



Lc: PC

JR

10 DOWNING STREET  
LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

29 May 1986

Dear Robert,

**SOUTH AFRICA: MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT BOTHA**

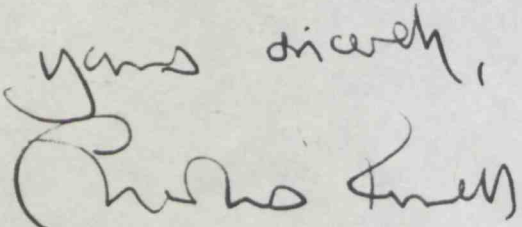
Thank you for your letter of 28 May conveying the Foreign Secretary's views on President Botha's latest message and on the way ahead. The Prime Minister agrees that we should do everything possible to keep the COMGEP initiative alive, however unpromising the prospects for it, and to play for time.

The Prime Minister would wish to reply to President Botha's letter straight away. The reply should be very brief and say that she and the President were both upset by the other's reaction, but that what matters is that negotiations are kept alive. The ANC will rejoice if they break down and the Prime Minister will have no chance or credibility in trying any other way of making progress. I should be grateful to have a draft on these lines later today (or am happy to do it myself if you prefer).

The Prime Minister is content for further analysis to be conducted under Cabinet Office auspices of the consequences for the United Kingdom of various possible additional measures against South Africa. The work should not attempt to prejudge in any way whether such measures are necessary or desirable.

As regards the suggestion of a meeting between European Heads of Government and President Botha, the Prime Minister's view is that we should not reject any way forward which could help avoid a confrontation and gain time. She hopes therefore that the Foreign Secretary will explore the idea very discreetly with his principal European colleagues and with Secretary Shultz to see how they would view it. There may be opportunities to do so in the margins of the current NATO Foreign Ministers' meeting.

I am copying this letter to Michael Stark in the Cabinet Office.

Yours sincerely,  
  
 (C. D. POWELL)

R.N. Culshaw, Esq.,  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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I will be to a very

brief reply saying

PRIME MINISTER

SOUTH AFRICA

Clearly we are both upset by the other's reaction - but what matters

The Foreign Secretary recommends: <sup>whether negotiations are kept alive</sup>

<sup>The ANC will rejoice if they break down, and</sup>

(i) that you should not reply to President Botha's recent, ~~the~~ and intemperate message for the time being. This should <sup>I shall</sup> wait until we know the terms of the South African <sup>have no</sup> response to the Possible Negotiating Concept of the <sup>charter</sup> EPG. (Intelligence suggests that the response will be negative). Agree?

<sup>credibility in</sup>  
<sup>buying any other</sup>  
~~day~~ <sup>days</sup> . <sup>not</sup>

(ii) that we should set in hand work internally on possible additional measures against South Africa, in the event that the EPG initiative breaks down. The aim should be to identify measures which cause the least possible damage to unemployment in this country or to South African blacks. This is more tricky. The Foreign Office are convinced (once again) that measures are inevitable: and once work is done on them, the notion that they are unavoidable will gather pace. On the other hand, such work under Cabinet Office auspices is a prudent precaution. Agree to work being done, to draw up an illustrative list of possible measures, without prejudging Ministerial decisions on whether any of them should be applied? <sup>Under Cabinet auspices - yes</sup>

<sup>but de minimis</sup>

(iii) that Pik Botha's suggestion of a meeting between European Heads of Government and President Botha should not be pursued for the time being. The other governments are unlikely to be enthusiastic, and once again, it is a ploy which might be held in reserve until we know the nature of South Africa's response to the EPG. I think that the advice on timing is probably right, though I would not like to see the idea dismissed out of hand. The Foreign Secretary might be asked to canvass it in strict confidence with Shultz and his principal European colleagues. One is tempted

to suggest that you might undertake such a mission alone, as the only person with the remotest chance of swaying President Botha. But in the light of all the evidence the chances of such a mission being successful are very slim: and you would be very exposed if it failed, with the pressure for sanctions all the greater.

Agree that the Foreign Secretary should canvass very discreetly views on a possible collective meeting with President Botha?

*Yes, let's try everything we can. We must pray for love.*

*CDP*

Charles Powell

28 May 1986

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cek  
①



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

Prime Minister

30 May 1986

I have re-cast the message. (I told the FO exactly what you wanted, but they knew better!)

Agree to sign attached letter?

Spred

Therby on  
/ out

CDP 30/5

South Africa: Message from President Botha

Your letter of 29 May asked for a draft reply for the Prime Minister to send to President Botha. I enclose a draft which has been approved by the Foreign Secretary. It takes into account the South African Government's response of 29 May to the co-Chairmen of the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group (your letter of 29 May).

The Foreign Secretary considers that this response shows once again that President Botha wants not just a suspension of violence from the ANC and other opposition groups, but a more far-reaching commitment from them to ending that violence. The letter also raises what appear to be two specific preconditions for the South Africans.

These are "a substantial reduction in violence" by others (which by implication would need to precede any move by the South African Government), and a commitment by others to "abandon all forms of intimidation". The letter also states that the South Africans are not prepared to negotiate about "a transfer of power", though they are prepared to discuss "power sharing".

Apart from the potential difficulties in meeting these South African concerns, the letter gives no indication of the South African Government's attitude to what is asked of it in the negotiating concept by way of the release of Mandela, unbanning of the ANC, etc. The South Africans offer no more than further discussions with the Group.

Ewen Fergusson spoke this morning to Lord Barber who fully understands the need to explore every avenue but who is not sure whether the other members of the Commonwealth Group will agree to the South African offer of further discussions and be willing to return there for what would be a last round of talks before finalising their report.

/Lord Barber

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Lord Barber believes that Mr Fraser's view on this is likely to be crucial. He will speak to him by telephone over the weekend and will try to persuade him that it would be wrong for the Group not to have further discussions with the South African Government. Fergusson encouraged him in this.

Despite the difficult nature of the South African reply to the Commonwealth Group, the Foreign Secretary considers that we have no option but to encourage the Group to make the best of it and to continue with their negotiations. Pretoria telno 86 reports some slightly more helpful comments by the Deputy Director General of the South African DFA (though we would expect him to put the best possible gloss on his Government's reply). Von Hirschberg claimed that the reply meant that the South African Government were interested in continuing to explore the negotiating concept. He also said that violence remains the key issue and that if this could be resolved the other three issues mentioned in the letter should fall into place.

The danger is that the Group will nevertheless conclude that the South Africans are just stringing them along. They will understandably wish to see real evidence that any of the South African Government's leaders, apart from Pik Botha, are really committed to the COMGEP exercise. Without such evidence they are likely to decide that the conditions for dialogue do not exist.

When we know the Group's reaction to the South African response, the Foreign Secretary will consider what further action we can usefully take with President Botha and the South African Government.

*Yours ever*

*Robert Culshaw*

(R N Culshaw)  
Private Secretary

C D Powell Esq  
PS/10 Downing Street

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DRAFT: minute/letter/teleletter/despach/note

TYPE: Draft/Final 1+

FROM:

Prime Minister

Reference

DEPARTMENT:

TEL. NO:

SECURITY CLASSIFICATION

TO:

The Hon P W Botha DMS

Your Reference

Top Secret

Secret

Confidential

Restricted

Unclassified

Copies to:

*M52 BZ/H*

PRIVACY MARKING

SUBJECT:

.....In Confidence

*Clearly we had were both upset by  
I see from your letter of 26 May that you are as  
to other's reaction to recent events.*

CAVEAT.....

dismayed by what I felt it necessary to say, as I had  
earlier been by your raids. We ought now to put this  
behind us. What matters is that we should both do all  
we can to keep alive the hope of peaceful progress  
offered by the Commonwealth Group's initiative.

*That breaks down, the ANC will rejoice  
as will all those who want a*

If the Group's negotiations break down, those of  
your opponents in the ANC and elsewhere who want a  
violent solution will have got what they wanted.

*My own credibility in making things any  
other way forward will be greatly  
diminished*  
They will have been let off the hook, and will be  
able to pursue unfettered a policy of confrontation.

The chances of persuading others to try better ways  
of making progress will have been greatly reduced.

Enclosures—flag(s).....

I have seen your Foreign Minister's letter to the  
co-Chairmen of the Commonwealth Group giving your  
response to the Group's negotiating concept and saying  
that your Government would welcome further discussions  
with the Group. The Group are meeting here next week.

/I do

Relations : SOUTH AFRICA  
Pt 9.

I do not yet know what their reaction will be, but  
I very much hope that they will decide to continue  
the discussions. I shall do what I can to  
encourage this.

