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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

19 December 1983

CHOGM

Thank you for your letter of 16 December. The following are the Prime Minister's comments on the various points you make.

As regards the last paragraph of your letter, the Prime Minister found the briefing for the last CHOGM excellent and has commented that most of it was needed. That is not to say that some condensation would not be welcome. We intend to continue with the system whereby senior members of our delegation attend daily briefing meetings with the Prime Minister.

Turning to the paper which you enclosed with your letter, the Prime Minister agrees that:

- (a) We should work for a shorter meeting, held during the Parliamentary Recess (see also my letter of today's date to Brian Fall about the Prime Minister's international commitments).
- (b) We should encourage further progress towards a briefer and more representative Communiqué.
- (c) We should stress that we are not willing to see the Commonwealth become simply another talking shop for the non-aligned.
- (d) It is not necessary for the Prime Minister to continue inviting all her colleagues to meals or even a reception (and the time saved could be better spent with smaller groups or on bilateral meetings over a meal).
- (e) We should make advance arrangements for three or four particularly important bilaterals but leave the arrangements for others to be settled sur place.
- (f) The retreat should be preserved but, in the Prime Minister's view, should be shortened. An evening and a day should be enough. Proper facilities for official back-up are desirable.

The Prime Minister is doubtful whether it would be right for Foreign Secretaries not to attend future CHOGMs. She takes the view that if foreign affairs subjects are to be the bulk of the

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Conference's work, Foreign Ministers ought to be there. But it may be useful to consider defining the role of Foreign Ministers more clearly. One question which arises is whether they should take from the Heads of Government some of the burden of drafting and approving the Communiqué.

A. J. COLES

Peter Ricketts, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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Prime Minister.

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Could you indicate which
points you agree with?

London SW1A 2AH

A.F.C. $\frac{16}{12}$

16 December 1983

Dear John,

CHOGM

Handwritten notes:
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You wrote on 30 November to suggest that we consider what lessons should be learnt from the recent CHOGM.

We have prepared the attached short paper, which sets out the main lessons which occur to us and suggests that we should start fairly soon preparing the ground in the hope of getting some improvement at the next CHOGM in 1985. You will see that we agree broadly with the two points in your letter, although we consider that it is worth making advance arrangements for a small number of particularly important bilaterals. There is otherwise a risk of wasting the first day.

Perhaps you would let me know in due course whether the Prime Minister agrees with the points in the paper, and whether she has others. We shall then start preparing the ground with suitable people in the Commonwealth Secretariat and Commonwealth Governments. The Foreign Secretary believes that we should undertake an early and vigorous campaign to press for a shorter meeting next time; he believes that success in such a campaign will depend essentially on enlisting some support from some other leading countries; even so he would propose the launch the campaign by discussing the matter first with Mr Ramphal.

The Australians will be useful allies; officials have told our High Commission in Canberra that Mr Hawke returned from CHOGM feeling strongly that the Meeting and the Communique had both been too long.

We would also propose to start a fairly early dialogue with the Bahamians who as hosts in 1985 will be particularly important, and who should on a number of issues be less inclined than the Indians to take a "non-aligned" view.

/The attached



*The briefing
was excellent
and most of
it was
needed.*

The attached paper does not cover the question of briefing requirements for the Conference. But we are very conscious of the mass of paper which has traditionally been produced for CHOGMs, and are considering whether this can be condensed. I should be grateful to know whether the Prime Minister had any comments on this aspect of the preparations. Senior members of our delegation found it particularly useful to be able to attend the daily briefing sessions with the Prime Minister. This enabled them to be sure of her own thinking throughout the Conference. A number of other delegations told us they went through the Conference largely unaware of what their own Heads of Government were saying and thinking.

I am copying this letter, plus enclosure, to Richard Hatfield in the Cabinet Office.

Your ever,

Peter Ricketts

(P F Ricketts)
Private Secretary

A J Coles Esq
10 Downing Street



CHOGM 1984: Lessons for the Future

Substance

1. So far as we were concerned, the Meeting was reasonably satisfactory. Despite the pronounced non-aligned flavour encouraged by the Indians, most of the discussion between Heads of Government was sensible, and usefully spanned the political and economic spectrum. The fact that the Meeting had two specifically Commonwealth issues to address in Grenada and Cyprus provided a useful focus.
2. The personal atmosphere was particularly good, especially among Heads of Government themselves. Representatives of a number of smaller African states have told us that they were much impressed with the informality and ease of communication. This is an important bonus for the Commonwealth, and contrasts sharply with the sour comments made from time to time about the stiff and formal atmosphere at meetings of the UN, OAU and so on.
3. As usual, most of the difficulties arose over the Communique. The final version, though far from satisfactory, was shorter than its predecessor and could have been worse; and we at least began to make people concentrate on the need to have a document which reflected what was actually discussed at the Meeting.
4. Our objectives for the 1985 CHOGM should be to preserve the good points from this year's meeting, while securing further improvements. In particular:

/(a) We



- Yes (a) We should work for a shorter meeting, held during the Parliamentary recess; —very important. I cannot take so much time off again.
- Yes (b) We should encourage further progress towards a briefer and more representative Communique;
- Yes (c) We should stress that we are not willing to see the Commonwealth become simply another talking-shop for the non-aligned. Third world countries must accept the need for more give and take with the "Western" aligned members, especially over the Communique. The Secretariat should play their part in encouraging this.

Mechanics

5. Lunches. There is no need for the Prime Minister to continue inviting all her colleagues to meals or even a reception. The tradition that the British Prime Minister entertains all Heads of Delegation is now an anachronism and in any case increasingly difficult to fit into the crowded CHOGM programme. (This difficulty would be enhanced if we managed to achieve a further shortening of the next CHOGM.) The time saved could be better spent with smaller groups.

6. Bilaterals. We should identify in advance those leaders with whom it would be useful for the Prime Minister to make bilateral contacts but leave the arrangements for most of them until after arrival at the Conference. We should make advance arrangements for three or four particularly important bilaterals, on the day of arrival or the first day of the Conference itself.

7. The Retreat. This should be preserved, —but shortened so as to provide proper facilities for official back-up on the spot, if matters of substance are to be discussed and texts negotiated.

/8. The role

An evening or a day should be enough



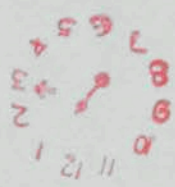
8. The role of Foreign Ministers. Twenty-nine Foreign Ministers were present at New Delhi. Six led their respective delegations; the rest did not have a clearly-defined role. The Foreign Secretary is considering how this might be improved. Unless Foreign Secretaries have a clearly useful task, there may not be much point in their attending in future.

Foreign and Commonwealth Office
16 December 1983

Then there is not
much point in the
conference if it is to
be carried on exclusively
of the Foreign Affairs
ministers: Why have
an F.O.?

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16 DEC 1983



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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

30 November 1983

CHOGM

You may well have it in mind to consider what lessons should be learnt from the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in New Delhi which has just ended. I would see value in such an examination being conducted fairly soon and the Prime Minister being consulted about its results before memories fade. Perhaps you would let me have views in due course.

Meanwhile, two points occur to me immediately:-

- (a) I am doubtful about the value of the large lunches which the Prime Minister gave on the last two days of the Conference. Although these were reasonably satisfactory occasions (despite the failure of a number of guests who had accepted invitations to turn up) there can be little doubt that the Prime Minister could have spent the time more profitably at a meal with a much smaller group of Commonwealth leaders or even at a tete-a-tete meal. There is, of course, an argument for the British Prime Minister giving entertainment at some point during the proceedings but it is possible that a large reception at the outset would be the best device.
- (b) We put a good deal of effort, both before and during CHOGM, in trying to set up bilateral talks. This was only partially successful - I have explained in a separate letter that the Prime Minister was in the event not able to have many bilateral meetings, because of the Conference programme. In future, I believe that the procedure could be simplified - we could simply identify in advance those leaders with whom it might be useful for the Prime Minister to make bilateral contacts and all arrangements would then be made after arrival at the Conference venue.

A. J. COLES

Peter Ricketts, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.