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*From the Private Secretary*

24 January 1985

Visit by Indian Prime Minister

Thank you for your letter of 24 January about the proposed visit of Mr. Gandhi to the United Kingdom.

A visit by Mr. Gandhi on 14/15 October would be convenient to the Prime Minister and would fit in neatly with CHOGM which starts on 16 October. The Prime Minister's preference would be for talks and a dinner on 14 October though the talks could if necessary be on 15 October. I should be grateful if a proposal in this sense could be put to Mr. Gandhi.

I agree that the Indian Government should be informed once details of the Prime Minister's visit to Asia in April are confirmed but before it is announced publicly. This should be done without any suggestion of trawling for an invitation to visit Delhi.

Charles Powell

L.V. Appleyard, Esq.,  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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DB

Have we not  
already given the  
Fco details for  
the Gandhi visit  
we - CHOEN?

Can you let me have  
them please.

CH

cc: [handwritten initials]



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

24 January, 1985

Dear Charles,

Visit by Indian Prime Minister

You asked what the position was over the proposed visit by Mr Gandhi to the UK.

When Sir R Wade-Gery saw Rajiv Gandhi's Principal Secretary, Alexander, on 16 January (New Delhi telno 069 enclosed) the latter said that Mr Gandhi had regretfully decided that he could not visit London in June. He would, however, very much like to visit London later. Alexander suggested that a visit before or after CHOGM (16-22 October) and the 40th anniversary celebrations of the UN (24 October) might be appropriate.

Alexander had not put this suggestion to Rajiv Gandhi. Since then he has, of course, resigned over the New Delhi espionage affair. As soon as the dust has settled we shall need to pursue the idea with Mr Gandhi's secretariat. It would therefore be helpful to know whether a visit by Mr Gandhi around the times suggested in October is likely to be convenient to the Prime Minister. If her diary permits, there could be advantage in timing the visit before CHOGM: Mr Gandhi would be fresher and it would be useful to compare notes with him before the meeting.

As regards the proposal in my letter of 17 January that the Prime Minister might pay a short visit to Delhi at Easter, you reported in your letter that the Prime Minister would wish any such invitation to be spontaneous.

The question will however arise as to whether to inform the Indians in advance of the Prime Minister's visit to Sri Lanka. The Indian Government are acutely sensitive about the situation in Sri Lanka and quite likely to misinterpret (or misrepresent) our position if we fail to tell them. This will need careful handling. We believe it would be best to let the Indians know of the Prime Minister's projected tour once the four host governments have confirmed their agreement but before any announcement is made to the press. That would avoid giving the Indian Government any cause to complain that we had ignored their interests; it would also give them the opportunity, if they chose to take it, of inviting the

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SRI LANKA  
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Prime Minister to call in at New Delhi on her return from Sri Lanka.

*Yours ever,*

*Len Appleyard*

(L V Appleyard)  
Private Secretary

C D Powell Esq  
10 Downing Street

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GRS 250  
CONFIDENTIAL  
FM NEW DELHI 161130Z JAN 85  
TO IMMEDIATE FCO  
TELEGRAM NUMBER 069 OF 16 JANUARY

TOP COPY

YOUR TELNO 48 : VISIT BY INDIAN PRIME MINISTER

1. ALEXANDER TOLD ME TODAY THAT MR GANDHI HAD NOW REGRETFULLY DECIDED THAT HE WOULD NOT HAVE TIME TO VISIT LONDON IN JUNE. ACCORDING TO ALEXANDER, HE WILL VISIT ONLY PARIS AND UNITED STATES (I DID NOT HAVE A CHANCE OF PROBING HIM ABOUT WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN BETWEEN THOSE TWO VISITS OR WHETHER THE GAP BETWEEN THEM HAD NOW DISAPPEARED).
2. ALEXANDER WENT ON TO SAY THAT MR GANDHI WOULD VERY MUCH LIKE IF POSSIBLE TO VISIT LONDON IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE YEAR. ALEXANDER'S OWN IDEA, WHICH HE HAD NOT YET DISCUSSED WITH MR GANDHI BUT EXPECTED HIM TO AGREE WITH, WAS THAT A 2-3 DAY OFFICIAL VISIT TO BRITAIN SHOULD IF POSSIBLE BE ARRANGED ON HIS WAY TO OR FROM EITHER THE 40TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS OF THE UN IN NEW YORK OR CHOGM IN THE BAHAMAS. MR GANDHI WAS PLANNING TO ATTEND BOTH THOSE FUNCTIONS.
3. I SAID THAT THIS SOUNDED A PROMISING IDEA WHICH I WOULD EXPLORE WITH LONDON. I HOPED HE WOULD KEEP ME POSTED AS MR GANDHI'S THINKING DEVELOPED (ALEXANDER AGREED). I ALSO HOPED HE WOULD MAKE CLEAR TO MR GANDHI HOW WARMLY MRS THATCHER LOOKED FORWARD TO WELCOMING HIM TO LONDON, FOR PERSONAL AS WELL AS PROFESSIONAL REASONS. ALEXANDER SAID HE WOULD BE GLAD TO DO SO. HE THOUGHT MR GANDHI WAS VERY SENSIBLE OF MRS THATCHER'S PERSONAL AFFECTION FOR HIM, WHICH HE WARMLY RECIPROCATED. HE HAD PARTICULARLY APPRECIATED HER KINDNESS AND SYMPATHY AT THE TIME OF HIS MOTHER'S DEATH. HE ALSO GREATLY ADMIRED HER COURAGE AND WISDOM AS A POLITICAL LEADER.
4. I DID NOT OF COURSE MENTION THE POSSIBILITY OF A LIGHTNING VISIT BY MRS THATCHER TO DELHI IN APRIL.
5. GRATEFUL FOR VIEWS ON PARA 2 ABOVE.

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India : Relations Pt 4

24 JAN 1985

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