CHAPTER 4

BRITAIN AND SOUTH AFRICAN ISSUES IN THE COMMONWEALTH

INTRODUCTION

Since the Second World War, there had been an international consensus against racial discrimination. Discrimination was interpreted as the discrimination by whites against blacks and especially, white minority rule. Hugh Tinker pointed out that although somewhat grudgingly, the west accepted that racism was synonymous with white racism. The 'political elite' in the west learned the rhetoric of international equality and assimilated the new word 'racism' into their vocabulary as they realised that any open identification with South Africa could only lead to guilt by association. The presumption of guilt by association put particular pressure on Britain.

Often the Commonwealth that stood on the values of equality and multiracialism came to the verge of disintegration on the issue of South Africa, mainly as many felt that Britain did not play its role. Even though Britain termed apartheid as abhorrent, it continued to maintain its economic relations with South Africa. Britain had more to do, than any other Commonwealth country, on the question of economic sanctions: qualitatively, by withdrawing the support and comfort that economic connection offered to South Africa and quantitatively, because of the magnitude of its trade and investment.

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1 Hugh Tinker, Race Conflict And The International Order from Empire to UN (London, 1977), p. 132.
2 The words of the British Ambassador Ivor Richards, on Rhodesia, at the UN is as applicable to South Africa: When you get 130 out of 140 countries expressing a clear view as to what the British government should do over Rhodesia, well obviously we don’t want to be isolated, particularly if we find that some of our closest partners, say in the west, or in the EEC, or in the NATO, themselves have doubts and qualifications about the policy Britain is pursuing. And while you could possibly ignore the Warsaw Pact powers as being biased in one direction, when you get a line-up of all the African countries, all the non-aligned countries, Asian countries some of the Western countries, the Scandinavian countries and you get that line-up on the other side of the argument to Great Britain, well obviously.... it makes you think as to why you find yourself in this position and what you can do to avoid it. James Barber, The Unusual Alliance Britain And South Africa (London, 1983), p. 9.
To the Commonwealth, a compromise on apartheid was not only a betrayal of the people of South Africa, but also a negation of its own basic principles.

For many post-war British leaders, the Commonwealth was to give Britain a continuing role as a major power with a spread of interests and responsibilities across the globe. Its claim to be anything more than a European power rested on this vision. Instead, it found that Commonwealth was turning to be a liability for it in its relation with South Africa and was damaging to Britain’s international position.

South Africa and Britain had a long association. When Britain transferred power to the white minority, it had known that the white minority had no intention of sharing power with the black majority. Despite the help the imperial forces had received from the black people of Natal and the Boer republics during the Anglo-Boer war of 1899-1902 and the understanding of black people that their political position would be improved under the subsequent peace, a vital clause in the Peace Treaty of Vereening in effect surrendered this power to the white minority. 3

In 1986, the British Select Committee on Foreign Affairs on South Africa recognised a residual British responsibility for development in South Africa when it said, “The development of apartheid as a legal system was made possible by the British parliament’s release of its responsibilities for the non-white population in 1909.” 4 Further, Britain has found itself to be in the international firing line due to its economic investment in South Africa.

Although the official British position to apartheid had been that it was an internal policy of South Africa and any discussion of it would violate its domestic jurisdiction, its position came increasingly under attack from the other members in the Commonwealth and from within Britain. Australia, the only Commonwealth country that supported Britain also began to modify its official position by 1959. 5 Bowing to international

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3 “The question of granting the franchise to the natives in the former Boer Republics, Transvaal and Orange River Colony will not be decided after the introduction of self government.” J. D. Omer-Cooper. *History of Southern Africa* (London, 1987), p. 156.


5 Australian representative J. D. L. Wood at the 147th meeting of special political committee said, though the racial policy of South Africa fell within the domestic jurisdiction of that country it would not do for it to be unmindful of the purposes of Article 55 calling for the promotion of universal respect for human rights for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion or of its obligations under Article 56 of the charter. B. Vivekanandan. *The Shrinking Circle: The Commonwealth in British Foreign Policy 1943-1974* (Bombay, 1985), p. 165.
pressure and realising its precarious position, Britain began to slowly change its stand on apartheid. Macmillan, the British Prime Minister, on his visit to South Africa completed the dissociation with his wind of change speech.6

This Chapter looks into the South African issues in the Commonwealth and Britain. Some of these issues have risen directly due to British action. Britain’s argument against sanctions and South Africa’s economic relations with Britain are looked into.

BRITISH INTERESTS

The British had economic, political and strategic interests that forced them to stave off any major international action against South Africa. South Africa’s strategic importance and its dependence on South Africa’s vast mineral wealth were also reasons for its interest.

ECONOMIC INTEREST

Even after calling racism ‘abhorrent’, the British, nevertheless effectively supported the status quo through business deals, massive investment and a protective diplomacy that staved off extreme international action. Low-wages and above average rate of returns induced the British to invest in South Africa. The 1970 report of UN Unit on Apartheid described British earning in South Africa as quite remarkable. British interests in South Africa were mainly due to economic, as well as due to it passport holders in South Africa. Political instability in South Africa would have resulted in their return to Britain. This would cause immigration problem for Britain. South Africa has always highlighted that political stability was needed for prosperous economy, implying that under Blacks political stability may not be there. Britain never wanted political instability in South Africa, even if it meant that the Blacks were suppressed.

Britain remained South Africa’s most important economic partner. Along with Germany, Japan and US, Britain remained South Africa’s main trading partner. Of the top ten transnational corporations, ranked in terms of employees in South Africa, seven were based in UK and one was based jointly in the UK and the Netherlands (see Appendix 3).

* For details refer chapter 1
In 1990, it was the second largest trading partner with a two-way flow totalling £2.2 billion to which banking and insurance must be added. Britain also remained the main investor in South Africa.

**Investment**

British investment and interest in South Africa economy has been huge. British investment was large, profitable and much of the profit was re-invested in South Africa. High rate of returns were the main inducement to the foreign capital for flooding in. Throughout the 1960s, when Industry in Britain failed to expand rapidly because of shortage of investments, British capital was flowing into South Africa. Whenever there has been major disturbances in the country as in the case of Sharpville and Soweto, investment would slow down only to flow back later. The average investment in 1964-1966 was 37 million Pounds. This increased to an average of 53 million Pounds in 1967-69 and in 1969 to 70 million Pounds (See table 4.1).

Table 4.1 UK Net Direct Investment In South Africa, 1961-1969 (In Million Pounds)

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No major sector of British capitalism was without substantial representation in this investment. The real significance of this investment can be understood when the above-average profitability of South African investment. In 1960-68, when the annual average rate of return on British direct investment averaged just over 8 percent in the world as a whole and a little less than 9 percent in the overseas sterling area as a whole (including South Africa) it averaged something over 12 percent in the case of South Africa (Appendix 4).

Between 1964-65, the manufacturing sector overtook mining as the main recipient of foreign capital. The British investment also shifted from mining to manufacture. In 1963

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direct investment of which bulk went into manufacturing industry, some into distribution banking and insurance and only a small part into mining already formed 72 percent of total British investment. Indirect investment most of which was purchases of shares in the South African mining finance house was 28 percent. By 1966 the propositions formed by direct investment had risen to 75 percent and indirect investment had fallen to 25 percent. By 1969 direct investment by sterling area countries by far the largest part which came from Britain formed 78 percent and indirect investment 22 percent.\textsuperscript{10}

In 1971 the percent of UK direct investment in the manufacturing sector in South Africa averaged more than the investment in world manufacturing sector.\textsuperscript{11}

Table 4.2 UK Direct Investment In Manufacture (1971) Percentage Of Total Investment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage Of Total Investment</th>
<th>World (59.0)</th>
<th>South Africa (65.4)</th>
<th>Rest of Africa (27.0)</th>
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<td></td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>18%</td>
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Not only has there been a shift in foreign investment to manufacturing sector but within manufacture itself investment has tended to centre on heavy industry\textsuperscript{12} (see Appendix 5).

\textsuperscript{10} First, n. 8, p. 82.


\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., p. 14.
In the 1970s investment from United States, West Germany and France increased even then Britain remained the single largest investor. In 1976 it accounted for about 37 percent of all South Africa foreign liabilities. Much of the foreign liabilities has come in the form of loans. As a result the share of direct investment in total foreign liabilities was decreased. Thus by the end of 1976 whereas direct British investment (excluding oil, banking and insurance) was worth £1,263 million and indirect (plus that in oil, banking and insurance) was as high as £3,554 million. In 1971-78 the average annual growth rate of direct investment from United Kingdom in South Africa did not differ significantly from the average growth rates registered in world wide stock of investment (see Appendix 6).

United Kingdom direct investment increased from £2 billion in 1981 to £2.3 billion in 1982. This continuous increase in investment was mainly due to rate of returns. The rate of returns of United Kingdom direct investment in South Africa were 18 percent in 1979 and 21 percent in 1980, while the average world wide rates of return for United Kingdom direct investment abroad were 10 percent in 1979 and 9 percent in 1980.

Trade Relations

Not only in the sphere of investment but in the export sector also Britain remained the largest exporter to South Africa. Britain’s share of South Africa imports was 57 percent in 1913, 43 percent in 1929 and 46 percent in 1936. Economic links with South Africa have always been important. South Africa was an important market for Britain. In 1947 United Kingdom supplied 31.2 percent of South African imports, this rose to 34.6 percent by 1955 and 28.4 percent in 1960. The South African exports to United Kingdom were also similar. South African exports have mainly been minerals, agricultural products in which fruit, vegetable, animal and fish products play significant part, and crude inedible materials that includes hides, pulp, textiles etc. South African exports to United Kingdom were 29.6 percent in 1947, 30.8 percent in 1955 and 25.2

percent in 1960. Trade balance was in favour of United Kingdom. Britain’s export to South Africa was only 5 percent of total United Kingdom export in each year. But for South Africa, Britain was taking an average of 30 percent of total non-gold exports. Even by the end of 1970 Britain supplied 22 percent of the South African Market.\(^{16}\)

However it must be noted that South African even though it accounted for only 5 percent of United Kingdom export was placed South Africa either second or third amongst British leading market in 1955. At the end of 1964 it ranked only after United States, Australia and West Germany as principal buyer of British goods. For the first time in 1960 British share of the South African market fell below 30 percent since 1948. This created panic among British exporters and also infected the British Government. So in 1966 the British National Export Council (BNEC) established Southern Africa Committee and trade missions increased from Britain to South Africa. In 1967 Britain announced its intention to put nothing before export-led growth.

South Africa was the first market for certain British manufacturing industry. The British Government indicated to the United Nations Committee on Sanction in 1965 that South Africa represented the principle customer (by value) for six important SITC categories of British exports, second largest for nine and third largest for six. It indicated that the loss of export trade would have direct effect on the British economic activity and put fifteen thousand jobs at risk in the shipyard and other auxiliary industries.\(^{17}\)

The expected loss of earning in the event of imposition of sanctions created panic among Britain Traders. But the government whether conservative or labour have always encouraged trade and denied any possibility of imposing sanctions. By the end of 1970s Britain had lost its pre-eminence as an exporter and importer to South Africa. But, South Africa still remained an important market. In 1967 South Africa sent roughly one-third

\(^{16}\) Berridge, n. 9, p. 28.

\(^{17}\) British Government, on the consequence of the loss of its South African market, replied to the United Nations Committee on Sanctions in 1965: The net loss of export trade would have important direct effect on the level of British economic activity, especially in those industries for which South Africa represents a significant proportion of total exports. These include ships, railway and motor vehicles, electrical machinery, tele-communication equipment, glass and textiles. Redundancies could be expected in these trades. In the case of ship, for example, the combined loss of South African orders and order from British owners engaged in the South Africa trade would first 15,000 jobs at risk in the shipyard and auxiliary industries. Ibid., p. 34.
of its goods to Britain. By the end of 1970s Britain was taking less than 10 percent of its exports. Britain was grouped with United States, West Germany and Japan. South Africa’s place in British export had fallen as British trade became more Europe oriented. In 1967 South Africa’s place in the British export market was third, by 1977 it had fallen to sixteenth. But, by 1980 it recovered to come in the twelfth position. Between 1974 and 1977, three main categories of British exports i.e., electrical equipment, transport equipment and other machinery constituted between 52 percent and 60 percent of the total export to South Africa. With the arms embargo in 1977 and the closure of British Leyland Plant transport equipment declined. In contrast chemical showed a steady increase. It moved from 6.6 percent of British exports in 1967 to 13.4 percent in 1977.18

If in the 1970s trade between United Kingdom and South Africa remained more or less balanced, by 1980 British exports were ahead again. In 1976 Britain’s 632 million of exports to South Africa and 714 million of imports represented 2.5 percent and 2.3 percent of total exports and import trade. The South Africa propositions were 22.2 percent of exports (excluding gold) and 17.6 percent of imports. But in 1980 British export was 1002 million against imports of 756 million. The trade balance was once again tilting towards United Kingdom’s favour. Even during the second half of 1980s South Africa remain the most valuable export market for Britain (see Table 4.3). 19

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18 Barber, n. 2, p. 31.
South Africa's major imports have been in the manufacture, industrial chemicals, machinery, power generating machinery, electrical machinery and motor vehicles.

In terms of British exports, South Africa has remained an important and indispensable market for British goods over the decades. Britain's trade interest in the Republic can also be observed from the British overseas trade missions. Between 1982 and the end of 1984 the British Overseas Trade Board (BOTB) funded 43 trade missions to South Africa to the tune of 347,000. Even after British consent to the Commonwealth accord on Southern Africa, agreed at Nassau in 1985, which sought that official funding for South African trade missions be stopped, the mission to South Africa continued. Most of the trade mission that went to South Africa following accord was funded by the BOTB, the export promotion arm of the Department of Trade and Industry. The British company operating South Africa were alarmed by the Nassau accord.

The Engineering Industries Association, which had been sending three missions to South Africa annually, claim that the British industry will lose important contacts with the market because they will not be able to go on Trade Mission. British government on its part did not abide by the Nassau accord and in November 1985 two trade missions were provided subsidiaries by the government to visit South Africa. British Foreign Secretary Geoffrey Howe explain that funding had been agreed before Nassau accord and there could be no backing out now. Therefore, since the signing of Nassau accord many British
companies had organised the trade mission to South Africa with full co-operation of the British Government.\textsuperscript{20}

The government had also encouraged the companies to continue trading with South Africa. The British Government provided economical lifeline for the Apartheid regime. The percentage of exports from South Africa to United Kingdom was 6.9 percent in 1980, 5.9 percent in 1985 and 8.1 percent in 1990. While the percentage of imports from United Kingdom was 12.1 percent in 1980, 12.2 percent in 1985 and 11.7 percent in 1990.\textsuperscript{21} Thus, South Africa remained a major market for Britain. The rate of returns has also been high. This has made the British Government to vehemently oppose sanctions at every point and in every organisation.

**Political Interests**

**British Passport Holders**

British interests in South Africa was shaped by a variety of reasons. One of them was the fear of the British passport holders returning in case of trouble. From the early nineteenth century Britain was the main source of white immigrants to South Africa. Since 1945 it has provided more than half of South Africa’s immigrants from outside Africa. Between 1946 and 1978 more than 1,350,000 people emigrated from Britain to South Africa. South Africa also have encouraged this immigration. This was mainly due to the shortage of skilled white labour in South Africa. Immigration was also a cheap way of obtaining skills for the economy. In October 1969, Piet Weidemann, the Deputy Secretary for Immigration said that South Africa gained about £90 million worth of professional and technical skills every year in this way. That was what it would cost the country to train the 3,000 professional and 7,000 tradesmen who arrive annually. While the Minister of Immigration said it cost only £77 to recruit each new immigrant.\textsuperscript{22}

Britain was a special target as there was no problem of language and no difficulties in adjusting to white’s political and cultural institutions. However the immigrants had to be

\textsuperscript{20} Selling Out To Apartheid: British Government Support For Trade With South Africa (London, 1989).


\textsuperscript{22} First, n. 8, p. 251.
whites. Thus in 1970 while the immigration Department of South Africa has a staff of twenty-nine people overseas 17 were in England, seven in West Germany and five worked in the Hague. In 1961 to 1970 the percentage of immigrants to South Africa from England was 32.7 percent. This increased to 44 percent in 1968 to 1970. In the years 1974-1978, 64 percent of the migrants from outside Africa was from Britain i.e., 74,445 out of 115,687. The next main source was West Germany with 7 percent. 23

The South African Britons do not directly influence British policy towards South Africa, but do so indirectly by contributing through their contacts in United Kingdom, both to a pro-white South African Lobby and to a high level of popular and media interest in South Africa. By 1988 there were roughly 750,000 South Africans who hold or were entitled to hold United Kingdom passport. 24

In 1971 more than 500 British companies had subsidiaries or associate in South Africa. There can scarcely be a single pension fund, insurance company, building society or unit trust in Britain which does not have some of its capital investing in South Africa. Students, trade unionist or clergy men who complain that their university union or church funds making unwholesome profits out of it a racialist society have only come upon small crack in the ground beneath their feet. These large financial interest has so much at stake that their pressure on British policy in predictably strong. It was not only that the transnational corporation worked closely with South African parastats but the British Government in particular became engaged in direct investment through it nationalised corporation such as British steel and British Leyland in South African industry.

Publicly professing abhorrence for Apartheid the British nevertheless effectively supported the status quo through business dealing, massive investments and a protective diplomacy that stayed off extreme International action. The professed abhorrence lessened at the prospects of expanding British trade with South Africa and the large British involvement at stake.

23 Ibid., pp. 244-245
In 1965 the year arms embargo was imposed by British Government the United Kingdom - South African Trade Association (UKSATA) was set up. It has a sister organisation in the Republic, the South Africa-Britain Trade Association (SABRITA). Both the association had the support of the biggest company in both the countries.

Another powerful business propaganda group was the South Africa Foundation. It aimed to propagate the strategic, political and economic importance of South Africa for the non-communist world and to stem the tide of ignorance, criticism and misrepresentation against the Republic. UKSATA’s importance can be seen in the Chairman’s speech in 1967. 25

In 1969, 490 British companies with South Africa interest made donations to the Conservative and its allies. In May 1970 after cancellation of the South African cricket team to Britain, the Labour Government told its trade officials to reassure South African that this will not affect trade. UKSATA propagates that Britain’s economic stake in South Africa was so vast and profitable that she must not risk antagonising the Republic for fears of damaging it.

British Government also have looked for economic trade and helped out the companies doing business with South Africa. Under the 1970 Export of Goods Act, South Africa has a special status along with the Commonwealth Countries. This allows radio, radar and explosive to be exported from Britain. Another loophole that British Government did nothing to stop allowed South Africa to obtain military equipment from Britain via third world countries. Rolls Royce engines have been sent from Britain via Italy for installation in Impala planes used in South Africa. British Rocket Motor made by Martin Baker Limited have been exported to South Africa via France. 26

In May 1980 the Trade Secretary John Nott refused to publish the names of thirty three British company who

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25 Continuous contact has been maintained with the Government and Opposition at the highest level. The President and Chairman have briefed the Prime Minister, the President of the Board of Trade and the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Opposition both verbally and in writing of the extent of the British stake in South Africa and the effects on the British economy and people of any confrontation with the Republic. The Prime Minister has said in the House of Commons and in writing to the President that the quarrel with Rhodesia must not be allowed to develop into a confrontation whether economic or military involving the whole of Southern Africa. The President and Chairman has also discussed all the problems affecting two-way trade with Mr. Heath and Sir Alec Douglas-Home. First, n. 8, p. 218.

were reported to be paying starvation wages to 2,000 of their Black employees. A further 20,000 Black workers 20 percent of the total employed by British companies were reported to be in receipt of wages below the level recommended by EEC code. British companies have also helped South Africa to break its oil embargo. In March 1981 the Shipping Research Bureau in Amsterdam identified 23 tankers most likely to have delivered crude oil to South Africa during 1979 and first quarter of 1980. Of these 12 were own or charted by Shells, a British company.

Western countries have also helped develop South Africa’s nuclear capability. In October 1997, Britain, United States and France vetoed Security Council resolution which called for an end to all forms of nuclear collaboration with South Africa. Again in December 1979, the General Assembly precisely called on Britain, United States, France and West Germany, among all other states, to stop collaboration with racist South Africa in the nuclear field. It also called on them to cease buying uranium from South Africa. None of these were taken into account. The British helped with techniques for transforming raw uranium into reactor fuel, with training facilities and funding. Britain in 1970 reached an agreement that gave South Africa technique for conversion of uranium ore into ‘hex’. This helped in the development of South Africa’s own enrichment facilities. In late 1970s Barclays’ Bank helped raise a loan of $1.2000 million to finance the Koerberg power generating plant. Rio Tinto-Zinc (RTZ) a Britain based multinational mining company with the British Government support won a leading role and financial state in Rossing Mine project (the biggest uranium mine in the world) in Namibia. The British government approved a contract whereby RTZ’s mine will supply 7,500 tonnes of uranium oxide to the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority. Lord Carrington was a member of the RTZ directorate till he became the Foreign Secretary in 1979.

One major sector in which British have helped out South Africa was in finance British banks on their own account have been substantial direct providers of medium to long term credits to the South African State and its corporation. British banks have by the use of their expertise, contacts and good name, arranged and facilitated the raising for the

South Africa state of far larger sums than they themselves have provided. The links between British Banks operating with South Africa and their United Kingdom parents provide an important point of access to the world capital market.

Although most British banks were involved the largest direct involvement were Barclays, Standard Chartered and Hill Samuel. Barclays and Standard have extended their business from that of commercial banks to provide a complete range of financial service including merchants banking, hire, purchase, leasing, credit cards, management service, insurance brokering etc. Moreover British banks and other institutions had gross claims on South Africa in sterling and foreign currencies totalling $3.16 billion at the end of 1977. This made South Africa the third largest debtor country for United Kingdom banks after Brazil and Mexico. The British banks share of South Africa's private overseas borrowing would appear to range between 35 percent and 40 percent. British clearing banks, international and merchant banks were deeply involved in the process of financing and arranging credits for South Africa28 (see Appendix 7).

The table at the Appendix 7 gives a figure for the total of Publicised credits to South African government borrowers from British sources for the years 1972-76. The first column gives the total value of all loans, bound issues and Export credit guarantee Department (ECGD) trade credits with which British banks have been associated in whatever capacity whether as managers, co-managers in syndicate leaders, investors or underwriters. In the second column, an estimate is made on the basis of specific disclosures combined with some rule of thumb assumptions of the actual financial contribution of British banks within the larger total. Euro currency loans were for multi-million pounds and were normally syndicated with up to a hundred banks.

The lead bank or banks responsible for arranging the loan receives a management fee for its services. An estimated 50 percent of South Africa's Euro-currency loans were arranged by British banks. Four major banks, Barclays, Standard Chartered, Hill Samuel and Midland have been most active in arranging finance for the South African government and its corporations. Standard Chartered managed a loan of $35 million for South Africa railways and harbours in 1973 and $100 million for the South Africa

government in 1974. Barclays in 1976 was one of the contributors to a $200 million to the Electricity Supply Commission and a $138 million loan to the Richard Bay project.29

In 1987 UK based banks were the largest creditors to South Africa. In 1987, South Africa's debt to UK based monitory sector institutions amounted to $4.4 billion, i.e., 23 percent of the total external South Africa debt and 26 percent of the total transnational banks.30 However, the increasing pressure from anti-apartheid groups and the banks desire to expand in the US markets where anti-apartheid campaigns were increasing resulted in the announcement in disinvestment from South Africa. Barclays disinvested, but continued credit lines to the newly independent banks called the First National Bank. Soon others followed suit. But, lines of credit continued to remain to the former subsidiary banks in South Africa. The government of UK does not provide export credits, but it provides export guarantees through the ECGD.31

Strategic Interest

South Africa's strategic importance to the Western countries have mainly depended on its cape route and its minerals. The Cape route remained a major asset to the West and Britain in particular. Without the command of sea-lanes round the cape, the British possession in South Atlantic and the Indian Ocean would have not been possible. Again in the World War II Britain could hardly have sustained hostilities against the Axis powers in the Middle East without command of the Cape route. When the Mediterranean was closed by the Germans, the Cape played an important part in the defence of Allied shipping.

The importance of the cape route was highlighted by the Britain in the Simonstown agreement of 1955 which says "Southern Africa and the sea routes around Southern Africa must be secured against aggression". During the Suez crisis of 1956-57 an estimated total of 50,700 ships were diverted to South African ports. With the closure of Suez canal, the Cape route provides the chief access to European commerce for trade with the countries of Asia. An average of 6,800 ships called at South Africa ports

29 Ibid., p. 33.
30 n. 21, p. 114.
31 Ibid., pp. 117-118.
between 1957 and 1966. The number was almost doubled when the Suez canal was closed. In the first eighteen months after the canal closure during the 1967 war, more than 10,000 ships were diverted round the cape. It reached an annual average of about 12,000 during 1967-72. This was an indication of the Western dependence on South Africa for its sea-lanes and port facility. The increasing importance of the Cape route could be seen from the fact that a total of 970 ships passed through the cape route in February 1974 alone (see appendix 8). The largest number of ships passing the Cape were from Britain. By 1975, some 24,000 ocean going vessels passed the cape every year, about sixty six a day. Of these 24,000 vessels, 9,476 docked in South Africa ports, including 1,600 from UK, 1,375 from Greece and 382 from the US.\footnote{L.H. Gunn and Peter Duignan, \textit{Why South Africa Will Survive} (London, 1981), p. 118.} It was quite clear Britain had a greater dependence of South African sea lanes and port facilities than any other country. South Africa on its part, turned his to its military advantage by demonstrating the increasing value of the Cape to Western economic interests and the projection of a threat perception, particularly from the Communist countries. Pretoria also placed great emphasis on its value as a shipping route, stressing that 654 percent of Western Europe's oil comes around the Cape of Good Hope. The threat perception of a Soviet attack was also raised as an argument for defending the Cape.

But, with the growing international hostility, the UN Security Council's arms embargo in 1977 and the doubts that USSR would choose South African waters for an attack reduced its strategic importance considerably. But, Cape route still remained an important trade route and was valuable for the Western nations.

**Minerals**

A major item of import from South Africa was its minerals. South Africa has enormous resources and production capacities in a number of important non-fuel minerals which play an indispensable role in modern industrial production. As well as gold and diamond, it has Manganese, Chromium, Cobalt, Vanadium, Titanium, Platinum, Copper, Nickel, Tin, Asbestos and Zinc. It also produces Antimony Fluorspar and vermiculite. It also has an extensive reserve of uranium, coal and iron ore.
Many of these minerals were of particular importance for industrial productions, petrochemical and electronic industries and the functioning industrial economy. Manganese, the mineral in alloy form as Ferro manganese was an essential non-substitutable ingredient, without which no steel can be produced. Chromium was an alloying mineral, indispensable in the production of a whole range of speciality steel. Cobalt was needed in the production of Turbines and Jet engines. The Platinum group metals have a unique catalytic and electrical properties and were of key importance in modern automobile production. For example, as catalytic converters to reduce exhaust emission, vanadium was used in its alloy form to manufacture light-weight, high strength steels, especially important in Civil and military aircraft engines. Titanium was an important light metal for aerospace and defence industries. The critical importance of these non-fuel minerals was because of their crucial role in modern industry and defence-related industry and were often called strategic minerals. Apart from USSR, it has the large and the most varied mineral resources of any country in the world (see Appendix 9). Not only the reserves, but the production capacity of South Africa has also been USSR and South Africa (see Appendix 10).

In a situation of peace or in war, these mineral supplies would be hard to replace if they were denied to the West or if they come under Soviet influence. In a cold war situation, South Africa was very important to the Western countries. South African minerals constitute a substantial portion of British import. Britain imports about two-third of its Chromium requirements, one-half of its Manganese imports, and one-third of its Platinum supplies directly from South Africa.

Britain's vulnerability depended on a number of factors, like the importance of the minerals, the dependence of South Africa and the opportunity to switch to an alternative source. In the short run, any interruption in the supply of these minerals could be remedied by different uses of the product, stockpiling and recycling and also switching

34 Gann & Duignan, n. 32, p. 195.
to an alternative source. However, in the long term, it would affect the British economy. An escalation of prices would mean that the industrial production would be affected. This in turn will lead to a negative growth for the overall economy of Britain. In 1977-78 South Africa supplied seventy percent of Britain’s Chrome ore fifty four percent of its manganese and sixty five percent of the Platinum group metals. In 1985 South Africa produced about fifty eight percent of Western world’s Chromium ore and twenty nine percent of its Manganese, sixty percent of its vanadium and ninety percent of its platinum group metals.\textsuperscript{36} Between 1985 and 1988 the importance of Metalliferrous ores and metal scraps and that of non-ferrous metals remained high\textsuperscript{37} (see Table 4.4).

Table 4.4 UK imports from South Africa

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<tr>
<td>Metalliferrous ores and Metal scraps</td>
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<td>205.0</td>
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<td>53.4</td>
<td>151.1</td>
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The strategic value of South Africa’s mineral wealth posed a problem for British and other Western countries. The fact that USSR was the only other alternative for many of these minerals increased South Africa’s importance. In a cold war situation, thus South Africa was of strategic importance to these countries. Sanctions would mean a disruption in the availability of these minerals, which in turn would affect Britain’s economic growth. This prevented the policy makers from taking tough actions against South Africa.

**MAJOR ISSUES**

**Arms Sale**

An issue on South Africa that came up in the Commonwealth was related directly to British actions. In 1970 with the Conservative victory they decided to resume arm’s sales to South Africa. This resulted in a conflict between Commonwealth and Britain. As early as 1963 the African states in their campaign against apartheid brought the question of arms embargo in the United Nations. United Nations passed a resolution calling on all

\textsuperscript{36} Mauull, n. 33, p. 622-623.

\textsuperscript{37} Nunnan, n. 35, p. 87.
member states to refrain from exporting arms and ammunition to South Africa. A voluntary arm’s embargo was set up in 1963. The Conservative government in Britain agreed to stop the sale of arms for internal use that could be employed to enforce the policy of apartheid, but reserved the right to supply arms for external use. That one could not differentiate arms for external and internal uses were clear to them also. This was reinstated when Lord Carrington admitted in 1963,

The government cannot guarantee that no weapon could even in any circumstances be used for the purpose of enforcing apartheid... even naval weapon could at a pinch be used to bombard a land target.38

The African States pressed for further measures in the 1964 Commonwealth meeting but had so be satisfied with communiqué committing themselves to multi-racialism.39

In the 1964 British general election the Labour Government came to force. They decided to issue no more services for arms, except concerning current contracts. This however meant that Labour Party continued to issue licenses for the supply of shares and ammunition for the Canberra and Buccaneer bombers and the Shackleton reconnaissance aircraft, which were in service with the South Africa air force; as well as practice shells for use by Naval vessels.40 During 1960-1969 United Kingdom exported $385 million worth of arms to Africa of which $199 million composed of deliveries made to South Africa.41

Soon differences cropped up in the Labour Party itself when South Africa requested for a lifting of the arms embargo and for 200 million worth arms. They requested a supply

38 Ibid., p. 171.
39 The 1964 communiqué said, The Prime Ministers reaffirmed their condemnation of the policy of apartheid practised by the Government of Republic of South Africa. Some Commonwealth Prime Ministers felt very strongly that the only effective means of dealing with the problem of apartheid was the application of economic sanction and an arms embargo. It was recognised however that there was differences of opinion among Commonwealth countries as to the effectiveness of economic sanctions and as to the extent to which they regarded it as right or practicable to seek and to secure the abandonment of apartheid by coercive actions of whatever kind. “Final Communiqué of Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings 1964”, The Commonwealth at the Summit: Communiqués Of Commonwealth Heads Of Government Meeting 1944-1986 (London. 1987), p. 87.
of Buccaneer aircraft and other items. The Foreign Secretary George Brown and the
Defence Minister were in favour of the sale. George Brown negotiated with the South
African government. He believed

That arms with South Africa wanted would not Jeopardise the
situation of Blacks Africans. And if Britain did not supply France or
someone else was waiting on the door step pressing the South
African's to let them do it at our expense.42

Arms trade was a lucrative business and this would have helped the worsening economic
situation in Britain. However, the Parliament decided not to abide to the demands and the
embargo was to stand. The Conservative Party was against this stand. Edward Health in
December 1967 said, “the government have taken the wrong decision. They have failed
to justify it to the house. It was damaging to our national interests in finance, trade and
defence and a Conservative administration will reverse it”.43 The Chairman of the
Conservative Party Anthony Barber said that in the event of a Conservative victory in
the ensuring election Britain would resume arms sale to South Africa.

The issue of British sales of arms to South Africa again came into the fore-front after the
Conservative victory in the election of June 1970 and their decision to resume arms
sales. Even before election the Conservative had not endorsed the extension of arms
embargo. South African government also protested against the embargo and argued that
it was contrary to the Simonstown Agreement. Edward Heath the new Prime Minister in
16 November 1970 said,

Under the Simonstown Agreement we have obligation to supply to South Africa
the maritime equipment she requires to fulfil her side of the agreement. We so
ask our Commonwealth Colleagues to accept that our rights to take decision in
pursuance of British interest is no less than theirs to pursue to policies which
serve what they consider to be their own interests.44

Britain had a request from South Africa for the supply of Wasp helicopters, Buccaneer
and Nimrod aircraft and its view to resume sales resulted in conflict between African

43 Nannan, n. 35, p. 178.
countries and Britain in the Singapore Commonwealth meeting. Some argued that one of the reason the Conservative government favoured the resumption of arms sale was the need to improve the climate of trade relations between the two countries which had somewhat chilled due to labour governments embargo. However the Prime Minister Heath maintained throughout that it was essentially a matter of defence policy. He asserted that Britain was primarily a trading nation and was uniquely dependent on the free movement of goods and on the freedom of the seas. The sea-lanes of the world, he said, were the arteries of life for Britain and necessary for her survival.

The British argument was that South Africa has a highly industrialised economy in which Britain has important economic investments and to deny it the means to protect itself against external aggression was to place these very important economic advantages in great danger. South Africa’s geographic position astride an important sector of world shipping routes, the facilities of Simonstown base and the ports and harbours on its eastern coastline was an invaluable asset to the West in both peace and war. Its vital to protect these routes in view of the evidence of the Soviet penetration in the Indian Ocean and Horn of Africa. Soviet Union will take advantage of any gap in the West’s defences and the absence of any sizeable Western deterrent in this area constitutes an open invitation to USSR to extend its own power in the area. British maritime arms were needed to counter the new threat of Soviet naval power in the Indian Ocean.

For these reasons, Heath maintained that Her Majesty’s ships must be constantly moving over the high seas, “keeping Britain in touch with her friends and allies and demonstrating her concern about political and military developments in the rest of the World”. The Africans read the selling of arms to South Africa as identification with apartheid or a certificate of responsibility to South Africa. Britain was trying to counter

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the Soviet build up a move that risked alienating all those states bordering the Indian Ocean. Britain by engaging in a controversial and highly publicised arms deal with South Africa willingly help Soviet access to third world countries.

The British government made matters worse by arguing that Nato should broaden its maritime horizons to give support and backing to our Portuguese allies and to the effort of South Africa in her action as a bastion against the spread of communism in Africa and her commanding geographical position on two oceans. The British Prime Minister recommended the resumption of arms sale with emphasising the distinction between supplying weapons for external and internal use.

The Africans in the Commonwealth argued that relaxation of arms embargo will have the effect of legitimising South Africa’s policies and the means employed to enforce them. Also closer military co-operation between West and South Africa would represent a tactic admission of the former’s interest in preserving and protecting the integrity of the Republic. South Africa was looking for an expression of a deeply felt aspiration to acquire a degree of both military and political responsibility in the eyes of the West. Another reason was that the Rhodesian issue was still not solved. It was common knowledge that South Africa was helping Rhodesia to survive in spite of the sanction. At this point of time to provide arms to South Africa was considered dubious by the African states.

Arnold Smith, the Commonwealth Secretary General suggested that South Africa was laying a trap and was trying to break up the Commonwealth thereby isolating Britain from Black Africa and gaining British support and apparent moral sanctions for its regime. Heath wrote to the Commonwealth leaders that the resumption of the limited supply of arms sale was in Britain’s defence interests and did not mean support to South Africa’s apartheid system. He also said that Britain under its export licensing system

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would see that no arms were exported which would assist in the enforcement of the apartheid system.\(^{51}\)

Britain decided to postpone actions and expressed its willingness to consult Commonwealth Head of Government meeting (CHOGM) before decision was taken. However British Prime Minister made its view clear when he said, "The time has come to establish clearly and unmistakably that British policies were determined by British interests. We shall not take a narrow or short-term view of British interests. But having identified where the British interests lie, we shall decide our policies accordingly."\(^{52}\) The Opposition party in Britain sharply criticised the government.\(^{53}\)

In the 1971 Commonwealth conference resumption of arms by Britain was discussed. However differences existed even between African countries in the Commonwealth. Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, and Gambia had no objection to the arms sales. A study group consisting of India, Malaysia, Australia, Britain, Nigeria, Kenya, Jamaica and Canada was set up by the Commonwealth to study the defence of trade route in the Indian ocean and the Southern Atlantic and report not later than the middle of July 1971.

Heath agreed to British participation in the work of the study group on three conditions:

1. The British Government, while taking full account of the views expressed by other members of the Commonwealth, retains its right to take such action as it considers necessary to give effects to its global defence policy, in which the facilities at Simonstown is an important element;

\[\text{"We shall ensure under our export licensing system, that no arms are exported to South Africa which would assist enforcement of the policy of apartheid,... we shall make it known that our resumption of a limited commitment, eventually in our defence interests, in no way implies any support for systems founded on racialist principles. We have indeed made clear our opposition to the racist policies of the South African government, which we regard as fundamentally wrong."} \text{Linda Freeman, Gerald Helleiner and Robert Matthews, "The Commonwealth At Stake", Canadian Journal of African Studies (Montreal), vol. 5, no.1. 1971. pp. 97-98.}\]

\(^{51}\) Spence. n. 47. p. 19.

\(^{52}\) Harold Wilson the leader of opposition said "But worst of all for the future of one Commonwealth and Britain's moral standing in the World is their hasty decision to condone South Africa's apartheid system by defying the United Nations decision on the supply of arms". The party tabled a motion in House of Commons calling upon Her Majesty's Government to abandon its present intentions to authorise the sale of arms to South Africa contrary to the United Nations resolutions, since this would threaten the survival of the Commonwealth as a multi racial community and inflict grave damage on the political, economic and strategic interests of this country". Vivekanandan. n. 3. pp. 183-184.
(2) The British Government is bound, if requested, to carry out its legal obligation to the South African Government under the Simonstown agreement on which the availability of those facilities depends. The nature and extent of those obligations were explained to the conference; and

(3) The British Government has received from the South African Government an assurance that the South African Government has no aggressive intentions and that it will not use any items of maritime equipment supplied by the British Government for purposes other than those for which they have been supplied. In the event of any breach of the assurance, the British Government would refuse further supplies of equipment and spares to the South African Government.54

However even before study group could meet Britain announced that it would supply seven Wasp helicopters to South Africa worth two million pound. Nigeria, India and Malaysia withdrew from the study group. Six helicopters were supplied before labour returned to power in 1974 and scrapped the Simonstown Agreement. The formation of study group worked as a face saving device so that by quitting it Afro-Asians could prove that they were still capable of some action, while at the same time, dissolution of the group may not necessarily involve dissolution of the Commonwealth. Also it helped to push aside the arm’s sale question.

However it would be relevant to question why Britain decided to resume arm’s sale especially when outward policy was winning friends in Black Africa for South Africa?

One of the reasons could be Tories desire to distinguish themselves from the previous Labour Government’s vacillating policies. The new role of a tough guy also lifted the mood of the average British voter. His disenchantment with the material conditions being skilfully manipulated by politician. Another factor was British desire to enter the common market and to gain best available terms for this. If Britain can act tough with its Commonwealth partners then it helps in impressing the European and to improve its bargaining position. The idea that “Britain can no longer be pushed around” get translated into something like “Britain cannot be taken for granted” for the benefit of Europeans.55

54 Ibid., pp. 186-187.
According to Arnold Smith, Heath supported the policy, not because he had any sympathy with South Africa’s racial attitudes, nor because he saw great commercial profits to Britain or even military advantage, for a few frigates and helicopters would scarcely tip the strategic balance. He supported it because he was simply an extremely stubborn man, who thought that retreating from even an unconfirmed policy was a sign of weakness and would damage his government’s credibility in other spheres, particularly in tough negotiations he saw ahead of him in industrial relations and with EEC countries on membership. To surrender under pressure on the arms question could well create a reputation of weakness.

Another was the British envy at the success of France in Africa. Unrestrained by moral consideration, France has successfully defied the United Nations arms embargo and sold South Africa the largest amount of military hardware. This however did not drag France into a dispute with Africa. Arms trade was a lucrative business and South Africa has been traditionally a market for Britain. The fact that South Africa was turning towards France for its arms and Britain was losing the trade angered the British. Britain believe that African countries were practising a double standard and since they did not object to French sales of arms to South Africa they had fortified their rights to questions the British move. However the issue soon died down and in 1977 United Nations passed a mandatory arms embargo. Another issue that came up after the arms issue was Sports.

**Sports**

South Africa has always been a major issue in the Commonwealth and every Commonwealth meeting discussed South Africa. In 1973 Ottawa meeting the Head of Governments reviewed the efforts of the Blacks in Southern Africa to achieve independence and agreed on the need to give humanitarian assistance to all those engaged in such efforts. The British government had reservation in this proposal as they feared that assistance might be converted for military purposes. The 1975 Kingston

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57. In 1969, France sold 42 Mirage III and 3 Mirage III B jets and secured a new contract for supplying 100 Mirage Milan’s to South Africa. In addition it sold helicopters and Panhard armoured cars (both effective against guerrillas) and helped it develop the surface to surface Cactus guided missile in South Africa. SIPRI Yearbook of World Armaments and Disarmament (Stockholm, 1969/1970)
meeting noted that South Africa continues to support the rebel government in Rhodesia by affording it the military and economic assistance, which its survival depends on. The Commonwealth asked South Africa to fulfil its international obligation and withdraw its forces from Rhodesia.

However in 1977 South Africa again came to the forefront with New Zealand’s decision to reinstate sporting relation with South Africa. In a way New Zealand deflected the ire of African countries away from Britain whose policy on sporting links were not so different from New Zealand. The 1977 Summit resulted in the Gleneagles Agreement. After the agreement a sporting contact diminished but was not eliminated. In September 1979 a South African Rugby team toured Britain while in 1980 British Lions Rugby toured South Africa. In March 1982, twelve England test cricketers' toured South Africa under the auspices of the South African Cricket and with the financial support of South African Breweries. In July 1982 an international soccer team which included some English players went to South Africa. Cricket players from Sri Lanka and West Indies also toured South Africa.

These resulted in the Commonwealth Games Federation accepting a code of conduct in 1983 for the constituent National Associations that spelled out as clearly as possible the steps each had to take. It also took on new constitutional powers to exclude a country from the games in the event of a breach of Gleneagles “so gross as to threaten the games themselves.” Britain and New Zealand did not approve these changes and they abstained from the decision. With the winning of Labour Party in 1984, which decided to strictly adhere to Gleneagles agreement New Zealand came back to the Commonwealth fold. Now only Britain stood out. In 1986, 31 of 45 countries boycotted the Edinburgh Commonwealth games due to the selection of South African born Zola Budd to compete in English colours. Only Botswana, Lesotho, and Swaziland participated from Africa. Though the reason for boycott was said to be the inclusion of Zola Budd, it was also a way to show the displeasure of African countries towards Britain due to its refusal to apply sanctions. The boycott reduced the number of teams

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participating to twenty-six (Thirteen from independent countries, Seven from Britain and Six dependencies). This left the organisers with a pound four million deficit.

The 1977 communiqué was also significant for the fact that it urged “the international community to take effective measures to compel South Africa to bring about majority rule.” It was a clear pointer that Commonwealth was moving beyond the question of Rhodesia and Namibia towards the stage where trade and other links with South Africa would soon be seriously questioned, with all the implications of this for Britain in particular. The British Prime Minister James Callaghan supported this and told Parliament, “We are talking about an acceleration of the atmosphere to a degree of tension that was becoming frightening in South Africa. This country will have to take some difficult decisions on these matters”. While British Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary David Owen spoke of the “real testing time ahead”.

This reaction to support from Britain could be due to the fact that Labour Party was in power and also the tougher stance on South Africa of President Jimmy Carter’s administration in USA. Another reason was that Soweto incident (1976), which shocked the world.

In the later years Commonwealth criticised South Africa and said the core of the problems in Southern Africa was White minority regime in South Africa. It also condemned the repeated attacks on front-line States (FLS) which endangered international peace and security. In 1979 Lusaka Declaration of the Commonwealth on Racism and Racial Prejudice termed racism as a dangerous sickness.

**Other Issues**

British policy, though critical about apartheid was that there should be continued negotiations with South Africa. Britain supported the arms embargo and sports boycott, but rejected sanctions. The violation of Commonwealth countries by South Africa was also condemned. The presence of South African troops in Angola was also condemned and Britain urged South Africa to pull back its forces from Angola. This was as Britain

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feared that raids and destabilisation would lead to greater violence and terrorist attacks, leading to greater opportunities for Soviet intervention in Southern Africa.61

On Namibia, in the 1983 summit Britain supported the demand that the attempt by South Africa and the United States to link Namibian independence to the withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola must be rejected. At the same meeting, the Commonwealth leaders wanted to make a reference on the need for the Contact Group, of which Britain and Canada were members to put pressure on the United States. This was changed on British request to a sentence were United States was not even mentioned.62

On the Constitutional reforms of South Africa Britain expressed some doubt that if the constitutional reforms answered the need for a system acceptable to the people of South Africa as a whole. But while the 1983 Communique rejected the constitutional proposal, Britain expressed reservation on this part of the Communique.

South Africa’s presence in the Commonwealth was nothing new but 1985 had highlighted the Commonwealth concern by the emergency in South Africa and outrage to human decency.63 This resulted in a strong clamour for sanctions against South Africa.

Sanctions

Fearing that the 1985 Nassau Commonwealth Head of Governments meeting may propose economic sanction. Britain’s Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary Geoffrey Howe in a speech at the Royal Commonwealth Society said, “we remain firmly opposed

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61 Howe voiced this fear in 1983 when he said that punitive raids and destabilisation of neighbouring states risk precipitating the situation most, as they fear the Russians and their surrogates were more powerful factors in the equations. *Africa Research Bulletin Political, Social and Cultural Series* (London), vol. 20, no. 11, December 1983, p. 7046.

62 The Changed version in the Communique was “Head of Governments urges the members of the Contact Group to exercise their influence to secure the speedy and unconditional implementation of Security Council Resolution 435”, “Communique”. Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, New Delhi, 1983, n. 39, p. 252

63 The racist governmnet in the face of strong resistance declared emergency in July 1985. UDF was banned and many leaders and activists disappeared or were killed. Black Newspapers were banned.
to economic sanctions of any kind.” For the first time since 1948 economic sanctions was possibility. This prompted the Director of UKSATA on 1 August 1985 to say,

It is Britain’s 12th largest export market, representing between 7 and 10% of total overseas investment and some 400 groups quoted on the London stock Exchange have one or more South African subsidiaries. Britain has more at stake than any of our European partners or United States.

The rest of the Commonwealth including Australia, New Zealand and Canada differed with Britain and was of the opinion that sanctions should be imposed. The Commonwealth Secretary General Ramphal pointed this out in late July “Britain is out of tune with the Commonwealth”.

Britain under Thatcher was against sanctions. Sir Geoffrey Howe on 10 September 1985 reaffirmed his government’s opposition to punitive measures against South Africa because he said they would be ‘counter-productive’. Mrs Thatcher explained that “there is no case in history that I know of where punitive, general economic sanctions have been effective to bring about internal change. In the case of South Africa sanctions won’t work as it has colossal internal resources, colossal coastline, materials would get in and out”.

Thatcher argued that sanctions would prevent negotiations and increase violence in South Africa. In her opinion the regime must be changed by persuasion rather than by sanctions because such measures would not be good psychology. Thatcher pointed out that by 2000, there would be 45 million Blacks in South Africa and that meant finding 1000 new jobs everyday. If the South African economy flourished the Black’s hand would be strengthened and they would be in a better position to demand better pay and

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66 Ibid., p. 386.
67 Editorial. The Round Table (London) no.296, 1985, p. 305.
68 Mrs Thatcher said, “I find it utterly astonishing that on one hand we are doing everything possible to help Ethiopia to relieve poverty and starvation and at the same time we are suggesting, that we turn people who are in work out of work.” Dilip Hiro. “Margaret Thatcher and Sanctions”. Mainstream (New Delhi), 2 August, 1986.
conditions and apartheid would then ‘wither on the vine’.

Thatcher stated: I don’t believe sanctions will help bring Apartheid to an end. They may however bring starvation and poverty to many thousands of black South Africans.

Britain argued that given the power of South African state and the improbability of a successful revolutionary transfer of power, sanctions and disinvestment are prescription for extensive Black unemployment and impoverishment. If, instead the economy were encouraged to expand the black majority would be in a position to seek opportunities for self-improvement. London also argued that by opposing comprehensive sanctions it was in fact serving the interests of the front-line states. Further she argued that Soviet Union will benefit from sanctions to South Africa as other than South Africa it was the major supplier of minerals. Mrs Thatcher pointed out that according to the research poll by Harn’s Research Centre, a majority of Britons was against sanctions.

The Nassau summit of 1985 released a Commonwealth accord on South Africa, established the Eminent Persons Group (EPG) and proposed a set of sanctions and further sanctions depending on the groups report. With this declarations generality was replaced by point by point programme of action. The accord laid down six economic measures which all Commonwealth governments were expected to follow and proposed eight more in the event that EPG was unsuccessful. Britain in Nassau refused to use the word ‘sanctions’ and insisted on using ‘measures’. This made David Lange the Prime

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69 Derek Ingram, “Commonwealth Note Book,” The Round Table (London), no. 305, 1988, p. 105
70 Baynham, n. 24, p. 134.
71 It is absolutely absurd that people should be prepared to put increasing power into the hands of the Soviet Union on the grounds that they disapprove of apartheid in South Africa.” Hiro. n. 68. p.
72 In the Polls done by the Research Center, 64% rejected a ban on air flights between South Africa and Britain, 68% rejected a ban on all sporting links, and 59% rejected a trade ban. An end to new investment attracted a small majority of support of 46% over disapproval of 43%. About 70% Britons would not personally boycott South Africa goods and 59% viewed with indifference the threat of individual countries to leave the Commonwealth: The Economist (London), 21 June 1985 p. 25.
73 Eminent Persons Group was to try to facilitate the process of change through peaceful negotiations within South Africa. EPG was to report to the 1986 mini Commonwealth summit in London. The Group consisted of Lord Barber of Wensbridge Chairman of the Standard Chartered Bank and former British Chancellor of the Exchequer; Dame Nita Barrow, of Barbados a president of the World Council of Churches; Mr. Malcolm Fraser former Australian Prime Minister; Gen. Olusegun Obasanjo former Nigerian Head of State; Mr. John Maleccla, former Tanzanian Foreign Minister; Sardar Swaran Sing, former Indian Foreign Minister; and the Most Rev. Edward Scott, Anglican Primate of Canada.
Minister of New Zealand comment "What is the difference between one man’s sanctions and another woman’s signal".  

Of the 46 members in Nassau, 45 were for sanctions and one against. In Nassau itself other countries could have broken ranks with Britain but they were keen to carry Britain with them, mindful of the importance of Britain’s participation. Britain’s resistance to sanctions was unyielding and the choice was to go ahead without Britain and apply substantial economic sanctions or agree on a small package of measures which Britain would join. Britain was surprised that it remained isolated on South Africa in the Commonwealth. Thatcher in British television gloated that the concessions she made were minor and insignificant, she said Krugerrands were a mere token concession, a mere £500,000 per annum. She also said her governments would not consider the further measures. Mrs Thatcher tried to put Geoffrey Howe as the chairman of the EPG in spite of the opinion of others and the Secretariat that members should not be drawn from serving politicians.

The EPG had a mandate to encourage political dialogue aimed at replacing Apartheid by popular government. The EPG made three visits to South Africa early in 1986 and had meetings with all sections of the government, leading political figures as well as Mandela in prison and the heads of governments of most front-line states. The EPG in its report published in June 1986 made it clear that there was no genuine intention by the South African government to dismantle apartheid. EPG succeeded in blowing away the smoke-screen which Pretoria had put up behind which its apologists sheltered with talks of reforms. EPG also said the absence of sanctions and Pretoria’s belief that they not be feared deferred changes. They pointed out that "it is not sanctions which will destroy the

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75 Ibid., p. 4
77 The report said, "at present there is no genuine intention on the part of the South African government to dismantle Apartheid and present prospect of a process of dialogue leading to the establishment of a non-racial representative government." Mission To South Africa: The Commonwealth Report (Harmondsworth, 1986), p. 140.
country but the persistence of Apartheid and the Government’s failure to engage in fundamental political reform. 78

Even after this, the South African lobby in Britain was bold enough to assert that the EPG had not come out in support of sanctions. Mrs Thatcher refused in the House of Commons to commit the government to a change of policy by imposing further sanctions against South Africa. She said that the Government would not be dashing into premature conclusions on the EPG report. She added, “We still believe we must not close the door on further negotiations.” 79 In an interview Mrs Thatcher said that sanctions were immoral and that she found nothing moral about those who called for sanctions sitting in comfortable circumstances, with good salaries, inflation-proof pensions and good jobs. What offended Commonwealth sentiment more were her remarks that South Africa should never have been isolated by the world and that there should have been more contact with the government. 80

After EPG return Thatcher angered many Commonwealth leaders by promoting a one-man mission to South Africa by her Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary Geoffrey Howe in the guise of the President of EEC. This led EEC to delay sanctions against South Africa. Mrs Thatcher claimed that Sir Geoffrey was picking up the task abandoned by the EPG when South Africa raided neighbouring countries. Many Commonwealth leaders saw this as a vote of no confidence in the EPG. However his mission was also not successful as Botha made clear that South Africa would not allow uncalled for direct interference in their internal affairs. Neither Mandela nor the representatives of ANC outside South Africa were prepared to meet Sir Howe. He acknowledged that “the responses which I have received have not yet enabled me to claim that I have made the

78 Ibid., p. 137.
progress that I would have liked." After the failure of his mission, Sir Geoffrey Howe said publicly that further measures internationally co-ordinated were now likely.

Commonwealth felt that in the light of the experience of EPG where Lord Barber, a former Chairman of the British Conservative Party also served and the failure of Howe mission British government would agree to sanctions. Moreover, there were reports that Queen Elizabeth was dismayed over the Thatcher Governments' policy over sanctions and that she was concerned in general with its socially decisive approach. The palace however, denied this. In Britain itself public opinion was aroused with the anti apartheid activists organising a vigil for two days before the mini-summit started to pressurise Thatcher. Mrs Thatcher however did not change her opinion and also declined to meet before the mini-summit a delegation from the Commonwealth Trade Union Council, including representatives of unions of South Africa.

However in the mini summit at London in August 1986 consensus was not possible. The Commonwealth strategy was to publish a list of sanctions that if emulated by US and EEC could have a major effect on South Africa. Thus become a 'first among equals' by being the world body which led other world bodies on the sanctions issue. The review meeting was faced with a choice between unity with Britain and credibility of Commonwealth and they chose credibility. Other than the measures said in 1985 some new sanctions were also imposed. The communique "expressed concern and regret that British government does not join our agreement, we note its intention to proceed with measures mentioned". British agreed to impose a voluntary ban on new investment in South Africa, a voluntary ban on promotion of tourism to South Africa, accept and implement any EEC decision to ban the imports of coal, iron and steel and of gold coins from South Africa.

Mrs Thatcher had delayed the adoption of sanctions by EEC in June 1986. If EEC sanctions were introduced in June her position in Commonwealth on the same issue

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81 Kessing's Contemporary Archives (London) vol. XXXII. Sept 1986 p. 34597
would have been exposed. Having escaped Commonwealth and having participated in
the arrangement of weak European measures, she presented a model for Reagan to
follow. But Reagan had to agree to sterner sanctions than EEC. The dominant factor in
Thatcher's mind had been an attempt to preserve a Western prerogative in drawing up
policy towards South Africa, undeterred by other international communities and
protective of Western interests in the region. In this preservation, the Western powers had
also to be protective of one another.84

Till the 1986 mini-summit Commonwealth meetings were known for unity and
consensus. But in the 1986 summit consensus was not possible on the issue of sanctions.
The 1986 summit set a precedent, which allowed exception from consensus. Britain
could now stand aside and was no longer bound by consensus. This continued in the
1987 meeting also.

The Vancouver Meeting

The Vancouver meeting communiqué in 1987 also had to present unanimity on
the issue of sanctions with the exception of Britain. Vancouver meeting issued the
Okanagan statement on Southern Africa and programme of Action. Canada’s minister of
External Affairs Joe Clark, who headed an ad hoc committee of nine foreign ministers
including Geoffrey Howe of Britain, prepared this. The Okanagan statement was a thirty
three point state of Commonwealth positions on Southern Africa of which twenty six
constitute a programme of action to assist the region. On twenty seven of these thirty
three points there was unanimity. On six of them Britain does not concur. Britain
withheld its agreement on:

1. The belief that economic and other sanctions have had a significant effect on
   South Africa and that their wider, tighter and more intensified applications
   must remain an essential part of the international community’s response to
   Apartheid.

2. A commitment to securing ‘a more concerted application of a global
   sanctions programme’ including the ‘universal adoption of the measures now
   adopted by most Commonwealth and other countries including the US and
   Nordic countries’ - pending the acceptance by the international community

84 Stephen Chan, “The Commonwealth as an International Organization”, The Round Table, no. 312,
1989, pp. 405-406.
as a whole 'that comprehensive and mandatory sanctions would be the quickest route to bring Pretoria to the negotiating table'.

3. Evolution 'on a continuing basis (of) the application of sanctions in order to assess their impact.

4. Initiation of 'an expert study, drawing on independent sources, of South Africa's relationship with the international financial system' with a view to a better understanding of developments and possibilities in this sphere.

5. In furtherance of commitments at Nassau agreement to 'continue to take further action (including sanctions) individually and collectively as deemed appropriate in response to the situation as it evolves until apartheid is dismantled.

6. Establishment of the Commonwealth committee of Foreign Ministers on Southern Africa.\(^85\)

The Okanagan statement spoke clearly of sanctions and did not use code words like 'measures'. British Prime Minister in her speech said 'there is nothing to be gained by parading our differences'; the meetings message should be one of agreement on positive action helping black Africans through education and training, and assisting the FLS to reduce their dependence on South Africa. All the leaders were resigned to the fact Thatcher could not be moved on sanctions, so no one tried. Rajiv Gandhi said at end, 'we didn't bother that would have been a waste of time'.\(^86\)

Usually British delegations had briefed only British journalist on a regular basis but at Vancouver the briefings were opened to all press covering the meeting. Britain alleged that Canadian trade with South Africa had actually grown after sanction. But it turned out that Britain were quoting 1986 World Bank figures before sanctions were imposed. Suggestions were also put that Brian Mulroney the Prime Minister of Canada was chairing the conference badly. This led to Bob Hawk, Mugabe, Kaunda and Gandhi holding a joint press conference at which they emphasised how well Mulroney had performed and accused the British of a misinformation campaign. Britain also said that sanctions were not working but was contradicted by a paper tabled by Jamaican Prime


Minister Edward Seaga at the meeting.\textsuperscript{87} Thatcher retreated further from the other Commonwealth leaders when in her general press conference she called African National Congress (ANC) a terrorist organisation. This at a time when for two years British diplomatic effort had been underway to build bridges with ANC, meetings by officials had led to talks between ANC President Oliver Tambo and Minister of State Lynda Chalker, and later with Howe himself.

**Kuala Lumpur Meeting (1989)**

Before the Kuala Lumpur Meeting Mrs Thatcher clarified to De Clerk that if there were no further reforms in South Africa, she would find it hard to hold out against imposing sanctions.\textsuperscript{88} De Klerk must have hoped to help Britain to hold its line and that Commonwealth will not go in for more sanctions as he released Walter Sisulu and seven others from the prison before the meeting. Shridath Ramphal said that difference persisted between Britain and the rest of the Commonwealth. He said that the Commonwealth, Britain apart will continue to use the pressure of sanctions. Ramphal commented of the Commonwealth’s window of opportunity to put further pressure on South Africa because of its need to reschedule its external debt.\textsuperscript{89}

However on the opening day of the CHOGM South Africa announced that an agreement has been concluded and that its creditor banks had re-scheduled pound 20 billion of debts on easy terms. While the other countries spoke of the need for specific proposals for maintaining and monitoring pressure on South Africa, Mrs Thatcher stressed the progress that had been made since Vancouver, with a new South Africa government committed to change. She maintained her adamant opposition to sanctions. She said that sanction would hurt those everyone was anxious to help and cited the closure of a pineapple cannery employing over a thousand Africans. She noted that Germany, Japan and others were cashing in on the trade abandoned by others.\textsuperscript{90}

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\textsuperscript{88} *National Herald* (New Delhi), 14 October 1989.

\textsuperscript{89} *Editorial, The Round Table* (London), no.313, 1990, p. 5.

The Commonwealth meeting in 1989 issued "Southern Africa: The Way Ahead the Kuala Lumpur statement". The statement was substantially modified on Britain's insistence. This contained the now familiar words 'with the exception of Britain'. This meeting was held when the racist regime had accepted a degree of peaceful political activity by the Black majority and had released eight political leaders from prison. The statement said until there was evidence of clear and irreversible change all existing sanctions should be maintained. All the others with the exception of Britain endorsed the establishment of an independent agency to review and report on South Africa's international financial links on a regular basis, and to gather and publicise factual information on financial flows to and policies towards South Africa.

Immediately after the CHOGM agreed to the text of Kuala Lumpur statement Britain released another text on its own initiative titled "Southern Africa: The Way Ahead - Britain's View". Thatcher justified its release in terms of illustrating Britain's positive approach, which lay behind the reasons for British dissent in the Kuala Lumpur statement. In this text Britain condemned Apartheid but laid out that sanctions contribute to poverty and misery in South Africa, disagreed that sanctions have political effect. The text stated that Britain believes that Commonwealth should concentrate now on encouraging rather than on further punishment. It said that when South Africa has taken the necessary steps, it would be right to lift some sanctions to reward the progress, to encourage further reforms. And that Britain will continue its programme of positive help for South Africans and neighbouring countries. The new Foreign Secretary John Major explained the British statement by claiming, "The Commonwealth statement sets out what the Commonwealth wants; it does not set out what Britain wants" and said the statement had been perfectly proper for reasons of balanced debate.

Australia and Canada who in the past was hesitant to put pressure on South Africa led opposition to the British statement. Mrs Thatcher expressed herself astounded that any democratic Commonwealth leader would deny free speech to another. South African

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President De Klerk welcomed Mrs Thatcher's stand but various Heads of the Governments condemned the British Prime Minister. This was a clear indication of Britain's isolation from others on the South African issues under Mrs Thatcher. Canadian Prime Minister said "When you sign a document at five you don't repudiate it at six." British Prime Minister was however unrepentant. While others argued that sanctions have brought South Africa to its senses, Mrs Thatcher argued that British influence had done the trick as she refused to isolate Pretoria.

In June 1990 in a farewell dinner to Ramphal organised by Mrs Thatcher, she praised him. Ramphal however castigated Britain for its failure to support sanctions. He made the point that a strong stand from Britain would have led to a stronger stand from Europe, Japan and the United States. He accused Thatcher of pulling the rug on EPG in 1986. The EPG policy was dialogue and sanctions but she sent the message to Pretoria that they didn't have to worry about sanctions from Britain.

At the October 1991, Harare Summit the Head of Governments issued the Harare Commonwealth declaration. The meeting welcomed the political reforms introduced in South Africa and urged negotiations on new constitution as soon as possible. The meeting endorsed measures on the phased removals of sanctions against South Africa people to people sanctions (including consular and visa restrictions, cultural and scientific boycotts and restriction on tourism promotion) were removed immediately, with the economic sanction to remain in place. With the release of Mandela followed by lifting of bans on all political parties British Prime Minister lifted sanctions on investments and tourism promotion. This brought sharp criticism from Commonwealth and also Mandela.

Mrs Thatcher's action was termed "a little unusual" by Hoyt of Guyana, "unfortunate" by Mahatir, "most unusual" by Michael Manley of Jamaica, "despicable and unacceptable" by Mugnnie. A Commonwealth spokesperson called the action "utterly despicable" and wondered "why do the British think they are doing coming here lecturing us about hypocrisy?" But De Klerk, however, welcomed Mrs Thatcher's "firm and principled stand." Ibid., p. 166.

She declared, "If you accept, as I do, that the South Africa economy must be strong when a new government will inherit a strong economy, out of 49 Commonwealth members, it will have one to thank for that." Kessing's Record of World Events (London), October 1989, p. 3964.

He said that "Mrs Thatcher failure to support sanctions against South Africa had cost three years with all that bloodshed and bitterness... and we are yet to tell if they weren't all important years. Arnold, n. 94, p. 167-168.
Initiative by Britain

Britain from early days itself have stated that it abhorred apartheid but continued with its economic trade. Thatcher also followed this line. Along with this goes hand in hand a parallel policy of financial and security assistance to Pretoria's neighbours. This by many was viewed as a blatant attempt to buy acquiescence from Black Africa and the Commonwealth.

Conscious of the fact that British policy was likely to come under renewed scrutiny and criticism in Vancouver, the foreign and Commonwealth office issued a pamphlet on British aid to Southern Africa. This sought to highlight the positive measures Britain was undertaking in Southern Africa. It was titled 'A force for Peaceful Change and Development' 97 This stated that Britain give substantial bilateral and multilateral assistance to individual countries and to the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC).

British Minister of state for foreign and Commonwealth affairs Lynda Chalker said in 1988 that Britain has long been involved in working to strengthen the economies of SADCC states to reduce their economic dependence on South Africa. Britain through the SADCC organisation have helped to restore the natural pattern of transport in the region by rehabilitation of regional routes through Mozambique. She added that, from 1980 to 1986, UK gave over £800 million in bilateral aid to SADCC countries.98 In 1987 total contribution to SADCC projects was £35 million.99 Britain stated that they give some £10 million a year on measures in South Africa itself. This was to finance 1000 black South Africans in higher education, to a scheme to create more low cost housing for black South Africans, to support 300 rural projects, to bring relief to refugees from Mozambique and to support operation hunger, which already provides food for 1.3 million black South Africans, including many children. Britain also provided £8 million to cover the cost of higher education for 80 blacks African undergraduates each year for

97 Editorial, *The Round Table* (London), no.308, 1988, p. 3
98 Baynham, n. 24, p. 134.
the year 1987-1992. Britain gave the first fund of £5 lakh to the Nassau Fellowship for South Africans started in 1985. 100

Though Britain resisted the pressure for stronger sanctions against South Africa, it did not want alienate the SADCC countries of which eight were Commonwealth members. As a result, Britain increased her aid to these countries to compensate South African damage when an effective means to stop this damage was direct pressure on Pretoria. Britain helped by giving £14 million for the rehabilitation of Limpapo railway and £12.4 million for the improvement in transport links between Malawi and Tanzania. Britain also provided professional military training for eight of the nine SADCC states. A large British Military Advisory Training Team (BMATT) has been operating in Zimbabwe since independence. The Team trains the Zimbabwe National Army (ZNA) which were deployed in operations against the MNR in neighbouring Mozambique. Britain also trains Mozambican troops and was the only non-Commonwealth African country to get this assistance. There were also small training teams in Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland states. Military personal from all these countries and also from Malawi, Tanzania and Zambia regularly attend officer cadet and staff training courses in the United Kingdom. 101

Mozambique was provided with non-lethal military equipment. The training programme to Mozambique army cost pound 350,000 in 1986 and doubled in 1987. British aid to Mozambique increased from pound 1.8 million in 1983 to pound 8.4 million in 1985. In 1987 Britain agreed to supply Malawi with Pound 750, 000 worth of non-lethal military equipment to help it guard the Nacala rail link. In 1988 it sold nine warplanes to Botswana to help it strengthen its defences against South Africa. In 1990, a BMATT team was sent to the newly independent Namibia to help that country’s fledging army. 102 Later when the election process started in South Africa Britain helped to train 20,000 peace monitors and 2000 chief election Marshals.

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100 Ibid., p. 342.
102 Arnold, n. 94, p. 68.
EVALUATION

With most of the Commonwealth members being Afro-Asian countries South Africa was bound to be an issue in the Commonwealth. The African countries considered South Africa to be an affront to their dignity, while Asian countries, like India based their foreign policy on an anti-racialist plank. Britain being an important economic partner of South Africa found itself to be in front of the international firing line. To many it seemed that Britain did not play the role it could have. Economic investment, Trade, UK citizens in South Africa etc., made Britain reluctant to apply sanctions. Every country other than Britain voted for sanctions. This marginalised Britain in the Commonwealth but at the same time helped Britain to stand aside from the sanctions issue. This however does not mean that Britain saw Apartheid as right. Britain gave aid and help to Black South Africans and also the front-line states. The African Countries viewed South African issue as a moral question and used their pressure in all forums. Britain on the other hand viewed it as a problem to be solved but not at their own cost.