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19.6.75

My dear Palkhiwala,

It was good of you to come and meet me. I told you that I wanted to meet you as a friend. There are so few people of understanding in this country that one does not like to miss an opportunity to meet any of them.

In desiring to meet you I had no advise to give you on any professional matters. But as you yourself opened this topic, I could not avoid expressing my opinion to one whom I have always considered a public man of integrity. I hope that you will not mind if I bring to your notice one other consideration.

The way she has been allowing propaganda to be freely carried on in her favour shows that she does not care about what happens to the country. This propaganda might lead to counter demonstrations imperilling the peace of the country. This may lead to rioting, bloodshed and shooting by the police. If that happens it will not be the politicians on either side who will suffer, but the poor innocent people who have nothing to do with the whole affair. This is what happened in the past. She appears to be in a desperate mood. If that mood continues she may decide to go to the Mujib way in Bangladesh. I would not like you to be held in any way responsible for that contingency. This may appear to you an imaginery fear, but these days anything can happen. If she decides to go the Mujib way, poor and ignorant as our people are, there may be no resistance.

I hope you will not mind my drawing your attention to this aspect of the problem.

With regards and best wishes,

Yours very sincerely,

J.B.KRIPALANI

Note: This letter, as the date will show, was written to Shri Palkhiwala before he went to Delhi, to defend Mrs. Gandhi of the charges of corruption. If there had been counter demonstrations by the opposition parties, rivers of innocent blood would have flown in Delhi. For this the nation should be thankful to the parties.

8.7.1975

Congress House, V.P.Road, Bombay 4

Dear Editor,

In what I am writing for your esteemed paper, I do not want to discuss the merits of the Emergency declared on the 26th of last month. What I write may be useful to the Government.

There are persistent rumours that Morarji Desai and Jaya Prakash are fasting unto death. There is also a rumour that the latter is no more among the living. I feel that the Government in their own interests should say something giving the facts. It would be better if the condition of their health is given under the signature of some eminent doctor or doctors.

It will be remembered that even the foreign imperial government had announced that fast of Gandhiji during the Quit India Movement when the last global war was going on, and the situation was critical. Dr. Gilder was transferred from Yeravda Jail to Aga Khan's Palace. Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy went from Calcutta and was in constant attendance upon Gandhiji. When his condition became critical, regulated crowds of visitors was allowed to see him.

I hope that the national Government of India in the matter will do no less than the foreign Government. I am sure this 'letter of mine' does not require any reference to the censors.

Yours faithfully,

sd^X J.B.Kripalani

Camp: Congress House,
V.P.Road, Bombay-4

8th July 1975

Dear Prime Minister,

I am sending you herewith copy of the letter I have addressed to the Press. If you feel that anything is to be done, in the interests of the Government, apart from the interests of the people, you will please do the needful in the matter.

Yours sincerely,

Sd/ J.B.Kripalani

Smt. Indira Gandhi,
Prime Minister of India
New Delhi.

Prime Minister

New Delhi July 14 1975

No. PMH/75

Dear Acharya Kripalani,

I have received your letter of 8th July.

You must have been in the newspapers that no one has or is on fast. Sir Jay Prakash Narayan and Shri Morarji Desai are well.

Yours sincerely,

Sd/- Indira Gandhi

Acharya Kripalani,
A-4, Sarvodaya Enclave
New Delhi 110 017.

Personal

Phone: 678837
A-4 Sarvodaya Enclave
New Delhi 110 017

9th September 1975

Many non-political friends have asked me, as the oldest living politician of the pre-Independence era, to approach you about the present political situation in the country. It would be worthwhile to meet you if you think it is time to have a fresh look at the political situation. It is now more than two months and a half that the proclamation of emergency was made.

If, however, you think the time is not yet ripe for any profitable reassessment of the situation, I would not like needlessly to take your precious time.

(J.B.Kripalani)

Smt. Indira Gandhi,
Prime Minister,
Government of India
New Delhi.

No reply

3rd December 1975

Dear Prime Minister,

You will recall my writing to you about the rumour afloat concerning the health of Jayaprakash and Morarji Bhai.

In your reply of the 14th July, you wrote: "You must have seen in the newspapers that no one has been or is on fast. Sri Jayaprakash Narayan and Sri Morarji Desai are well". But, I wonder if you were then posted with full information about Jayaprakash's health. His brother, who had seen him, told me that his health was none too good and that solitary confinement was adversely affecting it. Subsequent reports also were far from reassuring. Ultimately, he had to be released on a month's parole. From all accounts, by then both his kidneys had suffered grave damage. The latest reports, as you must have learnt, only confirm the fears expressed earlier.

I met Shri Atal Behari Vajpayee at the All India Medical Institute a couple of days back. After his arrest, he has undergone an appendicitis operation and a major one for slipped disc. One does not know how long it will take him to get well again.

I understand that Shri Nabakrishna Chowdhary, former Chief Minister of Orissa and a highly respected person, suffered a stroke in detention and is now lying paralysed, after being released on parole.

One can understand the arrest and detention without trial of politicians for various offences committed or to be committed. But such detention should not impair their health seriously. Even the foreign imperial government thrice released Gandhiji on grounds of health, once even when their empire was in peril. Can our democratic government not do the same? Most of the leaders, if not all, are past middle age. Their continued detention may permanently impair their health.

May I suggest, in the name of humanity, that the authorities should release all the leaders and, if it is thought necessary, open a dialogue with them for restoring normalcy! This is the more necessary since the authorities claim that there is peace in the country and things are going on smoothly.

Yours sincerely,
Sd/ J.B.Kripalani

Smt. Indira Gandhi,
Prime Minister
Government of India
New Delhi.

PRIME MINISTER
New Delhi
December 6, 1975

Dear Shri Kripalani,

I have your letter dated 3rd December, 1975, regarding Shri Jayaprakash Narayan, Shri Morarji Desai and some others.

Shri Jayaprakash Narayan who was detained on 20th June, 1976, was immediately moved to the Government Rest House in Sonā, Haryana, on the borders of Delhi. On 29th June, he was brought to the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Delhi, for treatment of "ischaemic heart disease". He was discharged from the Institute on 1st July and moved to the Post Graduate Institute of Medical Education Chandigarh, as that was a quieter place. There he asked for a cottage. That arrangement was made. Whenever necessary, he was taken to the Institute and given necessary medical attention for his old complaints. As you know, in April-May 1974, he had undergone treatment at the Christian Medical College Hospital at Vellore when they had noticed prostatic hypertrophy, diabetic heart disease and prolonged urinary infection.

After he was released on parole on the 12th November, 1975, Shri Jayaprakash Narayan underwent treatment for a brief period at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Delhi. Of his own choice, he is now receiving treatment at the Jaslok Hospital, Bombay. His detention order was revoked on the 4th December 1975. While he was under custody in Chandigarh, his personal servant, close relations and his lawyers had facilities to meet him periodically. He was provided the normal facilities of newspapers and similar other material. It is not correct to say that he was kept under solitary confinement there.

Mr. Morarji Desai is in normal health and is being looked after.

Shri A.B. Vajpayee had an operation for appendicitis in the Government hospital in Mangalore in July 1975. When later, at his own request, he was moved to the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Delhi, his old complaints of pain in the back was investigated and a surgical operation performed on the 16th November, 1975. At present he is on parole and is progressing well after the operation. I am told that there is no cause for concern. On both occasions, he has been permitted to have attendants of his choice to look after him.

We are in touch with the Government of Orissa regarding Shri Nabakrushna Chowdhary's case. He was recently released from detention and preliminary reports indicate that there is no cause for anxiety regarding his health. However, we are obtaining further details.

As I have said earlier, we are aware of the need for special medical facilities for the health of detenus who are of advanced age, and necessary arrangements are made for this purpose wherever called for.

I hope you yourself are well.

Yours sincerely,

Sd/- Indira Gandhi

Shri J.B. Kripalani,
A-4, Sarvodaya Enclave,
Sri Aurobindo Marg,
New Delhi.

Phone: 678837

J.B. Kripalani,
A-4, Sarvodaya Enclave
New Delhi - 17

9 December 1975

Dear Prime Minister,

I thank you for the prompt reply you have given to my letter of the 3rd inst. and the kind enquiries you have made about my health. I am as well as a man of my age can reasonably be expect to be.

I am, however, sorry you have in your letter of 6th December said nothing about the suggestion I had made in my letter that on humanitarian grounds "the authorities should release all the leaders and if it is thought necessary to open a dialogue with them for restoring normalcy. This is all the more necessary since the authorities claim that there is peace in the country and things are going on smoothly".

May I suggest that you will kindly give due consideration to this request of mine and inform me as to what the authorities propose to do in the matter.

Sd/-

J.B.Kripalani

Smt. Indira Gaddhi,
Prime Minister,
Government of India,
New Delhi.

(No reply. No acknowledgment)

Who Is To Bell The Cat

By

J. B. KRIPALANI

Whatever advance may have been made in the wake of the emergency in our economic and social life, there is little doubt that, in the political life of the country, there is yet a great tension. The authorities claim that there is peace in the country and there has been no occasion for them to requisition the services of the armed forces. But, they also say that conditions have not yet become normal and there is a likelihood of internal conflict and external danger from land, sea, air and of course from the underground - The authorities cannot have it both ways, that is, claim that there is peace in the country and yet there is no peace and that the emergency must continue ! However, as long as it continues, it cannot be said that political conditions in the country are normal. If they are not, a method must be found to bring about normalcy. Now is that to be done ? Some action in this direction has to be taken. Who is to take this action ? Obviously, either the authorities or the leaders of the opposition parties. The leaders of the opposition parties are in Jail. Their followers cannot act without them. Even if they did, their decisions will carry no weight. The followers can speak only as individuals and some of them have so spoken to no purpose.

If any effective action for bringing about normalcy is to be taken, or proposals made therefor, they must come from the leaders of the opposition parties concerned. But, the leaders cannot meet, as they are in different jails. Even the places of their detention are not known; this was stated by the Public Prosecutor the other day in a court in Poona about Morarji Desai, who was called as a prosecution witness ! However, if the leaders' advice is to prevail with the followers, they must keep their peace formula before the authorities as free men and women; otherwise, it may be considered that their decision was motivated by the desire to avoid the inconveniences, if not the hardships, of jail life. But we are told that they cannot be released till the emergency is lifted ! This presents a deadlock so far as the leaders are concerned.

In the absence of the leaders of the opposition parties, who can give the formula for the restoration of normalcy in the political life of the country ? Obviously, it is the Government. It has upto this time formulated no conditions for the restoration of peace.

However, let us suppose that one of these days the Government is able to formulate the terms of peace. Who is to

accept them ? Surely not the people. It is convenient to talk of the people. Even judgments in judicial proceedings can be left to them and so too the changes in the constitution or the drawing up of a new constitution! But, can people formulate the terms of an agreement between the Government and the opposition parties ? The people are an incoherent mass. They can act only through an organisation. What is the organisation through which the people can formulate the terms of peace, between the authorities and the opposition parties ? They cannot obviously make the Parliament their spokesmen for the simple reason that today they Parliament is virtually the Government in power. Even if it were not so, it has already in this session given its verdict that the emergency must continue ! If it continues, it means the leaders must remain in jails. How can there be a free settlement between the jailor and the prisoner ? Even if that were possible, it will always be suspect. Such a settlement will not bring a heart-to-heart unity or political peace in the country. Or, do the authorities want the detained leaders to come before them in sack cloth and ashes and declare their error and abandon their faith in Satyagraha as a civilised substitute for violence and war ! If they want the leaders to do that, let them say so. Even then, they must let them first meet as free men and take counsel with each other, if not with their followers to appear in that style before the authorities.

The authorities, when they say that the emergency will not be continued a minute after it is felt to be necessary, are merely using words to confuse the real issue. The leaders must first be taken out of jails, if anything worthwhile is to be attempted.

Even though the authorities and the member of the ruling party consider the detained leaders as fascists or their friends, as anti-democratic and enemies of the country, the public at large will never consider them so. Let Hetendra Desai say anything about Morarji but no Gujarati worth his name will consider him a fascist, a believer in violence or an enemy of democracy or the country. Few in India, except those in the charmed circle of the Prime Minister, will consider Jayaprakash as a fascist or a believer in violence or a tool in the hands of fascist and communalists. He will ever be considered a patriot, who has shown his loyalty to the country by his sufferings and sacrifice. He was a socialist long before Congress accepted socialism as its creed. Even the leaders of the Jan Sangh, however they may be described by those

in authority and their followers, will never be considered as wanting in patriotism. Anyway, no man with any impartial judgment will consider them as enemies of the country ! If they were such enemies, their party should have been banned as an unlawful organisation like some other parties which have been so declared !

If I have not read world history in vain, I can say with confidence that, as soon as the jail gates are opened, the detained leaders will get such a popular ovation that will leave their present detractors and maligners gaping in astonishment. But, perhaps, many of them will that day be found among the joyous and cheering crowds !

(J.B.Kripalani)