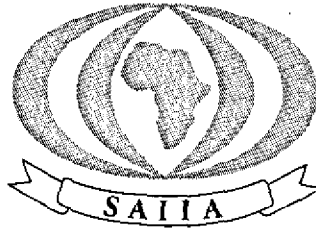


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THE COMMONWEALTH AT NASSAU:  
INITIATING INTERVENTION IN SOUTH AFRICA

This briefing reviews the proceedings of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting held in Nassau, Bahamas from 16 to 22 October, 1985. It also provides a brief overview of the Commonwealth and its structures, as well as some background information on relations between the Commonwealth and South Africa.

The sections are headed as follows:

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- A UNIQUE ORGANISATION
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- HEADS OF GOVERNMENT MEETINGS - THE STRUCTURE
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- THE COMMONWEALTH AND SOUTH AFRICA
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- SOUTHERN AFRICA AND THE FINAL COMMUNIQUE
- CONCLUSION
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## INTRODUCTION:

The 25th Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Nassau, Bahamas, has illustrated how the South African issue continues simultaneously to generate divisions and to foster agreement among the forty-seven member-states of this informal organisation.<sup>1</sup> These biennial meetings have, since 1947, provided a unique setting for a disparate assortment of states to discuss a number of pressing international and Commonwealth-related issues.<sup>2</sup> As these meetings are attended by heads of state and government, they represent a remarkable type of summitry, where attempts are made to reach broad consensus on a variety of issues, subsequently issued as a Final Communiqué.

The Nassau CHOGM, held between 16 and 22 October 1985, concentrated member-states' attention on South Africa's domestic and regional policies as never before. The outcome was both dramatic and remarkable considering the configuration of member-states present and their interests. (See Brief Reports nos. 21 and 34 for reviews of previous CHOGMs.)

## A UNIQUE ORGANISATION:

The Commonwealth comprises more than just the biennial CHOGMs; this 'fraternal association' of former British dependencies is characterised by an ongoing and informal process of consultation among member-states, co-ordinated by a permanent Secretariat. Its functional nature is best defined by the 1971 Commonwealth Declaration on Principles as "a voluntary association of independent sovereign states each responsible for its own policies, consulting and co-operating in the common interest of their peoples and in the promotion of international understanding and world peace".

The unique qualities of the Commonwealth as an international organisation, are found in its numerous common elements. Perhaps the overriding unifying factor is the common English language. The inter-relationships among member-states, their leaders, officials and their populations, are marked by what might be termed 'flexible intimacy'. A common heritage is evident in the colonial experience of most members, which has led to the intense concern for South Africa and Namibia. The endurance of this concern is partly because of South Africa's previous membership of the Commonwealth and the links that still remain between South Africa and several Commonwealth countries. Also, the Queen remains head of state in many Commonwealth countries as well as being Head of the Commonwealth, and the Westminster system is in place in a number of member-states.

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1. See the annexure for a full list of Commonwealth members. There are, strictly speaking, forty-nine member-states; but because Tuvalu and Nauru have special membership status, their heads of government do not attend the CHOGMs.
  2. The first Commonwealth 'Prime Ministers Meeting' was held in London in 1944. After India, Pakistan and Ceylon joined the Commonwealth in 1947, these occasional meetings were all held in London until 1966. They became biennial only in 1967 and changed their title to the CHOGM in 1971.

However, not all values are shared. This is seen in different ideologies and systems of government, as well as in member-states' differing perceptions of their national interests and of some international issues. The Commonwealth does not possess a particular constitution, and admittance or withdrawal is both voluntary and by unanimous consent of the member-states. There are no contractual obligations - merely 'bonds that unite without binding'.

Despite the earlier opposition to the establishment of a central bureaucracy, since 1965 the Secretariat has extended its co-ordinating functions and it is now the most tangible expression of the Commonwealth. It is funded by member-states' contributions, in agreed shares based upon population and national income. In 1984/5, Britain contributed 30% of the £5 million budget. The Secretariat's activities embrace a host of smaller divisions and offices handling international, economic, legal, scientific, educational, medical, development, youth and women's affairs. The Secretariat was supposed merely to service the organisation. However, the role of the Secretary-General has changed, so that it now expresses more fully the majority opinion of member-states. The personalities of the first and second Secretary-Generals, (Canadian) Arnold Smith and (Guyanan) Shridath Ramphal, have illustrated this change.

The establishment in 1971 of the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation (CFTC) added to existing Commonwealth activities within and between member-states. Financed by voluntary subscriptions from all member-states, it provides assistance to the Commonwealth's developing members in such areas as industrial development, export market development, food security and rural development, education and training, management and professional skills and short- and long-term technical assistance. Its budget for 1985 was £27 million. There are also Commonwealth organisations embracing such areas as communications, parliamentary, sports and media affairs. The Commonwealth then is more than the sum of its parts; it is a matrix of co-operative processes and structures.

#### THE NATURE OF CONSENSUS-BUILDING:

The Commonwealth has come to accept conventions which have safeguarded the essential qualities of informality and flexibility peculiar to its consultative fora - heads of government, senior officials, ministerial and special committee meetings, conferences, seminars, symposia and workshops. Before 1965, it was accepted that member-states were not required to reach collective decisions or take united action. However, since that date, procedural adjustments have enabled the Commonwealth to formulate a collective position, or at least consensus, on issues, and consensus has now become fully accepted as a unifying concept.

The important limitations on Commonwealth deliberations, however, are that the internal affairs of any one member-state cannot be discussed without its assent, and that the Commonwealth cannot act as an arbiter in disputes between member-states without their agreement. Great latitude has been allowed for the discussion of other international and Commonwealth-related issues, including particularly South Africa and Namibia.

The Commonwealth does not act as a voting bloc in the United Nations and other international organisations, and members have often taken opposite sides on issues, including the South African question. However, it does provide a unique setting for an array of developed and developing countries

to thrash out broad objectives on such diverse issues as debt, development assistance, disarmament and drug trafficking, among others. Even on disputed issues, there are consultations and exchanges of views and information.

#### HEADS OF GOVERNMENT MEETINGS - THE STRUCTURE:

In addition to formal openings by the Queen, the CHOGMs are characterised by a summit, a series of private talks and restricted sessions, and a weekend retreat. The general summit is attended by heads of government accompanied by their officials, plus officials of the Secretariat. Only the government leaders and the Secretary-General attend the subsequent private talks, and these may lead to several restricted sessions concentrating on particular issues.

The most unusual feature of the CHOGMs is the weekend retreat, where heads of government are free to get together in a leisurely atmosphere to discuss problems and ideas. Although broad agreement on principles might have been arrived at during the general summit, private meetings and restricted sessions, the weekend retreat has often facilitated the achievement of consensus on several important issues - such as most of the Final Communiqués (especially at Lusaka and Nassau), the Gleneagles Agreement, the Melbourne and Goa Declarations and the Nassau Commonwealth Accord on Southern Africa (see below).

#### THE NASSAU CHOGM:

Apart from South and Southern African-related issues (dealt with below), which dominated the summit, private talks, restricted sessions and the weekend retreat, other topics were discussed and included in the Final Communiqué and in a separate Declaration on World Order. Broad consensus was reached among the forty-six states present on these various topics, a summary of which follows.

The heads of government welcomed the proposed November Soviet-United States summit on arms control, but also called for a comprehensive test ban treaty and a multilateral agreement to ban the development, production, stockpiling and deployment of chemical weapons.

Much attention was given to the problems of small states (especially those that were land-locked) and the report of a special Consultative Group entitled 'Vulnerability: Small States in the Global Society' received widespread support. A special Programme of Action would be developed by the Commonwealth.

The Unilateral Declaration of Independence by the Turkish Cypriot authorities in November 1983 was condemned, and resolution of this conflict under the aegis of the UN was encouraged. Negotiations were also supported to reach agreement on territorial claims by Guatemala and Venezuela on Belize and Guyana respectively. The heads of government called for the early independence of New Caledonia and supported the adoption of the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty in August this year, by the South Pacific Forum. They called for the withdrawal of foreign forces from Kampuchea and the early establishment of a Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality in the South-East Asian region.

They reiterated their calls for the UN Conference on the implementation of the 1971 Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace, and they expressed their appreciation for reduced tensions and increased regional co-operation in the Caribbean. Support was also expressed for the 1984 Contadora Act of Peace and Co-operation in Central America, and for the proposed Mediterranean Zone of Peace, Security and Co-operation. The heads of government also called for Israel's withdrawal from territories occupied since 1967 and hoped that the 1985 Jordanian-Palestinian Agreement would promote the peaceful resolution of the Palestinian question. They also pleaded for a negotiated settlement in Afghanistan and the withdrawal of foreign troops.

Special attention was devoted to preventing and combating all forms of terrorism and overcoming the severe problems experienced by developing countries in the current international economic situation. Particularly the decreased financial flows to these countries and their increasing debt obligations, meant that the roles of multilateral institutions like the International Monetary Fund were crucial in facilitating adjustment and greater financial flows to developing economies. The necessity for a new round of global trade negotiations was realised, as protectionism was increasing, while commodity prices remained depressed.

Most members reaffirmed the importance of the Law of the Sea Convention, calling on all states to sign and ratify the Convention. They supported the proposed UN Convention on Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking, which was to be discussed at a 1987 UN Conference. Along with member-states' reaffirmed observance of human rights, support was expressed for the Commonwealth Secretariat's Human Rights Unit, and the UN's (1987) International Year of Shelter for the Homeless.

The long-term development problems faced by Sub-Saharan African countries were addressed, and broad support was given to the Organisation of African Unity's Addis Ababa Economic Declaration of July this year - especially its call for a conference involving creditors, debtors and the international financial institutions to discuss ways of alleviating the debt burdens of most Sub-Saharan African states.

The Nassau CHOGM, then, did follow-up on a series of previous CHOGMs, and similar Commonwealth meetings, conferences, seminars, symposia and workshops on Commonwealth-related and other issues. Its three major documents - the Final Communiqué, the Declaration on World Order and the Commonwealth Accord on Southern Africa - point out the multi-faceted concerns of member-states. They express a growing interest by Commonwealth countries in attaining consensus on a host of issues, which represents a unique common approach to these issues by developed and developing countries alike.

#### THE COMMONWEALTH AND SOUTH AFRICA:

South Africa and Namibia are seen as Commonwealth-related issues, as was the case with Rhodesia too, before 1980. The changing composition of the Commonwealth, as a result of decolonisation in the late 1950s and early 1960s, and the broader implications for the South African government of the heightened criticism of its apartheid policies, led to that government's decision to withdraw from the organisation in 1961.

The question of South Africa's continued membership of the Commonwealth took up most of the agenda at the 1961 Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting in London, and this concern with South Africa and its domestic and regional policies, has remained an issue at most meetings since this date. At this meeting, prime minister Verwoerd enquired as to the acceptability of South Africa's continued membership of the Commonwealth as a Republic. The criticism of the South African government's apartheid system by some existing and potential Commonwealth member-states, led to Verwoerd withdrawing the application for continued membership of the Commonwealth.

South Africa's withdrawal from the organisation in May 1961, did not lead to a drop in Commonwealth interest in this country. It came in for mild concerted criticism at the 1966 (London) Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting, especially for its refusal to live up to its international obligations regarding the mandated territory of South West Africa and its apartheid policy in general. This low-key criticism was also evident at the 1969 (London) Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting, which again condemned the policy of apartheid and South Africa's refusal to accept its international obligations to South West Africa. South Africa was once more shifted centre-stage at the 1971 (Singapore) CHOGM, when the Heath Government was put on the defensive concerning its arms sales to South Africa. Although the conflict was defused by appointing a Study Group to investigate the issue, Britain finally agreed at the 1975 (Kingston) CHOGM, to comply strictly with the UN arms embargo against South Africa and to terminate the Simonstown Agreement.

Since the adoption of the Declaration of Commonwealth Principles at the 1971 Singapore CHOGM, attention has repeatedly been focused on the Southern African region, and efforts to act on these issues have increased. The Principles include, among others, a common commitment: to uphold the liberty of the individual, the equality of rights for all citizens regardless of race, colour, creed or political beliefs and their participation in a free and democratic process of government; to eradicate racial prejudice and oppression; and to oppose all forms of colonial domination and racial oppression while furthering the principles of non-racialism and self-determination. Although not all member-states adhere to these principles themselves, South Africa is singled out for criticism because of its legislated racial discrimination and its continued occupation of Namibia.

Following the independence of Mozambique and Angola (and South Africa's involvement in the latter's civil war) and the Soweto uprisings, pressure mounted against South Africa within the Commonwealth; as was seen in the adoption of the 1977 Gleneagles Agreement. South Africa had largely been shielded from attention by the developments in Rhodesia, but this was being whittled away as Southern Africa became an international flashpoint, and as the inevitability of Zimbabwean independence became apparent. This was particularly seen after the Lusaka CHOGM (1979) and the acceptance of the Lusaka Declaration on Racism and Racial Prejudice, which was a reaffirmation of the Commonwealth's rejection of racist policies.

The Commonwealth member-states have followed up on certain aspects of earlier final communiqués, agreements, declarations and accords. Their record has been best with respect to Southern African-related declarations and agreements - especially in bringing about the Lancaster House Agreement (which secured independence for Zimbabwe) and tightening up on the Gleneagles

Agreement. Less impressive have been those relating to issues like economic development and arms transfers. It is clear from the above trends that a downturn in South Africa's internal political developments and/or its assertive regional foreign policy have led to periods of greater attention to this country and the region as a whole. In the absence of these, temporary breathing spaces were given to the South African government.

Indeed, since the last CHOGM in New Delhi in 1983, many Commonwealth leaders have allocated more time and greater effort to popularise opposition to the apartheid system in South Africa. Recent domestic and regional developments have again bolstered this trend. This has been because of their personal convictions and/or their perceived national interests. In particular, the Australian, New Zealand and Indian prime ministers have taken a lead in this regard and, one might ask what particular reason has prompted this heightened rhetoric and action on the parts of Bob Hawke, David Lange and Rajiv Gandhi. It seems clear that they are the best placed member-states of the Commonwealth to lead this popularising process, as together they comprise some of the largest democratic components of the organisation.

It is perhaps this type of intervention that has upset the South African government more than a blanket intervention by other Commonwealth member-states. The South African government has been less able to level charges of double-standards and pointed morality against these democracies, as would have been the case if the leadership of this intervention came from one-party states and dictatorships within the Commonwealth.

Hawke has been especially critical of Britain's reluctance to adopt widespread economic sanctions against South Africa, and his insistence on sanctions at Nassau illustrates his commitment. Further, Hawke hoped to take advantage of Australia's current membership of the Security Council in promoting united action against South Africa in this forum, using the Commonwealth stand as a springboard. Australia's role as a regional power is also a reason for Hawke's moves on sanctions, as is the support he draws from Australia's labour unions. Hawke retained his vociferous stance against South Africa throughout the Nassau CHOGM.

Canada has increasingly pressed for a more active role for the Commonwealth in bringing about a modicum of reconciliation and consensus not really seen in other international fora like the UN. The Canadian government also has growing interests in Anglophone and Francophone Africa, especially in Southern Africa. Canada's stance against the South African government and its pressing for the adoption of certain common Commonwealth principles, may be traced back to the premiership of John Diefenbaker in the 1960s. At Nassau, the Canadian prime minister, Brian Mulroney, endeavoured to take a mediating position between Britain and the other Commonwealth member-states. He reportedly played an important role in bringing about a compromise on sanctions, and could be said to have remained the closest member-state to Britain.

#### BRITAIN AT NASSAU - CENTRE STAGE:

The overriding issue discussed at Nassau was South Africa's domestic and regional policies and the implementation of effective economic sanctions. At stake was a possible showdown or split between Britain and the rest of the Commonwealth member-states. This was the first time in the history of the Commonwealth that Britain was so unanimously isolated at a CHOGM. This

was because of the former Dominions (Australia, Canada and New Zealand) and the rest of the Commonwealth's African, Asian, Caribbean and Pacific member-states were united in their belief that some form of punitive measures should be imposed on South Africa to force substantive changes in its domestic and regional policies.

Britain's position on South Africa was outlined by Foreign Secretary, Sir Geoffrey Howe, in his July 1985 speech to the Royal Commonwealth Society, where he announced his six-point plan of urgent action to create a climate of confidence for effective dialogue in this country. These included: the unconditional release of Nelson Mandela and other acknowledged political leaders; an end to forced removals; an end to detention without trial; an early end to the state of emergency; the progressive abolition of discriminatory legislation; and the adoption of a commitment to some form of common citizenship for all South Africans.

Referring to South Africa's regional policy, he requested an immediate end to South Africa's cross-border violence and the securing of Namibian independence in accordance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 435. This response was the result of widespread criticism of South Africa's raids into two Commonwealth member-states - Lesotho and, more recently, Botswana - and growing criticism that Britain had delegated its responsibility in the Contact Group on Namibia to the United States.

Britain has consistently rejected mandatory and wide-ranging sanctions against South Africa. Given its substantial economic interests in South Africa, this previous policy consistency is understandable. Britain believes that economic sanctions diminish effective pressures on the South African government to introduce fundamental changes, that such actions would bear heavily on the weaker sections of the South African population and on neighbouring states, and that economic growth offered the most promising route to peaceful political change in South Africa. To these reasons may be added the poor historical precedents of sanctions, especially against Rhodesia, in recent times.

It was during his visit to Nigeria in August 1985, that Sir Geoffrey conceded that some change in Britain's sanctions posture was needed. Altering what were previously policy consistencies in the face of Commonwealth pressures and interests, has not been unusual for Britain - good examples being its volte face at the 1979 Lusaka CHOGM, which led to the Lancaster House Agreement and earlier at the 1977 London CHOGM, which led to the Gleneagles Agreement.

However, the British prime minister stood firm on her government's rejection of sanctions. What developed at the general summit, the private meetings and the restricted sessions, was a moderation of the positions of those in favour of such measures. Margaret Thatcher seems to have convinced the Frontline States in particular, and other member-states in general, that creating economic hardship for South and Southern Africans was not the road to the destruction of apartheid. Also, possibly the most cogent reason for the compromise was that the more developed Commonwealth member-states (like Britain, Canada, Australia and New Zealand) could not guarantee the protection of South Africa's neighbouring states' economies against the resulting spillover from South Africa. What substantiates this line of argument was President Reagan's threat to refuse additional assistance to the neighbouring states if they pressed the sanctions action.



SOUTHERN AFRICA - THE COMMONWEALTH ACCORD:

An agreement was reached late on 20 October on a compromise package of measures that would be adopted voluntarily by Commonwealth member-states. Certain measures against South Africa could be taken by member-states before the six-month deadline,<sup>1</sup> to be followed by further measures after this period if South Africa failed to implement substantial domestic reforms and enter into credible negotiations with representative black South African leaders within six months.

The heads of government, in the accord on a programme of common action against South Africa, called on the South African government to meet certain objectives:

- to declare that the system of apartheid will be dismantled and specific and meaningful action taken in fulfilment of that intent;
- to terminate the existing state of emergency;
- to release immediately and unconditionally Nelson Mandela and all others imprisoned and detained for their opposition to apartheid;
- to establish political freedom and specifically lift the existing ban on the African National Congress and other political parties; and
- to initiate, in the context of a suspension of violence on all sides, a process of dialogue across lines of colour, politics and religion, with a view to establishing a non-racial and representative government.

A small group of 'eminent Commonwealth persons' would be established to foster negotiations between whites and blacks in South Africa, and they would be appointed and assisted in their task by the heads of government of Australia, Britain, the Bahamas, Canada, India, Zambia, Zimbabwe and the Commonwealth Secretary-General - the so-called 'contact group'. The Commonwealth Accord on Southern Africa also reaffirmed member-states' adherence to the 1977 Gleneagles Agreement and agreed to stricter enforcement of UN Security Council Resolutions 418 and 558 (on the mandatory arms embargo against South Africa). They further agreed to voluntarily adopt economic measures against South Africa (either immediately or gradually), so as to 'bring about concrete progress' in achieving the above five objectives within six months. These included:

- a ban on all new government loans to the Government of South Africa and its agencies;
- a readiness to take unilaterally what action may be possible to preclude the import of Krugerrands;
- no government funding for trade missions to South Africa or for participation in exhibitions and trade fairs in South Africa;

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1. By mid-November, the Commonwealth extended, by three months, its six-month deadline for implementing sanctions measures. The Commonwealth contact group (or monitoring committee as it is now called) will therefore only meet in June next year to discuss what progress has been made by the South African government and to consider the imposition of further sanctions.

- a ban on the sale or export of computer equipment capable of use by South African military forces, police or security forces;
- a ban on new contracts for the sale and export of nuclear goods, materials and technology to South Africa;
- a ban on the sale and export of oil to South Africa;
- a strict and rigorously controlled embargo on imports of arms, ammunition, military and para-military equipment from South Africa; and
- an embargo on all military co-operation with South Africa and discouragement of all cultural and scientific events, except where these contribute towards the ending of apartheid or have no possible role in promoting it.

A decision on whether to consider taking further measures against South Africa would be made at a specially convened review meeting of heads of government (or their representatives) in six months' time. This would depend on the member-states' assessment of the South African government's performance by that date. These voluntary measures would include:

- a ban on air links with South Africa;
- a ban on new investment or reinvestment of profits earned in South Africa;
- a ban on import of agricultural products from South Africa and the termination of double taxation agreements with South Africa;
- the termination of all Government assistance to investment in, and trade with, South Africa;
- a ban on all government procurement in South Africa;
- a ban on contracts with majority-owned South African companies; and
- a ban on the promotion of tourism in South Africa.

Failing substantial reforms and meaningful negotiations taking place after these measures had been employed against South Africa, further measures would be considered by the Commonwealth countries.

#### SOUTHERN AFRICA AND THE FINAL COMMUNIQUÉ:

In addition to the Commonwealth Accord on Southern Africa, statements on developments in the region and on what should be done, were included in the Final Communiqué. Namibia's delayed independence concerned the heads of government, especially the linkage to Cuban withdrawal from Angola and the establishment of the transitional administration in Windhoek. The United States policy of 'constructive engagement' was seen to facilitate continued South African intransigence over Namibia and apartheid in general. Following their agreement at the 1983 New Delhi CHOGM to consider action against South Africa if it failed to implement Resolution 435, the heads of government saw the measures of their Nassau Accord applying equally to ensuring Pretoria's compliance with this Resolution.

Concerning the South African government's admission that it provided support for Angolan and Mozambican dissident groups (UNITA and the MNR respectively), the heads of government believed that the pacts signed with the governments of these two countries in 1984 had failed to end South Africa's destabilisation of the region. They called for the immediate

withdrawal of South African troops from Angola and an end to its assistance to dissident movements in the region. The Communiqué also included a call on all states 'to do everything in their power to refrain from any actions which might entail support for, or encourage South African attacks on, or continue insurgency in these countries'.

Finally, attacks on neighbouring states, refusing to sign non-aggression pacts with Pretoria, were condemned. UN Security Council Resolution 568, following on the June 1985 raid on Gaborone, was supported, along with Botswana's demands for compensation. Tied to these regional issues, were requests for increased support for Commonwealth training programmes for South African and Namibian refugees, the Commonwealth Committee on Southern Africa and for the Programme to Counteract apartheid Propaganda.

#### CONCLUSION:

The decision to implement some or all of the first or second packages of measures of the Commonwealth Accord, will not be universally applicable. Certainly, most Commonwealth countries already impose a variety of measures (including many of the above) against South Africa, but the real teeth to these measures would lie in their adoption by Britain, and to a lesser degree by Canada, Australia and New Zealand. No less important is the self-flagellation implied by the prospective adoption of these same measures by South Africa's neighbours (both in Southern Africa and the Indian Ocean region). The Thatcher government has conceded that an immediate ban on the importation of Krugerrands is likely. However, it remains unwilling to go much further in placing sanctions on the South African government and the South African population until the results of the attempted mediation by the 'wise men' and 'contact group' have been assessed by mid-1986. Even then, Britain remains central to the whole intermediary role of the Commonwealth in South Africa's domestic and regional policies. The Thatcher policy on sanctions remains firm, and therein lies the marginal significance of this role of the Commonwealth.

The Commonwealth, nevertheless, hopes to become a more relevant agent by effecting meaningful collective pressure on the South African government and promoting negotiations between the government and black leaders. This genre of intervention by the Commonwealth illustrates its assumed role of 'bridge-building'. There are several similarities to the Commonwealth's role in bringing about the Lancaster House Agreement. Britain's role within the 'honest brokerage' envisaged by the group of 'wise men' and 'contact group' will remain significant, although Mrs Thatcher reportedly backed off her desire to place Sir Geoffrey Howe at the helm of these groups, thereby placing broader Commonwealth interests ahead of those of Britain for the interim.

In the final analysis the Commonwealth Accord on Southern Africa is a compromise; the obligation to participate in its objectives and actions remains the prerogative of each member-state and will depend on an assessment by each of progress made by the South African government.

The potentially most significant aspect of this compromise was the agreement to attempt a mediating role through the appointment of the group of seven 'wise men'. It remains to be seen whether this group will be able to play any meaningful role in promoting negotiations, but at this early

stage the omens are not good. Problems have been experienced in constituting the group, and by mid-November its composition is not yet settled. The South African government has so far not committed itself publicly on the question as to whether it will receive the group in South Africa, but it has given no encouragement at all to the idea of Commonwealth mediation in the current conflict. Nor has enthusiasm been expressed by other parties, such as the ANC, or any important sectors of South African society. The 'wise men' will thus face a difficult task; first, of establishing their own credibility and that of the Commonwealth, before they can hope to play a role in fostering negotiations on South Africa's political future.

JAN SMUTS HOUSE

20 November 1985

ANNEXURE

MEMBERS<sup>1</sup>

Antigua and Barbuda	Mauritius
Australia	Nauru <sup>2</sup>
Bahamas	New Zealand
Bangladesh	Nigeria
Barbados	Papua New Guinea
Belize	Saint Christopher and Nevis
Botswana	Saint Lucia
Brunei	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
Canada	Seychelles
Cyprus	Sierra Leone
Dominica	Singapore
Fiji	Solomon Islands
The Gambia	Sri Lanka
Ghana	Swaziland
Grenada	Tanzania
Guyana	Tonga
India	Trinidad and Tobago
Jamaica	Tuvalu <sup>2</sup>
Kenya	Uganda
Kiribati	United Kingdom
Lesotho	Vanuatu
Malawi	Western Samoa
Malaysia	Zambia
Maldives	Zimbabwe
Malta	

1. Ireland, South Africa and Pakistan withdrew from the Commonwealth in 1949, 1961 and 1972 respectively.
2. Nauru and Tuvalu, being special members of the Commonwealth, have the right to participate in functional activities but are not represented at Meetings of Commonwealth Heads of Government.

DEPENDENCIES AND ASSOCIATED STATES

Australia:	British Antarctic Territory
Australian Antarctic Territory	British Indian Ocean Territory
Christmas Island	British Virgin Islands
Cocos (Keeling) Islands	Cayman Islands
Coral Sea Islands Territory	Channel Islands
Heard and McDonald Islands	Falkland Islands
Norfolk Island	Falklands Islands Dependencies
	Gibraltar
New Zealand:	Hong Kong
Cook Islands	Isle of Man
Niue	Montserrat
Ross Dependency	Pitcairn Islands
Tokelau	St. Helena
	Ascension
United Kingdom	Tristan da Cunha
Anguilla	Turks and Caicos Islands
Bermuda	