

FROM: THE HIGH COMMISSIONER



BRITISH HIGH COMMISSION
LAGOS

IN CONFIDENCE + PERSONAL.

Michael Cook Esq
WAD
FCO

File

10 June 1991

Dear Michael,

POSSIBLE LECTURE BY MRS THATCHER

1. I mentioned in para 8 of my telno 556, of 29 May that I would be calling on the Minister of Justice, Prince Bola Ajibola, on 7 June. I duly did so, to be presented with a full set of Nigeria's laws and treaties, as well as their legal publications, in recognition of the UK's recent efforts to help strengthen the judiciary in the run-up to the return to civilian rule. It was a very warm occasion.
2. At the end, Ajibola did (as I predicted) return to his charge over a top-level British speaker for the major Conference he is planning in the autumn. The occasion is the "Second Conference of Attornies-General", to be held in Abuja in the second week of September, the general theme of which is "The Law and the transition to Civilian Rule". But he plans for the highlight to be a lecture on "Democracy: What is it all about?", which he wants to feature two outside speakers, one British and the other American. Ajibola said that this will be a ~~public~~ *major* public event which will be attended by Ministers, other members of the government, politicians, and possibly senior officers, besides legal practitioners of all kinds. There would be good media coverage. Could we help attract a top-level speaker?
3. Ajibola did not in the end, as I had suspected, specifically ask us to approach Mrs Thatcher (whom I know he admires). But she is the obvious first choice. Not only is she evidently much admired by the Nigerian political class - and indeed, by a wide swathe of the public; but also, the turn of events in South Africa (and Nigeria's positive reactions to it) mean that the one contentious issue there might have been has all but disappeared. (Indeed, a visit to Nigeria would balance very well her recent trip to South Africa; and what she had to say about that would be received with much interest.) The event would presumably be held in the spanking new conference facilities in Abuja created for the OAU; and a big turn-out could be guaranteed. It would be an excellent platform: and would underline Britain's interest in, and commitment to, the return to democratic and stable civilian rule in Nigeria. It would also help put us on the map in Abuja.

IN CONFIDENCE



4. Could you approach Mrs Thatcher's office, and see if there is any chance that she might be interested in taking this up? (I have no objection to your passing on a copy of this letter, if you want.) If so, please let me know at once by telegram, so that I can put Ajibola in touch with her office direct, since time is already quite short.

*Yours ever,
Christopher.*

Christopher MacRae

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