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CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN DR. R.C. COOPER, RAJAJI AND OTHERS
REGARDING THE SWATANTRA PARTY AND ITS FUTURE

1. Extract from Dr. Cooper's letter of March 28, 1972
to Mr. H.M. Patel
2. Rajaji's rejoinder of March 30, 1972
3. Mr. Manu Amersey's rejoinder of April 1, 1972
4. Dr. Cooper's reply of April 5, 1972
5. Mr. Madhu Mehta's rejoinder of April 6, 1972

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1. Extract from Dr. Cooper's letter of March 28, 1972
to Mr. H.M. Patel

" It is very obvious that the programme of our Party has not attracted the people of India in spite of our strenuous efforts extending over a period of more than ten years. The fact that the programme of our Party has been rejected rightly or wrongly, has become more obvious since the mid-term poll of 1971, and later, during the recent elections to the State legislatures.

I feel that there are three alternatives open to us :

- (i) continuance of Swatantra Party, as it is;
- (ii) to merge the Party with other like-minded party or parties; and
- (iii) dissolve the Swatantra Party and leave our members to decide for themselves what they are going to do in future. Some of us might prefer to remain out of any political party and yet to try to form public opinion, as best as they can, and also do public service. Some others might want to join other like-minded parties. A few might decide to join the ruling-party itself, in an effort to reform it from inside.

In my personal opinion, the third seems to be the best alternative open to us. Since our programme has not attracted the masses, it is no use trying to further spend away the limited human and material resources in an effort to continue as long as we can. These are badly needed by the country. The second alternative also does not seem to be open to us today in view of the unwillingness of the democratic parties in opposition to form an United Front or a new party with new name, symbol and flag. Further merit of my suggestion is also to reduce the number of political parties which is so badly needed.

I am aware of the fact that a single-party rule is a dangerous proposition and could very easily lead to dictatorship. However, the parties in opposition are so badly splintered and the resources, both in terms of money and mass-communication media, are so tightly controlled by the ruling-party that perhaps it is not much use fighting from the opposition benches, unless we are prepared to resort to direct action as suggested by Rajaji.

I would like you to distribute this letter in advance to the members of the National Executive and the General Council. It is only intended to provoke further thought on the various issues I have raised. It is quite probable that some or many of our members will hold a view contrary to what I have stated above. "

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2. Rajaji's Rejoinder of March 30, 1972

" Thank you for the copy of your letter to Shri H.M. Patel which you sent me and which has just reached me. My views are contained in the galley proofs of my front page article and 'Dear Reader' paragraphs to be printed in Swarajya of April 8.*
I send the galleys to you in advance so that you can see how my mind runs.

I suggest that you thoroughly discuss all matters in your meetings of the General Council and National Executive on April 8 and 9 in Bombay, but put off final decision for the next meeting thereafter so that nothing may be done in haste. "

* See Annexures 'A' & 'B'

3.

Mr. Manu Amersey's Rejoinder of April 1, 1972

" Many thanks for the copy of your letter to Shri H.M. Patel. I have faced so many defeats that I now refuse to be defeated by defeats. I also very firmly believe that there cannot be any compromise with fundamentals. Keep fundamentals intact and you can chop and change strategy. But I see from your letter that your faith in our fundamentals has been shaken. You are only keeping success as the yardstick. I feel most of us were aware that we were facing a difficult and uphill task in pursuit of Swatantra Ideology. Our ideology, I believe, is the truth. Much more so in today's context than ever before. Thus your second and third alternatives I mentally reject. There is hardly any party left which can be called 'like-minded'.

Organisation Congress is a party which blindly follows the Congress Party's thinking. Jan Sangh has radically changed its economic thinking and its leader Shri Bajpai can be termed a 'Hindu Indira'. Many have tried 'working from within' the Congress as you suggest some of us should do now. The only ones who have successfully done so are the Communists. The rest have fallen a prey to self-seeking. They dare not do anything but raise their fingers. I am sure neither you or me can be adept at finger raising.

The only answer thus is as Rajaji says is Direct Action. This means a change of stance on our part and preparedness, to suffer for what we believe in, including going to jail. Our cause, I believe, is noble enough for us to enjoy a jail if necessary. The fight has to be fought by the committed young. Whomsoever has mental walls against our new policies may remain in the background. But I am sure even those will be drawn ultimately to the battle by the sheer logic of it. If we fail we shall fight again. Our means of fighting can change if our means are within the walls of purity, but never the end itself.

I hope I do not sound too sanctimonious. If I do kindly excuse me. As you have sent copies of your letter to a few friends, I am also sending copies of my reply to the same friends. I trust this is in order. "

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5. Mr. Madhu Mehta's Rejoinder of April 6, 1972

" I have received a copy of your letter addressed to Mr. H.M. Patel, our President.

I do not think that it is correct to say the programme of our Party has not attracted the people of India inspite of our strenuous efforts extended over a period of more than ten years. I am sure you are aware of the fact that from the 1st of August 1959 till the elections in 1967, the Swatantra Party's stride in the legislatures and in Parliament was meteoric. We succeeded in displacing the Communists in Parliament and became the single largest opposition in Parliament to the then undivided Congress. We gradually became a major opposition party in Gujarat, Rajasthan, Bihar, Andhra and Orissa in the State Legislature. After 1967 elections due to a number of factors such as lack of proper follow-up action, failure to develop grass-root organisation, lack of proper nursing of the constituencies, indiscipline, quarrels among the Party members at the state level, the Party suffered the final disaster in the last Mid-term elections for Lok Sabha and also the recent elections to the various State Legislatures. Most of the reasons for our failure have been very aptly described in the Mid-Term Report which was published by us in 1969 and which was adopted by the General Council of the Swatantra Party on November 15 of the same year. I am enclosing a copy of the Mid-Term Report herewith.

You have put three alternatives before the Party. I am sorry I do not agree with any one of these alternatives you have suggested. It is obvious that we cannot continue the Swatantra Party as it has been functioning.

You talk about merging the Party with other like-minded party or parties. After the last Mid-term elections to the Lok Sabha I wonder whether there is any Party left in the country which can be described as a like-minded party. Even the Jan Sangh after its Ghaziabad Session has adopted a Socialist posture, and for which it had to pay very dearly in the last elections. Congress(0) with its 22-point Programme and the Socialist Party with its extreme leftist radicalism, surely cannot be described as like-minded parties. Whatever may be the state of our organisation we are the only party left in the country with a set of principles and policies which alone represent the true and genuine voice of dissent in the country.

I think that to dissolve the Swatantra Party and to leave members to decide for themselves what they are going to do in the future will be the greatest dis-service not only to our Party and what it stands for, but it would be a distinct dis-service to the cause of democracy for which we are all in politics. Of course some of us would prefer to remain out of any political party and try and educate public opinion and render public service, but surely the continuance of the Party does not come in the way of rendering public service and educating the public.

I now come to your last point viz., that some of us may decide to join the Ruling Party itself in an effort to reform it from inside. Here, I would like you to seriously consider the following arguments:

Congress members have no ideology. They are there to serve their own interest and to share power and patronage. The entire organisation has become a purchased organisation. Every member has been paid his or her price in return for which explicit obedience is expected from them. The result is to be seen in a completely total lack of interest displayed by the

Congress members in Parliamentary proceedings ever since the Parliament opened on March 13. Even the Cabinet has no hand in framing the policies of Mrs. Gandhi's government. Mrs. Gandhi has become a Supremo who conducts the affairs of her empire with the help and advice of the members of her kitchen cabinet. The most interesting aspect of the whole situation is that the Congress has even succeeded in corrupting and demoralising the CPI members after their last alliance with the Congress. Most glaring example is that of Mr. Rajni Patel in Bombay.

Another interesting example which I would like to point out to you is the reaction of some of the Congress and CPI members when the Wanchoo Committee Report on direct taxes was published. They promptly dubbed it as a Swatantra report. I think it will be an exercise in futility if any of us nourish the illusion that by our joining the Congress we will be able to change the heart and soul of the Congress Party which has been extinct for a long time.

I think that the disastrous defeat suffered by the Swatantra Party should prompt all of us to do some honest Soul-searching to enable us to come to the right conclusion as to why, inspite of our very sound set of principles and policies, we have not been able to attract the people towards us. I have come to the following conclusions after having toured extensively various places and having met a large number of rank and file and other people in various states.

(1) From 1959 to 1967, the main reason for our success in various States and in Parliament was that our top leadership after having presented to the people a first-class alternative programme to the Ruling Party attracted the imagination of some really respected and popular people from various States who joined the Party. We had people like Shri Bhailalbhai Patel, Raja of Ramgarh, Rajmata Gayatri Devi, Mr. Jinaraja Hogde and Mr. V.I. Menon from Mysore, Mr. R.N. Singh Deo of Orissa, and a number of other prominent personalities from Bombay. These people because of their popularity and respect they enjoyed personally managed to attract many more people in the Party and succeeded in winning a number of seats in various State Legislatures and the Lok Sabha. This process continued by and large till 1967. After that, barring a few honourable exceptions, not all of them could consolidate these gains by building up a grass-root organisation. Thus the decay in organisation started.

(2) The one most common complaint that I had from the rank and file and from outside about our Party's functioning was that our Party becomes active only at the time of elections and that no attention was paid to either contact the rank and file or to give them any programme of action and no sense of direction was coming from anywhere either from the Centre or from the States. While I am aware of the fact that many attempts have been made from the Central leadership in the past to give organisational and other guidance to the State Party with organisational matters and other programmes, I think merely issuing paper directives without any follow-up of action undertaken by frequent personal tours and contacts is one of the reasons why these directives did not evoke the desired response. I remember receiving a very interesting circular from you when you were the General Secretary about the manner in which financial resources in the Party could be raised at the State and other Primary levels. And yet no progress was made in this direction anywhere. The moral of the story is that constant supervision, encouragement and persistent follow-up of action is the key to success and not the satisfaction of having issued directives however sensible and eminent they may be. Complete lack of training to our rank and file about our Party's principles and policies and programme at the

State and Centre has also contributed to demoralisation amongst the rank and file.

I believe that only by a complete understanding of Swatantra's Principles and Policies by every one of us, we can succeed in building up emotional loyalties to the cause of Swatantra.

(3) The reason why we have failed to carry conviction with the people that we are not a party of and for the rich is because no serious thought has ever been given to project our principles and policies in a manner which will dispel the doubts in the minds of the people about our Party. Mass action, mass demonstration and agitations always have been frowned upon as taboo. In the Lok Sabha particularly, our members always concentrated more on economic issues and were always hesitant to expose corruption in high places when it concerned industrialists for fear of being misunderstood by them. With the virtual monopoly of the Press and other means of communication enjoyed by the Ruling Party it was not possible to spread our message to the maximum number of people by depending only on passing very carefully worded resolutions in closed door meetings.

There has hardly been any contact leave alone between Central leadership and the rank and file but in certain States also there has hardly been any contact between the State leadership and the rank and file. In certain States, I was shocked to discover that there has hardly been any contact between the State leadership and their elected MLAs.

These are some of the serious draw-backs which have contributed to our downfall. We will have to rebuild the Party from scratch. We must learn to change our image without sacrificing the basic principles of our Party. It is not possible to do that if we continue in the same fashion, viz., getting active only at the time of elections. We will have to educate public opinion on Swatantra values and Swatantra way of life. Mrs. Gandhi is helping us a great deal. Her brand of socialism has only succeeded in creating the monster of permit-quota-licence raj which has unleashed corruption on an unprecedented scale. In fact, the Swatantra Party will now have to fight the most pervert form of materialism which has been let loose by the most perverse kind of socialism of Mrs. Gandhi. It may take time for the people to realise how serious the problem is becoming before they become restless and start hating the system, but we must start acting from now onwards so that at a suitable opportunity we should be able to gain popular support from the people who will have been completely disillusioned by Mrs. Gandhi's socialism.

Let us not lose heart. Ours may be a struggle for a life time, but we must fight because the Swatantra cause is the only cause that is worth fighting for in the country today. "