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From the Private Secretary

PRIME MINISTER'S MEETING WITH MR. COLIN EGLIN

The Prime Minister had a talk this morning with Mr. Colin Eglin, M.P., Leader of South Africa's Progressive Federal Party.

The Prime Minister said that she had been quite encouraged by President Botha's recent speech, but understood that Mr. Eglin took a less positive view of it. It seemed to her that, following on the three by-elections in which the Government had suffered a disastrous setback, the speech had required some courage. It was important psychologically as an indication of President Botha's intention to continue the reform process. Mr. Eglin said that his reaction was not as negative as the Prime Minister had been informed. He was intrigued and fascinated by the speech, and agreed that it was quite courageous. The problem was that, until more formal policy proposals emerged, it should only be seen as another exercise in kite-flying. The weakness of the President's approach was that he was trying to create a new super-structure on a foundation which was simply not acceptable to the great majority in South Africa.

The Prime Minister asked about the prospects for repeal or reform of the Group Areas Act. Mr. Eglin said that the Government had not shown its full hand. Where separate areas had become de facto mixed, ways had been found to legalise this, and the Government had avoided taking a position on new estates. But it seemed also to be intent on increasing the penalties for those who moved across racial lines.

The Prime Minister asked to what extent the Whites in South Africa accepted the need for change. Mr. Eglin said that he believed that a combination of internal and external pressures would see the end of apartheid in due course (he stressed that he was referring to moral pressure from outside, not sanctions). White South Africans would not die in the last ditch in order to keep a separate bench in the park. The key issue was not apartheid, but political power. President Botha was telling the Whites that they must be prepared for some form of power sharing. But he was too old and too rigid to be capable of finding a solution himself. In consequence, he was stuck in a sort of no man's land. It

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was not just Botha's fault. The Opposition had equally failed to produce a solution or a philosophy to capture people's imagination. If middle-of-the road Whites could see an alternative to the Government's policy which gave them a fair chance of security and permanence, they might be prepared to support it. Unfortunately at the moment they saw no viable alternative to the present system. This was sad, because there was actually a much greater compatibility between white people and black people in South Africa than was generally realised. In practice, there was good cooperation between them in every field in which it was permitted.

The Prime Minister asked whether Mr. Eglin believed in one man one vote in a unitary state. Mr. Eglin said that he started from the concept that every citizen must have a say in the election of the government of his country. But in South Africa's conditions this would rule out a unitary state. There would have to be a federal system, and some form of proportional representation in government. These were problems which could be solved once one had broken the sound barrier of admitting that every citizen had a right to vote. If there could be a negotiated constitution on these lines, he thought that the ANC would have a significant role in South Africa, but would not command the support of the majority of Blacks. Unfortunately, President Botha was not the man to take the necessary steps. He had run out of "reform elastic".

In reply to a further question from the Prime Minister about the ANC, Mr. Eglin said that the present hard line nature of the ANC was a consequence of its banning. If it were unbanned, he believed that it would prove itself to be a reasonably democratic African organisation. Chief Buthelezi and the ANC were not so far apart. Both of them would like to be on better terms.

Mr. Eglin saw F.W. de Klerk as the most likely successor to President Botha. He met the need for someone who was a more pliable negotiator. The Prime Minister commented that this made him sound weak. The Whites would be better served by a strong leader with clear objectives.

The Prime Minister referred to the recent report written for the State Department on Renamo which exposed a horrifying story of brutality and torture. Mr. Eglin agreed that they could not be classified as freedom fighters. He thought that, since the Nkomati Accord, the South African Government had stopped its support for them.

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