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LONDON SW1A 2AA

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From the Private Secretary

15 September 1987

CHOGM AND SOUTH AFRICA

I have had a talk with the Prime Minister about the handling of Southern African issues at CHOGM. She intends to be predictably and satisfactorily robust.

A point which the Prime Minister made - and which has probably occurred independently to you - is that if the South Africans are anyway thinking of taking any particular steps in the direction of liberalisation or release of prisoners or anything similar in the near future, then it would be very helpful if they could take them ahead of CHOGM. It would make it considerably easier for us to defend our position if this were to happen.

You will know better than I how best to make this point to the South Africans. The Prime Minister is adamant that we should not seem to be pressing them to take any particular action, which would be counter-productive. (For the same reason, she does not want to send Botha any message.) It is only a suggestion about the timing of anything which they may intend to do anyway.

Equally, it would be helpful to have any details of action which the South African Government have already taken; and suggestions for any other themes which the Prime Minister might pursue.

I am not copying this letter to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. If you decide to report any action more widely, then please do not refer to this letter.

C D POWELL

His Excellency Robin W. Renwick, C.M.G.