



PRIME MINISTER

TRANSCRIPT OF NEWS CONFERENCE, PAN PACIFIC HOTEL, KUALA LUMPUR, 23 OCTOBER 1989

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JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, Mrs Thatcher says she's appalled that anyone would even question her right to put out her point of view.

PM: Yes, she said that. The position was very clearly accepted by the rest of the Commonwealth Heads of Government that an agreed position had been arrived at and that it was everyone's understanding that that agreed position would be adhered to. Now I've made my point of view known, as has Mr Mulroney and may I say that all the other members of the Commonwealth have quite clearly indicated their support for the position that we've expressed. Now I don't think any useful purpose is served by taking it any further. We know what's happened and the concern that we have expressed has been endorsed by others. Now no-one's purposes are served by taking it any further.

JOURNALIST: It's very harmful to the Commonwealth's position surely, what she's done?

PM: Well I think that if you had a position where the rest of the world thought that the declaration represented other than the view of the Commonwealth as a whole with the qualifications that Mrs Thatcher has wanted to express for the United Kingdom, it would be dangerous. But the world can have no doubt that the Commonwealth has expressed a clear view on South Africa.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, isn't what she's done effectively an act of duplicity though?

PM: I'm not making any descriptive comments about what Mrs Thatcher has done. I expressed my view in the Heads of Government Meeting, I expressed my opposition clearly, as did Mr Mulroney and as I've said all people who've spoken to us have endorsed what we've had to say. That was the point to express a position, I've done that.

JOURNALIST: But one minute she's says one thing or accepts one thing and the next minute she says quite the opposite. That's duplicity.

PM: You are in the media, you have the delightful task of interpretation for the public. I have a responsibility as a Head of Government in the meetings of Heads of Government to put a point of view which I took the lead in doing, no-one in the room was left in any doubt as to my feelings. But that's where I'll do it, in the meeting. Now you have the role of interpretations, you get delightfully well paid for it.

JOURNALIST: Why do you think she put out the statement?

PM: Well you would, again as I've had cause to say at a previous conference, if you're asking what's in the mind of Mrs Thatcher I'm not the guardian of her mind. I mean she is and you'll have to ask her, if you could get through to asking her. But I'm not trying analysis as to why she's done what she's done.

JOURNALIST: Don't you agree it's very strange way to do business though?

PM: It's, as we've said, rather unusual to have an agreed position and the adoption of that agreed position being moved by Mrs Thatcher and as a result of that, no further discussions occurring, and then to have you know, what's happened, that is unusual. I've described it as unusual.

JOURNALIST: inaudible

PM: I'm not properly going into a -

JOURNALIST: Do these kind of actions by Britain threaten the future viability of the Commonwealth, do you think?

PM: No.

JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke, what is your understanding of Britain's current position in relation to existing sanctions against South Africa?

PM: I suggest you read paragraph nine, which is very fascinating. Paragraph nine of the agreed communique says these things: that all existing sanctions should be maintained, and the second thing it says is that it calls on the rest of the world community to apply them. That paragraph nine has no qualification from the United Kingdom.

(PM cont) So one would have to say on the basis of the agreed document moved in its adoption by Mrs Thatcher that that paragraph nine - unqualified by a reservation in regards to the United Kingdom - represents her position. I mean that's what she moved.

JOURNALIST: Would you see that as a slight shift from their position at previous CHOGM's?

PM: Well it's a position which I welcome.

JOURNALIST: But she quite clearly accepts that trade sanctions are reasonable and working.

PM: All I can say is that Mrs Thatcher was the one who at the Retreat moved the adoption of the statement and I've referred to you paragraph nine which contains no qualification. So that's the position which she moved at the Retreat.

JOURNALIST: Do you find this confusing?

PM: I expressed how I found the British position. But I expressed that as I said, in the Heads of Government meeting. I'm not going to go into any public observation about what's happened. I did that in the meeting.

JOURNALIST: Well do you believe that this is a deliberate strategy by Britain or do you believe it's confusion within their own ranks?

PM: Oh well, I don't know. If I thought it was helpful to anyone to engage in a detailed public analysis of what's happened then I would do that. But I really don't think that Australia's interests, Britain's interests, but most importantly the interests of the people of South Africa, of all the people of South Africa, I don't think any of those interests are served by me going into such an analysis. I imagine there's going to be a lot of interpretation done by others, well that's OK. I honestly don't think that anyone's interests are served by me undertaking that analysis.

JOURNALIST: Mrs Thatcher seemed to suggest that the complaints by the other countries were somehow less than democratic, that she had a right to express Britain's view.

PM: Yes, she has exercised those rights on the Thursday in the Heads of Government meeting, her rights were exercised, she expressed a point of view there. Their rights were exercised by having her Foreign Minister in the drafting group where, as you'll appreciate, concessions were made by us and others in that drafting process, concessions of language on the basis of accommodating Britain's position. So they exercised their rights there and exercised their rights at the Retreat by moving the adoption for the agreed communique. So all the rights have been exercised as were everyone else's in the process up to and including the Retreat.

JOURNALIST: In the interests of both South Africa and the Commonwealth, what would you like to see Mrs Thatcher do now?

PM: Nothing more, I would think would be the best answer to that.

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