

TEXT OF A LETTER FROM THE CO-CHAIRMEN

COMMONWEALTH EMINENT PERSONS GROUP

TO AMERICAN SECRETARY OF STATE

THE HON. GEORGE SCHULTZ

Text Begins:

Dear Secretary of State

The Report of the Commonwealth Group on South Africa will be released today (12 June). We have arranged for a copy to be sent to you without delay.

While we put a great deal of effort into making a success of our mandate, we have reluctantly, but unequivocally come to the conclusion that at present the South African Government is not ready to and has no intention of negotiating in good faith. Its concept of negotiation is not one that can meet the escalating problems of South Africa. We have reached this conclusion on the basis of the Government's own communications and discussions with us.

In addition, actions of the Government have fouled the possibility of negotiations and have confirmed our view that we are not dealing with a government which wishes to negotiate. On the morning on which we met with eight Government Ministers in Cape Town, it attacked three neighbouring Commonwealth countries, two of which had nominated General Obasanjo and John Malecela to the Commonwealth Group. This was a significant provocation. It then introduced new and draconian security legislation into the Parliament which admittedly has not yet been passed, but which is quite unnecessary, given the panoply of powers already available. The comments of the State President were uncompromising. Renewed attacks on the credibility of the ANC have been launched.

It is difficult to understand why the Government turned its face against negotiation when negotiation was within grasp on the basis of the concept which we put to it some three months earlier. We left a copy of the concept with you when we saw you in April. For example, the Government had earlier accepted the

suspension of violence, but then returned to its insistence on renunciation of violence which was not capable of being achieved and which, in our common judgement, was unreasonable.

The Government did not pick up the suggestion of enabling Nelson Mandela to communicate with other black leaders, whether in gaol or elsewhere in South Africa. An attempt was made by the Government to have Mandela meet Chief Buthelezi, but Mandela had insisted, quite justifiably, on being able to meet with his own people first so that a group view could be properly formed. Discussions between Mandela and Buthelezi would necessarily have had to take place at a later stage.

The Government may well have been unwilling to face the prospect of negotiating with a united African Opposition led by Mandela, Tambo and Buthelezi acting in concert. From the discussions we had with Mandela, which had been fully reported to the Government, that prospect was a likely one.

The Government has reiterated throughout that the exercise of economic and political rights in its dispensation would have to be through racial groups requiring the maintenance of the Population Registration Act. In all our discussions with the Government, it was emphasised that any constitutional dispensation would only be negotiated within the context of its reform programme which has at its heart "group" rather than individual rights. It would seem that the Government has decided to proceed with that programme and, if necessary, to impose it by force, believing, falsely, that a sufficient number of blacks will in the end support it.

On the basis of existing policies, our Group is unanimous in holding the view that a much greater descent into violence is inevitable. Black leaders were always sceptical of the Government's intention to negotiate in good faith. Unfortunately, they will take our report as confirmation of their scepticism. Other things being equal, the more radical elements will use it to push through decisions involving full scale guerilla warfare of a kind that it would inevitably win over time, but at enormous cost in terms of black and white lives as soft targets came

increasingly to be attacked by both sides. To that would have to be added great destruction of property and real assets.

There is only one factor remaining which might prevent that kind of destruction. If the major Western States which have trade weight with South Africa really seek to bring pressure to bear on the South African Government, those decisions towards greater violence may be deferred and may be made unnecessary. That pressure can only be evidenced through sanctions. Without such actions, black leaders will again have their view confirmed that they are without fundamental support from the West.

The kind of government that would emerge from increased violence through much larger-scale civil conflict, whether it is eight or ten years hence, or even longer, would be totally radical, owing its allegiance to those countries from which it would obtain arms and support. The politics of the whole of southern Africa would be soured. Such a government would nationalise all major corporations. The strategic, economic and commercial interests of the West would be destroyed.

We reject completely the argument that international pressure will force the South African Government to withdraw into itself. That commonly held view is masterly disinformation. It has hitherto been successful in persuading major States not to take substantive measures or sanctions against South Africa. The Afrikaners have, in fact, only changed course when under extreme pressure. Any minimal change which has been achieved in South Africa recently has been as a result of substantial pressure from within South Africa, not as a result of quiet persuasion.

While the Commonwealth Group's report did not go into the details of measures that might be undertaken, we, as Co-Chairmen, have a common view. The South African Government is most vulnerable to measures in three broad categories and would be most likely to respond to pressure in these areas.

The first involves measures which will deliver a direct message to white South Africans by serving as irritants to them because of the inconvenience

they would cause. It was the Commonwealth Group's firm impression that international action that hurts the white constituency has been and can be extremely effective. In this category, we have in mind the banning of airlinks and the removal of consular facilities, in particular.

We believe that there should be a ban on airlinks with South Africa so that people wanting to travel there would have to do so via Harare or Lusaka. The U.S.A. would have it in its power to ensure that everyone complied with such a measure by making continuing landing rights in the U.S.A. dependent on compliance.

The removal of consular facilities from South Africa so that South Africans would be required to apply to their embassies in overseas countries for visas, etc. would, in our view, be an effective measure in conveying international opposition to apartheid. Governments would, of course, continue to provide consular facilities in South Africa for their own nationals. Measures such as these would help convey directly to whites in South Africa the extent of international opposition to apartheid. International co-ordination of these matters would be important.

The second category relates to the tightening of restrictions in the banking and financial area. This is an area of major concern to South Africa. There would need to be international co-ordination of measures in this area which would require efforts to ensure the co-operation of European governments and institutions. A technical examination would be highly desirable to see what further measures could be taken.

The third category relates to the ban on the import of South Africa's bulk commodities. South Africa is very vulnerable in regard to its exports, many of which are bulk commodities or food and agricultural products.

With the exception of clearly defined items such as armaments, merchandise exports from other countries are relatively easily on-shipped by a third party to South Africa. While we have no problem in restricting merchandise exports to South Africa, we

suspect that it may be harder to get the agreement of major States and we would have doubts as to how effective such a restriction could be because of the possibility of involvement of third parties.

On the other hand, restrictions on South Africa's own export sales would be easier to apply and supervise. It would obviously be important to achieve the compliance of other major industrial countries, especially Japan and European countries. We believe that there would be a good deal of support in Europe for such a programme and also that Japan could be persuaded to comply.

Another advantage in limiting the purchase of South African exports is that they would involve commodities which are nearly all in over-supply. As a consequence, purchasing countries should not be penalised if they have to purchase from other sources.

In relation to the Nassau Accord, we have mentioned the ban on airlinks and imports of agricultural products in this letter. As to the remainder of the steps in Paragraph 7 of the Accord, while we support them we do not believe that they would in any way be sufficient. They would not go to the heart of the economic structure of the country and we believe that the South African Government would feel that it could live with them.

For example, a ban on new investment or reinvestment of profits earned in South Africa may serve some purpose, but, as a result of internal political developments, there is unlikely to be much new investment in that country in any case. Such measures are therefore largely symbolic.

As a general comment, we would make the point that the claim by opponents of sanctions that sanctions will destroy South Africa is a false argument. Continuation of apartheid will destroy the country's economy. Sanctions, of themselves, could lead to the closure of a factory or a mine, but these could be re-opened once the political situation has been resolved. If there is conflict involving growing guerilla or civil warfare, the damage to the economy could be massive and far more difficult to repair.

The argument is also put that sanctions will not

work. We do not accept this view. For example, the decisions of international banks last year had real impact on that country. Even in the case of Zimbabwe (then Rhodesia), in spite of South African efforts to thwart sanctions, politicians across the political spectrum in Zimbabwe would now accept that sanctions did have some effect. In South Africa's case, if sanctions were to be applied, there would be no other country willing to provide the conduit to circumvent international sanctions as South Africa did, in Rhodesia's case.

It is important to understand also that the South African Government believes in economic sanctions as an instrument of national policy. It has applied such measures against its neighbours on a number of occasions and, from discussions with us, it is clear that Ministers fear the imposition of sanctions against their own country.

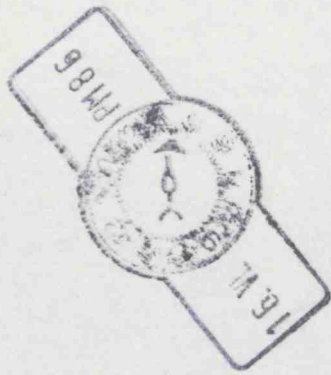
It is quite clear that gentle diplomacy and quiet persuasion have failed. It is our very firm view that the South African Government will never be moved by such approaches: that it will, in fact, only be moved by pressures: and that what it has done so far, little as it is, has been achieved as a result of internal pressure. There is no guarantee that sanctions will work, but greatly increased international pressure involving the use of sanctions offers the only chance to avert the tragedy of which we speak involving the destruction of all Western interests in South Africa.

Yours sincerely

Malcolm Fraser

Olusegun Obasanjo

Text ends



CORRECTOR

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Prime Minister
This is mostly what
Fraser and Obasanjo said
to you. But there are some new
bits on sanctions which I have
underlined.
from Mrs Thatcher, *CDP 16/6.*

16 June 1986

I have been asked by Mr Malcolm Fraser to convey to you the attached text which he and General Obasanjo have sent to the United States Secretary of State.

Yours sincerely

A. L. Vincent

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The Rt Hon. Margaret Thatcher, MP
Prime Minister and First Lord
of the Treasury
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From the Private Secretary

16 June 1986

I enclose a copy of a letter which I have received from the Acting High Commissioner of Australia covering the text of a message that Mr. Malcolm Fraser and General Obasanjo have sent to Secretary Schultz. As you will see, much of it covers the same grounds as Mr. Fraser and General Obasanjo traversed in their meeting with the Prime Minister. But there is a more explicit section on sanctions which recommends banning of air links, removal of consular facilities, tightening of restrictions in the banking and financial area and a ban on the imports of South Africa's bulk commodities.

Since these points are relevant to the meeting of Ministers on 18 June I am copying this letter and enclosure to Joan MacNaughton (Lord President's Office), Rachel Lomax (HM Treasury), John Mogg (Department of Trade and Industry), Andrew Lansley (Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster's Office) and Murdo Maclean (Chief Whip's Office).

(Charles Powell)

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