



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

2 January 1987

Pike Minister.

For information of the Foreign Secretary

MEW 2/January.

Dear Charles,

South Africa: Sir Michael Edwardes

You may like to know of a meeting the Foreign Secretary had with Sir Michael Edwardes on 19 December.

Sir Michael had let us know earlier in the month that he would be visiting South Africa and expected to see Pik Botha on 5 December. We told him that it would be useful to make clear to Pik our concern to prevent an escalation of economic confrontation between South Africa and the Front Line States and our hope that the South African Government would act with restraint even if Zambia and Zimbabwe were to adopt limited packages of sanctions.

Sir Michael called on the Foreign Secretary on 19 December and reported that he had made these points to Pik Botha. The South African Foreign Minister had responded by saying that the SAG saw the importance of not rocking the boat for the Conservative Party prior to an election. In any case the SAG did not believe that Zambia and Zimbabwe would act incautiously on sanctions.

Pik Botha had then asked Sir Michael to give HMG the following message. President Botha was prepared to visit Europe to attend a meeting, either with Mrs Thatcher or with Chancellor Kohl or with them both, at which he would be prepared to agree to the release of Mandela, the unbanning of the ANC, the removal of emergency powers in the townships and the initiation of discussions with black leaders (including the ANC) - in return for an understanding in advance that the ANC were prepared to "call a halt to violence". The SAG were prepared for such a meeting and such an outcome before their election next year.

/Asked



Asked whether these proposals had the support of President Botha, Sir Michael said that he understood that President Botha would be prepared to attend the meeting, provided only that the outcome was pre-arranged between officials of the three countries. In a meeting with Dr Worrall on 18 December (on his return from South Africa and before seeing Sir Geoffrey Howe) Sir Michael had been assured that what he had been proposing was endorsed by the SAG. Sir Michael added that Pik Botha had been critical of the Foreign Secretary because he believed that an earlier reference in a message from the Prime Minister about getting the ANC to abandon violence had later been diluted by Sir Geoffrey. President Botha could not live with a reference only to "suspending violence".

On two subsidiary points, Sir Michael quoted Pik Botha as saying :

(a) that the leader of the National Party in Natal had definitely been speaking for the SAG when he had rejected the Natal/KwaZulu Indaba's proposals (this is a more negative gloss than the message Dr Worrall has been seeking to put across here). The proposals were unacceptable to the SAG because the whites would end up with only 10% of the votes;

(b) that while the SAG would be prepared to turn a blind eye to the erosion of the Group Areas Act, they would not revoke it.

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It appears that Worrall privately advised Sir Michael to treat the proposal which he had been asked to convey with caution. Worrall's comments in this respect are revealing. First, he recognises that Pik Botha's tactics are an attempt to drive a wedge between the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary (and he is dubious of the wisdom of trying this). Secondly, Worrall advises discretion by Sir Michael about the idea of a top level meeting. He doubts whether, given the impending election in South Africa, there is likely to be any positive development before then. He suggests that the message should simply be that the SAG are prepared to look again at the EPG negotiating concept.

The Foreign Secretary is strongly inclined to be sceptical as to whether the message from Pik Botha represents any change of heart on the part of SAG. It is not clear with whose authority Pik Botha was speaking and whether he has really got the backing of President Botha and the rest of the South African Government (the Prime Minister's correspondence with P W Botha suggests not). As happened over the EPG, Pik Botha may to a large degree be acting on his own.

The conditions do not in any case seem ripe for a new initiative. This was very much the view of Mr Shultz when he met the Foreign Secretary recently at Chevening, and even the Germans now seem to accept that the short-term outlook is bleak. Indeed, the recent actions which the South African Government have taken - in shelving reform of the Group Areas Act, introducing drastic new press restrictions and embarking on a new wave of detentions - only add to the impression of their unwillingness to accept the case for fundamental change. It is discouraging that Pik Botha should now have confirmed to Sir Michael Edwardes that, while they are circumspect in public, the SAG in fact have no intention of accepting the result of the KwaZulu/Natal Indaba.

/Sir Geoffrey Howe



Sir Geoffrey Howe is inclined to interpret this latest South African approach as another attempt to shift the onus for lack of progress away from the South African Government on to the ANC. He regards it as a most unpromising initiative. But before making a final assessment he wishes to consult our Ambassador in Pretoria. We shall report further in the light of Sir Patrick Moberly's views.

*Yours ever,
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