SUBJECT
cc MASTER
OPS

Union Buildings
Pretoria

11 August 1986

Dear Prime Minister,

I have understanding for the position in which you found yourself at the meeting last week with your Commonwealth colleagues. The outcome, however, represents a step backward, not only from a sanctions point of view but, and in my opinion more importantly in the medium term, from the point of view of the adverse affect it will have on the process of negotiations. I have said this so often that I hesitate to repeat it, but I must: the international pressure on the South African Government causes increasing obduracy on the part of the adversary groups in South Africa. They become more and more determined to avoid negotiations; and these are the groups with which the international community insists that we should negotiate. The international community is creating an impossible position for my Government: it insists on negotiations, yet its actions prevent the negotiations from proceeding, and the longer the negotiations are delayed, so punitive measures escalate. What am I to do in these circumstances?

The communique of the review meeting demands unilateral action from my Government. But not even the EPG went so far. In fact, as I have mentioned in earlier letters, it proposed in its discussions with us that the ANC and other parties should be required to provide matching commitments relating to violence and participation in negotiations in return for commitments by the South African Government. You will be aware that we could not accept the EPG's proposal for a "suspension" of violence on the part of the ANC and others as contrasted with a "renunciation" of violence which we had advocated but the point I wish to make is simply that the EPG envisaged a strategy of matching commitments.

Sir Geoffrey Howe adopted the same line of argument. May I quote from his press statement of 29 July:

> "For many years now, and most recently in the negotiating concept of the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group, the crucial elements of confidence and reciprocity have been recognised.
>
> What is needed is that the South African Government should agree to release Mandela and other political prisoners, to unban the ANC and other political parties and to enter into peaceful dialogue - against a matching commitment from the ANC to call a halt to violence and to enter into peaceful dialogue.

...That is an approach which would reflect the mandate given me by The Hague European Council. It would offer a realistic and fair alternative to violence and economic warfare...".

Sir Geoffrey's aides also provided officials of the Department of Foreign Affairs with a formula which reflected this approach and gave President Kaunda a mediatory role. An informal concept of this formula as drafted by Sir Geoffrey's officials reads as follows:

"Formula put to President Kaunda and others:

Could he, with his FLS partners, tell State President Botha that:

- if he would, against a matching ANC commitment, commit himself to release Mandela and other political prisoners, to unbanning the ANC and political parties, and to entering into peaceful dialogue,

- they would use their influence with the ANC to get them to commit themselves to calling a halt to violence and entering into peaceful dialogue on the same basis."

Has this approach been jettisoned? My Minister of Foreign Affairs told Sir Geoffrey on his departure from South Africa that his formula offered real prospects for progress

particularly if the phrase "abandon violence", as used by you in your letter to me of 7 July, could be substituted for the phrase "calling a halt to violence". May I enquire if this method of proceeding is still in prospect?

For your own information, I send you a copy of a letter which I wrote to President Reagan on 4 August 1986. You will see that I took the liberty of quoting an extract from your letter to me of 7 July, to which I attach great importance. I hope you do not mind.

Yours sincerely

P W BOTHA
STATE PRESIDENT OF THE
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

The Rt Hon Margaret Thatcher
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
LONDON

Union Buildings
Pretoria

4 August 1986

Dear Mr President

Thank you for your letter, the text of which your Embassy conveyed to the Department of Foreign Affairs late on the 22nd July 1986.

Let me say at the outset that I know that you are under tremendous pressure from all sides, including your own Party, to step up action against South Africa as a means of coercing the South African Government into, what is commonly termed, "ending apartheid". I want you also to know that we respect you for the stand which you have taken against sanctions in the face of that pressure. Your speech on 22 July, although I disagree with certain sections in it, displayed a realism which has been tragically lacking in the public pronouncements of so many Western leaders, Mrs Thatcher and Chancellor Kohl excluded.

There is so much in that speech with which I am in general agreement that I can only stand perplexed as to why there should be such a gulf between us. Why this gulf? Is it due to misperceptions, misunderstandings, disbelief?

We are committed to ending what the world perceives as "apartheid". Why the insistence on this course as if we are not committed to it? Surely the list of important areas of reform already carried out ought to convince reasonable leaders of my Government's intention to move ahead with our reform programme.

We are committed to peaceful negotiations or dialogue as the means of constructing a political system in which all our communities, Black, White, Coloured and Asian, will participate, in which all will have a voice, in which no single community or group will "monopolise the reins of political power", a political system that rests upon the consent of the majority - where the rights of minorities and individuals are protected by law. Why the insistence on negotiations for achieving such a system as if we are not already committed to it?

Why the insistence, expressed by other Western leaders as well, that the South African Government has the responsibility to initiate dialogue to bring all this about as if the South African Government has not already taken the initiative? We have, on numerous occasions. We have established a variety of forums to facilitate the process of negotiations. We are open to suggestions regarding other forums. We have appealed to Black leaders, chosen by the Black communities themselves or occupying positions of leadership in Black interest groups, to come forward and not only participate in negotiations but also participate in the governmental process in the transition stage preceding agreement on a new constitution. Some important leaders have indeed come forward. But I cannot force those who do not voluntarily come forward to agree to negotiate.

Some elements remain committed to violence as a political instrument and reject negotiations. They are encouraged in their attitude by the campaign of escalating sanctions and threats of sanctions which governments abroad have employed in the belief, it would seem, that this would speed up the achievement of an objective which we share. Far from facilitating negotiations, this pressure is, in fact, retarding the process. The elements committed to violence see the pressure, rightly or wrongly, as being directed against the Government of South Africa and as support for their cause. Why should they engage in negotiations with the South African Government in these circumstances, they ask. The international community is on their side and the longer they hold out, the more the pressure on the Government will increase and the stronger will their position become. The sanctions campaign, real or threatened, is thus having a counter-productive effect. The psychological impact is as potentially damaging, if not more damaging in the short term, than the economic impact and I feel that governments abroad should be made aware of the implications of their actions. There is in any event no question of sanctions producing a political system in this country which is not the product of genuine negotiations between South Africans.

We are in principle prepared to release Mr Nelson Mandela and others and unban political movements so that they may participate in the political process. Is it wrong to insist that they abandon violence before we embark on such a course of action? You say, Mr President, and I applaud you for saying it publicly, the first and only Western leader to have done so, that the South African Government is under no obligation to negotiate the future of the

country with any organisation that proclaims a goal of creating a communist state and uses terrorist tactics to achieve it. The executive of the ANC is dominated by members of the South African Communist Party. Should we not insist that this of all organisations should at the very least abandon violence and commit itself to peaceful dialogue before it is unbanned?

Some adversary organisations such as the ANC, with its dominant communist element, categorically reject the concept of negotiations. In a document of the South African Communist Party of which I believe you have personal knowledge, it is clearly stated that they reject peaceful negotiations. They see negotiations as a betrayal of their revolutionary principles. They know that they will never get their ideology and philosophy accepted via negotiations. They see revolution, in terms of their ideology, as the only means of achieving their political objectives. Will this point of view within the ANC, advocated by its dominant communist component, not prevail?.

You have yourself drawn attention to the terror tactics of the ANC in your speech and you have acknowledged that the South African Government has a right and responsibility to maintain order in the face of terrorists. But you say also that by its tactics, the South African Government is only accelerating the descent into blood-letting. I do not know what you have in mind by "tactics". The need to eradicate violence in South Africa is uppermost in our minds. We cannot progress politically unless we can stop the current wave of violence. But what do we do in the face of

escalating violence on the part of the ANC and others and threats of still further and more gruesome acts of terror?

In a letter to me of 7 July 1986 about Sir Geoffrey Howe's visit, Mrs Thatcher wrote:

> "I read with interest the reference in your letter to the need for European Governments to put pressure on those who are encouraging intimidation and violence so as to prevent negotiations from taking place. Very much with that point in mind, you should know that Geoffrey Howe and I have decided that he should visit Zambia, along with Zimbabwe later this week. A meeting with President Kaunda had already been agreed before we learnt of your diary difficulties. While in Zambia, the Foreign Secretary is likely to have a meeting with the ANC leadership in order to put across a very clear message, that if progress is to be made, it can only be achieved by peaceful means. During these visits, Geoffrey Howe will therefore be laying particular emphasis on the need to abandon violence". (Underlining added).

This really is the key to future progress. The goals of the South African Government do not differ from yours: we

seek an end to violence; we want to negotiate with Black leaders about constructing a new political system acceptable to a majority of our citizens; we have already taken initiatives in this respect. The urgent need now is to get the opposing groups in South Africa to commit themselves to the same goals: to abandon their strategy of violence and also to engage in peaceful negotiations.

The Commonwealth Group of Eminent Persons impressed upon us during their stay in South Africa that further reform measures should be accompanied by matching commitments on the part of the ANC and others. Accordingly, as you will be aware, their proposal amounted to an undertaking on the part of the South African Government to take certain action - inter alia the release of Mr Mandela and others and the unbanning of the ANC and other organisations - but commensurately with commitments by them that they would "suspend" violence and participate in negotiations. In other words, the South African Government was not required to act unilaterally. This initiative ended, in my opinion prematurely, because of the unwillingness on the part of the EPG further to address our concerns in respect of their concept of ending violence. We could not accept a mere "suspension" of violence on the part of the ANC and others. Yet we are now being asked to release persons and unban and negotiate with

organisations still committed to violence, without any commitment from them at all to abandon violence. The only conclusion we can come to is that it is apparently acceptable to certain Western governments that these organisations and individuals retain in their negotiating armoury the possibility of reverting to violence whenever they choose to do so. My Government cannot accept that these parties should be given the right to resume violence if negotiations should not be going their way (implied even in the use of the word "suspension" in the EPG formula).

It is also important to note that Sir Geoffrey Howe at the conclusion of his visit to South Africa on 29 July said the following in a statement to the press:

> "For many years now, and most recently in the negotiating concept of the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group, the crucial elements of confidence and reciprocity have been recognised.
>
> What is needed is that the South African Government should agree to release Mandela and other political prisoners, to unban the ANC and other political parties, and to enter into peaceful dialogue - against a matching commitment from the ANC to call a halt to violence and to enter into peaceful dialogue.
>
> ....That is an approach which would reflect the mandate given me by The Hague European Council. It would offer a realistic and fair alternative to violence and economic warfare....."

Sir Geoffrey Howe has used "to call a halt to violence" instead of his Prime Minister's use of the words "abandon violence". I do not know whether this deviation was deliberate but, to break the cycle of violence, it remains only for the adversary groups to abandon violence and commit themselves to peaceful negotiations. It is for the ANC and other similar organisations to come into the open and reveal their intentions. Is it to shed their communist objectives and join with us in producing a genuinely democratic political system for a country which belongs to us all? Or is it to pursue their revolutionary strategy of continued violence aimed at achieving a Marxist dictatorship as their dominant communist component would want? It would greatly strengthen the hands of those of us, within and outside the Government, who are committed to the achievement of a genuinely democratic state, if you and other Western leaders were to endorse our search for a constitution which incorporates principles associated with all genuine democracies, yours in particular. We must construct a wall of defence against those who aim for a dictatorship in this country which none of us wants.

I hope that you will feel able, in the spirit of your speech and your letter to me, to engage yourself, with the British and your other allies, in creating the circumstances necessary for negotiations leading to an extension of democracy in my country.

May I take this opportunity of thanking you sincerely for your continued readiness to play a constructive role as we evolve politically in South Africa. With God's help and the understanding of leaders such as yourself, we shall triumph for the good of all South Africans.

Yours sincerely,

P W BOTHA
STATE PRESIDENT OF THE
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

President Ronald Reagan
The White House
WASHINGTON

10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

12 August 1986

I attach a copy of a letter which the Prime Minister received today from President Botha. I should be grateful for a draft reply.

(TIM FLESHER)

David Reddaway, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

12 August 1986

Thank you for your letter of 12 August to Charles Powell enclosing a letter to the Prime Minister from State President P.W. Botha.

(TIM FLESHER)

Mr. L.H. Evans

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South African Embassy
Trafalgar Square
LONDON WC2N 5DP

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

Dear Charles,

Further to my letter of 12 August 1986 herewith the original letter from President Botha to Prime Minister Thatcher, dated 11 August 1986.

Yours sincerely

L H Evans

L H EVANS
CHARGE D'AFFAIRES

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South African Embassy

B8/6/2

12 August 1986

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

Dear Charles,

I attach a copy of a letter dated 11 August 1986 addressed to The Tr Hon Margaret Thatcher, MP from State President P W Botha.

It would be appreciated if you could bring the contents of the letter to the attention of the Prime Minister as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely

L H EVANS
CHARGE D'AFFAIRES