

1023

8th June 1963.

My dear Kripalaniji,

I sent a one line acknowledgement of your letter of 3rd June on the 6th and trust you have received it. Yesterday I was in Ahmedabad and rather unexpectedly I was asked by the press when I was meeting for my comments on your 6-point minimum programme. I mentioned to them that I had received a letter from you and had meant to reply to you, but I could not refuse to answer their query.

I enclose herewith clippings from today's Bombay newspapers which are broadly not inaccurate, allowing for the usual distortions here and there. The points I made were :-

- (i) that I appreciate your noble efforts in the cause of inter-Opposition unity.
- (ii) that while I personally saw little or nothing to object to in your 6 points, I could not possibly give the reactions of the Party which can only be ascertained at a properly convened meeting of the Central Organising Committee and the Parliamentary Board.
- (iii) that, while I wished you luck in your efforts, I could see great difficulties in the way of a formal bloc or Front committed to a minimum programme.
- (iv) that for the reason mentioned in (iii), I myself felt that the sounder approach would be to continue along the path of joint action on agreed issues, which the Swatantra Party, P.S.F., Jan Sang and Socialist Party had in fact been following both within and outside Parliament during the last two years of the last Parliament and since. I mentioned the Amroha and Rajkot bye-elections as an example of spontaneous cooperation without any negotiations or agreement as a precondition. In this context I welcomed the statement of Madhu Limaye, Secretary of the Socialist Party, who had also made a suggestion on similar lines in a statement made in yesterday morning's Times of India .

I do not know how you feel about these comments of mine, but I trust you will not feel that I am lacking in enthusiasm or solidarity with what you are trying to do. It is simply that I have very little hope that any formal moves of this nature will bear fruit at this stage. In fact, you yourself have mentioned Lohia's reaction to your minimum programme and you can judge from that the numerous difficulties that are likely to arise from all sides.

If I may share my long term view with you, it is that the Swatantra Party as also other parties should develop their organisation and strength during the coming months and years, but that bilateral discussions in the direction of an electoral understanding for 1967 should commence. It was while I was in the middle of such discussions which had made good progress with Dr. Bhabuvir that he died, and I propose to resume them with the two or three parties concerned. I frankly do not think that any attempt at an ideological agreement is worth making at this time. If, however, you feel there is any hope, you are welcome to go ahead with your efforts, though I for one feel that you have made your effort and you may now sit back, and others can now show something of your enthusiasm for unity.

In so far as a meeting between Bhabuji, J.P., you and me is concerned, I am entirely at your disposal and if you can arrange with the two other great men, I shall join you at any place in India.

With warmest regards from Sakuntala and myself,

Yours sincerely,

(M.R. Masani)

Acharya J.B. Kripalani, M.P.,
11, Gautam Patti,
LUCKNOW.