

SECRET

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FM PRETORIA

TO IMMEDIATE CAPE TOWN

TELNO 009

OF 241200Z FEBRUARY 86

INFO IMMEDIATE FCO (PERSONAL FOR MR EWAN FERGUSSON)

PERSONAL FOR AMBASSADOR

MIFT: COMMONWEALTH GROUP

1. I CALLED ON LORD BARBER AT HIS HOTEL ON 23 FEBRUARY. HE IS NATURALLY CONCERNED THAT HIS POSITION AMONG THE GROUP WOULD BE COMPROMISED IF IT BECAME KNOWN THAT HE WAS PASSING SENSITIVE INFORMATION TO US. HE CONVEYED THE FOLLOWING ON CONDITION THAT ITS CIRCULATION IS LIMITED ON A NEED TO KNOW BASIS AND IS NOT REVEALED TO OUR AUSTRALIAN AND CANADIAN (OR ANY OTHER) COLLEAGUES. I ASSURED HIM WE WOULD RESPECT THIS.
2. HIS MAIN NEWS WAS THAT OBANSANJO HAD VISITED MANDELA IN PRISON. OBANSANJO HAD INFORMED ALL THE COMMONWEALTH GROUP MEMBERS IN STRICT CONFIDENCE BUT APPARENTLY NOT (REPEAT NOT) THE SECRETARIAT OFFICIALS. MY AUSTRALIAN AND CANADIAN COLLEAGUES HAVE SAID NOTHING TO ME TO SUGGEST THEY HAVE BEEN TOLD. IN NIGERIA OBANSANJO INTENDS TO INFORM ONLY HIS HEAD OF STATE. HE AGREED THAT LORD BARBER MIGHT INFORM MRS THATCHER.
3. ACCORDING TO OBANSANJO MANDELA WAS IN GOOD FORM, HEALTHY AND ALERT. HE WAS VERY WELL-INFORMED. HE SAID THAT IF RELEASED HE THOUGHT HE COULD REACH AN ACCORD WITH BUTHELEZI. HE DID NOT DISCUSS CONDITIONS FOR RELEASE EXCEPT TO MAKE CLEAR HE WOULD ONLY ACCEPT IF OTHER POLITICAL PRISONERS (PRESUMABLY THOSE IMPRISONED WITH HIM) WERE FREED. MANDELA ASKED OBANSANJO TO INFORM LORD BARBER THAT HE (MANDELA) RECOGNISED THE IMPORTANCE OF GIVING CONFIDENCE TO THE WHITES AS WELL AS THE BLACKS AND WELCOMED THE PRESENCE OF LORD BARBER IN THE GROUP.
4. LORD BARBER ALSO SHOWED ME IN CONFIDENCE (NOT TO BE REVEALED TO THE AUSTRALIANS AND CANADIANS) A COPY OF THE CO-CHAIRMEN'S PROGRAMME. A FULL LIST OF NAMES FOLLOWS BY TELELETTER (SUBJECT TO CONFIRMATION THAT IN THE EVENT ALL WERE SEEN).
5. ON SANCTIONS AND OTHER ASPECTS OF THE REPORT LORD BARBER SAID HE HAD NO EVIDENCE OF THE CO-CHAIRMEN'S LATEST THINKING. HE WAS TAKING THE LINE WITH THEM THAT THE QUESTION OF SANCTIONS FELL OUTSIDE THE GROUP'S REMIT. HE WAS ALSO URGING STRONGLY THE NEED FOR A MEETING WITH BUTHELEZI AS WELL AS FOR A BALANCED REPORT ACKNOWLEDGING THE FEARS OF THE WHITE COMMUNITY.
6. HE SAID THAT THE CO-CHAIRMEN HAD BEEN PARTICULARLY IMPRESSED BY PIK BOTHA'S REALISTIC GRASP OF THE GRAVITY OF THE SITUATION.

SOLESBY

LIMITED

SAPD

PS

PS/MRS CHALKER

PS/PUS

MR FERGUSSON

MR JOHNSON.

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NO 10 DOWNING ST.

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