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*SUBJECT cc MASTER*

10 DOWNING STREET  
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*From the Private Secretary*

10 February 1987

*Dear Tony,*

**PRIME MINISTER'S MEETING WITH THE  
SOUTH AFRICAN AMBASSADOR**

The Prime Minister had a brief talk this afternoon with the South African Ambassador before his final departure. It was in fact the first time that they had met during his period as Ambassador.

The Prime Minister said that the Eminent Persons' Group had been a missed opportunity for South Africa. The South African government should not delude itself that the present lull in international criticism of South Africa was anything more than that. International pressure for sanctions could build up again at any time, particularly if there were to be a South African attack on a neighbouring country. She continued to believe that comprehensive economic sanctions would be counter-productive. But her ability to hold them back was steadily eroded by the failure of the South African government to make progress with reform. The rejection of Ndaba in Natal had been particularly unfortunate. It was vital that there should be a move forward again in South Africa after the elections. President Botha could no longer claim that he was being put under pressure by the western powers. He had been given a respite. The Prime Minister continued that she accepted that nothing would happen before the elections. But she remained convinced that progress would only come with the release of Mandela and undertakings by the ANC to suspend violence. Her personal view was that a federal solution was the answer to South Africa's problems, and she hoped that some serious thought was being given to how this might be approached and prepared.

Dr. Worrall's reply was largely along standard lines. President Botha had lost patience with the western governments for their failure to give recognition to the reforms which he had undertaken. The sanctions imposed by the United States Congress had been counter-productive and had more or less destroyed United States' influence in South Africa. The prospects for further reform depended on the outcome of the elections. If the main opposition to the Government continued to come from the PFP, i.e. from the left of the Government, then there was a reasonable chance of further steps in the reform process. But if the main opposition in Parliament was in future to come from the far right, then South Africa was in for a very difficult time.

He personally shared the Prime Minister's disappointment at his Government's failure to pursue the Natal initiative. This would be one of the main planks of his own election campaign. He also agreed that, in the longer term, a federation solution was probably the way forward. Dr. Worrall added that we should not underestimate the importance of the Southern Africa initiative undertaken by his government. What they really craved, far more than approval from western governments, was to be accepted by and on terms with other Southern African states. He thought that this would be the main thrust of South Africa's foreign policy.

I did not take any notes. This account is my recollection of the main points.

*Yours sincerely,*

*Charles Powell*

CHARLES POWELL

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