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April 25, 1970

My dear Rajaji,

I trust you received my letter sent from here two days back.

While Cooper and I have decided to play it cool and to allow the Gujarat controversies to die down, I am afraid Mrs. Gandhi's men on the one side and Baria, CC and Company on the other, are doing everything they can to keep the pot boiling. The toppling game is continuing despite the fact that the Assembly has been adjourned and there is no legal necessity for it to be convened till August or September.

This morning's papers report that seven of Indira's men in the Gujarat Assembly and eight of our own MPs have gone up to Delhi together to lobby in all quarters and that the Prime Minister has already seen some of them. It is not clear that the group that saw her included any of our people.

^{that} The fact remains, as most editorial comments have already underlined, there is open collusion between Indira's men and some of our men (I don't think that M.M. Patel is personally in it) in defiance of our National Executive's directive. I am advised that I must turn a blind eye to all this and pretend that all is well. Not being a born ostrich, this attitude does not come naturally to me. What bothers me is the limit of such tolerance and at what point it becomes open connivance at sabotaging the Party's national line.

Morarji Desai appears to be having similar problems. Our own Party's toppling activities, the use of Indira Gandhi's money and the methods used to induce defections has made the rank and file of the Organisation Congress Party in Gujarat also bloody-minded. Action and reaction here as elsewhere are equal and opposite.

At the Centre some progress is being made with the drafting of a common programme but all this is in danger of being destroyed by our Gujarat friends. What they are toppling more successfully than Nitendra Desai's Government is our own Party!

Ranga's formula for this situation is there should be a friendly disaffiliation of the Gujarat Unit which should be permitted to go its own way while we disown responsibility for its behaviour. At first blush, it is an attractive idea, as it leaves the door open for our misguided friends to realise their mistake in due course and to come back to the Party's fold. But there are difficulties in regard to the position of our MPs from Gujarat

who cannot be allowed to divide their loyalties and, on the other hand, the loyal minority of Party members in Gujarat, which is probably around one-fourth of the Party and which would feel very let down at being handed over to the local Gauleiters.

I am sorry to be sharing all these headaches with you but I feel I must draw on your wisdom in a very agonising situation.

Meanwhile, with the cooperation of Cooper and Raju, I have today answered two questions put to me by PTI who came to interview me. I enclose a copy of the questions and my replies and I hope you will approve. I have tried hard to avoid treading on the toes of some of our people in Ahmedabad but even so, I am sure they will resent the implied cation. We cannot however give them a veto over the right to comment on the Prime Minister, her double talk and its implications. I hope you will approve.

Yours, as ever,

(M. R. Masani)

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Encl : *

PS. May I please have your reply in Delhi where I shall be proceeding this evening. I shall be there till the 2nd of May when I go on to Bunkela to attend the Convention of the Orissa State Unit.

MM:ri