



PM/85/45

PRIME MINISTER

The Security of Small States

1. You will recall that you managed to convert the acrimony over Grenada at the last CHOGM into a Commonwealth study of the wider economic and security needs of small states. As you told the House on our return from that meeting, 'Heads of Government decided to concentrate on the future, not the past - on reconstruction, not recrimination'.
2. Sonny Ramphal's report is due to be considered at this October's CHOGM. I do not yet know what it will say, but the signs are that a strong case will be made for the provision of more assistance to small states. If so, we shall inevitably be expected to support it.
3. As always, resources are the problem. We do not spend much and can only spend more on small states at the expense of something else. The memorandum which the Defence Secretary and I are currently circulating to OD colleagues concludes that, despite the intrinsic merits of helping small states, we would not be justified in giving them priority over existing overseas commitments. You will certainly want to draw attention at the CHOGM to the substantial help we already provide. But against the background of last time's CHOGM, we are likely to come under strong pressure to do more. The atmosphere may be fairly disagreeable anyway because of criticism of our policy on African issues (notably Southern Africa and - quite possibly, despite all we have done - famine relief). I am looking carefully at how this complex of African issues should be

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handled.

4. On small states, I will put to you nearer the time proposals on how to handle the issue at CHOGM, based in part on a detailed examination which is being put in hand as a follow up to the OD memorandum on the individual security needs of small states in vulnerable regions. Nonetheless, I thought that you would wish to be aware at this stage of the careful handling that this issue may need.

5. I am copying this minute to our OD colleagues and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'G. Howe', written in a cursive style.

(GEOFFREY HOWE)

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

9 May 1985

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