



#2135

**THE INDIAN ELECTIONS -
A DIARY**

Myron Weiner

**CENTER FOR
INTERNATIONAL STUDIES
MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE
OF TECHNOLOGY
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139**

THE INDIAN ELECTIONS — A DIARY

Myron Weiner

Chairman, Department of Political Science
Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Center for International Studies
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139

June 1977

The Indian Elections - A Diary

I left for Bombay on March 6th for a three-week trip to India to watch what proved to be an historic election. Mrs. Gandhi's defeat ended twenty-one months of emergency rule under which the government had summarily arrested thousands of opponents, suspended habeas corpus, imposed censorship on the press, and banned strikes and public meetings. Before the elections were declared many observers had concluded that India's long-standing democratic government was being replaced by a personal hereditary Asian dictatorship under Mrs. Gandhi and her son, Sanjay.

It came as a surprise when on January 18th Mrs. Gandhi announced in a radio broadcast that elections to parliament would be held in mid-March. At the same time she released thousands from jail, including her most prominent opponents (some of whom were members of the governing Congress party). She suspended press censorship and announced that public meetings would be permitted. But she also made it clear that the emergency was not ended, nor were civil liberties permanently restored. As she said in her broadcast, for the duration of the election campaign the "rules" of the emergency would be "relaxed".

It was widely understood that Mrs. Gandhi was holding the elections for two reasons. She was seeking a mandate for the emergency and for her recent amendments to the constitution and a number of parliamentary acts which made authoritarian government a more permanent feature of Indian life. Her critics, domestic and foreign, would she thought be silenced by a massive electoral victory. It would legitimize these changes domestically and strengthen Mrs. Gandhi's reputation internationally.

Many observers noted that Mrs. Gandhi continued to be concerned with western criticism. Though she denounced western critics for failing to understand that the emergency was necessary under Indian conditions to provide the country with stability and discipline, her frequent interviews with western reporters to explain her position showed how sensitive she was to what they wrote. In her announcement she pointedly said that elections would "uphold the fair name of India."

Elections would also provide her son, Sanjay, with an opportunity to establish his power within the Congress parliamentary party and thereby ensure his succession to the Prime Ministership. Sanjay had risen to prominence during the emergency as the leader of the Youth Congress, an affiliate of the country's governing Congress party. Though he held no public office, he was generally regarded as a powerful influence within the government. Some supporters of Mrs. Gandhi saw the Youth Congress as a potential mass movement that would provide support for the government. But Sanjay's critics feared that the movement, which attracted many tough opportunistic youth and which was developing strong ties with the local police, might become India's equivalent of a fascist youth corp.

Under the emergency India's long-standing democratic government was beginning to look more and more like that of other third-world regimes. Power was concentrated in the hands of the Prime Minister and a close coterie of supporters associated with Sanjay, while parliament had become a rubber stamp. The paramilitary Border Security Forces had grown in importance, as had the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), an intelligence gathering unit located in the Prime Minister's secretariat. Armed with a law called the Maintenance of Internal Security Act (MISA) the government could arrest opponents at will without reasons. The government had passed the Press Objectionable Matter Act so that press regulation would continue even if the emergency were ended. The constitution was amended to permit the government to prohibit "anti-national" activities. The powers of the judiciary were curtailed while those of the Prime Minister were increased.

An underground opposition to the government had developed, but it hardly constituted a threat. Only a few months earlier, George Fernandez, the most prominent leader of the underground, was picked up by the police. Strikes were effectively clamped down and while there was some vocal protest in New Delhi and in other parts of north India over the slum clearance and sterilization programs there were no signs of any mass movement against the government.

When the announcement was made it seemed like a foregone conclusion that Mrs. Gandhi and the Congress party would win. As a result of three reasonably good monsoons the food situation was satisfactory. Prices, though rising, were increasing at a substantially lower rate than before the emergency. The government claimed some successes in its twenty point program to improve the lot of the urban and rural poor by allocating housing sites to Harijans, redistributing land to the landless, abolishing bonded labor, ending or at least reducing

rural indebtedness, and providing alternate housing for urban squatters. While each of these "benefits" of the emergency had its detractors the government viewed these measures as both successful and popular.

Sanjay appeared to be emerging as a popular leader. His own "Five Point Program" for social progress, which included family planning, seemed to have taken root. Large crowds appeared at his public meetings, press coverage of his speeches was enthusiastic, he was acclaimed by the chief ministers and other Congress leaders of states he visited, and his Youth Congress was apparently attracting hundreds of thousands of followers. Sanjay's promise, and Mrs. Gandhi's hope, that the Youth Congress would emerge as a powerful force within the Congress party, built upon a popular base of energetic young people, seemed within grasp.

On such short notice it seemed unlikely that the opposition could by mid-March organize itself into a single party with a common platform. And given the likelihood that they would lose how would they raise money? In a country with 320 million voters and 542 parliamentary constituencies it had to be an expensive election campaign. Even though censorship had been suspended, the press would surely be cautious. The government had not relinquished the control it had established over the governing boards of several papers, and it had, moreover, established its own consolidated news agency.

But within two weeks of Mrs. Gandhi's announcement, it became clear that this was likely to be a genuine election. On January 21 the opposition leaders, most of whom had just been released from jail, met in New Delhi to announce the formation of the Janata party, a unified opposition party with a single program. Previously, the opposition parties had been divided. Since the Congress party had won earlier elections with less than a majority of popular votes many thought that a unified opposition could now make very substantial

inroads into the Congress parliamentary strength. Given the long history of aborted efforts to unify the opposition, the creation of the Janata party came as a considerable surprise. The Janata party was made up of four groups: the Socialists, the Jana Sangh (a pro-Hindu right of center party), the Bharatiya Lok Dal (B.L.D.), (a regional party in northern India), and a group known as the Congress Organization, which had separated from Mrs. Gandhi's Congress when the party split in 1969. The four parties had worked together before, but now for the first time they appeared to be submerging their individual identities. Many of the opposition leaders felt that unless they created a unified party, Mrs. Gandhi was sure to be reelected and were that to happen, there might never again be an opportunity for a free election. Another incentive for unification was a statement by Jayaprakash Narayan. The elderly much revered Gandhian Socialist who had led the pre-emergency campaign against the Prime Minister, said that he would not take part in the election campaign unless the opposition created a unified party.

The biggest surprise, however, came on February 2 when a senior minister in Mrs. Gandhi's cabinet, Jagjivan Ram, resigned from the government, denounced the emergency, and announced that he was forming his own political party, the Congress for Democracy, which would support Janata party candidates. Ram, a long-time Congress leader and minister, was a prominent figure in the politics of the state of Bihar and a leader of India's Harijan community. He was particularly harsh in denouncing Mrs. Gandhi for having destroyed democracy within the Congress party. Ram noted that during the emergency party offices were appointed, not elected, and the chief ministers of India's states were chosen by the Prime Minister rather than elected by the state legislative assemblies dominated by the Congress party. Two prominent state leaders, both former chief ministers of their states followed suit. Mr. H.N. Bahaguna, a

54 year old trade unionist and Congress leader in Uttar Pradesh, India's largest state, and Mrs. Nandini Satpathi, an attractive 46 year old social worker and political leader from the eastern state of Orissa also announced that they were resigning from Congress to join Jagjivan Ram.

Ram's resignation evidently led Mrs. Gandhi to be fearful of more widespread defections from the Congress party. It was initially assumed that Sanjay Gandhi and his Youth Congress followers would be given a large number of tickets in the parliamentary elections, perhaps as many as 150-200 out of the 542 parliamentary seats. But of course this would have meant denying renomination to a very large number of the sitting Congress members in parliament. With Ram's resignation, Mrs. Gandhi concluded that most of the sitting members had best be renominated. To discourage some of the state Congress leaders from joining Ram, several were given considerable influence in the allocation of tickets to their own supporters.

Jagjivan Ram's resignation thus deprived Mrs. Gandhi of the opportunity to restructure the distribution of power in favor of her son within the Congress parliamentary party. It also tended to strengthen the position of some of the state Congress leaders who were thought to be less than loyal to Mrs. Gandhi. And it provided an important psychological boost to the Janata party.

The first indication that Mrs. Gandhi might be in trouble occurred at the public rallies organized by the Janata party in India's major cities. The largest of these was a public rally at Ram Lila grounds in New Delhi where an estimated half million people came to hear Jagjivan Ram, Jayaprakash Narayan, and Morarji Desai, the leader of the Janata party. Mrs. Gandhi's rallies were not so well attended and she was often booed by members of the audience.

Still, it was generally assumed in early March that Mrs. Gandhi's Congress party would win, though perhaps by a substantially reduced majority.

Commerce, a leading business review published in Bombay, reported in its special number reviewing the state of the economy during 1976, that the country had built an impressive buffer stock of food, industrial production had substantially increased, performance of the government-run public sector plants had showed a significant improvement, a successful program of oil exploration had led to the commercial production of crude oil from wells off the coast of Bombay, foreign trade had substantially increased leading to a favorable trade balance in 1976, there had been a very substantial increase in the country's foreign exchange reserves, and wholesale prices had increased modestly by 8.5% during the year. Commerce estimated that real national income had increased by 6.5% in 1975 and by an additional 3% in 1976. The slowdown from '75 to '76 was primarily due to the lack of growth in agriculture during the past year as compared to the unusually high rate of growth in 1975 when the monsoon was substantially superior as compared to last year.

Surely, even if she lost some of the urban areas, it was said, Mrs. Gandhi would win the support of the countryside. Given the improved economic situation, it seemed unlikely that the countryside would turn against the government because it had imposed censorship on the press, arrested political opponents of the government, banned strikes, or weakened the independence of the judiciary -- issues that could, so it was said, hardly affect the masses of rural people. Not only in the West, but within the Indian government itself, it was generally held that in a developing society a largely illiterate peasantry is more likely to be moved by economic considerations than by abstract arguments about democracy and civil liberties. Sanjay Gandhi had made this point only a few months earlier when he called for postponing the elections because, as he put it, the country wanted "bread not elections."

I questioned this argument. Research I had conducted on Indian elections

from 1952-1971 showed that there were very few differences in the way rural and urban India voted. Differences were noted in the early elections, but by the mid-1960's these had more or less disappeared. In most of the states the turnout in urban areas had been no higher than in the surrounding countryside. In most states, the townspeople and the city people generally voted for the same political parties as the rural dwellers. It looked as if both the cities and villages were swayed by some of the same influences.

In India there is a great deal of movement of rural migrants back and forth from the towns to the countryside. Both villagers and city people listen to the same transistor radios. The newspapers, especially those published in the regional languages, have become ubiquitous. Most importantly, political parties had reached down to the small towns and large villages. There were elections not only to parliament, and to the state assemblies, but to village and district councils. Villagers, perhaps even more than city people, were in frequent touch with the local bureaucracy and with elected local officials. Political awareness seemed as high in the countryside as in the cities, in spite of differences in education and income.

But this was a unique election. The Janata party and the Congress for Democracy were running on a single issue. "The choice before the electorate is clear," said the Janata party manifesto. "It is a choice between freedom and slavery; between democracy and dictatorship; between abdicating the power of the people or asserting it; between the Gandhian path and the way that has led many nations down the precipice of dictatorship, instability, military adventure and national ruin." Lofty phrases, but would these mean as much in rural India, or in the city slums, as they might among the educated classes in the cities?

Bombay, March 8

During the ride from Santa Cruz International Airport into the center of Bombay I could already see the signs of an election campaign. Every wall, large and small, seemed to be covered by an election poster or by graffiti. The Congress theme was simply "For progress and stability -- vote Congress." Congress posters paired photos of Mrs. Gandhi with that of the local Congress candidate, though often there were only photos of Mrs. Gandhi. A favorite graffiti was, "Support Indira Gandhi -- Vote cow and calf (symbols of the Congress party)". Many posters from the emergency with hortatory slogans persisted: "Talk less, work more", "There is no substitute for hard work", and "Twenty point program is a blueprint for progress".

Janata had fewer posters but more graffiti. "Our pledge -- bread and liberty -- vote Janata" was a favorite Janata slogan. Among the other slogans I saw were "Save democracy -- vote for Janata party", "Problems are plenty, points are twenty, results are empty", "We were curtailed -- freedom of speech, freedom of press, fundamental rights, freedom of association -- to restore them forever vote for Janata party", "Our leaders and political leaders are still in jail -- release them at once -- vote for Janata", "Vote for Janata -- farmer cum plow (the symbols of the Janata party)", "A ballot for Janata is a bullet for democracy", "For civil liberties, freedom of the press, independence of judiciary, vote for Janata party", and "What do you want? Freedom or slavery? For freedom elect Janata party."

The government's Election Commission had a single poster which said "Vote without fear -- your vote is secret".

Banners and streamers were tied across streets, especially on the main thoroughfares in slum areas. Every few blocks I saw a neighborhood office of

one of the political parties. Each was typically located in a single room of a wooden storefront, in a busy bazaar. In the early evening hours there were processions of young people shouting slogans. Later in the evening after the sun went down, and the temperature dropped there were large public rallies which often continued into the late hours of the night and even into the early morning.

On my first day in Bombay I visited several political party offices. A neighborhood Janata party office that I visited was typical. It was a small room that measured about 10 x 15 feet. The room contained one large wood desk, four chairs, a metal cabinet, a wood bookcase with cards, leaflets, two straw mats, a telephone, and a large brass jug for water. On the wall was a ward map, a calendar and a photo of the Janata party candidate. An overhead fan and a single fluorescent light hung from the ceiling. But the air and light came largely from the open door facing the main bazaar street. A bullhorn with a battery was on the windowsill. In the corner were several Janata party flags. One was attached to a pole. There were also several 10-foot bamboo sticks in the corner. Presumably they too were for flags. Everyone in the room was barefooted. Each person's sandals had been dropped in a pile on the concrete floor by the door.

People were moving in and out in a disorganized fashion. They sometimes stopped to talk to one another and occasionally picked up a pile of cards from the desk with the names, addresses and polling station of each voter on the voting list. At one point there were nineteen people in the little room.

The man behind the desk, evidently the office manager, was about thirty years old. He explained to me that the parliamentary constituency was broken into four state assembly constituencies, which were divided in turn into four municipal wards. His particular office was in charge of one of the wards. It

was responsible for arranging local street corner meetings, and mounting posters, but most important was the responsibility for directing the voters to the polls.

I asked him what issues were emphasized as workers canvassed the constituency. "Since this is largely a working class constituency," he answered, "here we talk about the compulsory deposit scheme and the bonus issue." He explained that under the compulsory deposit scheme, most of the dearness allowances that workers had received had been taken by the government and put into forced savings. Moreover, during the emergency employers were no longer required to give annual bonuses to the workers. Most workers generally regarded the bonuses in India as a deferred wage but the government had declared that unless businesses had earned a specified profit bonuses were not mandatory. The unions opposed the government on the compulsory deposit scheme and the bonus issue. They were unable, however, to do anything about it, since public demonstrations and strikes were forbidden during the emergency.

Janata workers also talked about the family planning issue. The state government of Maharashtra passed a law last year requiring that everyone with more than three children, who worked for the government, had to be sterilized. The President of India had not signed the bill. It was therefore not yet a law. "But," he said, "if this government is reelected the law will be enacted."

"Nasbandi" -- the Hindi word for vasectomy -- if not a major issue in Bombay, certainly raised furors throughout most of northern India. Inder Malhotra, an editor of the Times of India, Bombay's leading daily, had just returned from a tour of rural constituencies in north India. He reported that Sanjay Gandhi had successfully persuaded many chief ministers to set up travelling vasectomy camps that would move from village to village to ensure that large numbers of people were vasectomized. Quotas had been imposed on

state and local government officials. "There is hardly a school teacher, a civil servant, railway man, or police inspector in this sprawling state," wrote Inder Malhotra in an article on the state of Uttar Pradesh, "whose pay, promotion, or confirmation was not held up pending the production by him or her of certificates to show that he or she had motivated a requisite number of persons to undergo sterilization." The result, he said, is that officials often coerced local people to undergo sterilization. In the town of Muzaffarnagar, there were armed battles between the local people and the police. Quite a few people were killed in police firings. Many, he said, thought that vasectomy meant the same as castration. There were stories of young men being forced into the vasectomy camps. There were incidents of post-operative infections as doctors moved quickly from village to village. Popular hostility to the compulsory sterilization program was so great that one life-long committed Congressman told Malhotra, "These damned vasectomies have become something like the greased cartridges of 1857". He was referring to the time when rumors that the cartridges of bullets were greased with pork lard led Muslim soldiers in the British army to mutiny.

Malhotra expected the Congress party to do badly in the states of U.P., Punjab, Bihar, Haryana, and Himachal. It was in those states that Bansi Lal, the Defense Minister, and Sanjay Gandhi had been influential in pressing for the sterilization program. The Muslims and the Harijans and other low income communities were hit the worst by the government quotas. He anticipated that those groups would turn against the government, and he thought that local officials in those states would also turn against the government. Not because they didn't like the idea of quotas, but because the government was now blaming them for some of the "excesses" of the emergency. "The officials," he said, "resent being used as a scapegoat for the government's excesses."

On March 5th a statement was issued by the All India State Government Employees Federation rebuking the government's attempt to blame its employees for the excesses in the family planning program. The statement said that the state governments had established quotas for motivating sterilization cases. "When employees could not achieve the quota, it resulted in withholding their increments, recovery of double the house rent due, non-drawal of salaries, and even discharge from service. For example, in Bihar alone, over 600 employees lost their jobs and 50,000 were not given their salaries for three months ... The terror-stricken employees were literally driven to fall on the hapless people." Moreover the chief ministers and health ministers of the states had drawn up targets for sterilization and even "coerced government employees to undergo sterilization. It was preposterous for those in power to assume an air of "injured innocence and pretend ignorance of all that was going on under their very nose Those who drive a wedge between the employees and the people do not serve the real interests of the nation. They serve only themselves."

The newspapers report that Bansi Lal, Sanjay Gandhi's strongest supporter in the Congress party and in the government, is in difficulty in his constituency in the northern state of Haryana. Bansi Lal's constituency, Dhiwani, has generally been considered a Congress stronghold, and has been nursed so well by Bansi Lal over the years that some even thought that the seat might even not be contested by the opposition. Bansi Lal was widely regarded as an able chief minister who played a significant role in accelerating economic development in the state, and he had been particularly conscientious about nursing his constituency. But reporters touring the constituency have been describing angry sentiments against Bansi Lal and against the Congress party government. "Residents of village after village refer to acts of highhanded-

ness, not all of them connected with family planning," wrote the correspondent for the Times of India. The reporter noted that many influential village leaders who had been elected to local bodies or cooperative societies had been replaced by their rivals, who had lost the elections, and who had been installed through governmental nomination. The reporter noted that there was universal opposition to the nomination of leaders of local bodies. "If the fate of a sarpanch (local government representative) is to be decided by someone in Chandigarh or New Delhi," said a former village schoolteacher, "we must then have our own man to wield power in Chandigarh or New Delhi." This, the reporter went on to say, explains the keen interest of villagers in the forthcoming parliamentary poll. One of the parliamentary candidates is reported to have said, "Villagers are taking as much interest in the Lok Sabha (parliamentary) elections this time as they generally do in elections to the village panchayats."

According to the newspapers, the family planning program is also a source of enormous bitterness. "Among the victims are a forty-five year old Muslim and his younger brother who was forced to undergo sterilization last November. The circumstances in which the incidents took place make it even more tragic. Their mother had just died and they had gone to the town to purchase a piece of white cloth to cover the coffin. A couple of policemen dragged them into a jeep and took them to the health center where they were forcibly sterilized despite protests and tearful pleas." The reporter went on to describe another incident.

"A sixty-five year old Harijan widow sat next to this reporter in a Gohana-bound bus. She was going to meet her daughter married to a municipal sweeper. When asked if she knew the elections to the Lok Sabha were around the corner, she said: "Babuji, you will see what this lady gets this time!

She had rendered my four sons and three sons-in-law impotent."

"Her neighbor, a Jat, had hid her sons in his sugar cane fields for some time. "It was their bad luck," she sighed, "that they were caught after a few days and were sterilized."

March 10

The most important "prestige" constituency in the city is Bombay North Central. There Ram Jetmalani, a former president of the India Bar Association, challenged the seat of Mr. Gokhale, the government's law minister. During the emergency, when a warrant was issued for his arrest, Mr. Jetmalani fled India and was granted asylum in the United States. When his plane landed at Santa Cruz Airport -- "I landed in my constituency" -- the warrant was still pending. Mr. Gokhale, however, advised the government not to arrest Mr. Jetmalani, and allow him to remain free to contest the election.

From six in the evening until three in the morning and six public meetings later, I accompanied Jetmalani. His son Tony, who had returned from his studies in Oxford to work for his father, was with him, as well as his attractive wife who sat next to him on the platform at each of the public meetings. There were never less than several thousand people at a meeting. At one, which began at two in the morning, there were upwards of fifty thousand persons. The larger the crowds the longer Jetmalani talked and the more enthusiastic both he and his audience were. As he entered and left there were shouts of "victory to the Janata party and victory to Jetmalani!" At three smaller neighborhood meetings, local community leaders presented him with garlands of flowers. Several of the garlands contained rupee notes to help him

in his election campaign.

Since Jetmalani comes originally from the Sind (now in Pakistan) and is unable to speak the local language, Marathi, he generally spoke in Hindi, which most of the Marathi audience could follow. To a predominantly Christian crowd in one neighborhood he spoke first in English and then in Hindi.

In each of his speeches he spoke about the issue of freedom and democracy. He denounced Sanjay's statement that the country needed bread not elections. He decried the view that only the educated were concerned about freedom. Tens of thousands of people, he said, had come to hear Jayaprakash Narayan and Morarji speak not about economic issues but democracy, liberty, and arrest without trial. Without freedom, he said, the government is able to enforce a compulsory family planning program against the poor. Without freedom the government was bulldozing the homes of slum dwellers. Without freedom workers could not strike for their just demands. Without freedom the Muslim and Christian minorities could not be protected. Only under the rule of law, he said, could they all be free. He charged Gokhale, his opponent and law minister, with responsibility for the constitutional amendments that had weakened the power of the courts. Then, speaking at a meeting of lawyers in central Bombay, Jetmalani alluded to the attacks against Mrs. Gandhi by her aunt, Vijayalakshmi Pandit. He told the lawyers that "As Mrs. Gandhi is a discard of her family, so Mr. Gokhale must be a discard of the lawyers."

Some of the speeches of the opposition candidates and leaders sounded like political science lectures. M.C. Chagla, a distinguished elderly judge who had at one time been ambassador to the United States, spoke on the public platform with Jetmalani at the meeting of Bombay lawyers. He said that the choice was between democracy and dictatorship and that the rule of law was essential if there was to be liberty. He denounced Mrs. Gandhi for her claims

that she, like Louis XIV, had to remain in power if there was to be a stable government. "Indira is not India and India is not Indira," he said, reversing a much publicized statement made by Mr. Barooah, the President of the Congress party. In a democracy, he said, no one is indispensable. He spoke of the lawyers as the vanguard of the freedom struggle. "Gandhi, Motilal, Jawaharlal and Vallabahi Patel were all lawyers who understood the importance of law in a free society. It is too bad that Mrs. Gandhi is not a lawyer too for perhaps if she were she might have respect for the law." He pointed out that Mrs. Gandhi claimed that she was continuing the emergency in order to assure "stability and progress" for the country, but that the only ground provided by the constitution for maintaining an emergency was to deal with an internal or external threat to the country's security. As to whether the Janata party had a program for the country, "What greater program can a party have than the restoration of democracy!" he said.

In addition to the lawyers who canvassed on Jetmalani's behalf and helped fund his campaign, Jetmalani had the support of one of the state's popular Marathi writers, Deshpande. At one of the large public rallies on Jetmalani's behalf, Deshpande told an enthusiastic audience that he had come to speak to them for only one reason -- to say that they must remove Gokhale as the man responsible for writing the amendments to the constitution that had deprived them of their freedom. Then he told the laughing audience that he had recently walked into a Bombay bookstore to ask for a copy of the Indian constitution that had been amended so often by the government, and was told by the shopkeeper that he didn't keep periodicals!

March 11

The morning newspaper reported that at a press conference in Cochin Mrs. Gandhi was asked whether it was true the government was cutting off all advertising to newspapers that were opposed to the Congress party. "Why should we give advertisements and support newspapers owned by big industrialists who have enormous money at their disposal?" was her response.

In an editorial, "Ads as patronage", the Indian Express replied that Mrs. Gandhi's attitude "is contrary to government spokesmen's repeated declarations in the past regarding the basis on which government advertisements are given to newspapers ... If the main consideration in selecting the media for government or public sector advertisements is not their value or utility as media, but the political or other attitudes of the owners ... this will mean a blatant abuse of public funds for partisan ends." With such a policy there would be "special dangers to a free press in an increasingly state-controlled and state-owned economy like ours," the editorial concluded.

The Indian Express and the Statesman are two of India's largest circulating English dailies. Both resisted government domination during the emergency and both were in the forefront of the attacks against the government. After Mrs. Gandhi announced that she was "relaxing" the emergency, and had ended press censorship, both newspapers boldly reported accounts of governmental excesses during the emergency, and both reported the growing wave of sentiment against Congress candidates. I was told that the circulation of the Delhi edition of the Indian Express leaped three-fold during the election campaign. It was they that were the targets of Mrs. Gandhi's decision to curtail government advertising to newspapers opposed to the Congress party.

Two of the other major English dailies, The Hindu which is published from

Madras and the Hindustan Times, published from New Delhi, continued to support the government. The Times of India, the largest of the newspapers, was at first cautious but by mid-campaign began to pay increasing attention to the activities of the Janata party.

In previous elections Bombay city was a Congress stronghold. The Bombay city Congress organization was regarded as one of the most effective party "machines", one which played a particularly important role in fund raising for the national party. In the 1960's the Bombay party organization was dominated by S.K. Patil. In the 1969 split he was forced out of the party by Mrs. Gandhi. Since then the city machine was run by Rajni Patel. Patel proved to be important not only in the city but as a major figure in the national party organization. As part of her efforts, however, to prevent independent centers of power emerging within the party organization, Mrs. Gandhi took steps to abolish the independent Bombay Congress committee. She incorporated the city organization into the state party, thereby deflating Rajni Patel's power. Just a few months before the election Sanjay Gandhi at a public meeting in Bombay berated Patel for independently raising money for the party. It was a clear signal to the business community that funds should be contributed directly to the central Congress party organization in New Delhi.

A bill permitting corporations rather than just individuals to contribute directly to political parties was introduced into Parliament by the Congress leadership but subsequently dropped. Some businessmen privately complained that they were being extorted by the government to make very large contributions to the Congress party by purchasing, at 10 to 20,000 rupees per page, advertisements in so-called "souvenir volumes" published by the party.

Gasoline sells for \$2.00 a gallon in India. Nevertheless, Congress party candidates appeared to be well supplied with jeeps and automobiles. They had more posters, banners, pamphlets and leaflets than the opposition and could fund larger numbers of local party offices throughout the city. Nonetheless it was widely reported that the abolition of the independent Bombay Congress city organization and the removal of Rajni Patel had thrown the local Congress organization into disarray.

Though the pro-Soviet Communist party was officially supporting the Congress party, its trade unions were definitely critical of the emergency and of the Congress government policy of **suspending bonuses**. The Muslim league was officially supporting the Congress party, but it was widely understood that many of the Muslims in Bombay were quite concerned over the government's compulsory vasectomy program. By and large, the city's middle class was known to be hostile to the emergency and to the Congress party. All in all even Congress supporters thought they would be lucky if they could win three or four out of the six Bombay seats, all of which were presently held by the Congress.

Congress supporters expected the party to do better in the rural areas of Maharashtra, where they controlled the elected district councils known as zilla parishads and almost all of the state's rural cooperatives that were important sources of credit for farmers, especially those engaged in the production of sugar cane. Moreover, the Maratha caste which dominated the countryside continued to support the Congress party.

The editor of one of the leading regional language newspapers told me that his reporters expected the Congress party to win most of the rural seats in the state. In contrast to its strength in northern India, he said, the Janata party had no social base in rural Maharashtra. The vasectomy campaign, he said, was not as oppressive in Maharashtra as in the northern states of U.P., Bihar and Haryana. He thought that the Chamars, one of the Harijan castes, might support the Janata party because of their ties to Jagjivan Ram, but

the Mahars, the other leading Harijan caste, would probably remain with the Congress party. He thought that the rural migrants who had moved into the cities would probably vote for the Janata party because they were concerned with the reports they had heard of government slum removal programs in New Delhi. His reporters touring the state concluded that there would be a substantial decline in the Congress vote, but that the Congress would still take some forty out of the forty-eight seats in the state, with the Janata party winning most of the urban constituencies and gaining substantial support among the Muslims and the Harijans. "It's possible though that Janata might do better," he said, "since there have been such large turnouts at Janata meetings. We thought that the opposition might not get party workers or money but that has not been the case."

The newspapers reported today that Sanjay Gandhi, when speaking to a crowd of about 8,000 people in a constituency in Madhya Pradesh in central India, described all those who supported the Janata party as "traitors". When he asked how many such traitors were in the crowd, only three hands were raised. But he persisted in attacking the Janata "traitors". Again he asked the "traitors" in the crowd to identify themselves. At that point almost the entire crowd raised its hands and kept them raised until Sanjay left in a huff.

Hyderabad, March 12

The secretary of the Janata party in Andhra, south India's largest state, is Mr. A. Chakradhar, a one-time member of the upper house of the Indian Parliament and a leader of the Socialist party in the state. Chakradhar, a handsome, tall, lean man with distinguished wavy gray hair, said that he spent fourteen months of the emergency in the Secunderabad jail near Hyderabad.

"There were about 500 party workers in the jail," he said. "About 100 belonged to the R.S.S., the Jamaat-I-Islam, or were Naxalites. The remainder were Socialists, members of the Jana Sangh, or former Congressmen. The jail conditions were not too bad and the jailers had no objection if we had meetings. So in the jail we had classes on ideology, economy, politics, and how the various groups might come together. The most important change was the way the other parties came to accept the Jana Sangh workers. The Janata party was born in jail. We emerged from jail not as a coalition of parties but as a single party." This was a theme I was to hear from a number of Janata party workers elsewhere as well.

The opposition parties first attempted to build a single front against the Congress party during the 1967 state elections. The result was an electoral arrangement without a common platform. Another attempt was made for the 1971 parliamentary elections. But the first effort to build a single party with a common platform occurred in Bihar during the anti-government political movement that was led by Jayaprakash Narayan in 1975. During the June 1975 elections in Gujarat that were held only a few weeks before Mrs. Gandhi declared an emergency, the Janata party fought as a single party, with a single platform, in state-wide elections. In a matter of weeks, before the state-wide arrangement could be turned into a national party, the emergency was declared.

Discussions among the opposition continued in jail. Janata workers I met spoke almost with nostalgia about the comraderie that existed there. The mood was reminiscent of the experiences of nationalists who were jailed by the British during the independence struggle. Jana Sangh workers said that they and the Socialists came to recognize that they shared an antipathy to "state" socialism, but supported "Gandhian socialism". The Jana Sangh, with its strong Hindu nationalist orientation, had always been in favor of a strong central

government, but the emergency and the growth of central authority under Mrs. Gandhi had led many Jana Sangh workers to become increasingly sympathetic to the call by the Socialists for greater decentralization. Jana Sangh workers also persuaded their fellow detenus that they were not anti-Muslim. As one Jana Sangh politician explained, "Let Muslim workers make demands as workers and Muslim slum dwellers make demands as slum dwellers. What we oppose is the demand for exclusive rights for Muslims alone." Party representatives denied that the Jana Sangh favored the assimilation of Muslims into Indian society, and asserted that they recognized the rights of Muslims to remain a separate religion and culture. They denied that the Jana Sangh, or its closely associated youth movement the R.S.S., was responsible for the Hindu-Muslim riots that had occurred in various parts of the country since independence. In the areas of India, they said, where Jana Sangh was strongest, there have not been riots. The Jana Sangh, they pointed out, had nominated Muslims for state assembly and parliamentary constituencies.

March 13

Hazrat Abdullah Shah Bukhari, the Iman of Jamma Masjid, India's largest mosque, flew down from Delhi to speak to a mass rally of Muslims in the old quarters of Hyderabad where most of the city's large Muslim population lives. This imposing bearded figure, dressed in the traditional long robes of a Iman, had incurred the wrath of the government by his opposition to the program of the Delhi municipal corporation to clear the Muslim huts that had encroached on the public spaces around the Jamma Masjid. Sanjay Gandhi had persuaded the Delhi municipal authorities to beautify the city by clearing shops and huts that had encroached on public spaces. The first structures to be leveled were

the houses around the mosque. Subsequently many of the squatter settlements were disbanded and their inhabitants transported to locations 10-15 miles from the city. Although eventually many of the squatters were provided with new housing, there was widespread anger at the manner in which the government had summarily bulldozed the slum dwellers, and there was considerable unhappiness among them at having been transported to an area far from where most of them worked. Most of Delhi's slum dwellers were probably Hindus, but the first to be removed were the Muslims who surrounded the old mosque.

Sanjay Gandhi was not just intent upon beautifying Delhi, he was equally determined to make the family planning program a success. Why he pressed so hard on the sterilization issue is still puzzling. Perhaps the answer is the one given by Kushwant Singh, the editor of the mass circulating popular Illustrated Weekly, a Bombay magazine. Singh praised Sanjay as a young man who knew how to get things done! While other politicians spoke of improving the appearance of cities or of doing something about the population problem, Sanjay appeared to be capable of getting done what others merely talked about. Bansi Lal, the Defense Minister, close friend and associate of Sanjay, and one-time chief minister of the small state of Haryana near Delhi, was also regarded as a man who could get things done. Under the insistence of Sanjay and Bansi Lal the health and family planning ministries of several of the state governments sent teams of medical workers on tour to set up vasectomy camps.

Given the generally poor quality of the administration in several of the north Indian states, and the speed with which these vasectomy camps moved from village to village, it is not surprising that some of the vasectomies were performed under unsanitary conditions. Stories of forcible sterilization of the young, the death of some people who were operated upon, and accounts of

villagers fleeing into fields at night to escape the surgical knife of the medical staff, rapidly spread through the countryside during the emergency. Since government workers attempting to fulfill their quotas were reluctant to coerce the rich and the educated, it was generally the lowest classes who were pulled into the vasectomy camps.

Some of the most intense opposition to the vasectomy campaign came from the Muslims. Among the least educated communities in India and one of the poorest, Muslims have by and large continued to have large families. Pressed by local officials to undergo sterilizations, Muslims sometimes resisted by force. A particularly nasty incident between the police and the Muslims at Turkman Gate in old Delhi led to a police firing in which a number of Muslims were killed. Word of the Turkman Gate incident, which came to symbolize the government's forced sterilization program, spread to Muslim communities throughout northern India.

The Iman of Jamma Masjid had emerged during the election campaign as one of the most outspoken Muslim opponents of the government. In Hyderabad he spoke at a crowded press conference at the Sarovar Hotel before going off to address a large crowd at a public meeting. The Iman, speaking in a booming voice more appropriate for a public speech than a meeting with journalists at a press conference, accused Mrs. Gandhi's government of turning Muslims against the R.S.S. and the Jana Sangh. He said that the attacks against these Hindu groups were part of the government's effort to follow a British-like policy of divide and rule. The Iman surprised his audiences by saying that he did not believe that the R.S.S. or the Jana Sangh were anti-Muslim, and he called upon the government to end their ban on the R.S.S., whose political workers still remained in jail. It is not the R.S.S. or the Jana Sangh, he said, that had fired on Muslims at Turkman Gate, but the government. It was not the R.S.S.

and Jana Sangh that introduced coercion into family planning, but the government. It was not the R.S.S. and the Jana Sangh that had used bulldozers against Muslims near Jamma Masjid, but the government. It was not the Jana Sangh and the R.S.S. that had arrested Muslim opponents of the government and banned the Jamaat-I-Islam, it was the government. Finally he went on to say it was not the Jana Sangh and the R.S.S. that had arrested him, but the government. Freedom for the Muslims, he concluded, depended not upon the election of a pro-Muslim government, but on living in a country in which the laws protected all communities.

March 14

Not many Congressmen defected from the Congress party in Andhra. While there had always been conflicts among the various factions within the Congress party there, there seemed to be little of the open party warfare that one heard about in northern India. One of the few people I met who had been with the Congress party but was now with the opposition was a member of the faculty at Osmania University. He complained that the government had suspended local and district elections for the Panchayat Samithis and Zilla Parishads, and the municipal corporations. Special officers had been appointed to take charge of all local governments in Andhra. The result, he said, was that officials had become all-powerful throughout the state. The land reform legislation, he explained, had not helped the landless but had simply enriched the members of the revenue department. If you want to get anything done, he said, now you must deal only with the government officials. "We would rather deal with corrupt politicians than with corrupt officials. A politician must be concerned with my feelings since he wants my votes but the bureaucrat knows that eventually

he will be transferred to another district. Besides, the official always has his pension! Once the politicians in this state used to have influence here because of their feudal authority, but because of elections their power came to rest upon the services they provide to local people. But since the politicians no longer have any influence, we must now deal directly with corrupt officials."

"Under the emergency," he continued, "the Congress party has broken down. There have been no elections to party posts in years. Everything is done by nominations. Even the chief minister was appointed by New Delhi. Now some unknown person has been chosen as president of the Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee. We are supposed to follow him. One day we were told that a new man was appointed. We didn't know him at all. A lot of Congress politicians here feel that they would be holding posts in the party or in the government if there had been elections. Ambitions have been frustrated because there has been no intra-party democracy."

I asked a high government official in the Andhra state government how true these charges were. He agreed that the suspension of local governments had weakened the rural base of the Congress party in the state, that there was a great deal of resentment in the Congress party against the chief minister, particularly on the part of the members of the Reddi caste, most of whom were supporters of Brahmananda Reddi, the home minister in Mrs. Gandhi's cabinet.

Reddi was widely regarded as a potential defector. It was thought that he might defect, not because of any principled objection to the emergency but because he had been humiliated by Mrs. Gandhi's appointment of Om Mehta as deputy in the home ministry. A favorite strategy of Mrs. Gandhi was to appoint one of her closest supporters as the deputy to a member of the cabinet. In

this way she could maintain effective control over the home and finance ministries, whose ministers were not thought of as totally loyal to Mrs. Gandhi. Ironically these two ministers were among the few ministers in the central government who were not defeated in the elections. Some observers attributed this to the fact that their deputies and not they were largely held responsible for the excesses committed by the two ministries.

Nonetheless, the Andhra official went on to say, he thought that landlords in Andhra had been successful in preventing the government from carrying out land reform legislation, largely because of their influence with the local bureaucracy. Some of them, he said, might oppose the Congress party, but he thought that the Harijan landless laborers would continue to support the Congress. Though he agreed that the Imam had some influence among lower class Muslims in Andhra, especially in Hyderabad, he thought that most of the Harijans and Muslims would remain with the government.

"I expect the Congress party to do well in Andhra, and maybe throughout the south. I read in the papers that northern India is upset about the family planning issue but that's not a big issue here. The excesses they talk about in the north have not been so much of a problem in the south. The officials have behaved well. There have not been as many arrests as in the north. The countryside has not been disrupted. And in Andhra and Karnataka the Congress party is reasonably well organized and not too badly divided as compared with places like U.P. and Bihar."

Whatever the election outcome, he went on to say, he thought there would be an economic crisis next year. After three good monsoons, he said, the fourth year is usually a bad one. "We have a good food surplus now, about twenty million tons, but we will probably have to draw it down rapidly if we have a bad monsoon next year. Food prices are likely then to be on the upswing

and the recession may deepen, particularly since people will not be able to afford to buy consumer goods." Like many observers who wondered why Mrs. Gandhi had called the elections now rather than wait until next year, he concluded that she was advised by her economists that the economy would not be doing as well next year as now.

"Of course," he went on to say, "one should not dismiss the possibility that she had been guided by an astrologer in setting the date. You may laugh," he continued, "but astrologers have a strong hold on all of us, even those like myself who are educated and like to think that we are scientific and without superstition. You know I would never call an astrologer to help me make a decision when I have already made up my mind. If my son, for example, had already decided who to marry I wouldn't call an astrologer to match his and the girl's horoscopes. But then I might call an astrologer to fix the date for the wedding! If I had to make a business trip to Delhi tomorrow I wouldn't ask the astrologer for approval, but then if I were planning a vacation I might ask him what is an auspicious date to start travelling. So if we are uncertain about when to do something we call in an astrologer."

"There is an astrologer here in Hyderabad who regularly flies to Delhi to consult with Mrs. Gandhi. At least that's what he tells me and I have no reason to believe that he's not telling the truth. There are also quite a few prominent people here who consult him. There are some people around Mrs. Gandhi who call him to Delhi and pay his travel and expenses. Mrs. Gandhi says that she never calls for astrologers but sometimes they come in to see her, and of course that is literally quite true. I understand the astrologer told her that there would be three generations of Nehrus in power. But he didn't say whether she should start counting from Motilal, her grandfather, or Jawaharlal. It depends upon whether you're counting presidents of the Congress party or Prime

Ministers of India! Astrologers are often ambiguous like that, though sometimes they can be firm about something about which you are uncertain. So maybe the date for calling the election was one of those uncertain decisions for Mrs. Gandhi."

Madras, March 15

The largest of the crowds that I have seen was at a political rally this evening at the Marina Beach in Madras. Madras has one of the most attractive shorelines of any large city in the world. Marina Beach extends almost the whole length of the city along the Indian Ocean. The large crowds that appear at election rallies here seem to reflect a long-standing local custom as much as an expression of political sentiment. After a warm day thousands of Tamils regularly relax on the beach. They come there in the evening to enjoy the cool breezes and to take advantage of this large open expanse that is one of the city's most attractive features. Small stands sell peanuts, cigarettes and other sundries. Before the emergency local political leaders would address crowds on the beach every few weeks. Those public meetings were at once a form of political education, public entertainment (since some of the local political leaders were film stars), a social gathering of friends, and an opportunity to relax on the beach after a day's work. During the emergency, however, public meetings for political purposes were prohibited by the government. Now that the prohibition on meetings is lifted there seem to be political rallies on the beach almost every night.

I am told that nearly half a million people came to hear Mrs. Gandhi speak here a few days ago. This evening's crowd, which may have been as large as the one that came to hear Mrs. Gandhi, listened to speeches by Janata party leaders, and by Mr. Karunanidhi, former chief minister of the state, and

leader of a pro-Tamil anti-northern regional party known as the D.M.K. The D.M.K. had governed the state of Tamil Nadu for about a decade and in the 1971 elections had been allied with Mrs. Gandhi and the Congress party. The local Congress party, however, was unhappy with the alliance between the D.M.K. and Mrs. Gandhi and as a result the coalition soon fell apart. During the emergency, the D.M.K. opposed the central government and Tamil Nadu became a center for underground activities. Many of the underground newspapers, mostly mimeographed sheets that were circulated throughout India during the elections, originated from somewhere in Tamil Nadu. Moreover, the D.M.K. had been unwilling to arrest opponents of Mrs. Gandhi. It came as no surprise, therefore, when early last year the central government suspended the D.M.K. government and placed the state under its direct control.

When the elections were called, the D.M.K. formed an alliance with the Janata party. It seemed like a logical coalition of groups that shared a common hostility to Mrs. Gandhi and to the Congress party. But the local Janata party consists largely of people who had split from the Congress in 1969 and had a long tradition of rivalry with the D.M.K. Moreover, there is some feeling here that the D.M.K. government was quite unpopular, in spite of its opposition to Mrs. Gandhi's emergency. The D.M.K. leadership was widely regarded as corrupt, and the government hopelessly inefficient. In fact the D.M.K. itself had split in two. A splinter group led by Mr. M.G. Ramachandran, a popular film actor who is the idol of women and young movie goers, had formed a new political party.

Since the D.M.K. and the Janata party were allied, it made sense for "MGR", as he is popularly called, to ally his group with the Congress party. Some people thought that if the Congress party won in Tamil Nadu it would be largely because of the popularity of MGR. In all his films MGR plays the

part of a virtuous hero, an incorruptible man who does not smoke, drink, or womanize. Some say that Mrs. Gandhi's political advisors encouraged MGR to leave the D.M.K. and to form a political party that would be allied with Congress. One sees posters containing photos of Mrs. Gandhi and MGR, wearing the dark glasses that are universally regarded as part of the guise of a film actor. MGR's local party office was crowded with enthusiastic young people.

Calcutta, March 16

The polling had already been completed in Calcutta when my plane arrived at Dum Dum Airport. The elections were staggered over a four-day period so as to give state officials time to move from place to place to set up polling stations. The polling was peaceful throughout the country and contrary to what happened just a week earlier in Pakistan there were few instances of poll rigging. There was particular concern about the polling in West Bengal since it was widely agreed that in the 1971 elections there had been massive rigging by Congress party workers and local officials to prevent a Communist party victory.

Even without rigging some observers thought that Congress would win at least half or more of the seats in the state. The compulsory sterilization program had not been introduced into West Bengal. The Congress government under the chief ministership of Siddharta Shanker Ray had survived an attempt by Sanjay Gandhi to replace the chief minister with someone more pliant to his influence. Sanjay had also failed to get control of the Youth Congress organization which remained under the leadership of Priya Das Munshi, a bright, tough, ambitious young anti-Communist who was himself standing for parliament. The morning after the polling the press, however, reported ballot stuffing in some

constituencies and charges that someone had printed duplicate ballots were authenticated. Some of the Janata organizers feared that the rigging may have cost them several seats in the city. The election commission provided considerable reassurance when it announced that there would be a re-polling in a number of the polling stations the next day.

If there had been any rigging by the Congress party it hardly affected the outcome of the West Bengal election. A few days later it was reported that Congress had won only three of the states forty-two seats. The opposition seats were evenly divided, sixteen to the Janata party and sixteen to their ally, the Communist party Marxist (CPM), and two to smaller parties. The pro-Soviet Communist party of India (CPI), which had always had a strong base in West Bengal, was totally wiped out.

The two Communist parties in India had taken diametrically opposed positions toward the government and toward the emergency. While the Communist party Marxist had consistently been in opposition and had denounced the emergency from the very beginning, the Communist party of India had supported Mrs. Gandhi ever since the 1969 split. It continued to support Mrs. Gandhi throughout the emergency. The CPI had tied itself to what it described as the "progressive" wing of the Congress party. It supported a number of former Communists who had resigned from the party to join, some would say infiltrate, the Congress.

The CPI was the only significant non-Congress party that had welcomed the emergency, the arrest of opposition leaders, the banning of political organizations, and restrictions on the "capitalist" press. But within a few months after the emergency it became apparent that the Communists too were feeling its brunt. Strikes were illegal, the automatic annual bonuses to workers had been ended, and public meetings of trade unions were prohibited -- all of which angered many of the Communist rank and file.

The emergence of Sanjay also alarmed the Communists. Sanjay's public attack against the Communists, his anti-Socialist pro-business attitudes, and his efforts to build a mass base militant Youth Congress seemed to them to push the country into a reactionary, if not "fascistic" direction. A few months before the elections Sanjay succeeded in deposing the left-of-center chief minister of the state of Orissa, Mrs. Satapathy, who had once been a member of the Communist party. The CPI then launched a frontal attack against what it described euphemistically as "extra constitutional forces", and tried to drive a wedge between Mrs. Gandhi, whom they continued to support, and Sanjay. Much to their surprise, no doubt, Mrs. Gandhi herself responded with a series of public speeches accusing the Communists of being anti-national and reminding the country of the role they played in opposing the nationalist movement and supporting the British during the Second World War. In a very personal speech she talked about the way in which the Nehru family would defend itself, and she attacked those who tried to draw a line between herself and her son.

When the elections were called the central committee of the Communist party announced that it would support the Congress, but that it would permit each of the state communist parties to decide whether to work with the government or with the opposition. In West Bengal the CPI supported Congress, but in Bihar and U.P. it sided with the opposition. The absurdity of the Communist position was caught by a cartoon in the Hindustan Times showing a man at a microphone asking a crowd of people, "All those for Congress raise their hands," and then, "Those for Janata....". "How is it," he asked a spectacled man, "you raise one hand for Congress and the other for Janata?" "I'm CPI," came the reply.

In public meetings opposition candidates laughingly ridiculed the Commu-

nists by saying that the CPI urged people to "vote for the cow without the calf".

March 17

Gore Ghosh, a writer and editor for Ananda Bazar Patrika, a leading Bengali newspaper, described for me the circumstances of his arrest. He explained that he was initially arrested under the Defense of India Rules for "rioting, bombing, and misbehavior!" His lawyers brought the case to court where the charges were thrown out. He was then immediately arrested again, under MISA, the Maintenance of Internal Security Act, an act which permits the government to make arrests without charges.

One Calcutta lawyer, a one-time Socialist who for the last fifteen years had not actively taken part in politics, told me that he was now devoting all his time to supporting the Janata party candidate for parliament in his constituency. The lawyers in Calcutta, he said, bitterly opposed the constitutional amendments introduced by Mrs. Gandhi and by the efforts of Mrs. Gandhi to place herself above the law. If Janata wins, he continued, we hope there will be a commission of inquiry for Sanjay and possibly for Mrs. Gandhi as well. "Can you imagine," he said, "that lawyers should be marching in public demonstrations in the streets of Calcutta?" Not only were they angry, he added, at the government's suspension of civil liberties, and at its efforts to destroy the independence of the judiciary, but they were also aroused at the government's efforts to get control of the national bar association. In West Bengal, he continued, the bar councils are now actively working against the Congress party in all of the district towns throughout the state.

March 18

My conversations with businessmen are often on plane trips. This evening on the plane trip from Calcutta to New Delhi I sat next to an executive who works for Tata Steel. Like several other executives and businessmen I met he was quite concerned over the possibilities of a defeat for Mrs. Gandhi and the Congress party. He thought the discipline that Mrs. Gandhi had created during the emergency was good for the country and he especially welcomed the ban on strikes and restrictions on bonuses for workers. He approved of the lower tax rates on higher incomes, the relaxation of government controls over business and the new emphasis on export promotion. Like many businessmen he expressed hope that the Congress party would win, but by a reduced majority so that some of the excessive features of the emergency might be dropped. The worst outcome, he said, was a victory for the Janata party because that would mean unstable government. "How could these people hold together? They may be united now against Mrs. Gandhi but once they take power the Jana Sangh, the Socialists, and the former Congressmen like Morarji Desai will never get on. The Janata people all talk of 'Gandhian socialism' but that's all poetry. What will they do when they have to decide on tax policies, or export policies, or priorities in the new budget? Many of the Janata candidates have talked about ending the compulsory deposit scheme, but if they do, where are they going to get money for the Five Year Plan? And do you think Vajpayee, who has always favored developing the nuclear bomb, and Morarji, who says he is a Gandhian, will agree on nuclear issues?

"Even if they agree on policies," he continued, "their ambitions will clash. If Congress loses U.P., then Bahaguna and Charan Singh will fight over who takes control over the state. And in Orissa there will be Biju Patnaik

against Satapathy. In every state in northern India there will be clashes. Without a strong Prime Minister there cannot be peace in the states. If the states fall apart how long can the center hold? We will be right back to where we started from a few years ago."

New Delhi, March 19

New Delhi was tense on the eve of the counting of the ballots. Today was the last day of balloting throughout the country. Tomorrow morning government officers will open the ballot boxes and start counting. Rumors have spread around the city that Mrs. Gandhi might provoke violence at the counting stations and then use the violence as a pretext for calling in the border security forces or the army to "restore order". Mrs. Gandhi made a statement a few days ago that was by no means reassuring. She accused the opposition of fomenting violence and hatred and said that the press was adopting anti-national positions, language that was strikingly similar to language she had used before she declared the emergency twenty months ago. Mr. Advani, the able general secretary of the Janata party, issued a reply in which he said that the Election Commissioner had only a few days earlier commended all of the political parties for the exemplary fashion in which they had conducted themselves during the election campaign. Janata leaders made a special point of urging their followers to exercise restraint, and to avoid any provocative processions against the Congress party, especially at the counting station.

The report a few days ago that some miscreants had shot at Sanjay Gandhi while he was travelling in his jeep in Amrethi constituency was greeted with derision by Janata leaders who said that this was an attempt by Sanjay to win sympathy. A few Janata leaders expressed their anxiety that Mrs. Gandhi might

use such incidents for taking steps to crack down on the opposition.

I heard an unverified rumor that Mrs. Gandhi had asked the military to go on the alert in the event that there might be disturbances when the ballots were counted, but that the military had told her that they did not think that it was necessary.

This evening another rumor spread around the city that an unusually large number of police had been seen moving toward one of the counting stations in the southern part of New Delhi. Several journalists on the staff of the Indian Express rushed to the counting station only to find a number of young Janata party poll watchers unpacking their bedrolls from their motorcycles, planning to spend the long night at the polling station watching over the sealed ballot boxes until the counting begins the next morning.

A journalist friend, who was confident that Mrs. Gandhi would lose the election, said that it was not certain that the government would not launch a strike against the opposition. After all, he said, they had all been caught unaware by Mrs. Gandhi's declaration of an emergency and political arrests, and it was not impossible that her closest advisors were even now urging her to take some drastic measures in order to avoid an electoral defeat.

March 20

This city has been in a state of expectation all day. The government-run Press Information Bureau and several of the newspapers have placed large billboards around the city, where they can list the returns of each party by state as they come in, in the evening. Though no returns are expected until after five o'clock in the evening, crowds of people had begun to assemble early in the afternoon around the large billboards.

The Election Commission does not announce the results in any parliamentary constituency until all the ballots in that constituency are counted. However, since each of the party candidates have their own poll watchers inside the counting stations, word is sent out during the day to report who is leading. By early evening, therefore, party workers and journalists were already receiving initial returns, but none of the results were broadcast on the government-run All India Radio, or posted on the Press Information Bureau or newspaper billboards until later in the evening. By seven in the evening, it was apparent that the Janata party was winning all of the seats in northern India, while the Congress party was winning in the south. The earliest returns posted on the billboards and announced on the radio were from the south where the Congress had won, but the crowds in New Delhi had already received word of the Janata victory elsewhere in India. Even while the billboards reported Congress leads the crowds were already cheering the Janata victories. As the Janata victories were posted on the billboards later at night, the enthusiasm of the crowds grew and shouts went up with the posting of each Janata victory. The enthusiasm was particularly great when the returns came in from the Delhi constituencies. The Janata party had swept all seven seats in the city.

March 21

This morning's newspapers announced the defeat of Indira Gandhi in Rai Bareli constituency in U.P. Mrs. Gandhi lost with 122,000 votes against her opponent, Raj Narain, who won with 177,000 votes. It was a particularly sweet victory for Mr. Narain, a Socialist member of the Janata party, who had been among the first arrested by Mrs. Gandhi on the evening of June 25, 1975 when she declared the emergency. After his overwhelming defeat by Mrs. Gandhi in

the 1971 parliamentary elections, Raj Narain accused her of violating the election law. Most educated Indians were convinced that it was the decision of the Allahabad High Court in early June that Mrs. Gandhi had broken the law and should step down as a member of parliament (and therefore as Prime Minister) that led her to declare the emergency, arrest the opposition, and impose press censorship.

In the nearby constituency of Amethi, Sanjay Gandhi was defeated. His opponent won 176,000 votes against Sanjay's vote of 100,000 in a constituency that had previously overwhelmingly elected a Congress candidate.

Although all returns are not yet in, it is apparent that the Janata party and its ally, the Congress for Democracy, have won an overwhelming victory against the Congress party. Reports have been coming in all day long about the defeat of prominent Congress leaders, including members of the cabinet, and the victory of prominent Janata leaders. Bansi Lal was defeated. So was V.C. Shukla, the Minister of Information, as well as Mr. Gokhale, the Law Minister. Virtually all of the leaders of the Janata party and the Congress for Democracy were elected, often with staggeringly large margins of victory. George Fernandez, the Socialist trade unionist, won his seat with a margin of over 300,000 votes, although (some say because) he was in jail during the entire election campaign and was unable to visit his constituency.

As I drove around the city in taxis and motor rickshaws the drivers would slow down or stop at each of the billboards to see the latest count and to see who had been elected or defeated. My rickshaw driver laughed when he read the flash announcement on the billboard in front of the Hindustan Times which said "Sanjay quits politics". Why are you laughing, I asked him, and he replied in English, "We threw Sanjay out and now he says he is quitting!"

Abu, the popular cartoonist for the Indian Express, did a cartoon this

morning showing two men listening to All India Radio. "V.C. Shukla has lost? Is the news reliable?"

All day long various political leaders have been issuing statements explaining the meaning of the election results and giving their own interpretations of why the voters turned the Congress party out. Atal Behari Vajpayee, the Janata party leader, who a few days later was to be appointed India's Minister of External Affairs, greeted his own victory with a statement that the election had been "more like a referendum than an ordinary election." The people in his opinion had voted, he said, against "coercion, regimentation, and intimidation ... They voted for freedom, cooperation, and for an open system and society." The Iman of Jamma Masjid, attributed the victory of the Janata party to the unity of Hindus and Muslims, adding that "it is not the Congress that has been defeated but oppression." When newsmen asked Morarji Desai whether he considered this his finest hour, he graciously said, "This is the country's finest hour. Everything that Gandhiji stood for has been vindicated."

Asked to explain the factors behind his own remarkable win against Mrs. Gandhi, Raj Narain said that one was the arrest of leaders like Jayaprakash Narayan and Morarji Desai, while another was the government's mistaken notion that family planning and forced sterilization were the same thing.

Mr. N.A. Palkhiwala, a noted constitutional lawyer who had spoken out frequently against the proposed amendments to the constitution, said that "history will record that the true gains of the emergency have been the unification of the opposition, the sharp awakening of the political conscience of the nation, and the dawn of realization among the people that they are the only keepers of the constitution."

Jayaprakash Narayan said that "The people have made their choice. They

have opted for liberty. I trust they will not ever relent their vigil."

Tendering her resignation, Mrs. Gandhi said "The collective judgement of the people must be respected. My colleagues and I accept their verdict unreservedly and in a spirit of humility." Sanjay, announcing that he was quitting active politics, said that "I am all the more sorry if what I did in my personal capacity has recoiled on my mother whose life has been spent in selfless service."

The president of the Congress party in Delhi said that "demolitions, unimaginative enforcement of pricetagging order, and up to a small extent the family planning drive" were the main factors for the defeat of the Congress party in Delhi. The National Herald, the Allahabad newspaper closely tied to the Nehru family and to Mrs. Gandhi, attributed the defeat of the Congress party to "vilification and misrepresentation."

In a remarkable turnaround most of the other newspapers that had supported Mrs. Gandhi now heralded the victory of the Janata party as a victory for democracy. In a long article, the editor of the Times of India, who had cautiously supported Mrs. Gandhi during the emergency, wrote about the destruction of democracy and human rights during the emergency and welcomed the return to democratic government.

Within the government most of the officials welcomed the defeat of Mrs. Gandhi, and especially the removal from power of Sanjay Gandhi and his closest associates.

But I heard another point of view, a minority perhaps, that is worthy of being recorded. A senior government official who had spent his career in relatively non-political ministries, expressed his alarm at Mrs. Gandhi's defeat. "Sometimes I think we are a suicidal people. Whenever we are close to doing something successful, we pull back. There are rare moments in our history

when we came close to having a leadership capable of pulling the country together. There was Ashoka and Chandragupta, and Akbar, and Curzon. They each had their own ways of doing things. So did Mrs. Gandhi. Now that she is overthrown, just when we had a chance of uniting the country, we will be replacing her with satraps, regional leaders who will pull in different directions without a central national leader. The south is not with this government and each of these Janata leaders will start to build their own centers of power in the states. These people talk about decentralizing power but that's only another way of talking about giving power to themselves."

March 22

The full returns are now in. The Janata party and the Congress for Democracy won 298 seats, and with their allies won a total of 328 seats out of 542. Congress won 153 seats in parliament. The Janata party alone won 271 seats or just half of the seats in parliament.

The proportion of the Congress party vote declined from 44% in 1971 to 34.5% in 1977. The Janata party won 43%. In 1971 the constituents of the Janata party together won 25% of the vote.

The most striking feature of the results was the regional schism. 221 of the Janata and Congress for Democracy seats were won in the predominantly Hindi-speaking region in the north, while the Congress party won only two seats in the same region. This was an extraordinary blow for the Congress. The Hindi region had been the heartland of the nationalist movement and of the Congress party since independence, and the area from which all three of India's Prime Ministers had come.

The two western states, Maharashtra and Gujarat, were more evenly split,

with 35 seats for the Janata party, and 32 for Congress. In the northeastern region 35 seats went to Janata, 23 to Congress and 16 to the pro-Janata Communist party Marxist.

The voting in south India was markedly different than in the rest of the country. In the four southern states the Congress party won 92 out of 129 seats, as against only six for Janata.

In other words, 75% of all the seats won by the Janata party and the Congress for Democracy were from the seven northern Hindi-speaking states and the capital city. Of all the seats won by the Congress party, 60% were from the four states of south India. In Tamil Nadu the regional party led by M.G. Ramachandran, the Tamil film star, actually won the largest number of seats in the state, 19 out of 39. And in Kerala, the Congress victory was part of a larger victory sweep for a united front coalition which included the Congress, the pro-Soviet Communists, and the Muslim league, a coalition which had successfully governed the state during the past six years. But whatever local factors appeared to be at work in Tamil Nadu and Kerala, it was evident that the Janata wave had not swept south of the Vindhya mountains, nor, some argued, did the worst excesses of the emergency.

The north-south schism led some observers to question whether Indians had voted in favor of democracy or whether north Indians had simply turned against a government that had adopted some unpopular policies. Many Congress supporters argued that Mrs. Gandhi's mistake was to adopt so many unpopular measures just before the elections. An aggressive sterilization program, they argued, was a fine idea in a country where the population is increasing as some fifteen million a year and where some aggressive measures are needed if the country is to bring down the birth rate at a faster pace. Perhaps, they say, a few excesses were committed but no other program had worked so far. Moving

the slum dwellers out of Delhi, Congress supporters maintained, was also desirable, though perhaps in their zeal government officers moved too hastily. The bonuses for employees had to be ended since there was no economic justification for a bonus system that was completely independent of productivity or profits. The compulsory deposit scheme under which a portion of the annual increments of workers had to be put into compulsory savings certificates was necessary if the government was to restrain inflation. But each of those programs alienated an important constituency, Mrs. Gandhi's supporters said. Sterilization and slum clearance affected the lowest classes, particularly Harijans and Muslims. The attack against the bonus scheme alienated the industrial labor force. The compulsory deposit scheme antagonized the middle class. And some of the equity policies alienated the richer classes. Landlords resented the government's decision to abolish rural debt. Shopkeepers didn't like the government's system of requiring fixed prices marked on all items for sale. Government officers who were fired for their inefficiency were resentful. In short, the people of northern India had voted against the "discipline" that Mrs. Gandhi had introduced. Northern Indians, it was claimed, had voted against these unpopular measures, not against the emergency itself. The people had not voted against the suspension of habeas corpus, or restrictions on freedom of the press, or limitations on the powers of the judiciary. After all, south Indians had no more freedoms than the north but since some of these programs, especially the sterilization campaign and the slum clearance program, were not adopted in the south the people there had no "excesses" to vote against.

Janata party supporters counter these arguments by saying that the south has simply not experienced the full losses of liberty that had taken place in the north, and that the sterilization campaign and slum clearance programs were

just two examples of an arbitrary government at work. The two programs were indicative of what can happen when there is an arbitrary government and none of the checks and balances that a democracy provides.

Arbitrary government, they said, also produced arbitrary men. Many a rural community as well as urban neighborhood had its little Sanjays -- politicians, government officials, landlords, and local toughs, usually members of Sanjay's Youth Congress, who used their connections to push people around. If these people were more common in the north than in the south it was because Sanjay's influence was far more pervasive in the northern states. He and his three closest allies, Bansi Lal, Om Mehta, and V.C. Shukla -- some Indians called then the "gang of four" -- had created an atmosphere of arbitrary government throughout the north. Even if the reports of compulsory sterilization and police excesses were exaggerated, an atmosphere of fear had spread throughout the north that had not affected south India. In any event, the Janata wave had not left the south unaffected. In Andhra, the Janata party vote increased from 12% in 1971 to 32% in 1977, and in Karnataka where Congress had won 71% of the votes in 1971, they now won only 57%, while the share of the Janata vote jumped from 24% to 40%.

While the north-south division was unexpected, even more unexpected to some observers including one suspects by Mrs. Gandhi herself, was the absence of a division between rural and urban India. In those parts of the country where the Janata party won, they did equally well in either urban or rural constituencies. All seven seats in Delhi went to Janata candidates, but so did all the surrounding rural constituencies in the Punjab, Haryana, and nearby Uttar Pradesh. Janata also won the urban constituencies of Banares, Lucknow, Allahabad, Agra, Meerut and Kanpur, all in Uttar Pradesh where Janata swept all of the 85 seats. Similarly, the Janata party and its allies won all of the

urban seats in and around Calcutta, and they also won all but three seats in the state of West Bengal.

In south India the Congress party did nearly as well in the urban constituencies as it did in the rural areas. In Tamil Nadu, for example, Congress and its allies won two out of the three seats in the city of Madras, and carried the urban constituencies of industrial Coimbatore and Madurai. In Andhra, where Congress won 41 out of the 42 seats, Congress carried both of the urban seats in the city of Hyderabad. Congress, though with a reduced margin of votes, swept the state of Karnataka, losing only one of the two urban seats in the city of Bangalore. Only in the state of Maharashtra in western India was there a substantial difference between urban and rural constituencies. The Janata party and its allies swept all six seats in Bombay, but won only half of the constituencies in the entire state. In most of the country the elections demonstrated that urban and rural areas in India tend to be affected by much the same influences.

Mrs. Gandhi's hope that she might at least win the support of the poorest classes in rural and urban India proved to be false. The margin of victory for Janata party candidates in many of the north Indian constituencies with large scheduled caste populations was often quite overwhelming. The north Indian constituencies that elected Harijans to parliament voted overwhelmingly for Janata, in one case, in a Bihar constituency, by a margin of 89% against 8% for Congress. In general the margins were 70% for Janata, 20 or 25% for Congress. Similarly, many of the constituencies in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal with large Muslim populations voted solidly for Janata party candidates. The Congress party also lost the predominantly tribal constituencies in Orissa, Bihar, and Madhya Pradesh. Mrs. Gandhi's efforts to persuade India's

minorities and lowest castes that their security and prosperity depended on the continuation of the Congress party in power had failed. The historic links between those communities and the Congress party came to an end. However, the Congress party and its allies continued to do well in the Muslim constituencies of Kashmir, Assam, and in the south.

60.4% of India's electorate voted. This was well above the 55.3% who took part in the 1971 parliamentary elections which swept Mrs. Gandhi back into power. The increase in voter turnout was particularly great in those states which had been hit hard by the government's sterilization program -- Bihar, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, and the Punjab. In Haryana and the Punjab, the two states surrounding the capital city, resentment against the sterilization program was reportedly particularly intense. 73% of the voters there turned out -- about 13% more than in the previous election. Three states which did not experience the "excesses" of the sterilization program but nonetheless gave the Janata party and its allies an overwhelming majority, experienced little or no increases in turnout -- West Bengal, Orissa, and Rajasthan. There was just a small increase in voter turnout in Maharashtra, but a whopping increase, from 53 to 69%, in the northwestern state of Gujarat, the center of the Janata agitation prior to the declaration of an emergency. Voter turnout also increased substantially in two southern states which elected Congress candidates but with substantially reduced margins and there was actually a decline in the vote in Tamil Nadu. The election returns generally confirmed the widespread impression that the emergency, rather than reducing the politicization of the country, actually increased it. People who had never taken part in elections before came out to vote, mostly against the government though in some places even for the government.

March 23

The leadership of the Janata party and the Congress for Democracy is expected to meet tomorrow to choose India's new Prime Minister. Tomorrow morning the members of Parliament from both groups will meet at Rajghat, the memorial to Mahatma Gandhi, to take an oath of service to the country. Later in the day Jayaprakash is expected to meet with Morarji Desai and Jagjivan Ram, two contenders. Representatives of the third candidate, Charan Singh, who is currently ill, are also expected to take part in the discussion.

Morarji Desai is in his eighties, Charan Singh is in his seventies, and Jagjivan Ram is sixty-eight. All three are former Congressmen, all are experienced government officials, and all three are reassuring figures to the bureaucracy, business community, and to the country as a whole.

It is generally expected that Morarji will be chosen, since he is the senior most leader of the Janata party who "deserves" the position because of his consistent opposition for nearly a decade to Mrs. Gandhi. There is a sense, moreover, that these three men also represent the last of the nationalist generation. Those in the next tier of leadership in the Janata party are all in their forties or fifties. Among those who have emerged as national figures during the emergency and the elections are: George Fernandez, the trade union leader who escaped into the underground until his arrest a few months ago by the government on charges that he was fomenting an armed attack; Subramanian Swami, the Harvard-M.I.T. trained economist who sneaked in and out of India during the emergency under the eyes of a benign police establishment that had been reportedly infiltrated by his own fellow party men in the Jana Sangh; Chandra Sekhar, perhaps the most popular and charismatic figure of the socialist young Turks who had been in the Congress party until he and other of his

supporters were arrested by Mrs. Gandhi, and whom some regard as a potential Prime Minister; Mohan Dharia, another Turk in the Congress party who resigned from Mrs. Gandhi's cabinet shortly before the emergency and who, like Chandra Sekhar, is widely regarded as a man of great principle; Atul Bihari Vajpayee, one of the able Jana Sangh leaders who is respected as a spokesman for the new more secular nationalist Jana Sangh; and L.K. Advani, another young Jana Sangh leader who served as the secretary of the Janata party, carefully minding the central office of the party while its national leaders were on tour.

Many observers here are concerned that if Jagjivan Ram's Congress for Democracy does not merge with the Janata party there might, in the near future, be conflict between the two parties, especially if the Congress party begins to fall apart. Although the electorate produced a two-party system (or, more accurately, a two-and-a-half party system), the fragility of the Congress party and the independent status of the Congress for Democracy makes the party structure very unstable. Chandra Sekhar, describing the party system as very fluid, said that "the situation in the states and in the central government may look very different a year from now."

Today, even before a new government has been chosen, the government announced that the proclamation of emergency issued on June 25, 1975 has been revoked. The ban on twenty-six organizations, including the R.S.S. and Jamaat-I-Islamia has been lifted. The central government has advised the state governments to release all political detainees. The government has also issued an order ending press censorship and has withdrawn the circulars asking government departments, public sector undertakings, and other government bodies not to advertise in the Statesman and the Indian Express. The Janata party secretary, Mr. L.K. Advani, announced that among the first acts of the new government will be the repeal of the Press Objectionable Matter Act, a review of the Maintenance

of Internal Security Act, and rescinding of the 42nd Amendment to the Constitution.

Abu, in his cartoon in this morning's Indian Express, portrayed an elderly villager squatting on the ground smoking his hookah (a traditional water pipe), and asking Jayaprakash Narayan, "Has my revolution been as total as you wished it to be?"

At the large billboard on Parliament Street when the election returns were still coming in, I asked a group of people who they thought would be India's next Prime Minister. Did they prefer Morarji Desai, Jagjivan Ram, or Charan Singh? "It doesn't matter," said one of the men. "If we don't like the Prime Minister we can always replace him."

Myron Weiner