

SOUTHERN AFRICA

PS
PS/MRS CHALKER.

PS/PUS

MR FERGUSSON

SIR J FREELAND

MR JOHNSON

MR O'NEILL

HD/SAFD

HD/CAFD

HD/UND

HD/NEWS DEPT

MR CLG MALLABY, CABINET OFFICE

PS/NO 10 DOWNING STREET

IMMEDIATE



CONFIDENTIAL

FM CAPE TOWN

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELNO 114

OF 191315Z FEBRUARY 86

INFO IMMEDIATE PRETORIA

INFO PRIORITY JOHANNESBURG, HARARE, LUSAKA, DAR ES SALAAM

INFO PRIORITY LAGOS, NEW DELHI, NASSAU

YOUR TELNO 60 (NOT TO ALL): COMMONWEALTH GROUP

SUMMARY

1. THE THREE MEMBERS OF THE COMMONWEALTH GROUP MOVED ON TO JOHANNESBURG LAST NIGHT (18 FEBRUARY) AFTER SEEING GOVERNMENT MINISTERS AND OTHERS IN CAPE TOWN. SO FAR SO GOOD. THEY ARE SAYING NOTHING IN PUBLIC ABOUT THEIR ONE-WEEK VISIT WHICH IS TO INCLUDE FURTHER MEETINGS WITH MINISTERS BEFORE THEY LEAVE. TIMING OF A VISIT BY THE FULL GROUP NOT YET AGREED WITH SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT.

DETAIL

2. FRASER, OBANSANJO AND DAME NITA BARROW HAVE SEEN FIVE SOUTH AFRICAN MINISTERS IN THE PAST TWO DAYS: PIK BOTHA TWICE, HEUNIS (CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS), MALAN (DEFENCE), LE GRANGE (LAW AND ORDER), AND COETZEE (JUSTICE). THEIR CALL ON THE LAST NAMED WAS ADDED AT SHORT NOTICE AND MAY HAVE BEEN TO DISCUSS THE POSSIBILITY OF THE FULL GROUP LATER SEEING MANDELA. THEY ALSO SAW BOESAK, UDF REPRESENTATIVES AND MEMBERS OF THE PFP DURING THE CAPE TOWN PART OF THEIR STAY.

3. IN JOHANNESBURG THEY EXPECT TO SEE BISHOP TUTU AND MRS MANDELA AS WELL AS LEADERS FROM THE UDF, CHURCHES, UNIONS AND SOWETO. ON FRIDAY THEY ARE PAYING A LIGHTNING RETURN VISIT TO CAPE TOWN FOR A SECOND MEETING WITH HEUNIS, AND ARE ALSO SEEING PIK BOTHA AGAIN THAT AFTERNOON IN JOHANNESBURG.

4. CANADIAN AND AUSTRALIAN AMBASSADORS AND I HAD A LONG SESSION WITH THE VISITORS ON THE EVENING THEY ARRIVED WHEN WE ANSWERED A RANGE OF SEARCHING IF BASIC QUESTIONS FROM THEM. SINCE THEN THE GROUP AND THEIR SUPPORT STAFF HAVE STEERED CLEAR OF US, ALTHOUGH WE

WITH THE VISITORS ON THE EVENING THEY ARRIVED WHEN WE ANSWERED A RANGE OF SEARCHING IF BASIC QUESTIONS FROM THEM. SINCE THEN THE GROUP AND THEIR SUPPORT STAFF HAVE STEERED CLEAR OF US, ALTHOUGH WE MAY HAVE A BRIEF MEETING WITH THEM IN CAPE TOWN ON 21 FEBRUARY. WE THEREFORE HAVE LITTLE TO GO ON IN ASSESSING THEIR FIRST TWO FULL DAYS OF TALKS.

5. THE BROAD IMPRESSION FROM GUARDED TELEPHONE CONVERSATIONS BETWEEN COMMONWEALTH SECRETARIAT STAFF AND AMBASSADORS, HOWEVER, IS THAT THEIR INITIAL CONTACTS HAVE GONE REASONABLY WELL BOTH WITH GOVERNMENT AND BLACK REPRESENTATIVES. ONE COMMONWEALTH SECRETARIAT OFFICIAL SPOKE OF BEGINNING TO SEE A BIT OF CLEAR WATER AHEAD. BUT IT IS STILL VERY EARLY DAYS, AND I WOULD NOT READ TOO MUCH INTO THIS. AT LEAST MINISTERS HAVE CONCLUDED THAT A SECOND ROUND OF TALKS WITH THE VISITORS LATER THIS WEEK IS WORTHWHILE.

6. WE HAVE ALSO BEEN TOLD THAT FRASER HAS BEEN DOING MOST OF THE TALKING FOR THE GROUP AND THAT THEY HAVE IN GENERAL BEEN SEEKING TO BUILD UP A DETAILED PICTURE OF PROBLEMS AND POINTS OF VIEW WITHOUT REVEALING MUCH OF THEIR OWN THINKING. THEY ARE SAYING NOTHING TO THE PRESS AND HAVE ALREADY MADE IT PLAIN THAT THEY WILL NOT BE MAKING ANY SUBSTANTIVE STATEMENT BEFORE THEY LEAVE.

7. THE CO-CHAIRMEN HAVE PROPOSED A FULL GROUP VISIT FROM 1-15 MARCH. THE DIRECTOR GENERAL OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMENTED TO ME YESTERDAY THAT THIS MIGHT BE A LITTLE EARLY. HIS REACTION SUGGESTS THAT AT FRIDAY'S MEETING PIK BOTHA MAY REQUEST A POSTPONEMENT, FOR THE SOUTH AFRICANS PROBABLY SEE THEIR INTERESTS AS BEING TO TRY TO PLAY THE EPG INITIATIVE AS LONG AS POSSIBLE.

8. THERE IS ALSO UNCERTAINTY ABOUT PLANS FOR NEXT WEEK. THE SUPPORT STAFF HAVE BEEN ASKED TO COST FLIGHTS TO SEVERAL NEARBY CAPITALS IN ADDITION TO LUSAKA. BUT THE GROUP'S INTENTION IN ANY CASE IS TO LEAVE SOUTH AFRICA ON 23 FEBRUARY.

MOBERLY

YYYY

CFPOAN 0187

NNNN