



Prime Minister

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Prime Minister

I thought that you might find the attached letter from an Oxford historian of the empire John Darwin useful in yr discussions about sanctuaries.

I side-line in need the interesting passages. I am in London & could get hold of Dr Darwin if you'd like to talk to him. He is conversative & an excellent man.

Clough Thomas
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John Darwin

1 August 1986

Dear Hugh,

I thought I would write to you because, like a number of people no doubt, while I agree entirely with Mrs Thatcher's position on sanctions against South Africa, I fear that the public argument in this country is being won by the advocates of sanctions (as the recent public opinion poll suggests) even though as the same poll suggests, most people do not favour any specific measures. Mrs T, it seems, has got into the rather awkward position of appearing to do nothing for reasons that have not got across to the general public - and of being very much on the defensive.

If Mrs Thatcher is going to win the public argument - and thus strengthen her hand against the Commonwealth countries and anybody else - she must take the offensive and more important regain the moral 'high ground'. The way to do this is to challenge those who favour sanctions much more effectively than has so far happened to spell out their preferred political solution in South Africa. If Mrs T made the following points I would have thought she would be able to build a much more powerful public case:

1. To favour sanctions because you are 'against apartheid' is a worthy but naive position - like being against sin. Apartheid is an immensely complex political, social and economic system which cannot be unravelled rapidly without immense conflict and suffering. To believe that by some crude stroke ~~like~~ this system will dissolve and be replaced by liberalism is to live in cloud cuckoo land.

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2. Much more important however is to ask those who favour sanctions what they think its effects will be and exactly how any measures in prospect will achieve an amelioration of the situation. *This point should be made again & again*
 3. But the real challenge that she should lay down is to ask the coalition of strange bed-fellows who favour sanctions what kind of political system they want to create in S.A.. Will the African Commonwealth countries, for example, commit themselves to publically favouring a constitution that allows for a multi-party state, with guaranteed for human rights and for minority groups. Will they support 'power-sharing'? Or do they insist on a single centralised state with no federal elements? What are their views on state control of the economy? The general point would ^{be} to say that it is not simply a question of sweeping apartheid away: The Commonwealth should also have a common view - if it's going to have a common view at all - on what to put in its place.
 4. Mrs T ought to spell out a little more the kind of solution she wants to see in S.A. if only to implant in public awareness that she is not simply negative, passive and 'uncaring'. She must make more of a virtue of not interfering and emphasise the dangers of doing so perhaps by some well-chosen examples. Above all, she should not let the African Commonwealth denounce Britain for lack of liberalism and humanitarianism - if necessary by a forceful reminder that ~~the~~ such liberal constitution^{al} provisions as they still retain were the result of British colonial policy and that no country in the world has had so much experience of the complexities of ^{governing} multiracial societies as Britain.

I am sorry this is such a screed - & I don't know what your views are. But I thought that I should let you have the views of the man on the Clapham Omnibus.
Yours ever, Tom D.