

CONFIDENTIAL

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Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan,
Chaupatty Road,
Bombay 7.

May 21, 1968.

To: Members of the General Council:

Dear friend:

I am sorry, my poor state of health prevents me from attending the meeting of the General Council in Madras.

I have received Shri Masani's letter of May, 15, to the members of the General Council, which I presume all of you must have read. His letter makes painful reading. He raises important issues concerning the Party. Since I would not be present to express my views on this matter, I thought I should convey them to you.

Rajaji, Ranga and Masani founded this political party—I joined them a little later with several others—not because we were a frustrated bunch of politicians as our opponents tried to make out, but out of a genuine conviction that, unless people like us took a firm stand against the steady erosion of moral and ethical values in politics and resist the inroads into the freedom of the individual by the State in the guise of Socialism, democracy in this country would be a thing of the past.

When we founded the Party, we emphasised that we stood for *dharma*; that we recognised the superiority of means over ends, and that our Party would not be obsessed with the mere pursuit of power. We were convinced that, even while paying public homage to Gandhiji's teachings, the Congress Party had chosen to ignore his philosophy and we were deter-

mined not to let that happen. We swore by Constitutional methods and proclaimed with pride the Statement of Policy adopted at the first National Convention at Patna in March 1960: we claimed that "we were a Party with a difference".

India's politics to day, to say the least, is deplorable. The politics of power has become the sole obsession of the politicians. Numbers count for everything. Bribery and corruption is indulged in shamelessly. The people have nothing but distrust of the politicians.

The developments within our Party in Gujarat during the biennial election to the Rajya Sabha from that State are distressing. There was a total disregard for ethics and morality—a total defiance of the Party's discipline. By nominating and securing the victory of a rebel candidate who was asked to withdraw his nomination by the Central Parliamentary Board, incalculable harm has been done to the Party's prestige and honour.

On what grounds have we been fighting for the retention of Privy Purses?—on the ground that abolishing Privy Purses would mean a violation of a pledge. But, within our own Party, members have deliberately broken a promise. No explanations can hide the fact that some members of the Party actively strove and succeeded in breaking a pledge given by the Party.

I have perused the Minutes of the meeting of the National Executive held in New Delhi on March 14, 1968, and was disappointed especially with their decision that, whatever the disciplinary action, it would not mean expulsion. This is a peculiar decision. It can mean only one thing—that the National Executive is prepared to pay every price in ethics and discipline to retain a few M.L.A.s.

I for one have always felt that the Swatantra Party's path is a long and arduous one. We are a middle-of-the-road Party eschewing all kinds of emotional appeals that would bring instant attraction. Our role is primarily one of political educa-

tion. The moment we take to the politics of expediency, we abandon the *raison d'être* for the Party's very existence.

When I heard about the debacle in Gujarat and Masani's resignation, I wrote in atonement to Rajaji expressing my strong feeling that the persons guilty of having engineered this debacle should be expelled. I emphasised that whatever be the cost, we should adhere to our principles—a fact which has won us praise even from Western observers.

I am glad to say that Rajaji agreed with me. I enclose copy of my letter to him and his reply.

Masani refers to Bhagwanjibhai Patel in regard to whom an Enquiry Committee has come to the conclusion that he actively worked against the Party's Parliamentary and Assembly candidates in Rajkot. Here again is a case of indiscipline of the worst kind. The National Executive should not hesitate in removing such a person.

Stern action to maintain the Party's purity would undoubtedly involve reduction in numbers. But, have we not on earlier occasions taken strong moral decisions which have reduced our numbers? I am sure, all of you remember about the Raja of Ramgarh who was once the President of the Bihar State Unit. He acted in the most indisciplined manner and flouted central authority at will.

The Party entrusted me with the task of enquiring into his activities. On the basis of the evidence before me, I recommended the severest action, which was the dissolution of the Bihar State Executive. We subsequently expelled him from the Party when we found out that, even while he was explaining his conduct to us, he had approached the Congress Party for admission.

Action against Ramgarh cost us the entire legislative strength in Bihar. I will not say that the State Unit was destroyed because there never was a Swatantra Party Unit in Bihar during Ramgarh's regime. But the Party had no hesi-

tation whatsoever in affirming its faith in quality rather than in quantity.

In his letter Masani refers to the General Council's resolution of February 1965. I was present at that meeting and was completely in agreement with that resolution which was moved by the present Chief Minister of Orissa, Shri R. N. Singh Deo, and was unanimously adopted.

Our Party is not a confederacy of autonomous units. It is not as if Units at the State level got together and decided to form a Party. The Swatantra Party is one Party, and State Units are its branches. There is no question of the Party at the national level "interfering" in the affairs of its branches. How can there be "interference" when there is only one Party? This is absolutely fundamental. This is what the General Council's resolution of 1965 emphasised. Abandon this position and we shall no longer be a well-knit national Party, but a convenient coalition of small units, each going in its own way.

We are also not a club for contesting elections. Elections will come and go; we might win or lose; but the Party will go on. For the Party presents an ideal; a way of thinking. It has continuity. Just as Ministers come and go, but the nation continues to exist, so also in a Party, office-bearers may come and go, but the Party will continue as an entity.

I am saying this because in the Gujarat affair, some M.L.As are reported to have argued that the promise given to Shri Babubhai Vaidya was no longer valid because it had been made by the Party's M.L.As in the last Assembly. This is an absurd proposition.

We seem to be drifting towards a general demoralisation in our public life. Unless we prove our superiority in terms of our loyalty to principles and morality; unless we demonstrate in no uncertain terms that what we are interested in is not the immediate achievement of power, but adherence

to moral and ethical standards which alone can contribute to the preservation of democratic institutions, I am afraid our existence as a political Party would be of no use to our people or to our country.

The tragedy of present-day India is that all the major political parties—old and new—are, step by step, ceasing to be *real* all-India parties with the courage to enforce discipline on recalcitrant State units. Shall we also go with the wind?

I have been a Vice-President of the Party all these years. My health, however, has denied me the privilege of attending the meetings of the Party. I have perhaps forfeited my right to put my point of view with emphasis. But I keenly feel that the decisions taken by this meeting of the General Council will decide the future of the Party.

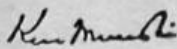
Since it became difficult for me to travel as I used to, I know that I am not of much use to the Party, I am there because of the principles adumbrated in the Manifesto, to which I was a party, and of my personal loyalty to Rajaji, and I cannot help sharing my thoughts with you which bear directly on the principles underlined in the Manifesto.

I know that my being a member of the Party or not is not going to affect the fortunes of the Party.

If the considerations that I have put before the General Council do not carry weight, I will be driven, unwillingly, to ask Rajaji to release me from the promise which I gave him to stand by the Party.

With good wishes,

Yours sincerely,



Encl: 2

Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan,
Chaupatty Road,
Bombay 7.

April 4, 1968.

My dear Rajaji,

You must have received a copy of Masani's circular letter of March 29.

I had a full report of what happened from Raju. In my view we should expel the rebels.

We may be few but we must stand for our principles. In fact foreign writers have noticed that Swatantra Party is the only Party in India which stands for definite principles regardless of temporary advantage.

With affectionate regards,

Yours very sincerely,

Sd/-

(K. M. Munshi)

Shri C. Rajagopalachari,
Naoroji Road,
Kilpauk,
MADRAS 10.

(Copy)

C. RAJAGOPALACHARI

Naoroji Road, Kilpauk
MADRAS-10

6th April 1968

My dear Munshi,

Thank you for your letter of April 4 about the Gujarat rebels. I agree with you.

Yours sincerely,

Sd/- C. Rajagopalachari

Shri K. M. Munshi
Bombay.

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