

15th May 1961

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I write to you in your capacity of the chief of the Tata Industrial concerns and to seek your attention and assistance to the Swatantra Party. You are no doubt aware of the principles on which this Party has been founded and organised and its aims and objects in the political life of the country. I shall not load this letter with any discussion of those aims, objects and principles but content myself with saying that no lover of the country, no one believing in parliamentary democracy and its essential requisites can fail to see the absolute necessity of an opposition party, being in position in parliament and the local legislatures, and in the country, whose presence, and activities will act as a check on the policies, programmes and methods of the ruling party. It is unnecessary to point out to you what is common knowledge that the other non-Congress parties now functioning in the country far from acting as checks actually serve to push the ruling party further and faster in the same direction.

You are aware how the Swatantra Party is suffering from many handicaps in the material aspects associated with party organization and how on the other hand the ruling party enjoys enormous advantages in the same respect besides commanding the opportunities and scope available to a party in power. We tried our best to bring about a legal ban against the exploitation of company funds for the use of any political party but the Government prevented any such prohibition coming into operation. We are compelled therefore to approach the fairminded and politically mature section among those who manage company affairs and company funds to assist us in bringing into existence a real opposition party that will act as a healthy countervailing force against the socialist ruling party. The Swatantra Party while it stands no less than the Congress for the welfare of the people and particularly of the poorer section thereof, will act as a healthy check on rash, hasty and illconsidered policies as well on mismanagement and wasteful and unwise methods of administration. It is as keen to achieve the objects stated in the Constitution of India as the Congress Party but without nullifying the fundamental rights solemnly guaranteed in the Constitution.

I therefore request that even if you help the ruling party with funds for its political and electioneering activities, it would also be just and proper for you to help a party that seeks to build an efficient check on its errors. While you may exercise your judgment and help the party in power, I respectfully urge that in the interest of good government and parliamentary democracy the national interests in general as well as the particular interests of those engaged in the industrial and commercial progress of the country justify adequate assistance being also given to efforts calculated to build up and bring an opposition party into effective operation. Indeed I claim your generous help in proportion to the greater difficulties and handicaps such a movement suffers from, by reason of the Congress party being in office and in the enjoyment of power incidental in a "Welfare State".

I hope I have not overstated our claims and seek your utmost sympathy and assistance. Your decision will serve to give a lead to all others who are like you engaged in the patriotic work of promoting the prosperity of the country. No democracy can govern well in the absence of a strong opposition and I trust you will deeply consider the situation and come to assistance.

I felt it my duty in spite of all natural handicaps to take up this cause in the interests of true parliamentary democracy and good government, over-ruling personal considerations pointing towards retirement and a peaceful nonpolitical life. I appeal to you to assist me in this task so that it may not end in failure for want of material cooperation on the part of those who are in the best position to understand the need for this effort. This letter has grown longer than I had intended, but I hope I have not tired you.

Mr. J. R. D. Tata
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(true copy)