

Confidential Filing

Visit of President Bongo of
Gabon to Britain from 18-21 May.

Gabon

April 1980

Referred to	Date	Referred to	Date	Referred to	Date	Referred to	Date
26.4.80.							
18.5.80							
19.5.80							
22.5.80							
PREM 19/240							



From the
Minister for Trade's office

DEPARTMENT OF TRADE
1 VICTORIA STREET
LONDON SW1H 0ET

TELEPHONE DIRECT LINE 01 215 5012
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M J Cunningham Esq
Managing Director
Druce & Co Ltd
66-67 Newman Street
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W1P 4AJ

Ly. Hunt
22nd May 1980

Dear Mr Cunningham,

Your letter of 12 May to the Prime Minister has been passed to this Department for reply.

The Prime Minister, we understand, had a useful discussion with President Bongo but it obviously ranged more widely than commercial and trade relations. The opportunity to deal with more detailed points on developing commercial relations between Gabon and the United Kingdom arose when the Minister for Trade, Mr Parkinson, met President Bongo later. The Minister is now abroad on a trade promotion visit.

This meeting demonstrated the significant scope of potential business in Gabon and the willingness in principle of the Gabonese to diversify their sources of supply. Only one of the projects listed in your letter was touched upon although others not so listed were mentioned. Certainly the Department agree that projects need to be put in an order of priority and that those which develop the economy of the country and are revenue earning would clearly stand the best chance of being financed.

In a country with a small population but with a relatively high GNP per head there will be a need to select carefully the projects to pursue. As you mention in your letter to the Prime Minister, Gabon has had a financial crisis from which it is carefully extracting itself. It is likely to be two or three years before additional new expenditure on any scale can be embarked upon and some of those you mention are obviously relative luxuries.

The Department has for some time been seeking to promote commercial interests in selected francophone West African countries including Gabon. You can rest assured therefore that the Department is keen to ensure that no reasonable business opportunity is let slip in Gabon and if there is assistance you require in pursuing particular objectives perhaps you will contact Mr B R Jones in our Commercial Relations & Exports Division.

JOHN MORTIMER
Assistant Private Secretary to the
Minister for Trade (CECIL PARKINSON)

Yours sincerely
John Mortimer

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MINISTER FOR TRADE'S OFFICE MINUTE NUMBER: 628

MEETING BETWEEN MR CECIL PARKINSON, MINISTER FOR TRADE AND PRESIDENT BONGO OF GABON: 14 MAY 1980

Present:

Cecil Parkinson - Minister for Trade
 HM Ambassador designate, Mr T Grady
 Mr B R Jones, CRE5
 Mr Matthew Cruickshank - APS/MFT

President Bongo of Gabon
 Gabonese Ambassador, London
 (Others)

1 This meeting between the Minister for Trade and President Bongo followed a meeting between the President and the Prime Minister the previous evening. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the prospects for trade between the UK and Gabon.

2 President Bongo opened the meeting with courtesies.

3 Mr Parkinson referred to the visit of M Rawiri last November when discussion on the line of credit was commenced. HMG wished to encourage UK investment in and trade with Gabon. Mr Parkinson hoped that President Bongo was satisfied with the meetings with industrialists and bankers which had been arranged. The best step forward for improved trade would be for a UK company to secure an important contract as this would encourage others. Mr Parkinson said that his forthcoming visit (planned for 20-24 November 1980) could be part of a process of encouraging trade between the two countries.

4 President Bongo asked about the status of the line of credit. The Gabonese Ambassador said it had been signed but Mr Parkinson said that it was our belief that it had not yet been signed, but was probably very near to being so.

5 President Bongo drew Mr Parkinson's attention to two major projects. The first was the Libreville-Franceville railway project (the trans-Gabonese railway) which faced problems in its development. The second was the Libreville II airport. The present airport was inadequate for future traffic requirements and a new airport would be required to allow more international passenger flights; and to cope with local and military traffic. The airport project would require long term credit, given the great cost of short term credit. Plessey were interested in the project. There were, President Bongo said, various other projects.

6 Mr Parkinson stressed that Plessey had the support of HMG. They had the technical skill to undertake the airport project as a complete package, would offer a free feasibility study and had the financial capability for the project. Mr Parkinson mentioned Plessey's good reputation in connection with similar projects. This could be the project to boost UK-Gabonese trade - since it was newsworthy, and would interest others in the prospects in the Gabonese market.

7 Mr Parkinson said that the UK had many firms which would be interested in the railway project. Mr Jones said that while there was no direct UK participation in the project at present, UK companies were thought to be suppliers of some items to the main contractors. UK companies could provide locomotives, rolling stock etc once the project was nearer completion - in about 5 years time. Mr Parkinson asked the President where UK firms could play a role - he would be

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very happy to contact suitable companies.

8 The President outlined the Libreville-Boue-Franceville railway. The section from Boue to Franceville was not yet financed, while studies had been made for the section between Franceville and Lastoursville. Mr Jones said that UK civil engineering companies could do the work, and several UK banks might help with the finance. Mr Parkinson proposed that Mr Jones and the Gabonese Ambassador in London should discuss the railway project and that we would contact UK construction and other companies and banks which could play a role. The President agreed with this.

9 President Bongo asked if there were any loans available to assist the purchase of military equipment. Mr Parkinson said that there were, and that we would consider any specific projects. Mr Parkinson said that he would bring with him on his November visit both businessmen who were interested in transportation, and representatives of the Defence Sales organisation. President Bongo asked if the questions of military purchases could be progressed through Ambassadors meantime? The Gabonese Ambassador said that it could and Mr Parkinson said that this was excellent.

10 Mr Parkinson said that he had spoken with the Prime Minister since President Bongo's meeting with her and he reported that she was very pleased to have had a chance to talk to the President. President Bongo said that he had also met the Queen.

11 President Bongo noted the great interest which Gabon, as a developing country, had in light and medium industry. He said that he had told the Prime Minister that Gabon was an independent sovereign country, and regretted that the United Kingdom had not been more involved in their process of development. Mr Parkinson agreed, but it was hard initially to interest small industry: the award of the airport project to Plessey could bring smaller ventures in its wake. He mentioned the existence of the BOTB, which particularly helped small and medium businesses by organising missions and other activities. The President said it would be a very good idea to encourage more missions from the UK to Gabon and Mr Parkinson said that he would investigate the possibilities. He would ensure that his forthcoming visit was well advertised, and he would publicise his visit on his return to encourage interest in Gabon. President Bongo welcomed this.

12 Mr Parkinson went on to discuss the prospects for British Petroleum, which was very interested in securing long term supplies of oil. But BP was not just an oil company - it was diverse, with, in particular, agricultural and chemical interests as well. Were there not substantial possibilities for Gabon involving BP in the purchase of oil and also in joint ventures to realise other opportunities in Gabon? President Bongo said that it would be a very good idea to discuss this and if BP would like to send a delegation he would arrange for the Minister of Mines and Agriculture to discuss these ideas. Mr Parkinson promised to pass this on, and said that BP would proceed to make arrangements. President Bongo said that the UK and Gabonese Ambassadors should keep in touch to help arrangements.


13 Mr Parkinson said that a long article was already prepared and would be published in 'British Business' in the near future about Gabon and the opportunities it offered. This was all part of HMG's determination to generate more interest in business with Gabon. President Bongo said that he had sensed this goodwill from various tourist and business visits by British people to his

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country; but it would be even more encouraging to have a mission come to Gabon. Mr Parkinson said that one or two such missions had been to Gabon in the last year.

14 The President concluded the meeting by saying that he welcomed the chance to discuss these issues, and would pass on details of Mr Parkinson's forthcoming visit.


MATTHEW CRUICKSHANK
APS/Minister for Trade
V/S 835
Extn 5146
20 May 1980

cc PS/Prime Minister ✓
PS/Secretary of State (T)
David Wright - Cabinet Office
Mr Caines Dep Sec
Mr Jones CRE5
Mr Durie OPG
Mr Clarke CRE5

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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

14 May 1980

Dear John,

Mike Pattison has sent you a copy of his letter to Roderic Lyne recording the Prime Minister's meeting with President Bongo of Gabon. I now enclose, together with its attachments, a copy of a letter received by the Prime Minister from the Managing Director of Druce & Company Limited. The letter was included in the Prime Minister's briefing folder but she made no reference to it in her talks with President Bongo. She had of course also seen the brief about Plessey's interest in Libreville International Airport which had been forwarded to us under cover of a minute from Mr. Jones in your Department.

I have acknowledged Mr. Cunnington's letter. I leave it to you to decide whether to carry the correspondence any further.

Yours sincerely

Michael Alexander

John Mortimer, Esq.,
Department of Trade.

ds

out

14 May 1980

I am replying on the Prime Minister's behalf to your letter to her of 12 May about her meeting with President Bongo of Gabon. Your letter was included in the Prime Minister's briefing for the meeting

M. O'D. B. ALEXANDER

M.J. Cunnington, Esq.

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Gabon

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

13 May 1980

President Bongo, accompanied by the Gabonese Foreign Minister and Gabonese Ambassador in London, called on the Prime Minister this afternoon. Mr. Johnson was also present.

After congratulating the Prime Minister on the success of the transitional arrangements in Rhodesia, President Bongo stressed that Gabon was looking for close and effective co-operation with Britain. He was ready to sign agreements to this end if the British were ready to do so. He had always said that it was the British, not the Gabonese who had held back from closer co-operation in the past. The British should understand that Gabon, despite its colonial history, was no longer a French preserve. Their aim was free co-operation with all countries. He was ready to congratulate the Prime Minister on her firm stand within the European Community: she had clearly understood the French style in these matters. British investors should know that Gabon did not go in for nationalisation and expropriation and that foreign investors would be entirely free to expatriate profits.

The Prime Minister enquired about priority areas for development in Gabon. The President explained that there was virtually no small and medium scale industry; that further work was needed on the Trans-Gabon Railway, both in terms of credits and civil engineering expertise; and that further finance was required for the first Libreville Airport, where Plessey had already obtained a radar contract despite efforts to prevent this. A new international class airport would also be required, and feasibility work was now needed. Low cost housing was also a priority need. If Britain could offer, for instance, long term low interest credit for railway equipment coupled with financial support for studies for the new airport, this would be welcomed. The Prime Minister undertook to pass these points to the Minister for Trade who would be seeing the President tomorrow. She was aware of Plessey's efforts to obtain more work in Africa. The company did a great deal of export business.

/The President

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The President mentioned other areas in which British assistance would be welcomed. Gabon had already bought excellent but expensive TV equipment from Britain (manufactured by RCA of Jersey), two more sets of this equipment would be needed, and Gabon would like to have about four scholarships to enable Gabonese operators to train in Jersey. English was the first foreign language of Gabon. Assistance already given for training interpreters and translators had been greatly welcomed, and more training places for teachers and translators would be of great value. The Prime Minister asked Mr. Johnson to pursue this with the Gabonese Ambassador.

In a brief discussion of the African political scene, the Prime Minister touched upon current uncertainty in Uganda and President Bongo spoke of the situation in Chad. This had been under discussion in the conference he had attended in Nice where a Vice-President had explained the problem. The northern side encompassed ten political groups. There were Libyans working with the northern forces, apparently with support from the Soviet Union and Cuba, although one of the political groups was attempting to resist the Libyan influence. Gabon and other African countries were helping the southern political group, in pursuit of their belief that Soviet policies offered nothing to Africa. Chad, in effect, did not exist at present. No solution was in sight: the matter might have to come to the United Nations; alternatively, it might be possible to assemble an African peace-keeping force if the United Nations could finance it.

During the closing courtesies, President Bongo reiterated his request to the Prime Minister to let British businessmen know that Gabon was no French preserve.

I am sending copies of this letter to John Mortimer (Cecil Parkinson's office, Department of Trade) and David Wright (Cabinet Office).

M. A. PATTISON

R.M.J. Lyne, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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KRB



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DRUCE

A Member of the Bullough Group

12th May 1980.

Please quote
Ref/Enq No

MJC/FW

Clive Whitmore Esq.,
Private Secretary to the Prime Minister,
10, Downing Street,
London. S.W.1

Dear Mr. Whitmore,

I enclose a letter addressed to the Prime Minister
concerning the forthcoming visit of His Excellency
President Bongo of Gabon.

Following my recent visit to Gabon, and my negotiations with the
President, I feel it will be helpful for her to read the
enclosed information.

I attach a copy for your attention and trust that you will
pass this forward for the Prime Minister's attention.

Thankyou for your help.

Yours sincerely,

Michael J. Cunningham
Managing Director.



12th May 1980.

DRUCE

A Member of the Bullough Group

The Right Honourable Mrs. M. Thatcher,
10, Downing Street,
LONDON. S.W.1.

Please quote MJC/FW
Ref/Enq No

Madam,

I understand that you are meeting His Excellency President Omar Bongo of Gabon this week. The following information may be useful to you.

Through a connection in Morocco, I was invited together with an Architect colleague to visit President Bongo in April. We understood he required to build a luxury Villa for himself.

On arrival in Gabon, we met most of the Ministers and various projects were outlined. They are as follows:-

- 1) The construction of a new international Airport at Libreville.
- 2) The completion of the Sheraton Hotel.
- 3) The construction of a new Ministry of Tourism Building.
- 4) The construction of a Broadcasting and Press Centre.
- 5) The construction of new office for the Prime Minister.
- 6) The construction of new residence for the Prime Minister.
- 7) The construction of Maison du Parti.
- 8) The construction of Assemblee Nationale.

On meeting the President he asked us if we would undertake these projects and obtain finance for them.

He also invited us to visit Franceville with him later in the week.

This we did, and more construction requirements emerged, including a very lavish Villa for himself. Franceville is his home town.

We were then despatched by Helicopter to visit several small airstrips which he wishes to develop.

cont/-

12th May 1980.

We had several meetings with the President, both formally and informally, and made the following observations to him which I am sure he appreciated.

- 1) The projects must be put into order of priority.
- 2) Those projects which add to infrastructure are most likely to gain finance.
- 3) The economy of the country had been virtually ruined by the French during the construction of unnecessary projects in 1975-77.
- 4) Through his wisdom, the economy is now recovering.
- 5) The standard and design of the buildings constructed was poor, and unsuited to the climate.
- 6) The scale of the project envisaged would have to be reduced unless he is to bankrupt the country again.

He was I think impressed by our frank and blunt approach, and we as a group struck up a good rapport with the President.

The French who of course are still extremely strong in Gabon were totally confused by our presence.

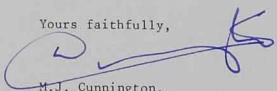
We were introduced to them as the gentlemen who were to control the projects which surprised us somewhat!

We have since held meetings with several banks and construction companies, who have expressed interest in the more sensible of the projects. With regard to Libreville Airport, we have held discussions with several major U.K. contractors. Similarly, we have held discussions with British Caledonian and Hotel Management concerning the Sheraton Hotel. In addition we have held preliminary discussions with Marconi concerning the Broadcasting Centre.

There exists a real opportunity for British business in the near future in Gabon. We shall be pleased to assist in any way we can to achieve such a result.

Finally, I am the Managing Director of an International Furnishing and Interior Design Company, hence my interest in the projects. The Architect who accompanied me is Mr. John Histon, Partner of Covell Matthews Partnership International London. I enclose our company credentials for your information.

Yours faithfully,



M.J. Cunningham.
Managing Director.

PS/EM

cc PS/MFT
Mr Caines DOT

ADDITIONAL BRIEFING FOR PRIME MINISTER'S MEETING WITH PRESIDENT BONGO OF GABON, FROM DEPARTMENT OF TRADE.

As you know President Bongo is to call on the Prime Minister at 17.30 on Tuesday 13 May. Attached is additional briefing on the Libreville Airport Contract of which the Prime Minister should be aware.

Plessey stand a good chance of getting this valuable contract but competition, particularly from French companies, will be intense. It would therefore be valuable if the Prime Minister could raise the matter with the President. Plessey will be seeing the President on Wednesday 14 May and hope to make the offer of a free feasibility study.



B R Jones
Department of Trade
Commercial Relations and Exports 5/3
R 325
1 Victoria St
215-5260
12th May 1980



BRIEF FOR PRIME MINISTER'S MEETING WITH PRESIDENT BONGO

LIBREVILLE II INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

BACKGROUND

1 The Gabonese Government wants to proceed with the phased development of a second International Airport at Libreville, as the present airport will soon be inadequate to cope with the future growth in air traffic. The first phase of development of the new airport will cost an estimated £60 million, of which £30 million could be "offshore content" in the form of equipment, design, control and supervision of civil works and project management.

2 The project could be important to the UK because it presents us with a further opportunity to penetrate the market for airports in Francophone West Africa where Plessey have already scored some notable successes (Abidjan in Ivory Coast and Garoua in Camereroon). Plessey Radar Ltd have been pursuing the Libreville airport contract for some time. As they have already secured some less significant aviation equipment contracts (worth £12 million) in Gabon they have some local experience and are very well connected there.

3 International competition is likely to be fierce and it will not be easy to win this contract for the UK. The design and construction of medium-sized airports is an area where the UK has a developing capability. The best chance of securing the work for the UK is for HMG to put



its support fully behind the UK firm most likely to succeed. Unfortunately in the past in the airports sector the UK has been less successful than a number of other countries partly because of excessive rivalry between firms.

4 In Gabon, Plessey are prepared to offer a full, free feasibility study for the airport and have arranged in principle the necessary finance to cover the entire construction of the first phase. Recently a UK firm of architects and planners (Covell, Matthews: (International) who are clearly well in with President Bongo have also expressed interest in the airport, but they clearly do not have the experience or capability to handle a full-size project of this sort, and are not yet in a position to offer a complete package.

5 The Minister for Trade has therefore decided that it would be right for the Government, without denigrating Covell, Matthews, to put its support fully behind Plessey, and to this end for the Prime Minister to speak in Plessey's favour to President Bongo. (He is seeing Plessey later, and may also be seeing Covell, Matthews, who are also interested in other work in Gabon. Both firms know of the Minister's decision that the Government should back Plessey).



LINE TO TAKE

Express interest in the building of a new international airport for Libreville and say:

- that Britain is uniquely placed to enable Gabon to achieve this objective;

- The Plessey company has a proven experience in West Africa of providing everything necessary to design, build and equip an airport - including the arrangement of suitable financial terms;

- Plesseys enjoy the full support and confidence of the Government in its approach to the new Libreville airport project and that when the President sees the company (tomorrow) I know that they will be putting forward a proposal which the President will find very interesting.

Defensive If asked about Government support for Covell, Matthews, say that they are architects and planning consultants of the highest reputation but, their experience of work on airports is more limited than Plesseys. We feel that Plessey have the experience and expertise necessary to offer the comprehensive package approach to the construction (and financing) of this airport - with the full support and the confidence of the British Government.

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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

9 May 1980

Dear Michael,

Call by President Bongo of Gabon
on Prime Minister at 1730 on
Tuesday, 13 May

President Bongo is to call on the Prime Minister at 1730 on 13 May for 30 minutes, accompanied by the Gabonese Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, M Martin Bongo (a nephew of the President), and the Ambassador, M Edouard Teale.

I attach briefing for the Prime Minister which has been agreed with the DOT, together with personality notes on the visitors. All speak little English: Mr Peers Carter, the official interpreter, will be present.

President Bongo is on a private visit and the call is at his own request. He will have attended a lunch hosted by Lord Carrington earlier in the day and is to be received in audience by The Queen at 1240 on 14 May. His last visit to London was as a guest of Government in 1970.

The call will be useful in strengthening bilateral relations. There might be two objectives: to build on the rapport established in recent years (President Bongo is well disposed to us and to the West generally, and is particularly gratified that we opened a resident Embassy in Libreville in 1978); and to convince the President that we believe British firms to be capable of playing a much bigger role in Gabon's development to our mutual benefit. (Our share of this traditionally French-dominated market is less than 3%).

We know of no particular subjects which the President wishes to raise with the Prime Minister but the brief includes a defensive line in case he raises the question of a State or official visit (for which he has been angling).

Yours truly
Roderic Lyne

(R M J Lyne)
Private Secretary

Michael Alexander Esq
10 Downing Street
London

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BRIEF FOR PRIME MINISTER'S MEETING WITH PRESIDENT BONGO
POINTS TO MAKE

GENERAL

1. Glad to note the development of our relations in recent years. Opening of British Embassy Libreville in 1978. Increased contact at ministerial level. Collaboration as partners in the Security Council during your term of office (1978/9). Gabon an example to Africa of political stability and economic progress.

TRADE

2. Increased interest in Gabon by British business men. Promising opportunities - growing market. HMG pleased to welcome Georges Rawiri, Minister of Transport, on first official visit by Gabonese Minister to UK in November 1979. Aware that a number of British companies have followed up since visit (Rotork - boats; Lloyds Bank - line of credit; Pandrol - railway equipment).

3. Hope that Mr Parkinson will be able to visit Gabon in November/December. Demonstrate HMG's determination to strengthen our economic and commercial collaboration. Glad President is meeting senior business men while in London. They will demonstrate interest of UK companies and what we can do. We have great experience and much to offer to assist Gabon's development. Not an easy market for us because of strong traditional French influence. President wise to wish to diversify links. Hope for his cooperation in giving British firms a fair chance. The award of one large prestigious contract to a British firm would be a great encouragement and would greatly stimulate interest in the opportunities in Gabon.

LIBREVILLE AIRPORT

5. President will be well aware of interest being shown in this important contract by two experienced British firms: Covell Matthews and Partnership and Plessey Radar. Plessey have already undertaken work in Gabon and have considerable experience in Francophone Africa - have recently won important contracts in Cameroon and Ivory Coast. We hope the ability of both companies can be used to mutual advantage of both countries.

/AID



AID (if raised)

6. Current reappraisal of UK aid expenditure in context of public expenditure cuts unfortunately precludes any aid projects in Gabon. Our aid input will continue to be through multi-lateral agencies, particularly the EDF.

POSSIBLE STATE VISIT (if raised)

7. Will certainly note your interest and look into the possibilities; but the waiting list for State visits is very long. Only a very few each year.

ZIMBABWE

8. Grateful for your strong support in our efforts to achieve a settlement in Zimbabwe.

BRIEF FOR THE PRIME MINISTER'S MEETING WITH PRESIDENT BONGO

ESSENTIAL FACTSANGLO/GABONESE RELATIONS

1. Friendly but lacking in substance.
2. Following many years of representations from Gabonese Government which opened Embassy in London in early 1960s, a small Embassy (2 UK-based staff) was opened in Libreville in July 1978. Major priority is commercial work. President Bongo very pleased at this step.

UK/GABON TRADE

	£m						
	Jan-March						
3.	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1979	1980
UK exports to Gabon	2.8	4.0	5.6	7.7	8.5	2.5	2.3
UK imports from Gabon	3.6	9.2	3.2	4.4	12.9	4.1	0.8

UK principal exports : machinery and transport equipment,
during 1979 : manufactured goods, beverages and tobacco

UK principal imports : diamonds, wood, manganese
during 1979 :

Our share of the market is only 2.8% and there is promising potential if we can break into what has traditionally been a largely French preserve.

4. Establishment of our Embassy 1978 and determined Gabonese efforts to solve economic problems will improve chances of British firms. City of Westminster Chamber of Commerce sent mission to Gabon October 1979. Most members were impressed by present and future trade opportunities. Gabonese Minister for Transport M Georges Rawiri (who has since become Vice-Premier) accompanied by directors of several quasi-Governmental organisations paid official visit to London in November 1979 as guest of Minister for Trade. Joint communique included mention of possible line of credit. Since then representatives of Lloyds Bank have visited

/Libreville

Libreville to follow this up. Best opportunities will probably be in public or semi-public sector, in transport sector (improved transport infrastructure required to exploit considerable natural resources), agricultural (including forestry) and telecommunications fields; but serious penetration by UK companies will require considerable effort in view of French dominance. Financing will also play a crucial role.

ECGD

5. Authority for cover : cover is available for business outside the short term, subject to following restrictions :

- (a) Section 1 (Commercial Account) : a reviewable market limit of £30 million;
- (b) Section 2 (National Interest) : considered on an ad hoc basis.

AID

6. Gabon has highest per capita income in black Africa, but Gabonese have been pressing for bilateral aid in shape of small scholarship programme and help with English teaching. This could assist development of our commercial relations but current squeeze on aid programme rules it out for the moment.

PRESIDENT BONGO'S VISITS TO LONDON

7. President Bongo visited UK officially in October 1970 as a guest of government. Programme included lunch at Buckingham Palace, banquet at Mansion House, a reception by Prime Minister and calls by leading industrialists. President delighted with visit.

/8.



8. Present visit is private. He has been angling for a State Visit for some years but his claims not strong against the competition.

GABONESE FOREIGN POLICY

9. Firmly pro-West. Gabon is one of France's strongest and most stable political and economic partners in Africa. President Bongo gave us steady support in our efforts to solve the Rhodesia problem (though of course his influence counted for very little on this issue, and Commonwealth Africans resented Gabonese involvement in sanctions busting). He is strongly anti-Communist and intensely suspicious of Soviet aims and opportunism in Africa.

ZIMBABWE INDEPENDENCE CELEBRATIONS

10. President Bongo planned to attend with large retinue but Mr Mugabe (his attitude perhaps influenced by Gabonese sanctions busting) wrote explaining that it would be impossible to accommodate him in appropriate style and inviting him to visit on some future occasion.

POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC FACTSHEET : GABON

1. Slightly larger in area than the UK. Population under one million. Highest per capita income in black Africa (US\$ 2,600: 1976). Formerly part of French Equatorial Africa. Full independence 1960. Léon M'Ba first President 1961. President Bongo succeeded constitutionally in 1967 on M'Ba's death. 1968 President announced formal institution of one-party government. President holds virtually all constitutional powers. Recently reconfirmed in further seven-year term. Regime, while autocratic and paternalistic, is not repressive. Good human rights record.

THE ECONOMY

2. Petroleum accounts for 36% of GDP and 75% of export earnings. With current reserves of about fifteen years, discovery of new reserves is essential : twelve new wells may be drilled 1980. World's principal manganese exporter, estimated reserves of 200 m tons. Uranium reserves estimated at 25 years' production and accounts for 4% of world total. Iron ore deposits are vast; lead, zinc and phosphate also exist. Forestry is declining in importance, accounting for only 9% of exports, but Gabon has the second largest reserves of timber in West Africa (most of the country is tropical rain forest). Agriculture is, as yet, poorly developed, with less than 1% of total area under cultivation although Government are increasing investment. Principal export crops : cocoa, coffee and palm oil. Manufacturing sector small and underdeveloped.

3. Country built up large internal and external debts mid-1970s leading to austerity measures and introduction of an IMF stabilisation programme. The Government have adhered strictly to this and IMF satisfied by Gabonese performance on debt problem. Economy stabilised 1979 and second half of 1979 saw signs of renewed economic growth. This improvement should permit more systematic development and diversification of economy based especially on oil revenue. A three-year economic development plan to cover 1980-82 is being drawn up on this basis.

BRIEF FOR PRIME MINISTER'S MEETING WITH PRESIDENT BONGO

PERSONALITY NOTES

EL HADJ OMAR BONGO

President of the Republic of Gabon (also holds the portfolios of National Defence; Information; Posts and Telecommunications; Social Security and Civil Aviation).

Born 30 December 1935, the youngest of nine children of a peasant family. M Bongo was conscripted into the Air Force in 1958 after serving as a junior civil servant in Brazzaville in the Congo from 1957-58. He served as a Sub-Lieutenant and on leaving the Air Force in 1960 was assigned to the newly formed Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In March he became Deputy Director of the Cabinet of President Léon M'Ba and in October of the same year Director of the Cabinet, a post which he held until 1967. In 1967 M'Ba created the office of Vice-President and M Bongo became the first holder. This facilitated a peaceful transfer of power to Bongo when M'Ba died later the same year.

Bongo's meteoric rise to power at such an early age was due to his intelligence, skill at political manoeuvres, hard work and luck. The President gives an impression of brisk, hard-driving energetic efficiency, but has a volatile temperament and can be unpredictable in his moods. He is an untiring traveller, making frequent trips abroad to put his country on the world map. He has accumulated a sizeable fortune, but though he lives in a sumptuous new palace his personal habits seem quite simple, apart from a certain delight in wearing formal clothes. He appears to enjoy official functions but habitually eats very little. Educated as a Catholic, he was officially converted to Islam some five years ago.

He completely dominates his Government and all matters of any significance are referred to him for decision. Primarily interested in the economic development of his underpopulated but otherwise exceptionally richly endowed country.

Has learnt a few English phrases but is not at all fluent.

Married with several children.

/MARTIN BONGO

A

MARTIN BONGO

Minister of State for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation

Born 4 July 1940. A nephew to President Bongo. Followed teacher training courses and became Inspector for Primary Schools at Franceville. Chef de Cabinet to the then Vice-President Bongo from 1967-9. Various ministerial appointments, including Information and Education 1969-76. Minister of Foreign Affairs since 1976.

Married with four children. Speaks no English. A quiet, solid, rather slow man who after five years as Foreign Minister is beginning to get the hang of his job.

M EDOUARD TEALE

The Gabonese Ambassador

Born in 1927 at Libreville. Half British: natural father was British Consul General at Libreville in 1916. Studied and was employed in Tropical Agriculture. First Counsellor at Brazzaville and Yaoundé, 1972. Chief Agricultural Expert 1974. Chargé d'Affairs Brazzaville 1974 and Ambassador Brazzaville 1975. Ambassador London 1976.

Not very effective. Lazy. Inclined to fuss unduly about petty details of protocol and personal matters and to be slack about more important matters. Sees it as his mission to boost commercial contacts which he tries to do, albeit haphazardly. Married with three children. Speaks little English.



BRIEF FOR PRIME MINISTER'S MEETING WITH PRESIDENT BONGO

LIST OF COMPANIES CALLING ON PRESIDENT BONGO DURING HIS
PRIVATE VISIT TO LONDON

Barclays Bank International
Lloyds Bank International
Midland Bank
National Westminster Bank
S G Warburg and Co Limited
Morgan Grenfell
Plessey Company
Hunting Surveys Limited
FEN Reinsurance Agency Limited

20
PRIVATE VISIT OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF GABON, HIS EXCELLENCY
EL HADJ OMAR BONGO, AND MADAME BONGO, 13-15 MAY 1980

Mr Peers Carter will act as interpreter for the official luncheon and
the talks with the Prime Minister on 13 May.

Tuesday 13 May

President Bongo and his party will arrive by
special Presidential aircraft at London Heathrow
Airport South Side.

Once the aircraft is parked, the greeting party
will walk across the tarmac to the aircraft steps.

0950 hours

Doors open.

The President will be welcomed by:-

The Lord Cullen of Ashbourne, Lord-in-Waiting
to Her Majesty The Queen

HE Monsieur Edouard Teale, Gabonese Ambassador

Sir John Stow GCMG, KCVO, the Special
Representative of the Secretary of State
for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs

Mr Robin Baxendale, Manager, Special
Facilities, Heathrow Airport.

The Gabonese Ambassador will board the aircraft and
accompany the President and Madame Bongo down the
steps. The Lord Cullen will be the first to greet
the President, followed by Sir John Stow. The

/Ambassador

Tuesday 13 May (cont'd)

Ambassador will introduce senior members of the party accompanying the President.

Proceed on foot to the VIP Suite, where the Ambassador will introduce senior members of the Embassy staff and Sir John Stow will introduce the Special Branch Officer, Detective Inspector R Haslett, and Foreign and Commonwealth Office officials.

1005 hours
(approx)

The Lord Cullen of Ashbourne and Sir John Stow will accompany the President to his car, where The Lord Cullen will take his leave. Sir John Stow will accompany the President in his car to the hotel (see Annex 1).

Proceed in limousines provided by the Gabonese Embassy to the Carlton Tower Hotel, Cadogan Place, SW1, where the party will be staying.

A motor cycle escort will be provided throughout the visit.

1035 hours
(approx)

Arrive at the Carlton Tower Hotel.

1255 hours

Leave the hotel (see Annex 2).

1300 hours

Arrive at Lancaster House.

/1300 for

Tuesday 13 May (cont'd)

1300 for Luncheon given by Her Majesty's Government hosted
1315 hours by the Secretary of State for Foreign and Common-
wealth Affairs, The Rt Hon The Lord Carrington
KCMG MC.

1430 hours Leave for the Carlton Tower Hotel.
(approx)

1530 hours Call on the President at the Carlton Tower Hotel
by Dr R Haas (Consultant in international law).

1725 hours Leave the hotel (see Annex 3).

1730 hours Arrive at No. 10 Downing Street.

Photocall.

1730-1800 Talks with the Prime Minister, The Rt Hon
hours Mrs Margaret Thatcher MP.

1800 hours Return to the hotel.

Wednesday 14 May

0911 hours Leave the Carlton Tower Hotel.

0915 hours Arrive at the Embassy of the Republic of Gabon,
48 Kensington Court, WB.

0930-1030 Calls on the President at the Embassy by
hours business and commercial interests:-
(0930 hours) Barclays Bank International
Mr D Payne, Assistant General Manager,

/Lloyds

Wednesday 14 May (cont'd)

(0930 hours)

Lloyds Bank International

Mr Kenneth A Barber, Chief Manager, Export Finance Division.

Midland Bank

Lord Selsdon, EEC Adviser to the Midland Bank Group (deals with Lomé Convention).

(1000 hours)

National Westminster Bank

Mr Norman Jones, Area Manager.

S G Warburg and Co Ltd

Representatives:-

Mr C L Reilly, General Manager

Mr Donnally, General Partner of Kuhn Loeb
Lehman Brothers

Mr Le Gouvello, Deputy Director of Lazard
Brothers, Paris.

Morgan Grenfell

Representatives:-

Mr David Curry, Adviser to the Morgan Group
The Hon Rupert Carington, Assistant Director
Mr Angus Dunn, Director.

Bank of Credit and Commerce International

Representatives:-

Mr Iqbal Rizvi, Chairman and Managing Director
for French-speaking countries

/Mr Abedi

Wednesday 14 May (cont'd)

Bank of Credit and Commerce International (cont'd)

Mr Abedi, Chairman

Mr Haque, Managing Director.

1030 hours Return to the Carlton Tower Hotel.

1230 hours Leave the hotel (see Annex 4).

1234 hours Arrive at Buckingham Palace.

Enter the forecourt by way of the North Centre Gate.

The Buckingham Palace detachment of The Queen's Guard will turn out in the forecourt and give a Royal Salute as the President and Madame Bongo drive across the forecourt.

Enter the quadrangle by way of the South Arch.

1235 hours Arrive at the Grand Entrance.

Photocall.

Met by: The Hon Mary Morrison, Lady-in-Waiting to The Queen, and by Lieutenant Commander Robert Guy, RN, The Equerry to The Queen.

1240 hours Audience of The Queen.

1300 hours (approx) Leave Buckingham Palace.

1304 hours (approx) Arrive at the Carlton Tower Hotel.

Wednesday 14 May (cont'd)

- 1611 hours Leave the hotel.
- 1615 hours Arrive at the Embassy of the Republic of Gabon.
- 1630-1825 hours Calls on the President at the Embassy by business and city interests:-
- (1630 hours) Plessey Radar Ltd
Mr W H Frame, Marketing Director.
- (1700 hours) Call by Alderman Sir Peter Gadsden, GBE,
The Rt Hon The Lord Mayor.
- (1730 hours) F.E.N. Reinsurance Agency
Representatives:-
Mr W H G Gallon, Group Chief Executive
Mr Michael Cahill, Director of F.E.N.
Mr W I L Forrest, Vice-President of
Menorah Mines Ltd.

1825 hours Call on the President by Gabonese students.

1830 hours Leave the Embassy.

1834 hours Arrive at the Carlton Tower Hotel.

Thursday 15 May

- 0850 hours The President and his party leave the hotel.
- 0920 hours (approx) The President will arrive at London Heathrow Airport, South Side.

Thursday 15 May (cont'd)

0920 hours
(approx)
(cont'd)

The President's motorcade will drive up to the VIP Lounge where the President and senior Ministers will alight and go into the lounge.

All other members of the President's party will go straight to the tarmac and board the aircraft.

In the VIP Lounge will be waiting the greeting party, consisting of:-

The Lord Cullen of Ashbourne, Lord-in-Waiting
to Her Majesty The Queen
Sir John Stow, GCMG, KCVO, The Special
Representative of the Secretary of State
Mr Robin Baxendale, Manager, Special
Facilities, Heathrow Airport.

The greeting party will accompany the President, Madame Bongo and the Gabonese Ambassador to the aircraft where they will bid farewell.

The last to shake the President's hand will be The Lord Cullen of Ashbourne.

0925 hours

Doors close.

0930 hours

Take-off.

12 May 1980

Inward Visits Section
Protocol and Conference Dept.

MOTORCADE FROM LONDON HEATHROW AIRPORT SOUTHSIDE TO THE CARLTON TOWER HOTEL (TUESDAY, 13 MAY).

Car P

HE El Hadj Omar Bongo CMG, President of the Republic of Gabon

Sir John Stow GCMG KCVO, the Special Representative of the Secretary of State

Detective Inspector R Haslett, Special Branch (seat next to driver)

2nd Car

Madame Joséphine Bongo, wife of the President of the Republic of Gabon

HE Monsieur Edouard Teale, Ambassador of the Republic of Gabon

Captain Moubango, Aide-de-camp (jump seat)

MOTORCADE FROM THE CARLTON TOWER HOTEL
TO LANCASTER HOUSE (TUESDAY 13 MAY)
(LUNCH HOSTED BY LORD CARRINGTON)

Car P

HE Monsieur El Hadj Omar Bongo,
President of the Republic of Gabon

Captain Moubango, Aide-de-camp

Detective Inspector R Haslett,
Special Branch (seat next to driver)

2nd Car

Monsieur Martin Bongo,
Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation

Monsieur Jean Francois Ntoutomé,
Personal Minister Counsellor to the President of the
Republic of Gabon

3rd Car

Monsieur Jean Pierre Lemboumba,
Minister of the Economy and Finance

Monsieur Michel Essonghe,
Director of the President's Cabinet

4th Car

Doctor Okias J Pierre,
Personal Doctor of the President

Colonel Odjia Nere
Director of Security

Ambassador's Car

HE Monsieur Edouard Teale,
Ambassador of the Republic of Gabon

Miss A L Pouliqen,
Private Secretary to the Ambassador

MOTORCADE FROM THE CARLTON TOWER HOTEL
TO NO 10 DOWNING STREET (TUESDAY 13 MAY)
(TALKS WITH THE PRIME MINISTER)

Car P

HE Monsieur El Hadj Omar Bongo,
President of the Republic of Gabon

Captain Moubango,
Aide-de-Camp

Detective Inspector R Haslett,
Special Branch (seat next to driver)

Ambassador's Car

Monsieur Martin Bongo,
Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation

HE Monsieur Edouard Teale,
Ambassador of the Republic of Gabon

MOTORCADE FROM THE CARLTON TOWER HOTEL
TO BUCKINGHAM PALACE (WEDNESDAY 14 MAY)

Car P

HE Monsieur El Hadj Omar Bongo,
President of the Republic of Gabon

Madame Joséphine Bongo,
Wife of the President of the Republic of Gabon

Captain Moubango,
Aide-de-Camp (jump seat)

Detective Inspector R Haslett,
Special Branch (seat beside driver)

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Embassy of the Republic of Gabon.....	937 5285/9
Special Facilities, Heathrow	75 97146
The Lord Cullen of Ashbourne.....	589 1981
Sir John Stow	370 1921
Carlton Tower Hotel	235 5411
Government Hospitality Fund	233 8142
West African Dept, FCO	233 5274 5662
Protocol and Conference Dept, FCO	233 5016

DISTRIBUTION

No 10 Downing Street

Private Secretary (2)
Press Office (2)

Gabonese Embassy (6)

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Private Secretary (2)
PS/PUS (1)
Mr D M Day (2)
Sir Leonard Allinson (2)
Head of West African Dept (1)
West African Dept (6)
News Department (6)
Security Dept (1)
Protocol and Conference Department (6)
Resident Clerk (1)

The Lord Cullen of Ashbourne (1)

Sir John Stow (1)

Mr Peers Carter (1)
c/o West African Dept
Mr Craddock

Special Branch (2)

Police Escort Group (2)



Gabon

10 DOWNING STREET

PRIME MINISTER

VISIT OF PRESIDENT BONGO OF
GABON, TUESDAY 13 MAY

Michael Alexander
wonders whether you would
like Cecil Parkinson to be
present when you see
President Bongo, as neither
the Foreign Secretary nor
Richard Luce can manage it.

[Handwritten signature]

Yes please

2 May 1980

*Confirmed Cecil
Parkinson. Cf. 615*



Re VB
B/F 12.5.80
Gabon

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

26 April 1980

Dear Roderie

Private Visit of President Bongo of
Gabon

The Prime Minister has seen your letter to me of 23 April and has agreed to receive President Bongo for 30 minutes at 1700 on Tuesday 13 May. It would be helpful if a brief could reach me by close of play the previous day.

Yours ever

Michael Alexander

R.M.J. Lyne, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

V B



10 DOWNING STREET

A. Alexander.

17.00 - 17.30

[can be longer if
you require] on

Tuesday 13 May.

No 10.

EJ.

24/4

010

Princ Minister

CONFIDENTIAL

Chris Stephens:
new sales.



^{already}
You have the Portuguese PM
on 19 May ~ In Walcheren on
20 May. But you could perhaps
squeeze Pres Bongo in on the morning
of 20 May. (21 May seems to be taken
up with the Women's National Conference).

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

23 April 1980

Agree, subject to finding a suitable time?

Yes
mb

Dear Michael,

1/2 - 23/4

Private Visit of President Bongo of Gabon

President Bongo of Gabon is to make a private visit to Britain from 18-21 May after attending the Franco-African summit in Nice. Our Ambassador in Libreville has been informed that President Bongo would greatly appreciate an opportunity to call on the Prime Minister while he is in London.

Lord Carrington recommends that the Prime Minister should agree to receive President Bongo for a short call. Gabon is one of the most stable, pro-Western countries in Africa and President Bongo is strongly anti-communist. He is anxious to strengthen Gabon's links with Britain and other Western countries as a counterweight to the dominant influence of France. His government have taken a moderate and helpful line over Zimbabwe.

Gabon has the highest per capita income in black Africa, based on oil exports and large reserves of uranium, manganese, iron ore and timber. This is a promising market of considerable potential and we are trying hard to increase our share of it (at present only 2.8%); the small resident Embassy which we established in 1978 is almost exclusively engaged on commercial work. Almost all contracts of any size have to have the President's personal approval and a meeting with the Prime Minister would help to convince him that we are in earnest about increasing our commercial and economic relations with Gabon.

Yours ever
Roderic Lyne

(R M J Lyne)
Private Secretary

M O'D B Alexander Esq
10 Downing Street

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