

The Genesis of Dictatorship

■ Dr. M.N. Buch

After the First World War the Allies imposed very harsh terms on a defeated Germany by the Treaty of Versailles. This included heavy reparations, abolition of the monarchy, the Weimar Constitution, a drastic reduction in the German Army and French and allied occupation of the Ruhr and the Saar regions. Alsace-Lorraine, which are German speaking and were wrested from France by Prussia after the Franco-Prussian War of 1869-70, were returned to France. The German people felt humiliated, an army smarting under defeat was sullen but determined to rebuild itself and a weak and ineffective government failed to provide good governance or to revive the economy. Collectively this began to focus first on the despair of the people, then on their anger and then again on a search for someone who would restore the dignity and honour of Germany. It is from this that Adolf Hitler was born out of Adolf Schickelgruber and the Nazi philosophy and the party, feeding on the anger of the people, began its campaign of projecting the moneybags, ultimately the Jewish moneybags, as the enemies of Germany who had betrayed it, while promising the people a strong government. The move towards “Ein Volk, ein Reich, ein Fuehrer” had begun.

In 1933 the Nazi Party, though not in a majority, became the largest single party in Parliament and Hitler was able to persuade President Hindenburg to invite him to form the government. The Socialists were quarrelling amongst themselves, the Left was in disarray and the Opposition was both complacent and fragmented. Hitler assumed power and on 5th March 1933 was able to persuade Parliament to enact “The Law For Removal of The Distress of The People and the Reich”, which gave him sweeping powers of legislation through ordinance. On 9th March 1933 he abolished the States and destroyed the federal structure. In May 1933 he abolished the trade unions and in July 1933 were abolished all political parties except the Nazi Party. Using the Constitution and the mandate of Parliament Hitler destroyed the Weimar Republic, abolished democracy and became the sole dictator of Germany.

Is there a parallel in Delhi? There is no gainsaying that in Delhi and in some metropolitan cities people were fed up with bad government, corruption, lack of safety and lack of job opportunities. By highlighting corruption Anna Hazare was able to focus the anger of the people and Arvind Kejriwal jumped on the bandwagon before usurping it. The anger was real enough to give Kejriwal’s party, the Aam Admi Party, twenty-eight seats in the NCT of Delhi Legislature and give it a healthy minority status. With the outside support of Congress, while appearing to be a reluctant debutante, Kejriwal nevertheless assumed power as Chief Minister. From day one he steeped himself in populism, aimed at enlarging his political base, even at the cost of beggaring the State. His mantra is that he will end all corruption if the Jan Lokpal Bill proposed to be introduced by him in the Vidhan Sabha is enacted. His perception is this will make him and his party popular enough to aspire for a much wider national role. Meanwhile in the game of bread and circuses Kejriwal goes on throwing to the people the sops of free water, free electricity, subsidy for not paying electricity bills, etc. To mix metaphors madly, the Congress now finds itself both hoist with its own petard and on the horns of a dilemma. Withdraw support and Kejriwal becomes a self proclaimed martyr. Continue support and Kejriwal continues with his antics, which at least temporarily give him a popular base. What the

Congress faces in either case is extinction in Delhi while the BJP waits and watches, ready to swallow the cream as the two cats claw each other to shreds.

The method to the madness of Kejriwal is that for him his present stint in government is only a temporary phase in his larger scheme. That may be good politics but not only is it not very ethical, but on a more practical plain it is harmful to Delhi whose citizens will have to suffer for at least six months more of nongovernment, especially if the present one collapses and the election takes place only a few months later. Is that being fair to the people?

Kejriwal is perhaps not a potential Hitler, but he is a demagogue who is prepared to use every tactic in the book to attain power. Comparison with Hitler would be unfair. But there are shades of megalomania which are being manifested so that Kejriwal can be compared with the authoritarian Indira Gandhi during the Emergency. I am prepared to accept that Kejriwal's intentions are to give us a corruption free government and society. However, this cannot be done through the Jan Lokpal. It has to come with firm, principled, honest government, working in an environment of calm, determined to give a people friendly, efficient and honest administration. If government is weak, ineffective, unable to deliver services to the people then, in the administrative vacuum which would develop, corruption is bound to prevail as people give bribes to have their legitimate work done and to push government into taking a favourable decision. In a good government there would be systematic analysis of every point of contact between the citizen and the government, rules and procedures would be simplified and made open, delay would not be permitted and decisions would be taken in a time bound, people friendly manner. This calls for systemic change. Thirty-six years ago I practised what I preached when I was heading DDA and I believe that it was generally found that DDA had become more people friendly, more efficient and less corrupt. The Jan Lokpal will punish if he can, but penalty is only one way of ending corruption. China executes more corrupt people than any other country, but it is still considered amongst the most corrupt countries in the world because there is no attempt to make the system open. In Sweden the Ombudsman does not punish, but he ensures that government functions smoothly and, therefore, there is very little or no corruption. Does Kejriwal want to follow the Swedish model or the Chinese one? The Jan Lokpal looks very Chinese to me.

Nothing said above really suggests that Kejriwal is a potential Hitler. However, his single point formula, the Jan Lokpal and the blood curdling threats he issues if the Bill is not passed does suggest that we have an Indira Gandhi in the making. God save us from such an eventuality.
