

ARTHUR I. WASKOW

Operation Zulu

The following documents are part of an historical case study of decision-making in the initiation of covert action in foreign policy. I have undertaken a full analysis of Operation Zulu (to be published by Praeger in 1977), but I am glad here to offer fellow scholars and the public some early fruits of my research. It can be disclosed that these documents were retrieved by US intelligence in late 1962 before they reached the Soviet Government. Soviet Operative K-19, into whose hands they had fallen, was eliminated at once. The retrieval prevented Operation Zulu from being totally compromised, and permitted it to proceed to a successful conclusion in July, 1970. Operation Zulu itself is by now well-known, but only the recent declassification of official papers has opened its origin to scholarly scrutiny. The documents have been edited, with the assistance of the staff of the National Archives, to remove repetitive comments—AIW.

DOCUMENT 1

Covering memorandum from Operative K-19 to the Committee of State Security, USSR, Dec, 23, 1962:

The documents reproduced below appear to represent as dangerous a threat to the forces of socialism as my report (OX-4397-B) in 1947 on Riesman plans for "The Nylon War." Please note the present program is far more advanced, having been accepted by the ruling circles of the United States. My information is that Stage 1 of Operation Zulu will be put into effect on January 1, 1963. My informant is a high official of the Department of State, a Southern *rentier* who says he will use any means available to prevent the success of Zulu. I recommend keeping in close touch with him as our own strategy develops.

DOCUMENT 2

From: Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs

To: Chairman, Policy Planning Council, Department of State

Classification: TOP SECRET

The success of our recent operation in Cuba suggests that this government would now be administratively capable of taking the initiative elsewhere *vis-à-vis* the Bloc, and that such initiatives would be both militarily and politically useful in exploiting the new situation which has arisen. Please advise whether present contingency planning can suggest suitable specific opportunities along these lines.

ARTHUR I. WASKOW is the author of *The Limits of Defense, and co-author of the forthcoming America in Hiding, a history of the 1961 "shelter mania" in the United States. "Operation Zulu" appears here by arrangement with The New Republic, Washington, D.C., U.S.A.*

DOCUMENT 3

*From: Policy Planning Council, Department of State
To: Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs*

*Copies to: Secretary of State; Secretary of Defense;
Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff; Chief of Staff, Army*

Classification: TOP SECRET

A major opportunity for seizing the initiative is latent in current preparation of a sizable counter-insurgency capability in the Special Forces of the United States Army. Such a capability has heretofore been regarded as useful only in a reactive sense, as a means of resisting Bloc support for so-called "wars of national liberation" (e.g., Vietnam), in states friendly to the United States. But it is possible to consider this growing capability as a preemptive tool to advance the national security of the United States by initiating action to organize or channel popular disaffection in Bloc countries into effective resistance.

DOCUMENT 4

From: The President

To: The Attorney-General

Classification: TOP SECRET (Handwritten)

Take a look at this memo. It seems to say we should use our training techniques in counter-guerrilla methods, and also the trained cadres, for guerrilla action against Communist governments. How does that hit you?—Jack.

DOCUMENT 5

From: The Attorney-General

To: The President

Classification: TOP SECRET (Handwritten)

Let's get George, Bob, Mac, Walt and Max over to talk about it—RFK.

DOCUMENT 6

Memorandum of Conversation: *The President, the Under-Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, the Attorney-General, the Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Chairman of the Policy Planning Council, Department of State.*

Classification: TOP SECRET

The question was raised of possible use of US Special Forces as a cadre for instigating guerrilla action against certain Communist governments. It was objected

1. that there is too little known of probable Soviet reactions to such action, Hungary being instanced as a possible and disastrous model of the Soviet response;

2. that the case of the Cuban invasion of 1961 indicates that the United States has too little experience in carrying through guerrilla revolutions, and that the Vietnam experience is inconclusive to date.

It was further suggested that a less risky alternative would be to "experiment" in overthrowing an oppressive government which the Soviets would not or could not protect against popular revolt. It was also argued that such an "experiment" would give needed additional familiarity with guerrilla-type operations by Special Forces.

After considerable examination of various possibilities, it was proposed that the United States help overthrow the government of the Republic of South Africa. It was argued that South Africa is nearly friendless in the world, that no negative interposition by the United Nations is probable, that the Soviet Union would not unleash general war on South Africa's behalf or attempt to protect her government directly, that American opinion is largely antagonistic to South Africa, that the possibility of using Negroes as cadres would assure a sufficient supply of suitable recruits, and that aid to overthrow the South African Government would improve the United States image in Africa, Asia and Latin America. This proposal met with general interest, although the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff noted the importance to the US of fueling privileges in Cape Town.

The President requested that the Attorney-General and the Chairman of the Policy Planning Council, Department of State, jointly explore this possibility and report to the Committee of Principals of the National Security Council.

DOCUMENT 7

Preliminary Report From: *Policy Planning Council, Department of State.*

To: *Committee of Principals, National Security Council*

Endorsed by: *The Attorney General*

Classification: TOP SECRET

We propose that the United States, in a three-stage operation beginning January 1, 1963, commit itself to the overthrow of the present government of the Republic of South Africa and its replacement by a popularly

elected, non-Communist government. We propose that to fulfill this commitment the United States make available to the people of South Africa a guerrilla force made up of highly-trained American Negroes, under the command of the Special Forces, United States Army. We further propose that this operation be known as Operation Zulu, and that a target date of July 4, 1970, be established for its conclusion.

Proposed details of Stage I of Operation Zulu are outlined below. Planning of Stages II and III is proceeding and will follow shortly.

Stage I—January 1, 1963, to December 31, 1963

Secret enlistment would be undertaken of a volunteer group of American Negro males, both civilians and members of the Armed Forces, between the ages of 18 and 35. They would be trained in techniques of infiltration, propaganda, violent and non-violent revolutionary resistance to establish government, reconstruction of the social, economic and political order in territory liberated, and other means of effective guerrilla action. They would also be instructed in African languages and customs.

This force would be trained in the State of Mississippi (secretly until July 4, 1963; openly afterward). Cadres would be made up of existing Army Special Forces units now trained in counter-insurgency, and of racial activists with experience in American sit-ins, freedom rides, race riots, bus boycotts. Membership lists of the Congress of Racial Equality, the Black Muslim sect, the Student Non-violent Co-ordinating Committee and the Southern Christian Leadership Council should provide a useful initial source for recruiting appropriate personnel.

DOCUMENT 8

From: *Central Intelligence Agency*

To: *Committee of Principals, National Security Council*

Classification: TOP SECRET

This Agency (1) requests permission to present evidence indicating the effectuation of the proposed Operation Zulu lies within the purview of its competence (2) requests permission to nominate one member of an Ad Hoc Inter-Agency Committee on plan development for said Operation.

DOCUMENT 9

Draft Memorandum for Circulation and Approval From: Committee of Principals, National Security Council

To: *The President*

Classification: TOP SECRET

It is proposed that an Ad Hoc Inter-Agency Committee to plan and administer Operation Zulu be appointed, to consist of: Chester Bowles, Special Assistant to the President for Asian, African and Latin American Affairs, Chairman; Chief of Staff, Army; Assistant Attorney-General for Civil Rights.

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DOCUMENT 10

From: *Secretary of Defense*
To: *The President (Handwritten)*

There seem to be some objections over here to Bowles as head of the Zulu project. In the interest of harmony what about Director of Intelligence from State?

DOCUMENT 11

To: *Secretary of Defense*
From: *The President*
Classification: TOP SECRET (*Handwritten*)

Hilsman has his hands full with Vietnam. Anyway, if this gets away from the White House staff, CIA, State and you people will all want it and we'll never get started. Bowles seems to me to give the program the right tone, especially overseas. I'll add Hilsman to the committee along with Klein from CIA.

DOCUMENT 12

From: *Special Assistant to the President for Asian, African and Latin American Affairs*
To: *Chief of Staff, Army; Assistant Attorney-General for Civil Rights; Director, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Department of State; Deputy Director, CIA*
Classification: TOP SECRET

20 FEBRUARY

The late Dunduzu K. Chisiza

We of Africa

extracts from a historic speech



Patrick van Rensburg

LIBERALS in the REVOLUTION

THE NEW AFRICAN 16 JANUARY 1963

The enclosed memorandum from the acting Director of Research, Project Zulu, is submitted for comment by the Inter-Agency Committee and staff.

Enclosure:

To: *Special Assistant to the President for African, Asian and Latin American Affairs*
From: *Acting Director of Research, Project Zulu*

The exclusion of Negroes from "in-group" citizenship in American society, and especially the handicaps which bar Negro youth from masculine maturation into responsible participant roles, have produced deep and widespread feelings of alienation. Operation Zulu affords a grass-roots opportunity to offer young male American Negroes psycho-social solidarity with the Nation, the Society as such. Operation Zulu could work to ameliorate Negro self-hate, to provide a new role through which the Negro could resolve his identity problems, and to restore the essential relatedness of American Negro to American white, if the Operation builds upon the Negro Experience. Zulu could teach American society to value its African heritage as much as its European one.

Nevertheless, recent developmental trends in South Africa indicate that it shares many of the salient characteristics of such post take-off societies as our own South, and that there may be reason to question the relative effectiveness of violent resistance in mobilizing the already somewhat bourgeois aspirations of the South African Negro. If possible, it would be desirable to have a variety of controlled experiments during Stage I of Zulu before guerrillas initiate destabilization activities in South Africa itself. Would such experiments be feasible at our present training centre in Mississippi? If experimental efforts at overthrowing the Barnett regime were to prove the superiority of non-violent efforts, much investment of money and prestige might be avoided at a later date, with no deleterious effect on US posture.

DOCUMENT 13

From: *Special Assistant to the President for Asian, African and Latin American Affairs*
To: *The President*

In accordance with your instructions via telephone, my "lyrical" staff assistant has been transferred to the Office of Education.

DOCUMENT 14

Supplementary Report From: *Ad Hoc Inter-Agency Committee on Operation Zulu*
To: *Committee of Principals, NSC*

The following additional plans are proposed for Stages II and III of Operation Zulu:

Stage II—July 4, 1963 to July 4, 1965.

On July 4, 1963, the President of the United States should address a joint session of Congress, announcing the intention of the United States to bring about an

AFRICANA

Send contributions to *Africana*, P.O. Box 2068, Cape Town. One Prize of R1 will be awarded for the best item each month, and two additional prizes of 50c each.

- The name Verwoerdburg has been suggested tentatively for Sophiatown, in recognition of the part played by Dr. Verwoerd in the clearing of this unsightly slum area and the creation of neat Bantu residential complexes around Johannesburg and also indirectly in the establishment of a Coloured residential complex—*Department of Information Weekly Country News Service*. [P.H.]
- “I know all the African leaders personally. I have always tried to understand their souls. I think I have succeeded. They cannot be regarded as criminals. They are merely people dedicated to a cause with which I do not agree. They have always treated me with great respect.”—Col. A. T. Spengler in the *Cape Argus*. [R.N.]
- Mr. A. B. Crawford, the Tristan da Cunha welfare officer, said last night he had heard nothing about a reported raid by Russian helicopters on the island. He was commenting on a report published in the London *Sunday Telegraph* that the Russian helicopters had raided the island and had taken off sheep and fowls for a Russian whaling ship . . . Mr. Crawford said he doubted whether there were any sheep or fowls left on the island. If the Russians obtained meat on the island, it probably came from the inhabitants. *Rand Daily Mail*.
- S.A. TEACHER FOUND U.S.A. UNINFORMED—*Cape Times* headline.
AMERIKANERS GOED INGELIG OOR SA.. VIND MNR. GOLDING—*Die Burger* headline, same day.
- RENE LACEY SCHOOL
Piano
Charm
Drama
Speech
Make-up
Modelling
Languages
Personality
Department
Social Graces
Practice Studios
Modern Methods
Classical or Jazz Music
Adults, beginners and children
All musical instruments taught
London, Paris
Professional Beauty
guns, rifles and air guns, up to 25% cash.
—*Rand Daily Mail*.

end to oppressive government in South Africa and asking for a “pre-dated” declaration of war (in the style of the Formosa, Middle East and Cuba Resolutions approved by Congress) to be put into operation by the President as conditions warrant. The President would simultaneously announce withdrawal of recognition from the present South African Government, and suspension of trade.

The President would specifically refer to Soviet anti-colonial propaganda and compare this with the vigorous American action. He would challenge the Soviet Union to an “anti-colonial race.”

The President would set July 4, 1970, as a target date for establishment of a democratic South African Government.

During the two years from July, 1963, to July, 1965, the United States would combine continuous diplomatic, political, propaganda and economic pressures against the South African Government with the smuggling of American Negro guerrillas into the country. The initial effort should be made to liberate and secure one of the reservation areas as a base for infiltration into the rest of South Africa.

Stage III—July 4, 1965, to July 4, 1970.

On July 4, 1965 the United States should recognize a government of “Free South Africa,” based on the liberated area and run by “safe” (*i.e.*, non-Communist) indigenous leaders who command the confidence of large numbers of Africans. After that, the revolution should be pressed with as little outside direction and as much African control as possible, so long as progress appears satisfactory.

DOCUMENT 15

From: *The Attorney-General*
To: *The President* (EYES ONLY)

I thought I'd add a note for you alone. It might seem at first glance that Zulu would ruin us on the Hill, but I think we can turn this Operation to advantage.

I suggest selected Southerners be acquainted with Zulu enough ahead of time to show them that every civil rights group in the country will be tied up first in training and then in supporting the guerrillas.

Attention would be redirected from Alabama, etc., to the revolution in South Africa. If Southerners understand in advance, they should welcome Zulu. Also, a lot of other people on the Hill would be just as glad to let civil rights simmer on a back burner for a few years—RFK.

[At this point the documents collected by Operative K-19 come to an end. As a matter of conjecture it might be assumed that K-19's apprehension was linked with the disappearance of the late Harrison Willis, former Secretary to the Policy Planning Council of the State Department. This hypothesis will be fully discussed in my forthcoming monograph—AIW]. ●