

SECRET

SECRET

2

MEETING BETWEEN THE HONOURABLE R F BOTHA, MINISTER OF
FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND AMBASSADOR H NICKEL OF THE UNITED
STATES : CAPE TOWN : 12 MARCH 1984

Also present:

Mr T Carney of the US Embassy
Mr D W Steward, Department of
Foreign Affairs
Mr A L Manley, Department of
Foreign Affairs

MINISTER BOTHA asked Ambassador Nickel why he was worried.
SWAPO was breaking the agreement and South Africa had

AMBASSADOR NICKEL said that he thought that South Africa's
statement of the 11 March 1984 had set off alarm bells.
His people had been taken by surprise. They had had no
idea that South Africa would be making such a statement and
Dr Crocker felt that South Africa might have consulted him
beforehand. The point that had created concern was not so
much the inclusion of SWAPO and the MPC but the inclusion
of UNITA and the Angolan Government. at certain reports
which had appeared in the Sunday Press.

MINISTER BOTHA replied that if the Angolans did not like
the idea they could shoot it down. However, if South
Africa did not start flying this kite now there would be
trouble in the future. The Prime Minister knows that
Angola might reject it. It had been painful for South
Africa to consider speaking to SWAPO even in this way.
However, the truth was that SWAPO was continuing to shoot
and South Africa was continuing to shoot back. UNITA was
fighting the MPLA and they were fighting back. The truth
had to be faced that if peace was to be gained all the
parties involved in the conflict must come together to talk
about peace. t the United States did not feel that direct

SECRET

2

AMBASSADOR NICKEL said that he did not disagree with the general objectives. The question was one of negotiating tactics. The United States thought that it was better to proceed sequentially on a step-by-step basis. They were at a delicate stage with the Angolans and were apprehensive about pushing up the question of national reconciliation at this stage. In the view of the United States the next step should be to speak to Angola about Cuban withdrawal.

MINISTER BOTHA asked Ambassador Nickel why he was worried. SWAPO was breaking the agreement and South Africa had leaned over backwards to keep it intact. The proposed conference could make a major contribution in bringing about Cuban withdrawal.

AMBASSADOR NICKEL repeated that the United States felt that AMBASSADOR NICKEL said that the United States did not want to make the Angolans gun shy. They appreciated that South Africa hadn't questioned Angolan good faith. However, the United States had been concerned about certain reports which had appeared in the Sunday Press.

MINISTER BOTHA said that the Weaver Report in the Sunday Times had been pure speculation. MINISTER BOTHA said that President Kaunda had stated that South Africa should speak to SWAPO. The Frontline States should be told that South Africa was sincerely seeking peace. South Africa's initiative had been triggered by SWAPO's request for a ceasefire. South Africa's statement was not a gimmick. If the other side didn't accept it we would all carry on.

AMBASSADOR NICKEL said that he had already told the Minister that the United States did not feel that direct

SECRET

3

talks between SWAPO and South Africa would be helpful at this stage and recalled that he and the Minister had agreed to disagree on this question. He could see some benefits in a SWAPO/MPC meeting so long as it was properly structured.

MINISTER BOTHA replied that he had always been under the impression that the United States was interested in national reconciliation in Angola. The proposed conference would not seek to unravel anything. Its purpose would be to bring about peace. South Africa had two objectives: UNITA and the MPLA should find one another, and SWAPO's terrorist violence should stop.

AMBASSADOR NICKEL repeated that the United States felt that these question should be addressed on a step-by-step basis.

MINISTER BOTHA said that the United States wanted South Africa to implement Resolution 435 before there was a solution in Angola. However, Resolution 435 could not be successfully implemented without a solution in Angola. South Africa had not said that it could not implement Resolution 435. On the contrary, the proposed conference would advance the process and it could be a powerful factor to achieve Cuban withdrawal. There was no other way. If Dos Santos, Savimbi and South Africa could sign a peace pact SWAPO would be drawn in as well and the Cubans would have to leave. Angola would then be able to ask the Cubans to go. All three parties would score. Then the Soviet Union would not have a leg to stand on. South Africa had had to take the decision now because it could not wait until doomsday for the situation to develop. A momentum had been created which should not be lost.

SECRET

4

AMBASSADOR NICKEL said that he did not think this question could be dealt with in the same fashion as the relationship between SWAPO and the MPC. His principle query was whether a large conference was the right place to resolve all these problems.

MINISTER BOTHA replied that President Kaunda would probably welcome such a conference. The various parties would be able to speak with one another in small groups. That was the way that politics were conducted in Africa.

AMBASSADOR NICKEL asked on what South Africa based its interpretation of President Kaunda's views.

MINISTER BOTHA replied that this view was based on President Kaunda's general attitude. He had asked President Kaunda whether he could not get Savimbi and Dos Santos together. However, Phiri had said that the Angolans were suspicious of Zambia because it had supported a Government of national unity in Angola during the seventies. South Africa would asked President Machel to arrange a meeting between Savimbi and Dos Santos during the meeting on 16 March. Symbolism was very important in Africa. It was very important that there should be tête-à-tête discussions. South Africa had been faced with a difficult situation by President Kaunda's press statement advocating a ceasefire agreement between South Africa and SWAPO. South Africa had to say that it could not talk peace with SWAPO because it had not declared war against them. All of the parties would have to be involved. South Africa had had to take the decision now because it could not wait until doomsday for the situation to develop. A momentum had been created which should not be lost.

SECRET

5

AMBASSADOR NICKEL said that the United States was on the eve of further talks with Angola on the delicate question of Cuban withdrawal. Under these circumstances there should have been consultations before South Africa made its decision.

MINISTER BOTHA said that he had thought that he had helped the United States. He had told Ambassador Nickel in December that the radicals had wanted until March to get rid of UNITA by military means. Now that they were failing the moderates could gain the initiative.

AMBASSADOR NICKEL said that he thought that the question had been raised too soon.

MINISTER BOTHA replied that he had already raised this question with Rodrigues in Lusaka.

AMBASSADOR NICKEL asked whether the Frontline States would be represented at Nkomati.

MINISTER BOTHA replied that Mocambique had sent an Ambassador to the Frontline States and that South Africa did not yet know whether they would be attending the meeting. However, he felt that President Banda as well as Lesotho, Swaziland, Botswana and Zambia might be represented. There was even a possibility that Zimbabwe might send a representative. Mugabe had felt neglected because Crocker had not visited him during his recent trip to southern Africa. It was very important that the momentum which had been built up should be maintained.

SECRET

6

AMBASSADOR NICKEL agreed that the momentum should be maintained. However, the United States felt strongly that we should proceed sequentially. There was a serious difference between South Africa and the United States on tactics.

MINISTER BOTHA replied that he could not see how this development could be viewed as negative. On the contrary, it would enhance the United States' chances of getting the Cubans out. He could not understand why it worried the Americans.

AMBASSADOR NICKEL replied that the United States felt that too much should not be put on the table at this stage. It was not wise to address issues before they were ripe.

MINISTER BOTHA said that South Africa had not mentioned national reconciliation as the sole objective for the conference. The objective was peace between all of the parties involved. What would he do if SWAPO continued killing people in South West Africa and South Africa was forced to withdraw from the agreement.

AMBASSADOR NICKEL asked what the likelihood was that the conference would take place?

MINISTER BOTHA replied that the chances were not very great. However, it was important to fly this kite and to reduce pressure on South Africa to talk with SWAPO. The parties referred to in South Africa's statement were the parties who were shooting each other. South Africa had

SECRET

7

made an offer to try to bring about peace between them. President Kaunda had said that everyone should stop shooting one another. South Africa had now made a practical suggestion in this regard. This was not only an effort to bring about national reconciliation in Angola. It was an effort to end the general conflict in the region including SWAPO's terrorist violence. However, if it was successful, it could lead to national reconciliation.

AMBASSADOR NICKEL said that the impression should not be created among Dos Santos' opponents and among some of the Frontline States that South Africa was trying to replace the MPLA government. He had stated his case as clearly as he could.

MINISTER BOTHA rose and said that there was no point in taking the discussion any further at that stage.

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