

April 1, 1977

**Memorandum of Meeting of South African Prime
Minister Vorster, Pik Botha and Brand Fourie on
Rhodesia**

Citation:

"Memorandum of Meeting of South African Prime Minister Vorster, Pik Botha and Brand Fourie on Rhodesia", April 1, 1977, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Rhodes University, Cory Library, Smith Papers, Jack Gaylard meeting file. Included in "Southern Africa in the Cold War, Post-1974," edited by Sue Onslow and Anna-Mart Van Wyk.
<https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/118534>

Summary:

Botha describes that neither South Africa nor Rhodesia can count on much support from the United States.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from Leon Levy Foundation

Original Language:

English

Contents:

Transcript - English

Meeting PM, ADR, Pik Botha and Brand Fourie
Groote Schuur, 31 March 1977.

Botha gave a summary of recent experiences in USA—that people were sympathetic, but not in Washington or New York. As a result he had become somewhat cynical. He was convinced that there would be no assistance forthcoming for either of our countries from USA. Botha had warned his own government that they could not rely on the West. This was proved by the Angola experience. He believed that Ford and Kissinger would be seen as angels compared to Carter. Vance was described as cold and calculating. On Rhodesia, the big question seemed to be whether or not PM genuine in seeing a settlement. He had been asked this question at every interview.

..

PM asked what it was Carter wanted? What did he want him to do? He had accepted majority rule in his talks with Kissinger.

Botha: He had talked with Sir Anthony Duff and Schauffele together. He had told them that the Black majority leader should be identified beyond doubt. Smith had been identified as the leader of the whites. If there were five or six contenders seeking white leadership as well as Smith, would the US and UK accept this, as you seemed to accept the state of affairs with the Blacks. Had said it was necessary to get Mugabe out and given the eg of installation of MPLA in Angola. Surely the US must be able to support the search for the majority black leader in Rhodesia... All they said was they would have to report his view higher up. Duff said he could not argue against the force of Botha's logic. However, the Front Line Presidents constituted a reality and no agreement could be made without considering this.

Carter was more positive. He had asked if RSA was committed to Muz. Botha had replied RSA not committed to anyone, but they would be for any individual who could lead the blacks towards a peaceful solution provided this was obtained in an open and fair way. They would even accept Mugabe if he came to power by such means.

Botha: the rightwing revolt in Rhodesia had been good thing overseas. It had showed Smith could not do as he liked, and he had just managed to get through the new legislation. This had made a good impression, and the same had happened to RSA over SWA. Carter had said he wanted to see Rhodesia and Namibia settled peacefully as soon as possible. He wanted black majority rule within a reasonable period, by irreversible process. PM said he agreed to this.

Botha rejoined they did not believe us. PM said if they did not want to believe him, what did they wish to bring in, in order to convince them? ..

Botha: he had been waiting for PM to say this. His idea was that the RSA should submit a document to Carter regarding RSA's attitude to Rh and SWA. This would set up the basic elements and should be delivered on a 'take it or leave it' basis. His advice was that we should always look and sound reasonable to European and US ears. Very little of our case had been committed to paper and if we could put across our views in writing this might achieve something; indeed it might even put them (US) in an impossible situation.

In SWA RSA had conceded it should go forward as an entity rather than be fragmented into homelands. 10 of the 11 members of the Council of Ministers would be black; Apartheid was abolished. They could not hand over the territory to SWAPO, just as Mr Smith could not hand over to Mugabe...

.. The poison of the unresolved Rhodesian problem was affecting good relationships and there was a growing feeling the white presence should be removed. He repeated that there was great value in submitting the document he mentioned getting our case across.... At end of meeting Bzezinski had said he found Botha's exposition compassionate and moving, but had gone on to say "you have not got the time."

Pm: thanked Botha. We would keep in close touch. He would always be available for consultation. Botha responded similarly: He said he would play straight with us. It was the only way he knew.

It was a warm and fruitful meeting and was significant for the rapport struck up between the PM and the new Foreign Minister.

1st April 1977, Cape Town