


**Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

London SW1A 2AH

Telephone 01- 273 3633

Sir Robert Wade-Grey KCMG , KCVO  
 British High Commission  
 New Delhi

Your reference

Our reference

Date 12 December 1984

**MRS GANDHI'S FUNERAL**

1. I am sorry not to have replied earlier to your letter of 20 November about the return journey by RAF VC10 from Delhi to London after Mrs Gandhi's funeral.
2. On the first point Mr Callaghan was offered a seat on the RAF VC10 (FCO tel no 766 of 2 November) and indeed was told after on arrival in Delhi we could also fit his detective in, albeit in an 'uncomfortable seat', probably with the crew. In the end Mr Callaghan preferred to go on an earlier Air India flight. I do not think this decision was in any way due to the proposed seating arrangements on the RAF aircraft. From a conversation I had with him at your luncheon Mr Callaghan was anxious to get back to the UK as soon as possible.
3. With regard to Mr Griffiths' comment about the four spare seats, I am not sure where he found them. However he probably did not realise the complications of the fit of this particular aircraft. Certain sections of it were set aside for HRH Princess Anne and her party and we, the Prime Minister's party, had no control over the allocation of those seats. In the official compartment itself, where Mr Griffiths was seated, there was in fact only one spare seat, next to the Irish Prime Minister.
4. I hope this clarifies the points raised by Mr Griffiths. I am as you suggest copying this letter and yours to Charles Powell at No 10.

S Waghorn (Miss)  
 Protocol Department



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BRITISH HIGH COMMISSION  
NEW DELHI, INDIA

From the High Commissioner  
Sir Robert Wade-Gery

20 November 1984

Miss S M Waghorn  
Overseas Conferences and Visits Section  
Protocol and Conference Department  
FCO

*Dear Sheila,*

RAF FLIGHT DELHI/LONDON: 4 NOVEMBER

Many thanks for your nice letter. It was great fun seeing you here, and we were all most grateful for your help in organising the whole party so smoothly.

2. There is one small point which I should perhaps report, in case it should have any repercussions. You may remember that Mr Callaghan asked whether he and his detective could have a lift home in the VC10 on 4 November. He was told that there would be room for him but not for his detective. I had just heard of this decision when I was asked by Mr Eldon Griffiths MP whether he too might have a lift in the VC10. I said I thought this would be impossible, since I understood that we had only just been able to find one spare seat for Mr Callaghan. When I reported this conversation to the Prime Minister and her staff (I am not sure whether it was Robin Butler or Charles Powell who was present) she said that she would very much like an effort made to fit Mr Griffiths in. This was found to be possible, and someone (you?) telephoned him back to say so. Subsequently, Mr Callaghan withdrew altogether; I never discovered myself whether this was because there was no room for his detective or for some other reason.

3. I have now had a thank you letter from Mr Griffiths in which he mentions, in passing, that when he eventually got on to the VC10 there were "at least four spare seats". He did not sound particularly querulous about this, but he did clearly want me to know that I appeared to have been wrong in telling him that the aeroplane was already full. Although I shall not trouble to say so to him (or to answer his letter at all) I imagine the answer may be that for weight reasons the RAF were unable to fill all the seats. But it occurs

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to me that Mr Callaghan might conceivably take umbrage if he were to hear by chance from Mr Griffiths that in the end there had been several spare seats on the plane. To avoid this probably remote danger, it might just be worthwhile somebody (eg the Prime Minister's PPS) explaining to Mr Griffiths why there were empty seats and urging him not to mention the matter in Mr Callaghan's hearing.

3. I am enclosing a spare copy of this letter which you may wish to pass to Charles Powell at Number 10.

*Yours ever*

*Robert Henderson*



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