

ADVANCE COPIES

15

16

SOUTHERN AFRICA

PS  
PS/MRS CHALKER.

MR CLG MALLABY, CABINET OFFICE

PS/PUS

PS/NO 10 DOWNING STREET

MR FERGUSSON

SIR J FREELAND

MR JOHNSON

MR O'NEILL

HD/SAFD

HD/CAFD

HD/UND

HD/NEWS DEPT

RESIDENT CLERK

IMMEDIATE  
ADVANCE COPY  
27 MAR 1986

15.11.84

CONFIDENTIAL

FM CAPE TOWN

TO DESKBY 271130Z FCO

TELNO 185

OF 270930Z MARCH 86

YOUR TELNO 107: COMMONWEALTH GROUP

SUMMARY

REPLY FROM THE  
1. A REPLY FROM THE PRESIDENT TO THE PRIME MINISTER'S MESSAGE MAY ISSUE SOON. BUT ACCORDING TO PIK BOTHA, MINISTERIAL DISCUSSION OF THE GROUP'S IDEAS IS STILL AT AN EARLY STAGE. A PRELIMINARY HOLDING REPLY TO THE GROUP IS LIKELY.

DETAIL

2. I SAW PIK BOTHA YESTERDAY (26 MARCH). HE IS WORKING ON A REPLY TO MRS THATCHER'S LATEST MESSAGE TO THE STATE PRESIDENT WHICH COULD ISSUE BEFORE EASTER. ONE INGREDIENT MAY BE AN EXPLANATION OF SOUTH AFRICAN DISTRUST OF THE ANC WHICH IS AT THE FRONT OF THE STATE PRESIDENT'S MIND.

3. PIK BOTHA SAID THAT HE HAD BEEN ASKED BY HEUNIS TO TAKE THE LEAD IN RESPONDING TO THE GROUP'S IDEAS (A DESCRIPTION WHICH THE PRESIDENT PREFERS TO "PROPOSALS"). HE HAD TOUCHED ON THE MATTER WITH THE PRESIDENT AND OTHER COLLEAGUES BUT HAD NOT YET TAKEN IT UP FORMALLY WITH THEM. IT WAS ESSENTIAL ON SUCH DELICATE ISSUES NOT TO RUSH THE PRESIDENT WHO AFTER A TIRING PERIOD WAS PLANNING TO BE AWAY IN THE WEEK FOLLOWING EASTER AND WOULD THEN BE IMMERSSED IN PREPARING FOR THE ANNUAL PARLIAMENTARY WEEK'S DEBATE ON HIS DEPARTMENT'S ESTIMATES. PIK BOTHA JUDGED IT DESIRABLE TO WAIT UNTIL THIS WAS OUT OF THE WAY ON 25 APRIL IF HE WAS TO FULLY ENGAGE THE PRESIDENT'S ATTENTION AND GET THE BEST POSSIBLE OUTCOME. HE WOULD BE FLYING TO SWAZILAND WITH THE PRESIDENT ON 26 APRIL AND THIS WOULD GIVE HIM AN OPPORTUNITY TO TALK ABOUT THE MATTER AT LENGTH.

4. I EXPLAINED THE GROUP'S OWN PLANS AND URGED A POSITIVE RESPONSE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE OR AT LEAST AN AFFIRMATIVE HOLDING REPLY INDICATING THAT THE GROUP'S IDEAS WERE BEING CAREFULLY CONSIDERED. PIK BOTHA SAID THAT HE WOULD ARRANGE FOR THE GROUP TO RECEIVE A PRELIMINARY RESPONSE ON THESE LINES.

*This makes it important to delay the (group) return*

*M.B. I see this is proposed on the page. not*

5. HE THEN WENT ON TO TALK AT LENGTH ABOUT HIS PROBLEMS IN TAKING MATTERS FORWARD. THE PRESIDENT WAS VERY SENSITIVE ABOUT PRESSURE AND DEADLINES AND HAD ALREADY COMMENTED UNFAVOURABLY THAT THERE APPEARED TO BE AN ELEMENT OF "RESPOND OR ELSE" IN THE GROUP'S APPROACH. HE HAD ALSO BECOME IMPATIENT AT THE CONSTANT STREAM OF VISITORS AND PRESSURE FROM ABROAD. PROMINENT IN THE PRESIDENT'S MIND WERE MISGIVINGS ABOUT THE AIMS OF THE ANC. THE PRESIDENT HAD ASKED HIM WHETHER THE IMPLICATIONS WERE FULLY REALISED IN LONDON OF THE FACT THAT THE MAJORITY OF THE MEMBERS OF THE ANC EXECUTIVE WERE MEMBERS OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN COMMUNIST PARTY. SURELY THE SOUTH AFRICANS WERE NOT EXPECTED TO HAND OVER THEIR COUNTRY TO COMMUNISTS ON THEIR TERMS. THE PRESIDENT WAS DISMAYED BY CONTINUED CENSURING OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT WHEN NOTHING WAS SAID BY WESTERN GOVERNMENTS ABOUT THE ANC'S DEMANDS FOR A ONE PARTY STATE, GOVERNMENT CONTROL OF THE PRESS AND NATIONALISATION OF BUSINESS. IT HAD BEEN HELPFUL THAT THE WHITE HOUSE HAD RECENTLY CLARIFIED THEIR POSITION BY EXPLAINING THAT THEY DID NOT CONSIDER THE ANC AS FREEDOM FIGHTERS.

6. PIK BOTHA THEN MOVED TO THE SUBSTANCE OF THE COMMONWEALTH GROUP'S IDEAS. HE STRESSED HE WAS TALKING PERSONALLY AS HE HAD NOT PUT HIS OWN THOUGHTS TO HIS COLLEAGUES AND, INDEED, HAD NOT FINALLY DECIDED ON HIS RECOMMENDATION. HE SAID IN THE FIRST PLACE THAT THE WORDING AND ORDER OF THE GROUP'S CONCEPT PAPER WAS NOT IDEAL AND THAT HE MIGHT PROPOSE SOME CHANGES. THE KEY WAS WHETHER THERE COULD BE AN END TO VIOLENCE. IF VIOLENCE ENDED THE SECURITY FORCES COULD BE WITHDRAWN FROM THE TOWNSHIPS AND THE AND PAC COULD PERHAPS BE UNBANNED. THE PROCESS REQUIRED SYNCHRONISATION BUT HE DID NOT AT PRESENT SEE HOW THIS COULD HAPPEN. THE SOUTH AFRICANS COULD NOT THEMSELVES SEND A MESSAGE TO THE ANC PROPOSING THE IMMEDIATE END OF VIOLENCE, RELEASE OF MANDELA AND UNBANNING OF THE ANC. THE CONCEPT WAS VALUABLE AND COULD BE DEVELOPED. BUT THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT WOULD NOT ABDICATE FROM STEPS TO MAINTAIN LAW AND ORDER IF VIOLENCE CONTINUED ONCE TAL BS BEGAN. THE GROUP SHOULD ACCEPT THIS.

7. I ASKED WHETHER HE SAW A ROLE FOR THE COMMONWEALTH GROUP IN THE PROCESS OF SYNCHRONISATION TO WHICH HE HAD REFERRED. HE REPLIED THAT THERE WAS DISTRUST OF SOME MEMBERS OF THE GROUP. HE APPEARED TO MANE FRASER FOR ONE, BUT ADDED THAT PRIVATE REMARKS BY ARCHBISHOP SCOTT TO SOME SOUTH AFRICAN BUSINESSMEN IN LONDON CASTING DOUBT ON THE SINCERITY OF SOUTH AFRICAN MINISTERS HAD BEEN DAMAGING TO CONFIDENCE IN HIM.

8. HE REVERTED TO THE PROBLEMS OF DEALING WITH THE ANC. AT THE END OF THE DAY IF IT CAME TO TALKS WITH TAMBO (AND THERE WOULD BE DIFFICULTIES ABOUT THIS WITH OTHER BLACK LEADERS SUCH AS BUTHELEZI) HE COULD SEE SCOPE FOR COMPROMISE ON MANY ISSUES. BUT IF THE ANC DEMANDED A ONE PARTY STATE, NATIONALISATION, ETC, THERE WOULD BE NO WAY THAT THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT COULD ACCEPT THIS AT THE EXPENSE OF FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS OF WHITE SOUTH AFRICANS. THE PRESIDENT WAS KEEN TO ESTABLISH THIS POINT WITH WESTERN LEADERS.

#### COMMENT

9. PIK BOTHA'S COMMENTS CONFIRM THAT PROSPECTS FOR A POSITIVE RESPONSE TO THE GROUP'S IDEAS REST ON A KNIFE EDGE. HE GIVES THE IMPRESSION OF WISHING TO KEEP THE INTIATIVE ALIVE AND EXPLORE THE POSSIBILITY OF FURTHER DISCUSSIONS. BUT SOME OF HIS COLLEAGUES ARE CERTAIN TO BE MUCH LESS INTERESTED. THE KEY WILL BE WHETHER HE CAN CONVINCE THE PRESIDENT.

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11. IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES I WONDER IF THERE IS ANY CHANCE OF THE GROUP AGREEING TO DEFER THEIR MEETING UNTIL THE END OF APRIL OR EVEN EARLY MAY. THIS WOULD NOT GUARANTEE A POSITIVE RESPONSE FROM THE GOVERNMENT. BUT THE LONGER PIK BOTHA HAS TO TRY AND CARRY HIS COLLEAGUES WITH HIM, AND ABOVE ALL THE PRESIDENT, THE BETTER THE PROSPECT OF KEEPING THE COMMONWEALTH INITIATIVE FROM FOUNDERING. I DO NOT BELIEVE THIS IS JUST A MATTER OF THE SOUTH AFRICANS PLAYING FOR TIME. IT GENUINELY REFLECTS THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE ISSUES FOR THEM AND THE RIVALRY BETWEEN THE MAIN CAMPS IN CABINET.

*[Handwritten initials]*  
*[Handwritten signature]*  
*[Handwritten initials]*

CCN PARA 6 LINE 8 SHOULD READ QUOTE WITHDRAWN FROM THE TOWNSHIPS AND THE ANC AND PAC UNQUOTE  
ERLY

YYYY

CFPOAN 0302

NNNN

MUSUM

CCN PARA 6 LINE 8 SHOULD READ QUOTE WITHDRAWN FROM THE TOWNSHIPS AND ANC AND PAC UNQUOTE

MOBERLY

YYYY

CFPOAN 0302

NNNN

GRS 1000

**CONFIDENTIAL**

CONFIDENTIAL  
FM CAPE TOWN  
TO DESKBY 271130Z FCO  
TELNO 185  
OF 270930Z MARCH 86

*ms*

YOUR TELNO 107: COMMONWEALTH GROUP

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**CONFIDENTIAL**

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**CONFIDENTIAL**

## CONFIDENTIAL

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CCN PARA 6 LINE 8 SHOULD READ QUOTE WITHDRAWN FROM THE TOWNSHIPS AND THE ANC AND PAC UNQUOTE

*MOBERLY*

SOUTHERN AFRICA  
STANDARD (PALACE)  
SAFD  
OADs  
UND  
NAD  
ECDs  
SOVIET D  
MR JOHNSON  
CABINET OFFICE

[COPIES SENT TO NO 10 DOWNING STREET]

ADDITIONAL DISTRIBUTION  
SOUTHERN AFRICA

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CONFIDENTIAL

SOUTHERN AFRICA

PS (6)

PS/MRS CHALKER.

PS/PUS

~~MR FERGUSSON~~ SIR D MIERS~~SIR J FREELAND~~ MR DARWIN

MR JOHNSON

MR O'NEILL

HD/SAPD

HD/CAFD

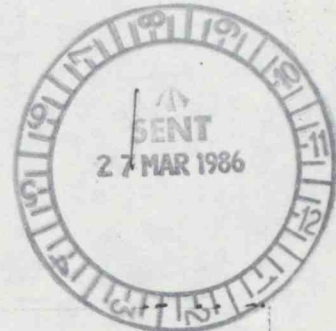
HD/UND

HD/NEWS DEPT

MR CLG MALLABY, CABINET OFFICE

PS/NO 40 DOWNING STREET

IMMEDIATE



RESIDENT CLERK

CONFIDENTIAL

FM CAPE TOWN

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELNO 189

OF 271445Z MARCH 86

MY TELNO 185: COMMONWEALTH GROUP

1. THE DIRECTOR OF PIK BOTHA'S OFFICE ADDED SOME POINTS AT LUNCH WITH ME TODAY TO THE ACCOUNT WHICH WE RECEIVED FROM HIS MINISTER YESTERDAY AFTERNOON.

2. MANLEY MADE IT CLEAR THAT THE REPLY FROM PRESIDENT BOTHA TO THE PRIME MINISTER WAS LIKELY TO RAISE THE POSSIBILITY OF OBTAINING SOME SORT OF CONFIRMATION NOW OF ANC INTEREST IN THE CONCEPT BEING ADVANCED BY THE COMMONWEALTH GROUP. CERTAINTY ABOUT ENDING VIOLENCE WAS A KEY POINT FOR THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT AND THUS FOR THE CHANCES OF GETTING A FAVOURABLE RESPONSE FROM THE PRESIDENT TO THE GROUP'S IDEAS.

3. I ASKED IF THE EXPECTED MESSAGE TO THE PRIME MINISTER WOULD IN MANLEY'S VIEW REQUIRE BRITISH DIPLOMATIC ACTION WITH THE ANC. HE SAID HE ASSUMED THAT ANY APPROACH TO THE ANC MIGHT BE MORE EASILY UNDERTAKEN BY A MEMBER OR MEMBERS OF THE COMMONWEALTH GROUP. I COMMENTED THAT, QUITE APART FROM THE INTRINSIC DELICACY OF HANDLING THE ANC, THIS SUGGESTION WOULD RAISE THE QUESTION OF THE GROUP NEEDING TO BE TOLD ABOUT PRIVATE CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT AND THE PRIME MINISTER. I ALSO POINTED OUT THAT EVEN AT THIS STAGE THERE WOULD BE A MATTER OF WHAT HIS MINISTER YESTERDAY CALLED SYNCHRONISATION. THE QUESTION WOULD BE ASKED WHY THE ANC SHOULD BE PRESSED TO COMMIT THEMSELVES IN ADVANCE OF THE GROUP RECEIVING ANYTHING BEYOND A HOLDING REPLY FROM THE SOUTH AFRICANS. I URGED MANLEY (WHO HAS BEEN INSTRUCTED BY PIK BOTHA TO PREPARE A DRAFT REPLY FROM THE PRESIDENT TO MRS THATCHER) THAT ANY REQUEST TO US ABOUT CLARIFYING THE ANC'S ATTITUDE SHOULD BE MATCHED BY THE MOST FORTHCOMING STATEMENT POSSIBLE OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT'S INTEREST IN THE GROUP'S IDEAS.

4. AT THIS STAGE IN THE CONVERSATION IT EMERGED - AS WE HAD SUSPECTED - THAT THE PRESIDENT HAS APPARENTLY STILL NOT SEEN THE

SUSPECTED - THAT THE PRESIDENT HAS APPARENTLY STILL NOT SEEN THE ACTUAL PAPER LEFT HERE BY THE COMMONWEALTH GROUP. ACCORDING TO MANLEY, THE PRESIDENT UNDERSTANDS THAT THE BALL IS IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN COURT BUT PIK BOTHA HAS DELIBERATELY NOT WANTED TO CONFRONT THE PRESIDENT WITH PRECISE FORMULATIONS YET.

5. I ASKED WHETHER AN EVENTUAL RESPONSE TO THE COMMONWEALTH GROUP WOULD NEED TO GO THROUGH CABINET. MANLEY THOUGHT HIS MINISTER'S APPROACH WOULD BE TO CONCENTRATE ON PERSUADING THE PRESIDENT HIMSELF. ONLY ONE OR TWO KEY MINISTERS WOULD ALSO NEED TO BE INVOLVED.

6. MANLEY STRESSED THE IMPORTANCE FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF VIOLENCE BEING BROUGHT TO AN END. HE REPEATED A POINT MADE BY PIK BOTHA YESTERDAY THAT IT WOULD HAVE BEEN PREFERABLE IF THE "NEGOTIATING CONCEPT" HAD SPOKEN OF CESSATION RATHER THAN SUSPENSION OF VIOLENCE. MANLEY WAS REALISTIC ENOUGH TO ADMIT HOWEVER THAT IF TALKS BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND ANC EVER STARTED AND THEN BROKE DOWN, A WIDESPREAD RETURN TO VIOLENCE WAS ALMOST INEVITABLE. THIS WAS INDEED A MAJOR WORRY FOR THE GOVERNMENT, SINCE IN THOSE CIRCUMSTANCES THEY WOULD BE WORSE OFF THAN IF THE PROCESS OF TALKING TO THE ANC HAD NEVER BEGUN.

7. MANLEY ALSO REVERTED TO HIS MINISTER'S CONCERN (PARAGRAPH 6 OF TUR) THAT THE GROUP MUST UNDERSTAND THAT NOTHING WOULD STOP THE AUTHORITIES FROM ACTING TO MAINTAIN LAW AND ORDER IF VIOLENCE FROM ANY QUARTER CONTINUED DURING TALKS. THE GOVERNMENT HAD NO WISH TO FIND THEMSELVES BEING HELD RESPONSIBLE FOR A BREAKDOWN OF NEGOTIATION AS A RESULT OF ACTING AGAINST CONTINUED UNREST AND THUS AUTOMATICALLY BRINGING DOWN INTERNATIONAL SANCTIONS ON THEIR HEADS. THEY WOULD WISH FOR REASSURANCE ON THIS SCORE FROM THE COMMONWEALTH GROUP.

8. FINALLY MANLEY CONFIRMED THAT PIK BOTHA WAS ANXIOUS FOR SOME INDICATION OF ANC WILLINGNESS IN PRINCIPLE TO CALL OFF VIOLENCE ON THE GROUP'S TERMS BEFORE (BEFORE) THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT DELIVER THEIR SUBSTANTIVE RESPONSE TO THE "NEGOTIATING CONCEPT". IN PRACTICE PIK BOTHA WILL BE LOOKING FOR A FURTHER MESSAGE FROM LONDON TO HELP HIM CARRY THE PRESIDENT WITH HIM. I POINTED OUT THAT THIS WOULD ADD ANOTHER STEP TO AN ALREADY TIGHT TIMETABLE.

9. ON A POINT A DETAIL I SHOULD CORRECT THE REFERENCE IN PARAGRAPH 7 OF MY TUR TO REMARKS BY ARCHBISHOP SCOTT OF WHICH PIK BOTHA COMPLAINED. IT APPEARS THAT THE ARCHBISHOP WAS IN FACT SPEAKING TO CANADIAN BUSINESSMEN IN SOUTH AFRICA.

MOBERLY

YYYY

CFPOAN 0307

NNNN