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Munster.

PRIME MINISTER'S  
PERSONAL MESSAGE  
SERIAL No. T 158A/85

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TO IMMEDIATE NEW DELHI  
TELNO 821  
OF 051000Z SEPTEMBER 85  
INFO PRIORITY PRETORIA

SOUTH AFRICA: MR GANDHI'S LETTER TO THE PRIME MINISTER.  
1. GRATEFUL IF YOU WOULD TRANSMIT TO MR GANDHI THE FOLLOWING  
REPLY DATED 4 SEPTEMBER FROM THE PRIME MINISTER TO HIS LETTER OF 19  
AUGUST:-

BEGINS ...QUOTE THANK YOU FOR YOUR LETTER OF 19 AUGUST. I  
WELL UNDERSTAND YOUR CONCERN ABOUT THE SITUATION IN SOUTH  
AFRICA PARTICULARLY FOLLOWING THE RECENT DISTURBING EVENTS  
INVOLVING THE INDIAN COMMUNITY IN NATAL. I AM NO LESS  
WORRIED ABOUT WHAT IS HAPPENING AND HAVE MADE VERY CLEAR TO  
THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT THE DEPTH OF OUR CONCERN AND OUR  
BELIEF THAT FUNDAMENTAL REFORMS AND THE OPENING OF A DIALOGUE  
ABOUT THE POLITICAL FUTURE OF THE BLACK MAJORITY MUST BE UNDER-  
TAKEN WITHOUT DELAY. I HAVE IN THE PAST PUT MY VIEWS ON THESE  
MATTERS DIRECTLY TO PRESIDENT BOTHA.

2. I RECOGNISE THAT MANY FEEL AS YOU DO THAT THE WEIGHT OF  
INTERNATIONAL OPINION SHOULD BE BACKED BY ECONOMIC SANCTIONS  
AGAINST SOUTH AFRICA. I MUST TELL YOU THAT THE BRITISH  
GOVERNMENT DOES NOT SHARE THIS VIEW. WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT  
THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT'S REACTION TO FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS  
IMPOSING SANCTIONS WILL BE TO MAKE THE REFORMS WHICH WE ALL  
WANT TO SEE. INDEED PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE AND THE REALITIES OF

THE SOUTH AFRICAN SITUATION SUGGEST THAT SUCH ACTION BY FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS COULD BE COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE, HARDENING RESISTANCE TO THE REFORMS SO URGENTLY NEEDED. MOREOVER SUCH EFFECTS AS SANCTIONS WOULD HAVE MUST IN A LABOUR-INTENSIVE ECONOMY BE BORNE BY THOSE LEAST ABLE TO WITHSTAND ECONOMIC HARDSHIP. THE RESULT, I FEAR, WOULD BE RISING BLACK UNEMPLOYMENT AND THE RISK OF FURTHER VIOLENCE AND REPRESSION. OTHER STATES IN SOUTHERN AFRICA, MANY OF WHICH ARE VERY DEPENDENT ON SOUTH AFRICA, WOULD ALSO ENCOUNTER SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES. THERE WOULD BE NO EARLY OUTCOME AND IN THE MEANTIME SOUTH AFRICA AND ITS NEIGHBOURS COULD BE DEPRIVED OF THE ECONOMIC GROWTH WHICH THEIR PEOPLE SO BADLY NEED.

3. IN MY VIEW INTERNAL SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC PRESSURES OFFER THE BEST PROSPECT OF PRODUCING REAL REFORM IN SOUTH AFRICA. WE THEREFORE WANT TO STIMULATE THE POSITIVE FORCES FOR CHANGE SUCH AS ECONOMIC GROWTH WITHIN THE BLACK COMMUNITY AND TO ENCOURAGE THOSE BOTH INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE GOVERNMENT WHO BELIEVE IN DIALOGUE. WE ARE WORKING THROUGH THE PRIVATE SECTOR AND OUR AID PROGRAMME TO ENCOURAGE THESE DEVELOPMENTS.

4. I CAN ASSURE YOU, HOWEVER, THAT OUR UNWILLINGNESS TO SUPPORT ECONOMIC SANCTIONS IN NO WAY DETRACTS FROM OUR RESOLUTE OPPOSITION TO APARTHEID. A SYSTEM IN WHICH A MINORITY SEEK TO PRESERVE A PRIVILEGED POSITION THROUGH RACIAL DISCRIMINATION IS MORALLY UNACCEPTABLE. LIKE YOU, I ALSO DETEST VIOLENCE. WE SHALL CONTINUE TO WORK HARD TO ENCOURAGE A PEACEFUL RESOLUTION TO SOUTH AFRICA'S PROBLEMS.

5. THERE IS UNANIMITY IN THE COMMONWEALTH ON THE URGENT NEED FOR FUNDAMENTAL CHANGE IN SOUTH AFRICA. I HOPE THAT THE FACT THAT THERE ARE GENUINE DIFFERENCES OF OPINION ON THE BEST MEANS TO ACHIEVE OUR OBJECTIVE WILL NOT STAND IN THE WAY OF THE CONTRIBUTION THAT THE COMMONWEALTH AS A WHOLE CAN MAKE ON A MATTER THAT CAUSES SO MUCH CONCERN TO US ALL.

6. I WAS DELIGHTED TO HEAR FROM YOUR HIGH COMMISSIONER THAT YOU ARE ABLE TO ACCEPT MY INVITATION TO VISIT US ON THE WAY TO CHOGM AND LOOK FORWARD TO DISCUSSING THIS AND OTHER PROBLEMS WITH YOU THEN..... UNQUOTE. ENDS

7. THE ORIGINAL REPLY FOLLOWS BY BAG AND SHOULD BE PASSED TO MR GANDHI ON RECEIPT.

HOWE

[COPIES SENT TO NO 10 DOWNING STREET]

SOUTHERN AFRICA

STANDARD(PALACE)

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ECDs  
SOVIET D

MR J R J JOHNSON  
CABINET OFFICE

ADDITIONAL DISTRIBUTION  
SOUTHERN AFRICA

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