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Mr Coles
29/5

24 May 1984

The Right Honourable Margaret Thatcher, M.P.
10, Downing Street
LONDON, S.W.1.

Dear Prime Minister,

Visit of the South African Prime Minister

In view of Mr. P. W. Botha's impending visit to London, I write as Chairman of the United Kingdom-Botswana Society to express concern at recent reports that the South African Government is seeking by means of economic and political pressure to induce the Government of Botswana to sign a non-aggression treaty. As you will be aware, the President of Botswana has stated clearly his view that for Botswana to enter into such a treaty would be unnecessary and inappropriate.

Botswana's foreign policy in the eighteen years since the country's independence has commanded widespread international respect. It has been characterised by two key elements: sustained and consistent opposition to apartheid and minority rule and refusal to allow Botswana's territory to be used as a springboard for armed attacks against its neighbours. President Masire has recently reiterated in the strongest possible terms his denial that the African National Congress or any other anti-South African group is operating from bases in Botswana. South Africa knows very well that its security is in no way threatened by Botswana. We are forced to conclude therefore that South Africa's

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objective in pressing the Botswana Government to enter into a non-aggression pact is to undermine the integrity and credibility of Botswana's position. We also understand that South Africa is attempting to use the renegotiation of the Customs Union Agreement with Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland to secure recognition of the Bantustans.

You have identified the internal situation in South Africa as a cause of tension in the region. We welcome your recent statement in the House of Commons that you will take the opportunity of the visit to London of the South African Prime Minister to repeat the British Government's disapproval of apartheid. Such statements encourage us to hope that in your discussions with Mr. Botha you will find it possible to emphasise the positive role which Botswana plays in the affairs of Southern Africa and to urge him not to take advantage of Botswana's economic dependence on South Africa in an effort to change the political stance of its Government.

Britain and Botswana enjoy close and friendly relations at both governmental and non-governmental levels and the two countries are united by their common belief in democracy and the rule of law and by their opposition to racial injustice. Britain is justly proud of its record in defending the freedom of small countries threatened by powerful neighbours. We hope that the British Government will do all in its power to ensure that Botswana is allowed to conduct its foreign affairs free from intimidation. Botswana's voice of reason and humanity makes an important and positive contribution to the resolution of Southern African problems, and must not be silenced.

Yours sincerely,
Eleanor J. Emery

Miss E. J. Emery, C.M.G.