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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

3 October 1985

Dear Colin,

PRIME MINISTER'S MEETING WITH BISHOP TUTU

The Prime Minister met Bishop Tutu this afternoon. The Bishop was accompanied by Terry Waite. The Prime Minister commented afterwards that she had been favourably impressed by Bishop Tutu.

The Prime Minister opened the discussion by saying that she understood Bishop Tutu to be a man of peace who would not support violence. Bishop Tutu confirmed that this was indeed his position.

Bishop Tutu said that the Prime Minister had a crucial, indeed critical, role to play in the deepening crisis in South Africa. Britain's greatness lay in its capacity to provide moral leadership. This involved taking sides and he recognised that Britain was firmly on the side of those who opposed apartheid. He himself had spoken out against all forms of violence, but the primary source of violence in South Africa was apartheid itself. It was hard for outsiders to understand the indignities of the system. For example, he himself was a Bishop, aged 53, and a Nobel Laureate, but he could not vote in his own country while an 18 year old white could do so. Opposition to apartheid had for many years been peaceful, but the ANC had gradually been forced into a position of armed struggle as the only means to pursue its aims. Bishop Tutu traced the post-war history of South Africa in some detail, concluding that the country was on the brink of catastrophe. Only a miracle or (sic) the international community could change things. President Botha's speech in August had left everyone disillusioned. He still saw an outside chance of resolving the crisis peacefully. But it would need the exertion of considerable political, diplomatic and economic pressure by the international community. He believed this was the only means to secure movement towards negotiations between the Government and the black community. Britain had seen the use of sanctions over the Falklands, and the United States had applied them over Poland and Nicaragua. People were concerned that blacks would be the first to suffer from sanctions. But in fact it seemed that a majority of blacks were prepared to accept them.

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Bishop Tutu continued that he could understand why in the short term governments were reluctant to apply sanctions. But it would be better if they were to take a long term view and support those who had justice on their side. One day there would be black majority government in South Africa, and it was important to ensure by actions now that such a government looked to the democratic countries as its friends. He therefore wanted to appeal to the Prime Minister to consider the case for additional economic measures to bring pressure to bear on the South African Government, and at the same time to enter into contacts with the ANC. There was no doubt that this organisation had the support of the majority of blacks.

The Prime Minister said that there was no need to convince her that apartheid was wrong. She had been disappointed with President Botha's speech, although there had been more encouraging statements since then. She could understand what Bishop Tutu and people like him felt. She took a very practical approach to the situation in South Africa. The key question in the present situation was: what should be the next step? In her view it was for the South African Government to sit down and to talk to black representatives about how they should be represented in the structure of Government. There were various ways in which this could be achieved, for instance, through a constitutional convention. She recognised that certain prior steps were needed for this to take place, notably an end to the state of emergency and the release of Nelson Mandela. The question of which representatives of the black community should be involved in negotiations was more difficult. As for sanctions, she thought that the financial markets had already achieved more than formal government-backed sanctions ever would.

Bishop Tutu said that he agreed with much of what the Prime Minister had said. He did not want to see the South African economy destroyed, although he would argue that the evident effect of market developments strengthened the case for sanctions. At the least one needed the threat of international sanctions as a signal to the South African Government.

The Prime Minister said that economic developments had already brought about significant change in political communities in South Africa. She did not want to leave Bishop Tutu in any doubt about the fact that she would not introduce government-backed economic sanctions against South Africa. She was not interested in hitting out at South Africa. Rather, she was looking for a constructive move. The pressure was already there. Now was the time to be specific about the next steps. One needed a proposition. Bishop Tutu said that the single most important requirement was a firm statement by the South African Government of its intention to dismantle apartheid. The Prime Minister asked whether, if such a statement were made, Bishop Tutu and those who thought like him could guarantee that negotiations would take place without violence. Bishop Tutu said that he would certainly work for that provided the South African

Government did likewise. The Prime Minister concluded that negotiations to incorporate black South Africans into the process of Government seemed to her the essential next step, but a lot of thought was needed on the precise mechanism. She hoped that Bishop Tutu and his colleagues would focus on this.

The Prime Minister said that she would tell the press that she had a long, interesting and constructive talk with Bishop Tutu. Bishop Tutu said that he would add that he had found the discussion very helpful. I enclose a note by our Press Section recording the gist of Bishop Tutu's subsequent and rather helpful remarks to the press.

Yours sincerely
Charles Powell

Charles Powell

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