



Mr. Punt

(2)

South Africa 7

Prime Minister

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

As you ^{know} Mr Botha has now

London SW1A 2AH

agreed that the meeting should be in

the second half of March: you may 20 February 1980

like to see the arguments made.

Dear Michael,

Punt

[Signature]

RELATIONS WITH SOUTH AFRICA

Thank you for your letter of 18 February about the timing of the visit by a British emissary to South Africa.

The argument in favour of a visit by the emissary earlier than suggested by the Prime Minister in her letter to P W Botha ('the second half of next month') is that put forward by Mr Leahy in the telegram to which you refer: that it is desirable for us to keep in close touch with the South Africans during the period immediately before and after the Rhodesian elections, to secure their continued co-operation over Rhodesia and to give ourselves the best chance of dissuading them from some ill-considered intervention. Mr Leahy's proposal - and it stems from him rather than from the South Africans - was that an early visit by the Prime Minister's emissary might provide a good opportunity for this kind of consultation.

However, in Lord Carrington's view, there are strong arguments against advancing the date for the visit.

What P W Botha has asked for is an opportunity for a high level discussion of the longer term problems of southern Africa and how these might be tackled. If an emissary were to go now he could be dragged into detailed discussion of the prospects in Rhodesia at the expense of wider issues.

There is also the risk that a visit by a special emissary during this period in Rhodesia might give ill-disposed African governments an opportunity to charge that we are acting in collusion with South Africa. In the present highly-charged situation this would be no less damaging for being untrue.

It is clear that the South Africans are anxious to begin a dialogue with the British Government. They hope that this will eventually lead to exchanges of visits at a high level, and perhaps also to public support by us for South Africa. With this expectation in front of them, they have a strong motive for avoiding any ill-considered action over Rhodesia or Namibia which might oblige the Prime Minister to reconsider the emissary's mission. This leverage is likely to be of particular importance over the next few weeks.

Lord Carrington therefore considers that we should treat the need to keep the South Africans fully briefed on Rhodesia as a separate exercise from the wider dialogue envisaged by P W Botha. To deal with the Rhodesian angle he has asked Sir Anthony Duff to pay a

/further

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further visit to Cape Town shortly to bring the South Africans up to date on Rhodesia. The Governor will need him in Salisbury during the week immediately before the elections but it should be possible for him to visit Cape Town in the period 27-29 February while the elections are actually in progress. His last visit there went unnoticed by the press. In the meantime instructions have gone to Mr Leahy to keep the South Africans abreast of our thinking.

Lord Carrington's conclusion is that we should stick to the timing for the emissary's visit proposed in the Prime Minister's letter to P W Botha.

yours ever
Roderic Lyne

(R M J Lyne)

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