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CALL BY PRESIDENT SIAKA STEVENS OF SIERRA LEONE ON THE PRIME MINISTER  
AT No. 10 DOWNING STREET AT 1200 HOURS ON 5 NOVEMBER 1980

Present:

The Rt. Hon. Margaret Thatcher MP	HE Dr. Siaka P. Stevens
The Rt. Hon. Lord Carrington, KCMG, MC	Hon. Dr. Abdulai Conteh Minister of Foreign Affairs
Mr. Richard Luce, MP	Hon. Dr. S.S. Banya Minister of Development and Economic Planning
Mr. D.M. Day, CMG	Hon. Mr. S.A.J. Pratt Minister of Trade and Industry
Mr. M.O'D.B. Alexander	Mr. V.E. Sumner Sierra Leonean High Commission
Mr. A.C.D.S. MacRae	

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Welcoming President Stevens to London, the Prime Minister said that she had learned much about Africa's view of the world from President Masire's recent visit and looked forward to equally frank discussions with President Stevens. President Stevens replied that he greatly appreciated the invitation to visit Britain. He also looked forward to a frank exchange of views. He felt that for the last five years or so, the links between Sierra Leone and Britain had somehow weakened. His countrymen always hoped to have preferential shares in 'the UK Limited'. We had been together so long. Yet Sierra Leone had begun to feel rather neglected of late; they noted the fact, for instance, that no British Ministers ever visited Freetown on their West African tours. This was a good moment, then, to renew our old friendship which, he agreed, was perhaps taken rather too much for granted. He was also a little disappointed that the educational links between our two countries seemed bound to be eroded by the higher students' fees which we were demanding. This fell particularly heavily on poor countries like Sierra Leone who depended to such a high degree on the UK for training; they felt that Britain was mistaken to calculate

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CONFIDENTIAL

- 2 -

everything in pounds, shillings and pence. On balance, however, he had nothing to complain about over our continuing development aid programme. He hoped that we would take more interest in other projects, including the development of tourism. Kimberlite mining was another future possibility. Here, Selection Trust having recently been bought by BP, he hoped that the Prime Minister might feel able to put in a word with the latter to persuade Selection Trust to be more active.

As to domestic policies, there were no particular problems. Sierra Leone's difficulties were mainly economic. They were particularly hard-hit by the escalation of oil prices: a large percentage of their exports had to go to meet the fuel bill. This situation coincided with a period when world prices for their main agricultural exports, such as cocoa and coffee, had gone down. They were nevertheless wondering how best to develop their agriculture; President Stevens thought that some large-scale plantations would be necessary to supplement the small producers. He mentioned the negotiations he had recently conducted with Alusuisse over a bauxite project. Unfortunately, this was hampered by inadequate transport infrastructure.

The Prime Minister raised the question of Namibia. The present phase in the negotiations was being presented in a different light by different people. Lord Carrington said that he was now a little more optimistic; it seemed likely that the Pre-Independence Meeting (PIM) might take place soon. It would be useful to discuss the procedures for the election. It would, however, be disastrous, especially for a number of poorer African countries, if the threatened UN sanctions went ahead. President Stevens said that he was also reasonably optimistic. He kept closely in touch with the Front Line States. The OAU had been bound to seize the Security Council of the Namibia problem; but perhaps this might now be carried forward until after the PIM had taken place.

The Prime Minister asked what the OAU made of the disastrous situation in Uganda. Lord Carrington added that we had said that

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- 3 -

we would help with the forthcoming elections only on condition that the four parties could agree on the ground rules. Otherwise, the elections would be seen as no more than a device to return Obote to power. We could not be associated with elections that were evidently not free and fair. President Stevens commented that Britain should not wash its hands of Uganda: we had a special responsibility for it, not only as a Commonwealth country but also because we had been involved in the overthrow of Obote. Lord Carrington denied this absolutely. He said that we were quite as taken aback by Idi Amin Dada's coup as anyone else - and as Defence Minister at the time, he knew this to be so.

The Prime Minister asked what would be the OAU's position towards South Africa once the Namibia problem was out of the way. For ourselves, we had many vital interests in that country and considered that the way forward must be by gradual but relentless change. Lord Carrington added that he thought it important that once the Namibia problem was settled, the OAU did not merely turn all its attentions to a destructive and negative attack on South Africa. It was important to develop links between South Africa and her black neighbours in order to bring about a change peacefully. Zimbabwe was an example of what could be done. Dr. Conteh thought both sides would need to give assurances. If Zimbabwe, for instance, could say that it would not allow attacks to be mounted on South Africa from its territory, then the South Africans should in their turn give solemn undertakings not to attack Zimbabwe. Both sides must gradually allow trust to be built up between them.

The Prime Minister asked what success the OAU was having in tackling the Chad problem. President Stevens said that the recent peace-keeping meeting in Lomé had not succeeded; but at least they had managed to bring the two parties together. The next step seemed to be a further OAU conference to be held in Lagos in the next few weeks. The Prime Minister asked about Dr. Conteh's recent visit to Cuba and what he made of the Cuban military presence in Africa. Dr. Conteh said that the Cuban presence was sometimes much exaggerated

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- 4 -

in the press. For instance, he had once, recently, seen a map which indicated that there were Cuban troops in Sierra Leone: but he could assure the Prime Minister that there were none! In Mali and Guinea, for example, they were able to do little. The two real exceptions were Angola and Ethiopia. In Angola they had at least kept the South Africans out and had allowed the NPLA to consolidate its rule over the country. Lord Carrington commented that in his view the presence of Cubans in Angola had merely prolonged the internal difficulties while failing to cause UNITA to disappear. Their effect had been wholly disruptive. Turning to Gambia, President Stevens said that Senghor had complained to the OAU meeting that Qadhafi was trying to subvert Senegal by training terrorists in Libya. Some time ago, Qadhafi had also offered Gambia help over transport, and this had been accepted. But after a while, the Libyans had started to intrigue with the Gambian opposition parties. So very recently, Jawara had been forced to ask for help from Senegal and Guinea, though so far only Senegalese troops had arrived. Mr. Pratt added that having been in Banjul over the weekend, he could confirm that Senegalese troops were only to be seen at the airport and the town was calm. A week before, a senior Gambian officer had been shot, which had been interpreted as the beginning of an uprising; but it did not seem to be so. However, opinion was gaining ground in West Africa that the Libyans were trying to make trouble everywhere.

President Stevens finished by raising three bilateral points. First, British Caledonian had entered into an agreement with Sierra Leone to exploit their air routes. However, they had done little by way of training, in comparison with eg UTA and Air Afrique, who seemed to do more to train pilots, engineers, ground maintenance staff and managerial staff. At present, British Caledonian seemed to do no more than fly the Sierra Leonean flag; he wanted Sierra Leoneans to be more directly integrated into the operation. Secondly, he mentioned ECGD cover. This had now been withdrawn, and Sierra Leone did not even have short-term cover. It was agreed that this could usefully be followed up during a visit to Sierra Leone by ECGD officials later this year, in the wake of the IMF official

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- 5 -

mission. Finally, President Stevens mentioned the long-standing dispute over Kissy Jetty. He explained the background to what he described as a family affair which we should not have allowed to drag on so long. He would like to see the matter concluded now if possible. It was agreed that talks would continue at once at official level to try to identify a mutually acceptable solution.

The discussion ended at 1300.

*AmS*  
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13 November 1980

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Sierra Leone

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13 November 1980

Call by President Stevens

I enclose a copy of the record of a conversation between the Prime Minister and President Stevens of Sierra Leone on the occasion of the latter's call here on 5 November.

I am sending a copy of this letter and enclosure to Stuart Hampson (Department of Trade).

MICHAEL ALEXANDER

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

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*With the compliments of*

THE PRIVATE SECRETARY

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FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

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1. Welcoming President Stevens to London, the Prime Minister said that she had learned much about Africa's view of the world from President Masir~~e~~'s recent visit and looked forward to equally frank discussions with President Stevens. President Stevens replied that he greatly appreciated the invitation to visit Britain. ~~Equally,~~ <sup>also</sup> ~~he~~ looked forward to a frank exchange of views. He felt that for the last five years or so, the links between Sierra Leone and Britain had somehow weakened. His countrymen always hoped to have preferential shares in 'the UK Limited'. We had been together so long. Yet Sierra Leone had begun to feel rather neglected of late; they noted the fact, for instance, that no British Ministers ever visited Freetown on their West African tours. This was a good moment, then, to renew our old friendship which, he

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2. As to domestic policies, there were no particular problems. Sierra Leone's difficulties were mainly economic. They were particularly hard-hit by the escalation of oil prices: a large percentage of their exports had to go to meet the fuel bill. This situation coincided with a period when world prices for their main agricultural exports, such as cocoa and coffee, had gone down. They were nevertheless wondering how best to develop their agriculture; President Stevens thought that some large-scale plantations would be necessary to supplement the small producers. He mentioned the negotiations he had recently conducted with Alusuisse over a bauxite project. Unfortunately, this was hampered by inadequate transport infrastructure.

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3. The Prime Minister raised the question of Namibia. The present phase in the negotiations was being presented in a different light by different people. Lord Carrington said that he was now a little more optimistic; it seemed likely that the Pre-Independence Meeting (PIM) might take place soon. It would be useful to discuss the procedures for the election. It would, however, be disastrous, especially for a number of poorer African countries, if the threatened UN sanctions went ahead. President Stevens said that he was also reasonably optimistic. He kept closely in touch with the Front Line States. The OAU had been bound to seize the Security Council of the Namibia problem; but perhaps this might now be carried forward until after the PIM had taken place.

4. The Prime Minister asked what the OAU made of the disastrous situation in Uganda. Lord Carrington added that we had said that we would help with the forthcoming elections only on condition that the four parties could agree on the ground rules. Otherwise, the elections would be seen as no more than a device to return Obote to power. We could not be associated with elections that were evidently not free and fair. President Stevens commented that Britain should not wash its hands of Uganda: we had a special responsibility for it, not only as a Commonwealth country but also because we had been involved in the overthrow of Obote. Lord Carrington denied this absolutely. He said that we were quite as taken aback by Idi Amin Dada's coup as much as anyone else - and as Defence Minister at the time, he knew this to be so.

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