



TITLE INFORMATION

SANCTIONS IN PARADISE

Peter Nicholl

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BOOK REVIEW

A conference of British Commonwealth officials ready to impose sanctions on South Africa over Apartheid is plagued by South African terrorists in Nicholl's novel.

In 1985, the Annual Conference of Commonwealth Ministers of Finance is held in Seychelles, an exotically beautiful East African island. The only real issue on the agenda is the possibility of saddling South Africa with sanctions in response to its continued policy of Apartheid. The measure is hotly protested by South Africans, who promise an "immediate and firm retaliation" if they are enacted. Peter White, the personal assistant to New Zealand's Minister of Finance, Brian Franklyn, witnesses the coldblooded murder of John Blake, a British spy posing as a journalist. Later, Peter is shot while paragliding, and is then nearly assassinated in his hotel. The conference continues apace in an expression of its deep commitment to a "spirit of understanding and co-operation and with a willingness to listen to each other's point of view" as the authorities desperately try to locate the South African mercenaries who have clearly infiltrated the island. However, Peter's life remains in danger as the investigations do nothing to weaken the terrorists' resolve. In this gripping political thriller, Peter's first-person narration of the events as they unfold is remarkably effective. He expresses himself just as one might expect a career bureaucrat and speech writer would: with clarity and understatement, maintaining a restrained tone that makes the terrorist menace even more terrifying. Meanwhile, he develops a romantic connection with Simone Lablanche, his Canadian counterpart, in an amorous affair portrayed with uncommon subtlety for the genre. Nicholl artfully creates an atmosphere of suspenseful expectancy, and the plot concludes with a thoughtfully rendered moral dilemma presented without any facile resolution.

A deeply intelligent political novel, both convincing and dramatically engrossing.