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Original filed on
S. Africa meeting with Vander Post
August 79

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NOTE OF A CONVERSATION (ON THE TELEPHONE) BETWEEN THE PRIME MINISTER
AND MR. LAURENS VAN DER POST: 31 AUGUST 1979: 1000 P.M.

Rhodesia

Mr. Van der Post said that he had been asked to get in touch with the Prime Minister by a very old friend of his who is at present the Minister for Bantu Affairs in the South African Government. The Minister wanted Mr. Van der Post to convey a message to the Prime Minister from the South African Prime Minister, Mr. P.W. Botha.

The message was that the South African Government were gravely concerned about the deteriorating situation in Rhodesia: things were going downhill faster than they had expected. They could help to contain the situation until November but unless sanctions were lifted then they would be unable to contain it any longer. If the position had not been stabilised by that point, South Africa would be forced to intervene.

According to Mr. Van der Post, the South Africans have many people working in Mozambique's ports and towns. They have ample evidence of the scale of the Soviet build-up in the country. The main roads to the Rhodesian border from Maputo and Beira have been repaired and remodelled with Russian and Cuban help. Mozambique is swarming with "technicians" from these countries.

In the view of the South African Government, HMG was being "strung along" by the Front Line States and others. South Africa would not permit an Angola style take-over in Rhodesia. South Africans (black and white) faced a stark situation: they were not willing to allow themselves to be strangled. Mr. Van der Post added, as a personal opinion, that Mr. Mugabe was a particularly formidable opponent and that President Nyerere was not to be trusted.

Finally, Mr. Van der Post explained that the South African Prime Minister had chosen to use him as a messenger because this was the only way to avoid a leak. One result of the present crisis within the South African Government was that the diplomats were not trusted.

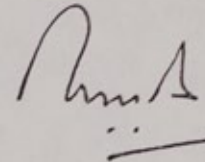
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Having established that Mr. Van der Post could not come to Chequers the following day, 1 September, the Prime Minister asked him to get in touch with her when he was next in this country i.e. on about 15 September. Mr. Van der Post hoped that the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary would be able to attend any meeting that took place.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'R. van der Post', with a horizontal line underneath.

3 September 1979

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