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10 DOWNING STREET

17 June, 1985

From the Private Secretary

Dear Len,

SEMINAR ON POLICY TOWARDS SOUTH AFRICA

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The Prime Minister wishes to hold a seminar on policy towards South Africa. The seminar would take place in September, probably on 13 September at Chequers, and would follow the normal pattern for such seminars. We have not yet settled whether it would be a whole day seminar or whether half the day should be devoted to another foreign policy topic, probably the Middle East.

The purpose of the seminar would be to examine our current policy towards South Africa, the sort of pressures to which we are likely to be subject in coming months (including at CHOGM) and our response to them. The sort of questions which the Prime Minister would want the seminar to cover are:

- what is a realistic forecast of the pace of dismantling the objectionable features of apartheid - bearing in mind that it has already gone a good deal further and faster than seemed likely only a couple of years ago?
- what would we actually regard as sufficient change to make South Africa "acceptable"? Would our criteria for what is "acceptable" be deemed sufficient by other industrialised countries?
- to what extent will the changes taking place in South Africa, together with South Africa's success in building relations with its neighbours, diminish pressures in black Africa and among third world opinion generally for sanctions?
- what explains the apparent increase in public and congressional pressures in the United States and some other industrialised countries for measures against South Africa, at the very moment when internal changes are at last taking place there and black African countries' obsession with South Africa may be declining? How long are these pressures likely to persist? And what can we do to deflect and diminish them?

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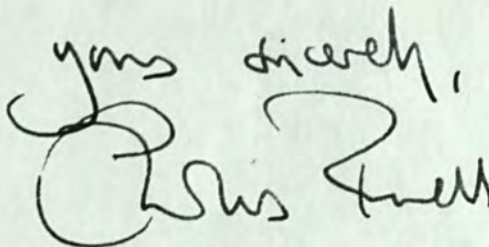
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- to what extent can Britain influence developments within South Africa itself? Ought we to swim against the international tide by strengthening contacts with the South African Government in the hope of exercising influence through friendly persuasion? Or should we go the other way by reducing existing contacts in the hope that a uniformly cold and hostile attitude on the part of the industrialised countries would leave South Africa no alternative but to make the desired changes?
- we want to avoid being in an isolated position in our dealings with South Africa. What would be the elements of a policy round which we could hope to unite key countries such as the US and Germany?
- in the light of our conclusions on these questions, is there scope for significant changes in UK policy towards South Africa? Do we have to go on denying ourselves the possibility of defence sales? Or, if we have to tighten up rather than relax our policy, what measures would cause the least damage and help fend off pressure for full economic sanctions? Additional conditions on British firms investing and operating in South Africa?

You will, I am sure, think of many others.

The Prime Minister would like a discussion paper to be prepared for the seminar by the FCO in consultation with the DTI and Treasury which should be available by 25 July if possible. She may commission a further paper or papers, for instance from the Centre for Policy Studies.

The Prime Minister would welcome suggestions for participation in the seminar. We should aim for a total of twenty drawn from Ministers, government backbenchers, businessmen, academic experts and officials. It would be helpful to have suggestions by 1 July.

Yours sincerely,


(C.D. Powell)

L. Appleyard, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

24 June, 1985

CDP
25/6

Dear Charles,

Seminar on Policy Towards South Africa

Thank you for your letter of 17 June. We have set in hand the discussion paper on policy towards South Africa and are in touch with the DTI and the Treasury.

We shall be writing to you separately with suggestions for participation in the Seminar.

Yours ever,

Colin Budd

(C R Budd)
Private Secretary

C D Powell Esq
10 Downing Street

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British and Commonwealth Office

London: RADA SAH

