

Subject cc Master

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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

19 June 1986

Dear Colin,

SOUTH AFRICA

The Prime Minister had a meeting this evening with members of the Conservative Back Bench Committee on South Africa. Those present were Sir Patrick Wall, Sir John Biggs-Davison, Sir Ian Lloyd, the Rt. Hon. Julian Amery, Mr. George Gardiner and Mr. John Carlisle.

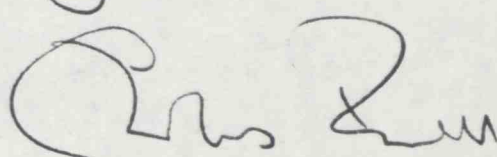
The Group's message was broadly along the following lines. They were fully behind the Prime Minister's stand on sanctions, which they believed enjoyed very wide support in the Conservative Party and in the country. Sanctions would destroy the agents of peaceful change in South Africa. They saw great risks in setting foot on the downward slope of economic measures. It would be represented as a retreat and a defeat for the Government. They did not believe that the Conservative Party would accept more negative sanctions. But there was a strong case for positive action. This might take the form of a Marshall Plan to help dismantle apartheid and raise the living standards of black South Africans; and a political initiative, which might involve sending the Foreign Secretary to South Africa to meet President Botha. The Group said that they had been concerned by some of the comments made in Ministerial speeches in the debate on South Africa which suggested uncritical acceptance of the goal of one man one vote in a unitary state in South Africa. They would like to see the Government be more active in condemning ANC atrocities - there had been 235 necklace deaths since March - and give more recognition of the role of moderate blacks in South Africa. They had been horrified at reports of Pik Botha's interview with ITN this evening, in which he had spoken of western countries' opposition to sanctions being dictated by narrow self-interest. They had sent a strongly-worded letter of protest to the South African Ambassador.

The Prime Minister said that it was essential to fashion a way through which kept the party together. She agreed that sanctions which added to unemployment and penury in South Africa would only make matters worse. But it was only realistic to acknowledge that the Government could not get away without doing something. It would probably be necessary to agree some new measures at the European Council

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next week. The South African Government had ruined the prospects of the Eminent Persons Group by its raids on neighbouring countries. The most recent statement by Pik Botha only increased the Government's difficulties. Her aim was to resuscitate the EPG's proposals and restore momentum towards a dialogue between the South African government and black representatives. An even stronger effort was required to get the Government's case across to public opinion. She would be ready to send a Government Minister to South Africa in the right circumstances. She reiterated the importance of maintaining party unity.

I should be grateful if this letter could be treated as personal to the Secretary of State, the Lord President and the Chief Whip, to whose offices I am also copying it.

Yours sincerely


C. D. POWELL

C. R. Budd, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office