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Private Secretary

Dr. Powell
Foreign Secretary has approved this.
R. Galman
4/5

cc: PS/Number 10
Sir R Armstrong
Mr Braithwaite
Mr Ingham
Mr Meyer

SOUTH AFRICA: HANDLING OF P W BOTHA'S REQUEST FOR A STATEMENT

1. Discussion this morning with the Japanese, US and Canadian Foreign Ministers revealed strong doubts about the possibility of getting agreement at Tokyo on a brief balanced statement of support for a dialogue between South Africa and black representatives of the kind the Prime Minister hopes to be able to achieve. They all agreed that the original South African expectations were quite unrealistic.

2. The arguments put forward were:

- (i) any proposal for a positive statement on South Africa would be met with counter-proposals for additions. These would be on standard lines (condemnation of apartheid, demand for release of Mandela, faster progress towards dismantling of apartheid etc) of the kind that would be unwelcome to Botha at present.
- (ii) the above risk would be particularly acute in the case of a separate statement. It might be reduced if a short passage could be included in a more general statement. But there is no suitable vehicle available. The general declaration of economic conclusions are quite unsuitable;
- (iii) an alternative possibility might be for a brief reference to be made to South Africa in the Chairman's summing-up if suitable wording could be agreed and used.

3. The dangers to the COMGEP process of an unbalanced statement from Tokyo are particularly acute at present. A bad reaction in South Africa would rub off on their attitude towards COMGEP and prejudice the prospects for a further visit to South Africa. Great care will therefore be needed here.

4. The best approach would be for the Prime Minister to sound out her colleagues (especially The Netherlands Prime Minister, also President Mitterrand and Chancellor Kohl) before the joint session on the afternoon of 5 May. It would be necessary to explain the rationale for making a positive statement at this juncture, and avoiding the standard condemnatory language. If their reaction was positive, it would be worth circulating the attached draft passage at the joint session.

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5. The risk would be that additions would be proposed drawn from recent statements on South Africa, eg by the 12, which would therefore be difficult to reject.

6. It would need to be clearly understood that if a passage on these lines was agreed for use by the Chairman in his summing up he should stick to the agreed wording.

7. If the responses from the Prime Minister's colleagues were equivocal, it would be best to avoid these risks altogether and to invite the Chairman simply to state, in his summing up, that the question of South Africa had been discussed, but avoid going into details.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'D M D Thomas'.

4 May 1986

D M D Thomas

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SUGGESTED PASSAGE ON SOUTH AFRICA FOR CHAIRMAN'S SUMMING UP

On South Africa, the Seven Summit leaders noted and welcomed the progress made so far by the Commonwealth Group of Eminent Persons. They expressed full support for the aim of facilitating a process of dialogue across lines of colour, politics and religion in South Africa in the context of a suspension of violence on all sides. They called for the complete abolition of apartheid and for the establishment of a democratic, non-racial system of government which would ensure the protection of minorities.