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April 26, 1977

My dear Doc.,

What a pleasant surprise to receive your letter. In fact in recent weeks I have been thinking of you and was planning to write to you. If I have not done so till now, it is only because I am still inhaling lungfuls of the air of freedom and liberty!

Regarding developments, there is so much to tell that one does not know where to begin! The atmosphere is absolutely free and we are back to the good old days of processions, slogan-mongering, strikes etc. And I don't mind them. For they demonstrate that we are once again a free society. The Newspapers are blunt and outspoken including the Times of India which only recently was Her Master's Voice. Mr. Shamlal should be in the circus for the breath-taking somersault he has performed in his editorials. The two papers that deserve all credit are the Indian Express and the Statesman. And they are uniformly being praised for standing up to the powers that be. Every day there is some revelation or the other. You won't be surprised that Blitz is now a great champion of JP, Morarji and the Janata Party!

Having said this there is also some apprehension about the homogeneity of the Central Government. As of now everyone in Government and in the Janata Party swears that they will remain together. What is impressive is the tremendous sense of identity between the man in the street and the Central Government. We have heard of agitations to dislodge a minister but soon after the formation of the Central Cabinet, when George Fernandes, Jagjivan Ram and a couple of others wanted to stay out, they were literally gheraced and told to get into the Ministry. Their first actions of the new Government have been to ease fetters on press freedom by repealing a couple of obnoxious acts. An amendment to amend the Constitution (42nd Amendment) is coming up in the next session in May. The Budget proposals will indicate the direction of the Government's economic policy. But indications are not lacking that the emphasis will shift back to agriculture and small agro-based industries. Perhaps you may be aware that HM is the Finance Minister. The Janata Party has not taken kindly to multi-nationals. As for the permit licence system the policy statement is not quite clear. The Manifesto of the Janata Party is an amalgam of various policies but basically swears by Gandhian socialism. Piloo lost in the election.

The Congress is in dire straits. Robbed of the 'fevicol' of power, they are quarrelling, and engaged in mutual recriminations. But the interesting thing is the continued dominance of the Congress in the southern States. This is essentially explained by the fact that the rigours of the Emergency were not felt to that extent in the South. In fact Sanjay Gandhi is held as the single biggest factor for the defeat of the Congress in the 'Hindi heartland'. You are perhaps aware that they did not win a single seat in U.P., Haryana, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh.

There have been a spate of articles and comments in a variety of journals. If you like I shall make a selection and send them to you. Please let me know.

Minoo addressed a public meeting along with Soli Sorabjee on the 1st of April. The press summary of Minoo's speech which is enclosed sums up his position. There are rumours that he might be offered a diplomatic assignment although Minoo himself is unaware of any such offer. Incidentally Soli Sorabjee is now the Additional Solicitor General of India. During the emergency he published a book on the Law of Censorship in India based on the Freedom First case when Minoo went in appeal to the Bombay High Court against censorship of several articles and won and against which the government appealed to the Supreme Court. Needless to add the appeal never came up.

As for Mr. Dandekar he is of course very happy, tinged with a feeling of regret in not having accepted an offer to contest the elections which he had to decline on grounds of health. He is now an all out supporter of the Janata Party and does feel that the Party will survive now that it is in the saddle.

The general apprehension that the Janata Party Government at the Centre might not form a homogeneous team is gradually being dispelled by their manner of functioning. Though they have been in power for just over a month they have by and large elicited kudos for the manner in which the ministers are conducting themselves. There is general acceptance that the Prime Minister is a changed man, much more tolerant and not at all wanting to thrust his own views on others. Even the statements of George Fernandes are very well taken and his recent participation at the Amsterdam Conference of the Socialist International and his speech to the FICCI (clipping attached) are indicative of a maturity that one did not suspect in him. There is no doubt that emergency has had a profound and traumatic impact on the thinking of various party leaders that dogmatic positions appear (at least from the surface) to have broken down. Thus you will see that the Socialists have accepted Gandhism and are no longer victims of the bread or freedom poser. They repeat at every available opportunity that it is a question of bread with freedom and that the two are indivisible. The Jansangh leadership have become equally statesmanlike and it is really happy to read their public affirmation of secularism in the non denominational sense of the term to such an extent that even the RSS is now seriously considering permitting Muslims to join that organisation! The Muslims on the other hand may no longer view former Jansanghis as Hindu communalists.

The speed with which the press has been freed and steps taken to go into the working of Samachar (the News Agency) and the decision to appoint a committee to go into the question of converting AIR and TV as autonomous corporation has been enthusiastically welcomed by the public. Similarly former Chief Justice J.C. Shah now heads a Commission to enquire into the misuse of Emergency powers and to investigate the widespread allegations of torture of political prisoners in jail.

The big question mark today is the role of the CFD (Congress for Democracy) lead by Jagjivan Ram. Most people are apprehensive of his likely role though one hopes that Mr. Jayaprakash Narayan would be able to ultimately get Jagjivan Ram to join in. The feeling is that the CFD may join only after the Assembly elections and not before and considerable pressure is now being brought on nine State Governments ruled by the Congress party to dissolve and seek a fresh mandate. This assumes importance in view of Presidential Elections to be held in August. *But J.P.'s health is causing concern.*

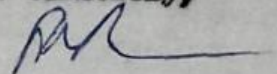
These are exciting times and I for one do hope that you will return home and become active again in the public life of our country.

One letter or even a hundred will not be adequate to put down thoughts that come rushing as I write this letter.

About your book I might tell you that not only did this idea occur to us but we did sell quite a few copies at our office which was used as the Janata Party office during the elections and at public meetings. We have with us 306 copies left. As desired by you we are sending you a dozen copies by Sea Mail in 2 parcels of 6 books each.

With kind regards to Zarine and yourself and love to the children,

Yours sincerely,



(S. V. Raju)

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Encls: As above