



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

12 June 1986

Dear John,

SOUTH AFRICA

Following her meeting with the co-Chairmen of the Eminent Persons Group, the Prime Minister is inclined to think that she should send a further message to President Botha. The tone would be sympathetic rather than upbraiding. The message would recognise frankly the difficulties of the position following the issue of the Eminent Persons Group's report and stress the importance of continuing to find a way forward. The purpose would be to sound out President Botha on the possibility of some progress between now and the meeting of the Commonwealth Heads of Government next September. Its focus should be the need for the release of Nelson Mandela and for negotiations with black leaders.

You should be aware that, in the course of the conversation with the co-Chairmen, General Obasanjo slipped in a remark that he thought the Prime Minister was the only person to whom President Botha would talk frankly about his fears and about what he was prepared to do. The Prime Minister deliberately did not respond to this. She thinks that she has used up much of her credibility with Botha, for the time being at least, and in any case any thought of a meeting in present circumstances is clearly out of the question. Nonetheless, she regards it as interesting and perhaps significant that General Obasanjo should trawl this idea and continues to believe that we should keep it in mind as a possible option.

I should be grateful if the drafting of such a message could be set in hand, to be finalised following the meeting of Ministers which we hope to have next week.

Yours sincerely

 C D POWELL

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