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PM/80/66

THE PRIME MINISTER

Relations with India

Prime Minister 3  
If you are content to  
send Lord Greenhill  
as your emissary to  
India, would you please  
sign the attached  
message? MAP 12/8

See  
India :  
June 1980

1. Despite your successful talk with Mrs Gandhi's emissary (Swraj Paul) on 2 July, there is growing evidence that our relations with India are not what they should be.
2. The Indians are reviewing the important Jaguar contract. It is by no means certain that Davy will get the £1 billion steel contract on which you exchanged letters with Mrs Gandhi recently. She is personally concerned about the treatment of India in the British media. Indian spokesmen compare the friendliness of India's relations with France and Germany to its relations with Britain.
3. Mrs Gandhi's own position is difficult. She weathered the loss of Sanjay remarkably well to begin with but signs of personal strain are now being reported. She has no-one else on whom to rely and appears increasingly isolated and beleaguered. She is now more than ever liable to form exaggerated notions of who her friends and enemies are. If she believes that we are not in the former camp, our material interests could suffer when the decisions on the contracts referred to above - and others - are taken. And that could spoil the atmosphere for the Prince of Wales' visit in November on which we are setting great hopes.
4. I think she needs a political gesture from us, to convince her that we want a good, productive relationship with India. I wonder whether taking a leaf out of her book, and by way of following up Swraj Paul's meeting with you on 2 July, you would consider sending a personal emissary of your own to see her. The aim would be to influence her general attitude towards us rather than to haggle about such issues as Jaguar and steel, although we should of course hope that the one would influence the other.

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5. It would be a great help if the emissary could hint that you would like to visit India in, say, April of next year. I do not think we should go firm on this until after the Prince of Wales' visit. It would be unwise to be committed too far in advance because the direction that Indian internal politics may take is somewhat uncertain. Another specific point which the emissary might make, subject to further consideration here, is that we are prepared to discuss whether anything can be done to influence the image of India in the British media, a subject about which we know Mrs Gandhi is personally concerned. There are obvious limits but there is probably a good deal that the Indians themselves could do to ensure, for example, that their industrial and scientific achievements get better coverage.

6. The choice of person is not easy. He would need to impress Mrs Gandhi as having your confidence (it would be important for him to be able to say he had been briefed personally by you). He would have to be able to deal with her sensitively in her present mood and would need to be familiar with the various international issues which she would doubtless want to discuss. Some of the people who would fit this bill would probably, because of their stature, attract a good deal of press speculation. I doubt if we want that. It would be better if whoever went avoided publicity as much as possible. He would need to go in late August/early September if the visit is to influence decisions on the Jaguar and steel contracts. It occurred to me that Lord Greenhill would be a good choice. I enclose a draft of a personal message that you could send to Mrs Gandhi if this idea commends itself to you and after we have checked that whoever you may choose is available.

Foreign and Commonwealth Office  
12 August 1980

*P Carrington*  
(CARRINGTON)