



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

31 January 1986

Don Charles

Visit of the Prime Minister of Vanuatu

Father Walter Lini, Prime Minister of Vanuatu, will be visiting Britain as a Category II Sponsored visitor from 22-26 February after attending a Francophone Heads of Government meeting in Paris.

Father Lini has been Prime Minister since independence in 1980 and was the leading political figure in the New Hebrides (as the country was previously known) for some years previously. The Prime Minister has met him at CHOGM. He last visited Britain in July 1983 when he paid a short call on Mrs Thatcher.

Vanuatu has consistently refused to vote against us in the UN over the Falklands. On other matters, they have a reputation as a maverick, through membership of the Non-Aligned Movement, diplomatic relations with Cuba and interest in a Soviet proposal for a fisheries agreement. They are also strongly opposed to the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty, which they consider too weak.

We realise the enormous pressures on the Prime Minister's time. I hope, however, that it might be possible for Father Lini to pay a very brief courtesy call during a rare visit. Apart from the normal courtesy to a Commonwealth Prime Minister, such a call would be of considerable value in foreign policy terms. Until recently Britain enjoyed noticeably better relations with Vanuatu than France, the other former metropolitan power. Our more helpful attitude to independence and over aid has given us a degree of influence with Father Lini. The French, who have been criticised for their colonial and nuclear policies, are now making a conscious effort, with a more generous attitude over aid and the invitation to Father Lini (an Anglophone) to attend a Francophone Conference. We believe it important to maintain and develop our influence both to promote our own national interests and to be able to restrain Vanuatu's sometimes maverick activities.

Yours ever

Robert Culshaw

(R N Culshaw)
Private Secretary

C D Powell Esq
PS/10 Downing Street

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CUPC



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

3 February 1986

VISIT OF THE PRIME MINISTER OF VANUATU

Thank you for your letter of 31 January about the visit of Father Walter Lini.

The Prime Minister has agreed to receive Father Lini for a brief courtesy call on Monday 24 February at 11 a.m.

Charles Powell

Robert Culshaw, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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