



Prime Minister

CHOGM: GROUP OF EMINENT PERSONS (EPG)

1. We agreed that I would let you have some further ideas on the Group of Eminent Persons. I attach a short paper which sets out what I suggest should be our objectives, together with the main problems which the proposal presents. The paper gives some idea of the wide scope and nature of the work which will be involved; and I deal in this note with the choice of our own nominee.

Yes - I think we should

2. The first question which I think we need to answer is whether we should take the proposal seriously, in the sense that we hope that it will yield positive results, or whether we should simply regard it as a damage limitation exercise imposed on us as an inevitable consequence of the discussion at Nassau. *Nonna*

3. I believe we should approach the Group with the intention of trying to make it work. I very much agree with you that the outcome at Nassau demonstrates what can be achieved by a determined campaign against all the odds. The same may turn out to be true of the EPG. The initiative could act as a catalyst in helping the South African Government to overcome some of the very real difficulties it faces in negotiating with representative black leaders. Contact with the South African Government may in its turn help to induce a greater sense of realism among some members of the Group. You will recall that when the EC Troika went to South Africa they returned impressed by the complexity of the situation. If on the other hand the Group fails, then this would certainly increase the pressure for economic sanctions.

4. Paragraph 4 of the paper sets out our suggested objectives. These indicate how important it is that our own nominee should be capable of putting our arguments across forcefully or, if he

/finds



finds himself in a minority, dissociating himself firmly from the views of the others. I know that you think both these considerations suggest that I myself should be our representative.

5. While I understand the reasons behind this conclusion, I am sure we need to give further thought to the very serious disadvantages of my participation. In the first place, it is clear from the list of likely nominees that most, if not all, of the others will be bent on a very different outcome from the one we seek. The British representative on the Group may well be faced at the end by a choice between two alternatives: either to accept the conclusions of the Group, which would involve damaging compromises, or to enter a minority report. Clearly there should be no question of doing the first. There is also a high risk that the South African Government would refuse to receive the Group at all. When I saw the South African Ambassador on 24 October he hinted strongly at this. If so, this would make your useful dialogue with Botha that much more difficult to sustain on its present basis. There is also the point that if I were to take part myself we would be committing the Government directly in a way which would not be the case with any other non-Ministerial candidate. I can foresee a situation in which we would want to distance ourselves from the report from the very outset in order to retain the option of dissociating ourselves if the outcome is unacceptable to us. (All this is aside from the question of whether CHOGM thought in terms of a serving Minister being appointed to the Group).

6. These are reasons of substance. From a more personal standpoint I am concerned that the Group seems likely to consist mainly of former Heads of Government, no longer in office but with much time on their hands. Their instinct will be to manufacture a role for themselves by having the Group visit as many countries as possible in Africa and elsewhere. I could

/of course

That's why we must go.

to what?

No - For for for India



of course do my best to limit the ambitions of the other members. But I do not see how I could spare the time for even a restricted programme of visits on the scale which the rest of the Group would be prepared, indeed eager, to accept. South Africa is a very important issue for us, but we have other equally important issues over the next six months which must take up a great deal of the time of a British Foreign Secretary.

7. For these reasons we have been through a long list of other possible candidates. I am afraid that Brian Urquhart is a non-starter. He will be in harness at the UN until the end of this year and is then due to make a tour of the UN's peacekeeping operations with his successor. The list which we have looked at includes a range of senior or retired politicians (Lord Jellicoe, Lord Thorneycroft, Lord Soames, Lord Thomson of Monifieth, Lord Home and Francis Pym), some senior generals (Field-Marshal Bramall and Carver) and various ex-government servants (for example Lords Greenhill and Hunt).

8. By far the most impressive, for obvious reasons, is Peter Carrington. He, more than anyone else I can think of, would offer us the best chance of securing a constructive outcome. I know that he will not find it easy to make himself available, but I think that we should make a determined effort to recruit him.

9. A second possibility, not in the Carrington class but still very well-qualified and steady (as we know from the Franks Committee) is Tony Barber. I do not feel that his business experience of South Africa should be seen as disqualifying him. On the contrary, indeed; though it could make it difficult to persuade him to serve.

10. If neither of these can be made available, then I would suggest that we look again at Anthony Parsons. Though obviously not of

/the same



the same degree of eminence as the other two, he would certainly have the necessary diplomatic skills and tenacity to make him extremely effective - and the viewpoint which we would like to see put over.

11. Quite apart from this question of membership, I believe we need to move very quickly on influencing the terms of reference of the Group. I would like our officials to make early contact with the Commonwealth Secretariat, and I would be prepared to see Ramphal myself this week if necessary.

12. I should very much welcome a discussion on these points as soon as convenient for you.

27 October 1985

(Geoffrey Howe)



POSITION PAPER ON THE COMMONWEALTH GROUP OF EMINENT PERSONS

Background

1. The Commonwealth Accord decided to establish "a small group of eminent Commonwealth persons" in order "to encourage, through all practicable ways," the evolution of the process of political dialogue in South Africa. The Group would "seek to facilitate the processes of dialogue referred to in paragraph 2(E) (of the Accord) and by all practicable means to advance fulfillment of the objectives of this Accord". Paragraph 3 of the Accord describes the process of dialogue as involving "the true representatives of the majority black population of South Africa" and paragraph 2 (E) states that it should be initiated "in the context of a suspension of violence on all sides" and "with a view to establishing a non-racial and representative government". The President of Zambia and the Prime Ministers of Australia, Bahamas, Canada, India, the UK and Zimbabwe were asked to develop the modalities of the effort together with the Commonwealth Secretary-General.

2. Mr Powell's letter of 22 October records what was decided at CHOGM about the Group. It was agreed that the Governments concerned should let the Commonwealth Secretary-General have their nominees for the Group by the end of next week. The Group would then meet in London within a month. It was proposed that the chairman should be Nyerere. Other names mentioned as possible members were Obasanjo of Nigeria, Fraser or Whitlam from Australia and Singh from India. The Canadians were likely to propose either Stansfield or Trudeau. The Prime Minister mentioned Urquhart.

3. There are no further details of what the Group might do. But a note on the original Australian proposal for such a group is attached.

British Objectives

4. We see British objectives as the following:

- (i) to use this Commonwealth initiative to focus



international efforts on trying to promote dialogue within South Africa rather than on punitive measures

(ii) to ensure that the outcome of the initiative is not such as to increase the pressure on the UK to adopt additional sanctions and to keep the Group from recommending these

(iii) to have the Group set itself modest and sustainable terms of reference which increase the likelihood of securing the co-operation of the SAG and avoid a rebuff by them

(iv) to avoid the group making recommendations about the future constitutional structure of South Africa. (We need to steer away from the categorical reference in the Commonwealth Accord (extracted from the New Delhi communiqué) to "the establishment of majority rule on the basis of full and fair exercise of universal adult suffrage by all the people in a united and non-fragmented South Africa". This is close to saying one man, one vote in a unitary state and as such totally unacceptable to the SAG)

(v) to keep the group from promoting the interests of the ANC at the expense of other representative groups of black opinion in South Africa.

Points for Decision and suggested British position

5. (i) Membership

Each of the seven Commonwealth countries are expected to nominate one member. We should aim to transmit the name of a British nominee to Ramphal by 1 November.

(ii) Terms of Reference

More detailed terms of reference will need to be worked out for the group. These can either be agreed by the seven Governments in advance or left to the group itself to work out on the basis of what is in the Commonwealth Accord. In practice it is likely that the Commonwealth Secretariat will play a central role in their drafting. The Foreign Secretary

[Friday]



recommends that he should speak soon to Ramphal to suggest terms of reference on the lines indicated below. We should aim to have acceptable terms of reference agreed by governments before the Group begins to work. We would want to avoid any suggestion in the terms of reference that the Group would become involved in drawing up blueprints for a political solution in South Africa; in laying down firm pre-conditions for dialogue there; or in making recommendations for additional measures to bring pressure on the SAG.

Instead the terms of reference might be on the following lines.

- To identify representatives of all the different groups and shades of opinion in South Africa whose views need to be taken account in any process of political dialogue in South Africa. This would include not only those who would take part in any such dialogue, in particular the SAG and acknowledged representatives of the black population, but also those (eg Church leaders, businessmen, trade unionists, press etc) whose views are relevant to such a dialogue.
- To make contact with these representatives, to clarify their attitudes towards beginning political dialogue and to seek their views on ways of promoting it.
- To examine ways of bridging the gap between the various positions so as to enable political dialogue to begin.
- To seek to identify possible confidence building measures on both sides which would promote such convergence and which might form a package leading to the beginning of negotiations. (It would not be possible to say in advance what such a package might contain but the sort of elements which would obviously need to be considered are those mentioned in paragraph 2 of the Commonwealth Accord including most importantly a suspension of violence on all sides. The



Group might also look into the possibility of promoting exploratory meetings between those concerned with a minimum of pre-conditions.)

(iii) Who would the Group plan to see?

There would seem every advantage in encouraging the Group to seek the views of as wide a spectrum of opinion as possible. We should press them to adopt the very good list produced by the Ten's Embassies in South Africa for the EC Troika (COREU tel CPE/HAG 322 attached). The Group will undoubtedly insist also on contacts with the ANC. We should not resist this. One other group of opinion with which the EC Troika did not meet, but which should be included, are the leaders from the independent homelands which we, but not the SAG, regard as part of South Africa. We may find difficulties in persuading other members of the Group to agree to this. A further point of difficulty is that the Group is bound to want to see Mandela if it goes to South Africa. The SAG refused to let the EC Troika see him. But several members of the Group may be reluctant to go to South Africa unless they do see him.

(iv) How would they make contact?

There is likely to be a presumption that the Group will ask to visit South Africa as the EC Troika did. The credibility of the Group depends on their having contact with the widest possible range of opinion and especially with the SAG. It is not clear whether the SAG will agree. The composition of the Group and any statements which its members may make are likely to influence this. If the SAG refuses to allow the Group to visit South Africa, it will have to invite representatives of South African opinion to come and speak to it somewhere else. It would then have to seek through other means the views of those, eg the SAG, who declined to come. The UK could offer to clarify the position of the SAG through diplomatic channels and relay this to the Group. However, we should normally press for the Group to meet people as a Group.



(v) Duration and scope of travel?

The Group will need to do a much more thorough job than the EC Troika. This means (if permitted) a more extended visit to South Africa, one which would take in Pretoria, Capetown, Durban, and possible other parts of the country. They would probably also wish to visit Lusaka (to see the ANC) and possibly Dar es Salaam (to meet the PAC) and other front line state capitals. We should encourage them to use London as their working base. We should also offer the use of the British Embassy in Pretoria and of subordinate posts in Capetown, Durban, etc for any visit to South Africa.

(vi) Secretariat

The Commonwealth Secretariat will expect to provide the necessary secretariat assistance and is technically capable of doing so. Indeed Ramphal is bound to involve himself closely. The members of the Group may also need assistants to act in the role of private secretaries. We should insert a British official to act in this capacity for the British member of the Group. We should also look into the possibility of the Commonwealth Secretariat team including a British member.

(vii) Finance

The cost of the whole exercise will presumably be met from Commonwealth funds. This means that Britain will pay 30% of whatever it costs.

(viii) Namibia

We should be careful to exclude the question of Namibia from this exercise. To try to include it would lead the Group away from the central question of promoting dialogue within South Africa and would increase the potential difficulties with the SAG.

AUSTRALIA'S PROPOSAL FOR A GROUP OF EMINENT PERSONS (as circulated
before CHOGM)

A stated Australian objective at CHOGM will be to seek endorsement of their initiative of 19 August proposing the establishment of an International Group to advance proposals for peaceful change in South Africa. They argue that the Commonwealth's shared constitutional and legal heritage, and its notable role in the transition of Rhodesia to Zimbabwe, place it in a strong position to "stimulate a peaceful transition to a democratic, humane society, ensuring that the process develops in a way in which secures for the West the respect and trust of black South Africans", carrying along "the white community whose involvement will be necessary for the emergence and development of a new South Africa".

The Group's report would go beyond broad formulations and propose a means for developing an agreed constitutional structure for South Africa and the steps needed to advance towards that end.

The Group would draw on the views of black South Africans - UDF, ANC and others such as Bishop Tutu. The acceptance of the Group by black leaders in South Africa and the FLS would be a critical element. It would also be necessary for the Group to have access to the views of representatives of the South African Government and of the white community.

The participants should be "eminent figures" of international renown, including an Australian. The various regions of the Commonwealth should be represented, but membership would not necessarily be restricted to the Commonwealth.