IDEALS OR OPPORTUNISM

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पार्टी की राज्य शाखा कार्यालयों से खरीदें जा सकते हैं।
THE PLEDGE

'We, the workers of the Janata Party, hereby rededicate ourselves to safeguarding the democratic rights and civil liberties of the people and strengthening them.

We are determined that the country's social, economic and political structure be refashioned fundamentally for the creation of a democratic, secular and socialist society on the teachings of Gandhiji and on the highest values of Indian culture.

We take a pledge that we shall remain united in the fulfilment of the objectives of the party and the realisation in practice of the political, economic and social charters outlined in our manifesto.

We offer our grateful salutation to all those who fought in the national liberation struggle and to those who have suffered during the recent democratic struggle led by Shri Jaya Prakash Narayan.'*

*Pledge taken by all the Janata MPs at Rajghat, New Delhi on March 24, 1977.
realise the far-reaching consequences of their actions. Some members of the party decided to leave the party at a time when the Opposition had moved a no-confidence motion in the Lok Sabha. Through manipulative politics and by joining hands with those very political parties and individuals against whom they had pledged to fight, a government has been formed. The Janata Party might have lost power but the basic fact is that by leaving the party these individuals have thrown to the winds the pledge given to the people and have thus betrayed the confidence reposed in them. Whether they are called ‘defectors’ or ‘splitters’ makes little difference.

**Basic principle**

An attempt is being made to justify this action by giving it a garb of struggle for lofty ideals and principles. Non-performance of the Government on the economic front and compromise of secular ideals are being described as reasons for this ‘split’. It is surprising that important Ministers holding economic ministries, including Finance, Industrial Development, Petroleum and Chemicals, Steel and Mines, should come out with such excuses. Having remained in the Council of Ministers from the day the Janata assumed power to the last minute of their decision to leave the party, not a single one of them had found the working of the Government frustrating. The burden of conscience was never too heavy to compel them submit their resignations in protest. At no time did they inform the National Executive or any other party forum that the presence of Jana Sangh or any other group of persons did not allow them to implement the socio-economic programme as outlined in the election manifesto. To strike ideological postures to seek justification for their indefensible conduct is a pure
This booklet contains three articles written by Shri Chandra Shekhar, Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Shri Madhu Dandavate published recently in ‘The Indian Express’ and also a letter written by Shri Nanaji Deshmukh to Shri Charan Singh. They throw a lot of light on the genesis and growth of internal problems of the Janata Party that culminated in the fall of the Janata Government at the Centre. These articles will help the party workers and the public to see the crisis in the right perspective and the people who are responsible for this crisis, in their true colours.

RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE

August 17, 1979
Betrayal of Janata Party

Chandra Shekhar

Recent happenings in Parliament have left a feeling of anguish and perplexity. The current scene is marked by its sharp and sad contrast with what prevailed in March 1977. The enthusiasm which brought the Janata Party to power has been dampened and hope and confidence in the viability of political institutions and democratic processes has been rudely shaken. Public respect, particularly for the people’s representatives, has not only declined sharply but has given way to an attitude of contempt and cynicism.

The verdict of the people in March 1977, was not only a negative vote against authoritarianism but a positive assertion of our people in favour of parliamentary democracy. Millions of Indian people—the large majority of them unsophisticated, illiterate and poor—demonstrated to the world that they were politically mature and were capable of taking a firm and clear decision at the appropriate time. The democratic system was preferred as a vehicle of socio-economic change and a system which responds to the needs and urges of the people.

Manipulative politics

The sordid drama enacted in recent days has brought disgrace to democratic institutions and the prestige of this country outside has suffered a serious set-back. Those responsible for the current state of affairs perhaps do not
afterthought. It does not conform to any norms of public life and political ethics.

The basic principle accepted at the time of the formation of the Janata Party in 1977 was that each constituent group had held divergent views and had a character and personality of its own. These constituents pledged themselves to a common programme and promised the people to implement them through cohesive and united action. The pledge for maintaining unity was stated in the election manifesto and reiterated at Raj Ghat after the election result. The party was launched in an atmosphere of mutual confidence, respect for each other’s views and mutual goodwill.

**Dependence on Congress**

We initiated a new trend in Indian politics where, in the wider and national interest, personal ambitions, likes and dislikes and old loyalties were to be forgotten. The focus had to shift from personalities and factions to a programme of socio-economic change. Unfortunately, this basic postulate was ignored. Self-righteousness among a few and obstinacy on the part of others created a variety of complications. Internal squabbles in certain States led to group conflicts and the wrath of some friends was directed against RSS. An apprehension was created that because of their presence the secular character of the party had been threatened. In order to weed out these elements from the party it was suggested that one should join hands with secular democratic forces outside the party. This crusade was confined to public statements and sometimes representations to Party headquarters. But no sooner was the Party faced with a no-confidence motion in the Lok Sabha, than a well-designed process of desertion started. In this, our
friends have opted for total dependence upon a group of Congress leaders who were active partners of the Emergency during 1975-77.

Instead of giving a call to the rank and file of the Congress to take a new lead, almost all of those who were Cabinet Ministers during the period of the Emergency have found berths in the new Government. One wonders how these Congress leaders, who observed complete silence during the troubled days of Emergency and even after the declaration of General Elections (1977), have all of a sudden acquired the capacity to take bold steps for reshaping the society on democratic and socialist lines. These leaders were with Indira Gandhi in the 1977 General Elections; it was after her defeat at the polls that they suddenly discovered that her style of functioning was disastrous.

The manner and style of bargaining for positions of power by these Congress leaders and their connivance with the support given by Congress (I) is a fairly good indication of happenings in days to come. The basic question is not one of removal or survival of the present Government or the formation of a new one. The question is more fundamental. The problem is not of ideological drift but of moral erosion and complete collapse of ethical values that a democratic society must preserve. The matter for concern is not the future of the Janata Party or for that matter stability of the Government at the Centre but the very credibility of public representatives and the respectability of democratic institutions.

Self-interest

A mere combination of political personalities, howsoever important they may be at a point of time, does not necessarily create a new political force for social transformation.
It is the new values in public life, a dependable norm of behaviour, together with policies and programmes to fulfil the aspirations of the people that can give new impetus to our people to rally round and mobilise behind a party which can be an instrument of social change in real terms. But, unfortunately, all policies and programmes and values of public life are being relegated to the background and only the self-interest of the individual has been the motivating factor for the enactment of the political drama soon after the tabling of the no-confidence motion in the Lok Sabha and the resignation of Morarji Desai.

**Political crime**

These curious developments are the culmination of a creeping malady that had infected the Janata Party from the beginning. All political parties in this country have been victims of internal dissensions. And the ruling party had to face additional problems. It became an arduous task to keep all elements satisfied. The party in power has to implement its policies and programmes through the administrative apparatus and show results to the people. Bestowing favours and distributing patronage among its members causes unavoidable strains. The hazards faced by the Janata Party became more complicated because it was constituted by merging five or six groups and many individuals not aligned with any one group. The Emergency had brought them together. Unfortunately, soon after the party got into power the constituents began to assert themselves disproportionately and naked attempts to create separate pockets of influence came to the surface. One particular group cannot be blamed for it. Almost every group tried to expand its own base. This was bound to generate factional rivalries.
There have been ideological differences within the party. Some friends felt very much concerned about them. On occasions feeble attempts were made to pursue this matter within the party. But it is shocking that instead of pursuing it within the party, those who occupied ministerial positions started deserting it when there was a direct onslaught on the party through a no-confidence motion by the Opposition. It is difficult to justify this position adopted even by ordinary members of the Janata Parliamentary Party on any ground. But such a position taken by ministers occupying important positions in the Government is a political crime, which is inexcusable. The no-confidence motion was against the entire government and not only against the Prime Minister.

**Jana Sangh and RSS**

The attitude and moves of the erstwhile leaders of the Jana Sangh while functioning in the Janata Party should not be assessed on the basis of their past association but their mode of functioning in the Janata Party. It will not be an exaggeration to assert that the top leadership of this section was most accommodating in organisational and administrative controversies and there was a perceptible change in their attitude even on key policy issues. But this offers only one side of the picture. At the lower level the experience was different. For this the blame has to be shared by all those who dominated the political scene at the State level. But as an organised body this group proved more effective. This created heart-burning and developed tension at the local level. This was bound to be reflected in the attitude of leaders at the Centre also. Thus the theme of doubtful behaviour became a matter of public controversy as these friends were linked with an organisation outside the party.
Some overenthusiasts in their attempt to justify their old links tried to convert the Janata Party into a platform to propagate the philosophy and working of the RSS. It was an unwise move and this gave further rise to apprehensions among many Party workers and also people outside. In this situation the RSS leadership responded in a purposeful manner and made it clear that they were willing to accept the formulation that all the parliamentarians, legislators and office-bearers of the Janata Party would not take part in the activities of the RSS. It was a welcome initiative but before something more concrete could emerge those who had made an issue of the RSS whipped it up and did not hesitate to impute motives not only to the RSS but also those who favoured a conciliatory attitude to find the solution of this problem. Subsequently, the controversial statements created complications and gave an impression that the decision of the National Executive was of no consequence. At this moment came the article written by Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee. He not only endorsed the decision of the National Executive but went a step further. He diagnosed the disease correctly and in unambiguous terms indicated the essential steps for ushering a healthy trend in the internal struggle of the Janata Party. It is not necessary to dilate on his views but it will not be out of place to congratulate Atalji on his courageous clear vision and bold stand on issues that were agitating the minds of the people.

Unfortunately, since its inception the RSS has been identified in the public mind with the concept of Hinduvad or Hindu Rastravad, nationalism based on Hinduism. The concept of Hindu Rashtravad was adopted by the RSS in the early thirties. In the temper and mood of that period there might have been some basis for such a concept. But
this concept immediately places a section of our people outside the pale of Indian nationalism. Indian polity, society, our consciousness of being a people and a nation, cannot be identified with the religion, race, language or culture of a section of our people, however large and numerous. A sectarian approach is not only contrary to our philosophy of life but also to the national ethos we have painstakingly built up during our freedom struggle, which took within its embrace all the diversity that makes India and gave to all its people an equal role and responsibility in the struggle against imperialism and in the reconstruction of our country. Any obscurantist concept will only lead the country to serious disaster. A dynamic and purposeful approach to this problem is essential. But even if these controversies are resolved to the satisfaction of all concerned the challenges before political workers will remain unanswered. The real remedy lies in reorienting the whole political set-up and making an attempt to regenerate a new confidence and faith in the public behaviour of our representatives at the helm of affairs. It is a difficult task and a challenging situation.

Vital issues

There are several real issues such as poverty, unemployment and social inequality to be tackled. They are, in fact, threatening the integrity and unity of this country. Let us, therefore, not shut our eyes to these issues. The recent controversy over the RSS is only an attempt at delaying the urgent task of implementing these programmes. We can fight the menace of communalism only at the socio-economic and political level. These issues are vital. They have a bearing on the future course of Indian political life. Let all forward-looking men face these issues unitedly.
All Responsible for Janata Crisis
Atal Bihari Vajpayee

The revolution of March 1977 demonstrated the unshakeable faith of our people in democracy. With the establishment of the first non-Congress government at the Centre, hopes were aroused that a new chapter will unfold in our history. Within 28 months, however, those who had suffered during the Emergency in jail or outside, and who had been voted to power at the crest of unbounded public enthusiasm, squandered this opportunity for petty, personal and factional reasons.

In retrospect, the responsibility for this state of affairs must be shared, in differing degrees, by all groups and their leaders in the Janata Party. Group loyalties and personal ambitions marked the very first steps of the infant party.

It is no secret that when the Prime Minister was to be elected in March 1977, members of the erstwhile Jana Sangh and the Socialists were in favour of Shri Jagjivan Ram. They felt that the elevation of a Harijan to the Prime Ministership of our country would have a positive impact, and that his proven administrative acumen as well as his ability to get along with people of diverse backgrounds would be an asset to the new administration. However, when this proposal was put before Chaudhary Charan Singh, he rejected it outright and indicated that he would support Shri Morarji Desai who had suffered during the Emergency rather than accept a person who had moved the motion in
Parliament for approval of the Emergency. Once two of
the three senior leaders had come together, the claim of
the third was not further pressed. This pattern was to be
repeated more than once in the ensuing two years.

Chaudhary Saheb has nursed since then a deep grievance
against the erstwhile Jana Sangh. Perhaps he is unaware
that even if he had commanded a numerical majority
(which he clearly did not command), neither Shri Morarji
Desai nor Shri Jagjivan Ram would have joined his Cabi­
net, and the state of affairs reached today would have
come to prevail from the very beginning. In fact, even at
that time Chaudhary Charan Singh's letter supporting Shri
Desai came as relief of a kind to many of us since we were
more confident of persuading Shri Jagjivan Ram to work
under Shri Desai than of persuading Chaudhary Saheb or
Shri Desai to work under Shri Jagjivan Ram.

Portent

The manner in which this crisis erupted and was "resol­
v ed" contained an important portent of how crises would
be handled in the Janata Party in the coming years: the
sad fact is that in this, as in later crises, the members
of Parliament and the National Executive of the party were
not taken into confidence about the negotiations that were
going on behind the scenes. When the Janata MPs assem­
bled in the Gandhi Peace Foundation hall they were taken
by surprise at the announcement that the leader of the
parliamentary party would be chosen by consensus. Among
those who were opposed to election was Shri Raj Narain
who even threatened to walk out of the party meeting.
Initially it had been decided to leave the matter to Shri
Jayaprakash Narayan. But at the suggestion of Chaudhary
Charan Singh, Acharya Kripalani was also included. The
two were asked to ascertain the wishes of the members, avoiding the need for a formal vote.

I vividly recall the dilemma that confronted the Acharya and JP in deciding the crucial leadership issue. It was also suggested that the person chosen as leader should relinquish office after two or three years, and the other person should become Prime Minister for the remainder of the term.

Wrangle

The wrangle was not confined to the Prime Ministership. Having conceded the Prime Ministership to Congress (O), the BLD group sought the Party Presidentship for themselves. However, the others could not be persuaded and with great reluctance, Chaudhary Charan Singh agreed to Shri Chandra Shekhar's nomination.

The Janata government was formed in a situation without precedent before the five constituents had merged into one party. Each constituent, with an eye on the next election, sought to capture the party apparatus, and in this the Jana Sangh with its disciplined cadre and the BLD with its large caste base in some northern States were the main contenders. Controversies arose over enrolment forms and the party Constitution—controversies which the Executive took long to sort out. Meanwhile, mass enthusiasm for the party evaporated.

Although the Janata party had been formed by the merger of five parties, the Cabinet was constituted on the basis of quota for each, the Congress (O) getting a disproportionate share. Group loyalties hardened further during the formation of the State governments. The former BLD and Jana Sangh came to an understanding which excluded other constituents. By this time the power struggle
within the Janata Party had taken deep roots. It acquired a new dimension with Chaudhary Charan Singh’s inability to reconcile himself to being No. 2 in the Central Cabinet.

An active and imaginative leadership would have created an infrastructure for the party all over the country by convening State and district level conferences, by holding workers’ camps at divisional level, by drawing towards it a large number of intellectuals, trade union leaders, youth leaders, and women’s organisations who had worked for the restoration of democracy and the victory of the Janata Party. But with the party President immersed in the distribution of State Assembly tickets, and, along with the General Secretaries, engaged in handling innumerable, internecine quarrels, all these steps so crucial to the consolidation of the party were altogether neglected.

Better performance

The performance of the Janata governments, both at the Centre as well as in the States, was better than that of earlier Congress regime. But it fell short of public expectations. Factional quarrels within the party and public airing of grievances, even by Ministers, vitiated the atmosphere and sullied the image of the Janata Party and prevented proper projection of the achievements of the governments.

Chaudhary Charan Singh’s statement describing his colleagues as “a pack of impotent men”, and his subsequent ouster from the Cabinet along with Shri Raj Narain, are events which do not need recapitulation. Shri Advani and I have been blamed by some for being instrumental in Chaudhary Charan Singh’s return to the Cabinet. It is true that we were active on his behalf. We were motivated solely by the desire to maintain the unity of the party. Little did we realise that our good intentions would lead to such an
unforeseen, unwelcome destination.

Much time was lost in the process, and ultimately Shri Raj Narain was not taken back—an act that could hardly have increased his identification with the party, or his love for the Prime Minister. Meanwhile, the Kisan Sammelan was formed and a very large sum of money was collected. The Sammelan quickly assumed the proportions of a rival party set-up.

On the very day of Chaudhary Saheb's return to the Cabinet, by a grievous coincidence, Shri Ram Naresh Yadav dropped four ministers in UP. These included two junior Ministers of the erstwhile Jana Sangh. The Jana Sangh group, in its turn, reacted out of all proportion to this slight. Shri Yadav had earlier on several occasions given evidence of his inability to lead efficiently such a large State as U.P. This had been acknowledged by Chaudhary Charan Singh himself but he could not bring himself to agreeing to a change in the UP leadership. Shri Yadav lost his Chief Ministership through a vote in the JLP, and Shri Banarasi Das, not from the BLD, was proposed by Chaudhary Saheb.

Chain reaction

Having succeeded in displacing Shri Yadav, the dissidents should have co-operated with Shri Banarasi Das. However, Shri Das raised the question of dual membership and refused to include the Jana Sangh in his Cabinet till this matter was resolved. In a chain reaction, the dissidents voted with the Opposition in the legislature to try and bring him down—an act of gross indiscipline. Accordingly, the relaxation of tensions that had followed Chaudhary Charan Singh's reinduction died out swiftly, and gave way to intensified recriminations. Thereafter the RSS
bogey was bandied about by Chaudhary Saheb’s men systematically, persistently and abusively.

The UP crisis swiftly engulfed the neighbouring States, amidst allegations that the States were being destabilized from Delhi.

Indiscipline in the party was in fact pervasive. It was connived at by senior leaders, and such disapproval as was expressed from time to time was purely verbal and for the record.

The Big Four particularly the Prime Minister had it in their power to rise above the petty considerations of the factions, to enforce discipline in the party, and to ensure stability in the States and an effective government at the Centre. Such direction, alas, was never forthcoming.

Role of RSS

Much has been said about the political role of the RSS and its alleged involvement in recent communal riots. In the communal riots at Sambhal, the majority community was the target. In Aligarh, riots erupted after a quarrel between two wrestlers of different communities—a situation that a district administration of minimum competence should have easily controlled. In Jamshedpur, it started with an attack on a Ram Naumi procession. In Purnea, a Congress (I) notable sent men galloping on horseback in the night to spread a rumour that three girls—a Harijan, an Adivasi and his own daughter—had been raped by Muslims, and to obtain firm pledges of revenge. In Nadia, riots followed the depredations of dacoit gangs. Even if some individual RSS youth, as those belonging to other groups, were subsequently involved can one on that account tar the whole organisation with the communal brush?
The truth is that communal riots have their origin in minor incidents; these are blown up by anti-social elements of both sides and petty politicians also play their part. Passions are aroused, and if the local administration is inept, partisan or demoralised, there is bloodshed, looting and arson. There remains, however, in India fundamental amity between all communities who have lived side by side over the centuries by and large in harmony and peace.

Apprehensions about the RSS aiming at capturing political power are without foundation. Its very character, its composition, the social strata from which it draws its cadre, its day-to-day activities, are such that it cannot mobilize support from the masses of a country like India where there is so much diversity of religion, language, caste etc, even though it has built up a countrywide organisation of patriotic disciplined youth which is the envy of many.

A bogey

Recently the RSS bogey has been assiduously built up by some BLD leaders as retaliation for the firm refusal by the erstwhile Jana Sangh to destabilise the Centre. So far has their obsession for office carried them that those who were calling their colleagues "impotent" for not acting against Smt. Gandhi yesterday are today seeking and appreciating her support ostensibly to fight the danger of the RSS!

Having said this, I must also add that the RSS, claiming to be a social and cultural organisation, should have taken greater pains to demonstrate that they did not seek a political role. Patronizing a press that takes sides in the sordid politics of power, involvement in youth bodies that interact with political parties, participating in trade union rivalries such as the one which recently brought enor-
forge such a unity with the Jana Sangh.

Even in March 1977, Choudhary Charan Singh joined the Janata Government at the Centre without this issue being settled.

While being the Home Minister, Shri Charan Singh publicly condemned the policy of the Government which, according to him, displayed a weak-kneed attitude towards the excesses committed by Shrimati Indira Gandhi. He approvingly quoted the description of his Cabinet colleagues as a "bunch of impotent people". As a result of this he had to go out of the Cabinet.

Wrecking game

Some of us who were his Cabinet colleagues and who did not want the Janata Party’s unity to be impaired, made collective efforts to bring back Choudhary Charan Singh to the Cabinet. He came back accepting the newly-created post of Deputy Prime Minister with Finance portfolio. It may be remembered that while returning to the Cabinet he did not put forward the condition of settlement of the issue of dual membership. When he entered the Cabinet, leaving Shri Raj Narain out in the lurch, the latter, in his characteristic style, publicly announced that he would fight the Janata Government from outside the Cabinet and Choudhary Charan Singh would do it from within. Some critics found an element of madness in his statement, but later events proved that there was a method in this madness.

Shri Raj Narain made many statements that embarrassed his colleagues in the Janata Party, Choudhary Charan Singh not excluded. At one stage Choudhary Charan Singh had to announce that he had parted company with Shri Raj Narain.

After some time Shri Raj Narain, following action by
mous misery to the people of Delhi by callously cutting off the water supply—these do not help an organisation to establish its apolitical credentials.

It is possible that some people genuinely feel apprehensive about the RSS. A certain onus accordingly devolved on the RSS, an onus that has not been discharged effectively by the RSS. Its repudiation of the theocratic form of the State was welcome, yet the question could legitimately be asked—why does it not open its doors to non-Hindus? Recent statements of the RSS chief, Shri Deoras, indicate that non-Hindus are being encouraged to join the organisation. A natural corollary of this process would be clear enunciation by the RSS that by ‘Hindu Rashtra’ it means the Indian nation which includes non-Hindus as equal members.

The other course of action open to the RSS could be to function only as a Hindu religious-cum-social-cultural organisation wedded to the task of eradicating the evils prevailing in Hindu society and revitalizing it to face the challenge of modern times. The kind of selfless service that the RSS has rendered in times of natural calamities has endeared it even to its critics and has established beyond doubt its capacity for constructive work for ameliorating the suffering of those who are in need of help. Such an organisation will draw support and sustenance from members of various political parties as has been the case with institutions like the Arya Samaj.

Need for ideals

The Indian polity cannot survive unless it is rooted in certain ideals. Among these are commitment to democracy, secularism, the equal participation of all communities and regions in national life, the upliftment of Harijans, Adivasis and the millions of the desperately poor. The country
must develop on modern, scientific lines, ensuring at the same time social and distributive justice.

Today we face a crisis of a magnitude which nations face only once in several centuries. The pursuit of personal ambition, factional interest and self-aggrandisement, so blatantly displayed by some politicians recently has not only made politicians as a class the object of ridicule but also undermined faith in our political system. Let all politicians search their souls, acknowledge their failings and mend their ways. What is now at stake is not the fortune of a handful of individuals or parties. At stake is the survival of our nation.
Crisis Rooted in Summit Power Politics

Madhu Dandavate

THE Janata Party came to power at the Centre through a massive mandate of the people in March 1977. No democrat would have felt concerned if the Government were to be changed again through the verdict of the electorate. The recent change of the Government has, however, been the product of crisis precipitated basically by power politics at the 'summit'. This is not to deny that any political issues are involved in the present crisis. All the same, the fact remains that power conflicts inside the Janata Party had largely contributed to this crisis.

When Shri Y.B. Chavan, Leader of the Congress(S), moved the no-confidence motion in the Lok Sabha as a ritual to outwit similar efforts by the Congress(I), perhaps he never meant that his motion would ever result in the collapse of the Janata Government and that he, as the leader of a party of 75, would be called upon to offer a “stable and cohesive” Government and would be reluctantly required to surrender that right to Choudhary Charan Singh. The crisis was precipitated by Shri Raj Narain’s exit from the Janata Party, along with a few colleagues, followed by Choudhary Charan Singh and his supporters. This exodus took place in dribs and drabs. Lots of legal quibblings are going on whether what happened was ‘Defection’ even according to the proposed Anti-Defection Bill or whether it was a ‘Split’. Without entering into this aspect one cannot
deny the fact that in the election manifesto of the Janata Party a solemn commitment was made to preserve the unity of the Party.

Common resolve

The manifesto stated:

“It is in response to this situation—in order to defend the people’s democratic rights and livelihood—that the Janata Party has come into being. It is not a mere alliance of parties but a new national party to which the Congress(O), the Bharatiya Lok Dal, the Jana Sangh, the Socialist Party, Independent Congressmen and many others stand firmly committed. This manifesto is a solemn re-affirmation of that common resolve.” In his recent article published in ‘The Indian Express’ of August 7, 1979, Shri George Fernandes has tried to draw a distinction between defection and split in the party. He may, however, recall that when he convened an informal meeting of Socialists in New Delhi on July 7 and 8, 1979 for a discussion on the present situation, in his letter to the invitees he wrote:

“It is necessary to carry on the ideological debate and not shun it. Realignment, in the light of the experience of the last two years, is necessary but that should not break the Janata Party. There is no democratic alternative to the Janata Party immediately. Those who break the Party may act as agents of dictatorship, military or civilian, regardless of their motives.”

The assurance for unity, given in the election manifesto of March 1977, and the above-mentioned views of my valued colleague, Shri George Fernandes, make it amply clear that all sections of the Janata Party were committed to its unity and had pledged not to break it. People feel deeply concerned because this assurance has been flagrantly
violated. Public memory may be short, but even shortness has its own dimension.

**Ambition**

The present crisis, as far as Choudhary Charan Singh's dominant role is concerned, stems from the fact that he was never reconciled to the reality that he could not become the Prime Minister of the country. All the policy issues that he had been raising are only the superstructures built on the basic foundation of his supreme ambition to be the Prime Minister of the country. It was not an accident that after becoming the Prime Minister, without any sophistication he crudely announced that his life's ambition had been fulfilled. Some of the issues that he has raised regarding dual membership and attitude to RSS are in the minds of many of us. The question, however, is, how are these issues to be settled? Are they to be settled through confrontation and fragmentation of the party or through persuasion, debate and dialogue? Those who committed themselves to the unity of the party would like to pursue the latter course.

It is worthwhile to recall the past background while considering this issue. In 1967 there were SVD Governments in various States in which the former Jana Sangh was a constituent—even the CPI was a participant in the experiment.

Choudhary Charan Singh was, no doubt, the strongest protagonist of the merger of non-Congress parties. However, it is on record that in the pre-Emergency era in 1973, when he found such a wider unity not coming forth, he toyed with the idea of a merger of at least BLD which he led and the Bhartiya Jana Sangh. At that time, the question of dual membership was not raised by him. On the contrary, he also sought the intervention of the RSS leadership to
the Disciplinary Action Committee recommending his removal from the National Executive of the Janata Party, resigned from the Janata Party with a few of his colleagues. Though Choudhary Charan Singh had earlier proclaimed his parting of company with Shri Raj Narain, he strangely followed suit. He, too, left the party along with his colleagues and while the caretaker Government was in office he withdrew from the Government.

In railway operations, very often a pilot is sent to test the safety of the track and when safety is assured, the main train traverses the track. So it happened with Shri Raj Narain and Shri Charan Singh.

While dealing with issues like dual membership and attitude to RSS, raised by Choudhary Charan Singh and others, it must be borne in mind that these issues are not unreal and have to be settled once for all. However, it is only the question of the modus operandi of settling the issues.

At this stage a look into the genesis of the formation of the Janata Party is very important. The Janata Party was formed by the merger of Congress(O), BLD, Jana Sangh, Socialist Party, Independent Congressmen and others on the basis of consensus evolved through initial dialogues and debate. The CFD joined the party later. Each constituent that merged into the new party had to give up something from its own policy and had to accept something new. It is widely known that even the word ‘socialism’ was an anathema to Choudhary Charan Singh. However, when the Party Constitution was framed, the Party’s aims and objects were defined as follows:

“The Janata Party is dedicated to the task of building up a democratic, secular and socialist State in India on Gandhian principles, drawing inspiration from our rich
heritage and the noble traditions of our struggle for national independence and individual liberty." (Article II: Aims and Objects).

Apart from Choudhary Charan Singh, the former Swatantra Party members who had come to the Janata Party through BLD, too, had to accept these formulations. Choudhary Charan Singh's opposition in the past to the policy of abolition of land revenue on uneconomic holdings in Uttar Pradesh was well known to all politicians. However, in the election manifesto of the Janata Party he agreed to exempting holdings below 2.5 hectares from payment of land revenue.

Sections of the Socialists and Jana Sangh were formerly in favour of keeping the nuclear option open. However, in the formulation of the policy statement of the Janata Party they had to give up their insistence on the nuclear option. Just as the socio-economic policies and programmes of the Janata Party were worked out through prolonged discussions and dialogues, the questions of dual membership and relationship with RSS have also to be settled once for all through a similar process.

**A beginning**

All our colleagues who had left the Janata Party could have constructively contributed to this process of settling the issues, as a beginning in this direction, though small, has already been made. With the consent of all, the National Executive of the Janata Party has adopted an amendment to the Party's Constitution which debars members of organisations believing in a theocratic State from becoming members of the Janata Party. It is true that no specific organisation has been mentioned in the amendment. Now the onus is on the RSS to redefine and clarify its aims
and objects. Shri Atal Behari Vajpayee had made a significant contribution by initiating a public debate on the subject. In ‘The Indian Express’ of August 2, 1979 Shri Vajpayee writes:

"...I must also add that the RSS, claiming to be a social and cultural organisation, should have taken greater pains to demonstrate that they did not seek a political role. Patronising a press that takes sides in the sordid politics of power, involvement in youth bodies that interact with political parties, participating in trade union rivalries such as the one which recently brought enormous misery to the people of Delhi by callously cutting off the water supply—these do not help an organisation to establish its apolitical credentials."

The RSS spokesmen had declared that they did not believe in a theocratic State. However, they still harp on the concept of a Hindu nation putting the widest interpretation on the concept of the Hindu nation. Whatever the interpretation, it will not be acceptable to those who are opposed to a theocratic State and are wedded to secular nationalism. This issue has to be thrashed out through discussions. The General Secretary of the RSS, Shri Rajendra Singh, issued a statement on July 24, 1979 suggesting that the Akhil Bharatiya Pratinidhi Sabha of the RSS will be convened to consider the suggestion regarding amendment of the RSS Constitution. One of the suggestions that he has received from certain quarters is that the embargo on office-bearers of political parties should be enlarged so that Members of Parliament and State Legislatures should not take part in RSS activities. The RSS Pratinidhi Sabha will not have to act on this suggestion only, but even the concept of the Hindu Rashtra may be transformed into Bharatiya Rashtra.
Whether the concept of Hindu Rashtra finds place in the RSS Constitution or in their prayer, it is the frame of thinking that has to be altered. Democrats must not give up hopes and efforts to use the methods of persuasion with success. If that could be done in evolving the basic socio-economic policies and programmes of the Janata Party, that process need not fail on an issue like the dual membership.

As on August 1, 1979, the position of various Parties and Groups in the Lok Sabha is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Seats</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Janata</td>
<td>203</td>
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<tr>
<td>Janata(S)</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congress</td>
<td>75</td>
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<td>Congress(I)</td>
<td>72</td>
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<tr>
<td>CPI(M)</td>
<td>22</td>
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<td>AIADMK</td>
<td>18</td>
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<tr>
<td>Akali Dal</td>
<td>8</td>
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<td>CPI</td>
<td>7</td>
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<td>P&amp;WP</td>
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<tr>
<td>United Parliamentary Front</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>R.S.P.</td>
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<td>Forward Block</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Muslim League</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>J&amp;K National Conference</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R.P.I.(Khobargade)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unattached</td>
<td>31 (including Independents supporting the Janata Party)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Vacancies | 7 |

543 (excluding the Speaker)
Steps be retraced

This composition shows that the Janata Party still continues to be the single largest party in Lok Sabha. Therefore, those members of the party, who got detached from the Janata Party under the false impression that the break in the party has come about basically on policy issues and not because of power politics at the summit, may retrace their steps even at this stage and join the mainstream of the Janata Party.

Similarly, allies of the Janata Party who stood by the party during the Emergency and threafter should also refuse to blow up certain issues beyond proportion and they should allow the Janata Party to reassert its position. It is only under such conditions of stabilisation can Janata Party’s assurance of “both bread and liberty” be fulfilled.

The achievements of the Janata Party during the past 28 months in various fields—domestic and external—were not insignificant. But these were clouded by internal bickerings and atmosphere of crisis generated too often by individuals and groups.

The present coalition headed by Choudhary Charan Singh is unnatural and bereft of all principles and programmes. This cannot continue for long, as fissures are likely to develop sooner than expected. The sordid drama of Ministry formation bears testimony to the fact that the coalition partners are guided solely by power motivation and political expediency. This set-up will never be able to deliver the goods and the atmosphere of crisis will further deepen endangering the nation’s stability and economic growth. It is, therefore, necessary for all right-thinking people to ponder over the situation and retrieve the position before it is too late.

26
A LETTER TO SHRI CHARAN SINGH

Not late to undo the harm

August 14, 1979

Respected Choudhary Sahib,

My respectful regards,

In a statement on August 9 you have said that I have been travelling all over the country abusing you and, secondly, that while I had urged you to become Chief Minister of U.P. with Jana Sangh support you had refused to do so “half a dozen times”

You are elder to me. How can I be abusing you? Even otherwise, I have not grown up in an atmosphere of abuse and it is not my nature to hurl abuse at others.

For the last 45 years, I have immersed myself in social work. Accordingly I am very conscious of my social responsibilities. I have endeavoured over these years to discharge these responsibilities in a selfless and fearless spirit. I may well have erred but I have not acted out of animus. In the political sphere also, I have not desired power of office. I have laboured solely in the interest of the people as I perceive them. It is from the point of view of the interest of our people that I want to set the record straight
on some issues through this letter so that there is no scope left for any misunderstanding.

It may be that my memory fails me and it is precisely for this reason that I would request you to remind me when it was that we, of the erstwhile Jana Sangh, were in a position to instal a Cabinet and when it was that in spite of what you assert, were the invitations from us to you to leave the Congress, and you declined to do so just to become the Chief Minister?

You will recall that it was in 1956 that, having been impressed by developments in China, Pandit Nehru had decided that Indian farming should be organised along cooperative lines. The Jana Sangh had started a nationwide campaign to oppose this. At this time your Stenographer, Shri Nanakchand, told me that you also were opposed to cooperative farming. It was in this connection that I first met you. You were kind enough then to give me the typescript of the book “Wither Cooperative Farming?” to read.

In the Nagpur session of the Congress you openly and forcefully opposed cooperative farming. I called upon you on your return to Lucknow, and congratulated you on your bold stand. It was on this occasion that I for the first time told you that, in my view, your place henceforth was not in the Congress, and that you should leave the Congress and join us. There was no question of my offering to support you for the Chief Ministership at that stage. Neither was your strength in the House such that you could secure the Chief Ministership on your own nor were we in a position to help you in any significant way to become the Chief Minister.
After this you will recall that Mr. C.B. Gupta resigned from Dr. Sampurnanand's Cabinet along with eight associates. My relations with the late Mr. Sampurnanand were cordial. He knew that I had cordial relations with you. At that time you also had submitted your letter of resignation to Mr. Sampurnanand. During the conversation Babuji (that is, Mr. Sampurnanand) told me: "Bhai, your Choudhary Sahib also wants to desert me at this hour". Upon being told this, I came over to your house and requested you to withdraw your letter of resignation. You remarked to me then: "Bhai, as for the resignation letter, I will certainly take it back. Even otherwise I do not want the impression to go around that I am with C.B. Gupta & Co. But tell me, when are you making me the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh?" At that time you will recall that the Jana Sangh had only 18 MLAs in the D.P. Vidhan Sabha. In response to your question I said then that when Jana Sangh obtains 100 legislators in the Vidhan Sabha, then Choudhary Sahib will be the Chief Minister of U.P.

In the 1962 election 49 Jana Sangh candidates succeeded in getting elected to the UP Vidhan Sabha. After the general election of 1962 Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia, Acharya Kripalani and Mr. Minoo Masani won successive by-elections to the Lok Sabha. The wave was turning against the Congress. At that time I earnestly advised you to leave the Congress and help consolidate the opposition groups into a strong and cohesive unit. I had said that the wave had turned against the Congress and that it was an opportune moment to consolidate the opposition groups. But you had said that time: "Bhai, I am not well enough to establish and consolidate the opposition groups; I do
not have the stamina or strength to labour and run around
to do so."

In the 1967 general elections the Jana Sangh succeeded
in winning 99 seats in the Assembly. The candidate from
Lucknow Cantonment, Shri Awasthi, who had stood as
an independent, joined us and so our strength grew to 100.
Mr. C.B. Gupta had already formed the Government.
The time had come for us to stand by my word to you.
It was then that you left the Congress with 16 associates
and ended the 18-day old Gupta Ministry so as to become
the Chief Minister yourself.

Apart from this single instance I do not recall any other
occasion on which we, of the erstwhile Jana Sangh, have
been in a position to form a Government and you declined
to become the Chief Minister with our support.

In 1969 you ordered mid-term election in U.P. After
the 1969 mid-term election Shri C.B. Gupta became the
Chief Minister. But owing to the split in the Congress, it
became difficult for Shri C.B. Gupta to continue as Chief
Minister of the State. Smt. Indira Gandhi was Prime
Minister at that time. Naturally, Guptaji sided with the
opposition. The opposition was called upon to form the
government in Uttar Pradesh. Therefore, efforts were made
to change the leader. You will recall that Guptaji at that
time had a serious heart-attack. Shri Raj Narain was your
severest opponent.

Shri Raj Narain was persuaded to accept you as our
leader. You called on Shri Gupta that very night. Shri
Gupta was instrumental in making you the Chief Minister.
Soon after this you deserted us and supported Mrs. Gandhi
in the Presidential election held in that year. These two
occasions apart (in each of which you yourself desired and became the Chief Minister) can you recall for the public when it was that you refused to become the Chief Minister?

I have to recall these instances because you have maintained in your statement that I requested you half a dozen times to take over the Chief Ministership of UP and that you consistently refused to do so.

Now the question of abuse.

Far from abusing you in my public speeches, I have only been highlighting a few facts and raising a few questions. I believe that highlighting these facts is a national duty. I would like to be enlightened as to how the action of drawing public attention to them can be construed as abuse. If you can educate me as to how this can indeed be construed as abuse, I would certainly be prepared to do public penance.

The facts I have been asking the public to consider are as follows:

First, Choudhary Sahib was for long the Home Minister in the Janata Government. In his capacity as the Home Minister, in a communication to Mr Morarji Desai, the Prime Minister, Mr Charan Singh levelled very grave charges of corruption against Mr Bahuguna. These charges of corruption and misconduct were so grave that they fell within the scope of maintaining that Mr Bahuguna was a traitor. Occupying as responsible a position as that of the Home Minister I presume Choudhary Sahib did not level these grave charges without first ascertaining the facts for himself and yet today, having become the Prime Minister, he has handed over to the same Mr Bahuguna the entire treasury and the direction of the financial affairs of our
country. In these circumstances should the public conclude that at the time Chowdhary Sahib levelled these grave charges against Mr Bahuguna, he did so out of animus and merely to have Mr Bahuguna removed from the Cabinet? Or should it conclude that so as to fulfil his life's ambition of becoming the Prime Minister, Chowdhary Sahib has now chosen to cover up the charges against the traitorous Mr Bahuguna and made a gift to him of the Finance Ministership of our country.

Is it abuse to bring this question to the attention of the public?

In your message to the nation upon your becoming the Prime Minister, you said.

"We will have to base our unity on living principles". I am completely in agreement with this principle that you have enunciated. But glancing at what has been happening for the last two years, I feel that we have made a plaything of principles. To base our polity on principles, we shall have to bare the shortcomings of the immediate past. We will have to awaken and enthuse the public so that it keeps a vigil on its rulers and does not permit them to depart from principles.

In view of this necessity and in view of the principle you have mentioned—that of basing our public life on principles—how can you maintain that my bringing a question like this to the attention of the public amounts to abusing you?

2. In your statement on the floor of the Lok Sabha on December 22, 1978 explaining the circumstances in which you resigned from Mr Morarji Desai’s Cabinet, you levelled the gravest possible charges against Mr Desai.
These are still fresh in the public mind and I do not have to recall them. Even after that you used epithets like ‘a coterie of corrupt men’ etc. to describe Mr Desai’s Cabinet. And yet you did not show the slightest hesitation in accepting the Deputy Prime Ministership and the Finance Ministership in the same Cabinet under the same Mr Morarji Desai. Do your previous assertions and the fact of rejoining the Cabinet as its Deputy Prime Minister go well together? It is this question which I have laid before the public.

After assuming the Deputy Prime Ministership and Finance Ministership, in a Press interview you said on May 31, 1979 that “I am not a rival of Prime Minister Morarji Desai for either the party leadership or the post of Prime Minister. Mr Desai must and will remain the Prime Minister as long as he wishes. It was I who wanted Mr Desai to be Prime Minister and I will be the last person to do anything to remove him.”

In my public speeches I have read this statement of yours out to the audience and asked them whether this statement conforms to what you had stated five months earlier in the Lok Sabha. Does this amount to abuse?

And then merely two months after your statement of May 31, 1979, you stated on July 26, 1979 that: “All the failures and shortcomings of the Janata Government could be traced to one cause. Mr Morarji Desai’s incapability to entertain any vision about the future of the country and his inordinate desire to stick to power.”

Now does this conform to the statement of May 31, 1979?

Can anyone believe that a distinguished public man
like Chowdhary Sahib who today has become the Prime Minister of the country can maintain such inconsistent views about the same individual, Morarji Desai? Can anyone trust and lay faith in a person who changes his position with such alacrity?

How can raising these questions in public be called abuse?

3. Mrs Gandhi had been expelled from her Membership of the Lok Sabha. Her political position was deteriorating day by day. She wanted desperately to return to the Lok Sabha. The Tanjore by-election was to be held. Mrs Gandhi thought of contesting the election from there. Yet she could not muster the courage to do so. Mr Devraj Urs parted company with her. It seemed that Mrs Gandhi's influence in the political arena was waning rapidly. Her old associates had begun to leave her one by one. And yet suddenly her significance and influence have re-emerged once again. These have increased to such an extent that today the Central Government dances to her tune. How has this come about? This is the question that I have been putting before the public.

It is clear that so as to fulfil what you have described as your life's ambition of becoming the Prime Minister of India, you devised a plan. Even while continuing to be a Member of the Central Cabinet you instigated your colleagues in the party to desert it. After this part of your plan had been carried out, you yourself left the Cabinet and, by abjectly seeking the support of Mrs. Gandhi, you had installed yourself as the Prime Minister. You have done all this when you yourself had written on June 28, 1978 that—"Many Emergency victims have come to me
repeatedly and implored me that not only should Mrs. Gandhi be arrested immediately but that she should be kept in Chandigarh, in the same circumstances in which Lok Nayak Jaya Prakash Narayan was kept or in Tihar Jail, in the same circumstances in which Gayatri Devi and Vijaya Raje Scindia were kept.

I have no doubt that if we in the Government could only persuade ourselves to accept and implement this suggestion, there would be hundreds of mothers of Emergency victims who would celebrate the occasion as befittingly as another ‘Diwali’. Of course, in any other country she would have by now been facing a trial on the lines of the historic ‘Nuremberg Trial’.

Do you think the public do not understand what is going on? How can the narration on such events before the public in a systematic manner be regarded as abuse? Indeed, to raise it publicly is precisely to awaken the public to the principles on which our national life must be made to rest.

4. As soon as the President invited you to form the Government, the first sentence which escaped your lips was, “My life’s ambition has been fulfilled”. Can it be the life’s ambition of anyone to become a Prime Minister one way or the other, by hook or by crook? I can understand that an individual may want to become the Prime Minister so as to better serve the country, so as to help improve the wellbeing and happiness of our people. The Prime Ministership can only be a means. How can it by itself be the ambition of a man? This is the question I have asked the public to ponder over.

Chowdhary Sahib, please do not get offended. It is true
that you have succeeded in becoming the Prime Minister. But the methods that you have adopted for obtaining this post have, I am pained to record, lowered your esteem in the eyes of the public.

Please do consider for a moment the effect your example, and the example of the means that you and your associates have adopted merely to acquire a post, will have on the youth of our country. What will they learn? How will principles survive such an onslaught of opportunism? In your message to the nation you have drawn attention to our glorious heritage. From time to time you keep reminding us of the heritage and standards of Mahatma Gandhi. Does your own conduct over the past six months fare well by these standards.

We have to end hypocrisy in our country. Without ending this, we cannot hope to improve the standards of our national and public life. On what kind of living principles can we found our polity if everything we do is saturated with hypocrisy?

But this step of yours is not limited to the purpose which you have already achieved. This has done greater harm. Fulfilment of your ‘life’s ambition’ has ushered in instability of the Central Government. This has brought a serious threat to democracy which was defended by Lok Nayak Jaya Prakash Narayan in his old age through a countrywide agitation. Integration of the country which was achieved by the great administrator Sardar Vallab Bhai Patel, through his farsightedness, is again being threatened. The lust for power and regionalism will get a fillip, due to the instability which has been created at the Centre. Kindly give earnest thought as to how far your
Conduct has been responsible for the present danger to the democratic structure of the country.

I agree that corruption in money matters should be condemned and it is a serious offence. But political corruption as also intellectual corruption are more dangerous. These types of corruption cannot be compared to others. Political corruption can be the cause of ruining the country and the society.

Choudhary Saheb, today I again appeal to you to reconsider the whole situation. You have fulfilled your life’s ambition. You are fully aware that your present Government is much more precarious and shortlived than your governments in U.P. in 1967 and 1970. Therefore, I request that for the integrity of the country, strengthening of the nation’s democratic fibre and restoration of moral values in the society you may give up the lust for power, in order to give the country a new government which can fulfil the aspirations of the people and usher in a new era of reconstruction and carry out the promises made to the people in 1977. You should cooperate with us to give a new government in order to undo whatever harm has been done to the country, and I trust that the people will gradually get over the feeling of hurt, and the country will repose confidence in the new government and usher in an era to fulfil the nation’s aspirations to which we stand firmly committed.

With my best regards and good wishes.

Yours Sincerely,

Sd/-

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