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REPUBLIEK VAN SUID-AFRIKA
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

PRIME MINISTER'S
PERSONAL MESSAGE
SERIAL No. T22 AB/80

Kantoor van die Eerste Minister
Prime Minister's Office

CAPE TOWN

5 February 1980

Dear Prime Minister

The relations between our nations have not always been good. Indeed, we have been both enemies and allies in war. Reflecting objectively on the history of events since we first came into contact with each other in South Africa, I am drawn to the irresistible conclusion that whenever we have clashed both nations have paid a painful price but whenever we have co-operated both nations have benefited substantially. What is more, the advantages of co-operation have accrued to all the peoples of the Southern African region.

I realise that British and South African interests inevitably diverge. But they also converge. Our interests diverge principally because of the conception which exists of the South African Government's "apartheid" policy. It is not my intention in this communication to discuss the misconceptions which persist in the judgment of my Government's policy in respect of multi-national development. What is important at the present juncture is whether the British Government, with more experience and knowledge of Southern Africa than any other government in the Western world, would not be prepared to re-examine and reassess its long-term interests in Africa and particularly Southern Africa in closer co-operation with my Government on a different basis than has been the case during the past two decades. Recognizing that your Government would in that case wish to exchange views candidly with us inter alia on such issues as measures discriminating between people of different colour, I invite you to send a personal emissary to meet with me in order that we may discuss not only questions of principle but also -

- (a) the obstacles in the way of closer co-operation between our Governments;
- (b) possible ways and means of eliminating those obstacles.

I convey this invitation to you not because I am under any illusion as to the views you may entertain on certain aspects of my Government's internal policy. I consider the survival of freedom and democracy of such vital importance that I respectfully suggest to you that you and I share a heavy responsibility to make the most sincere attempt to bridge our differences in order to cultivate the unity of purpose and strength which will be required to resist Russian imperialism. Indeed, your own courageous stand against the extension of Soviet power has played no small part in convincing me that our Governments should proceed immediately to engage in the discussions which I propose.

In saying this, I have also been encouraged by the measure of co-operation which has developed between us in regard to Zimbabwe/Rhodesia, more particularly as I am convinced it reflects a similar underlying assessment of the nature of the struggle for world pre-eminence in our era and of the extent of the threat to the Western democratic free-enterprise system. The lessons of Hungary, Czechoslovakia, the Berlin Wall, the Cubans in Angola and the Soviet doctrine of world domination having been forgotten or simply ignored, it has taken the rape of Afghanistan to open the eyes of the West.

During President Brezhnev's era the Soviet Union has materially increased its power and influence relative to the United States and to the West in general. Its military power has been developed far beyond the requirements of a defensive capacity. There are no signs that the Soviet Union will be satisfied with nuclear or conventional parity. The great preponderance of Soviet tanks and divisions in Europe has been well documented. The Soviet fleet has been transformed into a formidable blue-water navy, backed up with a very substantial and modern merchant marine. Brezhnev has supplemented this with a fleet of missile-carrying submarines, counterbalancing the American Polaris submarines. He has cleverly used détente as a shield and exploited the American setback in Vietnam and the maiming effect of Watergate to promote subversion and instal pro-Soviet governments in the Third World and, at the same time, to impose the Brezhnev doctrine - the right of Russia to intervene in "socialist" countries seeking change. Despite this, he has secured legitimacy through the Helsinki agreements for the boundaries of Eastern and Central Europe, for a quid pro quo which seems to have had little substance. Soviet influence in Europe, in South-East and South-West Asia, in the Middle East, in Southern Arabia, in parts of North, East, West and Southern Africa has grown beyond the point of being ominous. It is real. It has assumed awesome dimensions.

There is no doubt that the Southern African region has now become a prime objective of Soviet ambitions. Control of the vast and valuable reserves of raw materials in our region, in addition to Russia's own resources, would enable her to dominate supplies to the industrial West. Control of South Africa's strategic geographical position, the importance of which is significantly enhanced by her technological sophistication, infrastructural development and industrial capacity, would greatly enhance this dominance. It would in fact tip the global strategic balance in favour of the USSR to a degree matched only by control of the total area of the Middle East.

... You may be interested in the attached interview given by Glagolev. He is not necessarily the final authority on the subject. You will be in a position to evaluate his credibility. Nevertheless, his views flow from a source in the heart of the Soviet hierarchy and confirm what South Africa has long been propounding about Soviet intentions in Africa. The West appears to have been mesmerised by détente and to have discounted the marked increase in Soviet influence in Africa under Brezhnev's leadership because Russia has skilfully worked through surrogates and through the "liberation" movements.

An important part of the Soviet strategy in Africa has been to use the United Nations and international bodies which it controls to drive a wedge between South Africa and the major standard-bearers of freedom, on the pretext that South Africa has transgressed the norms of civilization. Whatever imperfections there may be in South African society, South Africa has a democratic, free-enterprise, Christian society and is spiritually, emotionally and ideologically committed to the democracy of the Greeks, Europeans and Americans. Whatever disabilities may be experienced by segments of our population, successive South African Governments have sincerely worked for their upliftment and progress. We are committed to uphold the human dignity of all persons, irrespective of race or creed. We are committed to the removal of all negative forms of discrimination based on colour. But our problems are complex. Our situation therefore requires understanding and tolerance. My Government is, within the bounds of the constraints imposed by the inertia of human nature, energetically pursuing a policy of ensuring that justice is done to all South Africa's peoples. I can assure you that, having already moved far as fast as possible during my first year of office, I shall continue on the path I have charted. I believe it to be an honourable course and that the West should become aware of this. I should therefore welcome the opportunity of explaining my aims in the light of the options available and current realities.

The Soviet threat of engulfing South Africa is of immediate concern to all of us. The Soviet Union is already established in Ethiopia, Angola and Mocambique, and its influence in other African countries poses a direct threat to the whole of Africa. But the prime target is Southern Africa. That is why the struggle for Zimbabwe/Rhodesia is so important and why Soviet aims in South West Africa must be frustrated, not only in the interests of Southern Africa, but also of the West.

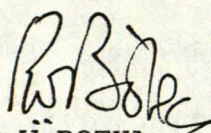
The events in Afghanistan have irrevocably confirmed that the Soviet Union will not hesitate to launch an attack southwards with surrogate forces if it believes that this can be done with impunity. War material has been accumulated in Angola and Mocambique, where, as you know, large tank forces have also been mustered. The build-up is continuing - with inter alia the addition of the technical know-how of the East-Germans.

It is clear to me that, if democratic institutions are to survive anywhere in Africa, a common anti-Soviet strategy for Africa as a whole must be worked out by the West and moderate African leaders and quickly. All anti-Soviet governments in Africa from Egypt to South Africa must be supported, their foreign policies co-ordinated and their differences submerged. It is essential that the countries of Southern Africa should come together to have any chance of maintaining themselves, for otherwise they will fall like dominoes. That is one reason why I am assiduously promoting the creation of a form of confederation or constellation of states in the region.

In view of your clearly stated views on the Soviet threat, I felt it would be constructive to let you have my views on the critical African situation. I would welcome receiving your own views and your ideas as to how we can counter this threat. I hope that your emissary will soon find it possible to visit South Africa for the proposed discussions. South Africa is irrevocably committed to resisting Soviet aggression with all means at its disposal, whatever the consequences. But South Africa could not carry the responsibility in Southern Africa alone.

You will appreciate that if South Africa has to stand alone she must retain the right to act when, where and in whatever manner she deems necessary to promote her own chances of survival, and time is short.

With sincere regards


P W BOTHA

The Right Honourable Margaret Thatcher, MP
Prime Minister
LONDON