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*Australia<sup>2</sup>*



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

3 August 1979

PRIME MINISTER

*A most positive  
report.*

*MA 6/viii*

*Dear Nick,*

I enclose a copy of Sir D Tebbit's  
despatch of 6 July reporting on the Prime  
Minister's recent visit to Australia.

*p.c. JSM  
15/8*

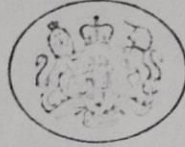
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Stephe*

(J S Wall)

*ans.*

Nick Sanders Esq  
10 Downing Street

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CANBERRA DESPATCH

SUMMARY

PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT TO AUSTRALIA  
30 JUNE - 1 JULY 1979

1. The Prime Minister paid a short but highly successful visit to Australia from Saturday, 30 June to Sunday, 1 July. It was the first official visit by a British Prime Minister in office for 21 years.

(paragraphs 1-2)

2. The primary purpose of the visit was to emphasise the closeness and continuing relevance of Anglo-Australian relations.

(paragraph 3)

3. Full use was made of the two-day visit. In addition to substantive talks with Mr Fraser and his Ministers, the Prime Minister gave two television interviews and undertook a number of social and public engagements. Her talk and answers at the National Press Club, which were broadcast live across Australia, have been widely acclaimed as a tour de force.

(paragraphs 4-6)

4. The two Prime Ministers met for an hour of talks à deux and they were joined for two further sessions by other Ministers. The only really difficult topic was Southern Africa and Rhodesia. Mr Fraser is preoccupied with avoiding a split in the Commonwealth and sees himself playing a

/mediating



mediating role at the forthcoming Heads of Government meeting in Lusaka. He is anxious not to identify too closely with British policies on Southern Africa in order to allow himself room for manoeuvre. Even so, the two Prime Ministers were able to reach a broad understanding and I believe Mr Fraser intends to be as helpful as possible to us.

(paragraphs 7-9)

5. The visit was a conspicuous success and underlined the importance Britain attaches to the links and values which we share with Australia.

(paragraph 10)

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BRITISH HIGH COMMISSION  
CANBERRA

026/8

6 July 1979

The Rt Hon The Lord Carrington KCMG MC  
LONDON

My Lord

VISIT TO AUSTRALIA BY THE PRIME MINISTER,  
THE RT HON MARGARET THATCHER MP, 30 JUNE TO 1 JULY 1979

1. I am very glad to be able to report that the Prime Minister paid a short but highly successful official visit to Australia on Saturday, 30 June and Sunday, 1 July. I enclose, at Annex A, a copy of the programme.

2. It was on 1 June that I was instructed to inform the Prime Minister of Australia, Mr Fraser, that Mrs Thatcher saw the possibility of squeezing in a visit to Australia at the conclusion of the Tokyo Summit meeting. He immediately welcomed the proposal and extended a warm official invitation. Things moved so rapidly that he was able to announce the prospective visit to the Australian Parliament on 5 June. There it was welcomed on all sides. The Leader of the Opposition, Mr Hayden, said that it was rare for him to agree with Mr Fraser about anything, but this was the exception. The Press and the Australian public were clearly delighted that Mrs Thatcher had gone out of her way to find time to visit their country so soon after assuming office. Australians generally saw the visit

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as a great compliment, especially as the last official visit of a British Prime Minister to Australia was paid by Mr Harold Macmillan as long ago as 1958. (The brief visit by Sir Harold Wilson to attend the funeral of Mr Harold Holt in 1967 falls into a different category).

3. Both in London and here in Canberra, pains were taken to emphasise that the primary purpose of the Prime Minister's visit was to underline the closeness of the Anglo/Australian relationship and its continuing relevance. However, the meeting was also opportune in that it enabled the Prime Minister to brief Mr Fraser on the outcome of the Tokyo Summit and to discuss with him the prospects for the Lusaka Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting.

4. The programme for the visit was designed to make full use of two short days without, if possible, making them too much of a burden on the Prime Minister. But I cannot claim that the programme allowed the Prime Minister much respite. There were substantive talks with Mr Fraser and his Ministers on both days. In addition Mrs Thatcher was entertained to lunch by the Governor-General at Government House and to dinner by Mr and Mrs Fraser at The Lodge. She herself gave a return dinner at Westminster House. Around these central events, Mrs Thatcher was able to fit in two national television interviews and to address a gathering of unprecedented size at the National Press Club. She attended Divine Service at St John's Anglican Church, planted a Blue Spruce in the garden at Westminster House, laid a wreath at the National War

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-3-

Memorial, surveyed Canberra from the vantage point of Mount Ainslie and inspected the Carillon, which was the British gift to Canberra on the occasion of its 50th anniversary.

5. I have no hesitation in reporting that the visit was a most striking personal and public relations success. The Prime Minister's talk and answers to questions at the National Press Club have been acclaimed on all sides as a tour de force. It may have been partly out of curiosity that an audience of 600 or more - huge by Canberra standards - crowded into the Press Club on a Sunday evening to hear the Prime Minister speak; but it was an unmistakable tribute to her knowledge, forthrightness and wit that her answers to a series of searching questions were received with such genuine and hearty acclamation. It is well known that the press corps of Canberra is basically antagonistic to politicians of the right but on this occasion even the ranks of Tuscany could not forbear to cheer. The Press Club proceedings were broadcast live across Australia and made a deep impact on many people. So too did the two television interviews. One of these concentrated on policy and the other on personal matters. In both cases it was a source of delight to most Australian viewers that the Prime Minister was much more than a match for her questioners. The directness and conviction of her answers have been widely noted and praised.

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6. I am also most grateful to the Prime Minister for the vigour with which she threw herself into the minor events on the programme. These enabled her to be seen and photographed by many ordinary people. Even in these events the Prime Minister did not spare herself. For example, her manner of planting a tree made it much more than a token ritual; the onlookers were delighted with the vigorous professionalism with which she insisted on moving every spadeful of earth herself until a very large hole was filled and the tree was well and truly planted. Similarly, at the Carillon, the Prime Minister was not content merely to watch the campanologist perform but played several peals herself. Touches like this heightened the undoubted pleasure which the visit gave to many ordinary Australians.

7. The substantive business of the visit was conducted in three sessions of talks. The Prime Minister and Mr Fraser met à deux for an hour on the Saturday afternoon. After that they were joined by the Australian Foreign Minister, Mr Peacock, and three officials on each side for a further hour and a half. Then, on the Sunday afternoon, there were two hours of talks which were also attended by no fewer than nine Australian Ministers. (I enclose, at Annex B, a list of the participants).

8. The talks on the first day dealt mainly with Rhodesia and the Tokyo Summit, on which the Prime Minister briefed Mr Fraser. The second day's talks covered mainly Indo-China and refugees, the world energy problem, Soviet ambitions, the results of UNCTAD V, global and domestic inflation and

/Pakistan's



Pakistan's nuclear ambitions. Mr Fraser had set his heart on having a lengthy and detailed communique setting out his views on a wide range of subjects, domestic and foreign, and we had some difficulty in persuading him to drop this idea. But the only really difficult topic was Southern Africa and Rhodesia. Although Mr Fraser accepts that the recent Rhodesian elections and the installation of a government with a black majority under a black Prime Minister constitutes an important step forward and accepts also the goal of restoring Rhodesia to legitimacy, he has been preoccupied by the need to avoid a split in the Commonwealth and to achieve a settlement which will command at least the acquiescence of those who might otherwise be able to overthrow Bishop Muzorewa's Government with Cuban and East German military support. Even in this difficult area, it proved possible to reach a broad understanding on the aims to be pursued at Lusaka. The best hope, it was thought, lay in aiming to announce at Lusaka the outline of a process involving further constitutional change and consultations with Rhodesians and Southern African States to secure approval for, or acquiescence in, those changes so as to bring about a final and genuinely peaceful settlement as quickly as possible. Mr Fraser emphasised that the final statement would, in his view, have to be one which had adequate support from independent African States. Mrs Thatcher for her part emphasised that a balance would have to be kept and insisted that any constitutional changes should not be such as to risk destroying Bishop Muzorewa's Government

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or the progress which had already been achieved in Rhodesia. It was not envisaged at the Anglo-Australian talks that the whole process need be worked out in detail at Lusaka provided its general lines were clear.

9. One reporter at the Press Club asked the Prime Minister whether she would be going to Lusaka with her options open on Zimbabwe/Rhodesia and what role she expected the Australian Prime Minister to play at Lusaka. The Prime Minister replied that she would go to Lusaka trying to persuade other nations to come along with us and added: "I am sure the Australian Prime Minister will help me in that objective". That reply, with its emphasis on the objective of a return to legality with maximum international support, was in my view justified; but it has given rise to comment and speculation in the Australian Press. Mr Fraser's publicists have been at some pains to make it clear that he is not committed to any particular method or timetable. In reality his object at present is to retain as much freedom of manoeuvre as possible. He foresees that he may be one of the few Commonwealth Prime Ministers able and willing to play some kind of mediatory role. He clearly hopes to be able to play a fairly major part in an operation designed (as he sees it) to save the Commonwealth from tearing itself apart on this issue. He is leaving no stone unturned to establish his credentials for this mission. For example, he gave a carefully planned pre-Lusaka dinner for all Commonwealth High Commissioners two nights after the Prime Minister left Canberra, and even spent a morning playing golf with the Acting High Commissioner of Nigeria in preparation for his pre-CHOGM visit to Lagos. Nevertheless, I believe that in practice

/Mr Fraser



Mr Fraser intends to be as helpful as possible to us. He cannot afford to forget that a substantial majority of the supporters of his Government look favourably on Rhodesia and with some impatience at his own stance against the early termination of sanctions or early recognition.

10. It is, I know, a besetting temptation for Heads of Mission to hail any and all visits by their own Heads of Government as outstanding successes. However, on this occasion I believe it can be stated without hyperbole that Mrs Thatcher's visit to Australia has been a conspicuous success. There was a wide range of agreement in the policy discussions and a complete identity of attitude on such matters as Vietnamese boat-people. Even on Rhodesia there was, as I have explained, a constructive effort to concert our different approaches to the mutual good and the good of the Commonwealth. But the visit achieved its greatest dividend by demonstrating to Australians that Britain and the British Government value the traditional links they have with them and want to keep them strong and bright. There are many Australians who have been highly encouraged and reinvigorated to hear the Prime Minister of Britain, still the country for which they have the greatest affection, extol the virtues of democracy and defend our common heritage of free speech, free elections and equality under the law against the assaults of communist tyranny. This, to many Australians, is what leadership is about; and they have been delighted to acclaim the Prime Minister of Britain as its standard

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-8-

bearer. These were two proud days for Britain in the Antipodes. All in all the Prime Minister's visit has reinforced and revived the British position in Australia and I am most grateful to her for having undertaken it.

11. I am sending copies of this despatch to the High Commissioners at Wellington, Ottawa and Lusaka.

I am My Lord  
Yours faithfully

(Donald Tebbit)

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