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10 DOWNING STREET

Commonwealth: Hqs into Ramphal:

May 79.

From the Private Secretary

7 September 1981

Dear Roden,

Commonwealth Secretary General

The Secretary General of the Commonwealth, Mr. Ramphal, called on the Prime Minister earlier this afternoon.

The Prime Minister asked after Mr. Fraser's health. Mr. Ramphal said that he had talked to Mr. Fraser on the telephone recently. Mr. Fraser was on his farm and, albeit reluctantly, taking things easy. The doctors seemed to think that CHGM would not give rise to difficulties provided Mr. Fraser continued to rest in the interim. The Prime Minister said that she hoped that Mr. Fraser could be persuaded to forgo most of the socialising during the meeting.

The Prime Minister asked about the other participants. Mr. Ramphal commented that it seemed the Malaysian Prime Minister would not be coming. Although Dr. Mahathir had made disobliging remarks about his country's relationship with the Commonwealth, it was not clear that this was the real reason for his absence. It was being said that he was unwell and suffering from a similar complaint to his two predecessors. The criticism of the Commonwealth was intended to distract attention from the real reason for Dr. Mahathir's non-appearance. Dr. Mahathir had passed through London on his way to Spain at the end of last week and would probably be coming back by the same route in a few days time. Perhaps someone in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office would be able to discover something. For his part, Mr. Ramphal said that he had invited Musa Hitam, who was visiting Paris at present, to come to London next weekend.

Mr. Ramphal was uncertain as to whether or not Miss Charles intended to make the journey. It would be a pity if she were not present since she would be particularly well placed to keep Mr. Bishop in line. The Prime Minister said that she too would regret Miss Charles' absence. If, as she had heard, the reason was financial surely something could be done. Mr. Ramphal said that he had hoped to arrange for Mr. Trudeau to give her a lift but this seemed to have fallen through.

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/As regards

As regards other participants Mr. Ramphal said that President Obote still hoped to attend. It would be a miracle if he did so. President Kaunda was also in a somewhat unhappy position. There was a good deal of disaffection in Zambia. However he too still planned to come. President Nyerere was a certain attender. He had asked Mr. Ramphal to see him in Paris next Monday evening. Mrs. Gandhi intended to be present for the whole conference.

Pakistan

Mr. Ramphal said that Mr. Fraser was pushing very hard for agreement on the readmission of Pakistan to the Commonwealth. Mr. Ramphal said that he had been warning Mr. Fraser that thinking in Delhi was not necessarily as positive as he (Mr. Fraser) seemed to think. The Indians did not consider that Mrs Gandhi had been as forthcoming as Mr. Fraser was now inclined to assert. It was important that the question of Pakistan's readmission should be seen in a Commonwealth context rather than in relation to the situation in Afghanistan. The Prime Minister said that it would be "disastrous" if the question of Pakistan's membership was raised and agreement was not secured. There should be no formal discussion until it had been established in the course of informal contacts among the Heads of Government that unanimous agreement would be forthcoming. Mr. Ramphal said that he entirely agreed. This was why he had rejected the proposal that the matter should be discussed by officials. He added that it seemed to him important that the Indian Government should not merely go along with the proposal but that they should be genuinely content. The Prime Minister agreed. We would not wish to find ourselves at a later stage in a position where we had swapped Pakistani membership for Indian membership. It was also necessary to bear in mind that the next CHGM might be held in Delhi. Mrs. Gandhi might prefer that Pakistan should not be there. Mr. Ramphal thought this point could be argued either way.

Gleneagles

The Prime Minister said that so far as she was concerned the less said in Melbourne about Gleneagles the better. Mr. Ramphal said he entirely agreed and had been working to that end. He did not think any great issue of principle was involved. All the members other than New Zealand would probably be prepared to allow the issue to go virtually undiscussed and to settle for a simple reaffirmation of the Gleneagles agreement in the communiqué. However Mr. Muldoon still seemed inclined to take the offensive. He had complained that the issue of human rights did not figure sufficiently prominently on the agenda. He was a "bruiser" and might be strengthened in his determination by the possibility of deriving electoral advantage from it in New Zealand. The Prime Minister said that she thought Mr. Muldoon had himself been "bruised" by recent events. She had a good deal of sympathy for his predicament. He was right not to have withheld visas: HMG would not have done so in a similar situation. Mr. Ramphal said that there was a feeling in the Commonwealth that Mr. Muldoon had not, in fact, leaned as hard on the Rugby Football Association

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in New Zealand as HMG had done on the RFU here in the past. It seemed doubtful whether he had ever made his views unequivocally clear to the rugby administrators. If he were to insist on raising the temperature in Melbourne, the Commonwealth Games in Brisbane might well suffer.

International Economic Issues

Mr. Ramphal said that Mr. Fraser was, of course, keen that economic issues should figure prominently at Melbourne. He saw this as his way of making a contribution to the meeting in Mexico. Mr. Ramphal hoped that it would be possible to do something tangible. He had in mind a food initiative. He believed that a limited, if concerted, effort by the Commonwealth could have very important results. He had mentioned the idea earlier to President Shagari who was enthusiastic. A "resource input" from HMG would be required. The Prime Minister undertook to look into Mr. Ramphal's proposal. She herself had for long thought that the continued production of food surpluses in Europe undesirable and had a damaging effect on the will and capability of the developing countries to increase their own food production. Mr. Ramphal said that he very much hoped the Prime Minister would make this point in Melbourne. It was increasingly accepted that food aid had inhibited food production in many countries.

Arrangements

In response to a question from Mr. Ramphal about the opening ceremony, the Prime Minister said that she did not mind when she spoke.

I am sending a copy of this letter to David Wright (Cabinet Office).

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

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