



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Principal Private Secretary

23 October 1985

Dear Sir,

PRIME MINISTER'S MEETING WITH THE UN SECRETARY GENERAL ON 23 OCTOBER
SOUTHERN AFRICA

During her call on the Secretary General the Prime Minister reported to him some of the discussions at CHOGM on South Africa.

She emphasised her belief that the pressures of the market on the South African people, and their fear that they might not be able to pay their debts, was a much more powerful lever for obtaining political movement in South Africa than the threat of sanctions. She had told President Botha that he should now respond constructively. It was essential that the "group of eminent persons" should handle the President with sensitivity if he was to be persuaded to enter into a full dialogue with the blacks about political movement. The composition of the group was extremely important. The Summit Accord's reference to progress within six months did not, of course, imply that apartheid had to be abolished within that period. Unfortunately many in the Commonwealth did not realise the complexity of the South African situation. The important, and novel, element in the Communique was the call, made by every state of the Commonwealth, for a suspension of violence on all sides. This is why she had accepted the ban on Krugerrands and on government funding for trade missions to South Africa. She was hopeful that President Botha would receive the group of eminent persons.

The Secretary General said that he had expected a signal from the President to help those, like Mrs. Thatcher, who were striving to help forward the political process in South Africa. But no signal had come. The President could have moved forward on the Namibian problem which was easy to solve. He could have stopped his country's destabilisation of neighbouring states. Progress in dismantling apartheid would inevitably be a long process.

The Prime Minister emphasised that more progress had been made in dismantling apartheid in the last six to seven months than had happened for several years. The Secretary General commented that the President still seemed "shy" in moving faster in this direction.

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The Prime Minister said that the President was disappointed that the world still criticised him, despite the progress he had made. Nor should it be forgotten that his thinking was ahead of much of his party.

The Secretary General wondered whether the UN could do more to support countries, like Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland, which were so dependent economically on South Africa. For instance, was it possible to establish "bridges" to those countries in the way that the Allies had supported West Berlin after the War. The Prime Minister replied that the best way of helping the people of those countries was to solve the fundamental problem of giving black people political rights in South Africa.

The Secretary General concluded this part of the discussion by wishing the Prime Minister good luck.

Yours sincerely
Nigel Wicks

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