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DD 141130Z PRETO
FM FCOLN TO PRETO
141020Z DEC
GRS 503

PRIME MINISTER'S
PERSONAL MESSAGE
SERIAL No. T 233A/85

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FM FCO
TO DESKBY 141130Z PRETORIA
TELNO 336
OF 141020Z DECEMBER 85

PLEASE DELIVER THE FOLLOWING MESSAGE FROM THE PRIME MINISTER TO
P.W. BOTHA AS SOON AS POSSIBLE BUT BEFORE THE END OF SUNDAY:
MESSAGE READS:

I WRITE TO LET YOU KNOW THAT I HAD AN OPPORTUNITY FOR A
LONG DISCUSSION WITH THE MEMBERS OF THE COMMONWEALTH EMINENT
PERSONS GROUP DURING THEIR RECENT VISIT TO LONDON. I WAS
GREATLY ENCOURAGED BY THEIR GENERAL APPROACH AND BELIEVE THAT
YOU WILL BE ALSO. THEY CLEARLY GET ON WELL TOGETHER. I
UNDERSTAND THAT THE TWO CO-CHAIRMEN ARE WRITING TO YOU TO ASK
WHETHER THE GROUP CAN PAY AN EARLY VISIT TO SOUTH AFRICA.
THEY ASSURED ME THAT THEY HAD TAKEN CARE TO COUCH IT IN TERMS
ACCEPTABLE TO YOUR GOVERNMENT.

IN THE COURSE OF OUR MEETING THE MEMBERS OF THE GROUP
SAID THAT THEY WELL UNDERSTOOD THAT IT WAS NO PART OF THEIR
TASK TO PURPORT TO TELL THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT OR PEOPLE
HOW TO ORGANISE THEIR OWN AFFAIRS. RATHER THEY RECOGNISED
THAT THEIR MANDATE WAS SIMPLY TO SEE IF THEY COULD FACILITATE
A DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE VARIOUS COMMUNITIES. THEY WOULD BE
CONDUCTING THEIR MISSION AS DISCREETLY AS POSSIBLE. THEY WILL
NOT SEEK PUBLICITY BUT HAVE YET TO WORK OUT HOW TO RESPOND TO
INEVITABLE PRESS INTEREST IN WHAT THEY RECOGNISED IS A VERY
SENSITIVE SITUATION. THEY SAID IN TERMS THAT IT WAS NO PART

1

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CONFIDENTIAL

2116 - 1

OF THEIR INTENTION TO EMBARRASS THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT BUT RATHER TO BE CONSTRUCTIVE. GENERAL OBASANJO ACKNOWLEDGED THE NEED TO PRESERVE THE STRENGTH AND BUOYANCY OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN ECONOMY WHICH HE DESCRIBED AS IMPORTANT NOT ONLY FOR SOUTH AFRICA ITSELF BUT FOR THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN REGION AS A WHOLE. THE GROUP AGREED WITH ME THAT THE SIX MONTH PERIOD MENTIONED IN THE COMMONWEALTH ACCORD WAS NOT A DEADLINE BUT A 'REVIEW CLAUSE'. THEY ALSO RECOGNISED THAT IT WAS UNREALISTIC TO EXPECT CHANGES TO HAPPEN OVERNIGHT.

I RECORD THESE POINTS BECAUSE I THINK THEY ARE INDICATIVE OF THE GENERALLY SENSIBLE, LEVEL-HEADED AND HELPFUL APPROACH OF THE GROUP. I HOPE YOU WILL AGREE THAT IT IS WORTH AN EFFORT TO PRESERVE THIS. THE GROUP MADE CLEAR TO ME THAT THEY WERE VERY ANXIOUS TO START ON THEIR TASK AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. THEY PARTICULARLY ASKED ME TO URGE YOU TO LET THEM VISIT SOUTH AFRICA IN JANUARY. THEY RECOGNISE THAT THEIR FIRST DUTY IS TO MEET YOUR GOVERNMENT AND CARRY OUT WHATEVER PROGRAMME YOU MIGHT RECOMMEND, THOUGH THEY WOULD BE SUBSEQUENTLY ALSO LIKE TO SEE REPRESENTATIVES OF ALL COMMUNITIES. IN VIEW OF THE GROUP'S RESPONSIBLE APPROACH, I HOPE VERY MUCH THAT YOU WILL FEEL ABLE TO RESPOND POSITIVELY TO THEIR LETTER AND IN PARTICULAR AGREE TO SEEM THEM BEFORE THE END OF JANUARY AS THEY ASK.

I HAVE ASKED THE CO-CHAIRMAN TO KEEP ME INFORMED OF PROGRESS IN CASE I CAN HELP WITH ANY DIFFICULTIES THAT MAY ARISE. I WOULD HOPE THAT YOU WOULD SIMILARLY FEEL ABLE TO TAKE ME INTO YOUR CONFIDENCE IN SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES.

WITH MY BEST WISHES

HOWE

LIMITED

HD/SAFD

PS

PS/MR. RIFKIND

PS/PUS

MR. FERGUSSON

MR. JOHNSON

2

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Letter to PW BOTHA

Je Already (T)'d.
cfw.
Used date



10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

14 December 1985

Dear Mr President,

I write to let you know that I had an opportunity for a long discussion with the members of the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group during their recent visit to London. I was greatly encouraged by their general approach and believe that you will be also. They clearly get on well together. I understand that the two co-Chairmen are writing to you to ask whether the Group can pay an early visit to South Africa. They assured me that they had taken care to couch it in terms acceptable to your Government.

In the course of our meeting the members of the Group said that they well understood that it was no part of their task to purport to tell the South African Government or people how to organise their own affairs. Rather they recognised that their mandate was simply to see if they could facilitate a dialogue between the various communities. They would be conducting their mission as discreetly as possible. They will not seek publicity but have yet to work out how to respond to inevitable press interest in what they recognised is a very sensitive situation. They said in terms that it was no part of their intention to embarrass the South African Government but rather to be constructive. General Obasanjo acknowledged the need to preserve the strength and buoyancy of the South African economy which he described as important not only for South Africa itself but for the Southern African region as a whole. The Group agreed with me that the six month period mentioned in the Commonwealth Accord was not a deadline but a "review clause". They also recognised that it was unrealistic

to expect changes to happen overnight.

I record these points because I think they are indicative of the generally sensible, level-headed and helpful approach of the Group. I hope you will agree that it is worth an effort to preserve this. The Group made clear to me that they were very anxious to start on their task as soon as possible. They particularly asked me to urge you to let them visit South Africa in January. They recognise that their first duty is to meet your Government and carry out whatever programme you might recommend, though they would subsequently also like to see representatives of all communities. In view of the Group's responsible approach, I hope very much that you will feel able to respond positively to their letter and in particular agree to see them before the end of January as they ask.

I have asked the co-Chairmen to keep me informed of progress in case I can help with any difficulties that may arise. I would hope that you would similarly feel able to take me into your confidence in such circumstances.

With my best wishes,

Yours sincerely
Margaret Thatcher

The Hon. P. W. Botha, D.M.A.

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slw/ale

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

13 December 1985

**GROUP OF EMINENT
PERSONS ON SOUTH AFRICA**

Following my letter of earlier today, I now enclose a draft message from the Prime Minister to President Botha. The Prime Minister would, I am confident, be content with it. Subject to any comments by the Foreign Secretary, it could be despatched over the weekend.

*attachment
taken to PM
by CDP.
GR's will do file copy*

(C. D. POWELL)

Colin Budd, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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