

10.10.85

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PRIME MINISTER'S

PERSONAL MESSAGE

SERIAL No. T 188/85

SUBJECT CC OPS

MASTER

MESSAGE FROM THE PRIME MINISTER TO PRESIDENT NYERERE

Dear Julius,

Thank you for your letter of 7 October about South Africa. I am glad that you have written to me so frankly about your views and I recognise your goodwill.

You know how much I personally detest apartheid. I have made this so clear over the years that I don't think anyone can any longer doubt where I stand or my resolve to do everything constructive and positive to help achieve fundamental reform in South Africa. Certainly President Botha knows exactly what I think.

So I am absolutely at one with you in wanting to end apartheid and end the cycle of violence. Where we differ is over the means. You mention our successful experience over Rhodesia. That was not achieved by sanctions: they only prolonged an unsatisfactory situation. It was achieved because we all got together to urge blacks and whites to talk and negotiate. We offered them the prospect of achieving peacefully what violence and repression was never going to bring about.

I recognise the need for clear political signals to the South African Government. That is why Britain recently joined its European partners in endorsing a number of restrictive measures in relation to South Africa, reinforcing those which we have been implementing for a number of years. But these measures were deliberately chosen so as not to damage the South African economy. I simply do not believe that hitting out and causing damage and disruption is the way

to make progress.

You are quite right that one of my reasons for opposing sanctions is the damage they would do to the British economy. I am certainly not prepared to create unemployment in Britain in order to create worse unemployment and disruption in South Africa. I do not argue that full-scale economic sanctions would not damage the South African economy. They certainly would. But I disagree with you over whether such damage would promote reform. My strong conviction is that it would have the opposite effect. It would put into reverse a process of economic growth which has done more than anything else to benefit black South Africans in recent years. It would weaken precisely those groups in South Africa which are most active in seeking political change. Ostracism and isolation are a sure way to harden resistance. Far from sanctions being a message of hope, they are likely to cause despair among those who support reform and progress.

What I should like to see the Commonwealth Conference achieve is agreement on practical ways to promote negotiations between the South African Government and representatives of the black community on the latter's participation in the political process. I see this as a much more positive outcome than sanctions, which are actually only a way of washing our hands of the situation. Also, a positive outcome will preserve Commonwealth unity, while a sterile wrangle over sanctions leading to serious divisions in the Commonwealth would give comfort to the South African regime and be a disappointment to those in South Africa who are looking to us for support and inspiration.

I am sorry that you will not be at Nassau. We shall miss your contributions; and I would like to have tried to persuade you in person that there are other approaches to solving this tragic problem than sanctions. But I shall look forward to discussing the issues with your delegation. Meanwhile I send you my warmest wishes.

Yours sincerely, Margaret Thatcher