

Proceedings of the meeting of representatives of the Swatantra Party, Jan Sangh and the B.K.D. on 26th and 27th May 1969 at 2 Tuglaq Road, New Delhi.

Present

1. Prof. N.G. Ranga
2. Ch. Charan Singh
3. Prof. Balraj Madhok
4. Mr. Takhatmal Jain
5. Mr. M.R. Masani
6. Mr. Prakash Vir Shastri
7. Dr. Mahavir
8. Mr. Advani

It was decided that various issues on which adjustment of points of view of different parties would be necessary as a pre-condition to the emergence of a new Party should be considered.

1. The issue of States Rights as against a strong Centre was the first issue that was taken up for discussion. After various points of view had been stated, it was felt that agreement could be possible on the basis of the three groups stressing the unity of India. It was also felt that the States should be given greater financial viability by placing certain heads of revenue at their disposal.

2. The measures to deal with the Communist menace and, in particular, the banning of the Communist parties was next considered. While there was complete agreement on the nature of the Communist menace, it was felt that there could be a legitimate difference of opinion in regard to the concrete measures that would need to be taken at any given moment to contain the evil. There was agreement arising out of the discussion that only those who believe in democracy have a right to participate in the processes of democracy. Those groups that believe in subverting the Constitution by violence obviously place themselves outside the law. Similarly, those that owe allegiance to foreign powers are fifth-columns and



have nothing in common with genuine political parties within the country. In the light of this, there was agreement that the Communist Parties, whatever their shades and labels, should be banned as and when it becomes necessary for the maintenance of democracy and the security of the country.

3. In so far as relations with Pakistan are concerned, there was an agreement that normal and friendly relations between India and Pakistan are essential in the interest and security of the entire sub-continent and that good neighbourly relations need to be developed but such an approach has to be reciprocal and on a basis of mutuality. Appeasement is no way of solving the problem.

4 & 5. After considerable discussion, further discussion on the Kashmir and Nagaland problems was adjourned.

6. There was discussion of the language problem with particular reference to the question of the medium or media of instruction. Now that the regional language or the mother tongue has been accepted as the medium of instruction, it was felt that the interest of national unity and the maintenance of an administrative apparatus for the whole country called for the study of English and Hindi at higher secondary and University levels. It was felt that each State should have freedom to give priority to one or the other of these two languages.

7. The attitude towards the minorities was discussed. There was agreement that there should be complete equality as between the citizens, irrespective of their religion, ethnic origin or caste and that all forms of discrimination based on such considerations should be removed. This does not exclude special measures for the uplift of the under-privileged.



N. H. 27 May 1969

The Rightist Trio

Like the left parties, the right parties too seem to believe in a common destiny, and the idea of unity appeals to them. Unity is difficult, and merger is more difficult. Although the Jan Sangh, the Swatantra Party and the Bharatiya Kranti Dal have made little progress towards merger, they are eager to pursue the goal. Their talks in Delhi have failed, although they have tried their best to give a different picture. The Jan Sangh leader, Mr. Vajpayee's absence—according to one report, he is indisposed and according to another, he is busy with a by-election in Mysore—was not the only factor responsible for the failure of the talks. Mr. Vajpayee agreed to attend the meeting, but in his absence either Mr. Balraj Madhok or Dr. Mahavir could have represented him. Both leaders were present during the talks, and they could have made reasonable commitments on behalf of the party.

The proposed merger has been made difficult not by any leader's attitude but by the reluctance of each party to lose its identity, and this fear is more pronounced in the case of the Jan Sangh because it has a larger following than the other two. At the same time all the three betray nervousness; they are conscious of their weakness, and they know that their survival depends on unity. This is not the first time that an effort has been made to bring about a merger. In 1963 Mr. C. Rajagopalachari made an attempt to bring the Swatantra Party and the Jan Sangh together, and in 1967, there was a move to ensure co-operation between the two parties in Parliament and the state legislatures. Mr. Rajagopalachari gave his blessings for the recent move also. According to him, the urgency of a serious attempt at merger among the non-totalitarian groups opposing the Congress is greater now than ever be-

The non-totalitarian groups opposing the Congress, however, have no particular charm of their own, and it is this realization which has made the Jan Sangh, the Swatantra and the B.K.D. reflect on their own plight. All the three have reactionary traits in common but so long as they do not know what good they can do for the country and how it can be done, even their unity will have no importance to the people. Anti-Congressism is a negative concept, and it can give little inspiration for positive work. If the right parties want to unite, they should draw up a common programme, but what have the parties in common? Even the reactionary traits differ from party to party. The Jan Sangh, which frowns upon secularism, is as distant from the Swatantra Party which sympathises only with princes and big industrialists, as it is remote from the B.K.D., which is essentially a party of rich peasants.

The aim of the rightist trio is to create a new party of "national democratic character" to "replace" the Congress. The goal is ambitious but can they attain it? The B.K.D. is a regional party, the Jan Sangh is popular only in certain northern states, and the Swatantra is fast losing its pockets of influence. Even if all the three combine, the product need not be a political giant. A stage has now been reached when individually these parties cannot grow, but unity is possible, if they are individually prepared to make certain sacrifices. The Jan Sangh should sever its ties with the R.S.S. and be prepared to adopt a reasonable attitude towards Pakistan and the minorities in India. The Swatantra Party should be willing to accommodate new gods in its pantheon. The B.K.D. may have little to lose in a merger, but some of its leaders have not the tem-

