International Seminar
on
The Role of Transnational Corporations in Namibia

Sheraton Washington Hotel
Washington, DC
November 29 - December 2, 1982

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December 2, 1982

Organized by the
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with the support of the
United Nations Council for Namibia
Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am first apologetic that I could not be here for the duration of the conference. In a way, it makes my task easier. I was asked to make a summary statement on what transpired here, and summary statements are much easier to make when you have heard nothing of the discussion. Many of us have made extensive remarks on books we have never read, so I must say my mind is not flooded with the details of much of the discussion. I was very pleased to hear the discussion on the Declaration, and it is heartening to see so many people here from so many countries to discuss this issue. I will confine my brief remarks to reflections on U.S. policy, as we have been close to it over the last few months.

A number of groups in the United States are now preparing a 50-page document, an analysis of the evolution of the crisis and U.S. contributions to it. I expect that as many as twenty major national organizations will endorse, coproduce, and release this report some time in January. Many of those organizations are present here today. Most of them are very well known nationally, and one hopes that this report will have some great impact. I met in July with Chester Crocker for an extended period of time, and I had never seen Chester as animated as he was in that meeting. Chester Crocker is the American Assistant Secretary of State for Africa. We talked in great detail about his command of the situation and his confidence in a breakthrough, and he assured me in ways that he had not before that the United States and the leadership of the contact group had this problem very much in hand, and that before we got to Tripoli for the OAU meeting that wasn't, that there would be something on the
African plate. Of course, Africans have always been suspicious about that because the Americans have always been optimistic weeks before OAU meetings, largely so that the Africans wouldn’t criticize the Americans harshly because they thought that something was up. But in any case, the profile was raised again, and Chester said that we were on the eve of a magnificent breakthrough, and by September we would have the problem solved, and by March of '83 a new flag would fly over Namibia, and independence would have been won.

About two weeks after I met with Chester, I was given a document from the daily American intelligence summary, a top secret document contributed to by the CIA, the Defense Intelligence Agency, and the National Security Agency. The document was dated July the 9th. It was based on reconnaissance photos taken on July the 28th in northern Namibia that showed major South African preparations for an invasion of Angola. To make the matter even clearer, the document went on to detail the discussion that took place between Pik Botha and Herman Nickel, the American Ambassador to South Africa, a discussion in which the Foreign Minister of South African told the American Ambassador that the South Africans would invade Angola massively in mid-August. So that there was no doubt in either party's mind that a massive invasion was on the way. This followed, mind you, just on the heels of Chester Crocker's optimism.

Now, one had to know at that time that if there was to be any solution of this supposed impediment to progress—the Cuban issue in Angola—the worst time for the South Africans to launch a major invasion of Angola would have been mid-August, right in the middle of Chester's successful diplomacy.
One asks the question, did the Americans first share this intelligence with the contact group, and if they did not, did the Americans try with all of the leverage that devolves from the new policy of "constructive engagement"—did the Americans lean upon the South Africans to persuade them and dissuade them from launching this attack at that time? The answer to that question is no, and the attack went ahead. And of course, the diplomacy is devastated. The diplomacy is now moribund. Better than moribund—dead. So one asks the questions—Has the United States proceeded out of total and absolute naivete about their capacities to influence the South Africans, or has the United States had all along quite another agenda? I think that America has had two irreconcilable objectives to try and achieve. One could say the first objective is to complete what they talked about at the beginning of this administration, and that is the restoration of South Africa to international respectability. In Haig's own words in earlier documents, "Our objective is to remove South Africa's international polecat status, and to restore them to their rightful place in the Western alliance, so that they can play the role that they have to play in opposition to the Soviet threat to all of the world." Because to those of you who are from the United States, we know well that it is a religious belief in the United States that the Soviet Union is responsible for everything that is wrong in the world. It cannot be doubted. Americans who cannot even define communism have an enormous fear. So that as George McGovern once said to me, if the Soviet Union came out against cancer the United States would have to support it. (laughter) For we have that myopic, enormous, sort of amorphous, fear of anything that comes out of Moscow. And so I think the
American policy is first designed to achieve the stability and respectability of South Africa as a permanent fixture in the constellation of southern African affairs. The East-West crisis is far more important to Chester Crocker, to Ronald Reagan, to Secretary Shultz, than anything that affects twenty million black South Africans and one million black Namibians. So that if it is not possible to reconcile the achievement of freedom for Namibia with the primary objective, then the secondary objective is sacrificed. And I think, clearly, that's what we have seen in this case. And so, in that regard, one can not think anything otherwise than that the diplomacy is dead. Now, one wonders how other than with some element of naivete the Americans could have thought otherwise. I asked yesterday in discussions with some American officials and some French officials that when three weeks ago the Americans approved the loan to South Africa of $1.1 billion dollars through the IMF fund, for it was an American loan, if any conditions were attached to that. If the Namibian solution is of any consequence to the United States, and if, as the facts demonstrate to us that this loan was an indirect military subsidy to South Africa, for its economic problems of course are occasioned by its destabilization program throughout the region, as well as the fall in the price of gold and diamonds, if its problems are of its own making, and we would vote for a program that would subsidize them and give them a greater capacity to make war and to repress at home, and if this nation wants a solution to the Namibia crisis and for South Africa to become more flexible, isn't it reasonable to assume that the Americans before casting the vote in the IMF whispered to the South Africans in the hallways that "If you do this, we will do that." My clear belief is that that never happened.
For three months before that meeting took place, a strange thing happened in Washington. An American author of a memorandum to Ambassador Herman Nickel then in South Africa left the memorandum in the back seat of a taxicab. The taxi driver read the memorandum, being politically astute as he was, and brought the memorandum to us. The memorandum said to Ambassador Nickel, and it was cleared through the White House and cleared through the State Department and cleared through the Commerce Department, and Ambassador Nickel read it in the Rand Daily Mail, because it never got to him because the taxicab driver took care of that. The memorandum read, "We at the State Department want you to make discreet inquiries with the South Africans about the advisability of seeking a loan at this time. This was an early August memorandum. We want to know at the same time that we will not oppose the loan. But we want you to know that if you seek the loan at this time it is possible that some of the governors will seek the ouster of South Africa from the IMF, and so with that knowledge that South Africa was going ahead, we sent the memorandum to all of the African ambassadors to the United States and to the United Nations, expecting that in Toronto in September the South Africans would pursue the loan. The Congress was in session in September, and 30 members of Congress wrote to the Secretary of the Treasury asking that the U.S. not support the loan. But because the Congress was in session, the South Africans did not seek the loan then. They waited until the Congress went out of session to seek the loan. Now, one believes that this was orchestrated between the Americans and the South Africans. Giving further demonstration of proof of American support for the loan without qualification. Now, of course this follows on the heels of the decision one month
ago to send 2500 shock batons to South Africa. Now, shock batons are not
dual-use items. One can't eat a shock baton. One can't inoculate oneself
with a shock baton. You can't sleep on it, and you can't live under it.
Shock batons are designed only to shock people and cattle, and it was clear
to the Commerce Department that the South Africans had in mind only one
use for them. And so one can see from a pattern of American behavior from
the very beginning that we have served up a full plate of carrots. The
South Africans have eaten each and every carrot and have asked for more.
We have put the stick down altogether. And one finds it difficult to
believe that this is done out of total naivete. Because we want very
much to prop up these people to achieve the principal American objective,
and that is the restoration of South Africa to a rightful place, a strong
anti-Soviet place in the configuration of political powers in that part
of the world. And so, of course, all of the things that we've heard this
morning in the declaration about American vetoes and American supports of
other kinds further indicate that this is the case. So I think the
question is: Where now from here? I had occasion to talk to French
officials yesterday. I think the African world and the Third World had
cause to be given hope by the French elections that brought to power a
socialist government. But when one raises the question with the French,
what now, the answer is nothing now. When one raises the question if
the South Africans say no to everything, and of course we know that they
always will. If there are 19 points on the table, the South Africans
will always agree to 18. They will always find the 19th point. And we
know that the Cuban issue didn't even come from the South Africans. It
came from the Americans, offered up by us. And we know that every party
to this contest save the South Africans want the Cubans out. I talked with Fidel in March in Havana. He wants the Cubans out. I've talked with Paulo Jorge and Kenneth Kaunda and all of the Africans, Theo Ben Gurirab—everybody wants the Cubans out. Who wants foreign troops on African soil? The South Africans do. And why? Because everytime the Cuban troop level goes down, the South Africans invade to quickly bring the troop level back up. They need it. They want it, and they must have it. So as the South Africans stall and stall and stall and stall until they are able to fashion something that will give them a fait accompli government in Namibia that they can pass off on the world as legitimate, what will be the response of the Western powers? Who in that contact group—what country—is prepared to support United Nations comprehensive Chapter VII Security Council sanctions? Not one. Including France. So it seems to me that it is incumbent upon us to work as hard as we can now within our own countries to raise the profile of this issue. Chester Crocker told an African Studies Association meeting two weeks ago that there was no constituency for this question in the United States save a dangerous fringe. And the question to him was: Which fringe and dangerous to whom? (laughter) But we have a lot of work to do in the United States, and I am sure that all of us from other countries know that we have a lot of work to do in those countries to raise the cost—We talk about the United States and the Western powers raising the cost of apartheid to practice to the South Africans. It seems to me that we first domestically have to raise the cost of apartheid to support by the Americans. We're quite a ways from doing that. But that is the struggle in our own country that
has to be made in the cities and towns across the nation. Many of you who have been here for some time have read in the Washington Post recently all of those ads, "The Changing Face of South Africa." I don't know if these ads are being run in papers across the world or not, but the South Africans are spending enormous sums of money to buy respectability. We cannot let these things quietly pass. And so it seems to me if we are going to be effective we have to take our struggle out of the conference room into the churches, into the labor unions, into the town meetings, to get everybody involved in these problems—to let Chester Crocker know that there is more than a fringe in this country appalled by the policies that this country is supporting vis-a-vis South Africa. Only in that way, coupled with the work of SWAPO, and I am so pleased that SWAPO was never fooled, that SWAPO has always known that there was much fighting left to be done, and it seems to me that we can help to limit the amount of fighting that they will have to do, if we can help to scale down the support that the Western powers have given to South Africa through our tireless political organizing and activities across the Western world. Thank you.