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Prinister

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Prin Stephens:
new sales.



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

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

23 April 1980

Agree, subject to finding a suitable time?

Yes
mb

Dear Michael,

1/2 - 23/4

Private Visit of President Bongo of Gabon

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

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

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

Yours ever
Roderic Lyne

(R M J Lyne)
Private Secretary

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