

From: A Reeve, SAFD
 Date: 18 February 1986
 ccs: Mr E Fergusson ←
 Mr J Johnson
 Ms Caton

Mr Curran

Mr Humfrey o/r

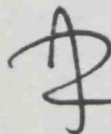
SOUTH AFRICA: ABILITY OF THE GOVERNMENT TO RETAIN CONTROL

1. I discussed this subject with Mr Fergusson this morning. We agreed that there was a need for a more detailed assessment of the capability of the South African Government to retain control even in circumstances of open guerrilla warfare

2. Mr Fergusson's thesis is that the conditions for guerrilla warfare are, in any case, unfavourable - lack of bolt holes in neighbouring states, lack of any military threat from any quarter, unsuitability of terrain and so on. These and other relevant factors*all need examining. Set against them we need to look at the capability of the South African military machine to deal with various threats ranging from urban unrest to open guerrilla warfare on a large scale. And we also need to examine the conditions under which these threats might be expected to become reality.

3. That is one half of the exercise. The other, assuming the study comes out as I suspect it will, would be to find ways of getting across to blacks in South Africa and to other third world governments the fact that the ruling elite in South Africa is capable of surviving for a very long time, having the determination and wherewithal to deal with these various threats. In my view, getting these points across is an essential step if we are to have any hope of gradually turning the sanctions tide. South African blacks and black leaders in neighbouring states have so far declined to consider the implications of sanctions for themselves. They will probably continue to do so. But at least if we can drive home the point that sanctions, once imposed, would probably have to remain in place for years, they might privately begin to perceive that the cost to themselves would be very high indeed. We shall need to explore what channels may be suitable for getting this message across.

4. Perhaps we should discuss all this as a first step.



A Reeve
 Southern African Department

18 February 1986

*internal/tribal
 divisions among
 the blacks,
 nature of
 'Apartheid'
 etc.*



Personal

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

^{COF}
Mr. Charles Powell (No 6)

Best aspects are
important. It is very
much in our interest to
illuminate the debate by
focusing attention on THE FACTS
!

Event.

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