

CONFIDENTIAL



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cc: PC

10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Private Secretary*

16 April, 1984

POSSIBLE VISIT OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN

PRIME MINISTER

Thank you for your letter of 13 April.

The Prime Minister agrees that an invitation should be extended on her behalf to the South African Prime Minister to a working lunch at Chequers. The best day from our point of view would be Saturday, 2 June. I should be grateful if you could ascertain whether Mr. Botha could accept this invitation.

RF

A. J. COLES

R. Bone, Esq.,  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

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NR

Mr Coles



Yes.

10 DOWNING STREET

Prime Minister

Agree to invite  
Mrs Botha to visit  
London in June?

(Yes)

Body Clerk

13/4

Mr. Barclay.

Yes

Can the Prime Minister do  
a working lunch at Chequers  
on either 2 or 3 June?

A.S.C. 16/4.





Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

13 April 1984

*Jew John,*Possible visit by the South African Prime Minister

As you will have heard, the FRG Government has announced that the South African Prime Minister, Mr P W Botha, is to visit Bonn on 5-6 June, apparently as part of a wider European tour. We have not been approached by the South Africans about a similar visit to London but in the circumstances we thought it right to consider whether a visit would be appropriate.

The arguments are finely balanced. Our overall objective is to move South African foreign policy in the direction of a more political and less military approach towards their neighbours, whilst looking for progress towards constitutional arrangements inside South Africa that are more acceptable to all sections of the population. A team of officials had talks in Cape Town last September; Mr Rifkind paid the first Ministerial visit to South Africa for some time in October 1983; and the Foreign Secretary is himself thinking of a visit at the end of this year. We of course regularly receive South African Ministers in London, including the Foreign Minister, Pik Botha, in early December 1983. It is important to pursue this policy of contact and dialogue without upsetting the balance of our interests more generally. The Prime Minister will be aware of the strong feelings expressed on the subject of South Africa at New Delhi last year.

A visit to this country by the Prime Minister of South Africa would be the first since Dr Verwoerd came for the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' meeting in 1961 when he announced South Africa's departure from the Commonwealth. It would certainly be open to misinterpretation in many quarters. Such a visit to London might provoke large demonstrations and be difficult to handle.

A visit would nevertheless enable us to make very clear to Mr Botha the strength of feeling in the UK about South African internal and external policies. It would be a good opportunity for some plain speaking. It would also

/provide





provide a chance to inject some momentum into the Namibian negotiations. For his part, Mr Botha would doubtlessly wish to raise some difficult bilateral issues such as the ANC presence in London.

On balance Sir Geoffrey thinks the arguments are in favour of an invitation. Although a visit would provoke strong reaction here, it is in accordance with our policy of dialogue, and would be publicly defensible. It should also be defensible internationally, the more so since President Machel's recent meeting with Mr Botha to sign the South Africa/Mozambique security agreement. A visit by Mr Botha here in early June would clash with the RFU tour in South Africa which begins at the end of May. This may contribute to the controversy of the visit, but the Foreign Secretary does not consider it alters the balance of the arguments.

Sir Geoffrey recommends that, if the Prime Minister should agree to invite him, it should be for a working lunch at Chequers, rather than for talks in London. Mr Botha's visit to Bonn is just before the Economic Summit; but perhaps a visit to Chequers on the weekend of 2-3 June by Mr Botha might still be possible and not clash with the arrival here of leaders of the Summit nations.

We have incidentally also been told by the Americans (Crocker telephoned Malcolm Rifkind last night) that they would not wish to invite Botha themselves, but that they see no disadvantage - from the point of view of the careful diplomacy they are pursuing over Namibia - in our doing so ourselves.

Your  
 R B Bone

(R B Bone)  
Private Secretary

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