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PRIME MINISTER'S  
PERSONAL MESSAGE  
SERIAL No. T229/85



10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

9 December 1985

Dear Mr. President,

Thank you for your message of 26 November enclosing a copy of your Government's statement on the establishment of the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group.

You know how much importance I attach to this initiative and I am therefore much encouraged by the positive tone of your Government's response. I well understand your concern that the Group should not interfere in South Africa's national affairs. The Commonwealth Accord makes it clear that a political settlement in South Africa is a matter for South Africans alone to determine.

The Group is to hold its initial meeting in London shortly. The responsible position you have adopted will, I hope, encourage an equally responsible approach by the Group to its task. It will also help those of us who wish to see South Africa solve its internal problems peacefully to continue to argue against measures which we believe would do serious harm to the whole of Southern Africa.

I was distressed to learn of the recent landmine explosions in the northern Transvaal and the injuries which they have caused. I understand from what your Government has said that the Zimbabwean authorities have given assurances that they will not allow Zimbabwe to be used as a base for carrying out such attacks. I therefore hope that every effort will be made to settle the matter without resort to force. The

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international political damage which would result from military action across the border would be very considerable and far outweigh any short-term security advantages.

I send you good wishes and hope that we can continue to keep in touch.

Y  
ours sincerely  
Margaret Thatcher

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The Honourable P. W. Botha, DMS.



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

5 December 1985

Dear Charles,

Reply to President Botha

Thank you for your letter of 26 November enclosing the letter from President Botha concerning the South African Government's response to the announcement of the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group.

The South African reaction was indeed more encouraging than we had expected. President Botha and Pik Botha have made it abundantly clear that the Prime Minister's views were the major factor underlying their decision not to reject the Commonwealth initiative.

President Botha will have to overcome strong resistance in his Cabinet to the Eminent Persons Group. The Foreign Secretary believes that a short letter from the Prime Minister expressing appreciation of his decision and urging him to maintain a positive approach would be helpful both to him and for the future prospects of the Eminent Persons Group. I attach a possible draft.

The draft also contains a reference to the recent land mine explosions in the northern Transvaal. The Foreign Secretary is concerned by evidence that Mugabe was left after the South Africa debate at CHOGM feeling somewhat bitter towards the UK. He considers it would be helpful in the context of our relations with Zimbabwe if the Prime Minister could say a few words to President Botha discouraging him from cross border pursuit into Zimbabwe. Following five landmine explosions near the border recently which injured a white farmer and four soldiers, the South African Government approached the Zimbabwean authorities and apparently received assurances that they would not allow Zimbabwe to be used as a springboard for attacks on South Africa. Pik Botha, while publicly welcoming these assurances, nevertheless warned that if there were further such incidents the South Africans would resort to hot pursuit.

/Such



Such action would risk a clash between South African and Zimbabwean forces which would greatly increase tensions in the area. It is in our interest therefore to do what we can discreetly to discourage the South Africans from carrying out this threat.

*Yours ever,*

*Colin Budd*

(C R Budd)  
Private Secretary

C D Powell Esq  
PS/10 Downing Street

S. Africa Pt 8

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DRAFT: minute/letter/teleletter/despach/note

TYPE: Draft/Final 1+

FROM: Prime Minister

Reference

DEPARTMENT:

TEL. NO:

SECURITY CLASSIFICATION

TO:

Your Reference

- Top Secret
- Secret
- Confidential
- Restricted
- Unclassified

The Honourable P W Botha DMS

Copies to:

PRIVACY MARKING

SUBJECT:

.....In Confidence

Thank you for your message of 26 November enclosing a copy of your Government's statement on the establishment of the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group.

CAVEAT.....

You know how much importance I attach to this initiative and I am therefore ~~greatly~~ <sup>much</sup> encouraged by the positive tone of your Government's response. I ~~fully~~ <sup>well</sup> understand your concern that the Group should not interfere in South Africa's national affairs. The Commonwealth Accord makes it clear that a political settlement in South Africa is a matter for South Africans alone to determine.

The Group is to hold its initial meeting in London shortly. The responsible position you have adopted will, I am ~~sure~~ <sup>hope</sup>, encourage an equally responsible approach by the Group to its task. It will also help those of us who wish to see South Africa solve its internal problems peacefully ~~and through dialogue~~ to continue to argue against measures which we believe would do serious harm to the whole of Southern Africa.

~~May I take this opportunity to mention the matter of the recent landmine explosions in the northern Transvaal. Naturally I deplore this violence and the injuries which ~~it~~ <sup>they have</sup> caused. I understand from what your Government has said~~

To issue  
Ch

Handwritten signature/initials

that the Zimbabwean authorities have given assurances that they will not allow Zimbabwe to be used as a base for carrying out such attacks. I therefore hope that every effort will be made to settle the matter without resort to force. The international political damage which would result from military action across the border would be very considerable and far outweigh any short-term security advantages. As you will recall from my letter of 10 July, our own belief is that the right course in such circumstances is to strengthen cooperation with the authorities of the neighbouring state in question, rather than to launch attacks across the border. I make the point in the previous paragraph because of my ~~keen~~ <sup>new</sup> concern that no fresh ~~development~~ <sup>work</sup> should be allowed to cut across the resolution by means of peaceful dialogue of your country's internal problems. I remain deeply <sup>very</sup> appreciative of the key contribution which you yourself are making to <sup>at</sup> that process of

I still you my good wishes and hope that we can continue to help in reaching a em.

S. Africa Pt 8  
Relatives