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10 DOWNING STREET

LONDON SW1A 2AA

*From the Private Secretary*

26 April 1989

PRIME MINISTER'S INTERVIEW WITH THE DAILY TIMES, LAGOS

Thank you for your letter of 25 April enclosing draft replies to the questions submitted by the Daily Times of Lagos. I have substantially revised a number of these. Subject to any comments which departments may have, they can now be telegraphed to Lagos, to be passed on to the Daily Times.

The Prime Minister has agreed to a 15 minute photo session at 1000 on 5 May during which a few supplementary questions could be put (see FCO telegram 275 to Lagos).

C. D. POWELL

Richard Gozney, Esq.,  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

PRIME MINISTER'S INTERVIEW WITH THE DAILY TIMES, LAGOS

1. For several years relations between your country and Nigeria were cool. Then, since 1987 they seemed to warm up rather suddenly. How do you explain this situation?

I think that my own visit to Nigeria in January 1988, which I very much enjoyed, represented in a way a new start in our relations. I am a very great admirer of President Babangida and the policies which he is pursuing. And Britain is giving them very strong support. The best proof of that is the way we took a lead in putting together the major package of international financial support for Nigeria recently, to which Britain contributed \$100 million. Now we are very much looking forward to the President's State Visit to Britain.

2. You are known to object to military governments. But with President Ibrahim Babangida, you seem to have struck a rapport. What special reason is there for this?

President Babangida is a practical person who wants to get things done. He has been prepared to take tough decisions to help Nigeria over its economic difficulties. That's something which I admire. We had to take some pretty difficult decisions when I first became Prime Minister ten years ago and it can be a lonely business. The key is to stick to what you know is right and see it through to the end. I am sure President Babangida will do that.

3. Nigerians tend to feel a special relationship with Britons and feel hurt when, as has happened since you came to power, this is not reciprocated. One example of this is that Britain requires Nigerians to obtain visas to enter Britain, and charges them a fee that is almost four times the national monthly wage to issue the visas. Can we expect that now that relations are warming up, the visa requirement will perhaps be scrapped, thus returning Nigeria to the favoured group of friendly nations?

Let's get this into proportion. British travellers to Nigeria have needed visas since the 1960s. So the introduction of a visa requirement to come to Britain can hardly be seen as down-grading over relations. We had to introduce the requirement because large numbers of travellers were arriving in the UK who did not qualify for admission. The confusion this caused was inconvenient for all concerned, above all for bona fide Nigerian travellers who are the great majority. Saying to travellers that they should make sure they qualify for entry to the UK before leaving Nigeria rather than at London Airport saves time and trouble for everyone.

The purpose of the fees is to cover the costs of issuing visas: at present a large proportion of these costs have to be met by the UK taxpayer. But don't let us exaggerate the problem. The cost of a visa is a very small proportion of the overall cost of travel.

4. There is now a clear movement of opinion towards the cancellation of a significant part of third world debts as one way of solving the debt crisis. Is that a view you can support, especially as it concerns Nigeria?

The UK supports Nigeria in the difficult adjustments which she is having to make in the economy. That is why we are giving \$100 million in additional aid this year following your agreement with the IMF. Proposals for writing off debt were introduced for the benefit of the very poorest countries only as far as recent proposals for debt reduction are concerned. These have yet to be discussed thoroughly in the International Financial Institutions.

5. In the nine years you have been in office, Britain's heart has been in Europe, to the extent that it sometimes seems that there is little room for the Commonwealth. Then recently Britain's interest seems to have been renewed in the Commonwealth.

(a) to what extent is the Commonwealth still relevant for Britain?

(b) would it be true to say that renewed interest in the Commonwealth is in reality a reaction against the proposal for greater integration of Europe by 1992.

The Commonwealth is still very relevant to Britain - and Britain to the Commonwealth. After all, we provide some { } of the Commonwealth Secretariat's costs. We participate fully in all Commonwealth activities, devote by far the greater part of our aid to Commonwealth countries and play a full part in Commonwealth Heads of Government meetings. It is a unique organisation and we attach great importance to it. Membership of the European Community is in no way incompatible with our role in the Commonwealth. Indeed we have secured very great benefits for Commonwealth countries through the EC, giving them better access to the EC market and very substantial aid through the Lomé Convention.

6. One of the main areas of disagreement between you and African Commonwealth leaders is how to bring apartheid in South Africa to an end. They believe in the use of sanctions and, if necessary, force, while you are opposed to sanctions as well as the use of force. But do you really believe that change can come to South Africa itself, without credible pressure being applied, either through sanctions, or armed force, or both?

Yes, I believe that change in South Africa is inevitable. Most importantly, the South Africans themselves are coming to recognise this. There is growing acknowledgement in South Africa that not only is apartheid deeply hurtful and inhuman but it is an obstacle to the economic growth necessary for the future prosperity of the whole nation. That is why we encourage the South African Government to take bold initiatives for change. I am optimistic that we shall see further progress with political reform, particularly if the Namibia Agreement is successfully implemented.

We constantly urge the South African Government to release Nelson Mandela and other detainees and open negotiations with representatives of black South Africans, against the background of the suspension of violence. This was the concept endorsed by the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group. But sanctions would only cause hunger and unemployment amongst black South Africans and delay the prospects for change.

6. One of the main areas of disagreement between you and African Commonwealth leaders is how to bring apartheid in South Africa to an end. They believe in the use of sanctions and, if necessary, force, while you are opposed to sanctions as well as the use of force. But do you really believe that change can come to South Africa itself, without credible pressure being applied, either through sanctions, or armed force, or both?

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7. You seem to believe that apartheid can be reformed peacefully into something that will be more acceptable, especially in the light of the developments in Namibia. Is it really possible to reform something that is intrinsically evil?

I do not want to see apartheid reformed, I want to see it abolished. I not only believe that apartheid can be dismantled by peaceful means, but that it must be. But what sort of future would we be giving the post-apartheid society if we destroyed the social and economic fabric of South Africa? Sanctions would not bring about the peaceful end of apartheid. They are destructive. They cost jobs, and they would have a crippling effect not only on black South Africans but on the Front Line States as well. As you know, we have considerable programmes of aid to black South Africans and to the Front Line States. It would be a very strange policy to give with one hand and to take away with the other.

8. On your last visit to Africa, you made a previously unannounced visit to Namibia, at a time when Namibia was arguably still under South African control. Were you trying to make a point? If so, what point?

I decided to make a short visit to Namibia on 1 April to demonstrate our strong support for the United Nations Plan for Namibian independence. I also wanted to visit our Signals Unit, which formed an important part of the United Nations Transitional Assistance Group. I was glad to support the authority of the United Nations at a particularly testing time. As you know, 1 April was the day when the implementation of the UN Plan came into effect, under which the United Nations Special Representative is working with the South African Administrator General to pave the way for free and fair election and to ensure the orderly transition to independence. My visit in no way implied acceptance of the lawfulness of the South African presence: it implied strong support for the United Nations.

9. YOU ARE, APPARENTLY, BRITAIN'S MOST SUCCESSFUL PRIME MINISTER THIS CENTURY. YOUR STEWARDSHIP HAS ALSO CHANGED BRITAIN FUNDAMENTALLY. BUT WHILE YOU HAVE STRENGTHENED THE ECONOMY AND INCREASED ITS WEALTH IN GENERAL, THE GAP BETWEEN THE RICH AND THE POOR IS BELIEVED TO HAVE WIDENED. HOW WOULD YOU RESPOND TO THE ACCUSATION OF BEING UNCARING?

- Any Government which sets out on major, fundamental, far-reaching reform is going to have to face criticism - a lot of it. Of course in 1979-81, when the first priority was to get the UK economy back on its feet, real incomes for almost everybody fell. Sacrifices had to be made, as you are making in Nigeria. Since then incomes have increased for everyone. In fact, the figures for 1981 to 1985 show that the real incomes of the lowest 10 per cent increased by over 8 per cent, compared to the national average of 6.4 per cent. Since 1985 living standards have been further increased by the fall in unemployment, fast growth, and tax cuts. The long term trends in Britain are towards more equal distribution of wealth. All the evidence points that way - income tax, home ownership (which has never been so high in our history), share ownership, and so on in many other areas. Our spending on the National Health Service has never been so high: and as you probably know, we are trying to make the Service better targeted and still more efficient. Spending on social security is to reach nearly £60 billion by 1991 - an increase of over £11 billion in 1988: an average increase of 2 per cent a year over the assumed increase in prices. We are uprating a wide range of social benefits. Pensions are up in line with retail prices. We are introducing new schemes for older pensioners. So we have made clear our firm commitment to protect all members of our society - while giving freedom to all those able and ready to generate the wealth which makes this help possible in the first place.

10. EVENTS IN NORTHERN IRELAND TEND TO BE CONFUSING TO AFRICANS, WHO QUITE OFTEN SEE THE IRISH REPUBLICAN ARMY'S ACTIVITIES AS ANOTHER LIBERATION STRUGGLE, FROM BRITISH COLONIALISM. WHAT REALLY IS THE JUSTIFICATION FOR CONTINUED BRITISH RULE IN NORTHERN IRELAND?

- The position is clear and unambiguous. Northern Ireland is an integral part of the United Kingdom because that is the democratically expressed wish of a majority of the people who live there. The British Government uphold this position precisely because it is the wish of a majority. The Government also recognise the aspiration of others in Northern Ireland for an eventual united Ireland. We have stated clearly in the Anglo-Irish Agreement and elsewhere that if, in the future, a majority of the people of Northern Ireland clearly wish for a united Ireland, their wish will be respected. The IRA is a terrorist movement which seeks to impose its views by violent means. Sinn Fein, the political wing of the IRA, attracts few votes. That is why the IRA resort to violence.

11. ACTUALLY, IN THE PERIOD YOU HAVE BEEN IN POWER, SCHOOL FEES CHARGED ON OVERSEAS STUDENTS HAVE QUADRUPLED, LEADING TO A DRASTIC REDUCTION OF THE NUMBER OF NIGERIAN STUDENTS STUDYING IN BRITAIN. SINCE EDUCATION HAS BEEN ONE WAY OF BUILDING FRIENDSHIP AND SPREADING BRITISH VALUES WORLDWIDE, ARE YOU NOT WORRIED THAT FEWER AND FEWER STUDENTS ARE COMING TO YOUR SHORES?

- I am very keen to welcome as many overseas students as possible to study in the United Kingdom. Student exchanges bring benefits to both of us. That is why the British Government is currently putting more than £110 million a year into awards and scholarships schemes to help overseas students to come here.

The number of overseas students at British universities is now at a record level. At the same time we note, with concern, the decline in the numbers of Nigerian students coming here. Increases in academic institutions' fees may be one cause. But as you know, these are now set by the institutions themselves. Exchange control regulations in Nigeria and the continuing development of your own educational facilities at second and third level also contribute. We are now directing a large share of our scholarship resources to Nigeria. The British Government has pledged itself to 100 new scholarships a year for a group of leading Commonwealth countries, including Nigeria. Last year we provided nearly £2 million for more than 350 awards for Nigerian students. We expect to provide even more this year.

12. You have praised the Nigerian Government's economic programme, and Nigerians for their readiness to make sacrifices. You'll agree that sacrifice-making isn't without its pains. Do you have any message, of a more cheering nature, to give to Nigerians?

Yes: you are an immensely talented people with great enterprise and flair and your country has vast natural resources. Your Government is committed to economic policies which will enable you to combine the talents and the resources to achieve success. If you can stick with the sacrifices now, the sky's the limit!

13. In the period you've been in office you have suppressed the unions, and now you have taken on reforms of the legal and accounting professions. What kind of Britain are you hoping to leave behind when you retire?

Of course we haven't suppressed the Trade Unions. What we have done is to bring the unions under the rule of law and make them more accountable to their members, that is to say, more democratic. We are also, as you say, working on reform in other important areas. The proposed legal reforms are intended to speed up the administration of justice and to make it more accessible to everyone. My aim is a society which is free, responsible and just.

14. Which of your many achievements as Prime Minister gives you the most satisfaction? And which is the least?

On the first part of your question, two main things. First, the British economy. We inherited an over-regulated economy which held back individual initiative. Throughout the 1960s and 70s Britain was at the bottom of the European Community growth league. Our industrial relations were bad. Since 1980, the United Kingdom has grown by more than any other EC country. We are now into our eighth successive year of sustained growth. Our GDP and our manufacturing output have both reached the highest level in our history. Britain's rate of growth exceeded five per cent per year in the past two years, the longest period since the 1950s. Business investment in 1988 as a share of GDP was the highest ever. Britain has just been chosen as the country for the biggest single Japanese investment ever made in the EC.

The other main source of satisfaction is that this greater prosperity has come about as a result of greater individual freedom and responsibility. We have shown that it's when you allow people to take their own decisions, keep more of what they earn and own their own homes, that they give of their best.

The least satisfaction? I suppose, that there is still so much to do!





Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

4 May 1989

Dear Charles,

Prime Minister's Interview with the Daily Times, Lagos

Further to your letter of 26 April, we have now received via BHC Lagos three supplementary questions which the Managing Director of the Daily Times, Dr Yemi Ogunbiyi, would like to put to the Prime Minister during the 15 minute photo session at 1000 on 5 May.

As the first of these is in general terms, we have not sought to provide briefing. I enclose suggested points to make and background for the other two questions. Both relate to aspects of the attempt to kidnap Umaru Dikko in 1984, a subject which remains a live issue in the Nigerian press. While the first, concerning the Nigerian convicted for his part in the kidnap, is an area of legitimate interest, it is clear that Dr Ogunbiyi has been set up to ask question three, either by General Hananiya himself or by one of his associates. We have suggested a line for the Prime Minister to take in responding to this. But she might consider that under the circumstances it would be better not to comment on a specific case such as this. We are in the meantime asking BHC Lagos to suggest to Dr Ogunbiyi that he ought to consider using this opportunity of an interview with the Prime Minister to put a more suitable question.

Dr Ogunbiyi will be accompanied by Mr Ade'obe Obe, the (London based) Editor of West Africa magazine, Mr Onyema Ugochukwu, the Editor of the Daily Times, and Miss Anne Tully, a photographer. The interview will appear on 7 May.

Yours ever,

Richard Gozney

(R H T Gozney)  
Private Secretary

C D Powell Esq  
PS/10 Downing Street

CCB  
Mhari  
Bluff



**PRIME MINISTER'S INTERVIEW WITH DAILY TIMES, LAGOS**

**1000, 5 MAY**

Question 1

In what specific way has your background as a working class person influenced your politics?

Question 2

General Ibrahim Babangida has demonstrated time and again that he believes in the rule of law. When he took over as President, some Britons who were detained here without trial were promptly brought to trial and sentenced. But in response to public outcry both from Nigeria and Britain, he ordered their release and subsequent deportation. There is a Nigerian Major Yusufu languishing in British jail as a result of the foolish mistake of the Dikko affair. Isn't it time to reciprocate Nigeria's goodwill by releasing him, if only so he can serve the rest of his sentence in Nigeria?

Points to Make

- The attempt to kidnap Dikko was a most serious and violent offence, for which the four men convicted are serving long prison sentences.
  
- We take the gravest view of crimes of violence. Parole is generally granted for prisoners convicted of such crimes only at most for a few months before the end of a sentence.



### Question 3

During the Dikko affair, Foreign Secretary Geoffrey Howe declared the then Nigerian High Commissioner, Major-General Hananiya a 'persona-non-grata'. Now that the Major-General is retired and a private citizen, is he free to return to Britain, that is on a private visit?

### Points to Make

- Police enquiries at the time produced information which appeared to implicate members of the Nigerian High Commission.
- We made it clear in Parliament then that it would be inappropriate for General Hananiya to return to the United Kingdom. Nothing has happened since to alter our view.
- We are bound to take the gravest view of any evidence which appears to implicate diplomats in crimes - and Dikko's kidnap was a most serious offence, for which four men are serving long prison sentences.



## BACKGROUND

### Dikko

1. Dikko, the Minister of Transport under Shagari's régime, fled Nigeria following Buhari's military coup in 1983. He is now wanted in Nigeria to face charges of corruption. An unsuccessful attempt to abduct him from the UK was made in July 1984 (ie before Babangida took over). Dikko subsequently applied for political asylum in October 1984. This application was refused by the then Home Secretary in June 1985 on the grounds that he was not satisfied Dikko had a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of political opinion. Dikko appealed against this decision, and an Immigration Tribunal in August 1987 granted him leave to remain in the UK as a refugee until June 1988. He has since reapplied for political asylum. The Home Office are currently considering his case.

2. In January 1985 the Nigerian Government submitted a formal application for Dikko's extradition. Since then, there have been various technical delays in proceeding with this. However, the Home Secretary ruled last year that the way is clear for extradition proceedings to commence. These proceedings will themselves be lengthy, and Dikko can be expected to mount a determined legal fight to resist extradition. Even assuming he is unsuccessful, it might well therefore be years before he is actually extradited. The Nigerians for their part remain anxious to bring Dikko to justice, and have raised it with us on a number of occasions. We have consistently stressed that both extradition and political asylum are essentially legal matters in which HMG has no standing to intervene.



### Yusufu

3. Four people were sentenced in February 1985 for the Dikko kidnapping: three Israelis and a former Nigerian Army Intelligence Officer, Major Yusufu, who was sentenced to 12 years. The Nigerians have been very concerned to get Yusufu back. But the only way early release could be granted would be through parole or repatriation. Yusufu's second parole review is due shortly. A decision to release Yusufu would depend on the Home Secretary exercising his discretion not to apply our policy of not granting parole to prisoners serving sentences of over 5 years for violent offences.

4. As for repatriation, a multilateral agreement, the Commonwealth Scheme for Transfer of Convicted Offenders, does exist. But the UK has not yet adopted it. Even when we have, the Scheme only provides an informal framework for prisoner transfers. Each case would have to be dealt with on its merits by the Home Secretary.

### Hananiya

5. The line we have taken consistently in the past has been that it would be inappropriate for Hananiya to visit the UK. Police enquiries at the time of the kidnap attempt indicated clearly his complicity in the affair. He was told of this at the time and was informed that evidence against him might well be produced in open court, and that his position would therefore be untenable if he were not recalled. He was not made persona non grata. But in reply to a question in the House about whether Hananiya would be welcome if he attempted to return to the UK, the Foreign Secretary said that, "as the full extent of the High Commission's involvement had not been established, it would be inappropriate for him to return".



6. Ministers have since taken the view that while there are no protocol or immigration grounds for refusing Hananiya entry, it would be inappropriate, given the evidence of his personal involvement in the Dikko kidnap, for him to return, even for a private visit. Press and parliamentary interest in the specific case of Dikko's kidnap (which continues to feature at each stage of his fight to remain in the country), and in the wider (and topical) issue of abuses of diplomatic privilege, could generate adverse publicity. Public opinion sees the Dikko kidnap as an early, and notorious, act of state terrorism in the UK.



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

Cc Press Office  
PC.

25 April 1989

Dear Charles,

Nigerian State Visit, 9-12 May:  
Prime Minister's Interview with Daily Times, Lagos

The Prime Minister agreed to give an interview to one of the main Lagos papers, the Daily Times, to mark the State Visit to the UK by the Nigerian President on 9-12 May (our High Commissioner's letter of 4 April, copy enclosed). The Daily Times agreed to submit their questions in advance. I enclose draft replies.

To meet their print deadline the Daily Times requires the text by 28 April. If acceptable we can telegraph the final text to our High Commission for them to pass on.

The Daily Times also asked for a 5-10 minute photo session with the Prime Minister during which one of their staff might put 2 unscripted questions to the Prime Minister following up the written replies (Lagos telno 325, copy enclosed). You are considering this.

Yours ever,

*Richard Gozney*

(R H T Gozney)  
Private Secretary

C D Powell Esq  
10 Downing Street



BRITISH HIGH COMMISSION

11 Eleke Crescent, Victoria Island, Lagos  
Telephone 0155x 619531

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4 April 1989

Dr Yemi Ogunbiyi  
Managing Director  
Daily Times  
3/7 Kakawa Street  
LAGOS

JWN 027/3	
RECEIVED	
1989	
DESK	FILE
SS	

f.a.  
State visit  
12/11/4.

Dear Dr Ogunbiyi,

REQUEST FOR INTERVIEW WITH BRITISH PRIME MINISTER

Thank you for your letter of 13 <sup>(13)</sup> March, requesting an interview with the British Prime Minister, the Right Honourable Margaret Thatcher MP.

My Information Officer was able to raise this with the Prime Minister's Assistant Press Secretary during Mrs Thatcher's short visit to Lagos on 28 March. He regretted that given Mrs Thatcher's exceptionally busy schedule over the next two or three months a personal interview was not possible. However he confirmed that the Prime Minister would be happy to provide written replies to any written questions that might be submitted by the Daily Times and West Africa Magazine.

I therefore have pleasure in inviting you to let me have written questions which we can transmit on your behalf to the Prime Minister. I hope you can provide these in good time for President Babangida's State Visit to Britain (9-12 May).

*Yours sincerely*

*Brian Barber*

B L Barber

blind cc: WAD, FCO



THE PRIME MINISTER'S INTERVIEW WITH THE DAILY TIMES, LAGOS

1. FOR SEVERAL YEARS RELATIONS BETWEEN YOUR COUNTRY AND NIGERIA WERE COOL. THEN SINCE 1987, THEY SEEMED TO WARM UP RATHER SUDDENLY. HOW DO YOU EXPLAIN THIS SITUATION?

- It is true that over the past two years our co-operation has become closer. President Babangida's State Visit to Britain which starts on 9 May marks a new high point in our relations - and will, I hope, help to make them even stronger in future. Both Governments have made clear their commitment to strong Nigerian/British links. We in the British Government have been keen to play our part, as we showed by our leading role this year in organising the international package of support for Nigeria, to which Britain contributed \$100 million.

We have a basically similar attitude to the main problems which both our countries face and that means we can and should work together. Britain is by far the biggest investor in Nigeria. Over 300 of our firms or their offshoots have investments in Nigeria. British investment overall is worth over £1.6 billion. This represents 40 per cent of all overseas investment in Nigeria. We are a major market for Nigeria: your non-oil exports to Britain have grown steadily since 1980.

2. YOU ARE KNOWN TO OBJECT TO MILITARY GOVERNMENTS. BUT WITH PRESIDENT IBRAHIM BABANGIDA, YOU SEEM TO HAVE STRUCK A RAPPORT. WHAT SPECIAL REASON IS THERE FOR THIS?

- The reason is very simple. We in Britain understand and admire the determination which President Babangida has shown in getting the Nigerian economy on a firm footing and laying the foundations for new growth. The Nigerian people deserve the chance to unlock their enormous potential, human and material. Creating the right conditions for sustainable growth and international competitiveness is not easy. It requires tough decisions. It means persevering for a long time before any rewards appear. This requires the kind of courageous leadership which President Babangida has provided.

3. NIGERIANS TEND TO FEEL A SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH BRITONS, AND FEEL HURT WHEN, AS HAS HAPPENED SINCE YOU CAME TO POWER, THIS IS NOT RECIPROCATED. ONE EXAMPLE OF THIS IS THAT BRITAIN REQUIRES NIGERIANS TO OBTAIN VISAS TO ENTER BRITAIN, AND CHARGES THEM A FEE THAT IS ALMOST FOUR TIMES THE NATIONAL MONTHLY WAGE TO ISSUE THE VISAS. CAN WE EXPECT THAT NOW THAT RELATIONS ARE WARMING UP, THE VISA REQUIREMENT WILL, PERHAPS BE SCRAPPED, THUS RETURNING NIGERIA TO THE FAVOURED GROUP OF FRIENDLY NATIONS?

- British travellers to Nigeria have needed visas since the 1960s. So the introduction of a visa requirement should not be seen as down-grading over relations. We had to introduce the requirement because large numbers of travellers were arriving in the UK who did not qualify for admission. The confusion this caused was inconvenient for all concerned - particularly bona fide Nigerian travellers, the great majority. Saying to travellers that they should make sure they qualify for entry to the UK before leaving Nigeria rather than at London Airport saves time and trouble.
- The purpose of the fees is to cover the costs of issuing visas: at present a large proportion of these costs have to be met by the UK taxpayer. But don't let us exaggerate the problem. The cost of a visa is a small proportion of the overall cost of travel.

4. THERE IS NOW A CLEAR MOVEMENT OF OPINION TOWARDS THE CANCELLATION OF A SIGNIFICANT PART OF THIRD WORLD DEBTS AS ONE WAY OF SOLVING THE DEBT CRISIS. IS THAT A VIEW YOU CAN SUPPORT, ESPECIALLY AS IT CONCERNS NIGERIA?

- The UK supports Nigeria in her implementation of much needed adjustment policies. This is why we are giving \$100 million in additional aid this year following Nigeria's agreement with the IMF. As far as recent proposals for debt reduction are concerned, these have yet to be discussed thoroughly in the International Financial Institutions.

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5. IN THE NINE YEARS YOU HAVE BEEN IN OFFICE, BRITAIN'S HEART HAS BEEN IN EUROPE, TO THE EXTENT THAT IT SOMETIMES SEEMS THAT THERE IS LITTLE ROOM FOR THE COMMONWEALTH. THEN RECENTLY BRITAIN'S INTEREST SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN RENEWED IN THE COMMONWEALTH.

(A) TO WHAT EXTENT IS THE COMMONWEALTH STILL RELEVANT FOR BRITAIN?

(B) WOULD IT BE TRUE TO SAY THAT RENEWED INTEREST IN THE COMMONWEALTH IS IN REALITY A REACTION AGAINST THE PROPOSAL FOR GREATER INTEGRATION OF EUROPE BY 1992.


- Britain's interest in the Commonwealth has never weakened. Britain remains fully committed to the Commonwealth. It is a unique association of 48 independent states, encompassing more than a quarter of the world's population and which has a constructive role to play in international affairs. The Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting will be held this year in Kuala Lumpur. More than 30 Heads of Government are likely to be there, and I hope very much it will be possible for President Babangida to attend. The debate will be enriched by his presence.
- Our accession to the European Community enriched our long standing relationships with our Commonwealth partners. It was instrumental in bringing the Lomé Convention into being, thus enabling Nigeria and other Commonwealth countries to develop an important new trade and aid relationship with the EC as a whole.
- As for 1992, I hope that Nigeria, and the EC's other trading partners, will regard the creation of a Single European Market as an opportunity, not a threat. Still greater prosperity in Europe in the Single Market should mean more demand for your imports, better value for money from our exports. I and other European leaders made clear in Rhodes last December that there is no question of 1992 resulting in a "Fortress Europe". From the outset we have fought hard to ensure that our Commonwealth partners enjoy better access to the European Market. This remains our aim.

6. ONE OF THE MAIN AREAS OF DISAGREEMENT BETWEEN YOU AND AFRICAN COMMONWEALTH LEADERS IS HOW TO BRING APARTHEID IN SOUTH AFRICA TO AN END. THEY BELIEVE IN THE USE OF SANCTIONS AND IF, NECESSARY, FORCE, WHILE YOU ARE OPPOSED TO SANCTIONS AS WELL AS THE USE OF FORCE. BUT DO YOU REALLY BELIEVE THAT CHANGE CAN COME TO SOUTH AFRICA ITSELF, WITHOUT CREDIBLE PRESSURE BEING APPLIED, EITHER THROUGH SANCTIONS, OR ARMED FORCE, OR BOTH?

- Yes, I believe that change in South Africa is inevitable. Most importantly, the South Africans themselves are coming to recognise this. There is growing acknowledgement in South Africa that not only is apartheid deeply hurtful and inhuman but it is an obstacle to the economic growth necessary for the future prosperity of the whole nation. Building on this, we must encourage the South African Government to take bold initiatives for change. The Namibia agreement has demonstrated what dialogue can achieve.
- When we meet South African Ministers we stress the importance of progress towards the dismantlement of apartheid. We tell them unequivocally that we want to see the unconditional release of Nelson Mandela and the other political detainees and the beginning of negotiations with representatives of all communities in South Africa. Constructive pressure can be applied only in this way. Sanctions would only isolate South Africa, greatly delaying the prospects for change. Violence is never an acceptable means of applying pressure and I totally condemn its use.

7. YOU SEEM TO BELIEVE THAT APARTHEID CAN BE REFORMED PEACEFULLY INTO SOMETHING THAT WILL BE MORE ACCEPTABLE, ESPECIALLY IN THE LIGHT OF THE DEVELOPMENTS IN NAMIBIA. IT IS REALLY POSSIBLE TO REFORM SOMETHING THAT IS INTRINSICALLY EVIL?

- I do not want to see apartheid reformed, I want to see it abolished. And yes, I not only believe that apartheid can be dismantled by peaceful means, but that it must be. But what sort of future would we be giving the post-apartheid society if we destroyed the social and economic fabric of South Africa? Sanctions would not bring about the peaceful end of apartheid. They are destructive. They cost jobs, and they would have a crippling effect not only on black South Africans but on the Front Line States as well. As you know, we have considerable programmes of aid to black South Africans and to the Front Line States. It would be a very strange policy to give with one hand and to take away with the other.




8. ON YOUR LAST TRIP TO AFRICA, YOU MADE A PREVIOUSLY UNANNOUNCED VISIT TO NAMIBIA, AT A TIME WHEN NAMIBIA WAS ARGUABLY STILL UNDER SOUTH AFRICAN CONTROL. WERE YOU TRYING TO MAKE A POINT? IF SO, WHAT POINT?

- I decided to make a short visit to Namibia on 1 April to demonstrate our strong support for the United Nations Plan for Namibian independence. I also wanted to visit our Signals unit, which formed an important part of the United Nations Transitional Assistance Group. I was glad to support the authority of the United Nations at a particularly testing time. As you know, 1 April was the day when the implementation of the UN Plan came into effect, under which the United Nations Special Representative is working with the South African Administrator General to pave the way for free and fair election and to ensure the orderly transition to independence. My visit in no way implied acceptance of the lawfulness of the South African presence.



9. YOU ARE, APPARENTLY, BRITAIN'S MOST SUCCESSFUL PRIME MINISTER THIS CENTURY. YOUR STEWARDSHIP HAS ALSO CHANGED BRITAIN FUNDAMENTALLY. BUT WHILE YOU HAVE STRENGTHENED THE ECONOMY AND INCREASED ITS WEALTH IN GENERAL, THE GAP BETWEEN THE RICH AND THE POOR IS BELIEVED TO HAVE WIDENED. HOW WOULD YOU RESPOND TO THE ACCUSATION OF BEING UNCARING?

- Any Government which sets out on major, fundamental, far-reaching reform is going to have to face criticism - a lot of it. Of course in 1979-81, when the first priority was to get the UK economy back on its feet, real incomes for almost everybody fell. Sacrifices had to be made, as you are making in Nigeria. Since then incomes have increased for everyone. In fact, the figures for 1981 to 1985 show that the real incomes of the lowest 10 per cent increased by over 8 per cent, compared to the national average of 6.4 per cent. Since 1985 living standards have been further increased by the fall in unemployment, fast growth, and tax cuts. The long term trends in Britain are towards more equal distribution of wealth. All the evidence points that way - income tax, home ownership (which has never been so high in our history), share ownership, and so on in many other areas. Our spending on the National Health Service has never been so high: and as you probably know, we are trying to make the Service better targeted and still more efficient. Spending on social security is to reach nearly £60 billion by 1991 - an increase of over £11 billion in 1988: an average increase of 2 per cent a year over the assumed increase in prices. We are uprating a wide range of social benefits. Pensions are up in line with retail prices. We are introducing new schemes for older pensioners. So we have made clear our firm commitment to protect all members of our society - while giving freedom to all those able and ready to generate the wealth which makes this help possible in the first place.



10. EVENTS IN NORTHERN IRELAND TEND TO BE CONFUSING TO AFRICANS, WHO QUITE OFTEN SEE THE IRISH REPUBLICAN ARMY'S ACTIVITIES AS ANOTHER LIBERATION STRUGGLE, FROM BRITISH COLONIALISM. WHAT REALLY IS THE JUSTIFICATION FOR CONTINUED BRITISH RULE IN NORTHERN IRELAND?

- The position is clear and unambiguous. Northern Ireland is an integral part of the United Kingdom because that is the democratically expressed wish of a majority of the people who live there. The British Government uphold this position precisely because it is the wish of a majority. The Government also recognise the aspiration of others in Northern Ireland for an eventual united Ireland. We have stated clearly in the Anglo-Irish Agreement and elsewhere that if, in the future, a majority of the people of Northern Ireland clearly wish for a united Ireland, their wish will be respected. The IRA is a terrorist movement which seeks to impose its views by violent means. Sinn Fein, the political wing of the IRA, attracts few votes. That is why the IRA resort to violence.

11. ACTUALLY, IN THE PERIOD YOU HAVE BEEN IN POWER, SCHOOL FEES CHARGED ON OVERSEAS STUDENTS HAVE QUADRUPLED, LEADING TO A DRASTIC REDUCTION OF THE NUMBER OF NIGERIAN STUDENTS STUDYING IN BRITAIN. SINCE EDUCATION HAS BEEN ONE WAY OF BUILDING FRIENDSHIP AND SPREADING BRITISH VALUES WORLDWIDE, ARE YOU NOT WORRIED THAT FEWER AND FEWER STUDENTS ARE COMING TO YOUR SHORES?

- I am very keen to welcome as many overseas students as possible to study in the United Kingdom. Student exchanges bring benefits to both of us. That is why the British Government is currently putting more than £110 million a year into awards and scholarships schemes to help overseas students to come here.

The number of overseas students at British universities is now at a record level. At the same time we note, with concern, the decline in the numbers of Nigerian students coming here. Increases in academic institutions' fees may be one cause. But as you know, these are now set by the institutions themselves. Exchange control regulations in Nigeria and the continuing development of your own educational facilities at second and third level also contribute. We are now directing a large share of our scholarship resources to Nigeria. The British Government has pledged itself to 100 new scholarships a year for a group of leading Commonwealth countries, including Nigeria. Last year we provided nearly £2 million for more than 350 awards for Nigerian students. We expect to provide even more this year.



12. YOU HAVE PRAISED THE NIGERIAN GOVERNMENT'S ECONOMIC PROGRAMME, AND NIGERIANS FOR THEIR READINESS TO MAKE SACRIFICES. YOU'LL AGREE THAT SACRIFICE-MAKING ISN'T WITHOUT ITS PAINS. DO YOU HAVE ANY MESSAGE, OF A MORE CHEERING NATURE, TO GIVE TO NIGERIANS?

- Yes: You are generously endowed with the most precious possession of all: an immense range of human skills which need only to be mobilised, by allowing people the freedom and flexibility to use their talents. Of course Nigeria also has vast natural resources - arable land, much of it not yet fully exploited, mineral wealth, and so on. But your prime possession is the skills of your people - Nigerians have demonstrated over centuries their enterprise, flair, and ability to work hard. Your Government is committed to fostering the stability, confidence and freedom which will allow Nigeria to flourish as it should.

13. IN THE PERIOD YOU'VE BEEN IN OFFICE YOU HAVE SUPRESSED THE UNIONS, AND NOW YOU HAVE TAKEN ON REFORMS OF THE LEGAL AND ACCOUNTING PROFESSIONS. WHAT KIND OF BRITAIN ARE YOU HOPING TO LEAVE BEHIND, WHEN YOU RETIRE?

- The British Government have done nothing of the kind. We have not suppressed the Trade Unions. What we have done is to help create greater freedom and greater responsibility. These are the values basic to all this Government has done. In Trade Union affairs, we have strengthened the democratic rights of individual members and improved the unions' own internal democracy. That is freedom. The unions have also been made more accountable under the law. That is responsibility. We are also, as you say, working on reform in other important areas. The proposed legal reforms are intended to speed up the administration of justice and to make it more accessible to everyone. My aim is a society which is free, responsible and just.



14. WHICH OF YOUR MANY ACHIEVEMENTS AS PRIME MINISTER GIVES YOU THE MOST SATISFACTION? AND WHICH IS THE LEAST?

- On the first part of your question, two main things. First, the British economy. We inherited an over-regulated economy which held back individual initiative. Throughout the 1960s and 70s Britain was at the bottom of the European Community growth league. Our industrial relations were bad. Since 1980, the UK has grown by more than any other EC country. We are now into our eighth successive year of sustained growth. Our GDP and our manufacturing output have both reached the highest level in our history. Britain's rate of growth exceeded 5 per cent per year in the past two years, the longest period since the 1950s. Business investment in 1988 as a share of GDP was the highest ever. Britain has just been chosen as the country for the biggest single Japanese investment ever made in the EC.
  
- The other main source of satisfaction is that I think the present British Government really has proved that this prosperity is the result of individual freedom and responsibility. We have shown that these are the values which encourage everyone to use his or her talents to the utmost. The least satisfaction? I suppose, that there is still so much to do! Some people still seem to think that by sacrificing their freedom and responsibility they can buy prosperity on the cheap. It's not true - ask Mr Gorbachev.

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MY TELNO 312: NIGERIAN NEWSPAPER REQUEST TO INTERVIEW PRIME MINISTER

SUMMARY

1. DAILY TIMES ACCEPT NO 10'S OFFER BUT ASK FOR SHORT PHOTOSSESSION AND OPPORTUNITY TO PUT MAXIMUM TWO QUESTIONS. NIGERIAN HIGH COMMISSION IN LONDON PURSUING SEPARATELY.

DETAIL

- 2. OGUNBIYI, MANAGING DIRECTOR OF DAILY TIMES, ACCOMPANIED BY HIS GENERAL MANAGER, CALLED ON SIZELAND (ACTING HEAD OF CHANCERY) AND FISHWICK (FIRST SECRETARY) ON 7 APRIL.
- 3. OGUNBIYI SAID HE APPRECIATED PRESSURE ON PRIME MINISTER'S TIME AND GRATEFULLY ACCEPTED NO 10'S OFFER (WRITTEN QUESTIONS FOR WRITTEN ANSWER). HE PROMISED TO LET US HAVE QUESTIONS ON 10 APRIL (IF THEY ARRIVE IN TIME WE WILL SEND TO WAD IN THAT DAY'S BAG). HE ASKED IF WE COULD EXPLORE POSSIBILITY OF 5-10 MINUTE PHOTO SESSION WITH PRIME MINISTER DURING WHICH KAYE WHITEMAN (GENERAL MANAGER, WEST AFRICA MAGAZINE) AND ONYEMA UGOCHUKWU (LONDON-BASED DAILY TIMES/WEST AFRICA EDITOR) COULD ASK A MAXIMUM OF TWO QUESTIONS FOLLOWING UP THE WRITTEN REPLIES. (OGUNBIYI ADDED THAT PRESIDENT REAGAN HAD AGREED TO THIS FORMAT ALTHOUGH THE INTERVIEW HAD HAD TO BE CANCELLED AT LAST MINUTE.)
- 4. OGUNBIYI SAID HE HAD TELEPHONED DOVE-EDWIN, NIGERIAN HIGH COMMISSIONER IN LONDON, WHO HAD AGREED TO MAKE A PARALLEL REQUEST DIRECT TO MR INGHAM. OGUNBIYI WOULD BE CONDUCTING A PERSONAL INTERVIEW WITH PRESIDENT BABANGIDA ON EVE OF HIS DEPARTURE FOR UK.

COMMENT

5. OGUNBIYI , A FRIEND OF PRESIDENT BABANGIDA AND STAUNCH SUPPORTER

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OF HIS POLICIES, IS KEEN TO HAVE AT LEAST SOME PERSONAL INPUT FROM THE PRIME MINISTER TO ENHANCE THE INTERVIEW'S IMPACT. THE MOST POSITIVE EDITORIAL COMMENT ON PRIME MINISTER'S STOPOVER VISIT TO LAGOS ON 28 MARCH HAD BEEN FROM DAILY TIMES (PARA 4 OF MY TELNO 294). WE HOPE THAT NO 10 MIGHT AGREE TO OGUNBIYI'S NOW MORE MODEST REQUEST WHICH WOULD HELP SUSTAIN THE GENERALLY MORE FAVOURABLE PRESS ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE PRIME MINISTER AND BRITISH GOVERNMENT POLICIES EVIDENT SINCE THE STOPOVER.

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