 9 per cent of the total votes. Its share in the proportion of the votes secured in several states was significant. The Party obtained 25 per cent of the votes polled in Gujrat, 18.57 per cent in Orissa and 18.10 per cent in Rajasthan. In these states, the number of votes polled by the Swatantra Party was around half of that polled by the Congress Party. The Swatantra Party in the Lok Sabha had 25 members as compared with the Communist Party which had a strength of 29. In the Rajya Sabha, the Party's strength went up from seven to eleven.

The Party leaders utilised the period intervening between the third and the fourth general elections, i.e. from 1962 to 1967, for the growth of the Party in the country.

Various political and economic events like China's attack on India in 1962, death of Jawaharlal Nehru in 1964, Indo-Pak War in 1965, death of Lal Bahadur Shastri in 1966, etc., generated anti-Congress wave in the country, and the Swatantra leaders wisely utilised this changing mood of the Indian people in favour of the Swatantra Party. Thus, the political climate in the country at the time of the fourth general elections was anti-Congress and Pro-rightist. Long before the 1967 elections, it was evident that the Congress system was on trial in the country, and that the pattern of one-party dominance was breaking down. Till 1967, Indian politics was truly one party oriented, comprising the massive Indian National Congress and a number of small opposition groups in the wilderness. All this changed with the election of 1967. In short, the 1967 elections constituted a watershed in the politics of independent India.

For the 1967 elections, the Party requested the people to send at least 100 M.P.s and MLAs in the Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha respectively. The Party's high command was always eager to join hand with the opposition parties except the Communist Parties. During the 1967 elections, the Party developed electoral understanding in the states of Rajasthan, Gujrat and Orissa, viz., with the Jan Sangh in Rajasthan and Gujrat and Jana Congress in Orissa. In Orissa, the understanding between the Swatantra and the Jana Congress was based on a strong footing, and both agreed for a common twentyone point programme to lead Swatantra-led government. In Gujrat, the Party had understanding only for 15 Vidhan Sabha seats.

In all, the Party fielded 978 candidates for the state legislatures. The Party in all secured 259 seats from 12 states, as against 207 seats from nine states in 1962. The Party's areas of influence in both the elections of 1962 and 1967 remained almost the same. The Party came to power in Orissa with the help of the Jana Congress. In the states of Gujrat and Rajasthan, it emerged as an official opposition.

But the sudden rise of the Party was without any grass-root organisational background. The Party grew from the top and very little work was done at the grass-roots level. David Hume²⁴ has observed that generally, during the founding period of a Party, the programme has considerable importance, because it serves as the rallying point of dispersed elements, but later, the organisation takes the foremost place. This reference also applies to the Swatantra Party, as in later years, the Party leadership was faced with problems on building a viable organisation. The Swatantra leaders never cared for sound organisation from the very beginning and aimed at 'Congress Hatao' (removal of Congress) Programme only, by all means. So the sudden rise of the Party, with the help of existing support of caste groups, Princes, industrialists, aristocrats, etc. was based on weak foundations. The Party failed to develop its organisation in a sound and methodical manner. The Party failed to inculcate ideological articulation among its hastily assembled, opportunistic, and ambitious but influential elements. Only an ideology or

commitment to the Party.³² Programme could have kept these various elements of the Party together. After playing a decisive role between 1962 and 1967 in the national politics, the Party gradually ceased to count. And this was because the Party had not satisfactorily proceeded towards the task of Party-building. The Party's approach of accommodating and co-opting the ready-made leadership and group of power-structures in it, without baptising them ideologically, made it faction-ridden. The persons who joined the Party never became Swatantratites in the true sense of the term. Hence, soon after 1967 elections, cracks started to appear in the Party. Thus, besides, poor party-building and indiscipline among party workers, the other important reasons for the sudden disappearance of the Party from political scene of the country were :

- (a) Overdependence on caste groups;
- (b) Almost total dependence upon the former princes;
- (c) Inclination to preserve and conserve than to advance;
- (d) Failure to study the dynamics of politics;
- (e) Negative attitude of Congress Hatao (removal);
- (f) Lack of commitment among the Party workers and leaders;
- (g) failure to check the process of change initiated by the Congress, especially after its split in 1969; and
- (h) limited sphere of activities.

All the above-listed factors increasingly isolated the Party from the political scene of the country. The Party's more negative and less positive approach to the policies of the Congress, like cooperative farming, establishment of public sector, planning commission, nationalisation of banks, abolition of privy purses, etc., was contrary to the trends of the day and this diminished the image of the Party in the eyes of the public. The public image of the Swatantra Party had always remained that of a Party which in domestic affairs planned for unrestricted free enterprise and complete abolition of public sector, and in the field of foreign policy, for a close alliance with the West. Ultimately, the Party disappeared from the political scene of the country. And, in the end, the Party lost its original name when it merged with the six opposition parties into a new nation-wide opposition party, namely, 'Bharatiya Lok Dal' (BLD) on August 29, 1974.

V. Policies of the Swatantra Party

Following are the principles of the Swatantra Party as adopted by the All India Convention held in Bombay on August 1 and 2, 1959.²⁵

"The Swatantra Party is pledged to social justice and equality of opportunity for all people without distinction of religion, caste, occupation or political affiliation."²⁶

"The Party holds that the progress, welfare and happiness of the people depend on individual initiative, enterprise and energy. The Party stands for the principles of maximum freedom for individual and minimum interference by the state, consistent with the obligation to prevent and punish anti-social activities, to protect the weaker elements of society and to create the conditions in which individual initiative shall thrive and be fruitful. The Party is, therefore, opposed to the increasing state interference of the kind now being pursued."²⁷

"The Party holds that state should foster and utilise the sense of moral obligation, the pride, the satisfaction and fulfilment felt by individuals in serving others, which are inherent in Indian tradition, instead of adopting legislative or other forms of compulsion. The Party, therefore, adheres to the principles of trusteeship adumbrated by Gandhiji."²⁸

"The Party holds that the policies of the Government should be founded on faith in the people and not on state compulsion and the encouragement of hatred and conflict."²⁹

"The Party stands for every effort being made to foster and maintain spiritual values and preserve what is good in Indian culture and tradition and avoid the dominance of a materialist philosophy of life without any reference to its content and quality."³⁰

"The Party holds that steps should be taken to remove the pervading sense of uncertainty that has been created by the present policies of the government. The Party holds that a sense of stability and incentive for individual effort can be restored only by strict adherence to the Fundamental Rights."³¹

"The Party holds that in the policies adopted for national development, priority must be assigned to the basic needs of the people, namely, food, water, housing and clothing."³²

"The Party believes that every citizen has a fundamental right to educate his children according to his choice and in a free atmosphere."³³

"The Party holds that the paramount need for increasing production and that this is best attained through self-employed peasant proprietor."³⁴

"The party believes in an intensive programme of agricultural improvement by promoting the material and psychological inducement for greater production without disturbing the harmony of rural life. The Party holds that there should be no disturbance of ownership, management and cultivation of land."³⁵

"In industry, the Party believes in the incentives for higher production and expansion of inherent competitive enterprise with adequate safeguards for the protection of labour."³⁶

"The party stands for restriction of state enterprise to heavy industries such as necessary to supplement private enterprise in that field."³⁷

"The Party is opposed to the state entering the field of trade and disturbing free distribution."³⁸

The Party stands for the preservation of the freedom of the small and self-employed artisans, craftsmen, who are

in danger of losing their occupational opportunities by reason of the policy of statism."³⁹

"The Party stands for great thrift in public expenditure."⁴⁰

"The Party is opposed to a programme of development based on crippling taxation, abnormal deficit financing and foreign loans."⁴¹

"The Party shall, in all matters, keep before itself the cardinal teachings of Gandhiji, maintaining faith in the people and in the efficiency of truth and non-violence."⁴²

"The Swatantra Party holds that democracy is best served if every political Party allows freedom of opinion to its members on all matters outside the Fundamental Principles of the Party. It, therefore, gives its members, full liberty on all questions."⁴³

Besides, Swatantra Party's outlook on the following issues are discussed severally :

(i) Economic Policy

The most controversial issue about the Swatantra Party was its economic policy. Restriction of state enterprise to heavy industries was necessary to supplement private enterprise in that field, opposition of State entering the field of trade and disturbing the free distribution and introducing controls

and official management, greater thrift in public expenditures, opposition to a programme of development based on crippling taxation, abnormal deficit financing and foreign loans beyond capacity and full and lasting employment in all sectors of life these policies formed the core of the economic policies of the Swatantra Party.

(ii) Cooperative Farming

The Swatantra Party considered the 'Joint Cooperative Farming' in the Nagpur Resolution to be calculated to mislead people. According to the Party Resolution, once the peasants lost their individual ownership, possession and utilisation of his farm, the free and self-respecting peasantry which was the bulwork of democracy would disappear and the bureaucrats would acquire a stranglehold on the economic, social and political life of the rural areas. In point of fact, the Nagpur Resolution would replace the old Zamindar with one big super-Zamindar, viz., the Government. The Swatantra Party stated that it stood by the peasants of India in this matter and would protect the peasantry against any attempt to filch the land away from them under the beguiling slogan of joint cooperative farming. The Swatantra Party rejected the scheme of ceilings on landholdings as likely and further to injure the efficient farming and maximisation of movements of food-grains to industrial and urban areas. This seemed to be an open plea for the protection of

the interests of the land-owners, ignoring the interests of the community ! That is why Jawaharlal Nehru had said that the Swatantra Party wanted to take back India to the "middle ages of Lords, castles, and Zamindars."⁴⁴ However, the Swatantra Party's stand on cooperative farming vindicates its position, viz. it stands for private property and initiative of private individuals.

(iii) Private vs. State Enterprise

According to the Swatantra Party, state enterprises should be reduced to the barest minimum. The Party did not deny that the state had no part to play in industry. In certain recognised fields such as communications and defence industries, the state had its legitimate field. The state might in the interest of national welfare, if found necessary, enter into industries such as are of the nature of pioneering enterprises, or where the needed capital could not be obtained otherwise. In such cases, the state should withdraw the moment when private competitive enterprise can be drawn into them.

Later C.Rajagopalachari suggested that state ownership and control must be resorted to in those cases where it was established after impartial enquiry that it was necessary in the interests of the community as a whole and also that it would increase efficiency and production in such a degree as to

outweigh the inherent disadvantages.⁴⁵ This does appear to be a feasible proposition. It only implies that the Party wanted full freedom for private entrepreneurs.

The Party's Election Manifesto stated that the role of the state was that of facilitator and regulator but not a participant. There was a great deal that government could do in a developing country, through the development of roads and other forms of communications, transport and cheap electric power. Mino Masani clarified this position further while speaking in the Lok Sabha on December 5, 1963 "The appropriate sphere of state is to build the infrastructures, the foundation for economic development. It means irrigation and water supply, it means roads transport and communication of every form, it also means education. And finally, there should be an essential minimum regulation to stop anti-social practices. All this is the legitimate role of the state as understood to be in a civilised society. But it is where the role of the state stops."⁴⁶

In fact, the Swatantra Party's argument counter to the prevailing ideas about the role of the state in modern society. The Party was very eager to draw the line which the state should not cross. It wanted the state to play the role of a 'night-watchman' and not that of a 'welfare state'.

(iv) P l a n n i n g

The Swatantra Party was disillusioned with planning in India which according to it, was 'totalitarian' and 'incompatible with democratic ways'. A collectivised economy could not co-exist for long with political democracy. While the Swatantra Party rejected outright the current pattern of centralised and top-heavy planning based on totalitarian programmes, it was not opposed to planning as such. Planning must, however, be carried on within the limits of the Constitution without relaxing the care for freedom guaranteed in it. Above all, it must know where to stop.⁴⁷

The appropriate organization, the Swatantra Party believed, for such planning of the affairs of the nation, was the cabinet responsible to the Parliament and through it to the people, and that while the government might resort to such expert assistance as it desired, there should be no other body, which in effect usurped the power of making policy affecting the life of the nation.⁴⁸

Though the Party ~~opposed~~ India's Five Year Plans, it was strange to note that the Party leaders held their own views about plans. Professor Ranga, the Party's spokesman, believed in planning and said, "our Plan is a Gandhian Plan, a plan that has for its foundation Dharma, a plan that is based on the initiative of the people, a plan that stands for self-employment and security of our people."⁴⁹

What was the Swatantra's alternative to the Plan ?

Mino Masani said, "We have an alternative by which we believe that plan would prove to the pedestrian. We believe if you try not to drag the savings of the people into the public sector, if you try not to divert them from the pursuit of agriculture and allied industries, where you get higher returns on your investments, our national income will go up much faster than what the (Third) plan contemplates."⁵⁰

V. The Swatantra Party's Concept of Socialism

The Swatantra Party was opposed to state ownership of all the means of production and distribution which was the creed of socialism. It opposed the socialism of the Congress Party on the plea that it would kill enterprise and initiative in the agricultural field and frighten foreign capital in the industrial and private sector. The Party stood for 'decentralisation of state power' and a policy of creating opportunities and facilities for small-scale private industries widely distributed over the country.⁵¹

The Swatantra concept of socialism was defined by Lobo Prabhu. The Party understood by socialism, "the advancement of the interests of the common man by taking from the rich and poor what they can give without the state competing with them in respect of what is within their capacities. It is this form of socialism that has enabled the free countries to establish

standards for their population which can never be reached by the brutality and godlessness of communism." ⁵²

The Swatantrites wanted the economic development of India to be left mainly to the private firms and also to foreign firms with whom the private industrialists of India had a close connections and affiliations. They believed that when money and power concentrated in the same hands, it would lead to totalitarianism and centralisation. At the same time, since the political atmosphere was saturated with socialist rhetoric, the Party could not escape being affected by it, at least for tactical purposes. Hence, it claimed that it was a better socialist party than all others. ⁵³

VI. Foreign Policy

The Swatantra Party's views on foreign affairs are striking in many ways. The Party was highly critical of the Congress government's foreign policy of Non-Alignment (Rajagopala-chari said, 'If non-Alignment is a sacred word and can not be given up, our policy should be 'Non-Aligned alliance with the West.' ⁵⁴

On Indo-Pak relations, the Party stood for settlement of outstanding disputes with Pakistan so as to enable the defence of the sub-continent to be secure against communist aggression. The solution of the Kashmir problem, the Party advocated, should

be such as to reduce, if not end Indo-Pakistan ill-feeling and such as to promote good understanding and amity between the two countries . For adequate defence against China, the Swatantra Party welcomed joint defence agreements with other Asian countries.

VI. C.Rajagopalachari and his role as a founder of the Swatantra Party

C.Rajagopalachari, "the most astute intellectual among the elite of Indian nationalists",⁵⁵ and who always disliked communism, had advocated earlier for our body politic and to save Parliamentary democracy, "not an ultra or outer Left but a strong and articulated Right."⁵⁶ For, he continued, a party of the Right gives expression to the distresses and disturbances, which are not less real and important than the need for change and progress. He emphasised that a rightist party in a Parliamentary democracy by testing and measuring both proposed legislation and the day to day administration, would challenge the wisdom of the governing party and compel modification when those in power act in a way which would produce more pain than profit to the community. He exhorted that those who were interested in the conservative aspect of the progress should, therefore, exert themselves to build up such an opposition. He was to repeat this appeal a few years later, this time for founding a conservative party, "a party that openly and boldly stands for and guided by the principles of conserving what

we have and what is good, before proceeding to change or disturb the status quo. Change should not come from mere compliance with untested and unrealistic slogans of revolution. The Congress has thrown to the winds the principles of conservation of what is good and what is rooted in the soil and has been acting more or less as a prisoner of its own slogans."⁵⁷

C.Rajagopalachari's criticism of the Nehru Government as a Swatantra leader and his pointing out of the loopholes of Indian democracy are elaborately discussed as follows :

(a) Democracy and Money Power

C.Rajagopalachari pointed out, like a seer, the sole that money power played in elections collection of crores from the corporations against the laws of the land, to be used for indulging in wholesale bribery and making it impossible for the honest but poor man to win the suffrage of his people.

C.Rajagopalachari made a revolutionary suggestion that the elections should be nationalised as is done in case of national census.⁴⁰

C.Rajagopalachari had strongly pleaded for a ban on elections donations by companies. If companies cannot pay, individual directors made large donations out of black money or by so manipulating the accounts of the company that it does not appear that the money had been paid by the company. Further, the companies had resorted to the device of paying large sums for

the advertisements to the souvenirs which had never seen the light of the day. Therefore, open and honest donations by a company or an individual were much better, provided any breach of it was severely dealt with.⁴¹ How practical was C.Rajagopalachari's foresight is proved by recent political developments in our country in connection with company donations to the political parties both in times of election and outside the election period. Thus, the present Chief Election Commissioner, Mr. T.N.Seshan called the present limits on election expenditure as the "biggest joke". Ridiculing the dishonesty involved in the electoral process, Mr. T.N.Seshan said that candidates spent several times more than the present limits. Yet, the first thing the candidates did after catering the House was to pledge honesty and truth. They could always claim that the posters, vehicles and the likes were sponsored by a friend or the party.⁴²

C.Rajagopalachari had also suggested that when a general election was declared, the government in office should resign and a caretaker government should be installed. This may be possible in states where President's rule can be imposed. But there is no provision in the Constitution for such action as far as the election to the Lok Sabha is concerned.⁴³

How true were C.Rajagopalachari's apprehensions had been borne out by happenings in the subsequent elections in

India's parliamentary democracy. The 1989 General Elections were estimated to have cost anything in the region of Rs.7000-8000 crores, and some economists felt that even this figure was very conservative. The Election Commission admitted to having spent Rs.110.14 crores in direct administrative expenses. According to the candidates statement of the expenditure submitted thereafter, another Rs.300 crores were spent during the campaign.⁴⁴

However, government expenses are really incidental in an election. The real expenditure is the money squandered by political parties and the individual candidates in campaign or buying votes. According to Election Commission rules, a candidate is permitted to spend upto Rs.1.5 lakhs, but this figure is simply fictitious. Everyone knows that it is much higher. In 1989 elections, figures see-sawed between Rs.10-20 lakhs per candidate. Even if one takes the lower estimate it would still amount to Rs.600 crores.⁴⁵

Where does all this money come from? It is said that Indian black money economy is in the region of 900000 crores. It is from where the money comes from. Be it Kulak or the erore-pati from the corporate world, the money-bags pave the way to electoral booth.⁴⁶

The prophetic mind of C.Rajagopalachari dwelt on the future of Indian democracy after Independence as a founder of the Swatantra Party, and even before Independence, as far back

as 1922, while he was in Vellore jail. Thus, he wrote in Jail Diary, "we all ought to know that Swaraj will not at once or, I think, even for a long time to come, be better government or greater happiness for all the people. Election and their corruption, injustice and the power and tyranny of wealth, and inefficiency in administration, will make a hell of life as soon as freedom is given to us. Men will look regretfully back to the old regime of comparative justice, and efficient, peaceful, more or less honest administration. The only thing gained will be that as a race we will be saved from dishonour and subordination. Hope lies only in universal education by which right conduct, fear of god, and love will be developed among the citizens from childhood."⁴⁷

(b) Elucidation of the Swatantra Philosophy

C.Rajagopalachari tried to remove the general notion that the Swatantra Party and the Swatantra movement were conservative. To do that he tried to modernise the term conservative. Thus, he opined that, "Swatantra does want the state to conserve what is good in anything before proceeding to reform it. It can be called conservative for that reason."⁴⁸ The Swatantra Party, according to C.Rajagopalachari, wants the fundamental rights guaranteed in the Constitution of 1950 restored and preserved in fact. The Swatantra stands for, as its name implied, is the restoration of citizen's freedom of action, not inconsistent with general welfare, and therefore, it wants the removal of barbed-wire entanglements known as

permit licence quota raj, which sits heavily over all national production and trade."⁶⁷

According to C.Rajagopalachari, Swatantra party wants less government and more freedom. At no time in the history of India, according to the members of the Swatantra Party, did government press so heavily on the minds of the people at all levels as during the time of the Nehru government. And this pressure is an incubus, not a contributor to the health or strength of the people who after all compose the nation.⁶⁸

Regarding land reforms, C.Rajagopalachari said, Swatantra wanted everything to be done to give full security to the tenants and every opportunity for the welfare of the workers, rural and industrial. The Swatantra Party was opposed to interventionism to prevent free competition, and was opposed to every policy that tends to frighten capital out of its function. We cannot produce, said C.Rajagopalachari, without capital and should not levy taxes to obtain capital but furnish incentives to national savings. It is only this that distinguishes progress and prosperity under freedom more mere appearance of prosperity.⁶⁹ According to him, the Swatantra Party wanted land reforms to be based on informed leadership, to be executed without attempting to extinguish the fundamental freedoms guaranteed in the constitution. The Swatantra opposed to statism dressed up in attractive garments.⁷⁰

According to C.Rajagopalachari, the Swatantra Party and the Swatantra movement could not be equated with the conservatives or liberals or any other party in the United Kingdom or the United States of America. It would be best to call it a 'constitutionalist party'. According to him, the ruling party's (i.e. the Congress) conceptions were bodily lifted from the communist conceptions of short and coercive way to progress and prosperity. The original of this copy, according to him, had been a failure. And any **system** working against human nature was bound to fail, even if it began with the deceptive promise at the outset. The desire to have prosperity is rooted in human nature and civilisation is rooted in it. In a free economy zeal and enthusiasm are automatically guaranteed. In the socialist world, the only proprietor is the state, neglect and apathy become the national climate. This cannot be counteracted by wasteful proliferation and entanglements of bureaucracy.⁷¹

Finally, C.Rajagopalachari opined that the Swatantra party opposed the Congress Party's statist policies based on a repudiation of the fundamental principles of the Constitution and freedom guaranteed therein. To those who are in the Swatantra movement and who feel abashed at the power which the ruling party has secured by being in office and **acquiring** control over the economy, exhorted C.Rajagopalachari, in a provocative language, "let us do what we should do and not be concerned about the results, let us not yield to the temptation of non-doing and become apathetic."⁷²

VII CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it can be assessed that both in its ideological appeal and its support base, the Swatantra Party was rightist. Ideologically, it was wedded to a free enterprise economy, closer understanding with western democracies, and a liberal political platform. Its support base was extremely narrow, limited to the landed classes and private industry. In terms of its Hindu communal background and its traditional base among petty traders in small towns, the Jana Sangh appeared to be more rightist.⁷³ Also, regarding the political strategy of the Swatantra Party, what S.Gopal⁷⁴ observed is highly remarkable. According to him, the Swatantra Party did not seem to have realised that it was not in the directions of economic and foreign policy but in the weakness of administration that the telling criticisms of the Nehru Government could be made. An underground economy was growing and the integrity of the bureaucracy had become very ragged at the edges. Thus the Swatantra Party instead of fighting the Congress on real grounds, directed its policies and strength against an imaginary enemy, i.e. the Congress socialism. In fact, the Indian National Congress was never socialist, not even during the time of the Nehru Government.

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