

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS:

Balthazar Johannes Vorster, Prime Minister,
 Republic of South Africa
 Dr. Hilgard Muller, Minister of Foreign Affairs
 Amb. Bernadus Gerhardus Fourie, Secretary
 of the Department of Foreign Affairs
 Amb. Roelof Frederik Botha, Ambassador to the
 U. S. and Permanent Representative to the UN
 General Hendrik Johannes Van den Bergh,
 Director, Bureau for State Security; Security
 Adviser to the Prime Minister
 Amb. Donald Sole, Ambassador to FRG

Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, Secretary of State
 Winston Lord, Director, Policy Planning Staff
 William E. Schaufele, Jr., Assistant Secretary
 of State for African Affairs
 Amb. William Bowdler, Ambassador to South Africa,
 Robert Funseth, Special Assistant to Secretary
 for Press Relations and Spokesman of the Department
 Peter W. Rodman, NSC Staff Member **DWR**

DATE AND TIME:

Wednesday, June 23, 1976
7:10 - 9:05 p.m. (Dinner)

PLACE:

Hotel Bodenmais,
Bodenmais,
FRG

[The Prime Minister and Secretary conferred alone from approximately 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. The principals then joined their delegations for cocktails. At about 7:10 the dinner began. The Prime Minister began the meal by saying grace. The conversation then began.]

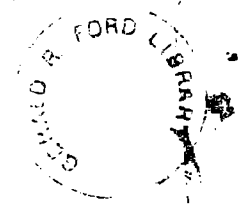
Kissinger: I asked the Prime Minister whether he could give us his assessment of the Rhodesian situation -- the military situation and the prospects. We will give you our assessment but you, being closer, I'm sure study it more closely.

DECLASSIFIED

E.O. 12958, SEC. 3.5

NSC MEMO, 11/24/98, STATE DEPT. GUIDELINES, State Review 3/15/04
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CLASSIFIED BY Henry A. Kissinger
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I can say I learned from the Prime Minister that there is a tribe in that is called Bastards.

Schaufele: We can give you new recruits!

Vorster: I said this to Waldheim and he nearly went through the roof. They call themselves Bastards and are insulted if you don't say, "Hello, Bastard." [Laughter]

Van den Bergh: It is literally true.

Kissinger: Do any speak German there?

Van den Bergh: Some older ones do.

Kissinger: What is the situation in Rhodesia?

Vorster: The situation in Rhodesia, Mr. Secretary, is, in a nutshell: Some people are inclined to think it's a fight between whites and blacks. But it's a fight between certain blacks and a group of whites and blacks. Two-thirds of the Rhodesian Army are blacks; volunteers, not conscripted. They're good fighters, as good as the others.

Kissinger: By "as good as the others" do you mean as good as the whites? Or as the other blacks?

Vorster: The other blacks. If the Cubans and Soviets stay out, the fight between 15,000 on the Rhodesian side and a few thousand terrorists can go on for 15 years.

Van den Bergh: Right. It could be forever and ever.

Kissinger: At what point -- since this is a psychological problem -- will the whites move out of the outlying farms into the cities, because their homes are insecure?

Vorster: Some will do it. But the morale of the people is very high. It's do or die for them. This is all they have.

Kissinger: But this doesn't preclude its becoming untenable. It happened in Angola.

Vorster: Don't equate the Portuguese settler with the Rhodesian farmer. That is a different kettle of fish.

Kissinger: Our estimate is they have 11,500 -- in training.

Schaufele: We estimate 3,500 already trained.

Vorster: But they're not even as well-trained as those who came in five years ago.

Kissinger: But in the history of guerrilla wars, the government always begins by trying to recruit the local population to fight the guerrillas.

Vorster: Here they hurt themselves by killing and maiming black women and children. The number of whites killed is very small. But hundreds of blacks have been killed and maimed.

Van den Bergh: And kidnapped.

Kissinger: But leaving aside the moral question, the example of Algeria -- where they were there longer -- guerrillas started by attacking the local population. At first they're outraged, then they're intimidated. The Government has to intensify measures. If they make reprisals, they lose their international position; if they don't, they lose the war.

So, with all respect, it seems to me to be the first phase of the war. At some point they reach a phase where, according to Mao, they swim in the sea of the population.

Vorster: But it's not at that phase. They can liquidate the terrorists, and they're doing quite well.

And the populace in Mozambique comes over to us for food. If they don't get it from us, they're starving.

Muller: They buy corn.

Vorster: Wheat and corn.

[Botha and Funseth arrive after giving a press briefing. See Tab A.]

Kissinger: Will the casualties begin to increase?

Vorster: They have increased already, on both sides, but more so on the terrorist side than on the Rhodesian side. We'll give you the figures.

Kissinger: But our estimate is that the ratio is declining. About three to one.

Van den Bergh: That is so.

Vorster: That's the civilian population; not just fighting men.

Schaufele: But they're aiming at the populace.

Van den Bergh: Most of the casualties are from the mines. They killed four black kids yesterday.

Kissinger: But I'm trying to be analytical. At what point will the settlers begin to abandon the outlying districts?

Vorster: The point has not yet been reached. But I'd mislead you if I said it wouldn't be.

Muller: But you have to realize the determination of the settlers.

Kissinger: But I'm just trying to understand. Don't you think at some point the people will start to leave?

Vorster: They're leaving now, and in increasing numbers. But they're not the people who count. They're the hangers-on. The Portuguese fought office hours -- 9 to 5. Not these.

Van den Bergh: There are no boats in the harbors.

Vorster: The Portuguese had boats in the harbors. Ready to go. These people aren't looking over their shoulders.

Lord: Are there blacks fighting with the whites?

Vorster: There are, and they're well-trained. The black man is no fool. He knows Machel promised a paradise and now it's going to hell. He says: "We've got jobs, so if that's the kind of paradise they have, we'll stay here."

Lord: Do you think Smith's strategy will be to give concessions?

Vorster: He has gotten jobs for them and made concessions. He created a commission to combat discrimination and accepted all the recommendations that count. He appointed seven black Ministers. That makes a difference.

Kissinger: Do they (the blacks) really know what's going on in Mozambique?

Vorster: There is a story about Mozambique -- there are no telegraph lines. A man shot a lion, and ten minutes later it was known fifty miles away.

Kissinger: How?

Botha: By bush telegraph.

Vorster: That's Africa.

Van den Bergh: It's the same tribe living on both sides of the border. One brother might be in Rhodesia and the other in Mozambique.

Vorster: I grew up on a farm. I spoke Xhosa before I spoke Afrikaans. They know exactly what goes on in Mozambique -- or Tanzania -- or Ethiopia. That's Africa.

Kissinger: Let's go back to Rhodesia. We get extremely different opinions. Some say the situation will begin to unravel by this time next year.

Vorster: Next year?

Kissinger: The cities won't be insecure, but the roads will be unsafe at night, etc. Some say two years. But all say it will happen at some point.

Vorster: We can't disprove that. We can't say it will happen, and we can't say it won't. Unless there is outside intervention I'll go along with you to some extent. I'll agree it's going to happen in X years, but I can't say two years.

Kissinger: By outside intervention do you mean officers, or actual troops?

Van den Bergh: Actual troops.

Kissinger: Why won't white officers make a difference?

Vorster: Because they'll be new and they will have a communications gap. And they won't know the psychology of the troops they're commanding. That makes a difference in Africa.

Van den Bergh: The blacks in Rhodesia know their white masters; they grew up with them on farms. They fought together as kids.

Kissinger: That was true in Algeria, too.

Schaufele: And Kenya.

Vorster: But the whites didn't fight in Kenya.

Schaufele: If the blacks can't fight, won't this encourage outside intervention?

Vorster: That is the million dollar question. Kaunda, for one, will be very wary of it because he's genuinely as afraid of Russian communists as you and I are.

Kissinger: But he may be equally afraid of not letting them in.

Vorster: I can tell you a story. I won't mention names, but it was a Southern African President. He said he didn't fear the Chinese but he did fear the Russians. I said my mother said "if you sup with the Devil, use a long spoon, and they're both devils." He said, "You're wrong. If you make a deal with the Chinese to build a machine, they'll come on the appointed day and ask our experts to come and they'll train our people. So if anything goes wrong with the machine, our people can handle it. That's the Chinese. The Russians will arrive on the appointed day and ask our people to clear off. They don't teach us a thing. They say that if we need help we should call them. And once they aid you they enslave you."

Kissinger: It just shows the Chinese are shrewder.

Botha: Yes.

Vorster: But the Chinese aren't a factor. It doesn't mean they won't be a factor in future.

Muller: Will they stay out of Rhodesia as they did in Angola?

Kissinger: I'm not sure. One could make a case for the proposition that having been humiliated indirectly in Angola, they might become more active in Rhodesia -- to ensure that what happens in Rhodesia doesn't happen under Russian tutelage.

Vorster: Not yet. There is no evidence at the moment. That doesn't mean it won't happen in future.

Muller: Isn't it clear that they (the Chinese) want to remain on good terms with the U.S.?

Kissinger: They do; in fact they were ready to help in Angola if we could have kept up a front.

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Muller: If they intervened, wouldn't it interfere with good relations with the U. S. ?

Kissinger: With advisers -- I'll be honest -- I'm not sure it would interfere with good relations. Troops, yes.

Vorster: The Russians might say to the terrorists: "If you get involved with the Chinese, count us out."

Kissinger: Really?

Van den Bergh: The Chinese have no say in Rhodesia now.

Vorster: I think the Russians laid down the law. All their weapons are Russian.

Van den Bergh: Except the Chinese train terrorists in Tanzania. You shouldn't get the impression we think white Rhodesia will find it easy.

Vorster: No, I made that point to the Secretary in our talk. And it will get harder for them.

Van den Bergh: And it depends on whether Botswana needs the railway line.

Schaufele: I thought Botswana allowed the terrorists to leave Rhodesia through Botswana.

Vorster: That they allow. They look the otherway.

Muller: They don't have the police force to control it.

Schaufele: Will you help them?

Vorster: We help Botswana, Swaziland, Lesotho. It's really a closer union than the European Common Market.

Fourie: There is an understanding that if the line is interrupted -- it's a Rhodesian line -- we will help them.

Kissinger: "Help" means?

Fourie: It means if the line is cut in Botswana without cooperation with Botswana and they have no communications, South Africa will help. But if that situation is brought about only without Botswana's cooperation. The line is operated through Botswana to the Republic and Botswana can't operate it itself.

Fourie: And it was the Prime Minister who first introduced Nkomo and Sithole.

Vorster: Nkomo, Sithole, Muzorewa, and _____ were there. Nkomo stood out. If you went in there not knowing who was the leader, you would have picked out Nkomo. If I had to ride the river with one of them, I'd pick Nkomo.

Muller: And the Rhodesians do too.

Kissinger: But how long will he be in the game? It's between him and the men with the guns.

Vorster: That's right. Even if there is an agreement tomorrow with Nkomo, the men with the guns wouldn't recognize him as their leader.

Kissinger: But it would be an entirely different situation internationally. If there is a legitimate government in Salisbury, if Nkomo was in office under international guarantees, and then terrorism started. . .

Vorster: Of course.

Kissinger: I've said publicly -- so it's no secret -- that if the Cubans and the Soviets did something, we would act. But with fifty percent of our combat troops being black because of our All-Volunteer Army -- and we could do it against Cuba because of Western Hemisphere grounds. But if Vietnam came in, or the North Koreans . . . Ironically, the easiest one for us to tackle is Cuba. But if there were a legitimate government, and then the terrorists started, we could do something.

Muller: They won't have support in the world.

Kissinger: We'd be in a much better position. We'd give arms to Nkomo.

Muller: The Rhodesian Party is the equivalent of our Progressive party, which we're fighting.

Schaufele: But Smith is ruining Nkomo.

Vorster: It's only a question of Standard 6 or Standard 7 or Standard 8. It's not one-man-one-vote -- which would mean dictatorship.

Kissinger: Standard 7 means? Education?

Vorster: Standard 7 is primary plus one. Standard 8 is primary plus 2.

Fourie: It's 160,000 including 80,000 Britons.

Kissinger: But if it's like Mozambique and it's a big force, no guarantees will work.

Vorster: That's right.

Van den Bergh: And you'll have a Marxist government in Rhodesia.

Vorster: And the entire country will be a shambles, and the beautiful cities, Salisbury and Bulowayo, will be in rack and ruin.

Muller: But if there is a solution where the whites don't feel threatened, if they could be encouraged to stay behind regardless of the color of the government, then it could be a great asset to the West, because Communism could be held back.

Kissinger: I'm a newcomer to Africa. But my understanding is, if there is finite time -- maybe a year -- when one can settle with men like Nkomo, then afterwards one has to settle with the guerrilla high command. Then it's an unwinnable situation, no matter how long it takes, whether five or ten years.

Vorster: Maybe not. Unless the Russians and Chinese intervene.

Kissinger: Given the evolution of world politics . . .

Muller: But the whites will leave.

Kissinger: But there is no domestic situation in which we could support Smith. We could even support Nkomo.

Vorster: Nkomo enforced by specific guarantees can save the situation.

Kissinger: For us, we can support Nkomo, but we can't support Smith. This is the reality, whatever any American tells you.

Vorster: Nkomo, bolstered up with sufficient guarantees, can save the present situation.

Muller: But we should consider an anesthetic.

Schaufele: Can I ask a very blunt question, Mr. Prime Minister?

Vorster: Yes.

Schaufele: Can any deal be made with Smith?

Vorster: If it can be a reasonable deal that I can sell to my people, I can sell it to him, or if not, to the leaders. I'll sell it to David Smith, the second in command.

Kissinger: If you can sell it to your people . . .

Muller: We can sell it across the border.

Kissinger: And your definition of reasonable is something that gives reasonable incentives for the whites to stay and plausible assurance of compensation if they leave.

Vorster: If there is no mass exodus. We've had a mass exodus from Mozambique and from Angola; God knows we don't want another.

Muller: For many reasons.

Vorster: Plausible assurance of life and property.

Kissinger: That's something we will think about.

Vorster: There has to be assurance it will stick.

Kissinger: A government by Nkomo, or someone like him.

Vorster: Guaranteed by outside powers.

Kissinger: In what way?

Vorster: Financial and otherwise.

Kissinger: Financial we can do, but we can't guarantee Nkomo against an overthrow.

Vorster: No, that is not realistic.

Muller: Do you want to bring the British in?

Kissinger: Yes, definitely. We don't want to do it alone.

Muller: And the Europeans, who are very keen. And some Africans -- the Zambians and others.

Kissinger: We want that. But the only way we can sell it to the Africans is if we can say: If all these conditions are met, on a date certain something will happen. If we could go to the four Presidents within a measurable time and say: by February 1, Nkomo will be President -- or March 1.

Vorster: There must be a transition period.

Kissinger: Or conceivably -- I'm thinking out loud -- a transitional period with the British coming back.

Vorster: Amen.

Kissinger: In which Nkomo could come in.

Vorster: But not a black Parliament.

Kissinger: I think we can then sell it to the Africans.

Vorster: And then you can look to me.

I don't want to stick my neck out -- but you can look to me because it's my responsibility to sell it to my subcontinent.

Kissinger: Then my only responsibility is to keep my people quiet.

Botha: Absolutely.

Vorster: It would be dynamite.

Kissinger: You talk about a bush telegraph! [Laughter]