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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

L. N. M.

3 March 1981

Dear Michael,

Sword of Shivaji

You asked for a note about Indian interest in a sword which is in the Royal collection at Buckingham Palace. The sword was presented as a gift in 1875 and is the property of Her Majesty The Queen. There is a belief in India that it is the Sword of Chhatrapati Shivaji who led Mahratta campaigns against the Moghul emperors in the 17th century. But informed opinion suggests that the sword is of a later date than the 17th century. The genuine Sword of Shivaji would be a popular and powerful symbol of Mahratta national identity. Various swords have been claimed as the original. The return of the Buckingham Palace sword would undoubtedly please the Indians, particularly those in the State of Maharashtra, the old Mahratta homeland.

Mr Antulay, the Chief Minister of Maharashtra, saw Mr Peter Blaker, FCO Minister of State, and the Lord Chamberlain in London on 1 December 1980 to seek the return of the Sword. This was the first approach from the Indians on this matter. He was told that since the Sword is in the Royal collection, the Indian Government should make a formal approach in writing to Buckingham Palace if they wanted to pursue its possible return.

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Mr Antulay is well placed within Mrs Gandhi's Congress I party to persuade politicians in central government in Delhi to lend weight to his representations but as yet we have received no other approaches.

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** ~ * Passages deleted and
closed, 40 years, under
FOI Exemption.*

*yours ever
Rodric Lyne*

*Wayland (R M J Lyne)
13.9.11 Private Secretary*

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