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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

11 March 1986

Agreed by
 Sir Minto
 with one
 amendment.

CDP 11/3.

Dear Charles,

Commonwealth Group of Eminent Persons

Thank you for your letter of 10 March about Pretoria telegram No 14.

As you will have seen from the telegram, Lord Barber told our Minister in Pretoria on 7 March that the Group had put to the South African Ministers a detailed proposal which they described as a "concept" to bring the ANC and others to the negotiating table. The South African DFA have since given us, in confidence, a copy of this proposal. In essence, it calls for the South African Government to commit itself to dismantling apartheid and entering into broad based negotiations on power sharing while undertaking the following steps:

- (a) Terminate the State of Emergency and remove troops from the townships;
- (b) Release Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners and detainees;
- (c) Unban the ANC and PAC and permit normal political activity.

In return the "ANC and others" are called on both to enter negotiations and to suspend violence.

Lord Barber asked that Sir Patrick Moberly should consider making representations to the South African Government in support of the Group's proposal. He was concerned that if South African Ministers rejected the proposal when they met the Group on 12 or 13 March this would mean that the other members of the Group, led by Mr Fraser, would then prepare a report highly critical of the South African Government and reflecting the unanimous support of blacks they have met for wide ranging sanctions.

Sir Patrick Moberly spoke informally to the Director General in the South African Department of Foreign Affairs over

/the weekend



the weekend to learn more about the South African position and to prepare a recommendation on what action we could take with the South African Government. The Director General subsequently asked him to call on him for a further word this morning. Killen claimed that the South Africans were in principle prepared to go along with most of the proposals but that the SAG's acceptance of the points listed must be in the context of a suspension of violence. The present text was also "too blunt" in places and the DFA were working on textual amendments.

Killen, who had clearly discussed the whole matter with Pik Botha, also suggested that it would be helpful if the Prime Minister were to send a further message to President Botha on the matter before Wednesday's meeting of the South African cabinet. Her last message welcoming the lifting of the State of Emergency had been "right on target" and a further message could encourage the State President to pursue the South African Government's declared aim of dialogue with all parties if violence was suspended.

Sir Patrick has rightly pointed out that Killen's surprisingly positive comments on the Group's proposal need to be tempered by the fact that he was speaking for the DFA not the Government as a whole. President Botha and other members of the Cabinet may be much less receptive particularly over the point of releasing political prisoners and unbanning the ANC and PAC. Sir Patrick agrees, however, on the key importance of Wednesday's Cabinet meeting and strongly recommends that we should send a high level message to the SAG in the course of today (11 March) to try to prevent a breakdown between the Group and the South African Government and to encourage the latter to adopt a flexible and imaginative approach to handling the Group and their proposal.

The Foreign Secretary supports this recommendation. Sir Patrick Moberly has suggested sending a personal message from the Prime Minister to President Botha. However, the Foreign Secretary thinks it would be better for the Prime Minister to keep a letter from her in reserve for the time being. He therefore recommends that Sir Patrick should be instructed to speak to the South African Foreign Minister immediately, making it clear that he is doing so on instructions from the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary and handing over a message from the Foreign Secretary. I enclose two draft telegrams to Sir Patrick giving him a line to take.

Yours ever,

Le Appleyard
(L V Appleyard)
Private Secretary

C D Powell Esq
10 Downing Street

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From the Private Secretary

10 March 1986

SOUTH AFRICA: COMMONWEALTH GROUP OF EMINENT PERSONS

I have shown the Prime Minister Pretoria telegram No. 14 to Cape Town which reports Lord Barber's suggestion that we should make representations to the South African Government in support of the ideas put to them by the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group in Cape Town.

The Prime Minister has commented that she thinks we should take up this suggestion but that it will need very careful handling indeed. Our approach should be that we are trying to be helpful to the South African Government in their own interest.

The Prime Minister would like to see any instructions prepared for representations on this matter before they issue.

MS.

C D POWELL

Colin Budd, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

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FM PRETORIA

DESKBY 071030Z CAPE TOWN EMBASSY

TELNO 14

OF 070830Z MARCH 1986

AND TO DESKBY 071030Z FCO (PERSONAL FOR FERGUSSON)

PERSONAL FOR AMBASSADOR

YOUR TEL TO FCO NO 139: COMMONWEALTH GROUP

SUMMARY

1. LORD BARBER SUGGESTS YOU MIGHT CONSIDER REPRESENTATIONS TO THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT (SAG) IN SUPPORT OF IDEAS PUT BY THE GROUP TO MINISTERS IN CAPE TOWN. A NEGATIVE OR PREVARICATING RESPONSE BY THE SAG WOULD LEAD TO A HIGHLY CRITICAL REPORT WEIGHTED STRONGLY IN FAVOUR OF SANCTIONS.

DETAIL

2. I CALLED ON LORD BARBER AT HIS HOTEL ON THE EVENING OF 6 MARCH AND SHOWED HIM YOUR TEL UNDER REFERENCE. HE SAID THAT THE GROUP HAD PUT TO MINISTERS IN CAPE TOWN A 'CONCEPT' OF THE SORT OF MEASURES WHICH MIGHT LEAD TO ANC AGREEMENT TO NEGOTIATE. THESE WERE AN END TO THE STATE OF EMERGENCY, TROOPS OUT OF THE TOWNSHIPS, RELEASE OF POLITICAL PRISONERS, UNBANNING OF THE ANC AND A STATEMENT OF INTENT TO ELIMINATE APARTHEID. THESE POINTS HAD NOT YET BEEN CLEARED WITH THE ANC BUT WERE BASED ON TALKS WITH THEM IN LUSAKA. IN RETURN THE ANC WOULD HAVE TO AGREE TO USE THEIR BEST ENDEAVOURS TO SUSPEND VIOLENCE AND ACCEPT AN OPEN AGENDA FOR THE NEGOTIATIONS (MINISTERS HAD CONFIRMED THAT THE SAG COULD ACCEPT THE LATTER POINT). THERE COULD BE SIMULTANEOUS ANNOUNCEMENTS OF ACCEPTANCE BY THE TWO SIDES.

3. LORD BARBER INITIALLY PASSED THIS ON FOR YOUR OWN CONFIDENTIAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION. HOWEVER HE TELEPHONED ME EARLY ON 7 MARCH TO SAY THAT THE 'CONCEPT' HAD BEEN EXPLAINED BY THE GROUP IN SOME DETAIL TO GAVIN RELLY AND A SMALL GROUP OF OTHER BUSINESSMEN OVER DINNER THE PREVIOUS NIGHT, WITH A REQUEST THAT THEY SHOULD USE THEIR INFLUENCE WITH THE SAG. RELLY DID NOT SAY YES OR NO, BUT LEFT THE IMPRESSION HE WOULD ACT.

4. LORD BARBER HOPES THAT THE SAG COULD BE PERSUADED TO GIVE A POSITIVE RESPONSE TO THE GROUP'S PROPOSAL AND REQUEST THE GROUP TO TRY IT OUT ON THE ANC. HE EMPHASISED TO ME THAT THE DETAILS OF THE PROPOSAL WERE NOT IMMUTABLE AND IT WAS OPEN TO THE SAG TO SUGGEST MODIFICATIONS OF WORDING TO THE GROUP. FRASER WAS DETERMINED TO PRODUCE THE GROUP'S REPORT BY MID-JUNE. IF THE SAG DECIDED THEY NEEDED TIME TO THINK, THE LATEST PRACTICAL DATE FOR A RETURN VISIT BY THE GROUP WOULD BE APRIL.

1. think we should take up this suggestion but it will need careful thought and clear indication that we are open to be helpful in their interest.

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5. LORD BARBER FEARED THAT WHEN THE GROUP AGAIN MET WITH MINISTERS NEXT WEEK THE LATTER WOULD IN FACT GIVE A LARGELY NEGATIVE RESPONSE OR ATTEMPT TO PREVARICATE. IF SO, HE WAS SURE THE RESULT WOULD BE A REPORT HIGHLY CRITICAL OF INADEQUATE PROGRESS TOWARDS REMOVING APARTHEID AND REFLECTING THE SO FAR UNANIMOUS SUPPORT OF BLACKS THEY HAD MET FOR WIDE-RANGING SANCTIONS. FRASER WOULD BE OUT TO 'BASH' THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT AND OTHER MEMBERS OF THE GROUP (WITH THE EXCEPTION OF LORD BARBER) WOULD GO ALONG WITH HIM.

6. LORD BARBER HAS ASKED OBASANJO IN STRICT CONFIDENCE WHETHER HE SHOULD INFORM YOU OF ALL THIS AND OBASANJO HAD AGREED. LORD BARBER WAS NOT MAKING A FIRM REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE, BUT HE WOULD BE GRATEFUL IF YOU WOULD CONSIDER MAKING REPRESENTATIONS (FOR EXAMPLE TO VON HIRSCHBERG) IN SUPPORT OF THE GROUP'S PROPOSAL. HE COMMENTED THAT YOU WOULD CLEARLY HAVE TO CONSIDER VERY CAREFULLY HOW THIS COULD BEST BE PUT TO THE SAG. HE CONFIRMED THAT YOU COULD REVEAL KNOWLEDGE OF THE PROPOSAL AS DESCRIBED IN PARA 2 ABOVE, AND IF YOU JUDGED IT NECESSARY COULD MENTION HIM AS A SOURCE. BUT HE ASKED YOU NOT TO REFER TO OBASANJO AND NOT TO REVEAL ANY OF THIS TO YOUR AUSTRALIAN AND CANADIAN COLLEAGUES.

7. THE GROUP WILL LEAVE FOR CAPE TOWN ON EITHER THE EVENING OF 11 MARCH OR EARLY MORNING OF 12 MARCH. THEIR FIRST APPOINTMENT THERE IS AT 10 AM ON 12 MARCH AND THEIR PROGRAMME IS LIKELY TO CONTINUE INTO 13 MARCH.

COMMENT

8. ALTHOUGH LORD BABER MENTIONED VON HIRSCHBERG (PARA 6 ABOVE) I AM SURE HE WOULD ACCEPT YOUR JUDGEMENT IF YOU CONCLUDED THAT REPRESENTATIONS AT A HIGHER LEVEL WOULD BE MORE APPROPRIATE.

SOLESBY

LIMITED
SAFD
PS
PS/MRS CHALKER
PS/PUS
MR FERGUSSON
MR JOHNSON

COPIES TO:
PS/NO. 10 DOWNING ST.

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