



*File ECL*  
*de fno*  
*J.L.C.*

10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

21 July 1986

*Dear General Obasanjo.*

Thank you for your message.

I am surprised that you believe Sir Geoffrey Howe's mission is being seen as "an exercise in futility". I recall that during our talk on 11 June you told me that you thought President Botha would be prepared to talk frankly to me about his fears and about what he was prepared to do. You also suggested that I might be able to persuade President Botha to release Mr. Mandela. At that stage you clearly saw further direct contact as useful. I do not quite understand what has happened since then to change your mind. Moreover, your message does not appear to acknowledge that Sir Geoffrey's mission is carried out on behalf, not of the United Kingdom alone, but of the Twelve countries of the European Community. The Twelve have repeatedly made plain their rejection of apartheid and cannot possibly be regarded as offering "unyielding support for the South African government and its apartheid policy".

I have frequently expressed my utter detestation of apartheid in strong terms, and I cannot imagine how anyone could reasonably "cast my position in a racist mould" as you suggest. My opposition to general economic sanctions is based on a conviction that they have never in history succeeded in changing a country's internal policies, would be very difficult to enforce, would inflict damage on the South African economy and above all on the black people of South Africa, and would harden the resistance of those opposed to

reform. In short they would not be effective. Equally, as you will know, we have taken a considerable number of measures to demonstrate our extreme disapproval of apartheid. We have also made clear that, failing early and substantial progress in South Africa, further measures may be needed. Contingency arrangements are being made.

Like you, I hope very much that the meeting of certain Commonwealth Heads of Government in early August will be able to advance a peaceful solution to South Africa's problems. That will certainly be my aim.

I look forward to seeing you then.

With best wishes.

Yours sincerely  
Raymond Shabeta

---

General Olusegun Obasanjo

XG



10 DOWNING STREET  
LONDON SW1A 2AA

*From the Private Secretary*

21 July 1986

BF

The Prime Minister has decided to reply to General Obasanjo's latest message to her, the text of which was in Lagos tel. no. 614. I enclose her reply and would be grateful if you would arrange for it to be telegraphed to Lagos.

(Charles Powell)

C.R. Budd, Esq.,  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

LB



10 DOWNING STREET

Prime Minister

I attach a  
revised reply to  
Obasanjo's letter.

"Dear General Obasanjo"

CDP.

~~CP~~ AM

Please return to  
me for covering letter  
to FCO.

AM

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CONFIDENTIAL  
FM FCO  
TO IMMEDIATE LAGOS  
TELNO 443  
OF 221315Z JULY 86

OUR TELNO 408 AND YOUR TEL 614  
FURTHER MESSAGE FROM PRIME MINISTER TO OBASANJO. PLEASE ARRANGE  
TO HAVE IT DELIVERED ASAP.

BEGINS:

1. THANK YOU FOR YOUR MESSAGE.

I AM SURPRISED THAT YOU BELIEVE SIR GEOFFREY HOWE'S MISSION IS  
BEING SEEN AS 'AN EXERCISE IN FUTILITY'. I RECALL THAT DURING  
OUR TALK ON 11 JUNE YOU TOLD ME THAT YOU THOUGHT PRESIDENT BOTHA  
WOULD BE PREPARED TO TALK FRANKLY TO ME ABOUT HIS FEARS AND  
ABOUT WHAT HE WAS PREPARED TO DO. YOU ALSO SUGGESTED THAT I  
MIGHT BE ABLE TO PERSUADE PRESIDENT BOTHA TO RELEASE MR MANDELA.  
AT THAT STAGE YOU CLEARLY SAW FURTHER DIRECT CONTACT AS USEFUL.  
I DO NOT QUITE UNDERSTAND WHAT HAS HAPPENED SINCE THEN TO CHANGE  
YOUR MIND. MOREOVER, YOUR MESSAGE DOES NOT APPEAR TO  
ACKNOWLEDGE THAT SIR GEOFFREY'S MISSION IS CARRIED OUT ON BEHALF,  
NOT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM ALONE, BUT OF THE TWELVE COUNTRIES OF  
THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY. THE TWELVE HAVE REPEATEDLY MADE PLAIN  
THEIR REJECTION OF APARTHEID AND CANNOT POSSIBLY BE REGARDED AS  
OFFERING 'UNYIELDING SUPPORT FOR THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT AND  
ITS APARTHEID POLICY'.

I HAVE FREQUENTLY EXPRESSED MY UTTER DETESTATION OF APARTHEID  
IN STRONG TERMS, AND I CANNOT IMAGINE HOW ANYONE COULD

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CONFIDENTIAL

*/REASONABLY*

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51581 - 1

REASONABLY 'CAST MY POSITION IN A RACIST MOULD' AS YOU SUGGEST. MY OPPOSITION TO GENERAL ECONOMIC SANCTIONS IS BASED ON A CONVICTION THAT THEY HAVE NEVER IN HISTORY SUCCEEDED IN CHANGING A COUNTRY'S INTERNAL POLICIES, WOULD BE VERY DIFFICULT TO ENFORCE, WOULD INFLICT DAMAGE ON THE SOUTH AFRICAN ECONOMY AND ABOVE ALL ON THE BLACK PEOPLE OF SOUTH AFRICA, AND WOULD HARDEN THE RESISTANCE OF THOSE OPPOSED TO REFORM. IN SHORT THEY WOULD NOT BE EFFECTIVE. EQUALLY, AS YOU WILL KNOW, WE HAVE TAKEN A CONSIDERABLE NUMBER OF MEASURES TO DEMONSTRATE OUR EXTREME DISAPPROVAL OF APARTHEID. WE HAVE ALSO MADE CLEAR THAT, FAILING EARLY AND SUBSTANTIAL PROGRESS IN SOUTH AFRICA, FURTHER MEASURES MAY BE NEEDED. CONTINGENCY ARRANGEMENTS ARE BEING MADE. LIKE YOU, I HOPE VERY MUCH THAT THE MEETING OF CERTAIN COMMONWEALTH HEADS OF GOVERNMENT IN EARLY AUGUST WILL BE ABLE TO ADVANCE A PEACEFUL SOLUTION TO SOUTH AFRICA'S PROBLEMS. THAT WILL CERTAINLY BE MY AIM. I LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOU THEN. WITH BEST WISHES.

ENDS.

2. SIGNED ORIGINAL FOLLOWS BY BAG.

HOWE

LIMITED

WAD

SAFD

PLANNING STAFF

PS

PS/MRS CHALKER.

PS/PUS

MR E. FERGUSON

MR REEVE

MR DEREK THOMAS.

CCD

PUSD

CABINET OFFICE

2

CONFIDENTIAL

PSA  
Mr. Denis Thomas  
Mr. Ferguson  
PS

XX

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URGENT

ADVANCE COPY

Prime Minister

A disappointing &  
frankly unacceptable reply.  
Do you wish no return  
no charge? or let it  
be?  
CDR/7

CONFIDENTIAL  
FM LAGOS  
TO DESKBY 161700Z FCO  
TELNO 614  
OF 161500Z JULY 86  
INFO IMMEDIATE WASHINGTON  
INFO PRIORITY PRETORIA, CANBERRA

OUR TELNO 607 : MESSAGE FROM OBASANJO TO THE PRIME MINISTER

FOLLOWING IS TEXT OF OBASANJO'S REPLY TO THE PRIME MINISTER'S  
MESSAGE IN YOUR TELNO 408

DEAR MADAM PRIME MINISTER,

I THANK YOU FOR YOUR MESSAGE OF 8TH JULY INRESPECT OF SIR  
GEOFFREY HOWE'S MISSION TO SOUTH AFRICA. THE MESSAGE WAS  
DELIVERED TO ME ON 14TH JULY. MUCH AS I WOULD WANT TO WISH  
SIR GEOFFREY SUCCESS IN HIS MISSION, THE FIRST STAGE DID NOT  
APPEAR TO BE AS SUCCESSFUL AS YOU WOULD HAVE WANTED. THAT IS  
PERFECTLY UNDERSTANDABLE.

IF MEMBERS OF THE EPG INDIVIDUALLY AND COLLECTIVELY BELIEVED  
THAT VIOLENCE WAS THE ONLY WEAPON LEFT TO DISMANTLE APARTHEID,  
THEY WOULD NOT HAVE UNDERTAKEN THE MISSION TO SOUTH AFRICA.  
THE EPG FAILED ON THE MAIN FOCUS OF THEIR MISSION TO PROMOTE  
DIALOGUE AND NEGOTIATION BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT OF SOUTH AFRICA  
AND THE BLACK LEADERSHIP. THE REASON IS THAT THE GOVERNMENT OF  
SOUTH AFRICA WAS NOT READY TO DISMANTLE APARTHEID AND ERECT A  
NEW GENUINELY REPRESENTATIVE AND DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURE OF  
GOVERNMENT. KNOWING THIS AND THE INITIAL RESENTMENT OF BOTH THE

It is not  
worth my pain  
by pain - but  
just worth  
remembering this  
that it should  
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~~... GENUINELY REPRESENTATIVE AND DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURE OF~~  
GOVERNMENT. KNOWING THIS AND THE INITIAL RESENTMENT OF BOTH THE GOVERNMENT AND THE BLACK LEADERSHIP TO OUR OWN GROUP AND YOUR PERSONAL EFFORT TO GET THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT TO COOPERATE WITH THE GROUP, YOUR PROMOTION OF SIR GEOFFREY'S MISSION SO CLOSE TO THE EPG'S REPORT WITHOUT FORMAL ACCEPTANCE OF THAT REPORT AND POSITIVE REACTION ALONG THE LINE OF ITS CONCLUSION CAN ONLY BE SEEN IN MANY QUARTERS AS EXERCISE IN FUTILITY, DELAYING TACTICS AND UNYIELDING SUPPORT FOR THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT AND ITS APARTHEID POLICY.

MY OWN UNDERSTANDING OF THE AFRIKANER BOTH FROM HISTORY AND FROM RECENT AND CURRENT EVENTS IS THAT HE IS TOUGH, TRIBALISTIC, STUBBORN, RUTHLESS, OPPRESSIVE AND SEEMINGLY INFLEXIBLE BUT HE HAS NEVER COMMITTED SUICIDE; HE HAS ONLY CHANGED UNDER PRESSURE AND THE MORE THE PRESSURE THE GREATER THE CHANGE. THOSE CHARACTERISTICS MAY NOT BE THE SPECIAL POSSESSION OF THE AFRIKANER ALONE. IF THERE IS NO PRESSURE THERE WILL BE NO CHANGE AND WHERE EXTERNAL PRESSURE IS LACKING OR INADEQUATE INTERNAL PRESSURE WILL EVENTUALLY ASSUME INCREASING PROPORTION. PRESSURE, ADEQUATE AND EFFECTIVE PRESSURE, WILL GET PRESIDENT BOTHA AND HIS PEOPLE OVER THE HUMP AND NOT DRIVE THEM INSIDE THE LAAGER. THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT NEEDS THE WORLD, ESPECIALLY THE INDUSTRIALISED WORLD, TO MAINTAIN THE VERY HIGH STANDARD OF LIVING OF THE MINORITY OF ITS POPULATION. THAT GOVERNMENT FEARS ECONOMIC SANCTIONS AND INTERNAL UNREST AND ONE NEEDS NO FURTHER PROOF THAT THEY CAN BE EFFECTIVE.

I THEREFORE SHARE YOUR VIEW THAT "IF MEASURES ARE TO BE EFFECTIVE IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT THEY SHOULD HAVE THE SUPPORT OF THE INDUSTRIALISED COUNTRIES AS A WHOLE". FOR ME, AND I BELIEVE FOR MOST OF US WHO HAVE FIRST-HAND PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE IN SOUTH AFRICA, THE QUESTION IS NOT MORE MISSIONS INTO SOUTH AFRICA BUT EFFECTIVE MEASURES (NOT TOKENS OR SYMBOLS) THAT WILL HURT ENOUGH TO BRING ABOUT COMPARATIVELY PEACEFUL CHANGE IN SOUTH AFRICA WITHOUT SEVERE DESTRUCTION OF ITS ECONOMY AND/OR ITS PEOPLE. THE SOUTH AFRICAN ECONOMY MUST NOT ONLY BE PRESERVED FOR SOUTH AFRICA BUT FOR AFRICA AND THE ENTIRE WORLD ON THE BASIS OF EQUITY, JUSTICE AND FAIR PLAY.

THOSE OF US WHO FROM PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE AND KNOWLEDGE HAVE SHOWN UNDERSTANDING FOR YOUR PERSONAL AND POLITICAL CONSIDERATION, ARE HARD PUT TO EXPLAIN AWAY YOUR CONTINUED INSISTENCE ON NO SANCTIONS. MUCH HAS HAPPENED IN THE LAST TWO MONTHS, ALL OF IT - FROM THE ACTIONS THAT SIGNALLED THEIR REJECTION OF OUR EFFORTS THROUGH EVER - MORE DRACONIAN STEPS OF REPRESSION - INITIATED BY THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT. AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND, HOW CAN THE FACT THAT YOUR STANCE ON SANCTIONS REMAINS UNCHANGED BE EXPLAINED WITHOUT GIVING AMMUNITION TO THOSE WHO SEE RACISM IN YOUR PRONOUNCEMENTS?



TO THOSE WHO SEE RACISM IN YOUR PRONOUNCEMENTS?

THIS, I DARE SAY, CANNOT BE WHAT YOU WISH TO CONVEY. TO MOST BLACK AFRICANS, AS THEY REPEATEDLY MAKE CLEAR, STARVATION IS MORE TOLERABLE THAN THE BRUTILITY, OPPRESSION, VIOLENCE, AND DEATH INFLICTED ON THEM BY APARTHEID. BUT YOU DESCRIBE THE CALL BY AFRICAN LEADERS (INSIDE AND OUTSIDE SOUTH AFRICA) FOR EFFECTIVE SANCTION IRRESPECTIVE OF THE SHORT-TERM EFFECT ON THEIR PEOPLE AS COLD, CALLOUS, AND IMMORAL, WITHOUT EVER DESCRIBING APARTHEID IN THE SAME LANGUAGE. THE CONTRAST ESCAPES NO ONE AND CAN ONLY TEND TO CAST YOUR POSITION IN A RACIST MOULD.

I BELIEVE THAT SIR GEOFFREY'S CONSULTATIONS WITH THE US ADMINISTRATION AND OTHER INDUSTRIALISED COUNTRIES TO ATTAIN A CONCERTED AND EFFECTIVE EFFORT ON ECONOMIC MEASURES SUPPORTED BY THE COMITY OF NATIONS CAN BE MORE DECISIVE THAN HIS SOUTHERN AFRICAN TRAVELS IN DRIVING PRESIDENT BOTHA TOWARDS MEANINGFUL CHANGE, (UNLESS OF COURSE, YOU CAN CHARM HIM MORE THAN WE COULD AS HE EXPRESSED GREAT REGARD AND RESPECT FOR YOU AND PRESIDENT REAGAN AS TWO LEADERS WHO SHOW UNDERSTANDING OF AND SUPPORT FOR THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT).

BUT WHATEVER MAY BE THE RESULT OF SIR GEOFFREY'S MISSION IN SOUTH AFRICA, YOU HAVE GREAT AND GRAVE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE SUCCESS OF THE AUGUST MEETING OF THE SEVEN COMMONWEALTH LEADERS AND THE FUTURE OF THE COMMONWEALTH. MY KNOWLEDGE OF YOU HAS ALWAYS CONVINCED ME THAT WHEN THE TIME COMES, YOU WILL LIVE UP TO THAT RESPONSIBILITY.

YOURS SINCERELY,

O OBASANJO

GENERAL OLUSETGUN OBASANJO

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