

CIACRS BR 75-55 Oct 75
Bio. Report: Gandhi of India; Key Advisers

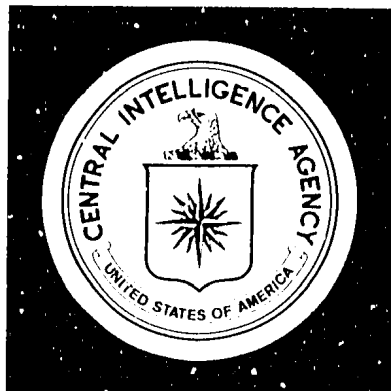
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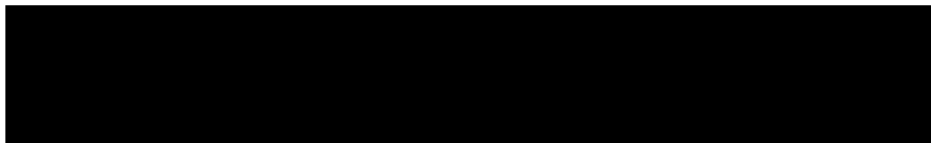
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(See inside cover)



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*Key Advisers to Prime Minister
Indira GANDHI of India*

Secret

BR-75-55

October 1975

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PREFACE

Background

On 12 June 1975 the Allahabad High Court convicted Prime Minister Indira Gandhi of illegal campaign practices in her 1971 election to Parliament. Her election was invalidated, and she was barred from holding office for 6 years; but a Supreme Court justice granted a constitutional stay allowing her to remain in office while she appealed the decision. Meanwhile, Parliament approved a new constitutional amendment that placed election of a Prime Minister above challenge in the courts. As of 1 October the Supreme Court was deliberating on the constitutionality of this amendment. If the court decision goes against Mrs. Gandhi, she probably will use her large parliamentary majority to secure legislation designed to protect her political position.

On 26 June, claiming that a "deep and widespread conspiracy has been brewing," threatening the country and its democracy, Mrs. Gandhi declared a state of emergency that transformed that democracy into an authoritarian regime. In the following weeks she moved to tighten her political control further by suspending fundamental personal liberties and rights; ordering arrests of opposition politicians, including some Members of Parliament and her own Congress Party; and imposing press censorship. On 1 July she announced a series of new economic measures designed to generate popular support.

Mrs. Gandhi's legal troubles followed a decline in popularity during 1973-74, as unprecedented inflation rapidly drove up prices. She claimed that the situation was due to forces beyond her control, but critics blamed her, saying that she had tolerated bungling and serious corruption to keep her party in control and had merely reacted to events rather than shaping them.

In recent years Mrs. Gandhi has become progressively more distant from her assistants, Cabinet Ministers and other senior party and government

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officials. This trend has been sharply accentuated by her declaration of the state of emergency and subsequent developments. A Cabinet-level committee has been formed to oversee the administration of emergency decrees, but its usefulness to her is reduced by the inclusion of two aspirants to the Prime Ministership, Agriculture Minister Jagjivan Ram and Foreign Minister Y. B. Chavan.

The Inner Circle

Since the emergency, the Prime Minister has increasingly relied on members of an inner circle of close advisers. This circle includes some of her most loyal and longstanding associates: D. K. Barooah, the leftist president of the Congress Party and a Gandhi political protégé; R. K. Dhawan, her personal secretary since 1967; her controversial son, Sanjay; R. N. Kao, a fellow Kashmiri Brahmin and India's intelligence chief; Rajni Patel, a Congress leader from Bombay and another protégé; S. S. Ray, her trusted Chief Minister of West Bengal and a longtime family and political associate; and C. Subramanian, the Minister of Finance.

This group of advisers is probably not permanent; its membership may change in the months ahead as Mrs. Gandhi reacts to, and shapes, political and economic developments in India. The US Embassy in New Delhi reported in late August that Mrs. Gandhi was increasingly turning to two conservative Chief Ministers: Bansi Lal of Haryana and Giani Zail Singh of Punjab. Both are right of center politically, and both have built reputations for ruthlessness and guile in running their states. In addition, two technocrats are mentioned whom Mrs. Gandhi turns to for advice and recommendations in their respective fields. One, T. A. Pai, Minister of Industry and Civil Supplies, she relies on for his economic expertise. The second, K. F. Rustamji, special secretary for police affairs in the Home Ministry, coordinates police resources throughout India and controls the well-equipped and well-trained paramilitary Border Security Force and the Central Reserve Police. His loyalty to Mrs. Gandhi is unquestioned.

Mrs. Gandhi is more powerful today than ever before, but she is also more isolated. She relies on her advisers or the technocrat specialists for counsel and recommendations. They may advise, urge, or otherwise attempt to guide her judgment, but after a lifetime at or near the center of Indian politics, she will continue to make all major policy and many minor operational decisions. Her greatest political asset is her willingness and ability to use her power decisively and dramatically to remain in power. "My father was a saint who strayed into politics," she has said, "I am not of the same stuff." Secretary of State Henry Kissinger has said of her: "The lady is cold-blooded and tough."

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