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CCPC



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

23 August 1988

Yes Mr

CCP

Den Andry

Prime Minister
Would you be
prepared to consider
this?
CCP 24/8

Request for an Interview with the Prime Minister
from the Editor of "Beeld"

The Editor of the leading South African Afrikaans newspaper Beeld has approached HMA Pretoria to ask whether the Prime Minister would be prepared to be interviewed by him, either shortly before 27 October or shortly after 10 November. Mr Renwick has expressed the hope that, despite all the pressures on her time, the Prime Minister might agree to be interviewed.

Beeld is the leading daily newspaper for Afrikaners. Of late the newspaper has carried some courageous editorials criticising the slow pace of reform. Most notably an editorial calling for Mr Mandela's release provoked a sharp response from the South African authorities.

An interview with Beeld would allow the Prime Minister to set out clearly her opposition to apartheid and to stress the need for the SAG to grasp the reform nettle. All too often the Afrikaner press and South African Broadcasting Corporation selectively quote the Prime Minister, drawing attention to her opposition to punitive sanctions without mentioning her calls for an end to apartheid, the release of Mandela etc.

Format will therefore be important. Beeld have told Mr Renwick that they would give notice of the questions they would wish to raise. The best approach might be to ask Beeld to prepare written questions, to which written answers could be given. The Prime Minister could then give a short follow-up interview.

Mr Renwick is pursuing separately the proposal which arose out of the call on the Prime Minister by Chief Minister Enos Mabuza of KwaNgwane in March for an interview with her by up to three black South African journalists working for leading black newspapers. The Embassy would ensure that any dates which were tentatively discussed with the other journalists were at a suitable interval should the Prime Minister agree to be interviewed by Beeld.

Yours ever

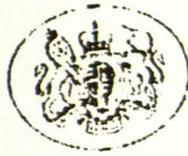
Robles

(R N Peirce)

Private Secretary

DEC 01 '00 10:00

F.1 10



~~Bernard~~
Charles

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Some good coverage
here

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1/2

FAX MESSAGE

TO: Michael Smith News Dept
+ TM Dowse SAID

FROM: A. P. S. EMBASSY PRETORIA

SUBJECT: PRIME MINISTERS INTERVIEW WITH BEELD

NUMBER OF PAGES: 9 + LEADER

ATTACHED ARE TRANSLATIONS OF FRONT
PAGE ARTICLES FOR WED 30 AND THURS 1.
BEELD OF 1 ALSO CARRIED A SUBSTANTIAL
NUMBER OF QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FROM
THE INTERVIEW WHICH WILL FOLLOW BY
BAG.

EXCLUSIVE: MAGGIE SPEAKS ABOUT SA AND PW

By WJ Wepener
Editor of Beeld

In an exclusive interview with the Editor of Beeld, Mrs Thatcher opened her heart regarding South Africa. In one of the most comprehensive interviews she has granted to any newspaper in a long time - certainly a first to a South African newspaper - she discussed a wide variety of subjects: she discussed sanctions, South African politics, Nelson Mandela, the ANC and the IRA, Mr Michail Gorbachev and other world matters, and the last is the best, she spoke about Thatcherism itself, the word which has been used throughout the world to describe the ruling style of this remarkable woman.

TO THE PEOPLE OF SOUTH AFRICA:

A personal message to the people of South Africa from Margaret Thatcher, British Premier and soon the senior ruling leader of the whole Western World:

"The message I would like most to send through you to South Africa, is that positive change is possible. In fact, it is unavoidable. It will demand true willpower and courage to break away from the past. But unless

we get together for fruitful discussions regarding South Africa's problems and the influence of them upon world matters.

The following question is more direct: How would you describe the relationship between you and President Botha? Relaxed? Tense? Or...?

She sounds a little surprised at this question: We spent a long time

matters. I listened to him very attentively. He listened very attentively to me.

We in Britain were very concerned about the forced removals and he promised to investigate the matter personally, he did this and the forced removals were ended".

Regarding certain other aspects of the Botha-regime she is also reasonably positive. She agrees that many reforms have taken place during his time. And the next one she wants to see taking place is "development in the direction of the scrapping of the Group Areas Act".

She also praises his visits to African countries and his peace initiative in Mozambique and Angola/Namibia. She is especially excited over the developments in Angola. "This is an enormous plus-factor. One could not have done this without South Africa. One could not have done this without America. One could not have done this without Mr Gorbachov. These are developments in the correct direction".

The future, she says, lies within South Africa's own hands. But she warns sharply: Unless courageous steps are initiated, violence could increase and S A would become more isolated. "I would not like to see this happen".

"I believe that if strong reform steps were taken, it would be possible to look forward to a very different future in which all South Africans could play their full roles and live together in peace.

The white community, she says, is indispensable to South Africa, now and for the future. The white has a vital role to preserve and build upon that which has already been achieved.

A new dispensation will have to be drawn up for South Africa and this would have to acknowledge the 'diversity' of the country. But only South Afaricans, black and white, can do this.

She agrees that increased isolation is making the ultra-right-wing in South Africa more powerful. 'This is why I am opposed to it (sanctions).

Regarding the possibility that the far-right-wing could come to power, I prefer to believe that white South Africans have enough sense to see that this does not happen!'

(But she does not allow herself to be lured into saying what Britain's

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attitude would be towards such a government).

Regarding one matter she is clearly a little irritated - that her opposition towards sanctions is interpreted as support for apartheid. "This is simply rubbish" she says. Apartheid is contradictory to her whole philosophy.

The reason why she does not support sanctions, is because she cannot think that things can improve by making them worse.

General sanctions would leave a large amount of black South Africans permanently unemployed, would create hardship for their dependents and would also have disastrous effects in the neighbouring states. In addition it would bring about polarisation and violence instead of reform.

Negotiate, negotiate, negotiate! This word is often heard in the interview and this is the concept upon which she bases her hope for South Africa.

Regarding the question of majority rule in South Africa, she is a little evasive, but her answer to a question regarding this matter, leaves the impression that she does not regard this as a serious option for the country.

A constitutional dispensation cannot be drawn up by outsiders. I must say that I cannot see how in a modern world it is possible to reach stability other than upon a basis where each adult has a voting right. The question is how the exercising of this democratic right, which cannot be denied, can be conciled with the rational protecting of minority rights. Over how this has to be done, South Africans will have to negotiate with each other".

Regarding the state of emergency she is also more realistic than what we have come to expect from other world leaders. She hopes it will be ended soon and that steps will be taken to normalise the situation.

"This, I believe, can be done best through negotiating (this word again) where all parties can participate in the context of ending violence on both sides. This concept has not yet been accepted. But I believe it will be accepted one day and this will be the best step forward."

...rievement of the Sharpeville-Six she is delighted and
...ent back to

prison. "It would have been disastrous if he died in prison".

She still condemns the terrorist deeds of the ANC, but has an interesting view regarding the difference between THIS organisation and the IRA.

Only when the interview ends, does one actually realise how much pressure must rest upon the shoulders of this slender, calm woman. Because then she had to rush back to parliament from where she had come especially for the interview and from which she did not expect to return before approximately 11.30 pm.

It is like this every day, she says. But regarding this and her particular view regarding the difference between the ANC and the IRA, more later.

BEELD. THURSDAY 1 DECEMBER 1988

THE IRA HAS THE RIGHT TO VOTE - THE ANC DOES NOT

WJ Wepener - Editor of Beeld.

LONDON. - For Mrs Margaret Thatcher there is one big difference between the IRA and the ANC, which justifies action against the one and not the other. The difference is that the IRA has the right to vote whereby they can, democratically, assert their rights, and the ANC members do not have the right to vote.

Besides, she implies, there exists no proof in London that the latter instigates violence.

Her point of view will be a disappointment to South Africans who expected stronger action against the ANC in London, after she described the ANC as 'a typical terrorist organisation' at the Commonwealth Conference last year.

But in her interview with Beeld at 10 Downing Street, Mrs Thatcher, who reveals understanding for so many other aspects of South Africa's situation, puts across this argument with such determination and logic that you realise she will not easily deviate from it.

No, she says, she herself has not in any way changed her attitude towards terrorism. " I have repeatedly expressed the British Government's abhorrence of terrorist acts. I could never condone bombs in restaurants

to the ANC. I also

Expressed my objections to acts of violence being perpetrated by the Security Forces.

Apartheid

"But South Africa and Northern Ireland can in no way be compared to each other. In Northern Ireland there is no apartheid. There it is a case of people who DO have voting rights, but will not accept the results of an election and have turned to terrorism".

"THAT is intimidation. Sinn Fein, their political wing, draws few votes and that is why the IRA commits violence."

"That is a totally different situation to the situation in South Africa where you have apartheid and where people are prohibited from participating in political processes because of the colour of their skin."

"As a political movement, the ANC is undoubtedly a factor in South Africa's politics. The question is how to get the ANC to abandon violent-politics. The best approach is to pursue the possibility of negotiations."

I have clearly expressed my viewpoint regarding this, namely that the way should be paved for negotiations between all parties, in the context of the ending of violence on ALL sides."

With reference to the report of the Conservative MP, Mr Andrew Hunter, regarding the activities of the ANC in London (to whom he refers as 'Angels of Death', amongst other things), she says:

"I am not going to comment on correspondence between Mr Hunter and I. You would not expect that from me either. But in this country, many organisations can be established.

"Our approach is not that nobody here can have rights unless we say so.

Anyone can establish themselves here on condition that our laws are not violated. If these laws are violated, we act against these people in the same way we would act against any other citizen of the country."

"There are very few forbidden organisations in our country. The IRA is one. Its partner, the INLA, is another. The others must only abide by our laws. This is what democracy really means."

"If such organisations ever promoted violence, we would act accordingly".

Question: "Does this also apply to acts of violence against other countries?"

Answer: "If there is enough evidence of the instigation of violence, I think they will clash with our law. We are studying this very carefully."

Question: "But to us, the ANC as well as the IRA are simply terrorist organisations?"

Answer: "The IRA plants bombs and mutilates people in this country. We have proof of this. That's why I am always being questioned in London about the PLO as well. If anyone violates the law, we act, providing we have proof."

Question: "You say the IRA plants bombs and mutilates people. This is exactly what the ANC does in South Africa?"

Answer: "We must have proof of what is done HERE. We have lost two thousand people because of the crimes of the IRA and the INLA."

Question: "You are therefore implying that we must negotiate with the ANC?"

Answer: "It is not I who must decide upon this. I am continually saying I

representatives of ALL the different groups in the country. But if you DO accept that negotiations are the correct way you will end violence. There are many people who say one must renounce violence totally. When we negotiated with Zimbabwe, they did not really renounce violence. But towards the end they did decide that the ballot and not the bullet will prove more positive. In this manner they did renounce violence at that time."

She was equally firm about the question of whether the British unit which recently went and shot the IRA terrorists in Gibraltar were not simply doing the same as the S African Security Forces do when they sometimes go and destroy terrorist nests in neighbouring states.

She says (with emphasis virtually on every word): "The three IRA terrorists were shot in Gibraltar which is British dependent territory and for whose safety Britain is responsible."

"The terrorists were on a mission to plant a big bomb in Gibraltar and were shot when they were confronted by the security forces and did not want to heed to their commands.

Our soldiers never crossed the Spanish border. In Norther Ireland, where we are now co-operating with the Irish government to establish security in the border-area, the British security forces strictly conform to border regulations. There is no question that they would cross the border while chasing terrorists. They act strictly according to the law."

you are prepared to do this, and tackle your problems with courage, the danger exists that you will be overpowered by them.

This is the manner in which Britain tried to handle its problems.

I was impressed by a phrase in a policy document of the Broederbond: 'The greatest risk is to take no risk'. This fits in with my whole philosophy and I think this applies to South Africa just as much as it applies to Britain".

LONDON. - "President P W Botha and I had a long, very direct and useful discussion at Chequers (country residence of British Premiers) in 1984. I am in regular contact with him. If a further discussion would help to take matters forward then this is something we shall decide upon at the time."

Speaking: Mrs Margaret Thatcher, the Iron Lady of Britain, long time Western premier, who captures the most imagination.

Last night in 10 Downing Street: A dark, rainy evening in London, a strong contrast to the imposing, brightly lit interior of the official residence, something one would not expect behind the small old-world door with the 10 on it.

This energetic woman in her checkered suit grabs a question like a fish grabs a hook. Most of the time you are still busy asking a question when she is already answering. The question she replies to above is: "Do you think there is enough common ground between you and President Botha to get together for fruitful discussions regarding South Africa's problems and the influence of them upon world matters.

The following question is more direct: How would you describe the relationship between you and President Botha? Relaxed? Tense? Or...?

She sounds a little surprised at this question: We spent a long time