

# Gandhi: India needs national unity to develop

*The following are excerpts from an interview with Indira Gandhi published in the respected Indian news-weekly New Wave shortly before the former Prime Minister's victory in the Chikmagalur State parliamentary elections.*

*Q: Madam, how do you assess the relevance of Jawaharlal Nehru's developmental strategy, his domestic and foreign policy framework, which the Janata conglomerate is trying to denigrate and destroy?*

*A: Jawaharlal Nehru's policies will remain relevant so long as there is poverty, inequality and injustice in Indian society. After all, we followed these policies not merely because they were Jawaharlal Nehru's but because we considered them relevant; in fact, only these policies are possible in the Indian situation. And, I think that the success we achieved within the country as well as outside was proof of this relevance. What is freedom worth if a majority of the people are not free to enjoy it?*

*Q: What, in your opinion, are the reasons which have prompted the Janata party to deviate from Nehru's policies, including nuclear policy, aimed at industrial development and modernisation of Indian society?*

*A: The reasons are that they disliked the policies from the very beginning. These people, the previous Union Home Minister (Charan Singh), for instance, disapproved those policies even when he was in the Congress Party. He was quite open about it. So many other people like the present Prime Minister and others, who were in the Congress organization in 1959, also did not like them. They argued against these policies. But they did not dare vote against them in the AICC because they knew the majority was overwhelmingly for those*

*policies. They were waiting for an opportunity to hit back. They did hit back at Jawaharlal Nehru at the time of the Chinese aggression by forcing Krishna Menon's removal which was a very big blow to Nehru. It weakened his authority considerably as also the authority of the Indian government.*

*As is obvious from the statements of some of these people, they are not at all interested either in industrial development or in modernisation. They are positively against modernisation. Then there are others who may want modernisation or rather a superficial kind of modernisation but who may not bother about true economic independence as is obvious from today's industrial policy. . . .*

*Q: Are the Janata policies beneficial to big Indian industries?*

*A: It is not benefitting all of them. It is benefitting only a few. Look at the unfairness of the gold policy. I do not have inside information but I am told that there are about seven families or firms which have definitely benefitted. Perhaps this is the only way they could think of turning black money, which has accumulated recently, into yellow.*

*Q: Does it not harm national industries?*

*A: Certainly it does.*

*Not only that but also buying goods abroad which can easily be produced in India, or which we can do without. After all, we are at a stage of development when we cannot afford luxury in place of people's necessities. So the Janata government's industrial, export, and import policies are not in the national interest. The effect of it will be felt later. It will hit us with a bang. When we left the government we left the economy in a very sound and stable shape and this is what will keep them going for some time. . . .*

*Q: Are they acting under foreign pressure or is it because of their own outlook?*

*A: It is a mixture of both. It is their outlook. I do not think they need much pressure. Basically, they are inclined towards that. But there is also pressure, no doubt.*

## A Fresh Consensus?

*Q: Behind Panditji's policies and development strategy there was a broad national consensus which was reestablished by you after the split in the Congress in 1969. There is no such consensus at present. Do you think there is need for a fresh consensus among all the progressive and democratic forces which are presently working at cross purposes? If so, how do you propose to achieve it?*

*A: I certainly think there is need for a fresh consensus. I do not know how to achieve it today when everybody seems to have trained his gun on me. But as I have said repeatedly that if somebody could wage this fight by my remaining outside, I would have gladly done so. I did remain outside, and I found nobody was doing it. In fact the time we lost thus is proving a serious handicap now. Had we started the fight right from the beginning the situation would have been different. My advice to my party was that we should go to the people immediately even if we were stoned on the day we were defeated.*

*Consensus can be achieved only by people who realise the objective situation and try to persuade others. The situation is far more serious than is realised. It is not a question of personalities or even of parties. It is the question whether this country is going to be independent as the founding fathers had envisaged it. It is not merely having an Indian government but an Indian government which regards national interest first, second and last, and which takes*

decisions in the light of long-term interest. It is not only Indian interest but the interest of world peace and of other developing countries.

**India-China Relations, Camp David**

*Q: How do you view the Janata's foreign policy, particularly its China policy, and the so-called policy of "genuine nonalignment" or the policy of equidistance towards the Soviet Union and the USA? What is your reaction to the Camp David agreement?*

*A: ... Our friendship with the Soviet Union was in no way against the USA, or China for that matter. And we did try to befriend the USA in spite of disagreement on many points: for instance, on Vietnam and their policies towards other nations of Africa, Asia and Latin America. But they always had a tilt against us. Why has that tilt been*

removed or tilted the other way I do not know. There is a definite change in the government's attitude.

There is no such thing as genuine nonalignment. Whatever non-alignment was, it was established by Nehru, Nasser and Tito. We do not need Mr. Desai or Mr. Vajpayee to tell us what the real thing is.

... I only hope that Mr. Vajpayee is not going to jettison national interest during his trip to Peking. And also, it is not clear which way China is heading ... And the West, which is so concerned about democracy in India, is not concerned about democracy in China or Pakistan and in so many other countries where it has not only not sided with democracy but often helped overthrow democracy and put up dictators.

China has got nuclear bombs but

it has not industrial strength. It now hopes to build it with the help of America. I do not know how far America would like China to become strong. The West welcomes China as a market at this moment or as a place for their goods. Their great disappointment was that India, which was a considerably big market, was more and more able to meet its own needs. So now they find there is a very big field by China. But the Chinese are not fools. I just cannot say in what direction all this will lead.

However much the Chinese may dislike or talk against the Soviet Union, I doubt very much whether they would like to get involved in a conflict with the Soviet Union.

So far as Camp David accord is concerned, anything which is rejected by the Arabs cannot possibly succeed.

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