

physically attack the Communists during past election periods.

#### *Western Press*

Western press accounts of the Indian election campaigns have invariably predicted that the elections will be close and promoted the fortunes of the rightwing Opposition front. The *New York Times*, has led one group of editorialists suggesting that Mrs. Gandhi note how "our (U.S.) civilized transfer of power has impressed the

rest of the world." If Mrs. Gandhi allows "fair elections" the election will be "close."

More accurate coverage has prevailed in the British press. The *Financial Times* aptly noted that Gandhi's critics stand on weak ground if they intend to shift from charging the Prime Minister with anti-democratically calling the 1975 state of emergency in order to consolidate her power, to accusing her of calling elections to strengthen her personal base of support. What then is "democracy," asks the *Financial Times*.

## Gandhi Lifts Emergency Restrictions and Calls for March Elections

*The following is the text of a speech given by India's Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and broadcast to the Indian nation Jan. 18:*

It is some time since I last spoke to you on the radio. However, through my continuous travels in various parts of the country and through the groups and large numbers of individuals whom I meet in Delhi and elsewhere I have continued to be in close touch with you all. Your support, your affection and your trust enable me to serve India to the best of my ability....

Some 18 months ago our beloved country was on the brink of disaster. Violence was openly preached. Workers were exhorted not to work, students not to study, and government servants to break their oath. National paralysis was propagated in the name of revolution. The democratic way would have been to work towards the next elections which were not far off.

The government had to act and did act. Without a purposive government a nation, especially a developing one, cannot survive. At that time I made it clear that the restrictions imposed would be temporary. They have been gradually eased. The leaders and many of the rank and file who had been detained have been released. For some time, past press censorship has been relaxed and newspapers have been reporting the activities of people and parties. Restrictions could have been lifted earlier had violence and sabotage been given up, had there been no attempt to stir up communal and other unrest.

This discipline and feeling of hope enabled us to initiate and pursue many policies to help those sections of the population who had not greatly benefited from development plans. The constitution has been amended to remove impediments to policies which are designed to serve the people. We have also undertaken programs to combat social evils such as dowry, which is a burden on our middle classes and family planning which aims at healthier and better-cared-for children. Any act of compulsion or harassment will be dealt with severely.

May I remind you that the emergency was proclaimed because the nation was far from normal. Now that it is being nursed to health we must ensure that there is no relapse.

Normality means the orderly conduct of business. This is possible only if people live by certain codes and norms of behavior. Democracy also has certain rules. Government functioning cannot be obstructed. None should imperil the welfare of any section of the people or the safety of the nation. If India is to live and prosper, there can be no preaching of hatred, no practicing of violence, no encouragement of subversive activities, or lowering of standards of public life.

The economic situation has vastly improved. Others are studying our anti-inflation strategy. Production has increased thanks mainly to the new spirit of dedication which we see in our farmers, in our industrial workers and in our scientists, technicians, managers and administrators. The public has cooperated in spite of difficulties.... The 20-point and 5-point programs have shown tangible results. Even though much remains to be done, they have generated an attitude of confidence and have galvanized young and old. In spite of criticism there is a new respect for our country abroad.

I am conscious of the difficulties which farmers, industrial workers and some other sections of our population are experiencing. We are studying each problem so as to find quick solutions. Cyclones, drought and floods have caused hardship in some areas. My sympathy to all those affected. In recent months prices of a few commodities have slightly increased. But we have already initiated corrective action which will soon show results.

We have the largest grain stocks in years. Elements which wish to stir up economic trouble will be sternly dealt with. As long as there is close cooperation between the government and the people, our economic battles can and will be won.

Anyone can see that today the nation is more healthy, efficient and dynamic than it had been for a long time. The question now before us is how to restore substantively those political processes on which we were compelled to impose some curbs.

Change is the very law of life. This is a time of great fluidity in the world. Contemporary society is beset with dangers to which developing countries are especially vulnerable. Hence all change must be peaceful. This is the legacy of our freedom struggle and of Mahatma

**Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru.**

Our system rests on the belief that governments derive their power from the people and that the people give expression to their sovereign will every few years freely and without hindrance by choosing the government they want and by indicating their preferences for policies. The government so chosen has their complete mandate to carry out such policies.

The present Lok Sabha was elected in 1971. The clear cut mandate of the people enabled the country to meet a combination of challenges — those created by the events in Bangladesh by the international economic crisis, by the drought of 1972-1973, and by the political events of 1974-75. Legally, the present Lok Sabha can continue for another 15 months.

But we also strongly believe that parliament and government must report back to the people and seek sanction from them to carry out programs and policies for the nation's strength and welfare.

Because of this unshakeable faith in the power of the people I have advised the President to dissolve the present Lok Sabha and order fresh elections. This he has accepted. We expect polling to take place in March.

The rules of the emergency are being further relaxed to permit all legitimate activity necessary for recognized parties to put forth their points of view before the people. I earnestly counsel political parties to eschew violence and refrain from vilification and calumny. People should neither believe in nor give currency to rumors and gossip.

Every election is an act of faith. It is an opportunity to cleanse public life of confusion. So let us go to the polls with the resolve to reaffirm the power of the people and to uphold the fair name of India as a land committed to the path of reconciliation, peace and progress.

My good wishes to you. For the people of India may 1977 prove to be a year of added stability, strength, and continuing achievement.

Jai hind!