



cc: FCO
DOT

Sierra
 Leone

RH

10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

17 November 1980

Dear Mr. Thomson,

Thank you for your letter of 11 November describing your talks with President Stevens. I am most grateful to you for having followed up the question of training of Sierra Leoneans so effectively.

I am sure that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Department of Trade would both be interested to have copies of your letter to President Stevens, and I should like one too.

Yours sincerely
Margaret Thatcher

Adam Thomson, Esq, CBE

059

file

ds

Sierra Leone

3 December 1980

The Prime Minister has asked me to thank you for your letter to her of 25 November about the co-operation between British Caledonian and the Government of Sierra Leone. The Prime Minister has read your letter with interest.

MICHAEL ALEXANDER

Adam Thomson, Esq., C.B.E.

5/11

British Caledonian

British Caledonian Airways Limited
London Airport-Gatwick
Surrey England RH6 OLT

Telephone: 01-668 9311 Crawley (0293) 27890
Cables: Scotair Gatwick Telex: 87161 BCAL G

From the Chairman's office

25th November, 1980.

The Rt. Hon. Mrs. Margaret Thatcher, MP,
Prime Minister,
10 Downing Street,
London, SW1.

Dear Prime Minister,

Thank you for your letter dated 17th November 1980. I enclose a copy of my letter to President Stevens and I am also sending a copy of this to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Department of Trade.

Our Group manages two small airlines and five hotels for various African Governments; this is part of our overall strategy of developing our airline alongside our tour operating and hotel group subsidiaries. Overall the total effort is worthwhile, but it certainly presents us with problems common to such developments in emerging African nations.

The speed at which Africanisation is carried out is always a problem. This is usually compounded by such things as pressure to accept candidates who may be unsuitable, but who are proposed by someone of influence, or by some individuals we have trained leaving to join another enterprise, or who have to be eased out for some misdemeanour or other. Having to provide an acceptable international service means that some local customs and practices have to be changed and new standards adopted and this all takes time.

Developing tourism is yet another problem. Often the senior people in Government know what has to be done to attract the tourist, but the financial state of the country does not permit it to carry out the necessary programmes. Some places are more successful than others. The Gambia is a good example of meaningful progress having taken place over the past few years, but I am afraid that Sierra Leone has a long way to go.

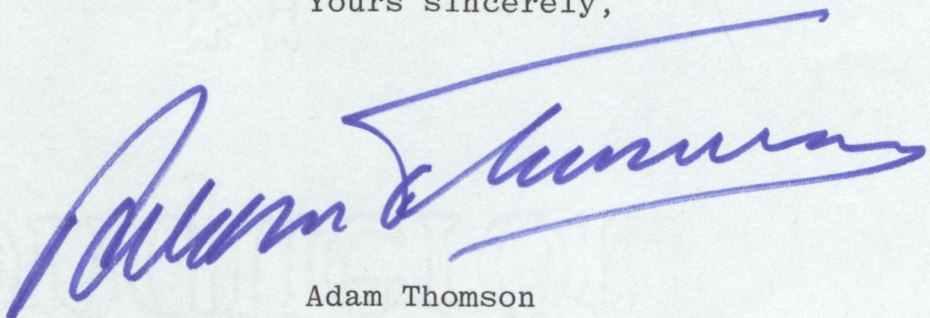
.../...

Airline services, the development of tourism and hotels is usually of sufficient interest in the various countries to which we operate in Africa for me to be invited to meet with the Presidents and/or Senior Ministers when I visit their country. I am usually pressed for more training, faster Africanisation and to bring more tourists to the country; in turn, I am usually pressing for a better infrastructure for tourism, less unrealistic pressures, greater opportunities and to be allowed to transfer some of our money to the U.K.

You may be interested to know that after the 1980 OAU Conference, which was held at the CHM managed Bintumani Hotel in Freetown, President Stevens was complimentary about our performance. As a matter of fact, the late President Tolbert complimented us on running the Hotel Africa and Conference Centre in Liberia at last year's OAU Conference and President Kaunda publicly congratulated CHM on its performance at the Pamodzi Hotel in Lusaka last year when we opened it - just in time for the Commonwealth Conference.

In spite of the many difficulties and problems, I do feel that we are making real progress in the African countries we serve and we shall certainly spare no effort to continue to develop our business there.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Adam Thomson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Adam Thomson

British Caledonian

British Caledonian Airways Limited
London Airport-Gatwick
Surrey England RH6 OLT

Telephone: 01-668 9311 Crawley (0293) 27890
Cables: Scotair Gatwick Telex: 87161 BCAL G

From the Chairman's office

24th November, 1980.

His Excellency The President
Dr. Siaka Stevens,
State House,
Freetown,
Republic of Sierra Leone.

Your Excellency,

It was indeed an honour to meet with you again at 10 Downing Street earlier this month, and also at Gatwick Airport before your departure to Freetown. I was pleased to hear you say how much you had enjoyed your visit and, from the standpoint of an observer, I thought it was a great success. I, and I know many of my friends and colleagues, particularly enjoyed your speech at the Mansion House.

During your visit we discussed training for Sierra Leoneans by British Caledonian. Your Excellency expressed the view that perhaps we could have done more. My own view, expressed at our meeting, was that - while we should always strive to do better - we had made serious attempts to train as many Sierra Leoneans as possible into responsible positions.

However, at our meetings I had insufficient evidence to demonstrate this point but promised to write to you with information as soon as it had been put into a report for me from the managers responsible. These reports have now been written, and I would like to summarise them briefly as follows.

The association between Sierra Leone Airways and British Caledonian Airways has existed for many years. In 1975 the two companies commissioned Britain's Air Transport and Travel Industry Training Board to study the management organisation of SLA and to make recommendations for progress, especially regarding the training of Sierra Leone nationals into more management positions.

At that time, SLA employed a total of 269 staff, of whom twenty-four were classed as managers and senior supervisors. Nine of those positions were filled by expatriates, and fifteen by Sierra Leoneans.

.../...

The study was in line with our views that management of the company should be passed progressively from the expatriates to Sierra Leone nationals, and that British Caledonian would be responsible for training to management positions those members of the staff that showed promise. The goal of complete indigenisation is still our aim for Sierra Leone Airways, and we believe we have made good progress since the ATTITB report was issued.

We had hoped that the post of General Manager would by now have been filled by a Sierra Leonean, but the untimely death of Mr. Remi Wright while we were training him was a great sadness for us all. Since his death, no other candidate for the position has been put forward, and we are continuing to employ Mr. Denis Long as General Manager. I understand that Mr. Long is very acceptable to the Government in Sierra Leone, but we do believe it to be in the long-term interest of SLA that a General Manager - Designate be identified. B.CAL would then start to train him at Gatwick, supervise his performance as deputy to the General Manager, and provide SLA with a worthy and capable successor.

On the Flight Operations side of the company, we have successfully trained two nationals of Sierra Leone to fly the Trislanders, and a third, Mr. Spaine, will shortly complete his training. Unfortunately, one of the earlier trained pilots has left to join Air Liberia, and the other returned to Government service. We are still hopeful of finding more nationals that we can train, both at Gatwick and with specialised British flying training schools.

We have been more successful in retaining the services of those engineers who have been trained by B.CAL. Three have been trained to full competency on the Trislander fleet - Mr. A. Coker, Mr. V. Lewis-Coker and Mr. A. Bunting-Graden, while we are hopeful that they will shortly be joined by Mr. B. Shengahum. Even more satisfactory is the fact that Mr. A. Coker has now completed a final 12 month period of training at Gatwick to become a fully licensed engineer on the DC10 and to take responsibility for all the large aircraft using Lungi Airport. Mr. Bunting-Graden will shortly commence a similar training programme. In addition, Mr. N. Palmer has been a fully-licensed radio technician since 1974.

I am sure you will appreciate that this training is both very long-term and expensive - Mr. Coker's training began in 1967 and has only just been completed. Training - and retaining - is a continual part of an airline's existence and we foresee that there will be a continuing need to train the excellent nucleus of engineers working for SLA.

At the moment we are also training Mr. Stanley Palmer who is the Commercial Manager - Designate. This is an extremely important position in the company, and I understand that those working with him at Gatwick have expressed great hopes for his future with the airline.

.../...

Elsewhere at management level, progress has been slower than we would have hoped. On the finance side, four promising recruits were given the opportunity to take on added responsibilities and received initial management training. Unfortunately none of the four reached a satisfactory level, and we are looking to train more recruits.

British Caledonian, along with the management of SLA, also take full responsibility for the training of all the junior staff, who run the domestic airline, man the ticket desks, and make Lungi Airport one of the most efficient in the Continent. This training has amounted to an average of 500 man days annually in recent years.

The airline industry today is a highly technological industry, in fact it is in the forefront of modern technology and demands of its staff much greater skills than most other occupations. Those of us who have worked with Sierra Leone Airways over the years have found it a most rewarding experience to watch those that we have trained gradually taking over all the responsible positions in the airline. Equally we look forward to the occasion when every post can be filled by a Sierra Leone national, and I would like to assure you, that your goal is our goal in this respect and of our dedication towards that end.

As your Excellency will know, the Group is also responsible for the training of the staff at the Hotel Bintumani through its subsidiary company Caledonian Hotel Management. I myself have been most impressed with the speed with which Sierra Leoneans have been trained to take over many of the most responsible jobs.

Mr. Mentink, the Managing Director of our hotel subsidiary, advises me that he is very pleased at the ability and quality of the intake of new recruits - a tribute to the educational standards of Sierra Leone. Nationals are now responsible for the restaurant up to the level of Head Waiter, and are completely responsible for the banqueting staff, the housekeeping staff and the front office, while we have been very pleased with the senior accountant who has been completely trained by CHM to a very high standard in a very short time.

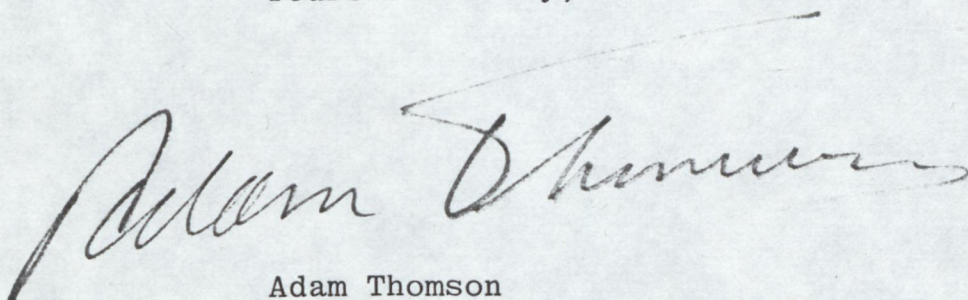
As I mentioned to you at Gatwick, we do believe that we could achieve so much more for the Government of Sierra Leone, as we strive to develop tourism through our airline, tour operating and hotel divisions, if further steps could be made to ease the path for tourists wishing to visit Sierra Leone.

Recently we have put forward suggestions that we believe could improve the occupancies at all Sierra Leone hotels to everyone's benefit by making the country more competitive with others. These suggestions included the proposition that the country waive its requirement for short-stay tourists to possess visas; not a big problem for the tourist but when he does not have to cope with it for other similar destinations, it may just be the "balancing" reason for him going to one of these; invest in more promotional activities in Europe and North America; ease the tourists' path through Immigration and Customs at the airport; encourage the local businessmen to provide more cultural and recreational facilities for the tourist; aim to

shorten the journey time between the resorts and the airport, by re-routing the Ferry services and improving their efficiency. We appreciate the problems but if they can be overcome, the initiatives we propose would certainly benefit the whole country.

Your Excellency, I would apologise for the length of this letter, but assure you it is a sincere reflection of the interest held in your country by the Caledonian Airways Group of Companies, and by myself in particular. If your office should wish to receive further details of anything mentioned in this letter, I would be very honoured to attend to its requests.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Adam Thomson". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Adam Thomson



British Caledonian

British Caledonian Airways Limited
London Airport-Gatwick
Surrey England RH6 OLT

Telephone: 01-668 9311 Crawley (0293) 27890
Cables: Scotair Gatwick Telex: 87161 BCAL G

From the Chairman's office

214 11th November, 1980.

The Rt. Hon. Mrs. Margaret Thatcher,
The Prime Minister,
10 Downing Street,
London, SW1.

Dear Prime Minister,

Thank you very much indeed for inviting me to attend your luncheon last Wednesday for His Excellency Dr. Siaka P. Stevens. It was a most enjoyable occasion.

Prior to lunch I brought up the subject of training Sierra Leoneans with President Stevens after he had raised this with you, but we did not really have the opportunity to discuss it then. However, I met him prior to his departure from Gatwick Airport on Sunday evening and, from the conversation, I believe he was talking about a feeling he had that we could do more training, rather than anything based on our past performance.

Apart from operating the London-Freetown scheduled service, we manage Sierra Leone Airways, which also involves running part of the Airport, and we also manage the Government owned Bintumani hotel. We do train local people for all three responsibilities; this year alone our training has ranged from the development of senior Sierra Leoneans to undertake jobs currently filled by ex-patriates, to technical training in the fields of Engineering, Traffic Handling, Reservations, Ticketing, Cabin Services and Cargo operations, plus training of different grades of hotel staff. Our policy is to replace ex-patriates with local staff as soon as we are satisfied that they are competent to take over the responsibility.

We did select and were training a local General Manager for Sierra Leone Airways; unfortunately he died last year and in spite of persistent requests to the Government for another designated candidate, no name has been given. I know that the

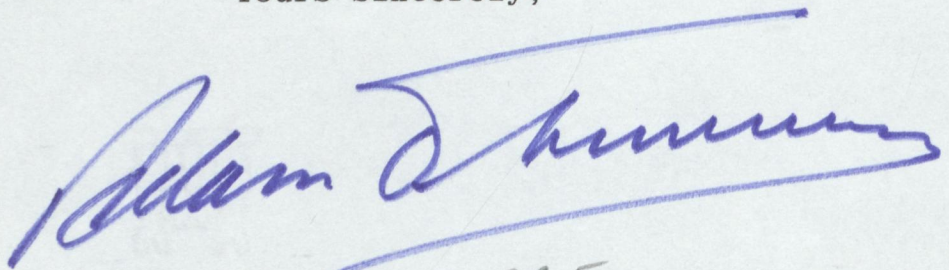
.../...

President would like to see a qualified Sierra Leonean Pilot. He was rather surprised to hear that we had one under training and we expect him to replace one of the ex-patriates within three months and we will certainly repeat this process provided we have suitable candidates.

I would really like to see all of our responsibilities covered with the minimum number of ex-patriates and this is a genuine common interest between the President's office and the Caledonian Airways Group's involvement in Sierra Leone, but if I take too much expertise away too quickly, then I have no doubt that the backlash from the Sierra Leone Government will be loud and clear.

President Stevens appeared to be quite satisfied with the information I gave him, nevertheless, I am writing to him with appropriate details. If your office would like a copy of this, or if they would like it sent to a Government Department, I would be pleased to comply.

Yours sincerely,



Adam Thomson, CBE