

SUBJECT CC OPS
MASTER

10.10.85

PRIME MINISTER'S
PERSONAL MESSAGE
SERIAL No. T.187/85

MESSAGE FROM THE PRIME MINISTER TO SIR LYNDEN PINDLING

My dear Prime Minister,

Our High Commissioner has let me have a full account of his very useful talk with you on 8 October about the handling of the forthcoming Heads of Government Meeting.

When we met in June you told me that it would be your aim to keep the debate on South Africa short and moderate, avoiding a "backs to the wall" position over the question of sanctions, while nevertheless aiming at a clear conclusion from the meeting. I am sure this is right. There are several other important topics that we shall all wish to discuss.

I know that you personally and your Government detest apartheid. I share that detestation and have always seen apartheid as totally contrary to all British values and British ideals. I have left President Botha in no doubt of my views on this and on the need for fundamental reform. There is therefore no division between Britain and the Commonwealth over our aims for South Africa.

You mentioned to Mr. Heap that while other Commonwealth countries were clear about what Britain did not want, it was not clear what we did want. In a nutshell, what I hope we can achieve at CSOQM is agreement on positive steps by which the Commonwealth can promote a dialogue between the South African Government and representatives of the black community on the latter's participation in the political process. There are some hopeful signs of movement in the situation, particularly in the attitude of business leaders. It seems to me that a dialogue of the sort I have described could be the watershed.

It is up to each of us to choose the means which are most appropriate to our particular circumstances and policies in contributing to this common end. Although we remain firmly opposed to economic sanctions, Britain has recently joined with its European partners in endorsing a number of restrictive and positive measures in relation to South Africa, reinforcing those which we have been implementing for a number of years. We believe these provide the necessary political signal to the South African Government of our concern at developments there.

I hope very much that with your chairmanship in which I have the fullest confidence we shall be able to discuss these issues in a positive way. It is particularly important that we should succeed in upholding Commonwealth unity. If the Commonwealth were seen to be seriously divided at Nassau, or our meeting to be given over to a sterile wrangle over sanctions, it would only give comfort to the South African regime and be a disappointment to those in all communities there who are looking to the Commonwealth for support and inspiration in helping to solve the problems that face them. I shall certainly do my best to try to achieve a constructive outcome.

Unfortunately I shall not be able to arrive in Nassau before noon on 16 October, so cannot take up your kind offer of a talk that morning. But I hope that you will find this letter helpful in explaining my views.

I am very much looking forward to my visit. I wish you every success as Chairman.

Yours sincerely,

Margaret Thatcher