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OPINION

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DICTATRESS AGAIN

WHAT, fellow-citizens, is Indira Gandhi ?

Since no one—not even the expert who toyed after the election with the idea of installing her as Empress—has suggested that there has been any change in her, she remains what she was.

And so she is primarily :

An arrant, inveterate liar ;
A most unscrupulous person ;
An inordinate lover of power ;
An inordinate lover of her son Sanjay ;
A complete acceptor in regard to herself
of the Satanist principle “Do what You will
is the Whole Law” ; .. .
A most plausible manoeuvrer.

This is the personage you have chosen, fellow-citizens, to be Prime Minister for the next five years, and you have given her so large an obsequious and pliant majority that she can quite easily alter the Constitution as she likes, giving the Executive (herself) supreme power, reducing the Legislature and the Judiciary to the position of bond servitors. Do you think then you can restrict her rule to the five years ? Does it not occur to you that you have in fact established her and her successors in power for the foreseeable future ? Aye, fellow-citizens, in all probability you have killed democracy in India.

To a number of you this may not matter particularly. The nursing-arms of dictatorship you longed for in any case, yourselves tightly held, your brows smoothed, your places assigned, your problems solved. What need have you for free choice ? She tells you what to do ; you do it. She is happy and so are you, as she descants upon the bright future, and the sacrifices and pains she is bearing to bring it about, and calls on you to make your contribution too with a cheerful heart and a smiling countenance.

To some of you it may seem irksome. You never thought your vote would bring dictatorship. You were dissatisfied with those in power and wanted a change. In the normal course you thought an opportunity for choice would come to you again some years later under the existing constitution, but now you found there was none forthcoming. Those in power remained in power whatever you thought. You had mistaken your

woman. You had not taken her for what she was. You had looked at a thistle and thought it was a vine and its fruit would be grapes. And long before the five years are over, you may be disillusioned too, for a head of a government with the character described above cannot really function except through a collection of unsavoury myrmidons, ready to take on tasks which generally could not face the light of day. These individuals increase the normal intrigue, back-biting, tale-carrying that pertain to any court many times over. They have in addition their clients to attend to, their own special patron to serve, so that their influence in the working of government begins to be felt more and more, and almost always for the worse. Corruption, nepotism, favouritism, endemic with such a head, widen in high quarters to epidemic breadth, and attract a good deal of attention after a time. You may of course learn to live with this condition, even in fact, depending on your moral make-up, to benefit from it. In which case, you will probably make yourself believe 'Oh, she knows nothing of all this, she is of course far, far above it', giving yourself a spotless idol to worship at least from afar.

Those of us who have eyes that see, ears that hear, and minds that consider and reflect honestly on what we have seen and heard, cannot deceive ourselves that the gateway to dictatorship has not opened again. The working towards it will probably be more subtle, with greater observance of the forms of law and avoidance of egregious blunders, but it will be surer than in the past. The time-span is longer, the life of Parliament, and it may well be argued that the people themselves have approved the authoritarian concept. Witness the P.M.'s majority. Yet, since there can be no doubt that the true welfare of the Indian people rests in democracy, and democracy alone, dictatorship must be opposed however it appears, in its own form or masquerading as democracy. To compromise is so easy, so comfortable, but what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his soul? Remember that, good Indians all!

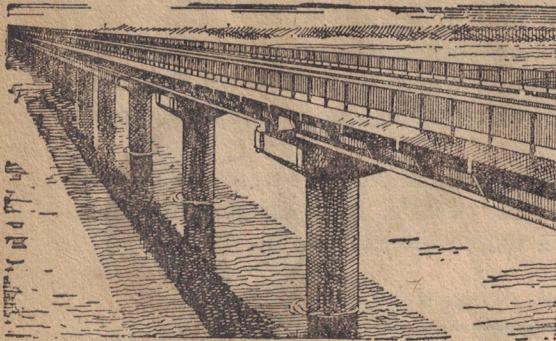
VIEW

A. V.: The result of the Lok Sabha elections should cause the members of the Opposition to ponder over many things, among them being the following:

(1) The most effective Opposition to the Congress(I) majority in the Lok Sabha would be an opposition majority in the Vidhan Sabha elections which seem around the corner. If the newspaper analysis regarding the percentage of votes polled by the Janata Party and the Lok Dal combined as against the Cong(I) by itself is correct, then the only sensible course of action left to these parties is to unite. However, if they do not understand the language of commonsense, or even survival, the citizens of India wish them luck in their suicide course.

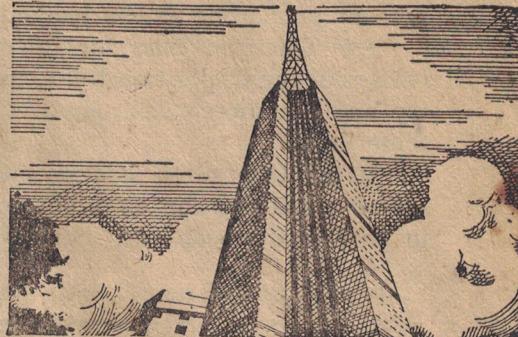
(2) There has to be a change in the Opposition leadership. The present leaders have to understand that their images are associated with

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OPINION, January 15, 1980

partisanship, divisiveness and hostility. Someone younger, more unanimously acceptable by all sections like Chandrasekhar must replace the present patriarchs as the leader of a united opposition.

(3) This is a time for introspection—not self-justification. Let the leaders of the Opposition think, and realise, where they let down the country and not merely talk in terms of where rival opposition factions let them down.

If the Opposition is not capable of this, it would deserve the most severe condemnation as a shameless lot, unable, even in serious crisis, to provide the people of India with a viable alternative.



I shall go when I like, if I like, says Brezhnev.

Of course, Bravo ,We heartily believe you and approve, says Indira.

A more disingenuous argument than that used by the Russians to the Government of India in regard to the withdrawal of troops after their invasion of Afghanistan it would be difficult to imagine. Say the Russians "Withdraw, of course we'll withdraw when the Government of Afghanistan asks us to." And who set up the Government of Afghanistan ? Why the Russians. It is a Russian puppet. So when the puppets ask the puppeteer to go, he will go. And the puppets make the movements only as the puppeteer's fingers move.

The Government of India accepts this blah and seriously puts it forward at the United Nations. Soviet-Indo friendship, indeed ! First-fruits of Indira's return to power, no doubt !!

*"Such subtle covenants shall be made
Till peace itself is war in masquerade"*

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