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*From the Private Secretary*

3 March 1986

REPRESENTATIONS TO THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT

Thank you for your letter of 28 February explaining the background to the representations made by HM Ambassador in Capetown to the South African government on 25 February to which the latter have responded publicly.

As you know, the Prime Minister thought that this matter had been handled most unsatisfactorily. While recognising that a difficult balance has to be struck in our dealings with the South African government, she thinks that the timing of the representations was unfortunate against the background of our efforts to persuade the South African government to deal sensible with the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group; and that the decision to give publicity to them smacked of acting for effect and me-tooism, which not surprisingly gained us the worst of all worlds.

The Prime Minister has asked me to make clear that she would wish No. 10 to be consulted before any decision is reached whether to make representations in similarly delicate situations in future (as is indeed your normal practice).

CHARLES POWELL

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