

*Subject ce Ops
Master*



File

(amended version) SPW

ce fcp

10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

20 March 1986

PRIME MINISTER'S
PERSONAL MESSAGE
SERIAL No. T56/86

Dear Mr. President,

Lord Barber has given me a full account of the Commonwealth Group's recent visit to South Africa. He had high praise for your Government's helpful attitude. The Group had seen everyone they wanted to see and had been given a fair hearing.

I understand that the Group will now be considering what they have learned and how they should take their initiative forward. Their aim seems to be to submit their report to Heads of Government by mid-June. In the meantime they wisely intend to continue to avoid all publicity.

Lord Barber explained to me the ideas which they set out during their discussions in Cape Town. He stressed that they had tried to build wherever possible on what they understood to be the positions of your Government. The results seem to me to contain much that is potentially helpful, particularly the insistence that the ANC and others must suspend violence as part of the action needed to bring about negotiations.

I do not know what response the Group will get from others. But they saw the ANC in Lusaka before arriving in South Africa and I understand that they are not unhopeful that a concept on the lines suggested might be accepted by the ANC. If they felt that your Government's reaction opened the way to negotiations, I understand that they would go back to the ANC to try to secure a firm and public commitment to suspend violence for the duration of negotiations.

DA

I very much hope, therefore, that you will be ready to engage in further discussions and negotiations about the Group's 'possible negotiating concept'. I continue to believe that their initiative offers a unique opportunity to make progress and that even those who were initially sceptical now share this view. The Group's mix of African and Western representation and support gives it international credibility. By its discreet behaviour and exploratory style the Group has demonstrated its serious interest in contributing to a dialogue rather than making propaganda. In my view, there is no other way forward on offer which stands a remotely comparable chance of success or of securing the same international support for the peaceful resolution of South Africa's problems which you seek. Everything which I have heard convinces me that such an outcome can be attained.

The Group's report will clearly be of major importance both in itself and in determining the degree to which other governments are prepared to give dialogue in South Africa a chance to work. Your response to their 'possible negotiating concept' will be the determining factor in shaping that report and subsequent steps. They will also be looking for firm evidence that the far-reaching measures of reform within South Africa which you have outlined will be implemented rapidly. I shall go on arguing, as I did at Nassau, that your Government must be enabled to achieve a peaceful outcome. But I shall only stand a chance of convincing my Commonwealth colleagues of this if I can point to a constructive response from you to the Group's ideas.

I am the first to recognise that this faces you with very difficult and far-reaching decisions which involve the whole future of your country. But I think it vitally important that your Government should give the Group a response which would enable them to continue discussions with you. I understand that they are planning to meet again on 21 April. Some indication of your approach in advance of

that meeting will therefore be vital for the future direction of their work.

If there is any way in which I can help, please do not hesitate to let me know.

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely
Margaret Thatcher

The Hon. P. W. Botha, DMS.

Already Td.
(TS6/86)

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TELNO 103
OF 201230Z MARCH 86
INFO IMMEDIATE PRETORIA, WASHINGTON

COMGEP: LETTER FROM PRIME MINISTER TO PRESIDENT BOTHA
1. FOLLOWING IS TEXT OF A LETTER FROM THE PRIME MINISTER
TO PRESIDENT BOTHA. GRATEFUL YOU DELIVER AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.
LETTER BEGINS..

DEAR PRESIDENT BOTHA, LORD BARBER HAS GIVEN ME A FULL ACCOUNT
OF THE COMMONWEALTH GROUP'S RECENT VISIT TO SOUTH AFRICA. HE HAD
HIGH PRAISE FOR YOUR GOVERNMENT'S HELPFUL ATTITUDE. THE GROUP
HAD SEEN EVERYONE THEY WANTED TO SEE AND HAD BEEN GIVEN A FAIR
HEARING.

I UNDERSTAND THAT THE GROUP WILL NOW BE CONSIDERING WHAT THEY
HAVE LEARNED AND HOW THEY SHOULD TAKE THEIR INITIATIVE FORWARD.
THEIR AIM SEEMS TO BE TO SUBMIT THEIR REPORT TO HEADS OF
GOVERNMENT BY MID-JUNE. IN THE MEANTIME THEY WISELY INTEND TO
CONTINUE TO AVOID ALL PUBLICITY.

LORD BARBER HAS EXPLAINED TO ME THE IDEAS - THE GROUP'S
QUOTE POSSIBLE NEGOTIATING CONCEPT UNQUOTE WHICH THEY LEFT WITH
YOU AND YOUR COLLEAGUES. HE STRESSED THAT THEY HAD TRIED TO
BUILD WHEREVER POSSIBLE ON WHAT THEY UNDERSTOOD TO BE THE
POSITIONS OF YOUR GOVERNMENT. THE RESULTS SEEM TO ME TO CONTAIN

1

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24115 - 1

MUCH THAT IS POTENTIALLY HELPFUL, PARTICULARLY THE INSISTENCE THAT THE ANC AND OTHERS MUST SUSPEND VIOLENCE AS PART OF THE ACTION NEEDED TO BRING ABOUT NEGOTIATIONS.

I DO NOT KNOW WHAT RESPONSE THE GROUP WILL GET FROM OTHERS. BUT THEY SAW THE ANC IN LUSAKA BEFORE ARRIVING IN SOUTH AFRICA AND I UNDERSTAND THAT THEY ARE NOT UNHOPEFUL THAT A CONCEPT ON THE LINES SUGGESTED MIGHT BE ACCEPTED BY THE ANC. IF THEY FELT THAT YOUR GOVERNMENT'S REACTION OPENED THE WAY TO NEGOTIATIONS, I UNDERSTAND THAT THEY WOULD GO BACK TO THE ANC TO TRY TO SECURE A FIRM AND PUBLIC COMMITMENT TO SUSPEND VIOLENCE FOR THE DURATION OF NEGOTIATIONS.

I VERY MUCH HOPE, THEREFORE, THAT YOU WILL BE READY TO ENGAGE IN FURTHER DISCUSSIONS AND NEGOTIATIONS ABOUT THE GROUP'S QUOTE POSSIBLE NEGOTIATING CONCEPT UNQUOTE. I CONTINUE TO BELIEVE THAT THEIR INITIATIVE OFFERS A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE PROGRESS AND THAT EVEN THOSE WHO WERE INITIALLY SCEPTICAL NOW SHARE THIS VIEW. THE GROUP'S MIX OF AFRICAN AND WESTERN REPRESENTATION AND SUPPORT GIVES IT INTERNATIONAL CREDIBILITY. BY ITS DISCREET BEHAVIOUR AND EXPLORATORY STYLE THE GROUP HAS DEMONSTRATED ITS SERIOUS INTEREST IN CONTRIBUTING TO A DIALOGUE RATHER THAN MAKING PROPAGANDA. IN MY VIEW, THERE IS NO OTHER WAY FORWARD ON OFFER WHICH STANDS A REMOTELY COMPARABLE CHANCE OF SUCCESS OR OF SECURING THE SAME INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT FOR THE PEACEFUL RESOLUTION OF SOUTH AFRICA'S PROBLEMS WHICH YOU SEEK. EVERYTHING WHICH I HAVE HEARD CONVINCES ME THAT SUCH AN OUTCOME CAN BE ATTAINED.

THE GROUP'S REPORT WILL CLEARLY BE OF MAJOR IMPORTANCE BOTH IN ITSELF AND IN DETERMINING THE DEGREE TO WHICH OTHER GOVERNMENTS ARE PREPARED TO GIVE DIALOGUE IN SOUTH AFRICA A CHANCE TO WORK. YOUR RESPONSE TO THEIR QUOTE POSSIBLE NEGOTIATING CONCEPT UNQUOTE WILL BE THE DETERMINING FACTOR IN SHAPING THAT REPORT AND SUBSEQUENT STEPS. THEY WILL ALSO BE LOOKING FOR FIRM EVIDENCE THAT THE FAR-REACHING MEASURES OF REFORM WITHIN SOUTH AFRICA WHICH YOU HAVE OUTLINED WILL BE IMPLEMENTED RAPIDLY. I SHALL GO ON ARGUING, AS I DID AT NASSAU, THAT YOUR GOVERNMENT MUST BE ENABLED TO ACHIEVE A PEACEFUL OUTCOME. BUT I SHALL ONLY STAND

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24115 - 1

A CHANCE OF CONVINCING MY COMMONWEALTH COLLEAGUES OF THIS IF I CAN POINTS TO A CONSTRUCTIVE RESPONSE FROM YOU TO THE GROUP'S IDEAS.

I AM THE FIRST TO RECOGNISE THAT THIS FACES YOU WITH VERY DIFFICULT AND FAR-REACHING DECISIONS WHICH INVOLVE THE WHOLE FUTURE OF YOUR COUNTRY. BUT I THINK IT VITALLY IMPORTANT THAT YOUR GOVERNMENT SHOULD GIVE THE GROUP A RESPONSE WHICH WOULD ENABLE THEM TO CONTINUE DISCUSSIONS WITH YOU. I UNDERSTAND THAT THEY ARE PLANNING TO MEET AGAIN ON 21 APRIL. SOME INDICATION OF YOUR APPROACH IN ADVANCE OF THAT MEETING WILL THEREFORE BE VITAL FOR THE FUTURE DIRECTION OF THEIR WORK.

IF THERE IS ANY WAY IN WHICH I CAN HELP, PLEASE DO NOT HESITATE TO LET ME KNOW.

WITH BEST WISHES, YOUR SINCERELY MARGARET THATCHER. LETTER ENDS.
2. SIGNED ORIGINAL FOLLOWS BY BAG.

HOWE

SOUTH AFRICA

LIMITED

S AF D

C AF D

UND

ECD(E)

NEWS D

LEGAL ADVISERS

PLANNING STAFF

PS

PS/LADY YOUNG

PS/MRS CHALKER

PS/PUS

MR DEFEK THOMAS

MR FERGUSSON

MR JOHNSON

CABINET OFFICE

3

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10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

20 March 1986

Dear President Botma,

Lord Barber has given me a full account of the Commonwealth Group's recent visit to South Africa. He had high praise for your Government's helpful attitude. The Group had seen everyone they wanted to see and had been given a fair hearing.

I understand that the Group will now be considering what they have learned and how they should take their initiative forward. Their aim seems to be to submit their report to Heads of Government by mid-June. In the meantime they wisely intend to continue to avoid all publicity.

Lord Barber has explained to me the ideas - the Group's 'possible negotiating concept' - which they left with you and your colleagues. He stressed that they had tried to build wherever possible on what they understood to be the positions of your Government. The results seem to me to contain much that is potentially helpful, particularly the insistence that the ANC and others must suspend violence as part of the action needed to bring about negotiations.

I do not know what response the Group will get from others. But they saw the ANC in Lusaka before arriving in South Africa and I understand that they are not unhopeful that a concept on the lines suggested might be accepted by the ANC. If they felt that your Government's reaction opened the way to negotiations, I understand that they would go back

to the ANC to try to secure a firm and public commitment to suspend violence for the duration of negotiations.

I very much hope, therefore, that you will be ready to engage in further discussions and negotiations about the Group's 'possible negotiating concept'. I continue to believe that their initiative offers a unique opportunity to make progress and that even those who were initially sceptical now share this view. The Group's mix of African and Western representation and support gives it international credibility. By its discreet behaviour and exploratory style the Group has demonstrated its serious interest in contributing to a dialogue rather than making propaganda. In my view, there is no other way forward on offer which stands a remotely comparable chance of success or of securing the same international support for the peaceful resolution of South Africa's problems which you seek. Everything which I have heard convinces me that such an outcome can be attained.

The Group's report will clearly be of major importance both in itself and in determining the degree to which other governments are prepared to give dialogue in South Africa a chance to work. Your response to their 'possible negotiating concept' will be the determining factor in shaping that report and subsequent steps. They will also be looking for firm evidence that the far-reaching measures of reform within South Africa which you have outlined will be implemented rapidly. I shall go on arguing, as I did at Nassau, that your Government must be enabled to achieve a peaceful outcome. But I shall only stand a chance of convincing my Commonwealth colleagues of this if I can point to a constructive response from you to the Group's ideas.

I am the first to recognise that this faces you with very difficult and far-reaching decisions which involve the whole future of your country. But I think it vitally important that your Government should give the Group a response which would enable them to continue discussions with

you. I understand that they are planning to meet again on 21 April. Some indication of your approach in advance of that meeting will therefore be vital for the future direction of their work.

If there is any way in which I can help, please do not hesitate to let me know.

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely

Nargant Khatta

DSR 11 (Revised)

DRAFT: minute/letter/teleletter/despach/note

TYPE: Draft/Final 1+

FROM: Prime Minister

Reference

DEPARTMENT: TEL. NO:

SECURITY CLASSIFICATION

TO: President Botha

Your Reference

- Top Secret
- Secret
- Confidential
- Restricted
- Unclassified

Copies to:

SRWAAQ

PRIVACY MARKING

SUBJECT:

.....In Confidence

has ~~I~~ have been given a full account by Lord Barber of the Commonwealth Group's recent visit to South Africa. He was *had high* full of praise for your Government's *helpful attitude* help with the ~~visit~~. He said that the Group had seen everyone they wanted to see and had been given a fair hearing.

CAVEAT.....

/// understand that

The Group will now be considering what they have learned and how they should take their initiative forward. They *Dear* *seems to be* apparently aim to submit their report to Heads of Government by mid-June. In the meantime they wisely intend to continue to avoid all publicity.

possible negotiating

Lord Barber has explained to me the ideas - the Group's "concept" - which they left with *you and colleagues* your Government. I have */suggested approach* looked carefully at their *and I believe that it* and I believe that it represents a serious attempt by the Group to assist in bringing about dialogue. *He stressed that* Lord Barber said that they had tried to build wherever possible on *what they understood to be* the stated positions of your Government. The results seems to me to contain much that is *potentially* valuable and helpful, including *possibly*

/the insistence

~~(b) On the second page, in the paragraph beginning "I do not know", Barber would like to change the paragraph from "ANC" to read as follows: "(...)" But the group saw the ANC in Lusaka before arriving in South Africa and I understand that they are not unhopeful that a concept on the lines suggested might be accepted by the ANC. However, before going back to the ANC, the group would hope to have the reaction of your Government".~~

// I do
not know
what response
the group will
get from
ANC.

Your response to their concept is likely to be determined by determining factors in steps we report subsequent steps.

the insistence that the ANC and others must suspend violence as part of the action needed to bring about negotiations.

I do not know what the Group will get elsewhere, for example from the ANC. I understand that before trying our their ideas on them, the Group wishes to have the considered reaction of your Government before trying out their ideas on others.

be ready to engage in further discussions & negotiations about the Group's 'concept'.

I very much hope that you will not dismiss this approach out of hand even though you will no doubt want to negotiate over the modalities. I am convinced that the Group's initiative offers a vital opportunity to make progress. The Group's unique mix of African and Western representation and support gives it international credibility. It is not perfect. But at least the Group excludes the Communists and those of your enemies who have no wish to explore peaceful solutions. By its discreet behaviour and exploratory approach it has already demonstrated its serious interest in exhibiting to a dialogue rather than making propaganda. In my view, there is no other mechanism on offer which stands a remotely comparable chance of securing the same international support for the peaceful resolution of South Africa's problems which you seek.

The Group's report will clearly be of major importance.

I believe therefore that a very great deal hangs on your response. I shall go on arguing that your Government should

both in itself and in determining the degree to which other groups are prepared to give a chance to work

dialogue in South Africa

/be given since this is likely to determine

be given the chance to achieve a peaceful outcome, ^{as} I did ~~so~~ at Nassau and I will do so again. But I can only argue the case to full effect if you provide me

with the ammunition that a constructive response would give. ^{But it will also be} ^{no more dead rapid by} This means it is essential that the gap between ~~to implement it~~ ^{Some of some of the measures outlined in} your recent far-reaching statements and their

implementation should be narrowed and then closed just as quickly as possible. ^{Our will help me to help you and be} If that is happening I shall ^{further evidence} then have at least a reasonable chance of helping to convince people of your ^{Government's} seriousness of purpose. If you ^{are prepared to} can build on the Group's concept, a worthwhile start can be made.

I recognise that you face very difficult ^{e fundamental} decisions and that some of them cannot be rushed. But I think it essential that your Government should demonstrate its readiness to ^{face up to} make these decisions. ^{I understand that they are} The Group is planning to meet again on 21 April and ~~some~~ indication of your views in advance of that meeting will therefore be very important for the Group.

If there is any other way in which I can help, please do not hesitate to let me know.

With best wishes.

To end agreement

and to central discussions with the Group



CCPC

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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

25 March 1986

OK

Dear Charles,

*Please amend the letter
& return to me, so that
I can explain to the PM*

Letter from the Prime Minister to President Botha

*and get her to sign
a revised
version
OOO*

Before handing over the letter from the Prime Minister to President Botha on 21 March, HM Ambassador in Cape Town felt it wise to delete the reference in paragraph 3 to "the Group's negotiating concept". It was the Ambassador's understanding that the Group had decided not to show the paper to President Botha, having received advice in this sense from other South African Ministers.

The first sentence in the third paragraph was accordingly amended to read "Lord Barber explained to me the ideas which they set out during their discussions in Cape Town".

I apologise for our apparent failure to consult you before this was done. But given that it has been done, I should be grateful if a revised version of the original letter could now be prepared and sent to us for onward transmission.

Yours ever

(Signature)

AD

(C R Budd)
Private Secretary

C D Powell Esq
PS/10 Downing Street

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Relations: SOUTH AFRICA Pt 9.

South African Institute of Race Research

1952-1953



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LPC



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

19 March 1986

Eng 4/3.

Dear Charles,

South Africa: Commonwealth Group

Thank you for your letter of 17 March giving an account of Lord Barber's meeting with the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister agreed that she would send messages to both President Botha and to President Reagan in support of the Group's initiative. She would ask President Reagan to add his influence to persuade the South African Government to avoid reacting to the Group's paper in a negative way.

I enclose two draft letters which have been approved by the Foreign Secretary. We are showing them also to Lord Barber, in confidence, since he wished to be consulted. I will let you know whether he has any comments on them.

I understand that Mr Fraser and General Obasanjo will not be going to Washington until next month, but the sooner President Reagan can be persuaded to act with President Botha the better.

Yours ever,

Len Appleyard

(L V Appleyard)
Private Secretary

C D Powell Esq
10 Downing Street

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SOUTH AFRICA : Relations PE 9

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY

