

March of the Nation
20/3/71
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That's the way it is... A.G. NOORANI

The National Decision

India has in a democratic manner expressed her overwhelming support for Mrs Indira Gandhi. Unless this truth is first accepted, and its implications realised, the lessons of the election results will go unlearned and the country's politics will be the poorer for it.

Swatantra Party Chairman M. Masani rose to the occasion and he said: "We, as democrats, accept the verdict and its implications."

have no meaning in the present-day world. It is heartening to note that Mrs Indira Gandhi also accepts this (March 11).

statements by Cong-O ment S. Nijalingappa and Sangh's A. B. Vajpayee, in contrast, are utterly devoid of any sense of fair play or realism. They can find excuses after excuses till the cows come home. Every one in his senses knows the country has rejected their parties.

POWERFUL SWEEP

It has been a national decision because the sweep of the pro-Indira vote was there all over the country. It was a powerful sweep, besides.

Electoral adjustments or alliances of a different kind would not have made much of a difference. We are back to the days of Jawaharlal Nehru, when his Party overshadowed all others.

And it has been a vote on the main all-India issue—Mrs Indira Gandhi's local issues went by the board. Witness Mysore. Men of slender credentials were elected only because they were HER men. The Party will be very much subordinate to the Government, as in the Nehru days.

But, as in the Nehru era, again, there will be need for greater vigilance by the press, not less. The Opposition in Parliament has been crippled by the massive vote and it will now be for public opinion outside to exercise the check that democracy requires. The Judiciary will be another check.

DRASTIC CHANGE

But where do we go from here? It should be clear that the parliamentary election has altered the status quo ante and the politics of the "Indira Hatao" days, having been rejected so decisively by the electorate, cannot be pursued now by any political party.

But this is exactly the politics the Four-Party Alliance pursued, especially since the SSP joined but by no means otherwise before it did so.

The Front's joint declaration was a collection of slogans, at best a statement of ideals. It adumbrated no policy, laid down no programme.

Even before the SSP joined, the Three-Party Front's common programme, as laid down in the AICC resolution of June 1970, was a paper patchwork. Cong-O needed six months more to agree to a Front and it was by no means clear that even that would have worked. The Jan Sangh behaved

Swatantra Accepts Decisive Verdict

BOMBAY: Mr M. R. Masani, Chairman of the Swatantra Party, commenting on the result of the mid-term election, states:

"The electorate has given a decisive vote of confidence to the Prime Minister and her Party and we as democrats accept the verdict and its implications.

"As it happens, the Swatantra Party had never accepted the slogan 'Indira Hatao' which the electorate has now rejected.

"The Central Parliamentary Board of the Party will meet in New Delhi on March 20 to consider the implications of the popular verdict and determine the attitude the Party should, as an Opposition Party, adopt towards the new Government and towards other Opposition Parties."

By a rethinking of ideologies, I mean the kind of intellectual exercise Mr R. A. Butler did following the British Labour Party's landslide victory in 1945. If Cong-O, Swatantra, the SSP and, for that matter, the PSP embark on such an exercise,

there is no reason why, discarding nostrums and dogmas, they should not be able to arrive at

remark. She will need the support of the entire nation if she is to tackle in earnest its enormous problems.

SUCCESSFUL STRATEGY

She has succeeded in the strategy she adopted. After the 1967 debacle, she was determined to give the Congress a radical image in order to steal the thunder from the Left. This she has succeeded in doing. Will she now pursue a Centrist course? How much will she listen to the Young Turks?

From now on she needs to lean on no party, the CPI or any other, and the opportunistic tactics she adopted have lost their "raison d'être." The Government should govern from now on. The era of instability should end with the era of opportunism.

A remark she made was wholly out of tune with much else she said on the morrow of her victory. She hoped the Supreme Court "will see things for itself". Whatever be the practice in the USA, in India the Supreme Court does not follow the election returns.

Mrs Gandhi's commitment to democratic values will meet their test in her attitude towards the Judiciary and the Press.

P.M. MUST SETTLE DOWN

A year from now, many of the States will go to the polls. But one hopes that Mrs Gandhi will make a deliberate effort to lower the political temperature and instead settle down to solid work.

As "The Economist" has said: "In fact, Mrs Gandhi may find that one of her biggest difficulties in the next few years will be stemming the tide of popular expectation which her eminently successful public relations campaign has helped to create."



a common programme which fulfils two tests:

It must be good for the country and is one which stands a good chance of popular acceptance.

As they stand today, these parties' programmes have failed to meet the second test and there is little hope for a reversal in the foreseeable future.

"Things cannot change overnight. In fact, progress can be made only as fast as the people want to go," Mrs Gandhi said on March 11. One hopes she appreciates the implications of this