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NK-SOMANI, MP

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Dear Shri Dandekar

1. It cannot be denied that the period after the last General Elections which witnessed sizable defections from the Party until the recent Gujarat incident has not proved good for the Party's general public image. Every political party has its own temporary rhythms of ups and downs, but we could certainly have avoided washing dirty linen in public. What is worse, there has hardly been any systematic attempt to re-forge our image and bring it to the general public's notice that all is not lost with the Party either in Gujarat or elsewhere.
2. The setback in Rajasthan after the recent by-elections has not been treated with any degree of serious stock-taking and morale-boosting by top leaders. The Maharaniji had to leave suddenly and the vacuum and despair permeated in the rank and file. Unlike this, the Congress has mustered its President, TNCC President, Ex-Chief Minister, Madras, to tour vast areas of Madras in the wake of its defeat at Tenkasi. Leadership can only prove its worth by providing direction and solace in times of need and this has been sorely neglected so far.
3. Our covert association with the Communists in supporting the DMK candidate in Tenkasi has also caused bewilderment and caustic comments in the public. Our stand has to be explained.
4. The other consistent charge against the Party is its negative role in some frontal national issues. We have disassociated ourselves with the National Integration Conference - probably for sound reasons, highlighting its ineffectiveness, but the people are not fully convinced whether our staying away from this helps matters any! The other step of boycotting the Planning Commission's exercises has also been misunderstood.

People at large believe that the Swatantra Party stands for "laissez faire" (most don't understand the term). Even the Prime Minister and her senior colleagues recently in the Lok Sabha were pleasantly surprised at Shri Piloo Mody's clarification that we don't stand for "no planning". If such a gap exists at the top-most level of the ruling party, others can hardly be blamed if they misunderstand our role. Hence a clearer enunciation of our policies could have been possible, if we, as the leading opposition party, could have submitted an alternative but comprehensive document.

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on "Approach to the Fourth Plan" (The official document on this subject, recently issued, is a feeble exercise in vagueness without studying in depth the extent and source of resources needed or available for the 4th plan).

I would strongly urge that the Party leaders should (even now) prepare and release a document on the next plan.

5. A common question in everyone's mind is: "What has Swatantra done in Orissa?" It must be stated here that our policies and performance has to be handled from a professional "communications and P.R." angle. I have been advocating that our achievements and improvements (howsoever meagre they be) must be systematically publicized if the people have to continue an abiding faith in our integrity and capability. A concrete suggestion of releasing special supplements in leading national dailies on the occasion of completion of one year's rule in Orissa was brought to your notice, but it seems it was not accepted.
6. A major mis-use of resources and talents seems to be in the existence of numerous periodicals and magazines in various parts of the country. This saps whatever little impact we can make and the leaders must take steps to run one English and Hindi periodical only - but in a proper manner. Language publications should also be streamlined and consolidated. A first step is to enlist all such party and pro-party publications in India. The Central Party office should be responsible to feed all news and material to this media list.
7. Our contact with 2 million university students and many million of young people is nil. This is the age group which has considerable part to play in the near future. All our top leaders should evolve a special programme of meeting and discussing as many youth groups as possible, not only in their own areas but in the rest of India.

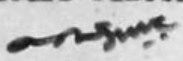
I am sorry this communication has turned out to be much longer than I had intended. I am sure if we considered these and other vital matters of importance at our national meets and more often and take renewed steps to invigorate the party structure, the lost ground will be recovered before long.

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In any case, the forthcoming by-elections and mid-term elections all over India should compe us to do something before long.

With regards!

Yours sincerely


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