



COMMONWEALTH GROUP OF EMINENT PERSONS

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Cables: COMSECGEN LONDON SW1

Telex: 27878

Telephone: 01-839 3411

Marlborough House

Pall Mall

London SW1Y 5HX

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The Hon. R F Botha
Minister of Foreign Affairs
Republic of South Africa

My dear Foreign Minister

Thank you for your letter of 29 May 1986 following the discussions between Ministers of the South African Government and the members of the Commonwealth Group in Cape Town on 19 May.

We note that your letter provides a restatement of points which Ministers raised with our Group at the 19 May meeting. Essentially there are two key elements to the points raised by Ministers: that there should be a renunciation of violence and that a de-escalation in the level of violence was necessary before other action might be taken by the Government. The Group explained in some detail its position on these matters and the difficulties which they raised.

Nevertheless, we are convinced that it is possible to achieve negotiations about the democratic future of South Africa if that is the Government's genuine wish, and it is willing to create the circumstances in which co-operation would become possible with the acknowledged leaders of the people of South Africa who would speak and act for negotiation.

We strongly believe that the negotiating concept which we left with the Government is sound and would assist in achieving negotiations in a non-violent atmosphere. This would require acceptance by the South African Government

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Members:

The Rt. Hon. MALCOLM FRASER (Co-Chairman); General OLUSEGUN OBASANJO (Co-Chairman)
The Rt. Hon. LORD BARBER, Dame NITA BARROW, Mr. JOHN MALECELA, Sardar SWARAN SINGH, The Most Rev. Archbishop EDWARD W. SCOTT DD

of the spirit and reality of what we have said about violence and a recognition that this applied to all sides. It would also require a deliberate attempt on the part of the South African Government to repair the damage that has been done by its actions of the last few weeks.

We find it difficult to understand how the term suspension of violence provides difficulties for the South African Government particularly as our negotiating concept would involve black leaders arguing in support of the maintenance of peace during the negotiating process. We reiterate that the Lancaster House negotiations continued without the suspension of violence as have many others in situations of conflict.

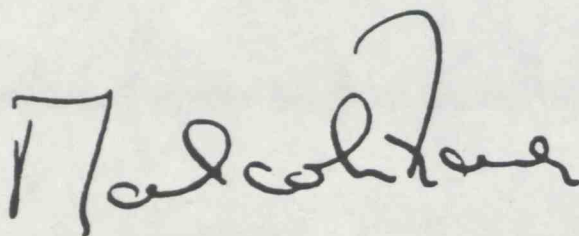
As to the second point, we reassert that a prior reduction in the level of violence before the Government itself takes specific action in regard to the concept would not be feasible. Acts of aggression were committed against neighbouring countries on the very morning when we discussed the concept with Ministers. This underlines the essential elements of the concept requiring a suspension of violence on all sides and highlights the unreality of asking others to de-escalate violence before action as proposed by the Group is taken by the Government. A suspension of violence or a commitment to non-violence, if in the Government's view the meaning is the same, would obviously in the present context require a commitment to suspend the violence arising from the administration of apartheid. In addition, in the light of recent events, the Government of South Africa would need to give a firm commitment to desist from further aggression against neighbouring states.

In your letter you mentioned two further matters. The first concerned intimidation. In our view the suspension of violence would necessarily involve the end of all intimidation. We emphasise it is only the Government that can establish the circumstances in which normal political activity and freedom of assembly and discussion can take place. This of course is an essential part of our concept.

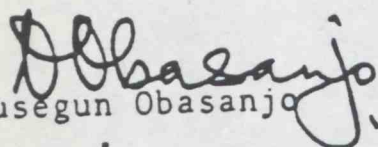
You then raised questions about the nature of the negotiations. All along we have said that the specific elements of a political settlement are for South Africans to determine. Our charter was never to prescribe the form of the democracy that should evolve in South Africa. That is for South Africans alone. We had noted your assurance that there would be an open agenda at the negotiations against the background of dismantling apartheid and with the objective of the establishment of a just democratic structure.

In the absence both of movement on the part of the Government on the first two major points and a positive response to the concept as a whole, we are unable to see merit in further discussions. This is especially so since actions of recent weeks have made the negotiating climate much more difficult.

Yours sincerely



Malcolm Fraser



Olusegun Obasanjo

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