



PM/85/106

PRIME MINISTER

South Africa

1. I have been thinking very carefully about whether there is anything more we can do to make sure that in the coming months P W Botha has a really clear understanding of your own thinking on Southern African affairs, and adequate opportunity to express himself openly and informally to you.
2. The lead which you have taken in your correspondence with the President has opened up what I believe is an increasingly significant dialogue. He obviously trusts you - you are perhaps the only Western leader in whom he feels he can confide. I have been struck by the increasingly frank and personal tone of his letters to you.
3. How Botha presents his government's policies in the early part of 1986, and in particular what he says in his major speech at the State Opening of Parliament at the end of January, will be of crucial significance not only for South Africa internally but also for its relationship with the world outside and our own ability to maintain our present policies.
4. He knows how seriously you take the role of the EPG. He has recently had a good talk with Tony Barber, and has also talked to Patrick Gillam of BP; he made it plain to both of them what influence you had had on his attitude. We are hoping that, difficult though the timing may be for him, he will be prepared for the EPG to go to South Africa in January. Against

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that background I have been wondering whether there is any additional personal connection which we could usefully bring into play, to enable him to talk at this key juncture to someone known to have your confidence. It would certainly be useful to us to know the way his mind is going, and to have an opportunity to indicate what we on our side would see as the minimum necessary.

5. For this to be worthwhile we would have to be able to identify a suitable intermediary, to whom Botha would be prepared to listen. It would also be important not to cut across, or to appear to be trying to upstage, the work of the EPG.

6. One possibility which I would commend would be to take advantage of a visit which Gordon Richardson is about to make, as Harry Oppenheimer's guest, leaving for South Africa on New Year's day. My suggestion would be that, in a further letter to P W Botha, you might mention Gordon Richardson as someone who had your confidence and express the hope that the President would see him. I realise that you will not have time to see Richardson before his departure, but if you saw the idea as worth trying I should certainly be prepared to have a good talk with him on your behalf.

7. Gordon Richardson's reputation, both in his own right and as an ex-colleague of Leutwiler's, would I think mean P W Botha would give him a careful hearing; and that he

/should



be able to put across very firmly to Botha the kind of things which the South Africans will need to be seen to be doing if they are ever to re-establish a normal relationship with the international banking community.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'G. Howe', written in a cursive style.

GEOFFREY HOWE

Foreign & Commonwealth Office
20 December 1985



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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

20 December 1985

SOUTH AFRICA

I have discussed with the Prime Minister the idea put forward in the Foreign Secretary's minute of 20 December that Lord Richardson should take a further message from her to President Botha early in the New Year.

The Prime Minister feels on reflection that she would prefer not to take up this option. She thinks that her card of entry to President Botha will decline in value if played too often; and she has other emissaries in mind whom she would prefer to use. She would not of course object were the Foreign Secretary to give Lord Richardson a message for Pik Botha.

CHARLES POWELL

Len Appleyard, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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