



*South African Embassy*  
LONDON

SUBJECT cc OPS  
MASTER

PRIME MINISTER'S  
PERSONAL MESSAGE  
SERIAL No: T238/85

23rd December 1985

Dear Prime Minister,

Thank you for your message conveyed to my Office in Pretoria by your Ambassador on the 14th of December 1985.

I have also meanwhile received a letter from the Co-Chairmen of the Commonwealth Group to which I have responded positively and constructively in my opinion. I enclose a copy. It follows the lines of my letter to you of 14 December (which crossed your message of 14 December to me).

As of now, I am encouraged by the approach of the Group. If not correctly and considerately handled, this initiative could be damaging not only for South Africa but for the whole of the sub-continent.

As to the date of their visit, you will see how I have responded in my reply to the Co-Chairmen. I have no wish or intention to delay the visit but the latter half of January is simply not possible at least for me and my Government. We then reconvene in Cape Town in preparation for the start of the Parliamentary Session at the end of January and this is followed by debates in Parliament which will require our full attention. The second or third week in February would seem to be the earliest date on which we could meet but these are matters which could be sorted out at functional level in January.

May I say that you have been helpful and thoughtful in your approach to the Commonwealth initiative. I appreciate it. I hope we can keep this initiative on a constructive course.

With my best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

P.W. BOTHA  
STATE PRESIDENT OF  
THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

The Rt. Hon. Margaret Thatcher, M.P.  
Prime Minister  
No. 10 Downing Street  
LONDON SW1

*Optimum*  
*100%*  
*Prog*



Already  
T'd :

T238/85

REC'd 23/12/85

CCPC

Union Buildings  
Pretoria

24 December 1985

Dear Prime Minister

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with CDP?

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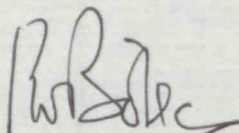
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Yours sincerely



P W BOTHA  
STATE PRESIDENT OF THE  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

The Rt. Hon. Margaret Thatcher, MP  
Prime Minister  
10 Downing Street  
LONDON



Union Buildings  
Pretoria

24 December 1985

Gentlemen

I acknowledge your letter of 13 December 1985 as conveyed to the Department of Foreign Affairs by the Ambassadors of Canada, United Kingdom and Australia on 16 December 1985.

I am encouraged by your positive reaction to the statement issued by my Minister of Foreign Affairs on 26 November 1985 setting out the South African Government's attitude with regard to the Commonwealth initiative.

I am prepared to approach this initiative constructively. I hope that you will be equally constructive in your approach. The Commonwealth Group can do incalculable harm if it sees itself as a pressure group charged with the task of extracting concessions from the Government and generally engaged in prescribing solutions to problems which are the sole concern of South Africans.

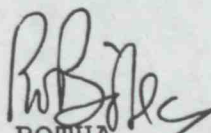
If, on the other hand, it wants to be informed of the situation in South Africa and confines itself to promoting peaceful political dialogue and, moreover, can be seen to be unbiased in this respect, it could serve a useful

purpose. I agree that a suspension of violence is a requirement for dialogue. I would hope, therefore, that the Commonwealth Group will discourage violence and avoid action or comment which might be seen or interpreted as encouragement to those promoting or supporting violence.

To ensure that there is no misunderstanding concerning the policies and objectives of my Government, let me state that we are determined to proceed with our reform programme which has already reached an advanced stage, whatever the obstacles we have to contend with; and we want to get moving with the negotiations. The sooner this can be done the better for this is the key to the solution of our problems. Our political programme provides for power sharing, subject only to the protection of the rights of all minorities, and we are reconciled to the eventual disappearance of white domination. All our communities must have a fair say in Government and this is what we shall be striving to achieve in the course of the negotiations. It presages the end of racial discrimination. But we need the co-operation of all our communities in constructing an alternative system of Government for South Africa. I trust that the Group will ensure that it does nothing which might impede the creation of a climate conducive to such co-operation.

You are welcome to visit South Africa and to consult with my Government and the representatives of the various population groups on the basis of the foregoing considerations. The modalities and timing can be arranged to our mutual satisfaction at functional level in the course of January 1986.

Yours sincerely



P W BOTHA  
STATE PRESIDENT OF THE  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Mr Malcolm Fraser  
General Olusegun Obasanjo  
Co-Chairmen  
Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group  
LONDON

S. AFRICA

RELATIONS P 58



8RW  
PRESIDENT Botha

ack/ 24 December 1985

I enclose letters from the South African State President and the Charge d'Affaires. I should be grateful for advice and a draft reply, please, by Tuesday, 7 January.

(MARK ADDISON)

Robert Culshaw, Esq.,  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

8RW



*South African Embassy*

LONDON

B8/2/7/1

23rd December 1985

Mr Charles Powell  
Private Secretary to the Prime Minister  
No. 10 Downing Street  
LONDON SW1

*Dear Charles,*

It would be much appreciated if you could kindly hand the enclosed letters from the South African State President to the Prime Minister, Mrs Margaret Thatcher.

Your assistance is much appreciated.

*With best wishes for the festive season*

*Yours sincerely*

*Leo*

LEO H. EVANS  
CHARGÉ d'AFFAIRES a.i.

ADVANCE COPIES

15

SOUTHERN AFRICA

PS  
PS/MR RIFKIND  
PS/PES  
MR FERBERSON  
SIR J FREELAND  
MR JOHNSON  
MR O'BRIEN  
ED/SAYD  
ED/CAFD  
ED/OND  
ED/NEWS DEPT

MR CIG MALLABY, CABINET OFFICE

~~PS/NO 10 DOWLING STREET~~

*Mr DARWIN*

*Prime Minister  
I have asked FCO for  
a direct reply to 45.44.1*

CONFIDENTIAL  
FM CAPE TOWN  
TO DESKBY 1430Z FCO  
TELNO 239  
OF 24 DECEMBER 85  
INFO ROUTINE PRETORIA

**IMMEDIATE**

*the State President's  
response.*

*MEB 24/12*

PRETORIA TELS NOS 596 AND 597 : EMINENT PERSONS GROUP :

STATE PRESIDENT'S REPLY

1. IN HANDING OVER THE LETTER THIS MORNING VON HIRSCHBERG SAID THAT HE WISHED TO EMPHASISE THAT THIS WAS A VERY POSITIVE AND CONSTRUCTIVE RESPONSE ON THE PART OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT. IN PARTICULAR PARAGRAPH FIVE WAS THE clearest possible policy STATEMENT OF THE GOVERNMENT'S GENUINE INTENTIONS FOR REFORM INCLUDING THE WORDS QUOTE WE ARE RECONCILED TO THE EVENTUAL DISAPPEARANCE OF WHITE DOMINATION UNQUOTE.

2. HE ADDED THAT THE COMMONWEALTH INITIATIVE COULD BE A LIFESAVER FOR THE DIFFICULT TASK OF PROGRESS INVOLVING DIFFERENT ETHNIC GROUPS. THE FACT THAT SOME MEMBERS OF THE EPG WERE KNOWN TO HAVE LITTLE SYMPATHY FOR SOUTH AFRICA WOULD ENSURE THAT THE GROUP'S REPORT WOULD RECEIVE WIDE CREDIBILITY AND SUPPORT. THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT WERE MINDFUL OF THIS.

3. VON HIRSCHBERG WENT ON TO SAY THAT THERE WAS A REAL PROBLEM ON TIMING. GIVEN THE WEIGHT OF BUSINESS PRIOR TO PARLIAMENT AND IN THE OPENING WEEKS IT WOULD BE UNREALISTIC TO ENVISAGE AN EPG VISIT BEFORE MID FEBRUARY BUT HE ASKED WHETHER AN INITIAL PATHFINDER VISIT WAS LIKELY AND IF SO WHO MIGHT COME AND WHEN.

COMMENT

4. THE RESPONSE IS AS POSITIVE AS WE COULD HAVE HOPED FOR. IT IS CLEAR THAT THE TACTICS ADOPTED BY THE GROUP OF KEEPING A LOW PROFILE AND MAKING NO PUBLIC STATEMENTS HAVE PAID OFF. THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT IS PREPARED TO SEE THEM. IT IS ENCOURAGING THAT THERE IS NO ATTEMPT TO SET PRE-CONDITIONS.

5. WE THINK THAT THE POINT ABOUT TIMING CAN BE ACCEPTED AT ITS FACE

5. WE THINK THAT THE POINT ABOUT TIMING CAN BE ACCEPTED AT ITS FACE VALUE. I HAD EXPECTED THAT THE SOUTH AFRICANS WOULD SEE PRACTICAL DIFFICULTIES OVER A VISIT IN JANUARY WHICH IS FOR THEM A HOLIDAY PERIOD FOLLOWED BY SEVERAL WEEKS OF VERY INTENSE WORK AS THEY PREPARE FOR THE OPENING OF PARLIAMENT. THEY MAY, HOWEVER, ALSO HAVE IN MIND THAT THEY WOULD PREFER THAT WHATEVER PROPOSALS THE STATE PRESIDENT WILL OUTLINE IN HIS OPENING ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT ON 31 JANUARY SHOULD NOT APPEAR TO HAVE BEEN INFLUENCED BY PRESSURES FROM THE EPG. FROM THE GOVERNMENT'S POINT OF VIEW IT WILL BE EASIER FOR THEM TO SEE THE GROUP WHEN THEIR PROPOSALS FOR THE SESSION HAVE BEEN ANNOUNCED.

6. FROM OUR POINT OF VIEW THE DELAY HAS ADVANTAGES. IT WILL BE EASIER TO ARRANGE A GOOD PROGRAMME FOR FEBRUARY RATHER THAN NEXT MONTH WHEN PLANS WOULD HAVE HAD TO BE MADE WHEN KEY PEOPLE WERE STILL AWAY ON HOLIDAY.

MOBERLY

WHILE SOME OF THE POINTS...  
THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT...  
THE OPENING OF PARLIAMENT...  
THE STATE PRESIDENT...  
THE EPG...  
THE GOVERNMENT'S POINT OF VIEW...  
THE DELAY HAS ADVANTAGES...  
THE POINT OF VIEW...  
THE DELAY HAS ADVANTAGES...  
THE POINT OF VIEW...

[REDACTED]

IMMEDIATE

BY THE  
SECRETARY  
FOR THE  
CONFIDENTIAL  
MATTERS  
SECRET

SECRET

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ADVANCE COPIES

25.14

SOUTHERN AFRICA

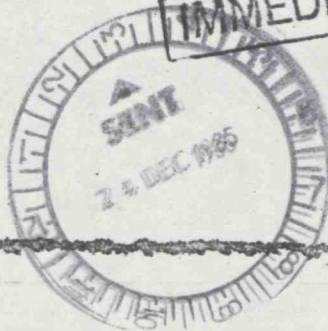
PS  
PS/MR RIFKIND  
PS/PUS  
MR FERGUSON  
SIR J FREELAND  
MR JOHNSON  
MR O'NEILL  
ED/SAYD  
ED/CAFD  
ED/UND  
ED/NEWS DEPT  
RESIDENT CLERK

MR CLG MALLABY, CABINET OFFICE

~~PS/NO 10 DOWNING STREET~~

ADVANCE COPY

IMMEDIATE



15.11.1

CONFIDENTIAL  
FM PRETORIA  
TO IMMEDIATE FCO  
TELNO 597  
OF 241000Z DECEMBER 85  
AND TO IMMEDIATE CAPE TOWN

MIPT: EMINENT PERSONS GROUP; SAG'S REPLY

1. THE FOLLOWING LETTER FROM P W BOTHA DATED 24 DECEMBER IS  
ADDRESSED TO MR MALCOLM FRASER AND GENERAL OLESECUN OBASANJO,  
CO-CHAIRMAN, COMMONWEALTH EMINENT PERSONS GROUP, LONDON:

BEGINS

I ACKNOWLEDGE YOUR LETTER OF 13 DECEMBER 1985 AS CONVEYED TO THE  
DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS BY THE AMBASSADORS OF CANADA, UNITED  
KINGDOM AND AUSTRALIA ON 16 DECEMBER 1985.

I AM ENCOURAGED BY YOUR POSITIVE REACTION TO THE STATEMENT ISSUED  
BY MY MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS ON 26 NOVEMBER 1985 SETTING OUT  
THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT'S ATTITUDE WITH REGARD TO THE COMMON-  
WEALTH INITIATIVE.

I AM PREPARED TO APPROACH THIS INITIATIVE CONSTRUCTIVELY. I HOPE  
THAT YOU WILL BE EQUALLY CONSTRUCTIVE IN YOUR APPROACH. THE COMM-  
ONWEALTH GROUP CAN DO INCALCULABLE HARM IF IT SEES ITSELF AS A  
PRESSURE GROUP CHARGED WITH THE TASK OF EXTRACTING CONCESSIONS  
FROM THE GOVERNMENT AND GENERALLY ENGAGED IN PRESCRIBING SOLUTIONS  
TO PROBLEMS WHICH ARE THE SOLE CONCERN OF SOUTH AFRICANS.

IF, ON THE OTHER HAND, IT WANTS TO BE INFORMED OF THE SITUATION  
IN SOUTH AFRICA AND CONFINES ITSELF TO PROMOTING PEACEFUL POLITICAL  
DIALOGUE AND, MOREOVER, CAN BE SEEN TO BE UNBIASED IN THIS  
RESPECT, IT COULD SERVE A USEFUL PURPOSE. I AGREE THAT A SUSPEN-  
SION OF VIOLENCE IS A REQUIREMENT FOR DIALOGUE. I WOULD HOPE,  
THEREFORE, THAT THE COMMONWEALTH GROUP WILL DISCOURAGE VIOLENCE  
AND AVOID ACTION OR COMMENT WHICH MIGHT BE SEEN OR INTERPRETED AS  
ENCOURAGEMENT TO THOSE PROMOTING OR SUPPORTING VIOLENCE.

TO ENSURE THAT THERE IS NO MISUNDERSTANDING CONCERNING THE POLICIES  
AND OBJECTIVES OF MY GOVERNMENT, LET ME STATE THAT WE ARE DETERMI-  
NED TO PROCEED WITH OUR REFORM PROGRAMME WHICH HAS ALREADY REACHED

TO ENSURE THAT THERE IS NO MISUNDERSTANDING CONCERNING THE POLICIES AND OBJECTIVES OF MY GOVERNMENT, LET ME STATE THAT WE ARE DETERMINED TO PROCEED WITH OUR REFORM PROGRAMME WHICH HAS ALREADY REACHED AN ADVANCED STAGE, WHATEVER THE OBSTACLES WE HAVE TO CONTEND WITH SEMICLN AND WE WANT TO GET MOVING WITH THE NEGOTIATIONS. THE SOONER THIS CAN BE DONE THE BETTER FOR THIS IS THE KEY TO THE SOLUTION OF OUR PROBLEMS. OUR POLITICAL PROGRAMME PROVIDES FOR POWER SHARING, SUBJECT ONLY TO THE PROTECTION OF THE RIGHTS OF ALL MINORITIES, AND WE ARE RECONCILED TO THE EVENTUAL DISAPPEARANCE OF WHITE DOMINATION. ALL OUR COMMUNITIES MUST HAVE A FAIR SAY IN GOVERNMENT AND THIS IS WHAT WE SHALL BE STRIVING TO ACHIEVE IN THE COURSE OF THE NEGOTIATIONS. IT PRESAGES THE END OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION. BUT WE NEED THE CO-OPERATION OF ALL OUR COMMUNITIES IN CONSTRUCTING AN ALTERNATIVE SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT FOR SOUTH AFRICA. I TRUST THAT THE GROUP WILL ENSURE THAT IT DOES NOTHING WHICH MIGHT IMPEDE THE CREATION OF A CLIMATE CONDUCIVE TO SUCH CO-OPERATION.

YOU ARE WELCOME TO VISIT SOUTH AFRICA AND TO CONSULT WITH MY GOVERNMENT AND THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE VARIOUS POPULATION GROUPS ON THE BASIS OF THE FOREGOING CONSIDERATIONS. THE MODALITIES AND TIMING CAN BE ARRANGED TO OUR MUTUAL SATISFACTION AT FUNCTIONAL LEVEL IN THE COURSE OF JANUARY 1986.

YOURS SINCERELY

P W BOTHA  
STATE PRESIDENT OF THE  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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POHPAN 4096

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