



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

29 September 1984

Charles Powell Esq
 Number 10 Downing Street

Dear Powell,

*Amended version agreed
 with the Prime Minister
 & despatched.*

CDP 30/9.

SITUATION AT THE DURBAN CONSULATE

1. As Tony Reeve mentioned to you on the telephone, the South African Foreign Minister, Mr R F Botha, telephoned Lady Young today. He said that he had been asked by President Botha to seek a meeting with the Prime Minister at which he would deliver a personal message from the President and discuss "methods and ideas to get out of the impasse". Mr Botha said that, if the Prime Minister agreed, he could travel to London on 1 October for a meeting on 2 October.
2. Lady Young has consulted the Foreign Secretary who thinks that such a meeting would create difficulties for us, even though it will be awkward to refuse. It seems probable that Mr Botha will wish to propose a deal whereby the Customs and Excise would drop the court proceedings against the four South African defendants in the Armscor case in return for which the South African Government would lift the detention orders which they wish to serve on the six. Even if the proposal does not take this form, it is likely to involve concessions on our part which we would find unacceptable.
3. Moreover, we have publicly stated that we will not act as intermediaries between the six and the South African Government. A meeting between the Prime Minister and Mr Botha would be bound to fuel speculation that we were negotiating some sort of deal with the South Africans. Mr Botha's visit would also attract fierce criticism from the Anti-Apartheid Movement and its supporters.
4. The Foreign Secretary therefore considers that it might be best for the Prime Minister to send a personal message to President Botha which would set out frankly her reservations about a meeting and seek to explore his thinking. This approach might serve to head off a visit by Mr Botha. It would also go some way to meet the South African complaint that President Botha has been refused direct access to her.

/I attach



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..... 5. I attach the draft of a letter which the Prime Minister might send to President Botha. I suggest that, if the Prime Minister is content, the message might be sent by telegram to the Chargé d'Affaires at Pretoria for delivery to President Botha's office, if possible on 30 September.

Yours ever,

Robert Barnett

R W BARNETT
APS/Lady Young

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DRAFT: minute/letter/teleletter/despach/note

TYPE: Draft/Final 1+

FROM
PRIME MINISTER

Reference

DEPARTMENT: TEL. NO:

SECURITY CLASSIFICATION

TO:

Your Reference

- Top Secret
- Secret
- Confidential
- Restricted
- Unclassified

HE PRESIDENT P W BOTHA

Copies to:

PRIVACY MARKING

SUBJECT:

.....In Confidence

Janet Young has told me of your proposal to send your Foreign Minister to London for a talk with me.

CAVEAT.....

Let me first assure you that I am following events in Durban very closely and have been personally involved from the outset. I know you were disappointed that I was unable to see your Ambassador when he requested an appointment. My programme that week was extremely tight. Ambassador Worrall will, I hope, have explained that a personal message from you, had it been delivered to a Foreign Office Minister or to my Private Secretary, would have received my immediate attention.

I have given some thought to your suggestion. Let me be entirely frank about this, as I am sure you would expect me to be. The situation at the Durban Consulate poses problems for each of us and the public dimension is a particularly difficult one. I feel bound to add that the action you have taken over the Armscor case makes the position more difficult. You will know that we have publicly stated that we cannot

Enclosures-flag(s).....

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become involved as intermediaries between the six in the Consulate and the South African Government. We take the view that it is for the six to negotiate with the South African Government and for the latter to create conditions under which the six will feel able to leave the Consulate voluntarily. I am rather concerned that a sudden visit by Mr Botha to see me would heighten public speculation that some sort of deal was about to be negotiated. It would I think be difficult for both Governments to communicate effectively in the full glare of the publicity which would inevitably flow from such a visit.

I wonder therefore whether it might not be better if we were to proceed through the exchange of confidential messages. I would not want to raise false expectations but I would find it very helpful if, as a first step, you could give me a clearer indication of your thinking.

Because of the intense media interest here, I think it would be best if you could ask your Ambassador to deliver your reply to my Private Secretary. A personal meeting between me and Dr Worrall at this stage might give rise to the same difficulties as a meeting between me and Mr R F Botha. This does not, of course, indicate any lessening of my concern. It is simply that we both have to show great delicacy in the way we handle this issue.

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