

Sumatilal Popatlal Shah

423 BUDHWAR PETH,
POONA CITY.

2nd July 1974

Respected Leader Shri M.R. Masani,

I received two letters from Shri Piloo Mody recently. Swatantra Party National Headquarters have circulated these letters to the members of the General Council of the Party. On reading these two letters, I felt very sorry. My feelings are that he has done injustice to you and to all the members of the Party who are against the dissolution of the Party. He has done this perhaps due to his anxiety to form the proposed new party. I felt that I must write to him against his stand. So I wrote him a letter. I am enclosing herewith a copy of that letter; and I request you to kindly spare your time to read this letter. I hope you will read it and advise me.

With regards,

Yours sincerely,
Sumatilal P. Shah

Enc. letter.

SUMATILAL P. SHAH

423, Budhwar Peth,
POONA. 2.

1st July, 1974

Dear Shri Piloo Mody,

I received an envelope from Swatantra Party National Headquarters, Bombay, on 24th June. It contained your letter dated 16th June, addressed to the members of the General Council and a copy of your letter dated 12th June, addressed to Shri M.R. Masani. After reading these two letters, I have carefully thought over your views as stated therein; and as a consequence, I am writing the following few lines. I hope that it will be possible for you to consider what I am writing here below.

Frankly stating, I did not feel happy to read your letter addressed to Shri Masani. You have written that he "deserted us". You have also stated that some of us "had come to the meeting with their minds closed to the idea of the new party." I am afraid these remarks do no justice, either to Shri Masani or to many members of the Party's General Council. I am sure that as the greatest leader of India, who has served the cause of democracy and freedom throughout his life, Shri Masani has always proved to be right in his analysis of political events and situations; and his thoughts expressed in the letter of 6th June, addressed to you, are also right in the present situation. He has clearly stated in his letter that he does not think that the proposed move to form a new party provides any justification for such a drastic step as the dissolution of our Party. He has also stated that after a period of "Unity in Action", we can consider ^{dissolving} ~~dissolution~~ ^{ing} our Party.

Copies of your letter addressed to Shri Masani have been posted to the members of the General Council. Those members who did not attend the Delhi meeting will have

to read your letter without reading the original letter from Shri Masani. This is not proper.

Those members who opposed the move to dissolve our Party had not come to Delhi meeting with their minds closed to the idea of the new party. They had their reasons for insisting that the identity and existence of the Swatantra Party must continue. They honestly believe that the proposal to dissolve the Swatantra Party is not sound. In fact, some members gave out their reasons for ~~maintaining~~ maintaining the existence of our Party, when they participated in the discussion at Delhi meeting. At this meeting, the General Council, as the highest standing committee of the Party, could have passed a resolution reversing the resolution of the National Executive in connection with the two-party system. Twenty-two members had agreed to support such a reversal; and some members were to abstain from voting. If this was done, the representatives of our Party could not have attended the meeting of the group of seven parties on 15th June. But instead of doing this, the members of the General Council unanimously supported the resolution moved by Shri H.M. Patel.

Though the General Council had passed the resolution moved by Shri H.M. Patel, a news item was published that the first national convention of the new party was scheduled to be held in Delhi on 15th August. Publication of this news item shows that the support of the members of the Swatantra Party is all the while taken for granted, as far as the two proposals — the dissolution of the Swatantra Party and formation of the new party — are concerned. This is certainly not in accordance with

the spirit with which the General Council had passed the unanimous resolution. There was an idea that about twenty leaders of some nine parties can decide to form a new party. It was taken for granted that there was no reason for the failure of this idea if twenty leaders agree to it. But it is now clear that this idea has failed. It is also clear that, on this issue, there is a serious difference of opinion in our Party.

In view of such a serious difference of opinion in our Party, it is natural that you have written a detailed letter dated 16th June to all the members of the General Council of the Party. The analysis of the present situation in the country shows clearly the danger of impending dictatorship. There is no dispute over this analysis. But the "two-party system", as presented to the General Council of our Party, is not the answer to the present situation. If India is to have a real "two-party system" in future, the ideal situation will be to have a liberal democratic party like the Swatantra Party on the one hand and a socialist party on the other hand. The American example of having two parties, with both of them having no ideologies, will create further confusion. Whatever may be the future course of Indian politics, the continued existence of the Swatantra Party is fully justified.

I am compelled to state here that out of the eleven parties mentioned by you, only four parties — the Swatantra Party, the Samyukta Socialist Party, the Bharatiya Kranti Dal and the Utkal Congress — are worth considering. Other parties are of no consequence at all. Out of the four parties, the two regional parties — the BKD

and the Utkal Congress — have decided to join the new party for their own reasons. But the SSP has already split over the issue of joining the new party. I am afraid our Party also stands divided on this issue.

The proposed new party is admittedly not ideologically based. Your letter further shows that it will not have homogeneity. Absence of homogeneity is being justified in the name of decentralisation, regional deviation and federalism. Such arrangements are very "Useful" to the BKD and the Utkal Congress; but they go against all the principles for which the Swatantra Party has been working.

You have stated that at the General Council meeting, opinions were "largely divided." Kindly do not attribute any motives to the members from Delhi, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu, who opposed the move of dissolving the Party. The support that came from Orissa and Uttar Pradesh can be interpreted by a member like me in some other way. The leaders of the Orissa Unit were working in a way of their own since the 1971 elections to Orissa State Assembly and also during the consequent making and breaking of ministries. Shri Masani had some apprehensions with this way. Many members like me shared his apprehensions. Shri Masani had expressed his opposition to the formation of the "Pragati Party" also. A member like me can say that the support to the idea of the new party comes from the Orissa Unit, only as a natural consequence of the formation of the "Pragati Party." A member like me can further feel that this support only proves that Shri Masani's opposition to ^{the} "Pragati Party" was fully justified.

I feel that it is my duty to propose

some alternatives which can work in the present situation of the clear division of opinion in the Party. To my mind, the three alternatives before the Party are as follows.

(1) The Party may give up the idea of dissolving itself. It may immediately start working in a way in which it can gain strength. This will avoid the impending split.

(2) The proposal of forming a federal party, consisting of seven or more parties may be accepted for coming together while maintaining the individual identity of our Party. This acceptance will also avoid the impending split.

(3) If some leaders and members are still convinced of the necessity of joining the proposed new party, they may themselves please join the new party, after leaving the Swatantra Party. They may not insist on the dissolution of the Swatantra Party. Praja-Socialist Party Chairman Shri Ashok Mehta and his colleagues had adopted this course when they left the PSP to join the Congress. It is futile to impose dissolution on the Swatantra Party. It will only make the split inevitable.

Some leaders of our Party are genuinely anxious to create a national alternative. I admit that they have a good intention. Analysis of the present situation in the country as presented in your letter is also fully acceptable to members like me. But I do differ with the conclusions presented by the supporters of the idea of the new party.

I hope that you will acknowledge this letter and communicate to me that you have read it completely.

With regards,

Shri Piloo Mody,
President, Sw

Yours sincerely,
Sumatilal P. Shah.
[SUMATILAL P. SHAH]