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MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
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Telephone 01-~~5800822~~ 218 2111/3

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8th June 1979

Dear Paul,

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CALL BY THE INDIAN MINISTER OF DEFENCE

The Indian Minister of Defence, Mr Jagjivan Ram, who was accompanied by the Indian High Commissioner and Deputy High Commissioner and by Lieutenant General S L Menezes, Vice Chief of the Army Staff, called on the Defence Secretary on 7th June at 4.15pm.

During the course of an hour's conversation, Mr Ram expressed the hope that defence relations between Britain and India would remain close. India saw Britain as her traditional partner when it came to defence equipment, and he hoped that this relationship would remain, even if there had sometimes been difficulties over particular equipments and spares. Mr Ram did not refer to any current negotiations, such as for Sea Harriers, nor to the Jaguar aircraft contract. On security issues Ram said that India was surrounded by potentially unfriendly States, and she felt the need therefore to modernise and improve her defence capability. The situation on the border with China was relaxed but there had been no tangible improvement in relations. Nevertheless she was attempting to improve relations with her neighbours. It was, however, unfortunate that during the visit of the Indian Foreign Minister to Peking the Chinese had launched their attack on Vietnam. Any disturbance in one part of the world would inevitably affect the stability of the rest.

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Paul Lever Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

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My Secretary of State commented that this was indeed the case. The combined efforts of Western countries had preserved peace in Europe for 35 years, but the next 35 years would require a greater effort. He warmly endorsed Mr Ram's views about relations between Britain and India in the defence field, which he hoped would be further strengthened. He believed that good relations between China and the West could only help China's relations with India. In answer to a question from the Secretary of State, Mr Ram said that he did not believe that Khomeini would be able to continue for long in power in Iran, since he could not command the support of the middle classes.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Bryan Cartledge (No 10) and Martin Vile (Cabinet Office).

Yours ever,

(R L L FACER)

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