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Subject: Anglo/India Relations Pt 3

TRANSCRIPT OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION BETWEEN MRS. THATCHER AND MRS. GANDHI MARKING 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF UK/INDIA PUBLIC TELEPHONE SERVICE : 3 MAY 1983

PRIME MINISTER'S
PERSONAL MESSAGE
SERIAL No. TSS/83

Mrs. Gandhi: Hello

Mrs. Thatcher: Hello Mrs. Gandhi, Margaret Thatcher here, how are you?

Mrs. Gandhi: I am fine. It is so nice to hear your voice. How are you Prime Minister?

Mrs. Thatcher: I am very well and very happy to be talking on this 50th anniversary of the first telephone service between Britain and India. It was a great occasion and I think we both agreed that we should mark it by this call.

Mrs. Gandhi: Well I am delighted to be at this end of it. We take telephones so much for granted and it seems strange that such a short while ago we managed without them.

Mrs. Thatcher: Well I think it has done so much both within countries and between them.

Mrs. Gandhi: Here in India we are trying to use communications to narrow our cultural difference between our urban and our rural areas. Already radio, tv and satellite communications are giving our villages access to information and education and contributing to the revival of our own regional music, art forms, drama and so on. Because in a country of our size, we do feel that preserving the diversity is part of reinforcing our unity.

Mrs. Thatcher: Yes, I am sure that is right. It obviously does a great deal to help both with industry and with your culture. We watch you know very carefully everything that goes on in India. You know we have just had a terrible month's rain but of course in part of your country you had a drought a few weeks ago.

Mrs. Gandhi: A drought in about three fourths of the country and rain where we didn't want it.

Mrs. Thatcher: Yes I know, that usually happens. I heard, Mrs. Gandhi, from a lot of people who came through London after the Non-Aligned Conference in Delhi and they were full of praise for the way in which you had chaired it and the whole way in which the Conference had been handled. And that means of course we are very much looking forward to the Commonwealth Conference in India in Delhi in November.

Mrs. Gandhi: We are looking forward to having you with us, Prime Minister, and we certainly hope that in this International Communications Year we and all nations will not remain neighbours merely in communications but become more neighbourly in our thinking and our spirit, more caring and more appreciative of one another's concerns.

Mrs. Thatcher: I think we can use it Mrs. Gandhi as a force for good. I have always thought that, not only between leaders which I think is very important when we have something that we want to consult one another about. But also we can help to get supplies from one place to another quickly. And we can help if there are any really difficult problems.

Mrs. Gandhi: Yes, I am sure we can. Actually there is so much that science can do if it is used for the welfare of people rather than for the opposite.

Mrs. Thatcher: That is right. That is right and we must try to use it that way. And it has brought enormous improvements in the standard of agriculture, in the standard of living and the new communications really are a great advance. And of course they are not so expensive as they were when they were inaugurated fifty years ago and I was very pleased to see that we have a hundred thousand calls a month between Britain and India.

Mrs. Gandhi: That is quite a number.

Mrs. Thatcher: And most people use it very well.

Mrs. Gandhi: I hope so too.

Mrs. Thatcher: It's wonderful to hear you. I very much look forward to seeing you next time. I hope you and your family are keeping very well and that the people of India are prospering. They are very close to our hearts.

Mrs. Gandhi: Well thank you Prime Minister, we are all very well and we wish you the same and may I say we are looking forward to meeting you. You will find a warm welcome in India and may I through you send my good wishes to the British people.

Mrs. Thatcher: Thank you very much indeed. Good-bye Mrs. Gandhi every good wish to you and your people. Good-bye.

Mrs. Gandhi: Good-bye.