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PRIME MINISTER'S
PERSONAL MESSAGE

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THE PRIME MINISTER

19 August 1986

Jean Pierre Thériault,

Thank you for your message of 1 August about the problems which confront us in Southern Africa. This reached me just before the start of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Review meeting. By way of reply I wanted to let you have my impressions of that meeting and to tell you of the action which we in Britain will now be taking on South Africa.

You will have seen the joint Communique from Marlborough House. As it says, our discussion was characterised by a spirit of frankness in friendship. There were many points of which we were all closely agreed. On those where we differed, we were able to agree to differ and to respect each other's positions.

First and most importantly we were in full agreement on our common purpose. Namely, the dismantling of apartheid and the establishment of a non-racial and representative government in South Africa as a matter of compelling urgency. As I said afterwards, no one can claim that the British Government is easy on apartheid. It has not been and it is not going to be. The system is just wrong and must go.

We began by hearing a personal report from the Co-Chairman of the Eminent Persons Group, General Obasanjo and Malcolm Fraser. Geoffrey Howe then described his own mission on behalf of the European Community. Both these accounts made it clear that, as you yourself conclude, the

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South African Government has failed to respond to our call for a start to genuine dialogue. We were therefore all able to agree that since our meeting in Nassau there had not been the adequate progress by the South African Government that we had been looking for.

On the British side, we reiterated our doubts that general economic sanctions would in fact bring about the internal change in South Africa that we all sought. Others round the table, however, took a different view. They were bent on further action against South Africa in the general belief that only this would move President Botha. In the light of their views as well as our own commitments as a member of the European Community - and the country now holding the Presidency of that organisation - the British Government decided on a number of further measures.

First, we said that if, next month, the European Community decided to introduce the measures mentioned in the Hague Communique of 27 June, we would accept and implement them. That would mean that we, along with the EC as a whole, would ban imports of coal, iron and steel. (As you know, we have already brought into operation the other measure envisaged by the EC, a ban on the import of gold coins.)

Second, we agreed now to introduce a voluntary ban on new investment - the only other measure mentioned in the Hague Communique - and a voluntary ban on the promotion of tourism to South Africa. Both of those measures were, of course, mentioned in paragraph 7 of the Nassau Accord.

Our readiness to take these steps was intended to demonstrate Britain's commitment both to the Commonwealth and to the European Community.

Others were prepared to go further. But I am sure that you will recognise that the scale of Britain's involvement, together with that of Europe, in South Africa means that even a relatively few measures taken by the EC impart a sharper

shock than a much longer list of measures taken by the Commonwealth as a whole.

I very much hope that it will be recognised that the undertakings which Britain has now given are both significant and fully consistent with our objectives. These remain unchanged from the Nassau Accord: we want, above all, to bring about the promotion of dialogue and the suspension of violence on all sides, since it is only through negotiation that the South African problem can finally be resolved.

I naturally share your concern for Commonwealth unity. I believe that the agreement we reached at Marlborough House demonstrates that the Commonwealth has the strength and maturity to accommodate the legitimate differences of view that may arise from time to time among its members. A mutual respect for each others' views and interests must be a necessary part of what binds us together. I am glad to record therefore that the seven of us, while regretting the absence of full agreement, nevertheless took the opportunity, as the Communique records, to renew our firm commitment to the future of the Commonwealth and to the aims and objectives which have guided it over the years.

Yours sincerely
Ray and Daphne
