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MEETING BETWEEN THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND
THE UNITED STATES AMBASSADOR, MR HERMAN NICKEL :
CAPE TOWN : 27 MAY 1985 : 19h40

MINISTER BOTHA referring to the Cabinda incident said that there had been a similar mission in the Cabinda two months earlier. The mission had provided reasonable evidence of the presence of an ANC camp in the area. (At this point the Minister showed Ambassador Nickel photographs of the suspected ANC base.)

AMBASSADOR NICKEL asked if the photographs had been taken from high-ground?

MINISTER BOTHA said that English was used frequently at the camp which strengthened the impression that ANC members were being accommodated there. The South African reconnaissance group was instructed to confirm the preliminary evidence. Nine members of the group were landed along the shore by submarine. The submarine had been forced to go to the north of the oil field because of the offshore pipes in shallow water. It had not been possible for submarine to go right to the shore and the party had been landed in boats. During the evening the party connected up with UNITA guides and walked through the night toward their destination. They met up with ten to eleven UNITA supporters who knew the terrain and who spoke Portuguese. They did not move as a single group. During

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the previous mission the grass had had been shorter. However, at this time of the year it was much higher and it was impossible for the group not to leave tracks. When drawn broke, they had to find a place to overday. They were already slightly passed the Gulf Oil installations and had to move back to a safe spot in thick vegetation. Unfortunately a hunter with blond hair accompanied by two military people and a dog found their tracks and reported their presence to a nearby military base. The South African group observed that they were being encircled and were finally confined to an area of about 200 - 300 meters in circumference. The first contact between MPLA elements and our forces was made at only about 6 meters. The battle started at 4 pm and lasted until about 7 pm when night fell. The MPLA fired a last number of shots to the extent that it was necessary for them to order extra ammunition. When night fell the South African group and their UNITA companions bombshelled. They were all alive at that time. The South African group shouted orders in Portuguese which confused the MPLA. They withstood the barrage and then crawled out through the MPLA lines. Only six got through. It was not know how many UNITA members were shot or captured. The commander of the group, who was wounded three times, was back in South Africa and had been able to submit a full report.

AMBASSADOR NICKEL assumed that the men had been taken off by submarine.

MINISTER BOTHA confirmed that he could assume that. The South Africans had their own equipment for reconnaissance

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and self-defence as well as binoculars. In such missions the object was to get close to the camp and to watch what was happening and to hear what language was being spoken. While they were on their way to their objective the UNITA commando had told the South African commando that they planned to blowup some of Gulf's installations. The South African commander asked them to act as guides to his group and requested them not to take any action against the Gulf facilities while the South African group was in Cabinda, because there would be no hope of explaining it if they were caught. UNITA agreed to this and confirmed that they would not attack the Gulf installations while the South African group was there. Nine backpacks have been found and there had been nine members in the South African group. However, these did not belong to the South Africans, except for the three that had belonged to the men who had been killed or captured. They were of either UNITA or MPLA origin. They were not South African. Some of these backpacks apparently contained Gulf Oil overalls. It is assumed that UNITA had obtained these overalls from the local population. The Gulf Oil installation was not, if not and never will be a target of the South African Security Forces.

MINISTER BOTHA then showed Ambassador Nickel another photograph of another ANC camp in Angola. He said that this was another ANC camp. South Africa would capture an ANC operative who would tell South Africa what was going on in the camp. South Africa would then send in a reconnaissance unit to confirm the information. Only once South Africa had verified information where it considered

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sending in a team to attack the camp. This was the full story of what had happened. It was confidential and had been conveyed on that basis. South Africa did not deny that UNITA wanted to do damage to Gulf Oil. The South African group had had difficulty persuading them not to do anything while they were there. It is no secret that this is what UNITA wanted to do, but not with South Africa's assistance. The South African group did not carry equipment for such a purpose regardless of what the MPLA might get from Du Toit. South Africa rejected whatever he would say. These were the facts. Gulf Oil was not a South African target, never has been and never will be.

MINISTER BOTHA said that it was not South Africa's policy to intervene in any country, South Africa did have the right to undertake reconnaissance when it had prima facia evidence of terrorism. Sovereignty was, however, a two way street. South Africa was not training people in the Republic for terrorism elsewhere. If others did this, South Africa would retaliate. It could not wait for terrorists to explode bombs in the Republic. South Africa appealed to the United States Government to understand that. In this case there had been a prima facia evidence of terrorism.

AMBASSADOR NICKEL said that he wanted to make some obvious points. He asked whether the potential benefit from this operation could possibly justify the risks which it involved. South Africa must surely have thought about this. It also affected the United States' interests.

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MINISTER BOTHA replied that this situation affected South Africa much more. He had told Kito that South Africa could not allow ANC terrorists to jeopardise its relations with its neighbours. It would have been back to square one. It was hard enough for South Africa to try to stop the war in Mozambique. If the United States had thought that South Africa would sit back and would accept anything, South Africa would have to disagree. The South African Government had to weigh the lives of its citizens when considering such operations. Why did the United States not pressure Dos Santos into getting rid of terrorists?

AMBASSADOR NICKEL replied that the United States was also troubled by this situation. He accepted that South Africa was not after Gulf Oil, but the situation got uncomfortable when the people who were with South Africa were intend on doing this. As a lawyer the Minister should know that one was an accomplice if one accompanied people intend on such acts. South Africa was in an uncomfortable area even though its people were not directly involved. The United States would protect the confidentiality of the South African message.

MINISTER BOTHA replied that he had given Ambassador Nickel the facts.

AMBASSADOR NICKEL said that it was welcome to hear that South Africa had no intention of attacking Gulf in Cabinda. He appreciated receiving this information but would like to know what South Africa's intentions were with regard to the future.

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MINISTER BOTHA said that South Africa would reply to the United States ideas on Cuban withdrawal within a week. It had a great deal to do.

MR CARNEY asked whether the Angolans had shown any willingness to return the remains of the two soldiers who had been killed?

MINISTER BOTHA replied that there had been no developments in this regard. The MPLA would go to the Security Council and would go to town with their propaganda. South Africa would approach the Red Cross for its assistance. When he had met Van Dunem in Maputo, it had been agreed that there would be a Ministerial meeting with Angola but he no longer knew whether this would take place. He supposed that the Angolans would now turn this meeting down. He was awaiting Angola's reply through Veloso. From South Africa's point of view it had warned Angola about this. It had asked the Angolans to get the ANC out of Angola. If Angola were able to accommodate the ANC they would make a fool of Samora Machel and give the Soviet Union a chance of insulting him. South Africa had made this approach to Angola at about the time of the Lusaka Agreement when the Angolans had been quite friendly. It had told them where the ... camps were but the Angolans had then moved them.

AMBASSADOR NICKEL asked if South Africa knew how many ANC members had been in the camp?

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MINISTER BOTHA replied that this was one of the matters which South Africa had hoped to establish.

AMBASSADOR NICKEL asked if this had been a major camp?

MINISTER BOTHA replied that he could not say, but it would have been a good target to stop.

AMBASSADOR NICKEL said that it was the United States' estimate that all of this had happened about 3 km from the main entrance to the Gulf Oil complex.

MINISTER BOTHA confirmed that this was more or less correct. The South African group just passed the main installation when it decided to go to ground overday.

AMBASSADOR NICKEL asked if the ANC had been involved in the fighting?

MINISTER BOTHA replied that they had not been.

AMBASSADOR NICKEL asked whether the language spoken had been Portuguese?

MINISTER BOTHA confirmed that this was the case. As far as further talks with the United States was concerned he suggested that the two sides should wait till South Africa's response was ready. He asked whether the Angolans have replied to the American suggestion?

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AMBASSADOR NICKEL said that the United States had not yet received a full reply.

MINISTER BOTHA said that Van Dunem had told him that they had given a full reply. South Africa would give the United States its response in the near future. However, it was convinced that the Soviet Union would not give Angola up easily. It must cost the Soviet Union a great deal of money to set up camps and provide military equipment. The attacks against South Africa were by no means over. It was not only SWAPO that they were harbouring. There was no justification for this. Mugabe had not done it. Lesotho said that it did not do so although the Minister did not quite believe this. Botswana, Swaziland and Mozambique were cooperating and now it was only Angola that was creating problems.

AMBASSADOR NICKEL said that there were rumours that the ANC was holding a party conference to discuss strategy. There was a great deal of speculation concerning a split between Tambo and Slovo.

MINISTER BOTHA said that South Africa would be interested in any information on this point. From South Africa's point of view a great deal had taken place which had caused the government considerable pain. The government had met with the leaders of the national states the previous week and would pursue these discussions further. Black leaders would in future share in decision making. It was necessary to keep these objectives in mind. President Reagan had never insisted on a unitary state or on one-man-one-vote.

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South Africa had now accepted the idea of sharing decisions, and it was no longer a question of whether this would happen but how. It would be foolish to make too many statements on this question now. In this regard South Africa should not be tied to European ideas. It could agree on structures for government with black leaders and now at this time when all of this had been taking place, it had to content with the ANC.

AMBASSADOR NICKEL said that the United States had been trying to make it known that things were changing in South Africa. It had maintained its position manfully and had pointed out the progress that had been made. The Cabinda incident would do a great deal of damage and would undoubtedly be grabbed by the Reagan Administration's opponents.

MINISTER BOTHA reiterated that South Africa did not claim any right of intervention in neighbouring countries. It had not done so in Zimbabwe because Mugabe had kept the ANC at bay.

AMBASSADOR NICKEL suggested that momentum should once again be restored.

MINISTER BOTHA replied that the Cabinda incident shouldn't be allowed to push things off the track. South Africa had made progress but it would have more turbulence in the future as it approached a solution. However, it would not be deterred. Blacks and whites would share in decisions. They would have to share in the burden of government even

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if it meant that the National Party would lose seats and a great deal of support. In the meantime the South African Government could not tolerate large scale attacks by the ANC. It would make its task impossible.

AMBASSADOR NICKEL said he would report back to Washington on these points.

MINISTER BOTHA said that the United States might not like the story but it was the truth.

AMBASSADOR NICKEL said that he was sure that South Africa did not like what had happened either. It was fully aware of the likely consequences as far as the political situation in the United States was concerned. Both countries should now look forward and try to recoup what had been lost.

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