

Indira Gandhi's 'Crown Prince'

The most talked about political figure in India today is not, technically speaking, a politician at all. He has never run for public office, and even denies that he has firmly set his sights on a political career. Nonetheless, Sanjay Gandhi, 29, the younger son of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi* and the grandson of Jawaharlal Nehru, has been hitting the hustings lately as an articulate and outspoken advocate of his mother's policies. Sanjay's political enemies—and even some of his friends—have begun to refer to him as "the crown prince." Veteran Indian politicians are treating him with the deference due a young man who happens to be the likely heir to a political dynasty. "Even a few minutes' talk with him reveals his political acumen," marveled Devaraj Urs, chief minister of the state of Karnataka, last week. "He is as courageous as his mother." Notes one longtime political observer in New Delhi: "At the beginning of 1975, Sanjay's influence was minimal. Today there is a genuine feeling that he has a very good chance of being the third member of the Nehru family to become Prime Minister."

VIP Treatment. Sanjay's enormous advantage is that his name is already known to millions of Indians. Last month he was elected to the executive committee of the youth wing of the ruling Congress Party. He also attended the party's national convention at Chandigarh, where he was given VIP treatment. Arriving unannounced one day at the delegate's dining hall for lunch, he was greeted with shouts of "Sanjay Gandhi zindabad!" (Long live Sanjay Gandhi!)—the sort of accolade usually reserved for national leaders.

Then he was off to Bombay for an off-the-record session with some of India's leading journalists and attended a presidential review of the ships of the In-

dian fleet. Last week he turned up in Bangalore, where he was greeted by crowds and hailed by local officials as a "symbol of youth and hope." He urged members of the party's youth branch to limit their families to two children, to educate at least one illiterate person and to plant one tree every year. Avoid identification with the political left or right, declared Sanjay, and follow the credo of Mahatma Gandhi (no kin to the Prime Minister) to help "the poorest of the poor and the weakest of the weak."

Until his recent emergence as a public figure, Sanjay Gandhi was best known to Indians as the designer and builder of a mini-auto called the Maruti, named for the son of the Hindu god of wind. In the past, opposition politicians have charged that Sanjay got preferential treatment in getting a license to manufacture the car, which is now in limited production (cost: \$2,800) after eight troubled years of development.

TIME New Delhi Bureau Chief William Smith and Correspondent James Shepherd recently talked with Gandhi about these and other matters. The interview took place in a small parlor of the Prime Minister's residence in New Delhi, where Sanjay and his wife Menaka, 20, also live. Reported Smith and Shepherd: "Unlike most Indians of his age, Sanjay scorns Western-style clothes for a traditional knee-length *kurta*, worn over white cotton pajamas. Shy but well-spoken, Sanjay began by describing with obvious pride the car he designed from scratch. Later, when he took his guests for a ride, he tactfully inquired, 'Shall I drive fast or slow?' before tearing off on a test-drive performance over the bumpy roads and fields surrounding the Maruti factory. His guests' consensus on the car: noisy but seemingly sturdy." Excerpts from the interview:

ON FOREIGN CRITICISM OF MRS. GANDHI'S EMERGENCY RULE: There is a tremendous double standard. If [something] is done in the U.S., then it is very democratic. If it is done here, then it is terrible, it is the death of democracy. Would you tolerate a situation in America where the opposition took



MRS. GANDHI & SANJAY AT CHANDIGARH
The deference due a dynastic heir.

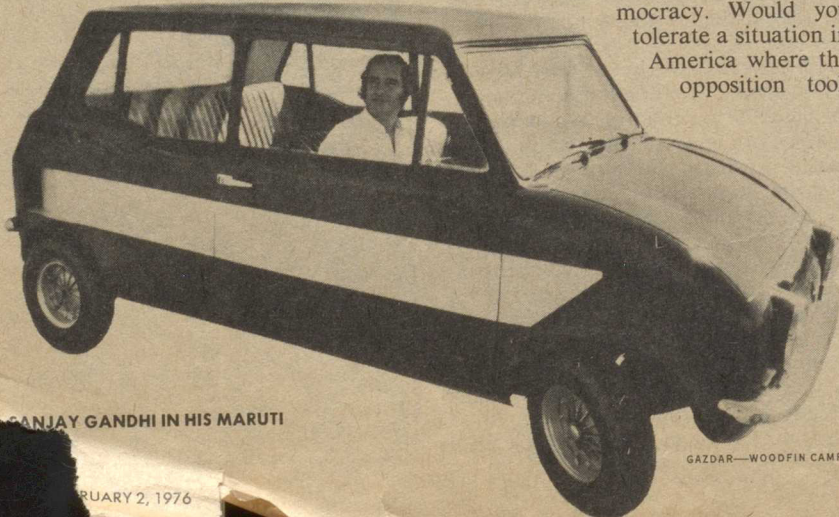
it on themselves to catch hold of the elected members of the assembly, as they did in Gujarat, and beat them up until they resigned, and burn down their houses? Did the British tolerate the building up of violence in Northern Ireland? They declared an emergency, they sent their troops in there. Did the Americans ever say that democracy has died in Britain?

For very much milder agitation in the U.S., troops have been brought out, dogs have been let onto the crowds. We never brought out troops here, even after the emergency. I mean, you say that democracy is suppressed here, but it is alive enough that we just couldn't use troops in such cases.

ON RESTRICTIONS ON THE INDIAN PRESS: I think there is much less censorship here than there is in most countries of the world. [But] the press has been controlled by a few people, and the role it played was the role it was ordered to play by these people, and that was to try and disrupt as much as they could. They told blatant lies the whole time.

ON INDIA'S MIXED ECONOMY: I don't feel you should throttle either the state-owned or the private sector. You should let them run in competition with each other, and let the best one win. Yes, I think there are too many controls on the state-owned companies.

ON HIS POLITICAL FUTURE: Honestly, I don't see any role. I didn't come into it for the sake of politics, I came into it in a time of crisis. I don't know if I'll stick at it after [the emergency] is over. I find it just as satisfying to hammer away at some piece of steel. [As for being Prime Minister], the question doesn't arise. We have 600 million people here, and quite a lot of them have been in this field longer than I have.



SANJAY GANDHI IN HIS MARUTI

GAZDAR—WOODFIN CAMP