

PRIME MINISTERIAL STATEMENT ON SOUTH AFRICAHouse of Representatives21 August 1986

MR HAWKE - I wish to report on the meeting in London from 3 to 5 August of heads of government of seven Commonwealth countries on the issue of South Africa. I table the communique of the meeting. The meeting brought together the Heads of Government of Australia, the Bahamas, Britain, Canada, India, Zambia and Zimbabwe. It was a crucial meeting from three points of view. First, it came against the background of a rapidly deteriorating situation in South Africa. That country has been experiencing the most widespread and destructive unrest in its post-war history. In the past two years more than 2,200 people have lost their lives, many in clashes with the security forces. Thousands have been injured. Since the Government declared a new state of emergency in June at least 8,551 people have been detained on a long term basis, according to the Government's own figures. These include leaders of political parties, trade unions, student groups, human rights organisations, churches and many other opposed to apartheid. Our meeting in London was therefore required to formulate a firm response to the deepening tragedy.

Second, the meeting came at a time of heightened tensions within the Commonwealth, tensions potentially capable of fracturing this longstanding organisation. The boycott of the Commonwealth Games and threats to leave the Commonwealth were symptoms of deep concern and frustration. The London meeting therefore had an important role in preserving the credibility and integrity of the Commonwealth. Southern African issues have been a dominant theme in the Commonwealth over the years and we should not forget that South Africa was a founding member of the Commonwealth and that its departure was decided by the white minority Government.

Third, the meeting was timely in terms of consideration of South Africa under way in other major countries. In June the leaders of the European Community agreed to consider measures against South Africa in three months time if South Africa failed to take certain political steps. In London we were therefore conscious of the important decisions the European Community would be taking in September. We were also conscious of the development in the United States Congress of new measures against South Africa. The London meeting provided the opportunity to give an important international lead.

This was no ad hoc gathering, hastily convened as some knee-jerk response to the appalling situation in South Africa. It was a step in a process already delineated with great care by all Commonwealth heads of government. The Commonwealth Accord on Southern Africa agreed at Nassau in 1985 embodied a

clear strategy. This involved the Australian initiative to establish a Group of Eminent Persons, EPG, to try to achieve negotiation and peaceful change. It involved the definition of clear benchmarks against which to judge the South African Government's willingness or otherwise to initiate change. It involved a graduated approach to measures against South Africa comprising a first tranche of measures to be taken immediately, consideration of a second tranche six months after Nassau if adequate progress had not been made, and possible further measures should the first and second tranches fail to produce results in a reasonably period. It involved the pursuit of this program jointly.

What we had here, then, was not a strategy which gave the South African Government no chance to change. It was not a strategy of lashing out at South Africa in a fit of pique. It was a strategy which very deliberately gave South Africa time to show that it was prepared to move towards a non-racial and representative government; which would take advantage of the opportunity offered by the EPG to facilitate negotiations with black South African leaders; and which made the adoption of sanctions totally contingent on the decisions of the South African Government itself.

The Nassau Accord established the mandate for the meeting in London. The first part of our mandate was to review the situation in South Africa and provide an opinion whether adequate progress had been made towards the objectives stated in the Accord. We conducted this review in London at length and in detail. We had the benefit not only of the report of the EPG but of first hand accounts by the two co-chairmen of the group - Mr Malcolm Fraser of Australia and General Obasanjo of Nigeria - and by the British Foreign Secretary, Sir Geoffrey Howe, who had undertaken a mission to South Africa on behalf of the European Community.

The report of the EPG was crucial to our review. I wish to repeat here that the group performed a very difficult task with great determination and integrity. The role played by Mr Fraser reflects great credit upon him. All honourable members have access to the report and I suggest that no objective reader could find it other than powerful and compelling account of the daily agony of apartheid for the majority of South Africans.

The EPG put forward a creative negotiating concept but this was rejected by the South African Government. The response revealed an unwillingness on the part of the Government to make fundamental changes and to negotiate the creation of a genuinely democratic system. The Government remained wedded to the concept of political rights being granted on a group rather than an individual basis, which implies that race classification will remain in place, and to the retention of the so-called independent homelands. The Government has flatly ruled out a political system based on one person, one vote in a unitary state. The EPG was left no alternative but to conclude;

"The Government of South Africa at the end made it impossible for us to proceed any further."

This was its unanimous view. It was striking at the London meeting that the impressions conveyed by Sir Geoffrey Howe coincided in essential respects with those of the two co-chairmen of the EPG. Moreover, in terms of the benchmarks specified in the Commonwealth Accord, the facts spoke for themselves. Not one of the benchmarks had been reached by the South African Government. Specific and meaningful action has not been taken to dismantle apartheid. A new State of Emergency has been introduced. Nelson Mandela and other detainees are still in gaol. Political freedom does not exist and the bans on the African National Congress and other political parties have not been lifted. No process of dialogue for non-racial and representative government is underway. Worse than this, spiralling violence and repression in South Africa, and military attacks by South Africa on Harare, Lusaka and Gaborone in May, demonstrated to us in London that the situation in South Africa had gone backwards. As the communique attests this was the unanimous judgement of the seven Heads of Government.

The second part of our mandate under the Nassau Accord was to consider further measures against South Africa. Here there was a division of opinion between Britain and the other six participants. Perfectly properly, we did not seek to camouflage or disguise this in the communique. Australia, the Bahamas, Canada, India, Zambia and Zimbabwe adopted a range of further measures, including those defined in the second tranche of the Nassau Accord. Britain was unwilling to take all these steps and the six regarded this, in the language of the communique, with both concern and regret. That having been said, the three undertakings the British Prime Minister gave were, of course, welcome as far as they went and will help the prospects of action by the European Community as a whole. As I said to my colleagues in London, I wanted us if possible to be united, but above all I wanted us to be credible and effective. Better that those of us ready to act should do so than that we should settle for some transparently ineffectual compromise. We can thank the willingness of the six to adopt strong measures for the fact that the Commonwealth and its international leadership role on southern African issues have been preserved.

I shall now briefly address the measures which Australia has accepted and which are listed in the communique. These measures will be brought into effect as soon as possible:

- (a) A ban on air links with South Africa. For Australia this principally involves terminating South African Airways services. The Government is now giving further consideration to the means of implementing this measure taking into account the provisions of the Australia-South Africa Air Services Agreement.
- (b) A ban on new investment or reinvestment of profits earned in South Africa. The reference to reinvestment

concerns reinvestment of repatriated profits, given the problems of applying extraterritorially a ban on reinvestment of profits which remain in South Africa. The Government has decided that in the first instance this measure will be effected through a call on Australian investors to refrain from such investment.

- (c) A ban on the import of agricultural products from South Africa. The Government has decided that provision will be made for prospective implementation of this measure 180 days after the necessary customs negotiations have been promulgated. This will obviate problems for importers who have existing commitments. The Government will shortly be considering certain definitional matters related to this measure.
- (d) The termination of double taxation agreements with South Africa. Australia has no such agreement with South Africa, so no action is required on this matter.
- (e) The termination of all Government assistance to investment in, and trade with, South Africa. The Government has already taken substantial action in this area. It has now decided to terminate all remaining Commonwealth Government assistance through the export market development grants scheme, the Export Finance Insurance Group and the Overseas Projects Unit of Austrade to Australian firms dealing with South Africa. This will be done consistent with legislative requirements and the honouring of insurance contracts entered into prior to the date of implementation.
- (f) A ban on all Government procurement in South Africa. Australia has already introduced this measure save for the procurement necessary to maintain our diplomatic missions.
- (g) A ban on Government contracts with majority-owned South African companies. This measure has also already been introduced.
- (h) A ban on the promotion of tourism to South Africa. The Government will terminate the temporary residence authority of South Africa based officials of the South African Tourist Commission in Sydney. The Minister for Sport, Recreation and Tourism will be bring forward proposals concerning other means of implementing this ban.

These eight measures comprise the second tranche identified in the Nassau Accord. The following three additional measures decided upon in London taken into account the movement which has occurred on sanctions in both the United States and the European Community since Nassau.

- (i) A ban on all new bank loans to South Africa, whether to the public or private sectors. The Government has already called on banks to refrain from such loans.

- (j) A ban on the import of uranium, coal, iron and steel from South Africa. Again this will be introduced prospectively 180 days after introduction of regulations. The Government will shortly be considering certain definitional matters related to this measure.
- (k) The withdrawal of all consular facilities in South Africa except for our own nationals and nations of those countries to whom we render consular services. This relates principally to visa issuing in South Africa. The Government is considering how broadly the withdrawal of visa issuing facilities should be applied and this matter will be the subject of a separate announcement.

I wish to announce also that the Government has decided to reduce South African representation in Australia through withdrawal of temporary residence authority for South African Trade Officers at the South African Trade Commissioner's office in Melbourne and for the Commercial Vice-Consul in Sydney. Australia withdrew its Trade Commissioner from South Africa in 1985. In addition I draw attention to the provision that has been made in the Budget for a new \$5m assistance program for southern Africa over a five-year period. This will, in particular, provide humanitarian assistance for black South Africans, Namibians and black South African refugees in the areas of education and training.

It is my purpose to report on the London meeting rather than engage in broad debate on the issue of sanctions. But I do wish to reiterate several points which are absolutely central. First, it is a characteristic of the debate about sanctions that those opposed to them prefer to set up straw men rather than address the real rationale for such measures. One such straw man is that negotiation and dialogue are to be preferred to sanctions. In fact it is a fundamental fallacy to see negotiation and dialogue on the one hand and sanctions on the other as somehow contradictory. The purpose of sanctions is precisely to bring home to the South African Government that its present posture, a repressive defence of the status quo, entails costs and that a change of course would bring benefits. The London communique is explicit that if Pretoria responds positively we all stand ready to review the situation and to rescind the measures which have been adopted.

Those who oppose sanctions do so frequently on the purported grounds that they will hurt the black community. I reject this as patronising and offensive to those representative black leaders such as Bishop Tutu, leaders of the African National Congress and the United Democratic Front, leaders of the front-line states, and black trade union leaders such as those I met in London, who have all made it clear that the black community of South Africa is already suffering immeasurably under apartheid and believes the price of sanctions is one it is prepared to pay.

Another straw man is that sanctions are ineffective because they will not destroy the South African economy or bring down the South African Government. Neither of these things is the real rationale for sanctions and people who argue this way are either too obtuse or lacking the intellectual honesty to address the much more complex calculations involved. The object, as my Foreign Minister (Mr Hayden), has eloquently said, is not to bring South Africa to its knees but to bring it to its senses. The object is not to bring down a government but to change the political dynamics of South Africa in a more progressive direction. The key point is that history shows that, to the extent South Africa has changed, it has done so in response to a changing internal dynamic which has drawn support and encouragement from external pressure. History also shows that in the absence of such pressures South Africa will prevaricate and delay indefinitely. Since inaction means delay and delay means a downwards spiral into violence those opposed to action bear a grave responsibility.

Third, concrete measures are the only way to fulfil our moral obligation as liberal democracies serious about the values of individual liberty and democratic rights. Apartheid is universally deplored but repugnance alone is not sufficient for its elimination. Vocal opposition without tangible measures is hollow.

Fourth, and very importantly, the self-interest of the West requires action. Make no mistake, change will come about one day in South Africa and it is a question of vital importance how it comes. The political, economic and strategic interests of the West will be dealt a tremendous blow if the process is a violent one which throws up a radical successor regime which regards the West as hostile. The purpose of sanctions is to bring home to the South African Government and its domestic constituency the need for peaceful change, and to send a signal to those moderate black leaders striving for change by non-violent means that they are not alone.

In fact, the cost of adopting measures now - whether to Australia, Britain, Canada, the United States of America, the European Community or Japan - will be nothing compared to the cost if South Africa plunges into conflict. It is for this reason, and also because a great moral issue is involved, that Western countries cannot afford to take decisions about sanctions on the basis of some narrow short term calculation in dollars and cents. I did not do so in associating Australia with the measures agreed at London. Nor do I shirk from, or apologise for, the fact that the measures could be at some cost to Australia. This depends upon many imponderables, including the extent to which the measures are adopted by other countries, including particularly, South Africa's major economic partners. No definitive tally can be given. Certainly, there is a potential cost given that our policy deliberately constrains us from developing lucrative commercial relations with the largest economy on the African continent. Any costs would be harder to bear should others stand by and perhaps benefit from the principled stand now being taken by an

ever-growing section of the world's community. The point, as stated in the communique, is that such measures have become a moral and political imperative which can no longer be deferred.

The London decisions do not constitute only a recommendation to the Commonwealth as a whole. They usher in a period of intensive consultations within the international community with emphasis on those countries that presently sustain a significant level of economic relations with South Africa. I have sent messages to the heads of government of the European Community countries conveying the Government's views and urging that action be taken. I have written in the same terms to President Reagan and to Prime Minister Nakasone. The visit to Australia next week of the Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee of the United States Senate, Richard Lugar, will provide a further valuable opportunity to follow up the London decisions.

The Western World is beginning to move on this vital international issue. On 15 August the United States Senate voted 84 to 14 in favour of strong measures, further evidence that there is solid bipartisan support for action in the United States. As noted earlier, the European Community will consider measures in September and movement by Britain at the London meeting should facilitate agreement. The indications are that Japan would be prepared to be part of a position concerted with other major Western powers.

The Government, in taking the decisions it has, has therefore aligned Australia with the emerging international consensus. But we have done more. We have played a major part in helping to shape that consensus. This is a role of which Australians can be proud. I present the following paper:

South Africa - Commonwealth Heads of Government review meeting, London, 3-5 August 1986 - Ministerial statement, 21 August 1986.