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Brzezinski
Box 14

THE VICE PRESIDENT
WASHINGTON

ACTION

Memo No. 357-77
April 8, 1977

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: The Vice President

SUBJECT: My Meeting with Vorster

For the past two weeks I have been working with Cy Vance, Andy Young, Zbig, David Aaron and others to develop a plan for a meeting between me and Vorster that would have the maximum positive impact in support of our strategy on Namibia, Southern Rhodesia and South Africa. This has involved developing an overall diplomatic approach to fulfill the objectives set out in your Presidential Directive -- majority-led moderate governments and a progressive end to apartheid, brought about peacefully. This effort also involves meshing with the on-going actions of the British on Southern Rhodesia and the UN on Namibia.

U.S. Strategy

Our objective is to have legitimate elections held in Namibia and Southern Rhodesia which will transfer power to majority governments. At the same time, we want to encourage the end of apartheid in South Africa over the longer term.

We reject the former administration's strategy which focused exclusively on solving the Southern Rhodesian and Namibian problems with the sole objective of keeping the Soviets out. This led the South Africans -- the key actors in the area -- to believe that we cared little about apartheid and that any solution that kept the Russians at bay would be acceptable. Thus, they have been working on "internal" solutions in Namibia and Southern Rhodesia which would preserve white control -- and in our view result in prolonged civil war.

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The purpose of my meeting with Vorster would be to convey a different message.

- We are concerned at the growing possibility of a transcontinental race war in Southern Africa that would radicalize black Africans, open the door to Soviet and Cuban penetration, and bring untold suffering and profound economic dislocation. There could be adverse political consequences in many other countries, including our own. A positive relationship between the United States and South Africa would be impossible under such circumstances. Thus, our relations are at a watershed.
- The solution is to move promptly toward majority rule in Southern Rhodesia and Namibia with individual rights for all. There must also be a progressive transformation of South African society, involving the elimination of institutionalized racism and leading to rule by the majority of all the governed, with full and equal political participation by all and guaranteed rights for minorities. We cannot accept "internal" solutions in Southern Rhodesia and Namibia.
- In pressing Vorster for positive South African actions on Southern Rhodesia and Namibia, I would make clear that progress on these urgent issues as well as on apartheid would provide both time and a constructive atmosphere for US support for difficult adjustments that lie ahead for South Africa.

In sum, our strategy also will place priority on Southern Rhodesia and Namibia through action by South Africa. But our inducement will be to be as helpful as possible in the transformation process in South Africa rather than letting the Vorster government believe we will bail them out regardless of their policy on Southern Rhodesia, Namibia and apartheid.

This will be the first time such a message will have been delivered to South Africa. We must be extremely modest about how much good it will do, particularly in the short run. But it is a message that will profoundly change the nature of our relationship and, if played properly, should have a constructive impact on their future decisions.

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Our Tactics

Where and when I deliver this message should be determined by several ongoing developments in Southern Africa.

UK Foreign Secretary Owen will be travelling there April 10-15, to meet with Vorster, Smith and others to find a solution on Southern Rhodesia. The holding of elections prior to independence in Southern Rhodesia is a principle accepted by all parties, but a framework for them is necessary. Ideally, an election or referendum would be supervised by an outside authority, following a negotiated political agreement and an end to guerrilla warfare. An election framework also would have to be acceptable to the Patriotic Front, and have the support of the "front line" states -- Zambia, Tanzania, Botswana and Mozambique. All the nationalist groups have rejected Smith's suggestion that an election determine simply the black leader with whom he is to negotiate. Smith and the Patriotic Front have rejected Muzorewa's call for a referendum to select a leader to whom Smith would immediately transfer power. The Kissinger/Richard plan for continuing the Geneva Conference to set up an interim government to hold elections within two years technically is still on the table, but politically it is dead.

Owen will be advancing a formula which would involve a British-chaired constitutional conference to create the permanent government for Southern Rhodesia. The conference would begin in June, with or without Smith, leading to elections and a proclamation of independence by the British Parliament in March, 1978 at the earliest, September, 1978 at the latest. Owen will also explore the possibility of reviving the Kissinger/Richard plan.

I believe we should use the possibility of my visit to South Africa as an inducement for Vorster to respond positively to Owen's efforts. Regardless of how firm my private message, publicly my visit will lend prestige and legitimacy to Vorster's government. We should be able to show it produced results in terms of Vorster's and Smith's acceptance of a resumed Geneva conference, or participation in a constitutional conference. A positive South African response to the Allied (five nations) demarche on Namibia might also provide a peg for my visit -- though the prospects appear less promising.

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But if either can be accomplished (we will be hearing from Owen and our Ambassador in Capetown). I would propose going to South Africa either in the last week of this month or right after you return from the Summit in London. I would stop off in Nigeria and Tanzania but not turn the visit into a repeat of the Podgorny visit.

If the South Africans are not responsive, it would still be important to meet with Vorster, but not in South Africa. Instead, I would suggest meeting in Vienna in May. This would make him come half way to meet me and avoid legitimizing his policies. It would lower public expectations of concrete results and could be combined with return visits to Portugal and Spain to show our support for the reemerging democracies there.

Next Steps

I believe it would be desirable for you to inform Callaghan of our plans concerning a meeting with Vorster. Owen might be able to use it to good effect in his talks with Vorster and Smith and in any event, Owen should know what we have in mind. (A proposed letter is attached at Tab A).

Second, we should have the U.S. Ambassador in South Africa follow up Owen's visit with a call on Vorster, carrying a personal message from you. This message would indicate our willingness to have me go to South Africa if concrete progress is being made along the lines Owen will be proposing, or to meet elsewhere for an exchange of views. In this connection, our Ambassador could get a better idea of what Vorster has in mind for such a meeting.

RECOMMENDATION

That you approve this approach to a meeting with Vorster, and sign the letter to Callaghan at Tab A. If you have time, it would be useful if you could approve it today, so that we could get it to Callaghan before Owen leaves for Southern Africa on Sunday.

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