

PILOO MODY



MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT

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My dear Minoo:

1. I do not understand why you persist in corresponding with me through circular letters to the General Council. You have also implied in your letter that you sent copies of your original letter to me for distribution to those members of the General Council as were present. This is not true. You sent copies of your letter to Arya directly, as I found out, and I had no way of telling whether it had been circulated to the other members or not. The fact is that you need not have done it. I would have read your letter to the General Council members assembled and replied to you directly without circulating my letter. I am also constrained to point out that my reply to you not only tried to reply to your letter, but also stated its contents accurately and therefore could not possibly mystify anyone. I am also baffled to read that my reply gave an "extended measure of publicity" because I circulated it to all members as against the limited publicity intended by you when you had your letter circulated.

2. The reason why I read your letter with 'dismay' is because I received your letter instead of seeing you - a point made amply clear in my reply. I am now regretting the fact that I did not mention in my letter that the meeting of the General Council was called entirely to suit you, even though it inconvenienced others - on a Sunday and Monday - instead of on a Saturday and Sunday. What am I to read in your decision for not attending except that "I am unable after all to do so" ?

3. Although I agree with you that the points mentioned in your letter were discussed by you when we met in the presence of Madhu Mehta, Viren Shah and Bhatia, they did not form the entire scope of our discussion. Several other points were mentioned, in particular regarding securing a programme from the new group which would be acceptable to us. If the idea at that stage was to go back on our decision, what was the purpose of securing a programme ? Was it merely to embarrass me later, or, was it just an intellectual exercise on which the leaders of seven (now ten) parties were to waste a month and half of their precious time? And



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now that a programme has been produced which not only embodies the entire Swatantra philosophy, but also spells it out in considerable detail, you should dismiss it as "vague and platonic" lending itself to varying interpretations ! Kindly compare Swatantra's statement of policy and the current document.

4. I am afraid my impression of our meeting was quite different from what you project. I returned to Delhi with the distinct impression that I was to pursue our efforts, enlarge the scope of our group and work out a programme. I have confirmed this opinion from Viren, Madhu and Bhatia, all of whom concur. If on the other hand you had changed your opinion you could have immediately asked me for another discussion, to ponder some more or demand greater safeguards - not absent yourself from the General Council and spring a letter on me instead. After I had spoken to you on April 27, I allowed a month and a half to lapse before I called a General Council meeting. Why didn't you stop me from proceeding during this period ?

5. Your efforts to denigrate our "puny" efforts of getting ten parties together can only compare with your efforts over three years of trying to get together with the BKD alone - "a party confined to UP" as you put it. At the Maharashtra State Council meeting, you contradicted me when I pointed out that you were keen on a merger of Swatantra and BKD into a new Party. I gathered this impression from a note recorded, prepared and sent to me by Raju our ex-Executive Secretary, who is reputed to know your mind better than anyone else. I quote some extracts:

The then leadership of the Swatantra Party responded to the Charan Singh initiative and on June 15, Prof. Ranga and Mr Dandekar met Charan Singh and Mr Gopal Shastry of the BKD in New Delhi.

At this meeting, both Prof. Ranga and Mr Dandekar expressed their reluctance to go along with the merger proposal on the ground that the leadership and rank and file of the Swatantra Party in well established States might not take kindly to a merger proposal. Another reason advanced was of ideological incompatibility with the BKD and the PSP both of which believed in socialism while the Swatantra Party did not. We however put two alternative proposals to the BKD: the first alternative was for the BKD to merge into Swatantra. In the event of the BKD accepting this proposal, Prof. Ranga offered to step down in favour of Charan Singh as President of the Swatantra Party and the leader of the BKD's Group in Parliament would become Deputy Leader of the Swatantra Party in Parliament.

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The second alternative was for working in close collaboration and forming an alliance on the Orissa pattern in UP.

Charan Singh straightaway rejected the first alternative on the ground that rightly or wrongly the Swatantra Party's public image was bad though he himself personally had no quarrel with the Party's policies and principles. As for the second alternative, Charan Singh was luke warm for the simple reason that he was way ahead of the Party in organisational strength and influence in UP. He did not need us.

Both Rajaji and Masani were disappointed with the outcome particularly our rejection of the Charan Singh's proposal for a merger of the two parties with a new name, flag and symbol.

Much later, Prof. Range (in a letter to Rajaji, dated May 27, 1969) added "it is clear that the Jan Sangh is not at all anxious for any merger. They want us to have talks only in terms of a limited Front which neither Masani nor Charan Singh is agreeable to".

1408/69 From the above extract, it appears that Rajaji and you were in favour of merger with a new name, flag and symbol and also that you were against a limited front (Unity in Action).

6. As for your comments on the personal character of those associated with the idea of forming the new Party, I will not comment. The reputations of public men in India are too fragile, and no one escapes unscathed. After all, by now you must have read Col. Pasricha's letter regarding our colleagues, particularly me, as indeed you are aware of the innumerable letters written about you. I am not defending anyone or anything, but as I said in my last letter, these are matters for society at large and the voters to decide, and not for you and me to sit in judgement on them. I might remind you that it was under your presidency that the Swatantra Party in Orissa formed a coalition Government with Biju Patnaik and there is no point in saying that you were against it, because you ultimately succumbed. Let us assume you are right but what is the people's verdict? Whereas the Swatantra Party secured 21 seats, Biju Patnaik secured 36 seats. As for any organisation, it can always take appropriate action, within the party, when occasion arises (Ramgarh, UP legislators, Gujarat, C C Desai).

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7. Your basic fault and contradiction lies in the fact that you have already come to the conclusion, since 1971, that all political parties have become irrelevant, that elections should not be fought and that a revolution is around the corner, which will save India, and that in the interregnum we must be doing constructive social work. My difference of opinion with you is only on the last point. I believe that we must keep on fighting politically till the last possible moment to avert the destruction of the democratic structure and the abrogation of the Constitution. My efforts do not in any way spoil your plans or thesis. On the other hand while maintaining that all political parties have become irrelevant, you are against the dissolution. At the same time you say that if all non-Communist parties join together, you will go along with it. How do these gentlemen of whom you do not approve all of a sudden become tolerable? That is why I urge you to continue with your social activities and give some of us one more chance to try and salvage the democratic system.

8. Now the main point: Will the new party be a National Alternative? Obviously a National Alternative has to have two distinct characteristics. It must have a clear cut alternative programme, which it now has, and, it must be large enough and strong enough to be taken seriously as the alternative. On the second score I will agree that its size and strength are still small but growing, but certainly much larger than Swatantra by itself. I want to assure you that we do not propose to stop at this. Every effort is being made to enlarge the scope of the new Party to include parties like the Cong (O), Jan Sangh, DMK and the Akalis. How can a National Alternative be created? Surely it cannot be done overnight, but this is just the first, but definite, step in that direction. Your own dream of combining the entire non-Communist opposition can only be realised through bold steps and sacrifice. In our case we sacrifice little - only name, flag and symbol - and preserve all that is precious - principles, policies and programmes.

9. There are a couple of things that puzzle me. In your second letter to me you had suggested that we meet on my next trip to Bombay. However this suggestion did not find its way into your circulated copy. What is more, when we met on the morning of July 6th at your house when Madhu Mehta was present, it was agreed between us that both objectives could be met if we could agree on the mechanics, words and phrasing of a common resolution. You agreed to send me a draft by the evening of Monday the 8th and I agreed to go through it and send it back with my suggestions.

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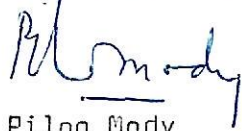
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Having agreed in the morning, I was more than a little surprised to see, on attending the Maharashtra State Council meeting, that you did not even refer to our morning meeting, let alone inform them of what transpired, and contrary to the very spirit of our discussion, actively helped in passing a resolution, against Madhu Mehta's wishes with which I agree, and thereafter, accepted and insisted that Subramaniam's amendment about continuing the Maharashtra State Party irrespective of the outcome of the National Convention be included in the resolution.

10. When I quietly asked you as to what happens when we reached an agreement on a common resolution? You replied that the Maharashtra resolution would automatically lapse. It was also agreed by the Maharashtra State Council that the resolution was not to be publicised. Yet I find a press report in several daily papers of July 9 that Mr Girish Munshi, General Secretary, Maharashtra Unit had given out a press statement and publicized the resolution. By way of contrast, the very next day when I attended the Gujarat State Council meeting, when they wanted to pass a resolution overwhelmingly supporting the idea of a new Party I pleaded with them to merely record their feelings without passing a resolution. I cannot remember in my 15 years of association with the Swatantra Party ever having been a witness to this level of dealing with each other. Today I really miss Rajaji by my side, who I know would have justified every action I have taken.

11. Finally, I welcome your suggestion of having a totally non-political Swatantra Seva Sangh, eschewing all elections, educating the public on Swatantra ideology and acting as a service organisation. I had also given the matter some thought without formalising the idea. I see no objection to it. However, this issue must not be linked with the main purpose of the National Convention in a manner in which it appears that the one is being accepted and the other is being rejected. Therefore, if you accept this formulation, I am sure we can work out a composite resolution which will meet both points of view without offending the purpose of each other, to achieve near unanimity at the convention. I have just received your draft; whereas the formulation of the proposal needs change only in the matter of transformation, the preamble is too unkind and not at all necessary. I am sending you my draft, separately which factually states the course of events and resolves to do what both of us have in mind.

Sincerely yours


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