

*I never let you in my -  
not sent - but X - effectively communicated*

I have of course read your letter attentively. I share your dismay that the results of an excellent discussion in Cabinet, leading to clear decisions supported by everyone, should have been portrayed in the press in terms suggesting lack of unity in the Government. But you go well beyond what is fair in trying to put the blame for this on Bernard Ingham and the No.10 Press Office. Bernard has done sterling work for this Government day in/day out over nearly seven years. That applies to foreign affairs as much as domestic policy. I am told that he has a particularly good working relationship with your present spokesman.

My understanding of events is rather different to yours. As you know, since you were sent a copy, No.10 put out a very welcoming and congratulatory briefing on your return from your mission. But the Press Office were subsequently confronted with "How to tell Thatcher: adopt sanctions now" headline. These seem to have derived from briefing on your aircraft, designed to give an impression that we were softening our position ahead of the Commonwealth meeting. They naturally led to a lot of questions to the No.10 Press Office about the Government's line on sanctions. They confirmed that our position was unchanged, that we did not believe sanctions were effective, that there was no expectation that we would impose them and that the Commonwealth meeting was not a deadline given our commitments to the Community. A number of expressions may have been used which were rather blunter than necessary. But these were corrected as soon as the agreed line was issued from Cabinet. It is absolutely absurd to suggest that the No.10 Press Office speculated about your possible resignation: they would have no grounds to do so.

What does seem clear is that some of your people subsequently behaved very badly. I understand that when we tried to kill the BBC story that evening about divisions between us - and I am grateful for your own efforts - they were told that they had  
X received telephone calls from a Foreign Office Minister

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saying, quite contrary to the agreement in Cabinet not to  
make public our negotiating position, that Cabinet had decided  
X that we would agree at the weekend to impose the European measures.  
As for the subsequent story in the Scotsman, it was quite  
disgraceful and attributed directly and in quotes to a senior  
Foreign Office source.

I agree entirely on the importance of good and accurate  
briefing about our position at the Commonwealth meeting itself.  
I am sure that Bernard will as always provide this under guidance  
from me and from you.

I am sorry that you should have this extra worry after your  
dedicated and stout-hearted efforts in Southern Africa.  
I am told that your TV interview made a particularly good  
impression. We have a strong position for the Commonwealth  
meeting and must see it through together.