



South African Embassy
Trafalgar Square
LONDON Wc2N 5DP

10 June 1986

The Rt. Hon. Malcolm Fraser
General Olusegun Obasanjo
Co-Chairmen of the Commonwealth
Group of Eminent Persons
Marlborough House
Pall Mall
LONDON
SW1Y 5HX

Dear Mr Fraser and General Obasanjo

I thank you for your letter dated 5 June 1986.

It is of great concern to me that while we are ad idem on the need to create conditions free of violence as a pre-requisite for pursuing negotiations, we differ on how this is to be achieved and also on the meaning of an end to violence.

You appear to be under the impression that it is the South African Government which is responsible for the violence and you proceed from the point of view that it is only the South African Government that must take the initiative, believing that if it does, violence would be reduced, negotiations could take place and agreement would be forthcoming. From the point of view of the South African Government this is unrealistic as it does not take account of the facts and motives underlying the conflict. Furthermore you seem to base your premise on the presumption that there are only two or three parties involved whereas in fact there is a multiplicity of views and interests which need to be taken into account. After your visits to South Africa, you will be aware that it is far more than opposition to the South African Government which lies at the heart of the conflict and the turbulence.

The tendency towards the use of violence for political advantage in South Africa is not limited to those on the radical left but also manifests itself on the radical right. And you must bear in mind that elements in South Africa on the radical right of the political spectrum also have the capacity to use destructive means in an attempt to achieve their political objectives. They are encouraged by

the example of the radical left to use similar methods in an attempt to bring an end to the reform policies of the South African Government. Does the Commonwealth Group of Eminent Persons believe that the principle of rejecting violence as a means for achieving political objectives should be applied selectively?

The principle is clear. Negotiations towards a resolution of the problems confronting South Africa can only take place in an atmosphere free of violence. It is a principle that applies to all. It is not only fair but feasible given the political will of all concerned. But it appears to be anathema both to the radical left as well as to the radical right. Both have declared publicly that they will pursue their political objectives by violent means. No responsible government can be expected to accept this. The South African Government cannot abdicate its responsibilities in maintaining law and order.

The South African Government can, by the same token, equally not accept what you imply in your letter, namely, that violence would only be suspended as long as the negotiations continue. As I have stated to you previously, it is unacceptable that violence or the threat of violence should be used as a bargaining counter in any negotiating situation.

You also stated it as your view that a suspension of violence would require of the Government, in your words, "a commitment to suspend the violence arising from the administration of apartheid". The South African Government is at a loss to know to what particular form of "violence" you refer. Presumably the Government is not expected to abandon its responsibility for the maintenance of law and order nor its duty to safeguard the rights and liberties of all South Africans. What, therefore, is meant by "violence arising from the administration of apartheid"? I ask this with particular reference to my previous letter in which you were informed of the South African Government's commitment to a negotiated constitutional order which guarantees fundamental values and freedoms for all South Africa's citizens.

In your letter you draw a comparison between the envisaged negotiating process in South Africa and the talks at Lancaster House which led to the independence of Zimbabwe. The relevance of this comparison defies understanding since you will know that the two situations are so different as to be entirely incomparable. Historically, factually, and legally the two situations simply cannot be compared.

I cannot understand why you should introduce new elements into your latest letter. I refer to your reference to the attacks on 19 May 1986 on terrorist bases in Botswana, Zambia and Zimbabwe. You will be aware that during your visits, the African National Congress was responsible for acts of violence in South Africa aimed at civilian targets. I cannot recall that you have called upon the ANC "to repair the damage that has been done by its actions of the last

few weeks". One cannot but be inclined to think that the Commonwealth Group of Eminent Persons has already taken sides on this question.

Regrettably the perception persists that South Africa's recent military actions constitute aggression against neighbouring states. South Africa's military actions were, as you know, confined to terrorist targets which posed a threat to the lives and liberty of South African citizens. In addressing Parliament on 31 January 1986 the South African State President reaffirmed the South African Government's continued commitment to peaceful international co-existence through co-operation and negotiation. He emphasized that there could be no peace and stability in the Southern African region as long as countries knowingly harbour terrorists who plan and execute acts of terror against a neighbouring state. He once again extended a hand of friendship to South Africa's neighbours.

The State President went so far as to propose that urgent and serious consideration be given by the countries of southern Africa to the establishment of a permanent joint mechanism for dealing with matters of security, particularly threats to the peace and prosperity of the southern African sub-continent.

The South African Government remains adamant that it is not prepared to allow its civilians to be murdered or maimed by acts of terrorism which are planned and perpetrated from across our borders.

I am also surprised at your reaction to the subject of "the nature of the negotiations" which I raised in my letter to you of 28 May 1986. The South African Government has all along been under the impression that your Group would not interfere in the question of any future constitutional arrangement. We are therefore in agreement that that is not your task. However, in my letter of 28 May 1986 I referred to a different matter, namely, that the ANC, in terms of its own objectives, rejects negotiations about the sharing of power, insisting that negotiations would be limited to the handing over of power. The South African Government therefore considered it important to establish whether you share the view that the envisaged negotiations should be about the handing over of power to a particular party.

Regarding the last paragraph of your letter, I am disappointed that after your experiences in South Africa you should require from the South African Government "a positive response to the concept as a whole". I remain under the impression that when it was presented to the South African Government on 13 March 1986, it was considered to be "a possible negotiating concept". The South African Government must now apparently accept it as the only and final negotiating concept. In my previous letter I indicated

what the main concerns of the South African Government were. I remain convinced that the majority of South African leaders who seek peace and progress for all on the basis of democratically acceptable norms and standards, do indeed wish to negotiate. I trust that the Commonwealth Group of Eminent Persons would agree that the concerns raised in my previous letter are real and serious and ought to be canvassed further.

The South African Government will continue with its programme of reform with a view to making it possible for all South Africans to come together and decide jointly on a new constitutional future based on fundamental values and freedoms and tailored to South African circumstances and realities.

In view of the fact that the substance of your letter of 5 June 1986 and your "possible negotiating concept" has appeared in the international media, the South African Government has decided, in the interests of balance, to release the contents of my previous letter to you as well as this one.

Yours sincerely

R.F. BOTHA
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS





10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

10 June 1986

I enclose a copy of a letter which I have received from Mr. Evans of the South African Embassy which in turn encloses a copy of the South African Government's reply to the recent message from the two Co-Chairmen of the Eminent Persons Group - in case you have not received it

**THIS IS A COPY. THE ORIGINAL IS
RETAINED UNDER SECTION 3 (4)
OF THE PUBLIC RECORDS ACT**

(Charles Powell)

Colin Budd, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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South African Embassy
Trafalgar Square
LONDON WC2N 5DP

10 June 1986

Mr Charles Powell
Private Secretary to
the Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
LONDON SW1

CDP 19/6

Dear Charles,

You will no doubt be aware that the Co-Chairmen of the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group addressed a letter to the Foreign Minister, Mr R.F. Botha on 5 June 1986. Regrettably even before this letter could be considered by the South African Government its contents were the subject of media coverage in London.

I enclose a copy of our Foreign Minister's reply to the Co-Chairmen's letter, for your information.

Yours sincerely
L. H. Evans

L.H. EVANS
MINISTER

Opinion
100%
July



COMMONWEALTH GROUP OF EMINENT PERSONS

Established pursuant to the Commonwealth Accord on Southern Africa. Nassau. October. 1985

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5 June 1986

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.

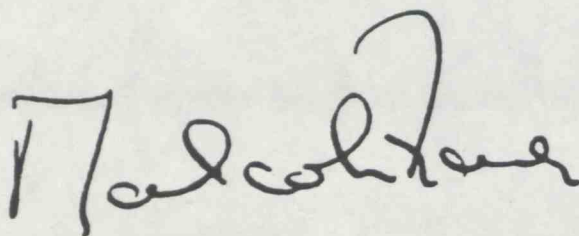
As to the second point, we reassert that a prior reduction in the level of violence before the Government itself takes specific action in regard to the concept would not be feasible. Acts of aggression were committed against neighbouring countries on the very morning when we discussed the concept with 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.

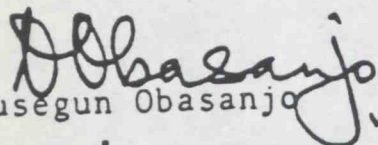
You then raised questions about the nature of the negotiations. All along we have said that the specific elements of a political settlement are for South Africans to determine. Our charter was never to prescribe the form of the democracy that should evolve in South Africa. That is for South Africans 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

SEK. AFRICA Relations Pt 9

