

PRIME MINISTER

SOUTH AFRICA

The Foreign Secretary suggests that the time has come to reply to President Botha's message of 11 August. He wants you to do so in fairly firm terms. The draft reply provided is not a bad one.

The only question in my mind is whether it is necessary to reply at all at this stage. As the Foreign Secretary's letter makes clear, there is no real prospect of progress at present and the proposed reply offers nothing new. It might be better just to wait a bit longer and see if we get any further signal from the South Africans. That would also leave time for further consultations with the Germans and Americans, on the lines which you discussed with Chancellor Kohl, which might give rise to some new thing<sup>kin</sup>.

Agree not to reply for the time being?

Or

Reply along the lines of the Foreign Secretary's draft?

CD?

CHARLES POWELL

10 October 1986

VC2AMM

I don't think that  
letter would help at present

The 'intransigence' of the  
ANC (which will continue  
violence) is the difficult one  
not

file to 73



be. ec

10 DOWNING STREET  
LONDON SW1A 2AA

*From the Private Secretary*

13 October, 1986.

**CORRESPONDENCE WITH PRESIDENT BOTHA**

Thank you for your letter of 10 October enclosing a draft reply from the Prime Minister to President Botha's message of 11 August.

The Prime Minister has considered this, but has concluded that a letter at this stage is unlikely to help matters. She agrees with the Foreign Secretary that there is no prospect of progress at present, and notes that we have nothing new to propose to the South African Government. She also recalls her agreement with Chancellor Kohl that there should be further consultations between the United Kingdom, United States, and the Federal Republic of Germany about South Africa after the United States Congressional elections. Unless the South African Government comes forward with any fresh suggestions in the meantime, she would prefer to delay any reply to President Botha until after those consultations.

(C.D. Powell)

C.R. Budd, Esq.,  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

CONFIDENTIAL

skw



ccpc



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

10 October 1986

*Dear Charles,*Correspondence with President Botha

With his letter of 12 August Tim Flesher enclosed one of 11 August from President Botha to the Prime Minister. Now that the dust in this arena has settled somewhat we need to consider a possible reply.

The Foreign Secretary believes that the outlook for progress in South Africa is currently bleak. The South African Government are seeking to show that they are not responsive to pressure of any kind. President Botha's speech on 12 August to the Federal Congress of the Nationalist Party was defiant and backward-looking, and nothing he has said since has conveyed a different impression. The action his government took against the United Democratic Front on 9 October was on any analysis a step in the wrong direction.

Underlying this tough approach is an apparent unwillingness to accept the case for fundamental change. Unlike a number of leading South Africans - politicians as well as businessmen - he has not yet brought himself to recognise that there must be fundamental political change in South Africa if future disaster is to be avoided. The government must be ready to have genuine negotiations with acknowledged black leaders, of a kind which command the assent of the black population as a whole. Chief Buthelezi, who as you know is no friend of the ANC, also sees this central truth - which explains his insistence on the release of Mandela before he himself will engage in dialogue with the South African Government.

/Sir Geoffrey Howe





Sir Geoffrey Howe sees President Botha's letter as an attempt to shift the onus for lack of progress away from the South African Government on to the ANC. His aim appears to be to enlist Western support for a given form of words - in present circumstances a reference to "abandonment" of violence - regardless of whether it will in fact open the way to dialogue on the terms so often suggested. A similar tack was taken in President Botha's letter of 4 August to President Reagan.

From the South African angle the question is not so much whether we (or any other outsider, from the EPG to President Reagan) can be persuaded to accept any particular formula. Their interest lies rather in the fact that a Western failure to deliver black African support for such a form of words would have the double bonus of putting the ANC (rather than the South African Government) in the dock, and of making it harder for Western leaders to increase the pressures on South Africa. Our experience over Namibia and Angola shows how the South Africans seek to string their Western "friends" along by using tactics of this kind. But this approach does nothing to bridge the gap towards dialogue in South Africa itself.

In the Foreign Secretary's view the Prime Minister needs to make clear to President Botha that it will only be possible to cross that gap when the South African Government show themselves ready to take the essential steps we have been asking of them - the release of Mandela, the unbanning of black political organisations, and discussion of the way forward with a representative group of black leaders.

/The





The Prime Minister can say that armed with such evidence we would of course do everything we could (direct and via the FLS) to induce the ANC to make a matching commitment. It is clear from Sir Geoffrey's talk with Mr Tambo that this would be no easy task. Black mistrust of the South African Government is intense. It is thus all the more significant that Mr Tambo told the Foreign Secretary that the release of Mandela was the one step which could alter black perceptions of the South African Government's attitude.

At some stage in this process it will be necessary to find a formula on the basis of which dialogue could commence. But recent history makes it unlikely that Anglo-American sponsorship is likely to uncover the key. That is why the Foreign Secretary has been working so hard to persuade black African leaders to take up the running. It remains open, of course, to President Botha to do so.

/ I enclose a draft reply from the Prime Minister to President Botha.

*Yours ever,*

*Colin Budd*

(C R Budd)  
Private Secretary

C D Powell Esq  
No 10 Downing St



DSR 11 (Revised)

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

The Honourable P W Botha DMS

Copies to:

PRIVACY MARKING

SUBJECT:

.....In Confidence

CAVEAT.....

Thank you for your letter of <sup>11</sup>~~12~~ August about my government's approach to the South African problem.

I realise that the recent decisions on both sides of the Atlantic to take further restrictive measures against South Africa will not have been welcome to you. They gave me no pleasure. As you know, I have no wish to see damage done to the South African economy. But as I have indicated previously there is a limit to how far I can hold to that position in the absence of any move by you which would enable all acknowledged black leaders to take part in a dialogue on fundamental change towards a non-racial, democratic society. The same obviously applies to President Reagan - and no doubt to Chancellor Kohl as well. We are ready to do what we can to help, but we need help in turn from you.

Enclosures—flag(s).....



SECRET

You asked in your letter whether we had jettisoned the strategy which underlay both the EPG's negotiating concept and the formula which Sir Geoffrey Howe put to President Kaunda and discussed with your Foreign Minister. The answer is that we have not. We continue to believe that an approach based on matching commitments offers the best hope of creating an atmosphere in which peaceful dialogue could begin. We are ready to do all we can to help bring this about. The Foreign Secretary put the case for advocacy rather than confrontation forcefully to Mr Tambo when they met on 20 September. He placed great stress on our opposition to the use of violence and urged the ANC to be ready to take part in peaceful dialogue.

I know that in our earlier correspondence you have set great store by the precise terms in which violence is set aside. Of course I would like to see the ANC abandon violence. But I think it is fruitless to insist on a statement by the ANC (and other black organisations) which would give the illusion that they were abandoning violence for all time come, what may. What might be achievable - and even that would not be easy - would be a suspension or halt to violence while talks with free and freely chosen black leaders took place. If those talks

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made progress, the realisation of black leaders that peaceful change was possible would provide the surest means of ending the violence. If they did not, no promise by the ANC to abandon violence would prevent it from breaking out again.

We should be ready to press the ANC and Front Line States very hard for such an undertaking if only you would commit yourself to free Mr Mandela and his colleagues and unban the ANC and other political parties. But as matters stand there is a strict limit to what Western political leaders can do to promote a dialogue. I do not think the deadlock can be broken unless you are prepared to make the first move.

The heart of the matter is really this: you need to adopt a position that will convince the black African leaders in question to set aside their deep mistrust of your Government. I understand readily enough, and indeed share, your concern about the extent of Communist influence on the ANC- though the organisation certainly does not lack substantial non-Communist figures, most notably Tambo himself. /..... [same para]

in the context of a suspension of violence and a commitment to by the ANC to peaceful dialogue.

↑  
[Such an addition on these lines is required].

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But you are surely going to have to reach out to those blacks who really matter, including Buthelezi - and I understand that he has always made plain that he will not take part in discussions with your government unless Mandela and his colleagues are also allowed to do so.

c.p.  
The outlook at present seems bleak. But [I am convinced that] you have it in your power to transform the prospects for peaceful change in South Africa. I [fully] realise the political difficulties which confront you as you look down that path. But [it is my profound conviction that] if you do not get dialogue going soon then the prospects for your country and people will become bleak indeed.

SECRET