

PREM 19/3349

Confidential filing

UK / Gabon relations

GABON

January
December 1980

Referred to	Date	Referred to	Date	Referred to	Date	Referred to	Date
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PREM 19/3349

SERIES CLOSED

**END OF
CONSERVATIVE
ADMINISTRATION**

1 MAY 1997



cdp

Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

London SW1A 2AH

12 March 1991

Sir Charles,

Message on the Gulf War from President Bongo of Gabon

/ We have received through our Embassy in Libreville the enclosed message to the Prime Minister from the Gabonese President conveying thanks for Britain's contribution to the successful outcome of the Gulf war and sympathy to the families of British servicemen who died. We assume that the same message, which begins "Monsieur le President", was sent to President Bush.

/ The Prime Minister might like to send a brief reply to President Bongo on the lines of the enclosed draft.

Yours ever,
Sir Charles

(S L Gass)
Private Secretary

Sir Charles Powell KCMG
10 Downing Street

Message from the Prime Minister

To:

His Excellency

El Hadji Omar Bongo GCMG

President of the Republic of Gabon

I was most grateful for your kind message after the suspension of hostilities in the Gulf. I should like to thank you particularly, on behalf of the families in Britain who lost relatives in the conflict, for your generous expression of sympathy.

Following the success of our military operations, we must now make every effort to build a comprehensive and lasting peace in the region, which would be the most fitting memorial to those who gave their lives.

CM

PRIME MINISTER'S
PERSONAL MESSAGE
SERIAL No. ^{ca} T20789.....



*File PMZ AKJ
cc FC
T*

*SUBJECT re MASTER
OPS.*

10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

THE PRIME MINISTER

23 January 1989

Dear Mr President,

Thank you for your letter of 30 November about the current negotiations between Gabon and the International Monetary Fund.

I compliment you on Gabon's continued commitment to economic restructuring. The path you have chosen is not an easy one, but I believe that it represents the only sure means of achieving self-sustaining growth. For this reason I very much hope that Gabon will persevere in its negotiations with the International Monetary Fund with a view to reaching agreement on a restructuring programme backed by the resources of the Fund. For our part we shall be very ready to offer Gabon all the support we can in the International Financial Institutions on the basis of a strong Fund programme.

I send you my best wishes for the success of your continued efforts.

*Yours sincerely
Margaret Thatcher*

His Excellency El Hadj Omar Bongo, G.C.M.G.

HM Pro



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

19 January 1989

*Dear Charles,*Gabon / IMF

In December we received a letter to the Prime Minister from President Bongo of Gabon seeking our help in his current negotiations with the IMF. A copy with translation is enclosed. President Bongo has sent similar appeals to the French (Gabon's main mentor and aid donor) and the US.

Although Gabon is a small country of relatively minor economic importance in Sub-Saharan Africa, President Bongo's letter raises important issues, given our general objective of promoting IMF-backed economic reform in Africa. We have therefore delayed this advice in order to give, with HM Treasury endorsement, full consideration to the points he makes in the light of Gabon's relations with the Fund and our contacts with the French.

Gabon's IMF programme, agreed in late 1986, is off-target. Gabon has long been characterised by a structure of inflated costs and wages. Gabon postponed making the hard choices needed in 1987 and 1988. The Fund have pressed Gabon for vigorous action this year. Negotiations on a new Stand-By Arrangement have broken down, and the Fund believe the Gabonese are now engaged in testing the resolve of IMF Management.

HM Treasury and we agree that the UK has no interest in undermining the Fund's negotiating position. Gabon's IMF programme will begin to bite only when the wage restraint and fiscal measures identified by the Fund are carried forward. The depressed state of the oil market makes the need for action all the more urgent. Gabon is unused to austerity and President Bongo will require strong political will. But given Gabon's regional position with the highest per capita income in black Africa, it is important that it should show itself capable of implementing reform. The French are now working with the Gabonese to identify suitable measures. It is unlikely that the US Treasury will be influenced by Bongo's special pleading.

/Although

CONFIDENTIAL



Although we cannot take the action Bongo wants, we believe that in these circumstances and in view of increasing UK investment by Shell and British Gas, there would be merit in the Prime Minister encouraging President Bongo to persevere in his negotiations with the Fund, and assuring him of UK support in the International Financial Institutions on the basis of a firm programme. Such a message would help maintain the pressure on Bongo and could strengthen his hand. It would complement efforts by the Fund and by the French. A draft, with which HM Treasury concur, is enclosed. If you agree, we could send the text by telegram to our Ambassador at Libreville for delivery, with the signed original to follow.

Yours ever,

Richard Gozney
(R H T Gozney)
Private Secretary

C D Powell Esq
10 Downing Street

CONFIDENTIAL

DSR 11 (Revised Sept 85)

DRAFT: minute/letter/teletype/despatch/note

TYPE: Draft/Final 1 +

FROM:
Prime Minister

Reference

DEPARTMENT:

TEL. NO:

Your Reference

BUILDING:

ROOM NO:

SECURITY CLASSIFICATION

Top Secret

Secret

Confidential

Restricted

Unclassified

TO:

Copies to:

His Excellency
El Hadj Omar Bongo GCMG
President of the Republic of Gabon

PMJALJ

SUBJECT:

PRIVACY MARKING

..... In Confidence

Thank you for your letter of 30 November about the current negotiations between Gabon and the International Monetary Fund.

CAVEAT

congratulate you on
I was glad to hear of Gabon's continued commitment to economic restructuring. The path you have chosen is not an easy one, but we in ~~Britain~~ believe that it represents the only sure means of achieving self-sustaining growth. For this reason I ~~strongly~~ *very much* hope that Gabon will persevere in its negotiations with the International Monetary Fund with a view to reaching agreement on a restructuring programme backed by the resources of the Fund. For our part we shall be very ready to offer Gabon all the support we can in the International Financial Institutions on the basis of a strong Fund programme.

Enclosures flag(s)

sd
I should like to offer you my best wishes for the success of your continued efforts.

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UNCLASSIFIED
FM LIBREVILLE
TO PRIORITY FCO
TELNO 122
OF 010910Z DECEMBER 88
AND TO PRIORITY TO WASHINGTON FOR WORLD BANK, IMF

MIPT: GABON : ECONOMY

1. TEXT OF PRESIDENT'S LETTER AS FOLLOWS:
(BEGINS)

MADAME LE PREMIER MINISTRE,

L'ECONOMIE GABONAISE, APRES AVOIR CONNU UNE LONGUE PERIODE DE PROSPERITE, TRAVERSE DEPUIS DEUX ANS UNE PHASE DIFFICILE QUI SEMBLE DEVOIR SE PROLONGER ENCORE QUELQUES ANNEES. LA SENSIBILITE EXTREME DE CETTE ECONOMIE A LA CONJONCTURE MONDIALE EST DUE POUR L'ESSENTIEL A LA PLACE DU PETROLE DANS LE PRODUIT NATIONAL BRUT, QUE NE PEUVENT POUR LE MOMENT EQUILIBRER LES AUTRES RESSOURCES MINIERES OU AGRICOLES. IL EST CLAIR QUE LE GABON DOIT DIVERSIFIER SON ECONOMIE : DEVELOPPER SA PRODUCTION FORESTIERE ET AGRICOLE, MIEUX UTILISER SON POTENTIEL TOURISTIQUE, CONSTRUIRE UNE INDUSTRIE NATIONALE SUR UNE BASE ESSENTIELLEMENT PRIVEE.

LE GABON A AINSI DECIDE, DE SA PROPRE INITIATIVE ET AVEC LE CONCOURS DU FONDS MONETAIRE INTERNATIONAL ET DE LA BANQUE MONDIALE, DE S'ENGAGER DANS UNE RIGOREUSE POLITIQUE D'AJUSTEMENT.

COMMENCEE EN 1986, POURSUIVIE AVEC LES BUDGETS DE 1987 ET 1988, CETTE POLITIQUE A CONDUIT LE GOUVERNEMENT GABONAIS A PRENDRE DES MESURES DRACONIENNES D'ECONOMIES BUDGETAIRES, DE STABILISATION DE L'EMPLOI PUBLIC ET D'ACCROISSEMENT DES RECETTES INTERIEURES. QUELQUES CHIFFRES CARACTERISTIQUES PERMETTENT DE MESURER L'EFFET DES MESURES SUR LA POPULATION: LES LICENCIEMENTS ONT REPRESENTE 15 POUR CENT DE LA POPULATION ACTIVE PRIVEE ET LES SALAIRES DE LA FONCTION PUBLIQUE ONT DIMINUE EN MOYENNE DE PLUS DE 10 POUR CENT, CE POURCENTAGE ATTEIGNANT 45 POUR CENT POUR LES SALAIRES LES PLUS ELEVES.

LES RESULTATS DE CETTE POLITIQUE SE TRADUISENT PAR UN BRUTALE DEFLATION. LES INDICES DES PRIX A LA CONSOMMATION SONT EN BAISSSE, LA POPULATION ETRANGERE, SOURCE D'IMPORTANTES RENTRES

PAGE 1
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MDLIAN 8749

DE SOUTENIR SA POSITION ET DE FACILITER UN ACCORD QUI SOIT POUR
LUI ACCEPTABLE.

LES PAYS MEMBRES DE LA COMMUNAUTÉ EUROPÉENNE, ET LE ROYAUME UNI
EN PARTICULIER N'ONT CESSÉ, MADAME LE PREMIER MINISTRE, D'AP-
PUYER LE GABON AUPRES DU FONDS MONÉTAIRE INTERNATIONAL.

JE VOUS PRIE D'AGRÉER, MADAME LE PREMIER MINISTRE, L'EXPRESSION
DE MA TRÈS HAUTE CONSIDÉRATION,

EL HADJ OMAR BONGO

MADAME MARGARET THATCHER
PREMIER MINISTRE DU ROYAUME UNI
10 DOWNING STREET LONDRES SW 1

(ENDS)

GOODFELLOW

YYYY

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ADDITIONAL 1

MR WICKS NO 10 DOWNING ST

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PAGE 3
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République Gabonaise

Union · Travail · Justice

Le Président de la République

Libreville, le 30 Novembre 1988

Madame le Premier Ministre,

L'économie gabonaise, après avoir connu une longue période de prospérité, traverse depuis deux ans une phase difficile qui semble devoir se prolonger encore quelques années. La sensibilité extrême de cette économie à la conjoncture mondiale est due pour l'essentiel à la place du pétrole dans le Produit National Brut, qui ne peuvent pour le moment équilibrer les autres ressources minérales ou agricoles. Il est clair que le Gabon doit diversifier son économie; développer sa production forestière et agricole, mieux utiliser son potentiel touristique, construire une industrie nationale sur une base essentiellement privée.

Le Gabon a ainsi décidé, de sa propre initiative et avec le concours du Fonds Monétaire International et de la Banque Mondiale, de s'engager dans une rigoureuse politique d'ajustement.

Commencée en 1986, poursuivie avec les budgets de 1987 et 1988, cette politique a conduit le Gouvernement Gabonais à prendre des mesures draconiennes d'économies budgétaires, de stabilisation de l'emploi public et d'accroissement des recettes intérieures. Quelques chiffres caractéristiques permettent de mesurer l'effet de ces mesures sur la population; les licenciements ont représenté 15% de la population active privée et les salaires de la Fonction Publique ont diminué en moyenne de plus de 10%, ce pourcentage atteignant 45% pour les salaires les plus élevés.

Madame Margaret THATCHER
Premier Ministre du Royaume-Uni de Grande Bretagne
et d'Irlande du Nord,
10 Downing Street
LONDRES SW1

.../...2

Le Président de la République

Les résultats de cette politique se traduisent par une brutale déflation. Les indices des prix à la consommation sont en baisse, la population étrangère, source d'importantes rentrées fiscales, a diminué de près de 50% et le nombre de fermetures d'entreprises ne cesse de s'accroître.

La population gabonaise a accepté toutes ces restrictions avec civisme et courage, sans qu'il y ait eu jusqu'à présent de troubles sociaux majeurs.

J'apprécie hautement le soutien que votre pays a pu apporter à cet effort d'assainissement.

Le Gabon est résolu à poursuivre son effort d'assainissement en 1989 par un accroissement sensible de la pression fiscale qui atteindra 25% du Produit National Brut, par une réduction des dépenses publiques, et notamment de la masse salariale, et une restructuration du secteur parapublic.

Mise en présence de ce projet, la mission du Fonds Monétaire International qui vient de séjourner à Libreville, tout en reconnaissant qu'il va dans le bon sens, estime qu'il est encore insuffisant. Elle recommande non seulement un alourdissement supplémentaire de la fiscalité, mais surtout une réduction nettement plus importante de la masse salariale en 1989 par une diminution des salaires moyens de 15% et un licenciement de 5% des effectifs de la Fonction Publique en sus des mises à la retraite.

Un tel dispositif, qui conduit à une réduction aussi drastique du pouvoir d'achat, à la fois par la baisse nominale des salaires et par l'augmentation des impôts, créerait un environnement défavorable, qui risque d'entraîner une agitation sociale difficile cette fois à contrôler.

La vision du Fonds Monétaire, qui consiste à concentrer sur la seule année 1989 la totalité de l'ajustement financier restant à réaliser n'intègre visiblement pas ce risque qui pourrait se répandre dans les pays voisins et contrecarrer ainsi les efforts faits par le Gabon pour maintenir la paix et la stabilité en Afrique Centrale.

C'est pourquoi le Gabon, qui appréhende les conséquences du maintien d'une position aussi intransigeante du Fonds Monétaire International, demande aux pays qui accompagnent son redressement de soutenir sa position et de faciliter un accord qui soit pour lui acceptable.

Le Président de la République
- 3 -

Les pays membres de la Communauté Européenne, et le Royaume Uni en particulier, n'ont cessé, Madame le Premier Ministre, d'appuyer le Gabon auprès du Fonds Monétaire International.

Je vous prie d'agréer, Madame le Premier Ministre, l'expression de ma très haute considération

A handwritten signature in blue ink is written over a circular official seal. The seal contains the text 'REPUBLIQUE GABONAISE' at the top and 'LE MINISTRE DES FINANCES' at the bottom. The signature is a stylized, cursive script.

EL HADJ OMAR BONGO

Subject cc MASTER
OPS

PRIME MINISTER'S
PERSONAL MESSAGE
SERIAL No. T1816/88

The President of the Republic

Libreville 30 November 1988

Prime Minister,

After enjoying a long period of prosperity, the Gabonese economy has for the last two years been going through a difficult stage which seems set to continue for a few more years. The economy's acute sensitivity to the world economic situation is due, for the most part, to the proportion of gross national product accounted for by petroleum, which at present outweighs other mineral or agricultural resources. It is clear that Gabon must diversify its economy: develop its forestry and agricultural production, make better use of its potential for tourism, build a national industry on an essentially private basis.

Gabon therefore decided, on its own initiative and with the assistance of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, to undertake a rigorous policy of adjustment.

That policy, introduced in 1986 and continued with the 1987 and 1988 budgets, led the Gabonese Government to take draconian measures to achieve budgetary savings, to stabilise public sector employment and to increase domestic tax revenue. The effect of those measures on the population can be judged from the following typical figures: redundancies among the private sector working population amounted to 15 per cent and civil service wages fell by over 10 per cent on average and up to 45 per cent in the case of the highest wages.

The results of that policy have been sudden deflation. Consumer price indexes are falling, the non-Gabonese population (a source of substantial tax revenue) has shrunk by almost 50 per cent and the number of business closures continues to increase.

The Gabonese population has accepted all these restrictions with public spirit and courage and there have been no major social disturbances up to the present.

I highly appreciate the support which your country has been able to give to these adjustment efforts and, more particularly, the rescheduling of our official debt payments.

Gabon is determined to continue its adjustment efforts in 1989 by considerably increasing taxation, to 25 per cent of gross national product, by reducing public expenditure and the wage bill in particular, and by restructuring the semi-public sector.

Presented with that project, the International Monetary Fund delegation which has just visited Libreville recognises that it is a step in the right direction, but nevertheless considers it still inadequate. It recommends not only a further increase in taxation but, in particular, a markedly greater reduction of the wage bill in 1989 by cutting average wages by 15 per cent and reducing the civil service workforce by 5 per cent in addition to reductions resulting from retirement.

Such a measure would bring about an equally drastic fall in purchasing power by simultaneously reducing the nominal value of wages and increasing taxes and would create an unfavourable environment likely to result in social unrest which this time would be difficult to control.

The Monetary Fund's idea, which is to squeeze into the one year 1989 all the financial adjustment still outstanding, clearly does not take into account the risk of unrest, which could spread to the neighbouring countries and thereby thwart Gabon's efforts to maintain peace and stability in Central Africa.

This is why Gabon, fearing the consequences which could arise if the International Monetary Fund maintains such an intransigent position, is asking the countries assisting [?]* its recovery to

* Translator's Note: Literally, "accompanying".

support its position and to pave the way for an agreement which would be acceptable to it.

The member countries of the European Community, and the United Kingdom in particular, Prime Minister, have consistently supported Gabon in relation to the International Monetary Fund.

[complimentary close]

El Hadj Omar Bongo

Mrs Margaret Thatcher
Prime Minister of the United Kingdom
10 Downing Street
London SW1

SUBJECT a MASTER
OPS

JA



PRIME MINISTER'S

PERSONAL MESSAGE TO DOWNING STREET

LONDON SW1A 2AA

SERIAL No. 129/88

THE PRIME MINISTER

29 February 1988

Your Excellency

Thank you for your letter of 27 January and for your invitation to attend the ceremonies on 12 March to mark the Twentieth Anniversary of the Gabon Democratic Party. I very much appreciate the invitation, together with the kind words with which it was accompanied.

I was pleased to read your remarks about the close and friendly links between our two peoples and Governments. I share your sentiments. It is important that we should do all we can to maintain and foster our relations. To my great regret, however, my other commitments prevent me from taking up your invitation.

May I take this opportunity, however, to offer my congratulations on the occasion and to express to you, on behalf of the British Government, our very warmest wishes for the continued prosperity and success of Gabon and its people.

Yours sincerely
Margaret Thatcher

His Excellency El Hadj Omar Bongo, G.C.M.G.

re

CONFIDENTIAL

cc R



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

26 February 1988

Dear Charles

at Hat

Letter to the Prime Minister from President Bongo

Thank you for your letter of 15 February enclosing an invitation to the Prime Minister from President Bongo of Gabon to attend Anniversary Celebrations of the Gabon Democratic party in Libreville on 12 March. I enclose a draft reply.

We intend to instruct our Ambassador to represent HMG. Mrs Chalker hopes to visit Gabon in July and it may be possible to inform Bongo of these plans before 12 March.

If the Prime Minister agrees to write to Bongo, we will telegraph the text for our Ambassador to deliver as soon as possible, with the signed original following.

however,

L Parker

(L Parker)
Private Secretary

C D Powell Esq
10 Downing Street

CONFIDENTIAL

DSR 11 (Revised Sept 85)

DRAFT: minute/letter/teleletter/despatch/note

TYPE: Draft/Final 1 +

FROM: Prime Minister

Reference

DEPARTMENT:

TEL. NO:

Your Reference

BUILDING:

ROOM NO:

SECURITY CLASSIFICATION

Top Secret

Secret

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Unclassified

TO:

Copies to:

His Excellency
President El Hadji Omar Bongo

SWZADN

SUBJECT:

PRIVACY MARKING

..... In Confidence

CAVEAT

I very much appreciate an invitation

Thank you for your letter of 27 January and for your invitation to attend the ceremonies on 12 March to mark the Twentieth Anniversary of the Gabon Democratic Party. I ~~should like~~ ^{appreciate} you to know how much I value it ~~to~~ together with the kind words with which it was accompanied.

I was very pleased to read your remarks about the close and friendly links between our two peoples and Governments. I share your sentiments. It is important that we should do all we can to maintain and foster our relations. To my great regret, however, my ~~existing~~ ^{other} commitments will ~~unfortunately~~ prevent me from taking up your invitation.

Enclosures flag(s)

May I take this opportunity, however, to offer my congratulations on the occasion and to express to you, on behalf of the British Government, our very warmest wishes for the continued prosperity and success of Gabon and its people.

Gr.

GABON: Pelotas January 1980





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PC

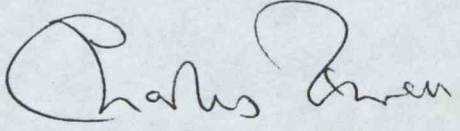
10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

15 February 1988

Dear Lyn,

I enclose a copy of a letter to the Prime Minister from President Bongo inviting her to attend festivities surrounding the 20th anniversary of the creation of the Democratic Party of Gabon on 12 March. You will no doubt wish to consider whether and how the Prime Minister should be represented on this occasion and let me have a draft reply.

Yours sincerely,


(CHARLES POWELL)

Lyn Parker, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

v



COFC

République Gabonaise

Union · Travail · Justice

Le Président de la République

Libreville, le 27 Janvier 1988

Madame la Premier Ministre,

Le Gabon célèbrera, le 12 Mars 1988, le vingtième anniversaire de la création du Parti Démocratique Gabonais.

Il m'est particulièrement agréable, en son nom, ainsi qu'au nom du Gouvernement Gabonais et en mon nom personnel, d'inviter Votre Excellence à assister aux festivités prévues à cet effet.

Je suis convaincu que Votre présence leur confèrera un éclat tout particulier.

Le Peuple Gabonais l'appréciera comme un grand hommage rendu aux relations d'amitié et de coopération entre nos deux pays et sera heureux de vous manifester la haute estime qu'il porte à Votre Excellence et, à travers Elle, au Peuple Britannique.

Je vous prie de croire, Madame le Premier Ministre, en l'assurance de ma très haute considération.

EL HADJ OMAR BONGO.-

Son Excellence Madame MARGARET THATCHER
Premier Ministre du Royaume Uni de
Grande Bretagne

L O N D R E S

CONFIDENTIAL

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT
2 MARSHAM STREET LONDON SW1P 3EB
01-212 3434



MINISTER
FOR ROADS AND TRAFFIC

Russell Dixon Esq
Private Secretary to the Secretary of State
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
Downing Street
LONDON SW1A 2AL

My ref:

Your ref:

7 January 1987

CJP
8/1

Dear Russell

MR BOTTOMLEY'S VISIT TO GABON: 28-30 DECEMBER

As you are aware, Mr Bottomley visited Gabon at the invitation of President Bongo to attend the inauguration of the Trans-Gabonese railway.

During the visit, he had the chance of an informal discussion with M Chirac about Chad. M Chirac talked briefly about the dilemma of letting Libya fill in down to the 16th parallel, even though the population above the parallel of 150,000 is small compared with 6 million below. French public opinion would not be keen on French casualties.

M Chirac commented further that Libyan political leaders are becoming increasingly 'less keen' on Colonel Gadhafi, who has had three spells of psychiatric treatment. Colonel Gadhafi was re-activating the Chad fighting to rally Libya to him.

M Chirac also spoke briefly about the rail strike in France. He said he was aiming at the Prime Minister's line with the miners - immobility without appearing uncaring.

/ I am copying this letter to Andy Bearpark (No 10) and John Sawers (Mrs Chalker's Office).

Yours
Nick

N J STARLING
Private Secretary

CONFIDENTIAL





Foreign and Commonwealth Office
London SW1A 2AH

CCPE ✓

PS

23 December 1986

Dear Trevor,

Opening of the Trans-Gabonese
Railway: 28-31 December

^{at trap}
I have seen a copy of Richard Allan's (Private Secretary to the Secretary of State for Transport) letter to you of 19 December drawing attention to the change in Mr Bottomley's travel arrangements.

I can now confirm that we are content, in the circumstances, for Mr Bottomley (accompanied by his wife) to accept President Bongo's offer of a lift to and from Gabon in the President's own aircraft.

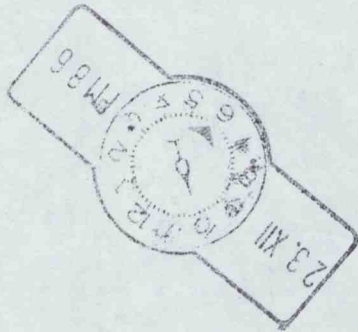
I am copying this letter to Richard Allan and Andy Bearpark (Number 10).

Yours Sincerely,
Colin Budd

(C R Budd)
Private Secretary

Trevor Woolley Esq
PS/Secretary of the Cabinet
Cabinet Office
70 Whitehall
LONDON SW1A 2AS

GABON Relations Jan 20





OTS
file

10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

MR WOOLLEY, Cabinet Office

OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE TRANSGABONESE RAILWAY

Thank you for your minute of 22 December.
I confirm that the Prime Minister is content
for Mr Bottomley to use President Bongo's
private aircraft.

I am copying this to Richard Allan (Department
of Transport).

P A BEARPARK
23 December 1986



CC/PC

Prime Minister.

Ref. A086/3574

MR BEARPARK

Yes

Content for Mr Bottomley
to use President Bongo's aircraft instead
of the commercial one?

22/12

Official Opening of the TransGabonese Railway

at the

You will have seen Richard Allan's letter to me of 19 December asking for agreement to Mr Bottomley accepting the invitation of President Bongo to travel to Gabon for the official opening of the TransGabonese Railway by means of his own private aircraft. You may also have seen my minute to Mr Wicks of 5 November recommending that Mr Bottomley be permitted to travel to Gabon courtesy of a chartered flight arranged by the European consortium which built the railway and Mr Wicks's reply of 6 November conveying the Prime Minister's agreement.

2. Sir Robert Armstrong considers that the arguments leading to his recommendation to agree to Mr Bottomley's previous travel arrangements apply equally to the revised plans and therefore supports the request made by Richard Allan. I have consulted the Foreign and Commonwealth Office who have no objection to what is proposed, and I should be grateful to know that the Prime Minister is also content.

Thomas Woolley

T A WOOLLEY

22 December 1986

GABON Relations Jan 1963



Office of the Ambassador

Faint, illegible text, likely a letter or document header.

CONFIDENTIAL

Faint, illegible text, likely the main body of a letter or document.

1963



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT
2 MARSHAM STREET LONDON SW1P 3EB

01-212 3434

Abon

Trevor Woolley Esq
Private Secretary to
The Secretary of the Cabinet
Cabinet Office
70 Whitehall
LONDON
SW1A 2AS

19 December 1986

Dear Trevor,

OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE TRANSGABONESE RAILWAY 28-31 DECEMBER

Your letter of 7 November ^{at Paris} to Sherard Cowper-Coles recorded the Prime Minister's agreement that Mr Bottomley, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Transport, should accept the offer of a charter flight from Paris to Gabon arranged by the European Consortium who built the railway (EUROTRAG/OCTRA). It has since been agreed (Andy Bearpark's letter to me of 3 December) that Mr Bottomley should be accompanied by Mrs Bottomley.

We now understand from the Consortium that President Bongo intends to provide his own private aircraft to convey Ministers and other VIPs to and from Gabon.

Since paragraph 53 of "Questions of Procedure for Ministers" states that Ministers should not normally accept offers of foreign travel from foreign governments, I thought I should draw the change of circumstances to your attention. But we would hope that, since the Prime Minister has already agreed that Mr Bottomley could accept the Consortium's offer of transport from Paris to Gabon, he could do likewise now that the offer is made by President Bongo. We have spoken to Andy Bearpark, and to Russell Dixon in the Foreign Secretary's Private Office, whose initial view was that this would not, in the circumstances, be unreasonable.

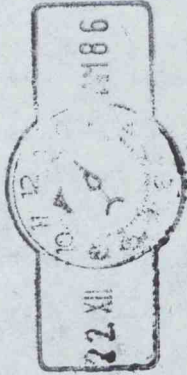
My Secretary of State would be grateful for agreement that Mr Bottomley may accept President Bongo's offer.

I am copying this letter to Andy Bearpark (No 10) and Russell Dixon (FCO).

Yours,
R Allan

R A ALLAN
Private Secretary

GABON - Relations - Jan '80





File
cc mini-cab file

10 DOWNING STREET

LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

3 December 1986

Thank you for your letter of
1 December about Mr. Bottomley's visit
to Gabon.

The Prime Minister is content, subject
to Parliamentary and Government business.
She is also content for Mrs. Bottomley
to accompany him on the visit.

I am copying this letter to Russell
Dixon (Foreign and Commonwealth Office),
Greg Shepherd (Government Whips' Office)
and Chris Cloke (Cabinet Office).

P. A. BEARPARK

Richard Allan, Esq.,
Department of Transport

25/

Prime Minister.

CCPC

CC Min - ab file



Content for Mr Bottomley

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT
2 MARSHAM STREET LONDON SW1P 3EB

to accompany his husband to
Gabon?

01-212 3434

27/12 - 3/1

A Bearpark Esq
Private Secretary
10 Downing Street
LONDON SW1

ms
2/12

1st December 1986

Yes not

Dear Andy,

OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE TRANS-GABONESE RAILWAY

The second phase of the Trans-Gabonese Railway will be officially opened by President Bongo on 30 December. The project was undertaken by a European consortium which included Wimpey International and Taylor Woodrow, who between them had a 22% share of the £660m contract.

Mr Bottomley, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Transport, will be representing HM Government at the opening ceremonies. The Prime Minister has agreed (copy of Trevor Woolley's letter of 7 November attached) that, exceptionally, Mr Bottomley may accept the Consortium's offer of travel to Gabon on the charter flight which they are arranging.

Mr Bottomley would like his wife, Mrs Virginia Bottomley MP, to accompany him to Gabon at public expense, in lieu of a Private Secretary. My Secretary of State supports this. He understands that the French and German Ministers who are attending the ceremonies will be accompanied by their wives, and that there will be a number of social and representational engagements on the programme. In addition, Mrs Bottomley is of course PPS to Mr Patten, Minister of State at the ODA. Since the flight from Paris to Gabon would be provided by the Consortium, the cost to public funds of Mrs Bottomley's visit should be limited to the economy class return air fare from London to Paris plus the supplementary charge for a larger hotel room in Paris, should an overnight stay there be necessary. This should be of the order of £150. This would be less than the cost to public funds of a Private Secretary, who would otherwise travel with Mr Bottomley.

My Secretary of State would be grateful for the Prime Minister's agreement that Mrs Bottomley may accompany her husband to Gabon in this way.

Yours,
Richard.

R A ALLAN
Private Secretary

SUBJECT CC. MASTER
OPS

PRIME MINISTER'S
PERSONAL MESSAGE
SERIAL No. T203/86

RESTRICTED

76702 - 1

RESTRICTED
FM FCO
IMMEDIATE LIBREVILLE
TELNO 82
13170UZ NOVEMBER 86

PRIME MINISTER'S MESSAGE

1. PLEASE ARRANGE FOR THE FOLLOWING MESSAGE FROM THE PRIME MINISTER TO BE PASSED TO PRESIDENT BONGO.
2. BEGINS ON THE OCCASION OF YOUR RE-ELECTION AS PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF GABON I SEND MY WARM CONGRATULATIONS AND BEST WISHES FOR THE FUTURE. I LOOK FORWARD TO THE CONTINUATION OF THE FRIENDSHIP AND COOPERATION WHICH EXIST BETWEEN OUR TWO GOVERNMENTS AND NATIONS. ENDS.

HOWE

OCMIAN 6702

NNNN
MAIN

LIMITED
WAD

PS

PS/MRS CHALKER

MR REEVE

MR FERGUSSON

1

RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED



10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

12 November 1986

**CONGRATULATORY MESSAGE FROM THE
PRIME MINISTER TO THE PRESIDENT OF GABON**

Thank you for your letter of 12 November enclosing a draft message of congratulations from the Prime Minister to the President of Gabon on the occasion of his re-election.

I am confident that the Prime Minister would be content to send a message and the text enclosed with your letter may be despatched.

(Charles Powell)

C. R. Budd, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

12 November 1986

Dear Charles,

Congratulatory Message from the Prime Minister
to President Bongo of Gabon on his Re-Election

The Foreign Secretary believes it would be useful for the Prime Minister to send a congratulatory message to President Bongo of Gabon, following his unopposed re-election on 9 November.

President Bongo, who as Vice-President automatically came to power in 1967 on the death of the previous President, holds virtually all constitutional powers. Further constitutional amendments in March 1983 had the effect of making him President for life. Gabon is nevertheless one of the more stable countries in Black Africa, the regime is not oppressive and so far as one can judge in these circumstances, Bongo does enjoy genuine public support. A recent British IPU delegation described his regime as "benevolent absolutism".

Our political relations with Gabon, though friendly, are not particularly close. Our commercial relations are a good deal more substantial, including a 22% share of Phase II of the Transgabonese Railway Project, which is about to be completed at a total cost of £660 million. The fall in the price of oil has interrupted Gabonese plans for carrying out further major infrastructure projects but it is nevertheless in our own long-term commercial interests to maintain our profile in Gabon. Mr Bottomley will represent Britain at the formal opening of the Transgabonese Railway Phase II, on 30 December.

The Foreign Secretary believes that a message from the Prime Minister would be a useful positive demonstration of our continued interest in Gabon, notwithstanding current economic set-backs, and at the same time, will support British contractors' interest in the possibility of involvement in a proposed third phase of the railway project and a major port development scheme.

Yours ever,

Colin Budd

(C R Budd)
Private Secretary

C D Powell Esq
10 Downing Street

RESTRICTED

PRIME MINISTER'S MESSAGE

1. Please arrange for the following message from the Prime Minister to be passed to President Bongo.

2. On the occasion of your re-election as President of the Republic of Gabon I send my warm congratulations and best wishes for the future. I look forward to the continuation of the friendship and cooperation which exist between our two governments and nations.

TWOAX





70 WHITEHALL, LONDON SW1A 2AS

01-233 8319

Mr Deodman - ju 1970
cc PS/Secretary of State
PS / Mr Mitchell
PS / PB

PS / Sir Alan Boyle
cc new-ab file.

From the Secretary of the Cabinet and Head of the Home Civil Service

Sir Robert Armstrong GCB CVO.

Ref. A086/3208

7 November 1986

Treasurer Sheward,

Official Opening of the TransGabonese Railway

Thank you for your letter of 4 November in which you seek agreement to Mr Bottomley, Parliamentary Under Secretary at the Department of Transport, travelling to Gabon for the official opening of the TransGabonese Railway, courtesy of a charter flight arranged by the European consortium which built the railway.

I have consulted No 10, and the Prime Minister is content, in the exceptional circumstances, for Mr Bottomley to attend this occasion and to use the charter flight arranged by the European consortium. Mr Bottomley should, of course, obtain approval in the formal way for his absence from the country for this period, although I understand that the Prime Minister herself would have no objection.

I am copying this letter to Mr Starling, Department of Transport.

Yours faithfully

T A Woolley

(T A Woolley)
Private Secretary

S L Cowper-Coles Esq
Foreign and Commonwealth Office



10 DOWNING STREET

LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Principal Private Secretary

MR. WOOLLEY
CABINET OFFICE

OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE TRANSGABONESE RAILWAY

Thank you for your minute of 5 November in which you seek agreement to Mr. Bottomley, Parliamentary Under Secretary at the Department of Transport, travelling to Gabon for the official opening of the TransGabonese Railway, courtesy of a charter flight arranged by the European consortium which built the railway.

The Prime Minister is content for Mr. Bottomley to attend this occasion and to use the charter flight arranged by the European consortium.

Mr. Bottomley should, of course, obtain approval in the normal way for his absence from the country for this period, though it could be noted that the Prime Minister would have no objection.

N.L. WICKS
6 November 1986

2

010



Prime Minister
Agree x?

Ref. A086/3169

Yes

N.L.W
S.11

MR WICKS

Official Opening of the TransGabonese Railway

I attach a letter I have received from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office seeking agreement to Mr Bottomley, Minister of State at the Department of Transport, travelling to Gabon for the official opening of the TransGabonese Railway courtesy of a charter flight arranged by the European consortium which built the railway.

X

2. In the exceptional circumstances, Sir Robert Armstrong considers that this request should be agreed to. But I should be grateful to know that you see no objection before I reply to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Trevor Woolley

T A WOOLLEY

5 November 1986



Sir Patrick Wright KCMG
Permanent Under-Secretary of State

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

CABINET OFFICE

A 11113.....

4 NOV 1986

FILING INSTRUCTIONS

FILE 21.....

4 November 1986

T A Woolley Esq

CABINET OFFICE

Dear Trevor

OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE TRANSGABONESE RAILWAY

1. The second phase of the TransGabonese Railway will be officially opened by President Bongo on 30 December. The project was undertaken by a European consortium which included Wimpey International and Taylor Woodrow, who between them had a 22% share of the £660 million contract. Mrs Chalker took an interest in the project when she visited Gabon in 1982 as a Minister at the Department of Transport and has been invited to attend the opening ceremony. She has had to decline owing to other commitments but Mr Bottomley, Minister of State at the Department of Transport, has agreed, at the FCO's request, to represent HMG. Department of Transport officials have, however, said that the costs could not be borne by their travel budget.

2. While officials from the Department of Transport, the DTI and the FCO were deliberating on how to cover the Minister's travel costs, our Embassy in Libreville advised us that the European consortium which built the railway (EUOTRAG) and the railway operating company (OCTRA) would be providing a charter flight from Paris on 28 December, returning to Paris on 31 December for the convenience of the many VIPs, both Government and private sector, attending the ceremony. The French Minister of Transport and his officials, and guests from West Germany, Italy, Belgium and Holland will be travelling on this flight. Mr Bottomley would also like to take advantage of this offer.

3. "Questions of Procedure for Ministers" (paragraph 53) states that Ministers should not normally accept offers of free travel from foreign Governments or other organisations and that in cases of doubt the Prime Minister should be consulted.

PUS



4. We believe that the special circumstances surrounding the provision of this charter flight means it would be in the Government's interest for Mr Bottomley to accept the consortium's offer. His attendance would show our continued interest in the Gabonese market and HMG's willingness to support British companies operating in difficult markets. The special charter flight is by far the most convenient way to travel to Franceville, the site of the opening ceremony, in the period between Christmas and the New Year. There is no suitable hotel accommodation in Franceville and the charter flight will be returning overnight following the ceremony and subsequent reception. Finally, HMG may not be represented at all if the full cost of the travel has to be met.

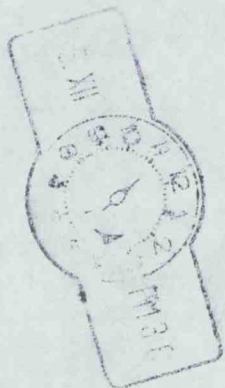
5. I would be grateful for agreement that we may accept the offer of two seats on the EUROTRAG/OCTRA charter flight to Gabon. Mr Bottomley would be prepared to travel alone if necessary, but would prefer to be accompanied by either his Private Secretary or by his wife who is, of course, Parliamentary Private Secretary to Mr Patten.

Yours ever

Sherard Hamod

PP Sherard Cowper-Coles
Private Secretary

cc: N J Starling Esq
Department of Transport



010



With the compliments of

WEST AFRICAN DEPARTMENT

J. D. Clark

302 JLN

FOREIGN & COMMONWEALTH OFFICE
LONDON SW1

ccfc

CONFIDENTIAL

RECORD OF CALL ON MR MALCOLM RIFKIND MP BY MRS LYNDA CHALKER MP, MINISTER OF STATE, DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT AT 3 P.M. ON WEDNESDAY 11 DECEMBER 1985

Present

Mr Rifkind
Mr Clark, WAD
APS/Mr Rifkind

Mrs Chalker

1. In welcoming Mrs Chalker, Mr Rifkind said that he had seen a telegram from our Ambassador in Yaoundé reporting Mrs Chalker's outstandingly successful visit to Cameroon. Mr Rifkind asked if Mrs Chalker's visit to Gabon was also a success.

2. Mrs Chalker said that throughout her West African trip, she was ably supported by four first class business men, Mr Dennis Wheatland, Balfour Beatty Power Construction Ltd, Mr Simon Coventry, British Rail Engineering Ltd, Mr Tony Piall, Plessey Airports Ltd and Mr Roger Lavis, George Wimpey International Ltd.

GABON

3. Mrs Chalker said that President Bongo of Gabon was a difficult character by comparison with President Biya. However she was able to get through to him on a number of points.

4. The Transgabonese railway project in which British companies have a 22% stake is proceeding well. The party visited the end of the line at a place forty miles from Franceville where, Mrs Chalker said, she met the Provincial Governor with whom she had a tête-a-tête. The Gabonese are keen to press on with Phase III of the project in order to exploit the country's iron-ore deposits, but Mrs Chalker had reservations about its economic prospects.

5. The Gabonese needed to inject more realism into their economic/developmental strategy. Mrs Chalker thought more work could be done to reduce the 70% food which Gabon now imports. A road needed to be built linking Port Gentil, Cambarené and Libreville. The swampland near Port Gentil would be expensive and difficult. Other port projects might be in sight.

CONFIDENTIAL

6. Mrs Chalker felt that her visit, as the first Ministerial one for a number of years, had gone well. She had been extremely impressed by our Chargé, Mr John Cummins, who had contributed greatly to making the visit a success. Mr Cummins was ably assisted by Mr Keith Moss, on temporary duty from London.

CAMEROON

7. Mrs Chalker was impressed with President Biya. Having now been in power over three years, he was much more confident, prepared to speak frankly in private. The President told Mrs Chalker that he was not willing to continue working solely with the French. He told her that Cameroon needed the British. He said his priorities were :

- (a) To improve the efficiency of agricultural production and distribution and thereby to assist exports.
- (b) Infrastructure and Security.
- (c) Health and Education - the President said that Cameroon will accept 20 VSO students for next September.

8. Mrs Chalker discussed in general terms with President Biya the British involvement in Cameroon. She told him of her pleasure in respect of the North West electrification contract agreed that morning for signature. Other matters sometimes seem delayed within the Cameroonian bureaucratic system. The President suggested that Mr Ongolo, the Minister responsible for co-ordinating projects under the ATP Agreement, be invited to join the discussions. The President asked for his assistance on other contracts and potential schemes to be given to UK.

9. President Biya agreed that it would be cheaper and more effective in the short-term to rehabilitate the port at Limbé rather than go ahead with the major restructural work required at Kribi. The President asked if we could arrange for a feasibility study to be carried out at Limbé. The President made a number of points about rehabilitating Limbé :

- (a) A feasibility study was required: (Mrs Chalker said that we should make every effort to persuade the ODA to carry out this study).

/(b)

CONFIDENTIAL

- (b) Rehabilitation of the port would speed up the export of agricultural produce to surrounding countries
- (c) The Blue Circle cement factory is to be located at Limbé. The factory needs clinker which must be imported from Spain and Limbé port would be more convenient than Douala.
- (d) There had been land incursions by Nigeria in the past. The President said that he was concerned about possible sea incursions.

10. Mrs Chalker said that Plessey have done well at Garoua airport. We should press President Biya to carry out initial studies on further road projects after the Bamenda ring-road since such projects required a large investment in heavy machinery and it made more sense to deal with projects of this kind in groups.

11. The President told Mrs Chalker that school class numbers were down from around 120 to 50 and efforts would continue to get a better balance. He was aware that there was a good deal of feeling on the subject of education in the Anglophone provinces and they would get additional help.

12. President Biya asked that Mrs Chalker personally inform Mrs Thatcher that our Ambassador, Mr Glaze, was doing an excellent job. The President said that with a man like Mr Glaze, he knew he could do business. Mrs Chalker added that the success of the visit to Cameroon was in no small way due to Mr Glaze's efforts. She said she was also impressed by Mr Jardine, our Consul in Douala, who had established good rapport and had access at the highest levels including the Provincial Governor. Finally, Mrs Chalker said that she was impressed by the willingness of a number of British companies to do business in Cameroon and Gabon.

West African Department
17 December 1985

Distribution: see below

CONFIDENTIAL

cc: PS/Mr Rifkind
PS/Mrs Chalker
PS/No.10 ←
Private Office
Mr Fergusson
Mr Johnson
TRED
POD
PPD

HMA, Yaoundé
HMA, Libreville
HMC, Douala

Mr Buist, ODA
Dr Osborne, ODA
Mr Everett, DTI, OT4
R Pounder, Dept of Transport
P G Taylor, PEP, DTI

CONFIDENTIAL



SUBJECT
cc Master
ops.



CC FCO
DTI.

10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

8 March 1984

**PRIME MINISTER'S
PERSONAL MESSAGE
SERIAL No. T37A/84.**

Dear Mr President,

I was delighted to receive a call by M. Georges Rawiri, First Vice-Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Transport of the Gabonese Republic on 22 February during his visit to the United Kingdom.

I am most grateful for the personal letter from you which M. Rawiri delivered when he called. I fully endorse your wish to develop further the ties between our two countries and am encouraged that discussions are now underway to negotiate an Economic Co-operation Agreement. We look forward to this being signed in the near future.

I am confident that M. Rawiri's visit and the earlier visit to Gabon by my colleague Mr. Alex Fletcher have already done much to facilitate discussion in a range of areas and have strengthened the links between Gabon and the United Kingdom.

It was also extremely helpful to have M. Rawiri's personal advice on the current position regarding the negotiations for the construction of the Port Gentil-Bifoun road between the Gabonese authorities and ARCO. We very much hope to play a prominent part in this prestigious project.

/ During

Boe.

During our talk, M. Rawiri referred to Gabon's candidature for the office of Secretary General of the OAU. The United Kingdom of course has no standing in the organisation, but we certainly await with interest the outcome of your bid for this important and influential post.

May I conclude, Mr. President, by sending you my warm regards and best wishes for the forthcoming celebrations to commemorate the 16th Anniversary of the foundation of the Gabonese Democratic Party.

Yours sincerely
Nang'endo Khatu

H.E. El Hadj Omar Bongo, G.C.M.G.



JF5882

PS/ Secretary of State for Trade and Industry

DEPARTMENT OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY
1-19 VICTORIA STREET
LONDON SW1H 0ET

Telephone (Direct dialling) 01-215 5422
GTN 215)
(Switchboard) 215 7877

6 March 1984

David Barclay Esq
Private Secretary to the
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
LONDON
SW1

Type letter pl.

MR 2/3.

Dear David,

MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT BONGO OF GABON TO THE PRIME MINISTER

Thank you for your letter of 22 February about the meeting which M. Georges Rawiri, the Deputy Prime Minister of Gabon, had with the Prime Minister earlier that day, in the course of which he delivered a message from President Bongo.

2 The letter from the President refers to the following:

- (i) the interest which Gabon has in strengthening ties with the UK;
- (ii) the need for a Joint Commission between the UK and Gabon;
- (iii) the conclusion of negotiations with Wimpey and Taylor Woodrow in the near future for the construction of the Port Gentil-Bifoun road;
- (iv) Gabon's candidature for the post of Secretary General of the OAU and the hope that HMG will persuade Commonwealth countries to support this.

... 3 The attached draft reply for the Prime Minister to send to President Bongo answers these points: the response to the one about the OAU has been cleared with officials in the FCO.

4 I am sending a copy of this letter and the enclosures to Roger Bone (Foreign and Commonwealth Office).

Yours ever, Ruth

RUTH THOMPSON
Private Secretary

Encl

HE M. El Hadj Omar Bongo
President of the Gabonese Republic
Libreville
Gabon

I was delighted to receive a call by M. Georges Rawiri, First Vice-Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Transport of the Gabonese Republic on 22 February during his visit to the United Kingdom.

I am most grateful for the personal letter from you which M. Rawiri delivered when he called. I fully endorse your wish to develop further the ties between our two countries and am encouraged that discussions are now underway to negotiate an Economic Cooperation Agreement. We look forward to this being signed in the near future.

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It was also extremely helpful to have M. Rawiri's personal advice on the current position regarding the negotiations for the construction of the Port Gentil-Bifoun road between the Gabonese authorities and ARCO. We very much hope to play a prominent part in this prestigious project.

During our talk, Monsieur Rawiri referred to Gabon's candidature for the office of Secretary General of the OAU. The United Kingdom of course has no standing in the organisation, but we certainly await with interest the outcome of your bid for this important and influential post.

May I conclude, Mr President, by sending you my warm regards and best wishes for the forthcoming celebrations to commemorate the 16th Anniversary of the foundation of the Gabonese Democratic Party.

Mr 2/3 .

GABON : Relations : Jan 80

- 7 MAR 1984



FHR SH

SUBJECT
cc Rawster



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

22 February, 1984

M. Georges Rawiri, the Deputy Prime Minister of Gabon, called on the Prime Minister briefly this morning. He delivered a message from the President (a copy of which has already been sent to you). I should be grateful for a draft reply for the Prime Minister's signature in due course.

The Prime Minister said that she was very pleased to see M. Rawiri in this country, and she offered him a warm welcome. The United Kingdom had watched with admiration the development of Gabon's successful economy, which owed a great deal to sound financial management. The Prime Minister asked M. Rawiri to convey her warm regards to the President.

M. Rawiri thanked the Prime Minister for seeing him in the midst of her many other engagements. He was delighted to visit this country, and had enjoyed useful discussions with the Prime Minister's colleagues. Gabon was a French speaking country, but its government wished to diversify its international contacts, and Britain was foremost among its friends. The Prime Minister said that she greatly welcomed this: Gabon had set an example which could greatly benefit other countries in Africa which, despite large resources, seemed unable to achieve the same level of stability.

In handing over the President's message, M. Rawiri referred in particular to the road between Port-Gentil and Bifoun. A number of French companies had wanted to be involved in its construction, but the Deputy Prime Minister's view was that preference would be given to a British firm. The Prime Minister said that this was very good news. She asked when a final decision could be expected. M. Rawiri replied that this would be by 15 March.

M. Rawiri said that there were also two British companies involved in the Trans-Gabonese Railway Project, the financing of which had already been arranged. Already Gabon had decided to purchase £12 million worth of British products. The Prime

/Minister

Minister expressed her pleasure at the good performance being recorded by British companies: the Government had worked hard to improve the efficiency of British firms.

Finally, M. Rawiri referred to Gabon's candidature for the post of Secretary General of the OAU. The Prime Minister said that although the United Kingdom was not, of course, a member of the organisation, she wished Gabon well in its efforts to obtain this position.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Roger Bone (Foreign and Commonwealth Office).

(DAVID BARCLAY)

Miss Ruth Thompson,
Department of Trade and Industry.

SUBJECT
cc OPS
Master.



PRIME MINISTER'S
PERSONAL MESSAGE
SERIAL No. T33/84

République Gabonaise
Union. Travail. Justice

Le Président de la République

Libreville, le 17 février 1984

Madame le Premier Ministre,

Au moment où le Vice-Premier Ministre Georges RAWIRI entreprend en Grande-Bretagne une visite qui, nous en sommes persuadés, contribuera au renforcement des liens entre nos deux pays, il m'est agréable de vous faire part de l'intérêt que mon pays attache à la coopération avec la Grande-Bretagne et de ma volonté de voir celle-ci approfondie et diversifiée.

C'est fort de cette volonté que nous avons encouragé l'échange de missions entre nos deux pays et que j'ai apprécié au plus haut point la visite effectuée récemment au Gabon par votre Sous-Secrétaire au Commerce extérieur, Monsieur Alexander FLETCHER. Cette visite a eu notamment le mérite de convaincre les experts de nos délégations de la nécessité de donner à notre coopération un cadre juridique approprié pour la mise en place d'une commission mixte, dont je suis convaincu que vous admettez le principe.

En tout état de cause, je marque l'espoir que des négociations à cet effet puissent s'ouvrir rapidement et aboutir à des résultats concrets et fructueux dans l'intérêt bien compris de nos deux pays.

Le Vice-Premier Ministre aura donc l'occasion pendant son séjour en Grande-Bretagne d'aborder tous ces problèmes. Le Gabon s'étant déjà résolument lancé dans une coopération effective avec la Grande-Bretagne, j'ai demandé à Monsieur Georges RAWIRI de vous informer de l'aboutissement prochain des négociations pour la route PORT-GENTIL-BIFOUN menées entre les autorités gabonaises et une entreprise britannique ARCO.

Madame Margaret THATCHER
Premier Ministre du Royaume-Uni
de Grande-Bretagne et d'Irlande
du Nord

LONDRES

/...

Le Président de la République

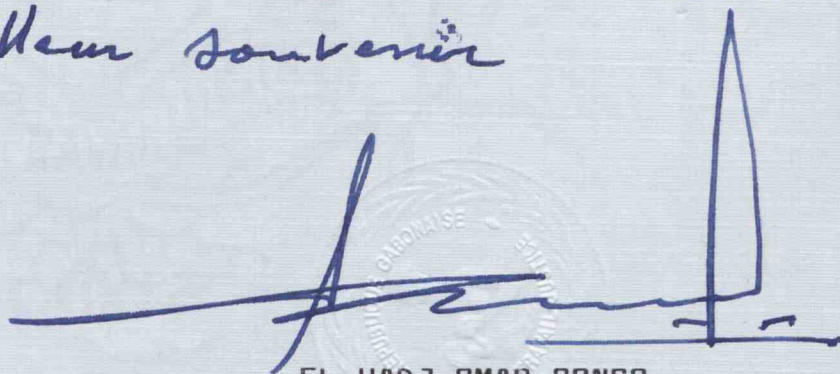
Mais je ne voudrais pas laisser passer cette occasion sans vous dire combien j'apprécie hautement tout l'intérêt que le Royaume-Uni a toujours porté à la cause de la paix et de la stabilité politique et économique sur le continent africain de même que l'importance de l'aide que vous avez en maintes circonstances accordée à ce continent.

C'est soucieux de garantir ces nobles idéaux et conscient du rôle déterminant de l'Organisation de l'Unité africaine pour leur maintien que le Gabon, mon pays, qui s'évertue de sauvegarder dans ce monde moderne perturbé depuis plus d'un demi-siècle par des conflits sanglants et fratricides en Afrique plus particulièrement, s'est porté candidat au poste de Secrétaire général de l'OUA.

Aussi sais-je pouvoir compter sur vos bons offices et ceux du Gouvernement que vous dirigez avec tant de clairvoyance auprès des pays africains membres du Commonwealth pour les convaincre de la nécessité de faire l'unité autour de la candidature gabonaise dont j'ai chargé par ailleurs Monsieur RAWIRI de vous entretenir.

Je vous prie d'accepter les vœux que je forme pour votre bonheur personnel et celui du peuple britannique et d'agréer Madame le Premier Ministre, l'hommage de mon respect.

*de la
mon meilleur souvenir*

A large, stylized handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of several sweeping strokes. The signature is positioned above a circular official seal and the printed name of the signatory.

EL HADJ OMAR BONGO

NON-OFFICIAL TRANSLATION

Libreville, 17th February 1984

Mrs. The Prime Minister,

At a time when the Vice-Prime Minister Georges RAWIRI is having a visit in Great-Britain, which we are convinced of it, will contribute to reinforce the bonds between our two countries, it is really a pleasure for me to let you know about the interest my country is taking in the cooperation with Great-Britain and also about my will to see it stronger and more diversified.

It is according to this will that we have encouraged the exchange of Missions in between our two countries and that I have appreciated so much the visit recently made in Gabon by Your Under-Secretary of State for Corporate and Consumer Affairs, Mr. Alexander Fletcher. This visit had in particular the advantage to convince the experts of our delegations of the necessity of giving to our cooperation a juridical framework suitable for the settlement of a joint commission, the principle of which I am sure you will agree about it.

In any case, I do hope that the negotiations regarding this matter will start very quickly and will lead to concrete and fruitful results for the common good of our two countries.

Therefore, the Vice-Prime Minister will have the opportunity, during his stay in Great-Britain, of approaching all these problems. Our country being already actually involved in a cooperation with Great-Britain, I have asked to Mr. Georges Rawiri to inform you about the near future of the negotiations for the road PORT-GENTIL/BIFOUN worked out by the Gabonese Authorities and an english firm ARCO.

But I would not let this opportunity of telling You how much I appreciate highly the interest of the United-Kingdom for the cause of the peace and the political and economics stability in the African world, together with the important help that you brought many times to this continent.

.../...

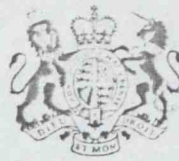
Anxious of guaranteing these noble ideals and conscious of the determinative part of the Organisation for the African Unity regarding this matter, my country, which is doing his utmost to achieve these principles in a world modern and disturbed since more than half a century by cruel and fratricide conflicts especially in Africa, has applied for the position of General Secretary of the OUA.

Therefore, I know that I can rely on your support and the support of your Government to convince the African countries of the Commonwealth of the necessity of joining themselves to help the Gabonese candidature ; anywhay, Mr. Georges Rawiri is in charge of conversing with You about this matter.

Please accept the wishes I make for your own personal good fortune and for the British people, and my respectful and best souvenir.

EL HADJ OMAR BONGO

Mrs. Margaret Thatcher
Prime Minister of the
United Kingdom of
Great Britain and Northern
Ireland.



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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

22 February 1984

I enclose a copy of the message from the President of Gabon which M. Rawiri handed to the Prime Minister this morning. I also enclose an unofficial translation.

A record of the meeting will follow shortly.

I am sending a copy of this letter and the enclosures to Roger Bone (Foreign and Commonwealth Office).

David Barclay

Miss Ruth Thompson,
Department of Trade and Industry.

Se



DEPARTMENT OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY
1-19 VICTORIA STREET
LONDON SW1H 0ET

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JU763

PS/ Secretary of State for Trade and Industry

21 February 1984

David Barclay Esq
Private Secretary to the
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London SW1

Dear David,

COURTESY CALL ON THE PRIME MINISTER BY M. GEORGES RAWIRI: 22
FEBRUARY, AT 10.45am

I am attaching a short brief, points to make, and background
trade and political briefs for this courtesy call. These have
been cleared with the FCO.

2 M. Rawiri has asked for the call in order to deliver a letter
from the President of Gabon. We have reason to believe that this
letter (in reply to one from the Prime Minister) may announce
President Bongo's intention of awarding a £195m roads contract to
a consortium led by Wimpey and Taylor Woodrow (known to the
Gabonese as ARCO. It would be helpful if the Prime Minister were
to open the letter in M. Rawiri's presence to establish that this
is the case. If so, no doubt she will ask for suitable
expressions of thanks to be conveyed to President Bongo.

3 I am sending a copy of this letter to Roger Bone at the FCO.

Yours,
A. Thompson

RP RUTH THOMPSON
Private Secretary

Encs



COURTESY CALL ON THE PRIME MINISTER ON 22 FEBRUARY 1984 AT 10.45
BY M GEORGES RAWIRI, FIRST VICE PRIME MINISTER, DEPUTY PRIME
MINISTER AND MINISTER OF TRANSPORT OF THE GABONESE REPUBLIC

1. Those attending the meeting

His Excellency M Georges Rawiri

His Excellency M Leon N'Dong, Gabonese Ambassador

His Excellency Mr A H Grey, Ambassador, Libreville

Miss M-C Kerr, DTI/OT5

Mrs V Landon, Interpreter

2. Reason for the Call on the Prime Minister

M Rawiri is expected to hand over a letter from President Bongo in reply to Mrs Thatcher's letter at Annex A. We have been led to believe that the letter expresses President Bongo's intention of awarding the road contract to Wimpey and Taylor Woodrow. Thank M Rawiri for the letter if appropriate, express pleasure at the awarding of this important contract to two of the UK's leading companies.

3. Points to Make:

a) Congratulate M Rawiri on the fact that Gabon is manifestly one of the best-run economies in Africa; Gabon is the only country in Black Africa to have a consistent balance of payments surplus.

b) Extremely pleased that Wimpey and Taylor Woodrow are part of the consortium which is building phase 2 of the prestigious Trans-Gabonese Railway.

4. Defensive Points

a) (If raised). We are actively considering the Gabonese



proposal to conclude an Economic Cooperation agreement and hope to be able to agree on a text with the Gabonese shortly.

b) M Rawiri would like to see more English language training made available for the Gabonese. Mention that this will be one of the topics discussed at M Rawiri's meeting with Mr Rifkind later that morning.

c) M Rawiri may try to enlist the Prime Minister's support for Gabon's candidature for the post of Secretary-General of the OAU. Regret UK has no standing in OAU, cannot lobby on behalf of individual states, but wish Gabon well in their candidature.

6. A Political Note on Gabon, prepared by West Africa Department, FCO is attached at Annex C.

OT5/3
Department of Trade and Industry
February 1984



10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

3 January 1984

Dear Mr. President-

I am very pleased that the Government of Gabon has been kind enough to receive Mr. Alex Fletcher and the group of businessmen accompanying him. I have asked him to bring you this personal letter to express my hope and confidence that his visit will reinforce the very good relations which exist between our two countries.

The UK Government was delighted that British firms were able to participate in the second stage of the Trans-Gabon railway. I understand that the Gabonese Government now attaches high priority to road improvement, and was pleased to learn that the two major British companies involved in the railways programme - Wimpey International and Taylor Woodrow International - are at an advanced stage of negotiations for the building of a major road to link Libreville and Port Gethyl to the Trans-Gabon railway. I hope that our firms and financial institutions will have the opportunity to make a valuable contribution to this further major development of Gabon's economic infrastructure.

I am glad too that relations are developing over a broad front: not only in trade, but also in education and training.

I conclude, Mr. President, by conveying to you my warm personal good wishes for the New Year and for the continuing prosperity of Gabon.

Yours sincerely
Margaret Thatcher

His Excellency El Hadj Omar Bongo, G.C.M.G.



GABON

ECONOMY AND TRADE BRIEF

UK/GABON TRADE

	£m					
	<u>1978</u>	<u>1979</u>	<u>1980</u>	<u>1981</u>	<u>1982</u>	<u>1983</u>
UK exports to Gabon	7.7	8.5	9.2	12.1	14.2	18.8
UK imports from Gabon	4.4	12.9	10.7	36.8	27.6	66.1

UK principal exports to Gabon - machinery and transport equipment, miscellaneous manufactured articles, beverages and tobacco.

UK principal imports from Gabon - petroleum and wood.

(Source: Overseas Trade Statistics of the UK)

GENERAL

Gabon which straddles the Equator, is slightly larger in area than the UK and has a (disputed) population of less than 1 million. It became independent from France in 1960.

ECONOMY

From our point of view, Gabon is a small market but with significant potential for UK companies who are able to secure business there on commercial terms. Gabon has the highest per capita GNP (\$3,700) in Black Africa, it is one of the few African countries to have a balance of payments surplus (£50m in 1982), and is Black Africa's second largest oil producer after Nigeria. Gabon also has the second largest reserves of timber in West Africa and is rich in manganese, uranium and iron ore. At the end of 1982 the official foreign exchange reserves stood at £220m.



PROJECTS WON

Taylor Woodrow International and George Wimpey International together have already secured a 22% share of the construction of Stage 2 of the Transgabonese Railway: the value of this contract is valued at £320m. Contracts have also been signed up for Brush locos, BREL coaches, Henry Boot turn-outs and British Steel rails and NEI cranes, under a Midland Bank line of credit.

FUTURE PROSPECTS

There is more business to be won. Apart from the major road contract (£195m) being pursued by Wimpey and Taylor Woodrow, we hope that UK companies will secure contracts in Phase 3 of the Transgabonese Railway (worth £213m altogether). Other projects being pursued include housing developments, airports, agriculture and military equipment, and some consumer goods.

Mr Fletcher's visit in early January went well and gave a visible fillip to business currently being pursued. British Caledonian, for example, made substantial progress with their negotiations for a direct airlink London Libreville (to start next Spring) and Racal COMSEC signed a contract for security equipment with the possibility of further orders.

GABON: POLITICAL NOTES

Internal Scene

1. Independent from France in 1960. One of more stable and moderate countries in Black Africa. President Omar Bongo came to power in 1967 upon death of President Leon M'ba. 1968 one-party Government and creation of Parti Démocratique Gabonais. 47 member National Assembly, elected every five years, has little power. March 1983 constitutional changes effectively made Bongo President for life. Still only in his late forties. Designation of Prime Minister Léon Mebiame as Head of Government has had little effect upon the power base, which remains firmly within the Presidential Palace.
2. Bongo remains acutely sensitive to any signs of criticism. November 1982, 37 members of an illegal opposition group MORENA (Mouvement de redressement national) were tried on charges of endangering state security and insulting the President, although no claim of violent intent. Eight defendants acquitted, but the others received prison sentences of up to 20 years. Amnesty International concerned about human rights in Gabon, but record no better or worse than that in many other countries in Africa and elsewhere.

External Relations

3. Pro-Western; closely linked to France, although some strains following election of Socialist Government in France and publication of a book in Paris last November deeply critical of Bongo regime. Bongo had already demonstrated that he wanted other friends, including the UK and the USA.
4. Pragmatic foreign policy; little dogma or theory. Gabon plays a moderate role in OAU; refuses to recognize the SADR (Western Sahara) and supports President Habré of Chad. Low profile on Southern Africa.

Bilateral Relations

5. Exports 1982 £14m; 1983 £18m. Imports £28m 1982; £66m 1983. Increasing number of Gabonese students studying in UK; in particular we fund training for young Gabonese diplomats at Queen Elizabeth House, Oxford. (Aid programme £40,000 in 1984/85). Also training with BBC for some journalists in 1982/83, who are now working for Gabonese Radio Station.

/6. Resident



6. Resident Gabonese Embassy in London. British Embassy in Libreville reopened in 1979 (2 UK-based staff): devotes about 5% of its time to political work, and most of balance to commercial work. Several Ministerial visits in both directions in past 3-4 years (most recently Mr Alex Fletcher in January). Gabonese Parliamentarians visited the UK July 1983 under IPU auspices; a return invitation outstanding.

WEST AFRICAN DEPARTMENT
FOREIGN & COMMONWEALTH OFFICE
21 February 1984



GEORGES RAWIRI-BOUROUX

Born in 1932 in Lambarene. He studied at the Office of Radiophonic Co-operation in Paris, from which he qualified. After a brief career in broadcasting (he was Director of Gabonese Radiofusion from 1960-63) he entered government in 1964 and has held a succession of important posts.

- 1964 - 66 Minister of Information, Tourism, Posts and Telecommunications
- 1965 - 66 Also Ambassador to France, UK, Spain, Italy and Israel
- 1966 - 71 Ambassador to France and Minister of State responsible for the Gabonese Embassy in Paris
- 1971 - 73 Minister of State for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation
- 1973 - 74 Minister of State at the Presidency and personal representative of the President. Responsibility for Foreign Affairs and Co-operation (1973) General Secretariat of the Government (1974) and Economic Co-ordination (1974)
- 1975 - 83 Minister of State for Transport
- 1982 Also First Vice Prime Minister.

Rawiri is said to be the person closest to President Bongo. The President's appointment of such a trusted associate as Minister of Transport reflects the importance attached to the Transgabonais railway in Gabon's development plan. Rawiri is married to a French woman and is a friendly and efficient man.



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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

20 February 1984

Deputy Prime Minister of Gabon

The Prime Minister has agreed to see Mr. Rawiri for 15 minutes at 1045 on 22 February. I understand that he has an appointment with the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary at 1100.

I am copying this letter to Peter Ricketts (Foreign and Commonwealth Office).

A. J. COLES

Miss Ruth Thompson,
Department of Trade and Industry.

VC

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DEPARTMENT OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY

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Prime Minutes

Agree to see him to
15 minutes at 10.45
on 22 February? - he sees the
Foreign Secretary at 11.00.

17 February 1984

JU699
PS / Secretary of State for Trade and Industry

David Barclay Esq
Private Secretary to the
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London SW1

A.S.C. 1/2

Yes mt

Dear David,

VISIT TO THE UK OF GABON'S DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER, 20-22 FEBRUARY

My Secretary of State has invited Mr Georges Rawiri, Gabon's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Transport on an official visit to Britain next week.

2 The main object of the visit is to give support to Taylor Woodrow and Wimpey and to further negotiations on their bid to secure a £200m feeder roads contract in connection with the Transgabonese Railway project.

3 Taylor Woodrow and Wimpey already have a 22% interest in Eurotrag, the European consortium, who are building the railway. Their involvement to date has resulted in project business with a UK content of £62m. A number of smaller contracts have also been signed recently for the supply of rails, rolling stock and other railway equipment, with good prospects for follow-on business in these sectors; while it is hoped that another UK consortium will win the contract for the Gabonese Railways' new headquarters building.

4 Mr Rawiri will be bringing with him a reply to the letter the Prime Minister wrote supporting Taylor Woodrow and Wimpey to President Bongo and which Mr Alex Fletcher passed on during his visit to Gabon last month (copy attached for ease of reference).

5 The Gabonese Ambassador has written to Sir Geoffrey Howe and my Secretary of State to solicit our support in requesting a call on No 10 to enable Mr Rawiri to deliver President Bongo's letter personally.

6 Given the current shortage of large scale project business on the international scene and the fact that so many developing countries are saddled with heavy debt repayment problems, we believe there is a strong commercial case for strengthening our ties with Gabon. As an oil producer with the highest GDP in Black Africa it has an impressive balance of payments record and



has built up useful foreign currency reserves. It is, in short, one of the few developing countries which is a good payer.

7 In the circumstances, I would be grateful if you could let us know whether it might be possible to squeeze in a short courtesy call during Mr Rawiri's visit. I am copying this letter to Peter Ricketts for information.

Yours ever,

Ruth

RUTH THOMPSON
Private Secretary



10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

3 January 1984

Dear Mr. President,

I am very pleased that the Government of Gabon has been kind enough to receive Mr. Alex Fletcher and the group of businessmen accompanying him. I have asked him to bring you this personal letter to express my hope and confidence that his visit will reinforce the very good relations which exist between our two countries.

The UK Government was delighted that British firms were able to participate in the second stage of the Trans-Gabon railway. I understand that the Gabonese Government now attaches high priority to road improvement, and was pleased to learn that the two major British companies involved in the railways programme - Wimpey International and Taylor Woodrow International - are at an advanced stage of negotiations for the building of a major road to link Libreville and Port Gehtil to the Trans-Gabon railway. I hope that our firms and financial institutions will have the opportunity to make a valuable contribution to this further major development of Gabon's economic infrastructure.

I am glad too that relations are developing over a broad front: not only in trade, but also in education and training.

I conclude, Mr. President, by conveying to you my warm personal good wishes for the New Year and for the continuing prosperity of Gabon.

Yours sincerely
Margaret Thatcher

His Excellency El Hadj Omar Bongo, G.C.M.G.

Gabon: UK/Gabon Relats Jan 80





Jo VC

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

3 January 1984

Wimpey International: Road Contract in
Gabon

Thank you for your letter of 23 December.

The Prime Minister has signed the proposed letter to the President of Gabon and I enclose the signed version for Mr. Fletcher to deliver during his visit to Gabon from 4-13 January.

I am copying this letter and enclosure to Roger Bone (Foreign and Commonwealth Office).

A. J. COLES

David Wallace, Esq.,
Department of Trade and Industry.

NR

SUBJECT

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PRIME MINISTER'S
PERSONAL MESSAGE
SERIAL No. T3184

10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

3 January 1984

Dear Mr. President:

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I conclude, Mr. President, by conveying to you my warm personal good wishes for the New Year and for the continuing prosperity of Gabon.

Yours sincerely
Margaret Thatcher

His Excellency El Hadj Omar Bongo, G.C.M.G.

VC



DEPARTMENT OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY
1-19 VICTORIA STREET
LONDON SW1H 0ET

TELEPHONE (DIRECT LINE) 01-215 5662
GTN 215
(SWITCHBOARD) 215 3000

From the
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State
for Corporate and Consumer Affairs

PS/Prime Minister

Prime Minister

*Letter attached for signature,
if you agree. (Dear Mr President)*

23 December 1983

*DWS
30/12*

Dear Private Secretary

WIMPEY INTERNATIONAL: ROAD CONTRACT IN GABON

Mr Alex Fletcher will be heading a Trade Mission to Congo and Gabon from January 4-13 as part of our effort to strengthen the British foothold in the largely French-dominated francophone countries of West Africa.

One of the contracts which Mr Fletcher hopes to help clinch for the UK is one for a valuable feeder road (worth £130 million to the UK), linking the capital, Libreville, to the Trans-Gabon railway. The joint British bidders are Wimpey International and Taylor Woodrow. A representative of Wimpey, Mr Astley will be accompanying Mr Fletcher on the mission.

It is apparently common practice in Gabon for visiting Ministers to hand over letters from their Heads of Government, conveying good wishes as well as highlighting the importance attached by that Government to particular contracts. In this case, the Gabonese Minister of Transport and First Vice-Prime Minister, Mr Rawiri, has actually suggested to our Ambassador in Libreville that a letter from the Prime Minister to President Bongo of Gabon would be helpful to our securing the roads contract. In view of this, not to send one might well be regarded as a snub by the Gabonese Government.

... If this is acceptable you will find attached a draft letter to President Bongo of Gabon - which has been cleared with FO officials - for the Prime Minister's signature. I am copying this letter and the attachments to the Private Secretary to Sir Geoffrey Howe.

Yours sincerely

DAVID WALLACE
Private Secretary to
Mr Alex Fletcher

HE El Hadj Omar Bongo GCMG
President of the Republic of Gabon

I am very pleased that the Government of Gabon has been kind enough to receive Mr Alex Fletcher and the group of businessmen accompanying him. I have asked him to bring you this personal letter to express my hope and confidence that his visit will reinforce the very good relations which exist between our two countries.

The UK Government was delighted that British firms were able to participate in the second stage of the Trans-Gabon railway. I understand that the Gabonese Government now attaches high priority to road improvement, and was pleased to learn that the two major British companies involved in the railways programme - Wimpey International and Taylor Woodrow International - are at an advanced stage of negotiations for the building of a major road to link Libreville and Port Gehtil to the Trans-Gabon railway. I hope that our firms and financial institutions will have the opportunity to make a valuable contribution to this further major development of Gabon's economic infrastructure.

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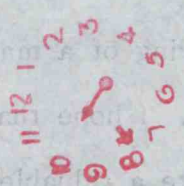
President of the Republic of Gabon

I am very pleased that the Government of Gabon has been kind enough to request the assistance of the British Government in the construction of the railway.

The British Government has agreed to provide the necessary financial assistance for the construction of the railway. This assistance will be provided in the form of a loan.

The British Government has also agreed to provide technical assistance in the form of experts and consultants. This assistance will be provided on a non-reimbursable basis.

29 DEC 1963



The British Government will continue to provide technical assistance to the Government of Gabon in the construction of the railway.

I am sure that the railway will be a great benefit to the people of Gabon.

Yours faithfully,

Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs

The New Year and for the continuing progress of Gabon.

THE MINISTER'S
PERSONAL MESSAGE
SERIAL No. T42/82

Gabon

JR

Subject



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10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

9 March 1982

Dear Mr. President,

I was very pleased to receive your letter of 10 February, which Lord Carrington passed on to me following his meeting on 19 February with M. Martin Bongo. I am sorry that I was not able to receive your delegation myself on this occasion. I vividly recall our very useful and enjoyable meeting during your last visit to London in May 1980.

We have given careful study to your letter, in which are set out the substantial costs involved in the holding of a conference on the scale of UNCTAD VI. We well understand your wish to carry out in full measure the obligations assumed by host capitals, despite the financial constraints your government faces. However, as Lord Carrington remarked to M. Bongo, we ourselves are facing pressures for economy which have led us to scrutinize with care all manner of governmental expenditure, including the level of our contributions to international agencies. Against this background, we would find it difficult to meet your request for assistance.

Even if the resources were forthcoming, time does seem to be very short for the expansion you plan of your existing facilities. I am sure that in welcoming your country's offer to host the conference, it was not the intention of the UNCTAD membership to impose a heavy financial burden on Gabon. We hope that discussions in Geneva might prove constructive, perhaps by reaching agreement to adjust the scale of UNCTAD VI so that there is no undue burden on facilities in Libreville. No doubt

/ the March

the March meeting of the Trade and Development Board will provide an opportunity for further consideration of the question.

I am sorry that I am unable to give a more helpful reply on the UNCTAD matter. But I should like to take this opportunity to express my personal pleasure at the development and strengthening of our bilateral relations which has taken place during the last year. His Royal Highness The Duke of Kent, Sir Geoffrey Howe and Mr. Richard Luce have all told me of the friendly and generous hospitality which they found during their visits to Libreville. I have also learned with pleasure of the recent signing of a project line of credit which will facilitate British participation in your immense enterprise of constructing the Trans-Gabonese Railway, and so give visible proof of the flourishing of British-Gabonese co-operation.

I understand that Richard Luce has conveyed an invitation to your Minister for Foreign Affairs and Co-operation to pay a more substantial visit to the United Kingdom later this year. I hope that it will be possible for this to be arranged very soon.

May I take this opportunity, Your Excellency, to renew to you the assurance of my highest consideration.

Yours sincerely
Raymond Dethier

His Excellency El Hadj Omar Bongo, GCMG.

RESTRICTED



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

8 March 1982

Dear John,

Gabon

The Gabonese Foreign Minister handed Lord Carrington on 19 February the enclosed personal message from President Bongo to the Prime Minister seeking financial assistance to enable the Gabonese to meet their obligations as host nation for the UNCTAD VI Conference in May/June 1983. Similar requests have been made to the United States, Canada, France and the FRG.

We understand that the UNCTAD Secretariat consider the facilities in Libreville well short of estimated minimum requirements. The Gabonese consider that expenditure of about £70 million is necessary to augment these facilities.

Gabon's offer to act as host saved UNCTAD from the crisis created by an offer from Cuba and the refusal of the Americans to go to Havana. But we cannot help the Gabonese out of their predicament. It would only encourage other countries in search of prestige to put themselves forward as hosts for international conferences without counting the cost. The nature of the investment is unproductive, and there is no guarantee that funds supplied by us would bring us any commercial benefit.

We hope that the forthcoming official level meeting of the Trade and Development Board in Geneva will focus on the problem and devise a sensible solution. This could be a scaling-down of UNCTAD requirements to meet the limited facilities available or a decision to hold the conference in Geneva. Either would be welcome in the context of the need for economy in international organisations. Alternatively, another African site may be selected. There is of course a risk that the offer of Havana will be resurrected but we think it unlikely that this would be successful.

A draft reply from the Prime Minister to President Bongo is attached, which has been cleared with the Department of Trade.

The Gabonese have recently signed with us a line of credit which will help UK participation in the major project of the

/Trans Gabonese

RESTRICTED

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Trans Gabonese railway. The draft reply takes note of this and other favourable elements in Anglo-Gabonese relations.

We will telegraph the approved text to the Embassy in Libreville for delivery, with the signed original to follow.

Yours ever.

(F N Richards)
Private Secretary

F N Richards

A J Coles Esq
10 Downing Street

RESTRICTED

DRAFT: minute/letter/teleletter/despatch/note

TYPE: Draft/Final 1+

FROM:
Prime Minister

Reference

DEPARTMENT: **TEL. NO:**

SECURITY CLASSIFICATION

TO:
His Excellency
El Hadj Omar Bongo GCMG
President of the Gabonese Republic

Your Reference

- Top Secret
- Secret
- Confidential
- Restricted
- Unclassified

Copies to:

PRIVACY MARKING

SUBJECT:

.....In Confidence

I was very pleased to receive your letter of 10 February, which Lord Carrington passed on to me following his meeting on 19 February with M. Martin Bongo. I am sorry that I was not able to receive your delegation myself on this occasion. I vividly recall our very useful and enjoyable meeting during your last visit to London in May 1980.

CAVEAT.....

We have given careful study to your letter, in which are set out the substantial costs involved in the holding of a conference on the scale of UNCTAD VI. We well understand your wish to carry out in full measure the obligations assumed by host capitals, despite the financial constraints your government faces. However, as Lord Carrington remarked to M. Bongo, we ourselves are facing pressures for economy which have led us to scrutinize with care all manner of governmental expenditure, including the level of our contributions to international agencies. Against this background, we would find it difficult to meet your request for assistance

Type please,

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Enclosures—flag(s).....

Even if the resources were forthcoming, time does seem to be very short for the expansion you plan of your existing facilities. I am sure that in welcoming your country's offer to host the conference, it was not the intention of the UNCTAD membership to impose a heavy financial burden on Gabon. We hope that discussions in Geneva might prove constructive, perhaps by reaching agreement to adjust the scale of UNCTAD VI so that there is no undue burden on facilities in Libreville. No doubt the March meeting of the Trade and Development Board will provide an opportunity for further consideration of the question.

I am sorry that I am unable to give a more helpful reply on the UNCTAD matter. But I should like to take this opportunity to express my personal pleasure at the development and strengthening of our bilateral relations which has taken place during the last year. His Royal Highness The Duke of Kent, Sir Geoffrey Howe and Mr Richard Luce have all told me of the ~~exceptional~~ ^{friendly and warm} warmth and hospitality which they found during their visits to Libreville. I have also learned with pleasure of the recent signing of a project line of credit which will facilitate British participation in your immense enterprise of constructing the Trans-Gabonese Railway, and so give visible proof of the flourishing of British-Gabonese co-operation.

I understand that Richard Luce has conveyed an invitation to your Minister for Foreign Affairs and Co-operation to pay a more substantial visit to the United Kingdom later this year. I hope that it will be possible for this to be arranged very soon.

/May I

May I take this opportunity, Your Excellency, to
renew to you the assurance of my highest consideration.

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10 DOWNING STREET

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Gabon

THE PRIME MINISTER

17 February 1982

Dear Mr. President,

Thank you for your letter of 12 January.

You will since have received a letter from Peter Rees, the Minister for Trade, dated 14 January, confirming the extent of the United Kingdom's financial support for the Trans-Gabonais railway. You will therefore know that we are extremely keen to help Gabon construct the railway which will increase access to the interior of your country and facilitate greater development. I was pleased to learn of the successful visit to the United Kingdom of Monsieur Jean-Pierre Lemboumba-Lepandou, your Minister of Economy and Finance, for the formal signature of a loan agreement between your Government and the Midland Bank relating to the supply of UK railway equipment for this railway. Mr. Rees was very pleased to have been able to meet Monsieur Lemboumba-Lepandou on the occasion of the signing ceremony.

I send to Your Excellency my very best wishes.

Yours sincerely

His Excellency El Hadj Omar Bongo

ds

CONFIDENTIAL



file

cc: C. Stephens

BK

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

16 February 1982

Visit of Gabonese Foreign Minister

Thank you for your letter of 15 February.

The Prime Minister regrets that she will not be able to receive the Gabonese delegation. Her diary for the rest of this week is already fully committed.

I think, however, that the Prime Minister might be prepared to send a message to President Bongo if you wish to suggest this after the delegation's visit to London.

A. J. COLES

Francis Richards, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

CONFIDENTIAL

SS



From the Secretary of State

John Coles Esq
Private Secretary
10 Downing Street
London, SW1

15th February 1982

Please type letter

*MR 16.
2*

Dear John,

TRANS/GABON RAILWAY

Your letter of 25 January to Roderic Lyne asked for a draft reply for the Prime Minister to send to the President of Gabon about the above.

- ... I attach a draft reply for the Prime Minister to send. It
- ... refers to a letter of 14 January from the Minister for Trade which I also attach. I am sorry for the delay in replying.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Roderic Lyne at the Foreign Office.

Yours Sincerely,

Jonathan Rees

J N REES
Private Secretary



PRIME MINISTER DRAFT REPLY TO:- HE PRESIDENT EL HADJ OMAR BONGO,
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF GABON, LIBREVILLE

Thank you for your letter of 12 January.

~~By now~~ You will ^{have} received the letter from Peter Rees, the Minister for Trade, dated 14 January, ~~which crossed with yours,~~ confirming the extent of the UK's financial support for the Trans-Gabonais railway. You will know that we are extremely keen to help Gabon construct the railway which will increase access to the interior of your country and facilitate greater development. I was pleased to learn of the successful visit to the UK of ^{Mr} Jean-Pierre Lemboumba-Lepandou, your Minister of Economy and Finance, for the formal signature of a loan agreement between your Government and the Midland Bank ^{relating to} the supply of UK railway equipment for this railway. Mr Rees was very pleased to have been able to meet ^{Mr} Lemboumba-Lepandou on the occasion of the signing ceremony.

~~May I take this opportunity to assure Your Excellency of my highest consideration.~~

I send to Your Excellency my very best wishes



BACKGROUND NOTE

TRANS-GABON RAILWAY

The Department of Trade has been closely involved in seeking British participation in the building of the second stage of the Trans-Gabon railway. A UK consortium of Taylor Woodrow and Wimpey were prepared to bid for the whole of this second stage. However, on advice from the Gabonese First Vice Prime Minister and Minister for Transport they decided to join the European Consortium (Eurotrag) which have constructed the first stage. The UK consortium has a 22% interest in Eurotrag. Decisions on the award of contract are now said to be due about mid to end March. Between now and then, HM Ambassador informs us, Eurotrag and one other bidder will be asked to provide additional information. It is considered fairly certain that Eurotrag will secure the second stage contract and the UK thereby secure a significant place in a hitherto non-traditional market and one with which we have been seeking to develop our commercial relations.

When representatives of Midland Bank went recently to Gabon and had meetings about the financing of UK contracts for the railway, the amount and favourable terms of the UK bid had been temporarily forgotten by President Bongo because the French had recently presented the terms associated with their (leading) role in Eurotrag. The Minister for Trade therefore wrote to President Bongo on 14 January outlining our terms in order that the UK should not be seen in a less favourable light.

OT5/3
Department of Trade

February 1982

16 FEB 1982





Prime Minister

I think the F/C.O. arguments
we rather exaggerated. Not
much harm will be done if you say
no. And given the state of your
diary you may wish to.

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AA

15 February 1982

If the F.O. gives such prominence to the F.C.O. we would like to see Lord I have the same view!

Dear John, We could find 10 minutes on Friday - but turn down?
A.F.C. ¹⁵/₂

Refuse no.

Visit of Gabonese Foreign Minister: 17-19 February

We have just learned that the Gabonese Foreign Minister, M. Martin Bongo, accompanied by the Gabonese Ministers of Trade and Industry, and Economy and Finance, will arrive in London on Wednesday 17 February bearing a special message from President Bongo for the Prime Minister.

Our Ambassador in Libreville has been informed that the message contains a request for assistance with preparations for the UNCTAD VI Conference due to be held in Libreville in 1983 (which was offered as an alternative venue for Havana). The Gabonese have belatedly realised that despite the lavish Conference Centre they built for the 1977 OAU Summit, they will need to provide a considerable range of extra facilities in a short time if the conference is to be a success. We are unable to offer any help except for ECGD-backed credit for the completion of a half-built Sheraton hotel (in which Balfour Beatty are interested).

There would, however, be considerable advantage in the Prime Minister receiving the delegation for a very brief call merely to present their letter. (It would be inappropriate for the UNCTAD question to be discussed in any detail; this would be left to a subsequent call on Mr Luce). Not only would this soften the impact of our inability to assist over the UNCTAD Conference, but also it would help in our relations with the government of President Bongo. UK firms have at last just started to break into this potentially lucrative market where we have been making a major effort recently. (In the past six months, Gabon has been visited by the Duke of Kent, at the head of a group of leading businessmen, and also by Richard Luce). Both visitors were given an exceptionally warm welcome by President Bongo, which suggests that there is now a good deal of truth in Gabonese protestations that they should not be regarded as a French preserve. Indeed, President Bongo has found that since the accession of President Mitterrand, Gabon no longer enjoys such a cosy relationship with France as in the past.

Our share of the Gabon market is still tiny (British exports were worth £9.1m in 1980); but the country is rich in oil and other mineral resources and offers considerable scope for the future. The major project in which we are currently interested is in the construction of the Trans-Gabonese Railway, which will

/open



open up large mineral deposits in the interior. British companies (Taylor Woodrow and Costain) have a 22% share in the European consortium which is building the railway, which is expected to bring orders for £44 million of goods and services from Britain. Other projects in prospect include the construction of medium-cost housing, a hotel, and a brewery, and the establishment of a British bank in Libreville.

A very brief call on the Prime Minister by this high-powered delegation could therefore do a disproportionate amount of good to our relations with this small but prosperous country. If, on the other hand, the delegation are not received by the Prime Minister, some of the progress made by recent high-level visits will be dissipated; and the Gabonese will be left with the impression that we do not take them seriously.

I therefore very much hope that the Prime Minister will be able to see the Gabonese party for 5 to 10 minutes only on 18 February or on the morning of 19 February. Lord Trefgarne is giving a lunch in their honour on 19 February.

Yours over,

(F N Richards)
Private Secretary

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Francis Richards', written over the typed name.

A J Coles Esq
10 Downing St

11
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05 FEB 1982

SUBJECT



PRIME MINISTER'S
PERSONAL MESSAGE
SERIAL No. T27A/82

République Gabonaise

Union. Travail. Justice

Le Président de la République

Libreville, le 10 Février 1982

Madame,

Dans le cadre des relations d'amitié et de compréhension mutuelles qui unissent nos deux Pays, je suis amené, aujourd'hui, à évoquer les problèmes soulevés au cours de la 5^{ème} session de la Conférence des Nations-Unies pour le Commerce et le Développement (CNUCED) qui s'est tenue à Manille, aux Philippines, en 1979, et qui concernent le lieu de notre prochaine réunion.

A cette occasion, notre homologue cubain a transmis une invitation de son pays pour abriter la 6^{ème} C.N.U.C.E.D. à La Havane, en 1983, invitation dont la Conférence a pris note sans commentaire.

En fait, il était évident que, pour des raisons politiques, nombreux seraient les pays qui éprouveraient quelques difficultés à y participer au cas où la Conférence se tiendrait dans la capitale cubaine. Certains pays l'ont d'ailleurs proclamé publiquement.

Compte tenu des dissensions que connaissent les pays de l'Amérique Latine, aucun d'eux ne pouvait être désigné pour accueillir ces assises. L'Asie ayant eu à le faire à deux reprises (New-Delhi en 1968 et Manille en 1979), le tour de l'Afrique, qui, théoriquement, ne revenait qu'en 1987, a été avancé, le principe de tenir les sessions de la CNUCED dans un pays en développement étant acquis. Il est apparu, en outre, qu'un pays francophone était mieux indiqué à cette fin.

Madame Margaret THATCHER
Premier Ministre du Royaume Uni
de Grande Bretagne et d'Irlande du Nord
L O N D R E S -

.../...2

Le Président de la République

C'est alors que le Gabon, dont la capitale se trouve être déjà dotée de certaines structures d'accueil depuis l'organisation, en 1977, de la 14^{ème} Conférence au Sommet de l'Organisation de l'Unité Africaine, a été pressenti par les grandes puissances, dont votre Pays, pour abriter ces assises.

Le Gouvernement Gabonais, qui s'est senti honoré par un tel choix, y a donné son accord de principe, simplement parce qu'il considère que ces assises constituent un moment fort des relations de tous genres en tant que trait d'union nécessaire entre le Nord et le Sud en contribuant ainsi à l'avènement d'un nouvel ordre économique et culturel international plus juste et plus humain.

Vous trouverez jointes, en annexe, les premières évaluations auxquelles ont procédé les autorités compétentes gabonaises et qui s'élèvent à TRENTE HUIT MILLIARDS SOIXANTE MILLIONS de francs C.F.A.

Vous conviendrez qu'une telle dépense n'avait jamais été programmée dans notre Plan en cours d'exécution et qu'elle ne peut, en aucun cas, entrer dans les priorités de nos objectifs de développement.

Voilà pourquoi, nous estimons que l'accord définitif du Gouvernement Gabonais demeure subordonné à l'acceptation par les grandes puissances, parmi lesquelles vous figurez, d'assurer la couverture financière de cette opération.

Le Gabon, pour sa part, est disposé à accroître la capacité hôtelière de Libreville et à prendre en charge les dépenses spécifiques de la Conférence.

Je voudrais pouvoir compter, une fois de plus, aussi bien sur votre générosité que sur votre compréhension accoutumées pour ne pas amener mon Gouvernement à décliner une telle proposition qui l'honore grandement et, partant, tous ses amis.

Tel est l'objet de la mission dont je charge mon Ministre des Affaires Etrangères qu'accompagnent ses collègues du Commerce et de l'Economie et des Finances porteurs du présent message.

Tout en étant convaincu que vous voudrez bien leur réserver l'accueil et la compréhension nécessaires à l'heureux accomplissement de leur mission, en vous remerciant à l'avance et en vous demandant instamment de bien vouloir ajouter foi et créance à tout ce qu'ils vous diront de ma part, je vous prie d'agréer, Madame, l'assurance de ma très haute considération et l'expression renouvelée de ma grande estime.



[Signature]

El Hadj Omar BONGO

REUNION DE LA CNUCED A LIBREVILLE

ESTIMATION DU COUT DE L'OPERATION

L'Organisation à Libreville de la VI^e CNUCED nécessite la mise en place d'une infrastructure appropriée et implique des charges de fonctionnement importantes.

Les différents contacts entre les autorités gabonaises et le Secrétariat de la CNUCED ont abouti aux conclusions suivantes :

1°) Installation immobilières pour la conférence

Le Gabon dispose d'installations d'une excellente qualité qui ne couvrent malheureusement pas les besoins de la CNUCED VI. Il s'agit de réaménager les salles existantes et de construire des nouvelles, y compris des bureaux supplémentaires et des locaux servant de salons, cafetaria, restaurants ect...
Soit au total en superficie à bâtir : 24.000 m².

2) Hébergement

La Conférence regroupe un nombre important de délégués 3.000 à 3.5000 personnes. La capacité actuelle de Libreville est de 9000 chambres et 41 suites. Certains travaux en cours (Hôtel Shératon) permettront de la porter à 1.200 ou 1.400 chambres. Il apparaît un déficit réel de 1.600 à 1.800 chambres.

3) Équipement et fournitures diverses

Les équipements existants sont insuffisants, équipements de bureaux, d'interprétation et de télécommunication.

...../.....

4) Fonctionnement

La mise en oeuvre de toutes ces installations implique des charges de fonctionnement. De plus la CNUCED a des exigences spécifiques telles que les charges de déplacement de 450 fonctionnaires de Genève à Libreville et leur perdiem.

X
X X
X

L'estimation des dépenses totales donne les résultats ci-dessous.

TABLEAU RECAPITULATIF, DEPENSES TOTALES

!		!		!
!		!		!
!	INSTALLATIONS	!	29,600	!
!		!		!
!	EQUIPEMENTS ET FOURNITURES	!	1,600	!
!		!		!
!	DEPENSES SPECIFIQUES CNUCED	!	1,200	!
!		!		!
!	FONCTIONNAIRES ET AUTRES	!	2,200	!
!		!		!
!		!	34,600	!
!	Imprévus 10 %	!	3,460	!
!		!		!
!		!		!
!	TOTAL	!	38,060	!
!		!		!

en milliards de Francs CFA.

INSTALLATION ET SERVICES AUXILIAIRES

1°) - LOCAUX ET SERVICES AUXILIAIRES

Les installations actuelles de la Cité du "12 MARS" s'avèrent insuffisantes eu égard aux besoins de la Conférence :

- L'auditorium doit être aménagé pour faire passer sa capacité de 1.650 à 2.000 places.
- Le déficit en bureaux approche le nombre de 300 etc...
 - 2 grandes salles (500 - 600 places)
 - 2 salles de comité moyennes (200 - 250 places)
 - 1 petite salle de réunions
 - 5 salles de groupe de rédaction (10 - 40 places)

Les locaux et services auxiliaires supplémentaires couvriraient une surface d'environ 24.000 m² (y compris halls, couloirs, toilettes etc...)

Le coût moyen au m² d'un bureau meublé dans le style du Palais des Conférences de la Cité du 12 MARS est de l'ordre de 4000.000 F.

Les locaux et services auxiliaires supplémentaires coûteraient environ 10,56 milliards (4000.000 F. x 18.500 m² + 10 %)

VI) HEBERGEMENT

La VI^e CNUCED regroupera environ 3.500 personnes. La capacité d'hébergement des hôtels de Libreville (y compris le SHERATON) laisse apparaître un déficit d'environ 1.800 chambres. Pour faire face à ce déficit, il sera construit un "village CNUCED" dont les villas seraient du type de celle de la SNI.

Avec 500 villas de 3 à 5 chambres, 1.800 délégués pourraient être hébergés. Certains de ces villas (une vingtaine environ) pourraient être transformées temporairement en bureaux pour les délégations n'ayant pas de représentation diplomatique au Gabon.

Le coût de l'opération y compris les VRD seraient de 13 milliards, soit environ 26 millions par villa meublée.

EQUIPEMENT ET FOURNITURES

1°) - MATERIEL D'INTERPRETATION

En plus du réaménagement du Grand Auditorium, toutes les nouvelles salles devront être équipées en matériel d'interprétation simultanée en six langues.

- le grand auditorium	:	95 millions F.
- 2 grandes salles de Comités	:	190 " "
- 3 salles moyennes	:	64 " "
- 1 salle conférence de presse	:	50 " "
Total		399 millionsde F.
arrondis à		400 " "

2°) MATERIEL ET FOURNITURES DE BUREAU

(achat hors taxes à Genève)

- Equipements de reproduction des documents	15 millions
- Equipements des bureaux (hors mobilier)	132 "
- location de matériel	10 "
TOTAL	157 millions

3°) INFRASTRUCTURES de telecommunications

- Achat et installation de 3 centraux téléphoniques dont un dans le Palais de Conférence et deux dans le " Nouveau Bâtiment". Le coût est d'environ

500.000million

A N N E X E 3

DEPENSES SPECIFIQUES CNUCED

Sont considérées comme "dépenses spécifiques", les dépenses que ne supporterait pas l'Organisation internationale si la CNUCED VI avait lieu au Siège, c'est à dire à Genève. Ces dépenses comprennent :

1°) Le coût du billet d'avion aller et retour et l'indemnité journalière de substance, au taux de l'ONU, pour le personnel des Nations Unies affecté à la Conférence (les traitements et salaires, l'assurance médicale, les pensions et autres prestations perçus par le personnel des Nations Unies seront payés par l'ONU :

2°) Le coût du transport aller et retour par voie aérienne et ou terrestre, y compris les frais d'assurance, du matériel et des fournitures (s'ils sont fournis par l'ONU), des documents des Nations Unies nécessaires à la Conférence et des documents de référence à l'usage du personnel des Nations Unies.

3°) Le Coût des télécommunications, c'est-à-dire TELEX. téléphone et valise diplomatique.

Le montant estimatif de ces dépenses supplémentaires est de 4 millions de dollars, soit environ 1,2 milliard de francs.

FONCTIONNEMENT

1) TRANSPORTS LOCAUX

Le Secrétariat de la CNUCED aura besoin de 20 véhicules pour ses déplacements y compris ceux affectés à certains hauts fonctionnaires.

Les Chefs de délégation (230 environ) pourraient se voir affecter un véhicule à l'absence de possibilité de location.

Les besoins totaux en voitures officielles seraient de 250. Si ces voitures étaient de TOYOTA CROWN SALOON, par exemple le coût global serait de 1,750 milliard de francs.

2) Tous les autres Délégués emprunteraient le Bus et ceci devrait coûter à la SOTRAVIL entre 150 à 200 millions de francs

3) PERSONNEL LOCAL ET INTERNATIONAL

Les besoins en personnel local et international sont de l'ordre de 500 personnes. Ne pouvant trouver sur place tout le personnel dont aura besoin la Conférence, le Gabon sera obligé de faire appel au personnel international (environ 150 personnes) dont il faudra assurer le transport, l'hébergement, la restauration et la rémunération.

On estime à environ 500 millions les dépenses relatives à ce poste dont :

- salaires	120	millions
- repas	200	"
- hébergement	120	"
- transport	60	"
	500	millions

4) budget domestique

- carburant	15	millions
- restauration	15	"
- service médical	5	"
- Divers	5	"
total	40	millions

5) PROGRAMME SOCIAL (EXCURSION)

6) RECEPTIONS OFFICIELLES : 50 millions

7) SECURITE : 50 "



From the
Minister for Trade

Mr Durie. PEP1
Mr Foster Ind Adv
Mr Sedman ECGD
Mr Jones OT5 (of)

DEPARTMENT OF TRADE
1 VICTORIA STREET
LONDON SW1H 0ET

TELEPHONE DIRECT LINE 01 215 5144
SWITCHBOARD 01 215 7877

HE President el hadj Omar Bongo
President of the Republic of Gabon
Libreville

14 January 1982

Jim Exum

TRANSGABON RAILWAY

I replaced Cecil Parkinson as the United Kingdom Minister for Trade in September last year. I am aware of his keen interest in assisting Gabon to develop the railway which will open up the interior of your country and facilitate its development. I am aware that Mr Parkinson met you, both in London and Libreville. I am equally keen to do what I can to support the interest of my country in the project and I felt now was an appropriate time to introduce myself and reflect upon the offer which has been made by my country in connection with the project.

You will know that a consortium of two large UK companies, Taylor Woodrow and Wimpey, were willing to undertake the whole of the second stage of the railway construction and that finance to support that interest was offered by UK banks led by Midland Bank and supported by the Export Credits Guarantee Department. In the event the UK consortium decided to join the Eurotrag consortium and they now have a 22% interest in that group. In support of Taylor Woodrow and Wimpey, Midland Bank have made an offer valid until mid-February 1982 for up to £60m to cover 85% of United Kingdom goods and services at 8½% interest with a maximum period of 7 years after the end of the construction period which is expected to be 4½ years after the date of the supply contract. Repayment will be by 14 equal consecutive semi-annual instalments commencing 6 months after each year of construction covering drawings during such year of construction. The terms have been formulated to correspond with those offered in support of the other members of the Eurotrag consortium.

.../...



The two companies forming the UK consortium are also very interested in the construction of roads associated with the railway and finance additional to that required for the railway construction itself can be available to support the UK companies' interest in some or all of this business. Precise terms for supporting the roads business will need to be settled in the light of our international obligations when your Government is able to consider proceeding with these contracts. As you may know the international consensus on credit terms was revised for all new offers made after mid-November 1981 and will be reviewed in May 1982.

A quite separate £10m line of credit for equipment supply has also been made on behalf of various UK suppliers by Midland Bank. This is to support 85% of the United Kingdom content of the contracts placed under the line of credit. The loan carries interest at 8½% per annum and is repayable over a 5 year period commencing 3 years after signature of the loan agreement. The 5 year period would be extended to 10 years if and when a contract is awarded for the construction of the second stage of the railway itself to the Eurotrag consortium leading to the United Kingdom companies in that consortium obtaining business in excess of £25m. I understand that your Minister of Finance hopes to sign this financial agreement in the first week of February when he will be in Europe.

I wish to assure your excellency of my highest consideration.

Yours sincerely Peter Rees

PETER REES



Union Travail Justice

BF

*Ambassade
de la République Gabonaise
à Londres*

Londres, 9th February 1982.

L'Ambassadeur.

No. 00201/82 / *Amb/Gab/Gb*

The Right Hon Mrs. Margaret THATCHER,
Prime Minister,
10, Downing Street,
London, SW1.

*1) Copy to Mr. Richards F.I.C.O.
2) Await F.I.C.O. advice.*

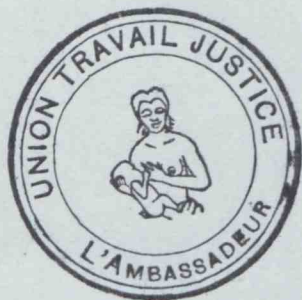
A.F.C. 9/2

Dear Prime Minister,

I have the honour to inform you that a Special Ministerial Gabonese Delegation comprises of His Excellency Monsieur Martin BONGO, Minister of State in charge of Foreign Affairs and Co-operation, including Their Excellencies Monsieur Etienne MOUSSIROU, Minister of State in charge of Trade and Industry and Monsieur Jean-Pierre LEMBOUMBA-LEPANDOU, Minister of Economic and Finance, will be arriving in London on the 18th February 1982 and carrying a special message from the Gabonese Head of State, His Excellency El Hadj Omar BONGO to be delivered to The Right Honourable The British Prime Minister.

May I also inform The Right Honourable that the Delegation will be in London from the 18th to the 19th February and wishes to be received in Audience either on the 18th in the afternoon or the 19th at the convenience of The Right Honourable.

Yours sincerely,



Léon N'DONG

Ambassador.

Gabon



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

28 January 1982

A.S.C. 25
h.a.

Dear John,

TRANS-GABON RAILWAY

You wrote to Roderic Lyne on 25 January enclosing a letter from the President of Gabon to the Prime Minister about financing for the Trans-Gabon Railway Project. As this is essentially a commercial question, I am asking the Department of Trade to let you have a draft reply for the Prime Minister.

Yours ever,
F N Richards

(F N Richards)
Private Secretary

The Private Secretary
10 Downing Street

cc: PS/Secretary of State for Trade

Saban

CF

25 January, 1982

Trans-Gabon Railway

I enclose a letter which the Prime Minister has received from the President of Gabon seeking confirmation of the financial arrangements which British firms tendering for the second section of the Trans-Gabon Railway will be able to offer. I should be grateful if you could in due course let me have a draft reply for signature by the Prime Minister.

A. J. COLES

R M J Lyne, Esq
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

DSG

SUBJECT



cc Master
ops

République Gabonaise

Union · Travail · Justice

Présidence de la République

12 JAN. 1982

Madame le Premier Ministre,

PRIME MINISTER'S
PERSONAL MESSAGE
SERIAL No. T 48/82

Le gouvernement gabonais s'apprête à engager avec le groupement d'entreprises EUROTRAG et les autres entreprises intéressées des négociations concernant le deuxième tronçon du chemin de fer TRANSGABONAIS.

Cette négociation, prévue par le marché conclu entre EUROTRAG et l'Office du chemin de fer TRANSGABONAIS (OCTRA) pour la réalisation de l'ensemble de l'ouvrage d'Owendo jusqu'à Franceville, a pour objet de définir les nouvelles conditions de prix applicables aux travaux à exécuter au delà de la ville de Booué.

Le gouvernement gabonais considère comme prioritaire l'achèvement de ce chemin de fer capital pour le développement économique du pays.

Il souhaiterait bénéficier pour la poursuite et cet important ouvrage, qui doit permettre la mise en valeur de nouvelles richesses minérales et forestières, de concours financiers extérieurs substantiels.

Son Excellence Madame Margaret THATCHER
Premier Ministre de Grande Bretagne

L O N D R E S

Présidence de la République

Il a, pour cette raison, exigé des entreprises intéressées par le projet qu'elles présentent, à l'appui de leur offre commerciale, une proposition de financement couvrant au moins cinquante pour cent du coût effectif des travaux.

Au moment où vont commencer les négociations relatives à ce deuxième tronçon du TRANSGABONAIS, il me serait particulièrement agréable de recevoir la confirmation des conditions de financement de la part des entreprises britanniques dans ces travaux.

Je vous prie de bien vouloir agréer, Madame le Premier Ministre, l'assurance de ma haute considération.



EL HADJ OMAR BONGO
PRESIDENT DE LA REPUBLIQUE

Subject

PRIME MINISTER'S
PERSONAL MESSAGE
SERIAL No. T5A' / 80

GABON
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- 9 JAN 1980		
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INDEX	PA	Action Taken

MESSAGE FROM THE PRIME MINISTER TO PRESIDENT BONGO.

1. PLEASE DELIVER THE FOLLOWING MESSAGE FROM THE PRIME MINISTER TO PRESIDENT BONGO.

BEGINS:

I OFFER YOU MY MOST SINCERE CONGRATULATIONS ON YOUR RE-ELECTION AS PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF GABON, AND I LOOK FORWARD WITH PLEASURE TO A PERIOD OF INCREASING COOPERATION BETWEEN OUR TWO NATIONS IN THE YEARS AHEAD.

WITH BEST WISHES,
MARGARET THATCHER.

ENDS.

CARRINGTON

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PS/MR LUCE
PS/PUS
SIR D MAITLAND
MR ASPIN

RESTRICTED



Gabon
File 16

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

3 January 1980

MESSAGE TO PRESIDENT BONGO

Thank you for your letter of 2 January enclosing the text of a message to the President of Gabon from the Prime Minister. The message can issue.

M. O'D. B. ALEXANDER

G. G. H. Walden, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Sb



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London S.W.1

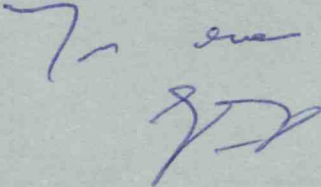
2 January 1979

Dear Mr. MacRae,

Our Ambassador to Gabon has recently recommended that a congratulatory message should be sent to President Bongo after his re-election in the Presidential elections on 30 December. As the only candidate of the only legally constituted political party, the Parti Democratique Gabonais, President Bongo was certain to be elected for a further seven year term of office.

Gabon is a prosperous country and the government has been noted for its moderation in recent years. As a member of the Security Council, Gabon has been more helpful to the UK than most African countries through the difficult weeks of the Lancaster House Conference. Furthermore, the Gabonese could well exercise a moderating influence in both the UN and the OAU should serious difficulties arise during the ceasefire period. A message would not only be warmly appreciated, but would also help Mr MacRae in his task of strengthening UK/Gabonese relations.

/ I attach for consideration a draft telegram to Libreville.


(G G H Walden)
Private Secretary

M O'D B Alexander Esq
10 Downing Street

File No.

OUTWARD

Department

Drafted by

(Block Capitals)

WAD

TELEGRAM

Tel. Extn.

Security Classification RESTRICTED
Precedence IMMEDIATE
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USE

Despatched (Date)
(Time)Z

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PREAMBLE

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(Security Class.) **RESTRICTED**

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[TEXT]

MESSAGE FROM THE PRIME MINISTER TO PRESIDENT BONGO

1. Please deliver the following message from the Prime Minister to President Bongo.

BEGINS

I offer you my most sincere congratulations on your re-election as President of the Republic of Gabon, and I look forward with pleasure to a period of increasing cooperation between our two nations in the years ahead.

With best wishes,
Margaret Thatcher

ENDS

ies to:-

3 JAN 1980

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