

**Volume 5**

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**Indira Gandhi - II**

**Lead: Cloudy were the political fortunes of India's longtime Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in the late 1970s. Unfazed, she engineered a vigorous comeback.**

**Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.**

**Content: Her political intuition, which in the past had seemed infallible, was failing. Power was slipping from her grasp. In June 1975 the High Court of Allahabad ('a la ba had) found the Prime Minister guilty of irregular and illegal election**

**practices. Economic decline was forcing many Indians further into poverty. When rising public disorder threatened the government, Gandhi resorted to desperation tactics. She declared an emergency, sent political enemies to prison, rescinded constitutional rights, and censored the press with unusual harshness.**

**Confident that her actions had cowed the opposition Gandhi called a snap election. The people rejected her borderline authoritarianism and handed the Prime Minister's Congress Party a sound thrashing.**

**There was no Indian politician, however, who was so widely accepted across regional, religious, caste, and class lines. When the opposition**

**coalition which had defeated her fell into disarray, in 1980, she returned as Prime Minister. The last four years of her tenure were punctuated by increasing friction between India's religious and ethnic factions and the accidental death of her most trusted political lieutenant and younger son, Sanjay. The most violent conflict at the time was in Punjab province involving Sikh extremists. They sought independence for the province, and their guerrilla attacks on government troops and moderate Sikhs provoked a crisis. Gandhi sent units to root out extremists who were occupying the Golden Temple, the holiest of Sikh shrines. The Temple was damaged and 600 died in the skirmish. Four months later Indira Gandhi was assassinated**

**by two of her Sikh security guards while she walked in her garden. A secular moderate in an age of religious extremism, a practical politician able to reach out to many factions, a foreign policy neutral capable of playing the great powers against each other to further India's international fortunes, Indira Gandhi made her mark on modern India and was genuinely mourned by a nation which valued her leadership.**

**At the University of Richmond, this is Dan Roberts.**

## Resources

**Malhotra, Inder. *Indira Gandhi: A Personal and Political Biography*. Boston, MA: Northeastern University Press, 1991.**

**Moraes, Dom. *Indira Gandhi*. Boston, MA: Little Brown and Company, 1980**

**Vasudev, Uma. *Indira Gandhi: Revolution in Restraint*. New Delhi, India: Indraprastha Press, 1974.**

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