



MEMORIAL CEREMONY
FOR
SHRIMATI INDIRA GHANDI

Pacheco Centre, Brussels
9 November 1984, 6 p.m.

Speech by EC Commission President
Gaston E. THORN

SHRIMATI INDIRA GANDHI 19.11.17 - 31.10.84

AMBASSADOR, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

WE ARE GATHERED HERE TO REMEMBER AND TO GIVE THANKS
FOR THE LIFE OF INDIRA GANDHI.

INDIA'S LOSS IS THE WORLD'S LOSS. IT IS HARD TO IMAGINE
PUBLIC LIFE IN INDIA WITHOUT HER; AND YET IT IS JUST AS
HARD TO BEAR HER ABSENCE FROM THE WORLD STAGE.

WHEN THE HISTORY OF THIS CENTURY IS WRITTEN, THE NAME
OF INDIRA GANDHI WILL NOT BE MISSING. SHE WAS A
STATESWOMAN OF WORLD STATURE.

INDIRA GANDHI WAS A PERSON WHO LEFT INDELIBLE MEMORIES
WITH THOSE WHO, LIKE MYSELF, HAD THE GOOD FORTUNE AND
PRIVILEGE TO MEET HER AS I DID ON THE OCCASION OF MY VISIT
TO INDIA IN 1982. SOFT-SPOKEN AND SLIGHT OF APPEARANCE,
SHE NEVERTHELESS COMMANDED ATTENTION IN WORD AND DEED
AS BEFITS THE CHILD OF A POLITICAL FAMILY. I LEFT
HER PRESENCE WITH A GREATER UNDERSTANDING OF HER
COUNTRY AND HER IDEALS FOR THE DEVELOPING WORLD.

. / SHE WAS

SHE WAS BROUGHT UP IN AN INTENSELY POLITICAL ATMOSPHERE. AT A RELATIVELY TENDER AGE SHE WENT TO PRISON FOR HER POLITICAL CONVICTION AND DEMONSTRATED AN EARLY COURAGE AND DETERMINATION TO CARRY THROUGH HER BELIEFS ON WHAT WAS RIGHT FOR INDIA. HER WELL-PUBLICISED HISTORICAL MODEL, JOAN OF ARC, WAS ALSO A FAMOUS, FEMININE, AND CHIVALROUS OPPONENT OF THE BRITISH. YET I BELIEVE THAT INDIRA GANDHI BORE NO ILL-WILL TO THE ERSTWHILE RULERS OF HER COUNTRY. SHE KNEW BEST HOW TO PROFIT NOT JUST FROM HER BRITISH BUT ALSO FROM HER EUROPEAN EDUCATION IN BOTH THE NARROW AND BROAD SENSE, AND REJECT WHAT WAS INAPPROPRIATE FOR INDIA.

THE REQUIREMENTS OF PUBLIC LIFE DID NOT OFTEN PERMIT MRS GANDHI TO SHOW HER VERY HUMAN QUALITIES NOR INDULGE THE THINGS SHE LIKED TO DO BEST. FAMILY LIFE WAS VERY DEAR TO HER AND HER PATRONAGE OF CHILDREN'S ORGANISATIONS SUGGESTS THAT SHE CARRIED THIS BEYOND THE CONFINES OF HER IMMEDIATE CIRCLE. HER LOVE OF THE OUTDOORS AND THE MOUNTAINS, HER WIDE INTEREST IN SCIENCE AND LETTERS ALL BEAR WITNESS TO A FREE RANGING SPIRIT WHO LIVED LIFE TO THE FULL.

./YET

YET INDIRA GANDHI WILL BE REMEMBERED FOR THE VERY QUALITY WHICH APPEARED TO HER POLITICAL OPPONENTS TO BE LACKING WHEN SHE FIRST TOOK OFFICE NOT FAR SHORT OF TWENTY YEARS AGO - HER LEADERSHIP. THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT IN HER TIME SHE WAS INDIA'S NATURAL LEADER. SHE WAS CAPABLE OF INSPIRING HER COLLEAGUES AND COUNTRYMEN TO A DEGREE WHICH WOULD BE THE ENVY OF PUBLIC FIGURES IN OTHER COUNTRIES.

OF COURSE, THERE WERE THOSE WHO DISAGREED WITH HER APPROACH. NO POLITICAL LEADER, AND ESPECIALLY NOT ONE IN THE WORLD'S LARGEST DEMOCRACY, CAN HOPE TO RALLY ALL SHADES OF OPINION. BUT I AM CONVINCED THAT HISTORY WILL JUDGE THAT SHE LEFT INDIA, IN SPITE OF ITS ETHNIC AND REGIONAL DIFFERENCES, A STRONGER SOCIETY, POLITICALLY MORE CAPABLE OF ACHIEVING ITS ECONOMIC ASPIRATIONS, AND BETTER PLACED TO EXERT ITS BENEFICIAL AND MODERATING INFLUENCE INTERNATIONALLY.

./THE PROGRESS

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THE PROGRESS OF INDIA DURING THE STEWARDSHIP OF MRS GANDHI NOT ONLY AS PRIME MINISTER, BUT HOLDING OTHER EXACTING PORTFOLIOS, WAS REMARKABLE. CERTAINLY, MUCH REMAINS TO BE ACHIEVED. BUT THE GREATEST TRIBUTE THAT WE CAN PAY TO INDIRA GANDHI, BOTH THE WOMAN AND THE POLITICIAN, IS TO HELP CARRY FORWARD HER LIFE'S WORK IN RAISING THE LIVING STANDARDS OF THE MASSES OF INDIA.

THERE USED TO BE TALK OF HUNGRY PEOPLE IN INDIA. NOW SERIOUS UNDER-NOURISHMENT IS A SCOURGE WHICH HAS BEEN BANISHED THERE, EVEN THOUGH IT UNHAPPILY REMAINS IN OTHER PARTS OF THE WORLD.

OUR MONUMENT TO INDIRA GANDHI WILL BE TO USE TO THE FULL THE EXTRAORDINARY POOL OF TALENT WHICH EXISTS IN INDIA TO BANISH POVERTY AS SHE SUCCEEDED IN ELIMINATING STARVATION. I AM CONVINCED THAT EUROPE HAS A CONTRIBUTION TO MAKE HERE IN THE FUTURE AS IT HAS IN THE PAST ESPECIALLY IN THE INDUSTRIAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL FIELDS.

./BUT MRS GANDHI

BUT MRS GANDHI WAS NOT JUST PRIME MINISTER OF INDIA. SHE DEVELOPED POLICIES WHICH TOOK INDIA TO THE LEADERSHIP OF THE NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT AND CONFERRED A PROMINENT ROLE UPON HER COUNTRY IN THE MULTI-LATERAL ECONOMIC INSTITUTIONS. NON-ALIGNMENT AND NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE WERE THE FOUNDATIONS OF INDIA'S FOREIGN POLICY FROM THE OUTSET AND HAVE THEIR ROOTS IN THE NATION'S HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE. BUT IT IS A PATH WHICH IS DIFFICULT TO FOLLOW. MRS GANDHI NEVER BELIEVED THAT ONE IDEOLOGY OR ANOTHER SHOULD HOLD PARTICULAR SWAY AT A GIVEN MOMENT IN HISTORY. NOR WAS SHE BOUND BY FIXED IDEAS IN HER ECONOMIC DIALOGUE WITH THE INDUSTRIALISED WORLD. RATHER SHE SET AN EXAMPLE OF PRAGMATISM AND REALISM AND SHE AND HER COLLEAGUES IN GOVERNMENT WERE AT PAINS TO CONSULT WITH INDIA'S PARTNERS IN ORDER TO PROGRESS ON THE ISSUES WHICH CONFRONTED THEM.

UNDER MRS GANDHI, INDIA WAS - AND WE TRUST WILL REMAIN - A "BRIDGE" COUNTRY.

MRS GANDHI WAS ALSO INTENSELY INTERESTED IN EUROPEAN INTEGRATION AND TOOK AN ACTIVE ROLE IN THE FIRST STEPS TOWARDS REGIONAL COOPERATION IN SOUTH ASIA, A PROCESS WHICH WE IN EUROPE CAN ONLY ENCOURAGE.

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./INDIRA GANDHI

INDIRA GANDHI BELIEVED THAT "LIBERTY, PEACE AND ECONOMIC PROSPERITY ARE INDIVISIBLE" (1).

LET US HOPE THAT IN OUR LIFETIMES AND THOSE OF OUR CHILDREN ALL THREE MIGHT BE REALISED. IN THE WORDS OF A KASHMIRI PROVERB, WE HAVE ONLY BORROWED THE WORLD FROM OUR CHILDREN - ONE DAY WE WILL HAVE TO RESTORE IT TO THEM.

OUR FRIENDS IN INDIA CAN REST ASSURED THAT AT THIS TIME OF DISTRESS, OUR THOUGHTS ARE WITH THEM. WE PRAY FOR THE LIBERTY, PEACE AND PROSPERITY OF INDIA SO THAT THE LIFE OF INDIRA GANDHI MAY NOT HAVE BEEN IN VAIN.

(1) MY TRUTH (1979)