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Prime Minister

I imagine Lord Carrington
will have a word about this
to-morrow evening. A NSH
may mig be.

Phd - 28/9

PRIME MINISTERSouth Africa and Sanctions

(OD(80) 53 and 54)

BACKGROUND

One of what will no doubt be a series of crunch-points on South Africa and sanctions is expected at the Security Council meeting which begins on 25th September. As background for awkward decisions of this kind when they came, a group of officials under Cabinet Office auspices has been analysing what British interests would be at risk if we accept sanctions or alternatively if we alienate Nigeria and others by an isolated British veto. The results are now circulated as OD(80) 53. They show that in material terms we have if anything rather more at stake in Black Africa than in South Africa (Nigeria, for example, is nowadays a larger British export market than the Republic); but that how much we would actually lose in either case would depend on unpredictable circumstances at the time.

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2. As a companion piece to this report Lord Carrington has circulated an outline policy paper OD(80) 54. His formal recommendations (paragraph 6) are not controversial: since we have so much at stake either way, we should try to avoid a general sanctions resolution, and if we fail in that we should try to organise a joint veto with the Americans and French. What matters is his views on the really difficult policy issues, which emerge from his earlier paragraphs as follows:

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- a. His paragraph 2 is categorical that, if we were faced with a call for total sanctions, we should veto, if necessary alone.
- b. His paragraph 3 argues against making clear in advance what Britain would veto, lest the Americans and French are thereby encouraged to let us do so alone and to rely, for the protection of their interests, on our willingness to incur international odium.
- c. His paragraph 4 hints that, in at least some circumstances, he would not favour vetoing a call for partial sanctions on our own.



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Other members of OD will no doubt agree with a. There is room for controversy about the tactics at b, about which Mr Nott for one is somewhat sceptical. But the real difficulty will of course lie in c. Next week's crunch point in New York will force this into the open.

THE IMMEDIATE CRISIS

3. This crunch point is briefly referred to in Lord Carrington's paragraph 5. The United Nations Committee responsible for the existing arms embargo against South Africa has at Black African instigation proposed drastically tightening that embargo. The final text of their proposal, which is due to come before the Security Council on 25th September, is now available in UKMIS New York telegram no. 1306 of 18th September, with Sir Anthony Parsons' comment in telegrams nos. 1304-5. The crucial vote in the Council may take place any day from 25th September onwards. Before the vote, the proposal as it stands will have to be translated into a draft Council resolution. During that process we and our allies will of course be trying to modify some of its worst features. Sir Anthony Parsons seems guardedly optimistic about our chances.

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minute

4. Our original aim was to line up the Americans and French in solid opposition to the whole proposal. But for electoral reasons the Americans preferred to try negotiating a compromise. They have not yet succeeded very far, but have left the impression that subject to certain reservations they will not veto. At one time the French too seemed likely to strike a deal by which they would not veto provided the Africans watered down the proposed ban on nuclear collaboration (paragraph 8 of the proposal), which is the main thing they care about; but this has not happened and there may now be more chance of the French joining us in vetoing if it comes to that. Your talks in Paris today may have shed light on this.

5. The main problem from our point of view is the proposed ban on all items of a dual-purpose military/civilian character (paragraph 6 of the proposal). But other aspects, eg the ban on spares and servicing (paragraph 2) and on licence arrangements (paragraph 3), would also cause us problems. You will



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recall the correspondence beginning with Mr Pym's minute to the Foreign Secretary of 15th July and ending with Mr Sanders' letter to the Foreign Office of 27th August in which it was provisionally agreed, at Lord Carrington's insistence and in the face of doubts expressed by Mr Pym, Mr Nott and yourself, that we should tighten our confidential guidelines on what dual-purpose ^{items} should be regarded as falling within the existing embargo. The present proposal would of course go far wider than that.

PROCEDURE

6. Lord Carrington's paragraph 5 promises that colleagues will be consulted as soon as the Security Council prospect is clearer, so that decisions on our stance there can be taken. Mr Nott's letter to Lord Carrington of 8th September had already asked for collective discussion of the problem. But your own absence in Greece and Yugoslavia (and Lord Carrington's, health permitting, in America) mean that no meeting of OD will be possible next week. Lord Carrington will therefore be getting in touch with you over the coming week-end, to seek such guidance on how to play the hand as may be possible in the present state of our knowledge.

7. Consultation will of course be possible, at the situation develops next week, between Sir Ian Gilmour and the other two Ministers directly concerned, ie Mr Nott and Mr Pym. But before you and Lord Carrington leave, and before you conclude your discussions with him, you may wish to have a word on the telephone with Mr Nott. Temperamentally, as well as by departmental interest, Mr Nott represents the anti-sanctions end of a spectrum of possible views, of which Lord Carrington necessarily represents the other end. You will find Lord Carrington pretty determined that we should not veto in isolation this time round (save in the unlikely case that the proposal cannot be modified at all); quite apart from the Black African hostility which this would involve, he understandably fears that a lone British veto now would convey the worst possible signal to the Americans and French, who would conclude that they could safely rely on us to carry the can when other even more serious crunch points are reached in the future. The critical question is therefore how damaging a resolution we could if necessary accept this time round; ie what



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is the irreducible minimum which we need to excise from the current United Nations proposal in order to be able, however unhappily, to live with it. Mr Nott's views on that will be very relevant to the guidance you give Lord Carrington.

8 I have warned Mr Nott's office that you may wish to consult him over the week-end; and it may be that he will in any case wish to get in touch with you and/or with Lord Carrington.

9. A meeting of OD will be arranged after your return. This will be able to take stock of what has by then happened at the United Nations, as well as considering the two papers. Lord Carrington will have to be represented by the Lord Privy Seal; he himself will be away almost continuously from 22nd September until November (he will be back only for the Party Conference, for two week-ends and on 13th and 24th October).

R L Wade-Gery

19th September 1980

R L WADE-GERY

c Sir Robert Armstrong o/r



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