

SUBJECT.

cc Master.



bc PC

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

9 June 1986

SOUTH AFRICA: PRIME MINISTER'S MEETING WITH LORD BARBER

Lord Barber came to see the Prime Minister this evening to report on final stages of the COMGEP initiative. He gave a lurid account of the difficulties of producing the Group's final report on the basis of a highly unsatisfactory Commonwealth Secretariat draft; and explained why he had decided in the end to go along with the report, despite its reference to further measures against South Africa, rather than put in a dissenting opinion. As it had emerged, the report made clear that any decisions about measures were for Commonwealth Heads of Government and not for the Group. Moreover, the report did not discuss any specific measures.

Commenting on the work of the Eminent Persons Group Lord Barber believed that there would have been a fair chance of getting the ANC to accept the Group's negotiating concept. There had been no doubt that Mandela would have accepted it. But in the final stages of the Group's effort it became clear that the South African government were not prepared to go far enough. He believed that the activities of the extreme right wing had been a major factor in hardening the South African government's position. Lord Barber said that his personal view was that there was likely to be a gradual deterioration in South Africa with the risk of an eventual bloodbath. He saw no alternative now but for Western governments to take some sort of measures, even if only limited ones, against South Africa.

The Prime Minister thanked Lord Barber for his work on the Group and for the efforts which he had made to ensure that the Group's report was reasonable. He had done wonders. She was very disappointed at the failure of the EPG initiative. She agreed with Lord Barber that the reason was that the South African government had gone sour. It remained important to try to find a negotiated solution though there was no obvious alternative to the Eminent Persons Group in prospect. She remained convinced that economic measures would not be effective in bringing about change in South Africa but would be damaging to the United Kingdom economy and jobs. She was in no doubt that if such measures were taken against South Africa, the South African government would lay off the consequences on the Front Line

States. They would in turn seek aid to compensate them, which we would be in no position to provide.

(C.D. POWELL)

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