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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

For the record

13 August 1985

The gist of  
the letter was transmitted  
to the PM in Austria today

Dear Mark (14/8)

SOUTH AFRICA

J  
14/8

Peter Ricketts' letter of 9 August reporting Mr Ewen Fergusson's meeting with Mr Pik Botha drew attention to the importance of international reaction to the speech that President Botha is to give in Durban on 15 August. A favourable reaction will greatly assist in the presentation of our policy towards South Africa. But a strong negative response is bound to increase the pressure for sanctions and to place us in an increasingly exposed position.

It is therefore important that we should continue to bring home to the South Africans and our partners the importance of the statement and of the reaction to it. As you know, Lady Young sent a message to the South African Foreign Minister on 12 August (copy enclosed for ease of reference). She emphasised our hope that President Botha's speech would include the sort of constructive and concrete steps set out by the Foreign Secretary in his address to the Royal Commonwealth Society on 23 July.

President Botha is expected to speak at 6.30 pm London time on 15 August. There are already indications of considerable media interest and it is likely that parts of the speech will be carried live on Channel 4 news. We have received requests from both television networks for Ministerial comment later in the evening.

The timing of the speech means that the US Administration may well make some substantive comment on it later that day. If we are to have any influence on the tenor of comment

/in

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in the media here and on subsequent statements by other governments we shall need to make some initial comment on 15 August. In the absence of both Sir Geoffrey Howe and Mr Rifkind Lady Young thinks it right to appear on the late evening television (and possibly radio) news that day. She will speak on the lines of the enclosed note. Her aim will be to underline the significance of President Botha's statement; to draw attention to its positive features; and to discourage over-hasty comment. We would then make no further comment until we have had a chance to make a more detailed study of what the speech contains. We shall aim to let you have this together with a recommendation for a more detailed line to take on the morning of 16 August.

On the international front we shall aim to co-ordinate our detailed public response to the speech as far as possible with the Americans and the Germans. It is clearly desirable that they and our other partners should be encouraged to give it a fair wind. We have accordingly sent instructions in this sense (copy enclosed) to our Embassies in Washington and Bonn. There is already pressure for a joint statement by the Ten in response to the speech and it is likely that some of our partners will wish to take a negative and unhelpful line. We are therefore asking our posts in Rome, Athens, Brussels, Luxembourg (as the Presidency), Ottawa, Canberra and Wellington, to urge their host governments to give the speech careful consideration and welcome such advances as it may contain. We have stressed that a considered and positive reaction would encourage the progressive elements in the South African Government to continue to work for fundamental reform.

*yours ever*

*Stewart Eldon*

S G Eldon  
Private Secretary to  
Baroness Young

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DESKBY 130615Z  
FM FCO 122000Z AUGUST 85  
TO IMMEDIATE PRETORIA  
TELEGRAM NUMBER 129 OF 12 AUGUST  
INFO IMMEDIATE WASHINGTON, BONN  
SOUTH AFRICA: MR FERGUSSON'S MEETING IN VIENNA WITH THE  
SOUTH AFRICAN FOREIGN MINISTER

1. PLEASE PASS THE FOLLOWING MESSAGE FROM ME TO PIK BOTHA  
AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

BEGINS: I WRITE TO YOU IN GEOFFREY HOWE'S ABSENCE TO TELL  
YOU THAT WE HAVE STUDIED WITH INTEREST THE REPORTS OF YOUR  
MEETING WITH MR FERGUSSON IN VIENNA ON 8 AUGUST. IT WAS  
USEFUL TO HAVE HAD THIS DISCUSSION AND WE WERE MOST INTERESTED  
TO HEAR THAT THE PROPOSALS WHICH PRESIDENT BOTHA IS INTENDING  
TO MAKE IN HIS FORTHCOMING SPEECH WILL REPRESENT, IN YOUR  
VIEW, AN HISTORIC POLITICAL CHANGE FOR SOUTH AFRICA.

WE HAVE KEPT THE DETAILS OF YOUR DISCUSSION CONFIDENTIAL.  
BUT REPORTS OF PRESIDENT BOTHA'S FORTHCOMING SPEECH AND ITS  
LIKELY CONTENT ARE RECEIVING CONSIDERABLE ADVANCE PUBLICITY  
IN THE PRESS BOTH HERE AND ELSEWHERE. IT IS CLEAR THAT THE  
SPEECH WILL BE WIDELY REGARDED AS A KEY TEST OF YOUR  
GOVERNMENT'S INTENTIONS FOR THE FUTURE.

AS SUCH, THE SPEECH WILL UNDOUBTEDLY HAVE A MOST IMPORTANT  
INFLUENCE ON THE COURSE OF DELIBERATIONS ON SOUTH AFRICA,  
BOTH IN THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY AND IN THE UNITED STATES.  
IT IS LIKELY TO BE JUDGED BY THE REACTIONS WHICH IT  
RECEIVES FROM THE NON-WHITE COMMUNITY INSIDE SOUTH AFRICA  
AND BY THE EXTENT TO WHICH IT IS SEEN TO PUT FORWARD  
CONCRETE PROPOSALS AND REFORMS. ON THE FIRST POINT, I AM  
SURE THAT YOUR GOVERNMENT IS DOING EVERYTHING POSSIBLE IN

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DIALOGUE WITH NON-WHITE LEADERS TO EXPLAIN THE PROPOSALS TO THEM AND BUILD MUTUAL CONFIDENCE.

ON THE SECOND, I SHOULD LIKE PRIVATELY TO EMPHASISE AGAIN MY GOVERNMENT'S STRONG HOPE THAT THE SPEECH WILL CONTAIN CONCRETE STEPS ON THE LINES SET OUT BY GEOFFREY HOWE IN HIS ADDRESS TO THE ROYAL COMMONWEALTH SOCIETY ON 23 JULY. THE PARTICULAR STEPS WHICH HE MENTIONED THEN INCLUDED THE RELEASE OF NELSON MANDELA, AN END TO FORCED REMOVALS, AN END TO DETENTION WITHOUT TRIAL AND THE STATE OF EMERGENCY, THE PROGRESSIVE ABOLITION OF THE PASS LAWS AND THE GROUP AREAS ACT AND A COMMITMENT TO SOME FORM OF COMMON CITIZENSHIP FOR ALL SOUTH AFRICANS. THESE WOULD BE IMPORTANT, CONFIDENCE BUILDING STEPS TOWARDS WHAT WE SEE AS THE FUNDAMENTAL OBJECTIVE OF ACHIEVING A SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA COMMANDING THE SUPPORT OF THE PEOPLE AS A WHOLE.

THE INCLUSION IN PRESIDENT BOTHA'S SPEECH OF SUCH CONSTRUCTIVE STEPS TOGETHER WITH A COMMITMENT IN SOME FORM TO THIS FUNDAMENTAL OBJECTIVE WOULD, IN OUR VIEW, DO A GREAT DEAL TO ASSIST THE CHANCES OF A FAVOURABLE INTERNATIONAL REACTION TO THE PRESIDENT'S SPEECH. WE BELIEVE THAT THE SPEECH WILL INDEED BE AN HISTORIC OPPORTUNITY FOR SOUTH AFRICA AND WE HOPE THAT IT WILL, AS THE PRIME MINISTER SAID IN HER MESSAGE OF 7 AUGUST TO PRESIDENT BOTHA, MARK A SIGNIFICANT STEP FORWARD FOR ALL THE PEOPLE OF SOUTH AFRICA AND MEET THE ASPIRATIONS OF BLACK LEADERS IN SOUTH AFRICA, AND GOVERNMENTS SUCH AS OUR OWN, FOR PEACEFUL EVOLUTION. ENDS.

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*Cape to No 10 Downing Street*

ECD(E)

MR FERGUSSON

PLANNING STAFF

MR JOHNSON

*New Dept.*

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INITIAL REACTION TO PRESIDENT BOTHA'S SPEECH ON  
15 AUGUST

Extremely important statement. We shall be studying it carefully before commenting in detail. But the speech clearly contains positive features which represent a significant move forward. [We welcome the confirmation of a common citizenship for all South Africans.] We hope that the proposals announced by President Botha will lead to the opening of a genuine dialogue with black leaders about the political rights of blacks in South Africa. The objective must be real progress towards a system of government which commands the support of the people of South Africa as a whole.

OO ROME

OO ATHENS

OO PRETORIA

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FM FCO 131100Z AUGUST 85

TO IMMEDIATE WASHINGTON

TELEGRAM NUMBER 1252 OF 13 AUG

AND IMMEDIATE BONN, LUXEMBOURG, ROME, ATHENS, BRUSSELS, OTTAWA,  
CANBERRA, WELLINGTON

INFO IMMEDIATE PRETORIA

PRESIDENT BOTHA'S FORTHCOMING POLICY STATEMENT

1. WE SHOULD BE GRATEFUL IF WASHINGTON AND BONN COULD SPEAK AS SOON AS POSSIBLE TO THE STATE DEPARTMENT AND THE AUSWAERTIGES AMT RESPECTIVELY AS FOLLOWS.
2. PRESIDENT BOTHA'S 15 AUGUST POLICY STATEMENT IS ASSUMING INCREASING INTERNATIONAL IMPORTANCE AS A TEST OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT'S INTENTIONS. IT IS VERY MUCH IN THE INTERESTS OF OUR THREE COUNTRIES THAT THE SPEECH SHOULD NOT PROVE TO BE A DISAPPOINTMENT SINCE THIS WOULD ONLY INCREASE THE PRESSURES ON US FOR ACTION AGAINST SOUTH AFRICA AND REDUCE THE CHANCES OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT OPENING ITS MUCH NEEDED DIALOGUE WITH THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE NON-WHITE COMMUNITY WHICH ALONE CAN DEFUSE THE PRESENT CRISIS THERE.
3. WE HAVE THEREFORE MADE A FURTHER ATTEMPT TO INFLUENCE THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT'S THINKING IN THE FORM OF THE MINISTERIAL MESSAGE IN FCO TELNO 129 TO PRETORIA (YOU CAN GIVE THE GIST OF THIS MESSAGE TO THE STATE DEPARTMENT AND THE AUSWAERTIGES AMT). WE NOTE (WASHINGTON TELNO 2373) THAT THE AMERICANS ARE NOT CONSIDERING ANY ADDITIONAL ACTION BEFORE 15 AUGUST.
4. THE DESCRIPTION WHICH PIK BOTHA GAVE TO THE AMERICANS, THE GERMANS AND OURSELVES OF THE LIKELY CONTENT OF PRESIDENT

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/ BOTHA

BOTHA'S STATEMENT SUGGESTS THAT WHILE THE SOUTH AFRICANS ARE SAYING THAT IT WILL REPRESENT A HISTORIC CHANGE IT IS LIKELY TO BE COUCHED IN GENERAL AND PERHAPS RATHER OBSCURE TERMS AND MAY THEREFORE NOT HAVE THE INTENDED IMPACT ON EITHER NON-WHITE OPINION WITHIN SOUTH AFRICA OR THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY. THERE IS A SERIOUS RISK THEREFORE OF INITIAL DISAPPOINTMENT INSIDE AND OUTSIDE SOUTH AFRICA AT THE CONTENT OF THE SPEECH LEADING TO A BLANKET REJECTION OF IT BY WESTERN COUNTRIES. THIS WOULD IN OUR VIEW BE A GREAT MISTAKE. SUCH REJECTION WOULD UNDERMINE THE POSITION OF THOSE PROGRESSIVE ELEMENTS IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT WHO ARE PUSHING FOR INTERNAL REFORM AND STRENGTHEN THE POSITION OF THE MORE REACTIONARY ELEMENTS WHO WOULD BE ABLE TO ARGUE THAT WHATEVER SOUTH AFRICA DOES IT WILL GAIN NO CREDIT IN THE WEST AND SHOULD THEREFORE MAKE NO MORE CONCESSIONS. WIDESPREAD INTERNATIONAL REJECTION OF THE SPEECH WILL ALSO STEP UP PRESSURES ON ALL OF US FOR SANCTIONS AGAINST SOUTH AFRICA AND LEA TO CRITICISM OF THE POLICY OF CONTACT AND DIALOGUE WITH THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT AND PERHAPS OF THE TALKS WHICH WE, THE AMERICANS AND THE GERMANS HAVE JUST HAD WITH PIK BOTHA.

5. WE THEREFORE THINK IT IMPORTANT THAT WE, THE US AND THE FRG, IN REACTING TO THE SPEECH, SHOULD GIVE CREDIT FOR ANY MOVES TOWARDS INTERNAL REFORM WHICH IT MAY CONTAIN AND ENCOURAGE OTHERS TO TAKE A BALANCED VIEW OF IT RATHER THAN MERELY CONCENTRATE ON ITS FAILINGS OR OMISSIONS. WE ARE THEREFORE LIKELY TO MAKE A SHORT INITIAL STATEMENT STRAIGHT AFTER THE SPEECH, UNDERLINING ITS IMPORTANCE, STRESSING THE NEED TO GIVE IT CAREFUL STUDY, AND SAYING (ASSUMING THAT WE REASONABLY CAN) THAT WE RECOGNISE THAT IT CONTAINS CERTAIN POSITIVE ELEMENTS.

6. FINALLY, WE SHOULD BE GRATEFUL IF YOU WOULD STRESS TO THE STATE DEPARTMENT AND THE AUSWAERTIGES AMT THE CONSIDERABLE IMPORTANCE WHICH WE CONTINUE TO ATTACH TO OUR THREE COUNTRIES KEEPING IN STEP ON THIS MATTER.

7. FOR LUXEMBOURG, ROME, ATHENS, BRUSSELS, WELLINGTON, OTTAWA (YOUR TELNO 456) AND CANBERRA (YOUR TELNO 541). WE ARE REPEATING TO

1704

YOU (AND HAVE ALREADY DONE SO TO CANBERRA WHO HAVE TAKEN PRELIMINARY ACTION WITH THE AUSTRALIANS) FCO TELNOS 123, 124 AND 129 TO PRETORIA, THE FIRST TWO OF WHICH GIVE AN ACCOUNT OF EWEN FERGUSSON'S MEETING IN VIENNA WITH PIK BOTHA ON 8 AUGUST. WE SHOULD BE GRATEFUL IF YOU WOULD GIVE YOUR HOST GOVERNMENTS, IN STRICT CONFIDENCE, A BRIEF OUTLINE OF WHAT PIK BOTHA HAD TO SAY ABOUT THE LIKELY CONTENT OF PRESIDENT BOTHA'S SPEECH. YOU SHOULD ALSO GIVE THEM A SHORT ACCOUNT, DRAWING ON FCO TELNO 129, OF THE POINTS WE HAVE BEEN URGING ON THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT. 8. YOU SHOULD SAY THAT WE DO NOT KNOW WHAT THE FINAL CONTENT OF THE SPEECH WILL BE (THE SOUTH AFRICAN CABINET IS DUE TO MEET ON 14 AUGUST TO CONSIDER IT). WE BELIEVE HOWEVER THAT IT MAY WELL CONTAIN A SIGNIFICANT ADVANCE IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT'S APPROACH TO INTERNAL REFORMS BUT THAT THIS MAY BE COUCHED IN GENERAL TERMS AND CONTAIN FEWER CONCRETE STEPS THAN WE WOULD HAVE WISHED. NEVERTHELESS WE BELIEVE IT IMPORTANT THAT WESTERN COUNTRIES SHOULD STUDY THE SPEECH AND ITS IMPLICATIONS CAREFULLY AND GIVE CREDIT FOR SUCH ADVANCES AS IT MAY CONTAIN AND AVOID BEING STAMPEDED INTO REACTING IN PURELY NEGATIVE TERMS WHICH WOULD ONLY MAKE IT MORE DIFFICULT TO PERSUADE THE SOUTH AFRICANS TO TAKE FURTHER POSITIVE STEPS. IN JUDGING THE SPEECH IT IS NECESSARY TO RECOGNISE THE DOMESTIC POLITICAL REALITIES AND, IN PARTICULAR, THE CONSTRAINTS IMPOSED ON THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT BY EXTREME RIGHT-WING ATTITUDES.

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