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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

25 February 1982

Dear John,

Festival of India

Under cover of your letter of 8 December to Roderic Lyne you enclosed a text which the Prime Minister had approved for the message for the Gala Concert programme.

Since then we have been trying to persuade the Indian Government that this text should form the basis of a joint message. Despite repeated reminders it was only at the beginning of this week that we received the text of a message from the Indian High Commission. We have today been able to establish through our High Commission in Delhi that Mrs Gandhi would prefer two separate messages and that this is her draft. In addition John Thomson has forwarded a complementary draft which he considers might match the latest message from Mrs Gandhi rather better than the draft originally approved by the Prime Minister.

We are now placed in an awkward situation. You will recall that the Prime Minister expressed doubts about Mrs Gandhi's original draft. In some respects the latest draft is even less suitable in that it refers to 'confrontation and struggle'. But the programme has to go to press on Monday. In effect we therefore have a choice between accepting Mrs Gandhi's latest text, with either the original or the version forwarded by John Thomson as the Prime Minister's message, and having no message at all. The latter would be taken badly by the Indians, would be difficult to explain and would be a disappointment to the Festival of India Committee. Accordingly we think that the better course is to accept the latest text. I would be grateful for your agreement.

As between the text originally approved by the Prime Minister and the draft put forward by John Thomson our feeling is that the latter is more tailored to an Indian audience than to the British public.

/ I am enclosing the text of the original draft approved
/ by the Prime Minister, Mrs Gandhi's original message and the
/ latest version of her message (FCO telno 192 to Delhi), and
/ the revised text for the Prime Minister's message proposed
by John Thomson.

Yours ever

(J E Holmes) *John Holmes*
Private Secretary

A J Coles Esq
10 Downing St

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PROPOSED MESSAGE BY THE PRIME MINISTER

Tonight's concert launches the Festival of India, a six-month long presentation of the art, music, science and technology of a great country and civilisation.

Countless people in the United Kingdom will share my own keen sense of anticipation and pleasure at this prospect. It is an unprecedented and perhaps unrepeatable opportunity to look afresh at a country which has deeply affected not just our history but our way of life and perception of the world. The British impact on India has been equally profound. Between some countries cultural links are little more than officially inspired cultural exchanges. Between Britain and India the cross-fertilisation of ideas and values is a living and creative process between peoples. The Festival will portray and celebrate that process. It is an event of great importance. I believe it will lead to a new awareness in the United Kingdom of the spirit and the meaning of India.

I commend the Festival programme to those who are already enthusiasts for the civilisation of India and to those who wish to acquire a knowledge and understanding of it. I wish all concerned a splendid success.

(i) LATEST VERSION OF MRS GANDHI'S MESSAGE

(ii) ORIGINAL VERSION OF MRS GANDHI'S MESSAGE

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OO NEW DELHI

GRS 513

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FM FCO 231330Z FEB 82

TO IMMEDIATE DELHI

TELEGRAM NUMBER 192 OF 23 FEBRUARY

FESTIVAL OF INDIA: MESSAGE FOR THE INAUGURAL CONCERT PROGRAMME

1. FOLLOWING IS THE TEXT OF THE REVISED INDIAN MESSAGE RELAYED ON 16 FEBRUARY.

(i) QUOTE IN INDIA, FESTIVALS ARE CELEBRATIONS OF THE AUSPICIOUS AND HARBINGERS OF AWAKENING. PEOPLE MINGLE AND PARTICIPATE IN SHARED REJOICING.

IN THE PAST THREE HUNDRED YEARS, BRITAIN AND INDIA HAVE FACED MANY MAJOR CHALLENGES. CONFRONTATION AND STRUGGLE HAVE BEEN INTERLACED WITH RARE INSIGHTS AND FRIENDSHIPS. THE TWO COUNTRIES MET AND PARTED, TO MEET AGAIN IN COMPLETELY CHANGED CIRCUMSTANCES. IT WAS INEVITABLE THAT PERSPECTIVES AND RELATIONSHIPS SHOULD CHANGE DRAMATICALLY. TO MOST YOUNG PEOPLE IN BRITAIN, INDIA IS TOO FAR AWAY, TOO UTTERLY DIFFERENT AND PERHAPS ALSO IRRELEVANT TO THEIR DAILY LIVES. FANTASY MYSTERY AND A COMPLEX CULTURE IN WHICH THE PRIMORDIAL SURVIVES ALONGSIDE THE MOST ADVANCED SKILLS AND TECHNOLOGIES OF OUR CONTEMPORARY AGE, HAVE MADE INDIA HARD TO UNDERSTAND. FOR EIGHT MONTHS, IN COLLABORATION WITH BRITAIN'S MAJOR CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS, YOU WILL SEE THE VARIED PARTS, SKILLS AND SCIENTIFIC PROGRAMMES ON INDIA THROUGH EXHIBITIONS, FILMS AND THE VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AS WELL AS LIVING CRAFTSMEN. YOU WILL SEE AN ANCIENT HERITAGE OF VILLAGE AND CITY AWAKENING AND BEING TRANSFORMED BY A NEW ETHOS.

ALL BEGINNINGS ARE FRAGILE AND HAVE TO BE NURTURED. THROUGH THE VICISSITUDES OF ITS LONG HISTORY, INDIAN SOCIETY HAS PROVED ITS RESILIENCE. THE VITALITY OF ITS NEW AND CREATIVE ENDEAVOUR WILL STRENGTHEN THE NATIONAL FABRIC. INDIA IS EMERGING AS A COUNTRY OF ABOUNDING POTENTIAL - CONCERNED WITH THE HUMAN PREDICAMENT, REACHING OUT BEYOND KNOWN HORIZONS.

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MRS. GANDHI'S
NEW MESSAGE

OVER.

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HERE IN ENGLAND IT IS SPRING, THE EARLY FLOWERS ARE IN BLOOM AND THE FIRST LEAF BUDS HAVE APPEARED - TRULY A BEGINNING. I BRING YOU GREETINGS AND WARM GOOD WISHES OF THE PEOPLE OF INDIA. UNQUOTE.

FOLLOWING IS THE TEXT OF MRS. GANDHI'S ORIGINAL MESSAGE (PARA 2 OF HULL'S TELELETTER OF 14 DECEMBER REFERS).

(ii)

QUOTE HISTORY BROUGHT BRITAIN AND INDIA TOGETHER POLITICALLY AND ECONOMICALLY. THIS RELATIONSHIP AFFECTED THE SCHOLARS, STATESMEN AND THE COMMON PEOPLE OF THE TWO COUNTRIES IN NUMEROUS WAYS. YET FOR VARIOUS REASONS OUR TWO PEOPLES MADE LITTLE ATTEMPT TO UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER IN DEPTH. PERHAPS THE VERY INEQUALITY OF THE POLITICAL LINK CAME IN THE WAY. NOW THAT THE WORLD SITUATION IS ENTIRELY CHANGED AND MEMORIES OF THAT UNCOMFORTABLE PERIOD ARE FADING, THERE IS OPPORTUNITY FOR A NEW EFFORT OF MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING.

THE FESTIVAL OF INDIA IS AN ENDEAVOUR TO PRESENT THE ARTS OF INDIA TO THE PEOPLE OF BRITAIN. THE SCALE AND THE TIME WILL PERMIT ONLY OF A QUICK GLIMPSE INTO THE COMPLEXITY, PERSISTENCE AND CREATIVITY OF THE CULTURE OF INDIA, WHICH IS REMARKABLE FOR ITS INSIGHT INTO THE UNITY OF ALL THAT EXISTS. THE INITIATIVE FOR THIS FESTIVAL CAME FROM THE PRIME MINISTER AND CULTURAL LEADERS OF THE UNITED KINGDOM. WE APPRECIATE THIS GESTURE AND HOPE THAT TONIGHT'S CONCERT, AND THE FESTIVAL AS A WHOLE, WILL FORGE A NEW LINK IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BRITAIN AND INDIA. UNQUOTE.

CARRINGTON

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Sir J. Thomson's draft

FESTIVAL OF INDIA : MESSAGE FOR THE INAUGURAL CONCERT PROGRAMME.

1. MY DRAFT FOR THE PRIME MINISTER'S MESSAGE IS AS FOLLOWS:

BEGINS:

? NEVER BEFORE HAS THERE BEEN SUCH AN EXTENSIVE DISPLAY IN BRITAIN OF ANOTHER COUNTRY'S CULTURE FROM ITS ANCIENT ROOTS TO ITS MODERN FLOWERING. IT GIVES ME GREAT PLEASURE THAT THIS UNIQUE EVENT SHOULD BE IN HONOUR OF INDIA.

WE ARE NOT SO MUCH CELEBRATING OUR MANY HISTORICAL CONNECTIONS OR EVEN OUR SHARED DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS - THOUGH THOSE ARE INDEED IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN OUR TWO COUNTRIES - AS SYMBOLISING IN THIS FESTIVAL OF INDIA OUR NEW MODERN EQUAL RELATIONSHIP WITH ALL ITS POTENTIALITIES FOR GOOD FOR THE FUTURE OF BOTH OUR COUNTRIES.

FESTIVALS, HOWEVER, ARE FOR PEOPLE RATHER THAN FOR GOVERNMENTS. I AM PLEASED AT THE THOUGHT OF THE PLEASURE AND WONDER WHICH MANY AND VARIED PEOPLE WILL GET INDIVIDUALLY FROM THIS GREAT DISPLAY OF ONE OF THE WORLD'S MOST ANCIENT AND STILL FLOURISHING CULTURES. WE HAVE AN IMPORTANT INDIAN COMMUNITY IN BRITAIN.

WE WOULD LIKE THE YOUNG PEOPLE OF THAT COMMUNITY TO BE AWARE OF THE CULTURAL SOIL FROM WHICH THEIR FOREFATHERS SPRANG AND EQUALLY WE WOULD LIKE THE BRITISH PUBLIC AT LARGE TO KNOW SOMETHING OF THE COLOUR AND MYSTERY OF INDIA. BEYOND THAT, I KNOW THAT THIS GREAT EVENT WILL ATTRACT SCHOLARS, ART LOVERS AND ORDINARY VISITORS FROM EUROPE, THE USA AND OF COURSE ESPECIALLY FROM INDIA. IT IS MY HOPE THAT THIS WILL PROMOTE THE INTEREST AND AFFECTION FOR INDIA WHICH HAS BEEN FOR SO LONG AND SO DEEPLY A PART OF THE BRITISH OUTLOOK.

THOMSON

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10 DOWNING STREET

Prime Minister

Agree that

(a) we should accept Mrs. Sandhu's
new message (Flag A) ?

(b) we should maintain your
original message (Flag B) ?

W. M. M.

A. J. C. - 26.