

Swatantra Party

CENTRAL OFFICE

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From: 18 Ferrozshah Road,
NEW DELHI-1.
22nd May, 1968.

When replying, please quote our Reference No. SPC-MRM

My dear Masani,

Re: Your Resignation from National
Executive and Central Parliamentary
Board.

I have your letter of May 13, 1968 in reply to mine of April 22, 1968. And I am bound to say I now regret having agreed to your releasing our correspondence to the press without first seeing your reply.

2. Your downright condemnation of the Gujarat leadership is not altogether just. It overlooks the following facts and circumstances:-

- (1) The Central Parliamentary Board's decision to put up Antani for the Rajya Sabha in 1966 was forced on Gujarat. And that is when the trouble really began, even though they loyally carried out the decision.
- (2) It was in fact to implement that decision that the Gujarat leadership (specifically H.H. Baria) had not only to make sure of lining up all our then M.L.As but also to give an undertaking to Babubhai Vaidya to put him up for the Rajya Sabha in 1968.
- (3) You endorsed that undertaking in unqualified terms, without prior consultations with the Central Parliamentary Board, who nevertheless stood by you in support of your commitment to Baria in terms which provided for no "escape clause".
- (4) Between 1966 when the undertaking was given and 1968 when it was to be implemented, the number and composition of Swatantra M.L.As and of the State Executive and Parliamentary Board in Gujarat, had changed radically.
- (5) Also, by February 1968 there had already occurred several defections of M.L.As, notably that of Vadibhai Mehta; and others were suspected to be also contemplating that step, for which Vadibhai was certainly trying hard.
- (6) You have made no allowance for the formidable difficulties which all these circumstances posed for the Gujarat leadership (Bhaikaka, H.M. Patel and Baria) in carrying the Gujarat M.L.As in support of the undertaking to put up Babubhai Vaidya.

In my opinion, in making any fair post mortem assessment of the eventual result and its causes, the real failure of the Gujarat leadership must be adjudged to lie in the fact that they did not start on this difficult exercise early enough, but remained at first inactive, and later dithery and ambiguous until it was too late.

3. Similarly, your condemnation of the Central Parliamentary Board and the National Executive in such intemperate terms as "eye wash" etc. was quite uncalled for. You chose not to be present when the Central Parliamentary Board considered this matter informally on 13th April and the National Executive considered it formally in a prolonged debate on 14th April. You are not therefore aware of how exhaustively and anxiously the matter was debated. The case for taking no action at all was argued powerfully by C.C.Desai; the case for taking strong disciplinary action against the delinquents was argued by H.M.Patel and Bhaikaka; and the case for moderation was argued by H.H.Baria himself, who had made it quite clear that he would not accept election as the Leader of the Swatantra M.L.As in Gujarat Legislature unless he was assured that the severity of the possible disciplinary action against the five who openly supported Mahida would be short of expulsion. This coming from Baria, who gave the undertaking to Babubhai Vaidya in the first place and was therefore entitled to demand stern action, but who was also the only possible future leader of the Party in the Gujarat Legislature, was a factor which no one in the National Executive could possibly ignore.

4. And so the National Executive had three alternatives before it: first, to do nothing at all; or, secondly, to hang everyone including, (if we went along with your line,) Bhaikaka, H.M.Patel, Baria, Pravinsinh Solanki and the five other M.Ps who went to Ahmedabad; or, thirdly, to decide as we did.

5. I for one have never made any secret of the serious view I took of the failure of our Gujarat M.L.As to elect Babubhai Vaidya, nor of the failure of the Gujarat Leadership to give a firm and timely lead. The resultant breach of faith with Babubhai was a disgrace which it will take us long to live down, apart from its other consequences. Disciplinary action against the delinquents was therefore a "must".

6. Even so, I must confess that I have no disposition to "play God". And even God tolerates a great deal of rascality among mankind in a surprisingly large measure. In any event, at the sort of practical level at which one has to operate in organisational matters concerning the Party, the best one can do is to keep pushing people steadily and constantly in the right direction; and if any one stays aside, to give him a sharp rap on the knuckles. To attempt anything more in an endeavour to impose puristic righteousness would almost certainly spell disaster for the Party, for we have to take human beings as they come. On that footing I have no doubt, on careful reflection, that we could not go beyond what is now contemplated.

was this at Madras

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With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,

L.S.

Shri M.R. Masani, M.P.,
148, Mahatma Gandhi Road,
BOMBAY-1.

Copy to: Mr.S.V.Raju, SP-C.

L. Sankar