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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

20 March 1985

*Dear Charles,*

India: Westlands Helicopters

/ New Delhi telegrams Nos 363 and 364 (copies enclosed) report that Rajiv Gandhi has, as he promised to the Prime Minister in Moscow on 13 March, 'had another look at' the Westlands helicopter issue.

The situation, as now described to Sir Robert Wade-Gery by Rajiv's cousin Arun Nehru, is deeply disturbing. It seems that Mr Gandhi's advisers have been playing up the technical objections to the Westlands aircraft (which we thought had been settled long ago) in order to steer the contract towards the French. It is difficult to know what role Nehru himself is playing in this affair, and whether he is to be believed when he claims that Mr Gandhi would have to pay a political price for overriding his supposed technical experts and concluding the contract with Westlands. Nor is it clear whether Mr Gandhi is aware of the implications for our aid programme with India if the contract is not signed.

/ Sir Robert Wade-Gery has recommended that the Prime Minister should write to Mr Gandhi. The Foreign Secretary agrees. We cannot afford to let this issue drag on unresolved and cast a shadow over the Prime Minister's visit to Delhi next month. I enclose a draft letter which has been cleared with the Private Secretaries in ODA, DTI and MOD (Defence Sales), to whom I am sending a copy of this letter.

*Yours ever,*

*L V Appleyard*  
(L V Appleyard)  
Private Secretary

C D Powell Esq  
10 Downing Street

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