

BIHARTIYA KRANTI DAL

Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee, President, Bhartiya Jan Sangh has been pleased to issue a reply to a resolution of BKD deciding to close further talks with Jan Sangh with regard to formation of a new party, but I am sorry to note the reply as cast in a tone and language which could have well been avoided. Our resolution contained not a single word to which exception could not possibly be taken. BKD had no choice but to take the decision it did. The facts are few and easily told:

A week after BKD had passed its resolution of March 23, Shri Prakash Vir Shastri invited leaders of Jan Sangh, Swatantra and PSP to his residence for a talk. Swatantra leaders and Rajmata of Gwalior, who was also pleased to participate, were of the opinion that in view of gravity of the situation that faced the country, all those parties which agreed on democracy and nationalism, should first coalesce together to form a new party and talk about the policies and programmes later. Shri Vajpayee was, however, of the view that it was 'Issues' which should first be settled. After I explained BK D reading of the political situation somewhat in detail, he agreed and said that he would place the matter before his party which was meeting in the 4th week of April in Bombay. As a result, the Jan Sangh passed a resolution welcoming our proposal.

On May 12, Shri Pitamber Das, Vice President, Shri Sunder Singh Bhandari, General Secretary and Shri Balraj Madhok of the Jan Sangh, Prof. Ranga and Shri Massani of the Swatantra and Shri Talat Mal Jain, Vice President, Shri Prakash Vir Shastri, General Secretary, Shri Raghbir Singh Shastri and I on behalf of BKD met together at U.P. Niwas. We stressed the desirability of starting the talks immediately and, if possible, finish them off before the Parliament adjourned for the Monsoon Session on May 17th. The Jan Sangh leaders pleaded their inability inasmuch as their President, Shri Atal Behari Vajpayee was away to Germany and they could not hold talks or take any decision in his absence. Shri Vajpayee was expected to return on 16th May. So, the Jan Sangh leaders agreed to May 26th and 27th for the talks.

On my arrival here in Delhi on May 26th, a letter on behalf of Shri Vajpayee was placed in my hands saying that he had to go to Hubli on May 26th in connection with a by-election to the Assembly and would try to return the next morning. That he wanted to cancel the programme, but did not succeed. Now, this struck us somewhat as odd, but its full implications dawned upon us only on May 27th when we found that no information of his return was available at his residence even till 10.30 A.M. The plane from Bombay was due at 9.30 A.M.

Now, May 26th and 27th had been fixed with the consent of the General Secretary of the Jan Sangh. Evidently, the Hubli programme was not on their list on May 12th. If it was, they hoped it could be changed or cancelled. If they did not change it or fixed it only after Shri Vajpayee's return on May 16th, as, we understand, they actually did, they could have very well informed us well in advance and asked for some other dates for the talks. They did nothing of the kind. Not only the President of the Jan Sangh could be present; they did not consider the talks important enough even for the presence of their Vice-President or General Secretary, both of whom were present on May 12th.

During the talks on May 26th on receipt of advance copies of the 'Swarajya' which contained Rajaji's appeal to the Jan Sangh for an unconditional merger, one of their representatives remarked that if the merger was not possible, then the three parties could at least arrive at a working arrangement inside the Parliament.

Both the leaders of Swatantra, Prof. Ranga and Shri Massani, as well as Shri Takhat Mal Jain and I protested and said that we envisaged nothing short of emergence of a new party and that is what the BKD resolution had demanded and that there was no meaning in the talks if merger was ruled out. At this the Jan Sangh kept quiet. It was after the talks had been postponed sine die explicitly on account of Shri Vajpayee's absence and a hand-out released to the Press on May 27th that one of the representatives of the Jan Sangh categorically stated that merger was just not on their agenda today. If at all, it could come about only in the course of time as a result, mainly of joint working in the Legislatures etc. This was in the course of informal talks when we were waiting for lunch. At this Prof. Ranga suggested to me that if the Jan Sangh was not prepared for the merger, then there should be no difficulty in the Swatantra and BKD coming together to form a new party. He also invited me to the meeting of their Executive which was scheduled to be held in Madras by end of June. I said I would let him know after I had consulted my friends.

Putting two and two together, we came to the conclusion that it was no use pursuing the talks with the Jan Sangh. That is why we came to pass the resolution.

As far as Jan Sangh Chief's claim that their representatives had full powers, well, although it is not very relevant for our purpose today, the Jan Sangh representatives to the talks must be knowing better. Our information is that their brief was limited.

Dated 30-5-69

Sd/- Charan Singh
Chairman