



SUBJECT *cell*  
PRIME MINISTER'S  
PERSONAL MESSAGE  
SERIAL No. T143A/86

State House,  
Lagos, Nigeria.

*cc Master  
ops*

31 July, 1986.

*Prime Minister*

The Rt. Hon. Mrs Margaret Thatcher, M.P.  
Prime Minister,  
10, Downing Street  
London

*Dear Mrs Thatcher,*

*A notably  
moderate letter from  
President Babangida  
EDP  
R/P.*

Events in South Africa and their effects elsewhere have all moved so fast since I received your kind message of 29th June, that whatever I would have had to say in reply would have been overtaken before you got it. The outcome of Sir Geoffrey's mission to Southern Africa, and the meeting this weekend of the seven Heads of Government agreed in Nassau, provide me with a good opportunity, however, to share with you my thought on what we should now do.

You will of course know that the view of successive Nigerian governments has been that, given the obduracy of the white South African Government to undertake meaningful reform, comprehensive and mandatory sanctions require to be put in place under the aegis of the United Nations Security Council. That remains my Administration's view, and if I may say so, the blunt rejection by the South African authority of Sir Geoffrey's presentation on behalf of the EEC, as well as the earlier rude ending to the efforts of the Eminent Persons' Group, confirm us in that view.

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Once the EPG had reported, we did not feel that another mission to South Africa, so soon, was necessary and we would have been happier, instead, to see the EEC make some decisions on sanctions at their meeting in The Hague, based on the detailed considerations contained in the EPG report. I therefore felt unable to endorse Sir Geoffrey's mission, but even so refrained from any public denunciation that might have reduced even further his slim chance of success. After all, his bottom-line twin objective of seeking Mr Nelson Mandela's (and other political prisoners') release, and the unbanning of the ANC, as a prelude to negotiations, is shared by all of us.

As I see it, the question now before us is do we in the light of the rather definitive rebuff to Sir Geoffrey's purpose on behalf of the EEC continue to hope that further missions of this kind may by themselves, one day, change the mind of the privileged minority who now rule South Africa? I do not believe that time would be on our side for this, even if there was cause for such forlorn hope. Rather, I believe that we should no longer delay an extension of the limited sanctions now in operation. I was interested to learn that the South African Minister of Finance had spoken during Sir Geoffrey's stay there of the effect of sanctions. I believe that it would be well to keep this in mind in assessing the often exaggerated invulnerability of the South African economy to sanctions.

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I have used the word "sanctions" in this letter, but I rather suspect that we are closer here than your own preferred expression of "effective measures" may suggest. Neither of us (nor the other Commonwealth leaders) wish to see South Africa made into a wasteland: we would not wish the African majority to inherit a wasteland, for one thing. What therefore we wish to see is the imposition of further sanctions - or effective measures as you would say - which would produce the incentive for meaningful negotiations. I can not accept that the white minority population would, at all levels of sanctions, rather prefer suicide than enter into such a negotiation.

I am hoping very much therefore that at the meeting of the Seven, you will find it possible, in the new situation brought about by the failure of Sir Geoffrey's mission, to join the other Commonwealth leaders in agreeing the adoption of effective measures, or sanctions, which would give a lead to the EEC and very usefully complement the efforts of the U.S. Congress (and in turn encourage President Reagan not to veto the emerging Congressional Bill).

I am pleased that our bilateral relations are once again on an even keel. George Dove-Edwin has reported to me on the warmth of his reception and the goodwill which exists for Nigeria, as indeed it does here for Britain.

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I am confident that as South Africa becomes less of an issue between our two countries, those relations will strengthen even more. Our decision to withdraw our participation from the Commonwealth Games in Edinburgh as a gesture of protest against your Government's insistent opposition to sanctions was not taken lightly. We have however noted the slight shift in policy signalled by Sir Geoffrey's statement to the House of Commons.

*Yours Sincerely*

*Ibrahim Babangida*

(Major-General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida)  
President, Commander-in-Chief of the Nigerian  
Armed Forces.