

1199
Friends:

After the General Secretary's circular letter dated 27th December 1974, events have moved at a fast pace in the country. I need not recount them.

One may recall that at the national convention of the Swatantra Party held in New Delhi on 4th and 5th August 1974, Shri. M.R. Masani and others had lamented the growing ineffectiveness of the parliamentary processes and had expressed grave concern at the concentration of power in the hands of the Prime Minister. Shri. Masani had pinned hopes on the movement initiated and led by Shri. Jayaprakash Narayan to combat the growing menace of dictatorship and corruption in the country. He had argued that the BLD which was sought to be created out of the Swatantra Party, some regional parties and splinter groups would not provide a real alternative and that without the Congress (O) and the Jana Sangh agreeing to shed their separate identities and to join any new Party, there was no sense in disbanding an All-India Party like the Swatantra Party.

It was the opinion of some of us that the conditions for merger of all non-congress (R) and non-communist opposition parties, however desirable such merger may be, had not then ripened and that instead of attempting an immediate merger of all parties, attempts should be made to create a federal structure in which the constituent parties would retain their separate identities, and work on a common platform for a common programme. It was then envisaged that out of the mutual confidence which common endeavour would generate, it would eventually be feasible for a single cohesive party to emerge.

Shri. Masani had hailed Shri. Jayaprakash Narayan as the coming saviour who would be able to resuscitate the hopes of our frustrated countrymen and to infuse them with a fresher vision and vigour and restore their confidence in democracy.

The apprehension that the BLD would not prove to be the real national alternative has proved correct. The other parties have not merged into the BLD, although time and again attempts have been made by Shri. Charan Singh, Shri. Piloo Mody and Shri. Raj Narain and others to preach this thesis to the Congress (O), the Jana Sangh and other parties. In fact, you must have noticed that the Jana Sangh at its Delhi session held on the 3rd March 1975 specifically repelled this suggestion to fold up immediately. Both Shri. L.K. Advani, the President of the Jana Sangh and Shri. A.B. Vajpayee have issued statements rejecting merger of parties and expressing themselves in favour of a confederation of parties.

Speaking recently in Hyderabad, on 20th April 1975, Shri. Vajpayee said that the BLD was pressing for merger of the parties but merger was not on the cards at the moment. He said that the other parties felt that any synthetic unity at the top level would not help and that the rank and file of each party should be involved in the process of evolving a unified party. The federal party would afford them an opportunity to work together.

Shri. L.K. Advani made the suggestion which was put by many at our national convention, viz: that all non-congress (R) and non-communist opposition parties should fight the ensuing elections under the leadership of Shri. Jayaprakash Narayan and

- (a) have a common election strategy and common election symbol.
- (b) have a common minimum programme and
- (c) field honest and able 'Janata' candidates irrespective of party affiliations.

Although the Congress (O) is hesitating now, events may drive it to accept the suggestion after the Gujarat Poll.

So far as the Socialist Party is concerned, Shri. George Fernandes is on record as having accepted the suggestion of a Federal Structure a few months ago.

You will also note that Shri. Madhu Limaye is the convenor of the Programme Committee set up by Shri. Jayaprakash Narayan.

p.t.o.

As Shri. Masani had predicted, Shri. Jayaprakash Narayan has emerged as the undisputed leader of the non-congress (R) and non-communist opposition. His crusade against corruption, nepotism, repression of the legitimate aspirations of the people has caught the imagination of all people and even amongst the congress (R) there is a growing recognition of the fact that the JP phenomenon cannot be wished away. All non-congress (R) non-communist opposition parties and groups have gathered under his leadership and attempts are afoot not only to sink personal differences among leaders but also several doctrinal differences plaguing the parties so that a united opposition, a real national alternative, can emerge.

A National Co-ordination Committee has also been set up under the convenorship of Shri. Jayaprakash Narayan. I am glad to inform you that our President, Shri. G.K. Sundaram has been invited to join this Committee. A common programme committee has also been set up under the convenorship of Shri. Madhu Limaye. We have written to him to include our representative on this committee.

At this juncture, it would not be inopportune to say that Jayaprakashji is the logical Gandhian successor to Shri. Rajaji and the "Total Revolution" which he preaches is not only acceptable to us but it is really what we have been saying all these years. Briefly, Shri. Jayaprakash Narayan advocates:

- (a) Sarvodaya - a concept which is totally opposed to the Marxist concept of class conflict.
- (b) importance of the moral values and traditions in the public life of our country.
- (c) a total revolution, peaceful and non-violent and covering all aspects, social, economical, cultural and not only political.
- (d) faith and reliance on people to resist an oppressive state. This faith in people, he characterises as "Lokshakti" or "Janashakti" as against "Rajashakti" or the might of the State.

In this conception, there cannot be a single party system. This concept of Lokashakti precludes one single party rule - which again is a "Marxist" concept.

- (e) the preservation of the fundamental rights of the people..

He is championing the cause of the people against a corrupt administration. His voice has been raised against corruption and against the licence permit raj which Rajaji repeatedly attacked.

At this moment, therefore, all members of the Swatantra Party all over the country must support JP and his movement. The National Executive has repeatedly supported Shri. Jayaprakash Narayan in their resolution and it must be our endeavour to see that we must strengthen the hands of Shri. Jayaprakash Narayan in every way we can. I would earnestly urge upon you to join the Loka Sangharsha Samitis in your area in large numbers and give it your full support and active cooperation.

If and when a unified party eventually emerges, we of the Swatantra should not and shall not lag behind in giving it full and unequivocal support and even consider submerging our identity if it is indeed the "National Alternative" we have been advocating.

We are concerned today with the values of freedom and decency in our public life and private life and the preservation and development of what is best in our culture and tradition. We are against corruption and the rottenness which is all around us. We must not, however, get disheartened but look heavenward and recapture the spirit of truth and dedicated service to the people. Let us, therefore, find out how our party and the movement it represents can be resurrected and made effective.

At the same time, let us involve ourselves with problems of movement of (a) farmers (b) students (c) industrial workers (d) shopkeepers and tradesmen (e) professionals and (f) technocrats. Primarily it was for these people that the Swatantra Party was founded and not for the rich or the Rajas, Maharajas and professional politicians who have mercifully spared us by either choosing some other party and retiring from public life altogether.

Our immediate task before the Party, however, is:

- (a) to re-establish our contacts with our members who joined this party with a conviction in its principles and not for their own convenience,
- (b) to rekindle in them the conviction that the path shown by the Swatantra Party alone is the true path to liberty and orderly progress.

I shall now report on events since the last General Secretary's circular dated 27th December 1974.

On 22nd January 1975, the National Executive of the Party met in Bombay and took the following decisions.

1. (a) Extended full cooperation and support to the movement led by Shri. Jayaprakash Narayan.
(b) Approved the electoral reforms prepared by the Electoral Reforms Committee appointed by Shri. Jayaprakash Narayan and urging the Govt. to accept the same.
(c) Expressed the firm view of the Party that there were enough food grains to meet the country's requirements. If adequate fertilizers, high yielding seeds and water supply were made available to the farmers it would be possible for them to produce even surplus quantities.
(d) Criticised the preparation of the electoral roll and demanded the enumeration of all eligible voters house to house before preparation of preliminary rolls and giving sufficient notice to voters to lodge objections before final rolls and published.
(e) Urged upon the Government to remove unnecessary controls and quota system in industries. It was noted that most of the industries were working below installed capacity for want of raw materials and working capital and also because of unnecessary controls on prices and distribution.
2. Before the meeting on 22nd January, members of the National Executive met Shri. Jayaprakash Narayan and offered our Party's fullest support to his movement. Later, Shri. G.K. Sundaram, our President was nominated as a member of the National Coordination Committee appointed by Shri. Jayaprakash Narayan.
3. The people's morcha held in Delhi on 6th March 1975 under the leadership of Shri. Jayaprakash Narayan was well represented by Swatantra volunteers from UP and Tamil Nadu.
4. The National Headquarters of our Party have been shifted to Madras. Its new address is "10.A, Flowers Road, Madras 84 - Telegraphic address is "SWATANTRA" and the telephone number is 666138.
5. A Writ Petition has been filed in the Madras High Court on 30th January 1975 challenging the decision of the Election Commission freezing the symbol of the Party. In the petition, Mr. Pilloo Mody as the General Secretary of the ELD and the Election Commission have been made parties. The petition has been admitted by the Madras High Court. Meanwhile, the legislators belonging to the Swatantra Party have been permitted to function under the symbol "STAR", pending final disposal of the petition, which is expected to be heard shortly.
6. You will recall that the Tamil Nadu Swatantra Party had filed a suit in the 6th Assistant City Civil Court, Madras on 1st August 1974. The case was heard on 10th December 1974 and a decree in our favour was passed ex-parte.

It was declared that the dissolution of the Party at the national convention held on 5th August 1974 at Delhi was in-valid.

7. In Uttar Pradesh, a State Executive with Shri. Vijay Pal Singh Saxena as President and Shri. R.S. Bharati as the General Secretary was formed in the second week of February. This Committee was approved by the National Executive at its meeting held on 9th April 1975. at Madras.

8. In Orissa, Shri. Harihar Patel, former Industries Minister in the Orissa Cabinet from 1967 to 1971 has appointed convenors in eight Primary units and the State Council has been recognised. Shri. Harihar Patel has been nominated as the President of the Orissa State Unit.

9. In Rajasthan, the former General Secretary of the Rajasthan State Unit, Shri. I.S. Bhargava is busy re-establishing contacts with the old workers and the response he has received is encouraging. Some Swatantra workers contested municipal seats as Swatantrites and a few of them came out victorious in Kotah and Jhalwad. According to him, the ground for reviving the Party in Rajasthan has already been prepared. Shri. I.S. Bhargava has been invited to join the National Executive in accordance with a decision taken at its meeting on 9th April 1975.

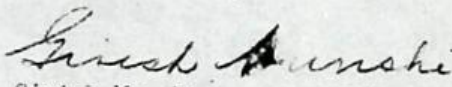
10. In Gujarat, some old workers in Saurashtra are in touch with us to revive our Party. Miss Kusum Joshi has been in constant touch with Swatantra members in various districts of Saurashtra.

11. In Karnatak, Shri. Nagabhushana Rao has been appointed Convenor

12. In Maharashtra, the Party is intact. The General Secretary intends to take a tour of some of the districts in the first week of May 1975.

It will thus be seen that we have not only been able to survive the difficulties created by the previous office-bearers, but can now look forward to slow but steady growth of the Party.

Yours sincerely,


Girish Munshi
General Secretary.