



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

27 July 1983

Visit of President Houphouet-Boigny

The Prime Minister's talks with the President of the Ivory Coast commenced with a fifteen minute tête-à-tête here today.

In welcoming the President, the Prime Minister described him as an elder statesman of Africa and said she would much like to hear his impressions, both of the current situation in the Ivory Coast and of the situation in the rest of Africa.

The President said that he wished to congratulate the Prime Minister on the example which she had given to the world at a time of grave economic difficulty. Her policies were beginning to bear fruit. The problems confronting Africa were of two kinds, those of economic development and those relating to peace and security. If the Ivory Coast had been able to make better progress than other African States, it was because it had enjoyed peace and stability for twenty-three years - a peace based on justice and not on force.

The fact that his family came originally from Ghana gave him a good understanding of events there. Nkruma had been a personal friend. Ghanaian independence had opened the way for independence and development in West Africa. The country had had the economic and human potential to give a lead. But unfortunately instability had retarded its development.

In West Africa, South of the Sahara, only five countries had not suffered from instability - Senegal, Gambia, Ghana, the Ivory Coast, Cameroon and Gabon. His great fear was that Africa would follow the pattern of South America which had suffered endless coups d'état in the last 100 years. The communist world was always behind instability.

The Prime Minister commented that the Soviet Union indulged both in direct subversion and in proxy subversion through Cuba.

The President said that he hoped that the great powers, and especially the United States, were aware of current dangers in Africa. The Prime Minister said that we were certainly aware of

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the dangers. So much had seemed to depend on the wisdom of those who had governed African States immediately after independence. The President provided one example. Kenya provided another.

President Houphouet-Boigny said that he did not want the Ivory Coast and Kenya to be oases in a desert of instability and underdevelopment. Africa needed more such centres so that the desert receded. The Continent possessed enormous resources. He quite appreciated that the West was distracted by the great problems of relations with the East as well as the problems of Asia and Latin America. But it should consider the Africa of the future. There was enormous potential which needed to be developed. Financial and technical assistance was necessary and it could only come from the West, especially Britain and France.

The Prime Minister said that Britain attached great importance to Africa, because of our historical connections, its significance as a store-house of raw materials and the considerable political implications of African developments.

The plenary session then began and is being separately recorded.

A. J. COLES

Roger Bone, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

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