

PRIME MINISTER

POLICY TOWARDS SOUTH AFRICA

I conveyed your decision on subscribing to the Community statement on South Africa to the Foreign Office this morning in the attached letter. The Foreign Secretary's Private Secretary has subsequently telephoned from New York to convey the Foreign Secretary's strong recommendation that we should take the step of agreeing to withdrawal of Defence Attaches from South Africa. His argument is that if we do not subscribe to the Community position in its entirety that position will begin to dissolve and we shall find ourselves increasingly isolated both at the United Nations and at CHOGM. There is also the risk that the Commission or some Member States will try to introduce regulations under Article 113 to provide a basis in Community law for the economic measures which we are already taking.

There are of course valid points in the Foreign Secretary's argument. It may be that if we subscribe fully to the Community statement we can hold the Community position at least up to CHOGM; and the fact of a common Community position will strengthen our hand there in resisting worse measures. Percy Cradock regards it as a "fine point" but on the whole thinks the Foreign Secretary right to be prepared to make a sacrifice for unanimity.

The arguments the other way are:-

- i) We are going to be in trouble at the United Nations and at CHOGM anyway and the existence of a common Community position will be marginal in defending us from this. In any case the common Community position will not endure for long.
- ii) Withdrawal of Military Attaches is irrelevant to the situation inside South Africa and will have no

beneficial effect there. Indeed it is a measure to increase South Africa's isolation which is something we have hitherto set our faces against.

- iii) Defence matters are not normally considered in political co-operation, at least hitherto. And anyway only three Member States even have Defence Attaches.
- iv) It is unlikely that our inability to subscribe to every single point in the Community statement at this stage will lead the others simply to abandon it.

The Foreign Secretary wanted me to make clear that his view was very strongly held. I therefore undertook to report it to you and let him know whether it led you to alter your decision.

C.D.P.

Charles Powell  
24 September 1985