

# Gandhi's visit poses development option to the Reagan administration

by Paul Zykofsky from Washington, D.C.

When Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi arrived at the White House on July 29, she described her first visit to the United States in more than a decade as "an adventure in search of understanding and friendship." Several days—and countless speeches and meetings—later, Gandhi told reporters that she felt her eight-day visit had been largely successful.

That success was the result of Gandhi's statesmanlike attitude and her ability to convey India's views and concerns to the administration and to the public at large. It was also based on President Reagan's willingness to listen. Summing up her 90-minute meeting with the President, Gandhi noted, "It was a good meeting. President Reagan is easy to talk to. He is a good talker, but he is also a good listener, and I was able to put across India's point of view."

The Indian Prime Minister added that she and Mr. Reagan had "agreed to disagree" on a number of issues. "We don't expect President Reagan to change his policies, but we do want him to try and understand why we follow the policies that we do; what are the compulsions of and circumstances behind what we are trying to do. And I think I did get this point across to the President."

Mrs. Gandhi did not conceal India's concern over certain aspects of U.S. policy. On the situation in the Middle East, she noted in a television interview that if the administration had taken a "strong attitude earlier," the situation in Lebanon "may not have deteriorated to this extent." Gandhi also implied that the United States would be well advised to deal directly with the PLO, whose leader Yasser Arafat had "struck me as the most moderate Arab" on the question of recognition of Israel during his recent visit to New Delhi.

Regarding sales of sophisticated military equipment—including F16 fighter-bombers—to Pakistan, Gandhi noted that President Zia had given assurances to the Soviet Union that it would not use these weapons against its troops in Afghanistan. In that case she feared that the arms would be used against India, as had occurred in the past three wars with Pakistan. She pointed out that the arms sales were forcing India to spend more on arms, diverting funds from development needs.

Addressing the administration's economic policies,

Gandhi was critical of U.S. cutbacks in financial assistance to developing countries—cutbacks which also slow down export-based economic recovery in the developed sector. In this context she rejected U.S. proposals that developing countries like India should rely more on dwindling credits from the commercial markets, since high interest rates have made such loans extremely costly.

## Contrast to 1971

Yet the talks between Gandhi and Reagan were held in a friendly atmosphere. This was a sharp contrast to her last visit to the United States in 1971 when Gandhi clashed with the Kissinger crowd—which was then fully committed to a "Pakistan tilt"—over Washington's refusal to condemn the Pakistan military's genocide against the population of East Pakistan.

But today the administration appears to have become more aware of the importance of India as a regional power—as well as the instability of "traditional" Asian allies Pakistan and China—and went out of its way to give Gandhi a warm reception. In particular the two heads of state appeared to have established a rapport, which, observers note, could be an international factor in the future given Gandhi's similar close relationship to the Brezhnev leadership in Moscow. Gandhi, who is scheduled to visit the Soviet Union in September, is known to be concerned with the need to improve U.S.-Soviet relations.

An element which contributed to the friendly tone of discussions was working out a solution for the one major outstanding bilateral dispute between the two countries—the cutoff of enriched nuclear-fuel supplies for the U.S.-built Tarapur atomic power station. Despite a 1963 agreement which committed the United States to supply fuel for the entire 30-year life of the plant, the fuel supplies have been blocked by the 1978 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Act. Under an "agreement in principle" announced after the White House talks, the enriched uranium fuel will be supplied by France to bypass the Non-Proliferation Act. The 1963 agreement will remain in force, including provisions for international inspection of the facilities and future use of the spent fuel. India's desire to reprocess that fuel to supply

plutonium for its fast breeder program will be addressed at a later date.

### Clearing up misconceptions

Prime Minister Gandhi also spent a good deal of time clearing up "misconceptions" about India and its policies. In countless meetings with journalists, interviews with the press and television, and discussions with scientists, businessmen and political analysts—not to mention the official talks in Washington—Gandhi repeatedly explained the motivations for India's domestic and foreign policies.

Responding to charges that India is "pro-Soviet," Gandhi stated: "We do not lean to one side or another, neither to the so-called East nor West. We judge issues from the Indian point of view and in terms of humankind's right to a peaceful and fuller life."

Addressing the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, Gandhi reiterated India's opposition to the Soviet troop presence there, but also said that India stood for "total non-interference," referring to the outside backing for Afghan rebels operating from Iran and Pakistan. She noted that India had refrained from sheer condemnation of the Soviet Union—for which she has been criticized—since this only pushed the U.S.S.R. to "dig further" and to create a more dangerous East-West confrontation. Instead, India has pressed for a negotiated settlement through which the Soviets would withdraw, rebel activity would stop, and Afghanistan would return to non-alignment.

Gandhi also outlined India's efforts at "industrializing, modernizing and transforming an ancient society of immense size, population and diversity," based on planned economic development, since independence from the British in 1947. It was through this process that India had attained self-sufficiency in foodgrain production and a fivefold increase in industrial production, she reported.

In a speech to scientists Gandhi presented an India "preoccupied with building and development," based on advanced science and technology. Gandhi stressed India's desire for cooperation through transfer of technology, while noting the need for developing countries to build up their own scientific expertise. She reminded her audience that India has created the world's third largest pool of scientists and engineers. After the official talks both sides announced the agreement to form a special joint commission of Indian and American scientists to determine new areas of scientific cooperation, including agriculture, bio-engineering, immunology and materials sciences.

In her arrival speech at the White House, Mrs. Gandhi summed up what a United States true to its historic purposes as a nation means to others. From the vantage-point of this speech, her visit can be seen as having posed to the Reagan administration a partner-

ship with the developing countries for economic growth, as an alternative to its current pursuit of the policies of economic collapse and confrontation set by its Anglo-American advisers.

We excerpt below Mrs. Gandhi's statements on leading issues during the course of her visit.

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## Gandhi greets Mr. Reagan

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*At the White House arrival ceremony, July 29:*

Mr. President and Mrs. Reagan, to me every journey is an adventure. And I can say that this one is an adventure in search of understanding and friendship.

It is difficult to imagine two nations more different than ours. As history goes, your country is a young one. Over the years, it has held unparalleled attraction for the adventurous and daring, for the talented as well as for the persecuted. It has stood for opportunity and freedom. The endeavors of the early pioneers, the struggle for human values, the coming together of different races, have enabled it to retain its elan and dynamism of youth. With leadership and high ideals, it has grown into a great power. Today, its role in world affairs is unmatched. Every word and action of the President is watched and weighed and has global repercussions.

India is an ancient country. And history weighs heavily on us. The character of its people is formed by the palimpsest of its varied experiences. The circumstances of its present development are shadowed by its years of colonialism and exploitation. Yet, our ancient philosophy has withstood all onslaughts, absorbing newcomers, adapting ideas and cultures. We have developed endurance and resilience.

In India, our preoccupation is with building and development. Our problem is not to influence others, but to consolidate our political and economic independence. We believe in freedom with a passion that only those who have been denied it can understand. We believe in equality, because many in our country were so long deprived of it. We believe in the worth of the human being, for that is the foundation of our democracy and work for development. That is the framework of our national programs.

We have no global interests. But we are deeply interested in the world and its affairs. Yet, we cannot get involved in power groupings. That would be neither to our advantage, nor would it foster world peace.

Our hand of friendship is held out to all. One friendship does not come in the way of another. This is not a new stance; that has been my policy since I became Prime Minister in 1966.

No two countries can have the same angle of vision, but each can try to appreciate the points of view of the others. Our effort should be to find a common area, however small, on which to build and to enhance

cooperation. I take this opportunity to say how much we in India value the help we have received from the United States in our stupendous tasks.

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## On Indo-U.S. cooperation

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*To the Foreign Policy Association in New York City, Aug. 2:*

There have been many ups and down in the curve of Indo-U.S. relations. Two large, vibrant and plural societies cannot possibly agree on all matters and especially on details, but if we concentrate on a shared perception of global welfare and respect for the same human values, we have a base on which to build understanding and cooperation. I believe such an affinity exists between our two countries, and that in the coming decades we can cooperate creatively in the great task of harnessing the resources of our planet more rationally and fruitfully for the benefit of all humankind. . . .

We want foreign investment. We want it to bring such technology as we can absorb and adapt to our conditions, which will augment our exports, improve our balance of payments, and strengthen our self-reliance. Of the 6,232 industrial collaboration agreements signed between 1957-1980, about 20 percent were with U.S. firms.

Foreign investment in India can earn its normal rate of return and be assured of security. We have borrowed from private financial institutions but there are limits, because of heavy debt servicing charges. . . .

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## On science and technology

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*To the American Association for the Advancement of Science on July 30:*

Scientific endeavour, as success in any other walk of life, instills confidence in a society and leads it to a higher sense of achievement and fulfillment. Apart from the raising of traditional skills and techniques, using available materials in agriculture and rural crafts, our efforts in science cover a wide spectrum, encompassing work in some frontier areas of atomic energy, space science, oceanography, electronics, and fundamental research in mathematics, particle physics, molecular biology and so on.

Why should India, which is still wrestling with the more obvious basic needs, concern itself with such advanced areas? Scientists are aware that new knowledge is often the best way of dealing with old problems. We see our space effort as relevant for national integration, education, communications, and the fuller understanding of the vagaries of the monsoon which rules our economic life. Mapping from the sky also gives information about natural resources. Oceanography augments food and mineral supplies. Modern genetics opens



*Mrs. Gandhi with President Reagan at the White House.*

out vast possibilities. Homegrown expertise has helped our oil exploration. Had we been wholly dependent on foreign experts, we would not be producing 16 million tons of petroleum a year. . . .

For India, science is essential for development and no less for the intellectual self-reliance and creativity of our people.

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## On economic development

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*To the Foreign Policy Association, Aug. 2:*

In no way is it (our planning) totalitarian or coercive. We try to take the largest possible number with us at every stage. Industrializing, modernizing and transforming an ancient society of immense size, population and diversity is a daunting venture and, inevitably, a gradual one. In a democracy particularly, but even in other systems, the pace of transformation cannot be faster than its acceptance by the public. . . .

India is now basically self-sufficient in grains. In 1979 we could withstand one of our worst-ever droughts, though it seriously affected our economy in the succeeding year. Our grain production has now reached the record level of 134 million tons. This green revolution was made possible by the gradual spread of new technology, of better and new varieties of seeds, of the use of fertilizers and pesticides, of land reforms, of price policies and credit to farmers, and above all the skill, hard work,

and adaptability of the ordinary Indian farmer and the increasing involvement of the people at the grass-roots level in the process of development. . . .

No less substantial is the growth and diversification in our industry, bringing us to the first dozen countries in volume of industrial production. In 30 years since 1950-51, the index of industrial output increased more than five times.

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## On North-South cooperation

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*To the Foreign Policy Association, Aug. 2:*

India and most developing countries need foreign aid and loans to get new technology and to make structural changes in the economy. Shortages of foreign exchange and deficit in balance of payment are closely connected with development problems. They cannot be solved by cutting down expenditure or changing exchange rates. To reduce imports, we must increase our domestic production. To augment exports, we must produce more exportable goods and these need markets in industrialized countries. All this calls for investment, higher productivity and more flexibility. We need external assistance to support developmental programs. . . .

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## On the Middle East

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*From a discussion at the National Press Club, June 30:*

We have been agonized by the Lebanon tragedy, especially by the bombing of civilian areas, and we've expressed ourselves very strongly on this. We have talked to the U.S., Soviet Union and France, who are in the best position to do something about it directly. . . .

*From NBC-TV "Meet the Press," Aug. 1:*

When Mr. Arafat came to India not too long ago, he struck me as the most moderate Arab I have met on this issue [of recognition of Israel—Ed.]. And he very clearly stated that he thought that some kind of agreement could be reached by which the Israelis, the Arabs and the Christians in that area could live together in peace. He said this was the situation before Israel came into being and he would very much like some such arrangement. India, long ago when this matter came up at the U.N., had proposed a federal kind of set-up.

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## On Pakistan-India relations

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*To the Foreign Policy Association, Aug. 2:*

In spite of the conflicts and hostilities which we have faced in our own neighborhood, we have kept wide open lines of communications and the road of reconciliation. In my last term of office I took the initiative to improve relations with China and Pakistan, and we are continuing

these dialogues. We do want relationships of trust and amity. A no-war pact was first offered to Pakistan by my father and repeated in different forms subsequently. But Pakistan seemed to be allergic to the words. However, the substance of a no-war declaration was incorporated in the 1972 Simla Agreement between [Prime Minister] Bhutto and myself. Pakistan has now come forward with a proposal for a no-war pact. We are ready to take it up once more. In fact I have publicly affirmed that, pact or no pact, India will not attack Pakistan. I have proposed a treaty of peace, friendship and cooperation which would include non-aggression commitments, and affirm strict adherence to nonalignment by both countries and a resolve to settle all differences by bilateral negotiations. I have also suggested a joint commission as a mechanism for continuous consideration of bilateral cooperation.

*From NBC's "Meet the Press," Aug. 1:*

We don't want the U.S.A. to break off its friendship with Pakistan. I don't think that would solve any problem. But we do feel that being friends with Pakistan should not preclude being friends with India.

*From interview with the New York Times, Aug. 1:*

We are doing everything possible to have . . . a reconciliation [with Pakistan—ed.]. But my only—I don't know if "suspicion" is the right word—is that Pakistan is a bit wary of all this. Not because they don't want friendship, but because they are worried about Indian influence. Not influence which the Government of India will exert, but there is no doubt that greater friendship with India will encourage the forces of democracy. This is our problem not only with Pakistan, but with all our neighbors.

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## Gandhi on Afghanistan

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*From speech at Foreign Policy Association, Aug. 2:*

Much emotion has been aroused in the U.S. and other countries on Afghanistan. We are no less concerned. For it is a neighbor with whom we have a historic friendship. Our position has been made clear publicly and privately, through diplomatic channels and at the personal level, that foreign troops in Afghanistan should be withdrawn. At the same time we are aware of other interferences there. This also must be taken into account.

*From ABC-TV "Nightline," Aug 3:*

The question is do we want this to increase the confrontation between East and West, or create a new kind of confrontation in the region. I think that would be disastrous for the world. Therefore we have been trying everything possible to have some kind of negotiated settlement and we are told by the Afghans that if the help to the rebels will stop they will ask the Soviets to go back.