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should lend broad support to the Government in its policies and the measures it would adopt in the pursuit of these policies. To that end, a resolution laying down the policy of the papers was formulated.

After discussions, the draft of the policy guidelines and the letter accompanying them were finalised by Shri V.C. Shukla, Shri K.N. Birla and me on 26th November 1975, copies enclosed, marked Annexures "B" and "C" respectively.

This policy resolution was printed on the 6th December 1975 and immediately circulated to members of the editorial staff all over India. It was later officially circulated by the Company's Secretary to all editors after the meeting of the Board of Directors held on 16th January 1976, at which Shri Birla was formally appointed Chairman. The circular made known to the editors the express desire of the Board that "the editorial policy is strictly adhered to and followed and that there is no violation thereof and that for this purpose the editors to report to the Chairman from time to time and seek his advice and guidance in the matter".

The Express Group of papers have scrupulously followed these guidelines. In some cases, the Indian Express has offered some mild constructive suggestions on certain developments. But in every such case, some of our contemporaries, including the National Herald, have been more forthright. As I have always pointed out in my discussions, the Indian Express or any other paper cannot serve anyone's purpose if it completely loses its credibility. That is my conviction. I have left the editors scrupulously alone in interpreting the policy guidelines. In my opinion, they have done their job with consistent honesty.

In spite of all this, and in total contravention of the letter and spirit of the November agreement reached with the Government, a new demand was put up to me by Shri Shukla in person which reads as follows:

"According to agreement reached between Shri R.N.G. and K.K.B. the administration of the editorial department of the Express Group of Newspapers shall vest exclusively in the Chairman. This includes day to day administration policy of the newspapers. However any action which involves any extra financial burden on the Company will not be taken by the Chairman without the approval of the Board. The financial and business side of the group will be under the charge of the Managing Director as hitherto.

This demand sought to vest complete administrative control of the editorial department in the Chairman. In explaining the meaning of the note, Shri Shukla spelled out for me that it included the right to dismiss, appoint, transfer and give day to day instructions to the editors.

On my return from that meeting I prepared a letter for Shri Birla in which I put forward my views about the unworkability of the proposals from the legal as well as the professional point of view. Copy of the letter is enclosed, marked as Annexure "D"

There the matter rested till yesterday the 19th July 76 when there was a meeting of the Board. There was no discussion at the meeting, of the new powers proposed for Shri Birla. But in the evening a meeting was arranged with Shri Shukla to which I accompanied Shri Birla. Shri Shukla maintained that the Indian Express had violated the guidelines on several occasions. I told him that the only occasion which was pointed out by the Chairman to me was an Habeas Corpus petition. I explained that several papers including the National Herald had already commented on the judgment more strongly, whereas the Indian Express had made constructive suggestions. Shri Shukla said that other papers may be critical but the Indian Express was expected to give unqualified support to the Government. The logic of this discrimination was hard for me to follow. Finally Shri Shukla repeated his demand that I accede to his proposal. I pointed out again the very real difficulties it would lead to and pleaded for a more cautious approach. Thereupon Shri Shukla said there would be grave consequences for me if I did not accept his proposals straightaway.

Prior to my meeting Shri Shukla on the 19th it was communicated to me by him through Shri Birla, Shri Shriyans Prasad Jain and Shri G.D. Kothari, that if I did not agree to the proposal given to me by him on July 5, 1976, I along with my son and daughter-in-law would be detained under MISA. A similar threat was held out to me prior to the agreement in November 1975.

I have given 45 years of my life to build up the Express Group from scratch. When the papers mean to me I shall never be able to make anyone else appreciate fully. But leaving that aside, I may claim with pardonable pride to know something about every aspect

of a newspaper, from the minutiae of editorial work, to its printing, publication and business management. I am particularly aware of the delicate relationship of a proprietor with the editor. I do not think any editor who lays claim to professional integrity will find it possible to submit to the kind of overlordship that is sought to be exercised by the Chairman. Who, after all, represents the management. The net result will be a loss of morale throughout the entire editorial staff and consequent deterioration in quality and credibility. I fear the Express Group will never be able to recover from such a blow. I may point out also that there have been several pronouncements by spokesmen of the Government, including Shri Smukla, on this very subject of the editor's responsibility vis-a-vis the proprietor or any other outside authority. These pronouncements support my stand.

I do not see any way out of this situation. On the one hand it goes against the grain after my experience of 45 years of dealing with such matters. On the other hand, in submitting I see nothing except gradual degeneration of the paper and its financial collapse. This surely is not what is being sought to be achieved.

Perhaps you could give me some advice in the matter. Be as it may be, let me assure you that I shall continue to adhere strictly to the editorial policy that has been agreed to in November 1975.

With regards,

Yours sincerely,

(R.N. Goenka)

Shri P.N. Dhar
Secretary to the Prime Minister,
Prime Minister's Secretariat
New Delhi.

encl: as above.