



It is worth  
the thought  
me (2)

10 DOWNING STREET

Prime Minister

You will not  
have time to read  
the full report of  
the Eminent Persons  
Group. But you may  
like to see the  
conclusions (attached), especially  
those which I have  
underlined.

CDP  
10/6.

MISSION TO SOUTH AFRICA

REPORT OF THE COMMONWEALTH GROUP OF EMINENT PERSONS

MESSAGE TO ALL COMMONWEALTH HEADS OF GOVERNMENT

From the Secretary-General

9 June, 1986

At their meeting which concluded in London on Saturday, June 7, the members of the Group of Eminent Persons have prepared a unanimous Report on their efforts, an advance copy of which I am sending to you today via your High Commission in London, with a request to get it to you at the earliest possible opportunity. The Co-Chairmen will hold a press conference in London on Thursday, June 12 and I would ask that the Report itself and this message be treated as confidential until then. In view of the very wide international interest in the Report and the importance of minimising speculation and distortion, I am arranging for its release at the earliest practicable opportunity, and will try to ensure the widest possible circulation. Meanwhile, I am sending you, herewith, advance information on the Group's principal conclusions. These are, in the language of the Report, as follows:

- "Our mandate was to foster a process of negotiation across lines of colour, politics and religion, with a view to establishing a non-racial and representative government. It is our considered view that, despite appearances and statements to the contrary, the South African Government is not yet ready to negotiate such a future - except on its own terms. Those terms, both in regard to objectives and modalities, fall far short of reasonable black expectations and well accepted democratic norms and principles.
- We draw the conclusion that while the Government claims to be ready to negotiate, it is in truth not yet prepared to negotiate fundamental change, nor to countenance the creation of genuine democratic structures, nor to face the prospect of the end of white domination and white power in the foreseeable future. Its programme of reform does not end apartheid, but seeks to give it a less inhuman face. Its quest is power-sharing, but without surrendering overall white control.
- It is not for us to prescribe or advise who the parties to a genuine negotiation might be; but we noted as significant

the Government's allergy to our proposal that they should be the "true", "authentic" or "acknowledged" leaders of the people.

- There can be no negotiated settlement in South Africa without the ANC; the breadth of its support is incontestable; and this support is growing. Among the many striking figures whom we met in the course of our work, Nelson Mandela and Oliver Tambo stand out. Their reasonableness, absence of rancour and readiness to find negotiated solutions which, while creating genuine democratic structures would still give the Whites a feeling of security and participation, impressed us deeply. If the Government finds itself unable to talk with men like Mandela and Tambo, then the future of South Africa is bleak indeed. If, therefore, the Government is serious about negotiations, it must create conditions in which free political activity becomes possible, and political parties and leaders are able to function effectively and test the extent of their popular support. Tragically, the whole thrust of Government policy has been to thwart such legitimate leadership from emerging and destroy it where it does. Even non-violent organisations like the UDF have been subjected to harassment and persecution.
- Behind these attitudes lurks a deeper truth. After more than 18 months of persistent unrest, upheaval, and killings unprecedented in the country's history, the Government believes that it can contain the situation indefinitely by use of force... South Africa is predominantly a country of black people. To believe that they can be indefinitely suppressed is an act of self-delusion.
- While right-wing opposition cannot be ignored, it would be fatal to give it a veto. Indeed, we gained the impression that white opinion as a whole may be ahead of the Government in significant respects, ready to respond positively if given a bold lead.
- Put in the most simple way, the Blacks have had enough of apartheid. They are no longer prepared to submit to its oppression, discrimination and exploitation. They can no longer stomach being treated as aliens in their own country. They have confidence not merely in the justice of their cause, but in the inevitability of their victory... The strength of black convictions is now matched by a readiness to die for those convictions. They will, therefore, sustain their struggle, whatever the cost.
- The writ of the Government will be increasingly circumscribed. Inter-black rivalry and violence, partly encouraged and fomented by the Government, will grow, making the task of negotiating a settlement even more difficult. Political upheaval and social unrest will accelerate the flight of capital and professional skills and the economy's downward spiral.

The Government faces difficult choices. Its obduracy and intransigence wrecked the Commonwealth's initiative, but the issues themselves will not go away, nor can they be bombed out of existence. It is not sanctions which will destroy the country but the persistence of apartheid and the Government's failure to engage in fundamental political reform.

- In our Report we have addressed in turn the five steps which the Nassau Accord called on the authorities in Pretoria to take "in a genuine manner and as a matter of urgency"... our conclusions with regard to them are as follows:

(a) We have examined the Government's 'programme of reform' and have been forced to conclude that at present there is no genuine intention on the part of the South African Government to dismantle apartheid.

(b) The state of emergency, although technically lifted, remains substantially in force under the ordinary laws of the land which, even now, are being further strengthened in this direction.

(c) Nelson Mandela and other political leaders remain in prison.

(d) Political freedom is far from being established; if anything, it is being more rigorously curtailed. The ANC and other political parties remain banned.

(e) The cycle of violence and counter-violence has spiralled and there is no present prospect of a process of dialogue leading to the establishment of a non-racial and representative government.

- Overall, the concrete and adequate progress looked for in the Nassau Accord towards the objectives of "dismantling apartheid and erecting the structures of democracy in South Africa" has not materialised.

- Indeed, in recent weeks, the Government would appear to have moved consciously away from any realistic negotiating process. It is not just their communications with us which have indicated a hardening of attitude. The same message has been clear in the State President's speech in May, the bombing of three neighbouring Commonwealth countries even while we were in discussion with senior Ministers, the denigration and smearing of the ANC, the retreat from the earlier readiness to accept 'suspension' as opposed to 'renunciation' of violence, the seeking of greater security powers for the police and military on top of the massive powers they already have, the renewed determination to

suppress public meetings and free speech and to harass black leaders, and not least the more recent raids on Angolan ports.

- For all the people of South Africa and of the sub-region as a whole, the certain prospect is of an even sharper decline into violence and bloodshed with all its attendant human costs. A racial conflagration with frightening implications threatens.
- What can be done?... There may be no course available that can guarantee a significantly more peaceful solution. But against the background in which ever-increasing violence will be a certainty, the question of further measures immediately springs to mind. As the Nassau Accord makes clear, Commonwealth Heads of Government have agreed that, in the event of adequate progress not having been made in South Africa within a period of six months, they would consider further measures.

← While we are not determining the nature or extent of any measures which might be adopted, or their effectiveness, we point to the fact that the Government of South Africa has itself used economic measures against its neighbours and that such measures are patently instruments of its own national policy. We are convinced that the South African Government is concerned about the adoption of effective economic measures against it. If it comes to the conclusion that it would always remain protected from such measures, the process of change in South Africa is unlikely to increase in momentum and the descent into violence would be accelerated. In these circumstances, the cost in lives may have to be counted in millions.

← The question in front of Heads of Government is in our view clear. It is not whether such measures will compel change; it is already the case that their absence and Pretoria's belief that they need not be feared, defers change. Is the Commonwealth to stand by and allow the cycle of violence to spiral? Or will it take concerted action of an effective kind? Such action may offer the last opportunity to avert what could be the worst bloodbath since the Second World War."

With deep respect,

Shridath Ramphal