

December 7, 1976

Report for South African Prime Minister Balthazar Vorster from ADR, Prime Minister's Return to Geneva

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Summary:

Description of the situation at the Geneva Conference, the lack of Kissinger's presence due to Ford's electoral defeat, and the South African realization that the chance for a peace settlement at Geneva is almost gone.

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Following is message from Pik Botha to his government yesterday. He and Fourie phoned me from Washington early this morning and said I should get this to the PM soonest. They said K was taking a position that suited them very well. He had confirmed with them shortly before they telephoned me that they had send the messages to Nyerere and Kaunda. He would have reminded the two presidents of his discussions with them during his African visits. Kissinger said the African delegations at Geneva were raising issues never agreed in his talks with them. Only the original proposals could form an agreement.

Botha and Fourie stressed that Kissinger had asked them to emphasise that we must not reveal under any circumstances that this particular message was being made known by him to us, as it would destroy his credibility. They had given him the assurance that they would only pass it on, on condition that we would keep it quiet.

They stressed the conference must be keep going until after the date of Carter's inauguration. Botha said he felt that we can believe Kissinger as the latter has nothing to lose now. He thought the substance of the signal represented reasonably good advice.

Fourie said the Americans had given him their assurance that they were going full steam ahead with the Trust Fund.

Botha message begins.

1. I saw K this afternoon (Sat 4 Dec) for approximately 1 hour. He had just returned from Mexico

2. As regards Rhodesia I said the talks in Geneva were heading for a failure because the black Rhodesian reps were ignoring the 5 points. I appealed to K to go Geneva personally to confront the reps there with the five points which had been agreed upon.

3. K agreed that the chances of success were slim but he feels that all is not yet lost. He has given instructions that messages be sent to Kaunda and Ny this w/e to inform them that "the present proposals advanced by the black delegates in Geneva offer no basis for agreement."

The two black presidents will also be reminded of the "basic structure" of the five points was discussed with me by four separate American missions as well as by the British. The concept of the Council of State and the two-tier system proposed for the interim gov had indeed been discussed with them and neither Kaunda nor Nyerere had at any time shown any opposition regarding these proposals. The only two points which appeared to be problematical for Kaunda and Nyerere were the question of a white chairman for the Council of State and the appointment of two white ministers for the two security ministries. K continued "the African presidents seem to operate on a different version of the truth. Now says that he did not know anything about the Council of State until very last stage. Discussed the matter personally with him. The Council of State was not an American idea. It was not conceived by us but we supported it and we discussed it with them. The African leaders did not agree to every word in the section concerning the Council of State, but they did agree with the concept."

4. I urged K to go to Geneva personally to confront the delegates with the background of events. His reaction was he would have done so gladly if Ford had won the election. "If Ford had won I would by now have forced a showdown and I would have confronted them with the reaction of the frontline presidents. However the way the British have been conducting the Geneva talks and the fact that we have lost the election now makes it impossible for me to go to Geneva. K fears that the black delegates will not at present pay much heed to him unless the new Admin makes it clear they will execute his programme and support him.

5. I asked K why he did not try to obtain a categorical undertaking from Carter that Carter would support him. K is of the opinion that Carter will not be willing to execute the five points. The blacks brought Carter into power and he will not dare to support Smith.

6. I told K that it then no longer really paid us to try to do anything further to save the talks at Geneva. It was clear to me that the talks would fail. We had pinned our hopes on a firm American reaction but it was clear to me that this was lacking. Matters must then take their course and the war must escalate.

7. K replied that there was still a slender possibility that a peaceful solution could be reached. He wished to emphasise that Mr Smith should try to have the talks continue as long as possible. At least for a few weeks until after Carter has assumed office on 20 January 1977. If the talks then fail, Kissinger will at that stage be willing to state in public that there had been a reasonable chance of success but that the Carter Administration had caused the peace effort to miscarry. Am Ambassador tells me Schaufele was instructed to remain in London on way home from Lesotho...to meet Kissinger there today. Richard's visit was probably not purely coincidental. Bowdler says it is possible Schaufele will return Geneva. Let us hope they might stiffen the Brits' backbone."