



Prime Minister

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FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH SECRETARY

SOUTH AFRICA

Eldon Griffiths spoke to me in the House of Commons three days ago to say that he had just returned from a visit to South Africa where he had talked to Horwood, the Finance Minister, about the Falklands crisis. As you know Horwood has been friendly to us in the recent past, and I believe we owe some of our recent large South African contracts to him. Horwood told Eldon Griffiths that he believed that the South African Cabinet would respond favourably to any approach from the United Kingdom for the use of South African naval and other support facilities. Eldon also obtained the same general message from other politicians and military personnel to whom he talked.

2. I told him that we would not wish to approach South Africa for help at the present time for reasons which he would understand but I was interested to hear this viewpoint as it conflicted a little with what I might have expected. Eldon Griffiths responded that he would like to check out his impression and I said that I saw no reason why he should not do this, as long as it was quite clear that it purely came from him.

3. Yesterday evening Eldon Griffiths telephoned me to say that he had had a further word with Horwood who had talked to P W Botha, the Prime Minister, on this subject. Botha said that the South African Cabinet would be likely to respond favourably to any such approach from the UK for help and that he thought that this would be the view of the majority of his colleagues. Horwood said that he would like a response from Eldon Griffiths one way or another as to whether we would be needing assistance.



4. I think it would be right for me to respond to Eldon Griffiths by telling him that we do not require any help at the present time but we were, nevertheless, most grateful to know of the South African's willingness to consider an approach from us, should we think it necessary.

5. I record this matter for two reasons. First, South Africa could, of course, provide very important bunkering facilities to us and also shelter for our ships, but also because it gives a very different read-out to the message which I saw a week or two ago from our Representative in Pretoria.

6. I am copying this minute to the Prime Minister and other Members of OD(SA) and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

? I enclose Eldon's Griffiths letter
just received

SW.

29th April 1982

Ministry of Defence



Secret

HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Dear John

29th April, 1982.

We spoke last night on the telephone about South Africa.

I confirm the following:

1. The impression you had received, namely that the "Boers" would react negatively to the idea of our using their air and naval facilities in Cape Province, is incorrect.
2. The South African Prime Minister says he is "most interested" in the possibility of our Task Force vessels and/or aircraft making use of these installations in the event that a lengthy operation needs to be continued in the Falklands. He asks that the following message be conveyed to our Prime Minister:

"I should be willing to discuss this. If Mrs. Thatcher would find it useful, I suggest she deposes someone who can speak on her behalf to come out here and talk to me directly about it".

In conveying this message to me the Finance Minister of South Africa (Owen Horwood) repeated what he told me in Cape Town last week, namely "our attitude would be constructive".

3. Mr. Botha's comments were made yesterday at a meeting which Horwood sought at my request, following our brief talk in the lobby. As a result of that talk, I told Horwood by telephone (as we agreed) that the prevailing impression in Whitehall was different from the one I had formed during my talks with him in Cape Town. Simonstown came up because, during my visit, the Task Force had reached almost exactly the same latitude as Cape Town. Horwood agreed that it would be odd for our forces to have to continue carrying most of their food and rations 8,000 miles from Portsmouth when plentiful supplies were available in South Africa; also that the docking and engineering facilities that might be needed if our ships ^{were to} remain at sea for long periods, ^{are still} ~~were~~ available at Simonstown, Cape Town and Durban.

4. My involvement arises from a long personal friendship with Owen Horwood, reaching back to the time when, while working



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for Alec, I first became interested in the Simonstown Agreement. You will recall that this provided Britain with access not only to the relatively small harbour at Simonstown, but to all the air and naval facilities of South Africa - in return for our supplying weapons for external defence.

5. In view of the South African Prime Minister's personal message, I think it important ~~that~~ some response - even if it be of a holding nature, - be sent to Owen Horwood. May I also request that the details of my communications are not made available to our Embassy in South Africa? My impression is that Botha and Horwood would prefer at this stage to handle any discussions that might arise on a personal and confidential basis.

John Nott
J. Nott

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