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Subject on: Relations;

THE PRIME MINISTER

4 July 1986

SOUTH AFRICA

Pt II.

PRIME MINISTER'S

PERSONAL MESSAGE

SERIAL No. T125/86

Dear Mr. President,

Thank you for the message which your Embassy conveyed to my office on 2 July.

I am sorry that you do not accept that the overall thrust and intention of the conclusions of the European Council meeting at The Hague last week were positive. They were certainly intended to be so. Since that meeting I have publicly and repeatedly made clear that the Council decision should not be seen as an ultimatum. I have said explicitly that we do not think that threatening further sanctions immediately or automatically would help to bring about the negotiations that we all want.

I have also told the House of Commons repeatedly of my opposition to comprehensive sanctions and my conviction that your problems have to be solved by negotiation. I reiterated our view that it is not for us or for anyone else outside South Africa to say what arrangements would come out of such negotiations. It will be for all the people of South Africa to decide on the future constitution they would like.

So far as the British Government are concerned, there does indeed need to be a suspension of violence on all sides, as called for by Commonwealth Heads of Government at Nassau. I certainly do not see you as being required to make a unilateral concession. It remains my view that a commitment

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to the early release of Nelson Mandela and the unbanning of the ANC, in exchange for a suspension of violence, would do more than any other step to create the climate of confidence in which a dialogue would become possible.

This brings me to your question about what is meant by "authentic leaders" of the black population. Of course, it is hard to be sure until, as you promised in your speech of 31 January, all South Africans are in a position where they can participate in government through their elected representatives. But I can assure you that we, like others, do not have only the ANC in mind (though they clearly have a sizeable following).

There is much else to discuss in your letter. But I think that it would be best if Geoffrey Howe were able to go over the ground with you in person at the earliest possible opportunity. His aim would be to see in what ways we might be able to help the process of negotiation. Of course I accept your commitment to power-sharing and to a democratic system of government which accommodates all legitimate political aspirations of all the South African communities. The challenge is how to draw in those groups who have hitherto been unwilling to associate themselves with the plans and structures of the South African Government.

I now hear that it is unlikely to be convenient for you to receive Geoffrey Howe next week as we had proposed. This perturbs me considerably. I can well understand that it is not easy to accommodate such a visit at short notice. But it was not through any wish to inconvenience you that we suggested it. It is my honest assessment that an early visit, during which Geoffrey Howe would meet with you, will best enable me to defend what I perceive to be your interests as much as ours in the face of the rapidly mounting pressures for action against South Africa.

Could I ask you to be kind enough to look again at the possibility of a visit by Geoffrey Howe next week, and of seeing him yourself? I can assure you that he would act with the greatest possible discretion. I would not come back to you on this unless I really believed it a matter of great importance.

Yours sincerely

Rogant Datta

The Honourable P. W. Botha, D.M.S.