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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

24 September 1985

POLICY TOWARDS SOUTH AFRICA

I have written separately about the question of our rallying to the position of the Nine on South Africa.

The Prime Minister has asked me to say that she regards withdrawal of defence attaches as a futile action. It will have no effect upon the situation in South Africa. Rather it will diminish such influence as we have with the South African Government and increase its sense of isolation which we have on other occasions said we think the wrong way to proceed. The arguments for doing so have been based entirely on expediency and the need to establish a common position of the Ten which is all too likely to prove ephemeral. She regards it as a sign of serious weakness in our diplomacy that we allow ourselves to be governed by herd instinct rather than by what we calculate is the right thing to do. It is also a mistake, in her view, to allow a defence matter to be settled by political cooperation. So the decision is taken against her better judgement. It is her strong conviction that under no circumstances should we go further than this in the direction of measures against South Africa.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'CP' or similar initials.

CHARLES POWELL

C.R. Budd, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.