

May 15, 1981

Notes on Meeting between South African Minister of Foreign Affairs R. F. Botha and US President Reagan

Citation:

"Notes on Meeting between South African Minister of Foreign Affairs R. F. Botha and US President Reagan", May 15, 1981, Wilson Center Digital Archive, South African Foreign Affairs Archive, File 137/10/02 Vol. 9, doc. No. 82214/006772. Obtained and contributed by Or Rabinowitz. <https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/116764>

Summary:

South African Minister of Foreign Affairs "Pik" Botha and President Reagan meet in Washington, DC. South African Ambassador Sole, the note taker, interprets Reagan's friendly opening comments as "the inference clearly being that he had no illusions about democratic rule in Africa." They discuss the situation in Namibia and Angola, and their shared opposition to Soviet and communist influence in the region. Botha also asks Reagan to help South Africa's souring relations with France regarding nuclear cooperation. Botha states that "South Africa was not preparing or intending to explode a nuclear device, but[...] could not afford publicly to surrender this option."

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from Carnegie Corporation of New York (CCNY)

Original Language:

English

Contents:

Original Scan

137/10/2

8/27

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5/27/81 Secret.

NOTES ON THE MEETING BETWEEN MINISTER R.F. BOTHA AND PRESIDENT R. REAGAN.

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We had been led to believe that only Mr. Richard Allen and Dr. Chet Crocker would be with the President but in addition the Secretary of State and Mr. Ed Meese were present.

The Secretary of State outlined to the President the content of the discussion between the Minister and himself, with reference in particular to the Namibian situation and the problems created with respect to nuclear relations arising out of existing U.S. legislation. He informed the President of the progress that was made in respect to the former and indicated with respect to the latter that every effort would be made to be as helpful as possible.

The President, in welcoming the Minister, made it clear that he was no advocate of what he called "one man, one vote once", - the inference clearly being that he had no illusions about democratic rule in Africa. He commented briefly on the current situation between the two countries, repeating the point that he had made in the Walter Cronkite broadcast that South Africa was a long-time friend and ally and expressing the hope that these relations would be maintained and consolidated.

On Namibia he was hopeful for a resolution of the questions at issue and referred in this context to the link with Angola.

The Minister commenced by conveying the warm regards to the President of the Prime Minister. He thanked God that the President's life had been spared. He emphasised that he had been greatly encouraged by his talk with the Secretary of State. He had come to Washington with a certain degree of suspicion. In the light of what had happened in the past, South Africa was tilted towards going it alone but he now took hope that there was a potential for a new era in the relations between the two countries. He did not wish to overplay this because he recognised

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that the United States, as a global power, had so many other interests. Nevertheless, he emphasized that South Africa would always be with the United States in respect of its commitments to counter the activities of the Soviet Union.

On Namibia he stressed that South Africa was committed to securing its independence. He stressed that the Prime Minister had declared that he was opposed, not to a Black Government in Namibia, but to the advent of a Black Communist Government in the Territory.

This might be seen as something of an obsession but South Africa would never accept in exchange for the possibility of war on the Cunene, the possibility of war on the Orange River.

He described in some detail, changes which had taken place in Namibia in respect of the abolition of discrimination.

With reference to Angola he made it clear that South Africa would not be able to "ditch" Savimbi. In this context he also outlined the deteriorating economic picture on the Continent generally - "Africa is dying" - and referred to South Africa's potential in providing some degree of economic relief, at least to the southern portion of the Continent.

In this context of Southern Africa, he also made a special plea, saying that he was doing so on the specific instructions of the Prime Minister, for consideration of South Africa's case for obtaining suitable reconnaissance aircraft in order to provide the necessary air/sea rescue operations for the ships rounding South Africa's coast.

On the nuclear issue he expressed appreciation of the Administration's willingness to see what could be done to help, referred to the prospect of the souring of relations with the French in this field as a result of the change in the presidency

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in France, emphasised that Koeberg would be at all times under complete international safeguards, but made it clear that South Africa cannot sign the Non-proliferation Treaty. He explained in this context that if we were to sign the Treaty, it would terminate the speculation about South Africa's possession of the bomb. This would mean that South Africa would be deprived of an important deterrent of major psychological value. South Africa was not preparing or intending to explode a nuclear device but he made it clear that we could not afford publicly to surrender this option.

In responding briefly to the Minister, the President indicated that he was particularly struck by this last argument which had not occurred to him before. The President also reiterated briefly his commitment both to nuclear power and to promoting changes in the previous Administration's policy in this field.

The President also made, although somewhat more indirectly, the same point that the Secretary of State had made in the discussion the previous day, that there was a need for each side to know where it stood on the major policy issues at stake.

At the conclusion of the meeting the Minister presented the President with a volume on South Africa's proteas as a gift to Mrs Reagan.

D.B. SOLE

WASHINGTON DC

15 May 1981