

4556

Not for publication before May 15

May 13, 1968.

My dear Dandekar,

I have received your letter of April 22, 1968, and have given it careful consideration.

Now I ~~do~~ agree with you and our colleagues on the National Executive of our Party that "in view of disciplinary action having been initiated against Mahida and the five persons who are known to have supported his candidature there remained no further cause for such a drastic act of atonement" by me as resignation from the National Executive and Parliamentary Board of the Party. In my earlier letter of April 10, I had made it clear that my resignation was final and was not intended to influence in any way the decisions of our National Executive. In any event, the decisions of the National Executive at its meeting in Delhi on April 13 and 14, far from leading me to the conclusion you suggest, confirm my feeling that I should adhere to the action I have taken.

The National Executive has failed to take the obvious steps that were called for in order to restore the credibility of the Party in Gujarat and a measure of discipline within its ranks. The minutes record something that was not mentioned to the press, namely, the intention of the Executive not to resort to any serious disciplinary action, such as expulsion, against the rebels even before notices to show cause were served on them! Further, the Executive appear to have ignored the failure of duty on the part of the Leader of the Opposition and the President and General Secretary of the State unit in Gujarat as also of certain Members of Parliament, one of them a member of the National Executive, who went to Ahmedabad a day or two prior to the elections to work against the Party's candidate. It seems to me, therefore, that the National Executive has in fact purported to court martial the corporals who were guilty while turning a blind eye to the colonels and captains who were involved. Would it be unfair to consider this kind of disciplinary action mere eyewash?

In so far as our Gujarat colleagues are concerned, the statement of the President of the Gujarat Party on April 15 dismissing the entire incident as a mere "misunderstanding" and his attack on the victim of our Party's breach of faith whom he charged with "ingratitude" for venturing to write to Rajaji stating the facts shows not the slightest awareness of misconduct or a desire to atone for it.

Quite apart from the failure to take an ethical stand, the attempt to turn a blind eye to what has happened is somewhat ostrich-like in that it shows a lack of political acumen about what is needed to restore the shattered image of the Party in the eyes of the people

Contd.....2

of Gujarat. I hope we are not going to develop the same cynicism about the sanctity of the Party's pledged word and the same contempt for the electorate which the Congress Party have been showing, with results with which we are all familiar. People are hankering for a little idealism and ethics in our politics and these they are not getting today. The Swatantra Party could supply these missing elements if it made up its mind to do so. I hope the time will come when the Party will appreciate that having a few spokesmen in whom the people have faith is even more important than adding to the number of its M.P.s and M.L.A.s.

As you are aware, the Party system and Parliamentary democracy are on trial and larger and larger numbers of people are losing faith in political parties and in the democratic process. I am sure you appreciate that, if our democratic Constitution is wrecked and the country turns to some form of authoritarianism, there will be very little scope left for the Swatantra Party or any other Party in the country. Therefore, it is more than ever necessary that all of us should put the country before Party.

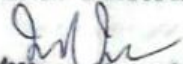
In these circumstances, I feel I can do more for our own Party and the maintenance of democratic processes by staying outside the National Executive and the Parliamentary Board. I propose to do what I can in the way of what may be called "constructive work", such as training programmes for the building of a cadre of young workers. I shall continue to spread the Party's excellent principles both in Parliament and outside. I shall be ready to campaign for good candidates put up by the Party. In this way, I shall also be free to give expression to the suppressed feelings of the rank and file many of whom are not happy with the state of the Party.

If and when the Party realises the need for an acceptance of ethical and disciplined functioning, when it agrees that the means must be as clean as the ends, that it is quality and not quantity that counts and that people have a right to be told the truth, I shall be ready to respond to its call to share responsibility for guiding its work and organisation.

For these reasons, I shall be obliged if you will now kindly report my resignation from the National Executive to the General Council of the Party so that it may be able to consider the issues that arise when it meets in Madras on 1st June.

As there have been some ill-informed comments in the press and as you have been good enough to agree to my releasing to the press your letter of April 22 and my reply, I am doing so now.

Yours sincerely,


(Minoo Masani)

Mr. N. Dandekar, M.P.,
General Secretary,
Swatantra Party,
Bombay.