

MESSAGE FROM SIR GEOFFREY HOWE TO SOUTH AFRICAN FOREIGN MINISTER

"I understand from conversations Ewen Fergusson has had with Denis Worrall and from our Embassy's contacts in Pretoria with the DFA that although you are free to see me during my planned visit to the area next week, there are very real practical difficulties about a meeting with the State President.

I well understand the difficulties which a visit proposed at this short notice must cause you, and I am very aware of the great pressures on the State President's programme. On the other hand, the Prime Minister and her fellow Heads of State and Government at the recent European Council placed great importance on my establishing contact with statesmen in Southern Africa at the highest level. I very much share that view. I am also anxious, as I am sure you will understand, that the absence of a meeting with the State President could all too easily provoke comment that could be unhelpful to us both. I very much hope therefore that he will be able to find time for a meeting during my first visit.

I should also explain the reason why I am planning to go to the area at such short notice and why there is so little give in my dates. My aim is to pay two visits in the course of July. The first would aim to establish contact with the main policy makers in South Africa. That is why I myself attach so much importance to a meeting with the State President. This would be followed by a more extensive visit towards the end of July during which I would hope to follow up whatever leads present themselves and meet a cross-section of the various South African communities.

Unfortunately, my existing commitments are such that there are only two windows of opportunity between now and the end of the month. The first is the period 9-11 July. I must be back for the visit of the Soviet Foreign Minister who arrives here on 13 July. Another opening will not arise until after the Foreign Affairs Council on 21/22 July, which given my role as Chairman I simply cannot miss.

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We have not announced or confirmed any dates. But inevitably the press have a pretty fair idea of what we are proposing. This stems from their extensive knowledge of my July commitments, coupled with intelligent speculation.

I hope that I can count on you to do everything you can to try to arrange a meeting with the State President during the period 9-11 July. I would of course be willing to fly with my own aircraft (a VC10) to any part of South Africa convenient to the State President."

S. Africa

REVISIONS

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