

PRIME MINISTERSOUTH AFRICA: COMMONWEALTH EMINENT PERSONS GROUP

Over the weekend, the Eminent Persons Group have agreed and signed their report. They conclude that their work is at an end. They do not, apparently, make any recommendations as to future action by Commonwealth governments. Indeed there is a sentence to the effect that it is not for the Group to determine the nature and extent of measures which might be adopted or to advise on the effectiveness of them. Nor do the Group make any attempt to suggest that the August date for the meeting of the Commonwealth Heads of Governments should be advanced. But the fact that they have given up is of course bad news.

The Group plan to transmit their report to Heads of Government tomorrow night or on Tuesday morning and to publish it on Thursday with a press conference by the two co-Chairmen.

I understand Lord Barber wants to see you tomorrow if possible and the two co-Chairmen on Tuesday. I imagine that you will agree to both meetings and we will find times.

It is reported that the two co-Chairmen also intend to brief the French and German governments - though I am not sure how this is necessary given that they are a Commonwealth group.

C.D.P.  
CHARLES POWELL

8 June 1986

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PRIME MINISTER

cc Mr. Ingham

EMINENT PERSONS GROUP

As of this evening, the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group are still locked in discussion. This may continue over the weekend. However there are clear indications that they are going to finalise their report. This will in effect terminate their mission. Although there is unlikely to be any formal statement until next week, there seem bound to be leaks over the weekend. Much depends on the precise terms in which their conclusions are issued. They may reply to President Botha's latest message in a way which would, in theory at least, leave him the option of asking for discussions to continue. But in practice their reply is likely to be cast in terms which the South African Government will find unacceptable.

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This all reaches me second hand but you should be aware of it.

C.D.P.

CHARLES POWELL

6 June 1986

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