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SPEECH BY THE RT. HON. MRS. MARGARET THATCHER

TO THE ZAMBIAN PRESS ASSOCIATION

MONDAY 6 AUGUST 1979

Mr. President, your Excellencies, friends,

I am deeply honoured that you, Mr. President, have invited me to be with you tonight to present the annual press awards of Zambia.

I know that the presentation of these awards is an event which is very closely associated with you personally, Mr. President, and I appreciate all the more your kindness in asking me to share this occasion with you.

You may not know, Mr. President, that you and I have something in common which is, I believe, of special significance in your country, as a mark of good fortune.

We are both the parents of twins.

This evening's celebration is thus taking place under the best of auspices.

Your invitation to me is typical of the efforts which you, Mr. President, the people of Lusaka and indeed all the people of Zambia have made to make me feel welcome and at home among you.

/ I know

I congratulate the Zambian Press Association, whose sponsorship of these awards makes a valuable contribution to the pursuit of new standards of excellence in a fine tradition of free journalism.

And I warmly congratulate the award winners tonight on their achievements, and encourage them to do their best to see that the Zambian Press continues to maintain its high standards.

In both our countries, the Press has a vital role to play and Prime Ministers are not always immune from criticism - as I know only too well!

The Zambian Press is known for being lively and no respecter of persons or institutions.

This is not always a comfortable fact for those in Government to face.

When hard things have been said in the British Press about Zambia and in the Zambian Press about Britain, we must not seek to control or censor the media.

Instead we should encourage our journalists to know each other's countries better, and understand the other's point of view.

Ignorance and prejudice often walk hand-in-hand.

Journalism is a career which demands the highest professionalism.

It demands responsibility as well, for the line between honest revelation and disingenuous sensationalism is sometimes perilously thin.

But the best journalists of our two countries set a fine example of how integrity can be combined with a lively and, if necessary, critical tone.

/I congratulate

But I am glad to say that not all my time in Lusaka has been spent discussing important issues of state.

I have also had the opportunity to see, for the first time, something of the traditions and culture of your very beautiful country and its hospitable people. And to hear what wonderful singers Zambians are.

I hope that my distinguished audience will forgive me if I say that sometimes both our countries suffer from the public images presented to one another.

Often it is the sensational story or reported disagreement that hits the headlines.

We must indeed acknowledge that Britain and Zambia do not see eye to eye on everything; it would be surprising if we did.

But equally we do well to remember the many points we have in common and the many links between us.

During this Conference, I have found that, despite the fact that I came to Zambia as a stranger, there is a basic goodwill and a desire to get on good terms -- an attitude which I entirely share.

/In both our countries,

But above all we want to move quickly to the most important goal of all, and that is an end to the hostilities.

I said in my speech on Friday that I simply did not believe that there is anything now dividing the people of Rhodesia which is worth the use of the bomb and the gun to kill and maim men, women and children by the thousand, or which can justify the misery of the hundreds of thousands in refugee camps.

The British Government are deeply conscious of the urgent need to bring peace to the people of Rhodesia and to Rhodesia's neighbours, and I know you are too.

I am grateful to my Commonwealth colleagues for the helpful and constructive way in which we have worked together on this problem over the last few days.

We have talked long and earnestly together.

We have sought together to analyse the essential elements of the problem of Rhodesia.

We have discussed how to work towards a solution.

It has been a wonderful and inspiring experience.

This meeting, my first Heads of Government Meeting, has shown the Commonwealth at its most positive.

/ But I am glad

This uniquely "Commonwealth" atmosphere gives us ample opportunity for a constructive dialogue.

You will all by this time know that a striking example of the way the Commonwealth Heads of Government work together, and the way that the Commonwealth can be of real help over difficult problems, has just been given by the publication of the statement we agreed yesterday in regard to Rhodesia.

That statement does two very important things.

First, it records firm Commonwealth agreement that only Britain can give Rhodesia legal independence.

Second, it affirms the confidence of the Commonwealth in Britain to do that.

Now this is very significant, most helpful.

It means that we have full Commonwealth support and encouragement to move forward along the path described to our colleagues and indicated publicly.

The statement is a firm and welcome point from which to start a new initiative.

We mean now to move swiftly towards our immediate objective of working with the parties to draw up an independence constitution.

/But above all

I know that I speak for all of us in paying tribute to the wise, skilful and yet always friendly and informal way in which you have guided our discussions.

This, I hope and believe, will go down as one of the great Commonwealth meetings.

There can be few such occasions on which the unity of purpose and the sense of shared ideals, which is what we mean when we speak of the spirit of the Commonwealth, have been more obvious or more productive of practical results.

That this has been so has been, Mr. President, in great measure your own achievement.

I should like, too, to pay tribute to all your Ministers and officials who have worked so hard to ensure the success of our meeting and to make us feel so comfortable and so completely at home. I know that I speak for all my colleagues when I tell you how much we have appreciated the excellent arrangements which you have made for us; and which have contributed so much to maintaining the traditional informal atmosphere in these Commonwealth meetings.

/ This uniquely



I know that hospitality and kindness come naturally to  
Zambians, whose friendship is both spontaneous and  
sincere.

Mr. President, during these eventful days in Lusaka you have been  
host and friend not only to me, but to all the 39 Heads  
of State and Government who are present in your capital  
to take part in the Commonwealth Heads of Government  
Meeting.

/ I know