

373

13th June, 1969

My dear Rajaji,

Our President has invited the B.K.D. to send one or two spokesmen to meet the National Executive of our Party when it meets in Madras on June 22, where no doubt the developments in connection with the merger of the Swatantra Party, Jana Sangh and B.K.D. will be reported and appropriate decisions taken. Since I will not be present at the meeting, I think it may be useful if I share with you certain impressions I have gathered as a result of the negotiations in Delhi.

2. In the press release put out on the 27th, which was drafted by me, the progress made on the first day was described as "satisfactory," and indeed that was so. As can be seen from the note of the proceedings, which was also drafted by me and settled at the meeting on the morning of the 27th, except on the subject of Kashmir, on which there was failure to agree, it should be possible for the points of view of the three parties to be reconciled if there is a genuine desire for merger on all sides. Unfortunately, the fact has to be faced that not all elements in the Jana Sangh have any such desire.

3. I fear the Jana Sangh has no intention of participating at present in such a merger as was contemplated. This is clear from the terms of the resolution they passed in Bombay, from the statements made at the meeting in Delhi where, except for Balraj Madhok, the other two Jana Sangh spokesmen kept on stressing the need for joint action and "coming closer together," while showing a marked reluctance to talk about merger. There is also the editorial article in the Organiser of May 31, 1969, which conclusively ends up by saying that "Politics is the art of the possible and, in the Indian political context, an alliance seems possible but a merger does not." In the same article a little earlier, the Organiser had given its version of what the various parties stand for as follows: "While the P.S.P. stands for socialism, the S.S.P. stands for more socialism, the Jana Sangh for nationalism, the Swatantra Party for property rights and the B.K.D. for, shall we say, Charan Singh."

4. Above all, Vajpayee's absence from the Delhi meeting is conclusive evidence of the lack of seriousness on the part of the Jana Sangh. It is Vajpayee's absence from the meeting on the first day, namely, May 26, that has to be clearly understood. The meeting on that day had been specifically fixed to enable him to take part in the discussions. He was away abroad during the earlier meeting when Balraj Madhok and others were present. The fact that he chose to go all the way to Hubli for a routine by-election there and gave it more importance than the merger talks shows quite clearly the mind of the ruling circles in the Jana Sangh. The conclusion drawn by one of the journals that commented on this

development was: "In other words the Jana Sangh cared more for a single Assembly by election than Charan Singh's serious All India project of forging unity of 'nationalist and democratic forces to confront the forces of subversion and disruption.' "

5. As it happens, I ran into Vajpayee at the Bombay airport early morning on Monday the 26th. I assumed he was going to Delhi, but he corrected me and told me he was going to Hubli. I immediately told him what a painful effect this would have not only on those participating in the discussions but also on the general public. He then assured me that he would join the talks in Delhi on the morning of Tuesday the 27th. A perusal of the IAC time table makes it quite clear that he could not possibly have done so even if he had not fallen ill, as no plane service could have brought him back from Hubli to Delhi in time for the discussions on Tuesday morning. The talks were scheduled to finish that day and my leaving for Europe on the 28th had no relevance.

6. In this context, the attitude of the Jana Sangh in the Lok Sabha during the past two years needs to be examined. I think it is correct to say that on a large number of economic and political issues, the Jana Sangh chose to identify itself with the Communist and Socialist parties and to place the maximum possible distance between itself and the Swatantra Party, on several occasions. An examination of the proceedings of Parliament and the Division Lists during the last two years would show that the Jana Sangh has deliberately adopted an attitude of demagogic "Leftism" on various economic issues and that its opposition to Communism is not to be depended upon. In the case of the dismissal of the U.P. Government in Bengal, they had actually gone along with the Communists. More recently, the Jana Sangh declined to see the Home Minister even to discuss the possibility of banning the Naxalite Communists. In the Delhi discussions, the Jana Sangh spokesmen said that, while they were opposed to communism, they were not for banning the Communist parties. Other instances are the Jana Sangh support to the illegal strike of the Central Government employees and its support to the abolition of the Managing Agency system during the recent discussion on the Companies Bill.

7. All this could have been overlooked if the Jana Sangh had shown a desire to let bygones be bygones and to readjust their attitude. In the light of the latest developments, however, no purpose would be served in overlooking the considerable gulf in sentiment and feeling that exists between the two parties on the basic issues of Modernism vs. obscurantism, a non-denominational as opposed to a communal approach, and the absence of a consistent opposition to Statism on the part of the Jana Sangh. The Statesman editorial of 31st May is not very far wrong when it asks: "What has the Swatantra Party, which is secular and cosmopolitan, in common with the Jana Sangh's communal and chauvinistic position?" *politics?*

8. On the controversy that has developed since the Delhi meeting,

I may mention that it was Mr. Charan Singh who proposed the adjournment of the talks sine die as a result of Vajpayee's failure to turn up on the second day. This suggestion was immediately supported by Professor Ramo. My own contribution was to get those present to agree to the text of a more positive release to the press which not only described the talks as "satisfactory" but also mentioned that "the talks would be resumed after an interval of time that would enable the spokesmen of the three parties to consult their colleagues in regard to the various issues that had been discussed." I had hoped at that time that the ill-effects of the setback that had taken place could thus be avoided but, unfortunately, this has not happened.

9. In so far as what could be done from now is concerned, my own feeling is that, unless the JanaSangh give clear evidence of a change of heart (it is too late now to expect an apology from Vajpayee, though that is due), there should be no question of continuing these talks. The ball is quite clearly in their court.

10. I feel that no purpose would be served in discussing with the Jana Sangh anything short of merger because both past experience and present circumstances indicate that any such half-hearted steps will be misleading and will, while stopping the Party from developing its own organisation, yield no positive or long-term results.

11. In so far as the B.K.D. is concerned, I think we should discuss the question of merger with them but, in the light of what has happened, it would be wise to thrash out and arrive at an agreed programme before the two parties can be expected to dissolve themselves and merge into one.

Yours sincerely,

(M. R. Masani)

Mr. C. Rajagopalachari,  
Naroroji Road,  
Chetput,  
Madras 31.

c.c. Dr. R. C. Cooper

Mr. N. Sandaker