



THE SOUTH AFRICAN COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

May 25, 1984

Mrs. M. Thatcher
10 Downing Street
London, SW 7, England

Dear Mrs. Thatcher:

On behalf of the South African Council of Churches, I hope that you and yours had a pleasant and happy Easter.

I am writing to express our sense of shock that you and your government should have seen fit to invite Mr. P.W. Botha, the South African Prime Minister to come to England as an official guest of your government. It is, in our view, an affront to those such as many in our member churches who are striving to work for fundamental change in South Africa by peaceful means. It is like a slap in the face of millions of black South Africans who are the daily victims of one of the most vicious policies in the world.

Recently a delegation of church leaders visited England as part of their tour to various countries of the Western world to publicize the appearance of a report on the South African government's Force Population Removal Policy. This report is a joint effort between the South African Council of Churches and the Catholic Bishop's Conference designed to highlight the most vicious aspect of apartheid. The report shows that at this point the South African government has uprooted over three and one-half million black people.

The South African government wants to project an image of a regime that is embarking on a reform policy. It has produced a new constitution and has signed a peace pact with Mozambique and is disengaging from Angola. So, its supporters would argue, it should be given a chance. But is it really involved in real change or reform? The constitution excludes totally from its provisions 70% of the population. How can that be construed as even remotely democratic or as being a step in the right direction? It provides for three chambers: one for whites, one for coloured, and one for Indians. Clearly, far from moving from racism, this constitution actually entrenches and sanctions it. The ratio of white: coloureds: Indian in the parliamentary committes is to be 4:2:1. This means that the whites can never be out-voted at all. Thus, the constitution perpetuates the rule of small white oligarchy. So, it is a momental hoax to hoodwink the international community into believing that the South African government is reforming.

With regard to the peace accord with Mozambique, I want to state categorically that all Christians are happy whenever there is a cessation of hostilities anywhere in the world and so we welcome the peace accord for this reason. But we must then hasten to add a few points. First, that Mozambique has had a long war of liberation that played havoc with her economy. She had a devastating drought. South Africa has tacitly admitted destabilizing her through the support she gave to MNR dissident groups and pounded Mozambique in South Africa's hot pursuit policy against alleged ANC bases. Consequently, it was not surprising that Mozambique succumbed to South Africa's bludgeoning. President Masire of Botswana was right when he said that Mozambique had been bullied into submission. More than this, without being cynical, we have wondered why all this diplomatic flurry should happen in a year when there is to be a presidential election in the United States of America. It is a strange coincidence. The South African government has recognized that President Reagan with his constructive engagement policy is the best thing to have happened to them in a long time. They would do anything to get their friend re-elected.

The South African government wants the international community to ease off any pressure it may have wanted to exert on it to change apartheid. In the meantime it has not abated one bit of its evil policy to uproot blacks and dump them in arid poverty-stricken Banstustan homelands and to strip blacks of their South African citizenship turning them into aliens in the land of their birth. The pass laws are applied as viciously as they ever were: influx control of blacks is as rigid as always. Arbitrary banning and detentions without trial are still the order of the day. Our children still receive an inferior education. I am a Bishop in the Church of God. I am 52 years of age. I am reasonably responsible. In the land of my birth I cannot vote. A child of 18 years of age because he or she has a white skin can vote. We still live in ghetto areas such as Soweto. It is not the perpetrators of apartheid who can tell you that apartheid is changing. Surely, it is the victims who should be asked what they think.

It is good for Mr. P.W.Botha to be concerned about detente with South Africa's neighbors. But the threat to peace in the sub-continent and indeed in the world is apartheid. This is South Africa's internal policy and that will not be changed by external detente. Mr. Forster's failure of the past has proved that. The crisis of our country will be solved when the government sits down with the authentic leaders of all sections of our society to talk about dismantling apartheid. This is what most of our member churches have been calling for without avail. Mr. Botha has recently refused to meet with us church leaders inside South Africa, but he has met with Marxist leaders outside the country.

He heads a government which is carrying out a policy which is as evil, as immoral and as un-Christian as Nazism and Communism. You are providing him with the opportunity of deceiving the world that change is happening in South Africa. His government denies 70% of the inhabitants of South Africa the most elementary human rights and you are providing him with the opportunity of gaining a respectability for apartheid it should not have.

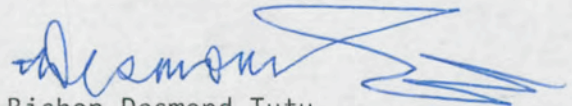
Are you and your government telling us that black South Africans are really expendable: that when it comes to the crunch, blacks can never trust white people because they will always gang up against us, that blood is thicker than water? Would you have collaborated with Stalin when he was carrying out his diabolical policies against his fellow Russians? Would you have collaborated with Hitler when he perpetrated the holocaust? Then why can you collaborate in this way with the perpetrators of a policy as diabolical as Stalinism and Nazism?

It is for us a sad day when the leaders of democratic countries in the West seem to indicate that Christian morality is perhaps a stranger in the corridors of power.

We pray for you and pray also for our people who have been abandoned by the free world. We pray that they will not become desperate because of this for desperate people tend to use desperate methods. Of course if the West can show that apartheid is changing it will be convenient for western governments since they will be let off the hook. They won't need to take measures against South Africa that would be politically unpopular in their own constituencies.

We have no doubt that we will be free and that South Africa will one day be a non-racial and just democracy. And we will remember who helped us in the process of becoming free. God bless you.

Sincerely,


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General Secretary

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