



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

7 August, 1985

Dear Tim,

Message to the Prime Minister from President Botha

Ministers here have given careful thought to the proposal in President Botha's letter of 5 August that the Prime Minister should see Pik Botha to hear an explanation of the new internal political proposals that President Botha has said he is about to announce.

We know from the Americans (and also from the press) that President Botha is likely to make his statement on 15 August in Durban. We do not know its content but he clearly intends it to be seen as a main step towards overcoming South Africa's present crisis. But, however far-reaching his proposals, they will never satisfy the demands of those, inside and outside South Africa who are pressing for immediate and radical change.

We have just learned that the Americans are sending MacFarlane and Crocker to see Pik Botha in Vienna tomorrow and that the Germans are also trying to arrange a meeting at similar level with him either in Vienna or in Bonn.

There would be a number of advantages in our discussing the South African proposals in advance with Pik Botha. It would be first of all a demonstration that the UK's policy of continuing contact and dialogue with South Africa has enabled us to maintain influence with the South Africans and to play a positive role in encouraging fundamental reforms there. We would be able to argue subsequently that those, like the French, who had gone down the path of sanctions had cut themselves off from this means of influence and that this reinforced the arguments for the UK eschewing sanctions and using its links with South Africa to full advantage. Secondly, a meeting would give us an opportunity to make our views known forcefully to President Botha not only on the need for fundamental internal reforms in South Africa but also on the need for South Africa to facilitate rapid progress towards independence for Namibia and to refrain from any further attacks on her neighbours. Thirdly, a meeting would provide us with useful foreknowledge



of President Botha's new proposals and give us time to prepare our reaction to them.

There would, however, be serious disadvantage in agreeing to a Ministerial meeting on the basis proposed by President Botha - especially in this country. News of it would be very likely to leak and, given that public interest following press reports is likely to increase, we could well be criticised for agreeing to meet South African Ministers at this juncture. If President Botha's proposals subsequently turned out to be inadequate and were condemned as such internationally it would be argued that we had nothing to show for our attempts to influence him. There is also the practical difficulty that both the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary will be away when Pik Botha is likely to want to come here.

Ministers here conclude that it would be best for the Prime Minister to respond to President Botha by immediately offering to send Mr Fergusson to meet Pik Botha in Vienna. I enclose a draft reply in this sense from the Prime Minister to President Botha.

You should also know that Pik Botha has written to the Foreign Ministers of Luxembourg, Italy and the Netherlands in response to the Ten's proposal to send a Ministerial Troika to South Africa to discuss the latest developments there. He has proposed that the Troika should first see him in Europe.

The South Africans have expressed concern to the Americans that the proposed Troika visit should not interfere with President Botha's forthcoming statement. As you know, Shultz has written to the Foreign Secretary saying that he thinks such a visit, especially in the first half of this month, would be a mistake.

But that is not now in the Ten's intention. The Luxembourg Presidency has sent a Coreu telegram (copy enclosed) to partners reporting the letter to them from Pik Botha and asking how they should respond. The Presidency has also proposed a timetable for political cooperation among the Ten on South Africa this month and next month. The plan is for a meeting of the Africa Working Group on 19/20 August; a special meeting of the political committee on 26/27 August with Ambassadors to Pretoria present; the despatch of the Troika mission from 29 August to 1 September and a Ministerial meeting on 10 September. We have replied that we can accept this timetable while taking a neutral line on the question of the meeting between Pik Botha and the Troika.

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If arrangements are to be made for Mr Fergusson to get to Vienna for a meeting with the South African Foreign Minister during his visit there (ie tomorrow or Friday) we shall need the Prime Minister's agreement as soon as possible. If the Prime Minister wanted to discuss this further, Sir Antony Acland and Mr Fergusson could come to No 10 for a word this afternoon.

Y
ever,
Peter Ricketts

(P F Ricketts)
Private Secretary

Tim Flesher Esq
10 Downing Street

CONFIDENTIAL

Registry
No.

DRAFT

Type 1 +

SECURITY CLASSIFICATION

Top Secret,
Secret.
Confidential.
Restricted.
Unclassified.

To:-

The Honourable P W Botha DMS MP
State President of the Republic of
South Africa

From

Prime Minister

Telephone No. Ext.

Department

PRIVACY MARKING

..... In Confidence

Thank you very much for your letter of 5 August. I was ~~very~~ interested to learn that you will shortly be making an announcement about future constitutional developments. [REDACTED] I very much hope that your statement will prove to be a significant step forward for all the people of South Africa and will meet the aspirations of black leaders in South Africa, and governments such as ours, for peaceful evolution.

I regret that I shall not be able to meet Mr R F Botha during his European tour to hear more about your proposal. Unfortunately both Geoffrey Howe and I will be away. I understand, in any case, that Mr Botha will be visiting Vienna tomorrow and I suggest, therefore, that I should send a senior official, Mr Ewen Fergusson, as my personal emissary to meet Mr Botha while he is still there, ideally on Friday 9 August. From our point of view there would be advantage in holding such a meeting sooner rather than later. I see that there are already press reports foreshadowing your announcement. In any case I think it would be preferable that we should exchange our ideas as far in advance of your announcement as possible and preferably without attracting attention. Perhaps you could let Mr Moberly know as soon as possible whether Mr Botha can manage a meeting in Vienna on Friday.

As far as the visit of the three European Community Foreign Ministers is concerned, I am sure that they will understand your reasons

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for not wishing to receive them until after you have made your announcement. I understand that they are not now proposing to visit South Africa until the end of August.