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Personal

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EDITORIALS

As Mrs Gandhi smiles

IT IS SAID that the fastest way for a politician to become an elder statesman is to lose the election. And it seems some politicians are dead set on this path. "The Grand Alliance" is now buried and instead an electoral adjustment has been agreed to between the Congress (O), Jan Sangh, the Swatantra and the SSP.

One would like to see this front functioning but the same lack of character that broke the Alliance is likely to make the functioning of this national arrangement difficult. Some state units of the parties concerned will probably opt out of the national arrangement to make state adjustments and finally state-wide adjustments may also be put in cold storage, leaving the candidates to haggle and bargain. And whilst they all quarrel Mrs Gandhi will smile.

Her own party finds electoral adjustments with the PSP, the Bangla Congress and the CPI difficult. But her need for allies is not as great as that of her opponents. Many are eager to vote for Mrs Gandhi because

they say that if insecure she is capable of using tortuous ways of keeping herself in power but if secure she is a responsible stateswoman.

With eight weeks to go before elections it appears that in all likelihood her party may win a solid majority. But the question is what kind of a government will it be?

Soon after the split in the Congress Party, during the December '69 Party Congress in Bombay, Mrs Gandhi spoke of "the new blood" that her party wanted — young businessmen, intellectuals and others, who she said should come into public life. She has so rushed the election that there is no time for these niceties. And the same actors who held the political stage these last years have been assured their tickets by all political parties, including hers.

We may expect at the end of the elections the mercy of a stable government but anyone who expects it to be either clean or incorruptible is living in a dream world.