



Prime Minister

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

13 June 1979

*President Giscard
mentioned to you the desirability
of a good relationship with
President Tolbert. An invitation now would
be timely: so agree 'X'?*

Dear Bryan,

Agreed and

SW
14/6

Visit by President Tolbert of Liberia

The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary recommends that President Tolbert of Liberia should be invited to Britain as the guest of the Government in November. He hopes that the Prime Minister can agree to receive the President and entertain him to lunch or dinner.

President Tolbert was originally to have come here in March 1973 but called the visit off at the last minute. The Liberians have since hinted on a number of occasions that they would welcome a renewal of the invitation. We have made it clear that a State Visit is not possible. President Tolbert's predecessor, President Tubman, had one in 1962 and the Liberians would not normally qualify for consideration for some years.

Our relations with Liberia are good. In 1978 our exports increased by some 53% to £33 million. Although there were some disturbances over Easter after rumours of an increase in the price of rice, the country is generally stable. President Tolbert, while maintaining Liberia's close association with the United States, has sought to extend his links with other Western countries. He has been sympathetic to our southern African policies.

The next Summit Meeting of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) will take place in Monrovia in July, and President Tolbert will be appointed Chairman for the ensuing 12 months. He will certainly seek to play a prominent role in African issues and it would be in our interests to pay him some special attention. This view is shared by our Western colleagues: the President has already visited France and West Germany this year.

Mr Callaghan agreed earlier this year that an invitation should be issued for November. The formal invitation was not however delivered pending discussions over the content of the programme with the Liberians. Lord Carrington recommends that this should now issue. Mr Luce is going to Monrovia as part of his tour of African capitals for Rhodesian consultations and will leave London on 18 June. It would be helpful if he were authorised to extend the formal invitation on behalf of the Prime Minister. Precise dates could be settled later.

I am copying this letter to Martin Vile (Cabinet Office).

Yes even.
Stephen
(J S Wall)

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