

Mrs. Gandhi: patriot, statesman, and friend of the United States

We present Mrs. Gandhi here, through excerpts from her own speeches and interviews of recent years.

In an interview with EIR published on Oct. 6, 1981, Mrs. Gandhi was asked about the causes of the danger of war today. She replied:

There is no one source. It is a general attitude of most people to pursue what they consider to be their immediate national interests, even if they are not in the long-term interests of the world, and therefore themselves.

For instance, if the developed countries squeeze the developing countries as we are being [squeezed], where do they sell their goods? They can't have it both ways. We are the natural markets, but if our people don't have the purchasing power, then obviously the West will be hit also. As they are—[through] unemployment and so on. The U.S. seems to have solved this problem by giving dominance to the armaments industry.

Mrs. Gandhi arrived in the United States for a summit meeting with President Reagan on July 29, 1982. Here is her statement at the welcoming ceremony at the White House:

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 élan 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. . . .

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, howsoever 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.

While in the United States, she also delivered a speech to the American Association for the Advancement of Science, on July 30, 1982:

. . . 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 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. . . .

Mrs. Gandhi delivered the opening speech to the Non-Aligned summit in New Delhi, on March 8, 1983:

Humankind is balancing on the brink of the collapse of the world economic system and annihilation in a nuclear war. . . .

We of the developing world have no margin of safety. We shall be the first and worst sufferers in any economic breakdown. . . .

The Non-Aligned Movement has stood firmly for a thoroughgoing restructuring of international economic relations. We are against exploitation. We are for each nation's right to its resources and policies. We want an equal voice in the operation of international institutions. We reiterate our commitment to the establishment of a new international economic order based on justice and equality. . . .

The eyes of the world are upon us. People in India and in all our countries have high expectations from our deliberations. Let us decide here:

To demand more purposeful ways to carry forward the democratization of the international system and to usher in a new international economic order;

To call for an international conference on money and finance for development which will devise methods to mobilize finance for investments in the critical areas of food, energy, and industrial development; and,

To reassert our commitment to collective self-reliance. . . .

In a speech on July 23, 1983, Mrs. Gandhi inaugurated a new unit of the Madras Atomic Power Project at Kalpakkam. This brought India into the ranks of countries that are self-sufficient in nuclear power production. The plant was domestically built and is the first nuclear reactor in India that is not under foreign safeguards and restrictions. The heavy water required for the startup of the reactor was also produced in India.

. . . Our science, particularly nuclear science, is dedicated to development, the achievement of freedom from want, and the provision of essentials and an honorable life for the masses. We are to make the deserts bloom and not make the world

a desert. This applies to our nuclear science, indeed to all the sciences. . . .

When we first embarked on our nuclear program, most industrialized nations were very critical of us. Their disapproval, even hostility, continues. Cooperation is withheld, and solemn agreements are lightly set aside. . . .

In a parliamentary debate on the crisis in the Punjab in August 1984, Mrs. Gandhi responded to remarks from opposition politicians to the effect that India is a country composed of many nations:

I strongly deplore the remarks. India is one nation; it was one nation; and it will remain one nation. . . . The word *nationality* may have many meanings, but I am afraid it is a dangerous word to use. The word I use is *community*, never *nation*. . . .

[Mrs. Gandhi noted that in some communist countries the word *nationalities* is used, but not in India.]
question of there being different nationalities. We are all one nation; we are all Indian citizens, and, as I understand it, the word *nationality* means different citizenship.

In an interview with UPI in mid-October 1984, Mrs. Gandhi discussed the threats to her life, and her life-long commitment to use the tools of scientific optimism to transform India and the world:

No, I'm not afraid, as you can see, I usually ride in an open car. . . . I am frequently attacked. Once a man poked a gun at me; another time in Delhi someone threw a knife at me. And then, of course, there are always the stones, the bricks, the bottles—especially at election time. . . .

[Mrs. Gandhi described how when she spoke to a crowd in Orissa in 1967, one of those stones broke her nose and split her lip, but she refused to leave the podium, and simply pulled her sari up around her face to hide the blood.]

We are taught that life is a mixture of good and bad, of sunlight and shadow, happiness and sorrow. . . . I feel I have to fight evil, I have to fight what is wrong, but you cannot be bothered about what is happening to you in consequence—you have to go on with your job. When you are small, you may cry at a very small hurt that when you are older would mean nothing, but there are still the bigger hurts. . . .

[Asked about her dream for India, Mrs. Gandhi's voice dropped to a whisper.]

say a better place, I mean not only materially, not only a better standard of living. There's been so much advance in knowledge. We've got the scientific knowledge; we've got the capability, we can do so much.

Now we must concentrate that knowledge on being better people, on making the world a much better place in every possible way. And if the rest of the world can't do it or won't, at least India should try her best.