



10 DOWNING STREET

PERSONAL

From the Press Secretary

M R Hanson Esq
UKCC
23 Portland Place
London W1N 3AF

30 July 1986

Jim Michael,

Many thanks for your letter of July 22 re South Africa and more particularly Botswana's attitudes to Britain. I very much hope that as a result of the Foreign Secretary's recent visit to Botswana its leaders are now clearer about the British position.

One of the problems I have encountered through this whole piece is the over simplification to the point of utter distortion inherent in British politics and journalism.

This manifests itself in this case in the form of the Prime Minister's being South Africa's "friend" because she is against general economic sanctions. (NB: We can't be against selective economic sanctions or other measures since we already have 13 in place.) This in turn is twisted by some politicians to infer or assert that the Prime Minister is racist. And so we go on.

To be against general economic sanctions is not necessarily to be for South Africa. Indeed, the Government in my view shares the broad aim of all moderate, as distinct from extreme or uncaring or unthinking, people of securing an end to apartheid sooner rather than later on the basis of a peaceful settlement with minimum damage to the South African economy.

The argument is really about means. But that is where it becomes difficult for those whose sole contribution to constructive thinking about the issue is to parrot the world "sanctions". I think I can say without fear of contradiction that for the last 2 months we have encountered no argument, merely slogans, in response to the Government case against general economic sanctions and for diplomacy.

I am satisfied that sanctions, whether economic or otherwise, won't work in the sense of securing an early fundamental change in the apartheid policy. I am satisfied that they won't work, partly because sanctions never do work in the face of the ingenuity (the son of greed) of which the world is capable and partly because the South Africans are determined to win through

anyway. I am satisfied that gesture politics will also be ineffective. I am not satisfied that diplomacy is useless and that patient talking is not more likely to secure the broad aim I set out above. The problem is time and emotion.

We are therefore heavily engaged in the business of procuring and managing change in a part of the world where we probably have as much influence as any other country, though that is not saying much. This requires us to keep on trying - while at the same time also trying to keep the lid on things.

All this - and Botha language and US Congress activity and so on - will test our ingenuity and skill. But I believe we shall better succeed with patience rather than bluster. In the meantime, I agree it would help if our motives, and especially those of the Prime Minister, were more accurately understood. It is my daily task to strive for that understanding. It would help if much of the world wanted to listen.

John G. ...
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BERNARD INGHAM



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Charles Bowell

With the compliments of

Dear see my attached letter
to a correspondent - whose
letter you saw.

It brings together all my
briefings

John