

August 18, 1981

Letter from South African Foreign Minister R. F. Botha on Relations with the Reagan Administration

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Summary:

Letter from South African Foreign Minister "Pik" Botha to South African Member of Parliament J.W.K. Wiley on relations with the United States. He notes that there has been a considerable change in policy since the Reagan administration took over from Carter, summarizing that "the Americans are not at present trying to make trouble for us," although that may change if progress is not made on South West Africa, i.e. Namibia.

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MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INFORMATION

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MB 5/4/3

18 August 1981

PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL

Dear John

Thank you very much for the courtesy of passing your proposed questions to me for reaction before you submit them.

I am of course very well aware that you have always taken a strong stand against interference by the Americans in our domestic affairs. They have often been an embarrassment to us, especially during the previous Carter administration. I must say, however, that there has been a considerable change in approach since President Reagan took over.

Of course the Americans have their own interests at heart but the Reagan Administration's understanding of those interests is presently easier for us to live with than the previous administration's. They have also made an effort to be more restrained in their public statements on South Africa, and seem willing to remove minor irritants and to improve relations. In short, our experience is that the Americans are not at present trying to make trouble for us. We realize, of course, that if there is no progress on South West Africa this may change.

Nevertheless, I doubt whether it would serve a constructive purpose just now to single out the American Consul for attention in a parliamentary question about visiting "Crossroads".

I also doubt that our interests will be best served by the question on the U.S. Congressmen. You will remember

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Mr J W E Wiley, M P
House of Assembly
CAPE TOWN.

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that I issued two strong press statements on the telephone during their visit, exposing their dubious motives. These statements were well reported. In today's Argus (18 August 1981) you will have noticed that Rev. Colonel Robert Blamp states that the Congressmen came to South Africa "to grandstand for the benefit of their constituents in the U.S." To resurrect the matter now in Parliament would seem to give them - "a fraction of a fraction of the very radical left" as Col. Blamp describes them - unnecessary status and publicity. Furthermore, it may force the U.S. Administration to come to their defence on questions of general principle, e.g. the right of Congressmen to inform themselves on events in other parts of the world.

With kind regards

Pik Bama

R F BOTHA