



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

30 April 1984

Dear John,

Sri Lanka

Prime Minister:
 Agree this response to Mrs
 Gandhi and the telegrams of
 Instruction? JF 30/4

Your letter of 11 April asked for a draft reply from the Prime Minister to a letter from Mrs Gandhi which she received through the High Commission.

It is not entirely clear what is the point of Mrs Gandhi's letter, which on the face of it goes into the affairs of another country in rather surprising detail. A similar letter has gone to President Reagan who, to our knowledge, is the only other world leader to have been approached. The Americans have even considered the possibility that the letters might be intended to provide some prior justification for Indian intervention in Sri Lanka and detect a similarity with the letters Mrs Gandhi circulated (far more widely) just before the Indian invasion of Bangladesh in 1971; however they have stopped short of concluding that the parallel is entirely valid. Our own view is that an Indian invasion is unlikely in view of the international political consequences, the financial costs and the logistic difficulties involved.

Mrs Gandhi's categorical assurance that Tamil extremists are not being trained or armed in India is somewhat disingenuous. You will be aware from the JIC Assessment of recent developments in Sri Lanka dated 12 April (Part III of the Weekly Survey on Intelligence) that inter-communal tension in Sri Lanka is increasing rapidly following an upsurge in the activity of Tamil terrorists. Many of these are from South India and there is now clear evidence from secret sources as well as a number of press reports that Tamil emigres in India are receiving para-military training. Although the Indian Government have denied that this is happening, it is hard to believe that Indian Ministers, particularly Mrs Gandhi, are unaware at least in general terms that the Indian intelligence agencies are supporting Tamil terrorist groups. The Indian attitude is particularly hard to take in the light of the difficulty encountered by Lady Young during her visit to Delhi last month in getting the Indians to accept our denials that the SAS were involved in training the Sri Lankan army.

/Mrs Gandhi



Mrs Gandhi is nevertheless right in pointing out that the situation in Sri Lanka is very serious. The straightforward explanation for her letter - which we think is probably the right one - is that the Indians consider that we and the Americans have some influence over President Jayewardene and that now is the time we should use it to get him to exert his authority to make the All-Party Conference (APC) succeeds, on the basis of granting the Tamils a greater measure of regional autonomy. So far the Conference has made little progress and the prospects of success when it reconvenes in early May are slender. But it is certain that these negotiations stand no chance if Tamil terrorist violence continues to increase, reinforcing in turn the intransigent elements in the majority Sinhala community. Since only the Indian Government has the capability to control and limit the activities of the Tamils we consider there is a strong case for using the opportunity provided by Mrs Gandhi's letter to urge the Indian Government to do what it can in this respect.

Our conclusion is that our approach should be even-handed between India and Sri Lanka and we should avoid being drawn into the details of the dispute and the counter-claims made by either side. As regards India, the Prime Minister's reply should confirm our readiness to urge President Jayewardene once again to work for progress at the reconvened APC but it should not address the specific point made by Mrs Gandhi about the need to persuade him to go beyond the District Development Council scheme. It is in any case not our business to press any particular institutional proposal on the Sri Lankans. To balance this the reply should make a general reference to the importance of tackling the terrorist problem and our High Commissioner should be instructed to elaborate on this point orally when delivering the message. As regards the Sri Lankans, our High Commissioner in Colombo should be instructed to tell President Jayewardene of our concern at the dangers of the present situation and the prime importance of the APC making progress when it reconvenes; for this to be possible both communities will have to make concessions.

I enclose draft telegrams containing a reply to Mrs Gandhi's letter (in which we have included a cross reference to the Prime Minister's recent exchange of messages with Mrs Gandhi about the Libyan crisis), and instructions to Sir R Wade-Gery in New Delhi and Sir J Nicholas in Colombo.

Yours ever,

Peter Ricketts

(P F Ricketts)
Private Secretary

A J Coles Esq
10 Downing Street

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hlc *SSM*

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

1 May 1984

Sri Lanka

Thank you for your letter of 30 April. The Prime Minister agrees with the telegrams containing a reply from herself to Mrs Gandhi's letter of 4 April and instructions to the High Commissioners in New Delhi and Colombo.

*BF
BF
copies
of final version*

Peter Ricketts, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

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OUT TELEGRAM

		Classification CONFIDENTIAL	Caveat	Precedence IMMEDIATE
ZCZC	1	ZCZC		
TC	2			
CAVEAT	3			
FM	4	FM FCO		
TO	5	TO IMMEDIATE NEW DELHI		
TELNO	6	TELEGRAM NUMBER		
OF	7	OF		
AND TO	8	RFI IMMEDIATE COLOMBO, WASHINGTON		
	9	YOUR TELNOS 314 AND 320 AND COLOMBO TELNO 132: INDIA/SRI LANKA		
	10	1. We would be grateful if you would deliver the letter in MIFT		
	11	from the Prime Minister to Mrs Gandhi. We would have no objection		
	12	to your handing it to <u>Alexander</u> , which might indeed be most		
	13	<u>appropriate.</u>		
	14	2. We find the categorical assurance in Mrs Gandhi's letter		
	15	that Tamil extremists are not being trained or armed in India		
	16	a little hard to take in the light of all the evidence to the		
	17	contrary as well as the Indians' strong reluctance to accept our		
	18	own repeated denials of SAS involvement in Sri Lanka. We		
	19	therefore think it <u>important not to let</u> the Indians believe that		
	20	<u>we go along with their one-sided analysis</u> of the problem in		
	21	Sri Lanka and the measures <u>needed to resolve it.</u> Our main		
	22	consideration however must <u>be to avoid getting caught</u> in the		
	23	crossfire between India and Sri Lanka on this intractable		
	24	problem and to follow an even-handed policy.		
	25	3. Ministers have therefore decided that the right course is		
///	26	for the reply to Mrs Gandhi's letter to confirm our readiness		
//	27	to urge President Jayewardene to work for progress at the		
/	28	reconvened all-party conference but without addressing directly		
	29	Mrs Gandhi's point about the need to persuade him to go beyond		
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YYYY			Catchword: the District	
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OUT TELEGRAM (CONT)

Classification and Caveats
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2 the District Development Council scheme. We agree with
3 Sir J Nicholas that it is not our business to press any
4 particular institutional proposal on the Sri Lankans. We are
5 sending him separate instructions for speaking to President
6 Jayewardene.

7 4. At the same time we should like you to follow up orally
8 the balancing reference to the terrorist problem in the Prime
9 Minister's reply to Mrs Gandhi. In spite of Parthasarathy's
10 account to you of Athulathmudali's visit we tend to doubt
11 whether the Sri Lankans will really have accepted the Indians'
12 claimed inability to control the Tamil extremists. We realise
13 that the point will have to be put over with great care in order
14 to avoid giving the Indians the impression that we disbelieve
15 Mrs Gandhi's assurances which would clearly give great offence.
16 You have discretion to put across the burden of the message as
17 you think best, but we suggest something along the following
18 lines:

19 We welcomed Mrs Gandhi's clear statement that Tamil
20 militants are not being trained in India. We are however
21 concerned at persistent reports that Tamil extremists are crossing
22 into Sri Lanka from India and move freely in South India. We
23 believe President Jayewardene is genuinely seeking a political
24 solution in Sri Lanka acceptable to both communities. However
25 his ability to convince the hardliners in the Sinhala majority
26 will diminish as terrorist violence increases. We accept that
27 the Sri Lankan Government must play its part in this by ensuring
28 restraint by its security forces in the North of the island.
29 But if the resumed APC is to have any chance of success terrorist
30 activity must be curtailed. We hope that the Indian Government
31 will exercise whatever influence it may have with the Tamil
32 ex-patriate community to urge it in the direction of moderation
33 and to make the movement of extremists into Sri Lanka as hard
34 as possible. We for our part will urge on the Sri Lankan

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2 Government the need both for a solution satisfactory to both
3 communities and for positive movement when the all-party
4 conference reconvenes. We make these points as a friend of both
5 countries and without any wish to interfere.

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7 HOWE

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OUT TELEGRAM

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YYYY MAIN ADDITIONAL NNNN		Catchword: his			
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2 his efforts. I am therefore instructing our High Commissioner in
3 Colombo to seek an early meeting with the President to reiterate
4 our concern.
5 It is clear, however, that President Jayewardene's task is
6 complicated by the terrorist violence in the North of the island.
7 It would certainly make it easier for him to convince the majority
8 Sinhala community to accept the desirability of making concessions
9 to the Tamil majority if he could point to a reduction in
10 terrorist activities. I think it important therefore that all
11 concerned should urge restraint on the more extreme elements
12 among the Tamil ex-patriates. I am sure this is an area in which
13 the Indian Government could help, building upon the extremely
14 constructive role played by your special representative
15 Mr Parthasarathy.
16 At this troubled time the greatest need is for restraint by
17 all parties so that the Sri Lankans themselves can work out a
18 solution to their problems peacefully and democratically.
19 I hope we can continue to keep in touch on this important
20 and urgent issue.
21 I should also like to take this opportunity to thank you for
22 your thoughtful message of 21 April about the incident at the
23 Libyan People's Bureau in London and for the helpful way in which
24 your officials have spoken to the Libyans. We have since arranged
25 the departure of the Libyans from London in strict accordance
26 with the Vienna Convention. We shall of course continue to act
27 in accordance with the Convention and have no wish to exacerbate
28 the present difficult situation. We expect the Libyans to
29 exercise similar restraint and in particular to take all necessary
30 steps to ensure the safety at British citizens in Libya.
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32 HOWE
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OF	7			
AND TO	8	RFI IMMEDIATE NEW DELHI, WASHINGTON		
	9	FCO TELNO TO NEW DELHI: INDIA/SRI LANKA		
	10	1. We would be grateful if you would seek an early opportunity		
	11	to speak to President Jayewardene.		
	12	2. You should say that we sympathise with his efforts to		
	13	grapple with the present immensely difficult internal problem,		
	14	in particular the growth of terrorist violence in the north. We		
	15	hope that this will not impede progress at the all-party		
	16	conference when it reconvenes in May. We share the President's		
	17	concern to see peace and stability restored. We believe that		
	18	for this to be possible both communities must be prevailed upon to		
	19	make concessions. We would not presume to suggest how this		
	20	might be achieved, but consider that the minority will only be		
	21	weaned from their increasing resort to violence by guarantees		
	22	for their security and self-respect. At this time the greatest		
	23	need is for restraint by all parties - a point we are also making		
	24	to the Indian Government - so that Sri Lankans can themselves		
	25	achieve a peaceful and democratic solution.		
///	26	3. We hope that this hint that we are also speaking to the		
//	27	Indians will help you to convey the necessary message.		
/	28	HOWE		
	29	NNNN		
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