

TOP SECRET

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Meeting with Dr C Crocker : Jan Smuts Airport  
29 November 1985

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On the afternoon of 29 November 1985 Mr T Carney of the US Embassy informed me that Dr Crocker would be at Jan Smuts Airport for half an hour that evening. He indicated that Dr Crocker would like to brief me on his recent discussions with the MPLA in Lusaka. After receiving instructions from the Minister I left for Jan Smuts Airport with Mr J Stauch of the SWA Section. We held talks with Dr Crocker, who was accompanied by Ambassador Nickel and Mr Robert Cabelly, for approximately half an hour on the following subjects.

#### The Geneva Summit

Dr Crocker gave a short briefing on the recent Geneva summit. He mentioned that the meeting had taken place because the United States wanted it to take place. The United States had also determined the agenda and had forced Gorbachev to address questions that he did not wish to address, such as human rights and regional conflicts. The only subject that Gorbachev had wanted to discuss was the United States Strategic Defence Initiative (Star Wars). On regional conflicts discussion had centred mainly on the situations in Central America, Afghanistan and Kampuchea. According to Crocker President Reagan "threw down markers" to let Gorbachev know that the United States regarded Soviet activities in Angola and Ethiopia as illegitimate.

The main benefit of the summit had, however, been the opportunity which it had created for Reagan and Gorbachev

to get a measure of one another and to establish a new pattern of communication between the super-powers. The summit will lead to further summits in 1986 and 1987 and also to extensive bilateral contacts and meetings at other levels.

The talks with the MPLA in Lusaka

According to Dr Crocker his talks with the MPLA delegation, led by Minister Alexandre Rodrigues "Kito", had been "rough", but productive. The MPLA had apparently been "dismayed" by the losses which they had suffered during the recent offensive against Mavinga. The MPLA "felt that the walls were closing in on them". They were very worried about the prospect that the United States might assist UNITA. They had heard that South Africa had sent a letter to the US on 22 November on Cuban withdrawal but did not know what the contents were. Dr Crocker gave the impression that he had not spoken to them in any detail on points made in our letter but probably characterised it to them as being "positive" or "workable". The pressure was accordingly on the MPLA to come up with a "positive" reply as well. This could be expected after the MPLA congress in December. Dr Crocker indicated that he would be meeting with the MPLA again "soon".

When I asked him whether there had been any change in the MPLA's attitude to UNITA he said that there had not been and that it appeared that the MPLA was still committed to the war option. However, he added that he had not had a chance to speak to Kito in private. He also questioned a view which I expressed that the radicals and the militarists are now in the ascendant within the MPLA.

Dr Crocker was very concerned about unfounded reports that South Africa might release the text of its letter of 22 November 1985 - He was even worried about the fact that the existence of the letter was now generally known. I replied that we had no intention of releasing the letter but that at the same time we had no objection to its existence being known since this helped to dispel allegations that we were responsible for the delay in the negotiations.

My own view is that Dr Crocker has probably exerted pressure on the MPLA by characterising our letter as more positive than it is and by holding the threat of US aid to UNITA over the MPLA's heads if they do not respond quickly. I suspect that the MPLA will seek to delay the next round of talks, supposed to take place "soon", for as long as possible and that in the meantime Dr Crocker will use the "progress" which he made in his talks with the MPLA in Lusaka as an excuse for trying to prevent or delay any attempt to give US assistance to UNITA.

#### Southern Angola

On the instruction of the Minister I then expressed South Africa's concern over the current military build-up in Menongue and Cuito Cuanavale and the possibility that the MPLA might launch a second offensive against UNITA before the rainy season. Dr Crocker showed considerable interest in the details of the build-up which I provided him and admitted that these tallied with their own intelligence. I said that we did not yet know whether the build-up was

defensive or offensive, but were naturally very concerned about the situation. When Dr Crocker asked me how we would react I replied that on the one hand we obviously did not want to become involved in an escalating conflict with the Soviets and their surrogates; on the other we would not allow them to achieve any easy victories. Accordingly we would continue to assess the situation "very carefully". Dr Crocker repeated his view that the Soviets might be trying to test South Africa. However he did not say that South Africa should not stand up to them. Dr Crocker also expressed the opinion that the new aggressiveness manifested by the Soviets in Angola was not the result of Gorbachev's accession to power, but the natural development of a process which had commenced two years ago. He added that the MPLA would continue to support SWAPO to the hilt.

#### Zimbabwe

As instructed by the Minister I also expressed South Africa's concern over the recent landmine incidents in the northern Transvaal. Dr Crocker asked whether the elements responsible might not have infiltrated into Zimbabwe from Botswana and then crossed the Limpopo. He asked if we thought the Zimbabwean Government knew about these activities and whether they had recently complained to South Africa concerning alleged RSA support for Zimbabwean dissidents. In this regard, the Zimbabweans had accused South Africa of maintaining super-Zipra bases in the Eastern Caprivi.

Mozambique

I conveyed to Dr Crocker a message from the Minister that South Africa was continuing to do everything possible to make a success of the Nkomati Agreement. Our exposure in Mozambique was already over R100 million. Only that week we had approved a further R16 million, inter alia for uniforms and roads. Dr Crocker said that he regarded this as encouraging. The US had been concerned by recent indications from South Africa that the RSA might already have reached its limit as far as support for Mozambique was concerned.

Dr Crocker said that the Mozambicans were apparently uneasy about their channels of communication with South Africa. After the revelations in the Vaz diary they discerned some conflict within the South African Government as to how relations with Mozambique should be conducted. Machel had a very personal approach to this. He regarded Nkomati as a personal agreement between himself and President Botha and he still had confidence in President Botha. I denied that there was any conflict within the SA Government on its policy toward Mozambique, although the Mozambicans had certainly tried to cause trouble by the manner in which they had dealt with the Vaz diary. I also said that there should be no problem with channels of communication. The Mozambicans knew that anytime they wanted to have serious high-level talks with South Africa, our Minister would, as in the past, be available.

Swaziland

At the end of our discussion I informed Dr Crocker that I had a private message from the Minister which I wished to convey to him. We then withdrew from the rest of the party and I told him that I was conveying the message to him in the spirit of openness which had always characterised his relationship with the Minister. I then related to him the message which Foreign Minister Mnisi had conveyed to members of the South African Government after his recent visit to the United States, specifically his allegation that he had been "snubbed" by the US and Dr Crocker's reported remarks to him that "if he had come to see him as an agent of South Africa he was wasting his time"; that "the US had already given South Africa enough time to change and had decided to impose serious sanctions against the Republic"; and that "the United States was not concerned whether countries such as Swaziland were hurt in the process". Dr Crocker was visibly upset by Mnisi's reported remarks and said that Mnisi was a "liar" and a "snake in the grass". He said that it had simply not been possible for Shultz to meet the Foreign Minister of a small country like Swaziland during the UN's 40th anniversary celebrations. Mnisi was lucky that Crocker had been able to see him. Mnisi had pleaded for aid from the United States to help it to survive sanctions against South Africa. In this regard the West and its friends in Africa like Swaziland should present a common front against the Republic. Dr Crocker said that he explained to Mnisi that the Reagan administration had no intention of imposing further sanctions against the Republic. Later, in a speech

which he delivered, Mnisi launched a vitriolic attack against the US policy of constructive engagement and against Dr Crocker personally. He accused the US of being in the same camp as the racist South Africans. Dr Crocker said that this was clearly a ploy by Swaziland to try to get aid from the US.

General

Dr Crocker said that although he was not yet in a position to characterise our letter of 22 November 1985, the US regarded it as positive because it gave them "something to work with". The US would come back to us in due course on the detailed points which we had raised.

He said that he welcomed our "open response" to the Commonwealth initiative to send a group of eminent men to South Africa, although he did not expect much to come of this exercise.

D W STEWARD

SWA SECTION

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