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## Full-scale criticism of South Africa blocked by Britain

BY PHILIP STEPHENS

WESTERN LEADERS yesterday made a brief critical reference to the apartheid regime in South Africa, but Britain blocked a full statement on the issue.

At the end of the seven-nation economic summit in Venice, Mr Amintore Fanfani, the Italian Prime Minister and host at the meeting, said that the leaders viewed the situation in South Africa with "particular concern."

In remarks agreed with the other heads of state and government, Mr Fanfani added: "We agree that a peaceful and lasting solution can only be found to the present crisis if the apartheid regime is dismantled and replaced by a new form of democratic, non-racial government."

The criticism of Pretoria, contained in Mr Fanfani's general summary of the summit stand on a wide range of political issues, fell short of the detailed declaration sought by a number of governments.

Senior officials from several delegations said that the British Government refused to agree to a separate statement on South Africa. Sir Geoffrey Howe, Britain's Foreign Secretary, denied that Britain had been isolated. He said that other governments shared his view that it was the wrong moment to launch any initiative so soon after the whites-only election, when the South African Govern-

ment was likely to be particularly unresponsive.

According to the official Canada and the US had both during the past two months prepared drafts which they hoped might form the basis of a separate statement at the summit.

The European Community political directors had discussed a draft declaration guiding principles for West's relations with Pretoria. This had focused on the pre-eminence need to dismantle apartheid, to establish the equal treatment for all South Africans under the law, and the need for respect of human rights.

At one stage, the US raised the possibility that its draft and the European version could be merged to provide a "Venice declaration." US enthusiasm, however, was said by officials to have waned considerably after Britain made its opposition known.

At the summit, Canada continued to argue forcibly for a separate text, but was forced to accept the smaller declaration contained in the general political summary.

Mr Brian Mulroney, Canada's Prime Minister, said that the compromise was not "a perfect response," but it was nonetheless important that the issue had been addressed by the seven leaders. A failure to say anything would, he said, have sent the wrong message to Pretoria.

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