

GROUP DISCUSSION ON REGIONAL SECURITY : OATLANDS, VIRGINIA,
18 MARCH 1983PRESENT:SOUTH AFRICA:

Mr M Louw - National Intelligence Service
Mr J Stauch - Department of Foreign Affairs
and Information
Professor A van Rensburg - University of Pretoria
Dr G M E Leistner - Director, Africa Institute
Dr J du Plessis - Sovietologist

UNITED STATES:

Mr D Simpson - Director, Office of Southern
African Affairs
Mr D Dlouhy - Country Officer for
Southern Africa
Mr J Segars - Country Officer for Zimbabwe
Miss C Hanson - Country Officer for Botswana,
Swaziland
Mr M Minton - Bureau of Soviet Union Affairs

BACKGROUND:

The South African delegation had been under the impression that these group discussions would concentrate on the global aspects of Soviet expansionism, with particular reference to the southern African region. The American delegation, however, at no stage attempted a macro-analysis but merely dealt with the existing internal situation of southern African countries not dealt with by the other two groups. It was noticeable that the Americans were not as concerned with what the Russians were doing in the area, but rather with what South Africa was doing or not doing. This discrepancy was mentioned to the Americans, stressing that the academics in the South African team had specifically been included for this purpose. As the Americans, however, persisted with their view of a country-by-country analysis it was felt that it would serve no purpose to make an issue of this matter.

ZIMBABWE

Dan Simpson, who throughout the discussions dominated the American delegation, started off by asking the pointed question "do you support Nkomo?". When this was emphatically denied by us, they again requested confirmation that we do not support ZIPRA, as was claimed by Zimbabwean sources. We stressed the South African interest in the stability of the entire region, referring to statements by Governmental spokesmen on this issue and reiterated as recently as during the present Parliamentary Session. We explained that South Africa would derive no benefit from destabilizing Zimbabwe, which due to its ethnic division had to find an internal solution to this inherent threat to its political stability.

The Americans maintained that we could do more to shore-up Mugabe's position and to defuse the situation, quoting examples of acts which indicated a destabilization line like locomotives, sabotage of airbase and oil pipeline, ammunition dumps and white resistance groups operating or receiving aid from within the Republic. We referred to our previous explanations as well as pointing out that the two sides who joined forces to oust Ian Smith were quarelling about the spoils. Prof Van Rensburg explained that a Government of national unity had never worked in Africa and was unlikely to succeed in Zimbabwe. The Africans had no tradition of sharing or of respecting a "loyal opposition", but followed a principle of the winner taking all, which in the case of Zimbabwe meant that the Shonas would not tolerate the Ndebeles in any position of power. We added that as there was no military representative in our group, questions of this nature should be held-over - which they readily accepted.

The Americans said that they had maintained good relations with Zimbabwe since independence and that they had provided financial assistance to the tune of \$225 million under the US Aid Programme since 1980. The American public reacted very strongly to the problems in Matabeleland and great pressure was exerted on the Administration to kill-off aid, both from the left (human rights lobby) and from the right (pro-Smith and other

conservative elements). The U.S. Government was nevertheless determined to retain its aid programme and its influence on the Mugabe Government. They inquired about the possibility of dropping our guard somewhat in bilateral economic relations by for instance not insisting on ministerial approach with respect to a trade agreement. They also felt that we could be more constructive on the political level.

We replied that any political initiative emanating from South Africa could only be counterproductive, bearing in mind that Mugabe had become a front-man in the anti-South African campaign, but that we continued with very fair economic relations under the prevailing conditions. Dr Leistner then provided some background on the Zimbabwean economy, stressing the major problem of the pre-election promise of redistribution of the land. We also stressed that Zimbabwe had been viewed as becoming a dominating economic power in the region with a stabilizing influence on its neighbours. This in turn was viewed with suspicion by certain Front Line States and the Soviet Union, which had backed the wrong horse and therefore had to alter its strategy, now preferring instability in order to improve its sphere of influence. There were already some signs of the Soviets moving closer to Mugabe who, however, remained very suspicious of Russian involvement.

The Americans were asked to outline their plans with respect to the present Zimbabwean situation. They replied by saying that Mugabe would be urged to follow a conciliatory approach. They would support the British Government which had to take the lead in any action which would contribute to a political solution. They felt that Nkomo's position within his own party was being threatened by Young Turks who would possibly be more prepared to cooperate with Mugabe. We stressed that Mugabe's position was strengthened with Nkomo and other ZIPRA leaders in exile, particularly as Nkomo still had a large popular support under the Ndebeles and as the "father of African nationalism" in Zimbabwe.

We inquired about the significance of the Chinese visit which they regarded as purely a good-will visit and a long overdue showing of the flag in Africa; not much significance could be attached to it and in contrast with the Russians, China was not prepared to make any financial sacrifices for the cause. During Shultz's talks with the Chinese Foreign Minister they stuck to stock recitations, rejection of the linkage of Cuban withdrawal to the Namibian question and generally maintained a pragmatic if somewhat cagey line, keeping all their options open. We expressed the possibility of using the Chinese to counter Russian influence in Africa which they did not regard as viable. We stressed the importance of playing our cards well as the Africans were looking everywhere for assistance, and maintained that the U.S. should take the initiative in this respect. This led to an emotional response by Mr Dlouhy who accused us of hedging and trying to find others - like the U.S. and China - to solve the problems for us. This was countered very firmly by the explanation that we had gone into these discussions in order to have a frank and open exchange of views with the aim of exploring all possibilities of containing Soviet expansionism. Dan Simpson closed this chapter by wholeheartedly agreeing therewith.

BOTSWANA

Discussions on Botswana were dominated by our group as the Americans seemed somewhat thin on the ice in terms of facts. There was no major difference of opinion on Botswana. It was realized that Botswana's security depended on the broader regional situation and that the country was, therefore, extremely careful not to intimidate any of its neighbours. We did stress the inherent dangers for Botswana of the internal problems in Zimbabwe which have spilled-over to some extent. We added that there had been a noticeable shift in Soviet attention from Zambia to Botswana, which had apparently become the major listening post on the RSA and SWA. The large Russian Embassy in Gabarone was a clear indication thereof.

There were also signs of Ian Khama being interested in the Presidency, though there were some problems of a technical nature (age, paramount chief etc.). The Americans were urged to cultivate him as he was waiting for a sign from the West which he did not get because they thought him to be close to the Soviet Union. It was agreed that Botswana, due to its geographic situation, was a haven for refugees and that this fact in itself could cause problems with its neighbours. We stressed that ANC bases in Botswana would not be tolerated. We also felt that as it was a "soft spot" serious attention had to be given to countering Russian initiatives and to retain Western influence and internal stability in Botswana.

LESOTHO

There was broad agreement on the confused situation in Lesotho and that Jonathan could not risk holding a democratic election as he did not have the majority support in the country. The difficulty in making any positive contribution was also realized by both groups. The geographic factor was responsible for South Africa's dilemma:- whatever we do or do not do can be interpreted as an involvement in Lesotho's internal affairs. The Americans still regard the BCP as a Russian tool and assume that the LLA operates from within the RSA. They also mentioned the possibility of a military coup against Jonathan and that the King may return to active politics, which could have a marked effect on the internal situation. Prof Van Rensburg explained that so far Jonathan had succeeded in keeping the King from the people and stressed the manipulative capacity of Jonathan who had managed to obtain \$ 40 million for Lesotho as a result of the South African raid on the ANC base. We added that the Soviet Union also did not trust Jonathan and that the FLS were not interested in including Lesotho. We concluded by saying that South Africa maintained regular and close contact with Lesotho on a number of practical issues, as was the case with Swaziland, and that we had no interest in getting involved in the internal affairs of these countries. The position of the ANC did however pose the threat of confrontation in the future. The Americans were at a loss as to what they could do in Lesotho.

SWAZILAND

The Americans saw no outside involvement in Swaziland but merely indications of animosity and intrigue in Court circles. Dr Leistner pointed out that the dissatisfaction with the Dlamini-clan could lead to an exploitable situation. When asked about the Swaziland Socialist Organization, reportedly based in Mozambique, the Americans claimed to have no knowledge thereof. We repeated the dangers for Swaziland, and therefore also to the RSA, of Swaziland's geographic position next to Mozambique, the ANC's heartland in the region. The Americans briefly touched on the Ingwawuma question which they regarded as a goodwill gesture to the late King. We explained that a Commission of Inquiry is presently investigating this issue and left it at that.

MALAWI

Both groups agreed that Banda was still in absolute control and that the country was not only internally stable but had a certain stabilizing influence in the region. The danger of the RNM-Frelimo conflict spilling over into Malawi was ventured. The Americans regarded Malawi as a good friend of the West, the US and the RSA. They mentioned the risk of diseases spreading into Malawi from Mozambique. The question of Malawi after Banda was posed as there appeared to be no obvious successor. It was agreed to continue cultivating Malawi as a pro-Western country.

ZAMBIA

Kaunda's position was the main point of discussion. Despite the fact that all major interest groups were against him, he managed to cleverly outplay these against each other, relying heavily on an excellent intelligence service, and thereby maintaining his position of power.

No real alternative to him could be seen at this stage. We stressed that he could still play a constructive role in the region and that we had kept our options open in this respect. The economic plight of the country was discussed and the fact that Kaunda was reluctantly paying some attention to the IMF. The forthcoming visit to the US of Kaunda will be used to draw him closer into the western sphere of influence.

GENERAL COMMENT

It was clear that the Americans were mainly concerned about Zimbabwe and seemed a little desperate as to what line they should take, looking very much towards South Africa for solutions and initiatives. We managed to dispel their fears with respect to destabilizing the region and to convince them that we were interested in political stability on our borders and economic cooperation with our neighbours.

SECRET

CLOSING SESSION, 18 MARCH 1983

Dr CROCKER offered to make some final comments after the conclusion of the group discussions. He felt that certain trends and some concerns could be discussed.

There were trends towards

- bigger Soviet physical involvement in the area
- escalation of incidents
- efforts to achieve peace.

Main concerns were

- South Africa's involvement in neighbouring countries
- The Soviet Union was preparing a trap in southern Africa and South Africa should not fall into it
- There was a trap of war masterminded by the Soviet Union.

Mr VAN DALSEN concluded that there evidently existed some common ground but that South Africa was wary of short-term solutions. The details of the two days' discussions would have to be studied and it was perhaps useful to proceed with such an evaluation. (Further talks were possible that evening or on Saturday if considered necessary). The Meeting adjourned.