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PRIME MINISTER

FESTIVAL OF INDIA AND MRS. GANDHI'S VISIT

The attached FCO letter sets out in a rather complicated way proposals for your involvement in the Festival of India and Mrs. Gandhi's visit. Given that you are a patron of the Festival, and given Mrs. Gandhi's reception of you in India, you will obviously want to play a full part. But I still think the attached letter asks you to do too much.

Mrs. Gandhi's visit is from 21 - 25 March. You will want to bear in mind that you have bilateral talks with Helmut Schmidt on 19 and 20 March. You have a major speech at Harrogate on 27 March. The important European Council meeting is on 29/30 March - and a good briefing session for this will have to be fitted into the previous week. Even assuming there are no major domestic problems at the time, this is a pretty heavy programme.

In the light of the above, I suggest that your involvement should be as follows.

Sunday 21 March

It is very unusual for you to meet a visiting Prime Minister at the airport. But Mrs. Gandhi met you and this would be a nice special gesture at the outset. It would also enable us to cut down on one or two other events. Provided Mrs. Gandhi's aircraft arrives at a reasonable time on the Sunday afternoon, agree that you should meet her at the airport? *Yes - guard of honour?*

Monday 22 March

(a) Agree to talks from 1100 to 1300 followed by lunch? *Yes*

Yes (b) Agree to attend inaugural concert at Festival Hall at 2000 hours (you are practically committed to this)? Also agree that the FCO should see whether the Prince of Wales can attend?

/(c)

(c) Agree that I should turn down the FCO suggestion that you should host a reception at the Banqueting House or Lancaster House after the concert? This seems to me an unnecessary commitment for you at the end of the day. The business of moving guests across the river from the Festival Hall would be cumbersome. If there is need for a Government reception for e.g. those involved in the Festival, I do not see why the Minister of Arts or some other Minister could not host it.

Tuesday 23 March

Yes

(a) The FCO suggest a second session of talks. This is unusual. Agree that we should try to avoid this? (We will keep an hour in the diary in case there is an essential requirement for further talks.)

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(b) Agree that the Lord Mayor should be asked to host a lunch for Mrs. Gandhi (you need not attend)?

Yes.

(c) Agree to open the Hayward Gallery Exhibition, together with Mrs. Gandhi, during any half-hour between 4.15 and 5.15 (it now seems unlikely that The Queen can open this, as was proposed earlier)?
I will attend but I think Mrs. Gandhi should open the Exhibition.

Wednesday 24 March

(a) Agree that the FCO should propose that The Queen gives lunch for Mrs. Gandhi (you need not attend)?

(b) Agree to open Science Museum Exhibition with Mrs. Gandhi (there is a chance that the Duke of Edinburgh will do this, in which case you would not need to attend)?
It would be excellent if he would

Yes

(c) Agree to attend Indo/British Association Dinner (and make a speech if necessary) but not an Indian Government reception at 1700 hours that day (if the Indians insist on giving a reception and want you to attend, we might suggest that it be held in the same venue as the dinner and immediately precede it)?

/The FCO I think I shall have to attend. They will be so grateful if I do it.

The FCO also ask about a Press Conference. I suggest, and Mr. Ingham agrees, that we avoid a joint Press Conference. Mrs. Gandhi can give her own Press Conference and you can decide whether to meet the Press or whether Mr. Ingham should brief them in the usual way.

The suggestion has also been made that Mrs. Gandhi might address a joint session of both Houses of Parliament. You of course addressed both Houses of the Indian Parliament. There are precedents for distinguished foreign visitors making an address to both Houses (see the FCO letter). The question is whether such an event would contribute to the success or otherwise of the visit as a whole. I am very doubtful about the idea. Mrs. Gandhi is not popular in this country and I believe she has more enemies than friends in the House of Commons. Agree that we should discourage this? She could, of course, meet British MPs under the auspices of the CPA or some other Parliamentary body.

A CPA reception
at which she spoke
would be good
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A.F.C.

11 January 1982