

DISCUSSIONS AT RUACANA ON 8 JUNE 1976

Present:

Mr B.G. Fourie
Mr P.R. Killen
Major-General C.L. Viljoen
Mr J.P. Brand of Swarek
Mr C. Truebody - Director of Water
Affairs, Windhoek
Major Ferreira (interpreter)

Commander Alexandre Rodrigues Kito -
Ministry of Defence
Commander Enrico - General Staff of FAPLA
Commander Ivadi - Chief of Staff of
southern front
Ismael Martins - Secretary for Foreign
Affairs at the Presidency

Mr Fourie said that we had asked for the meeting basically in order to see in what practical ways we could be able to build up a better understanding between the two countries and to see what steps could be taken to avoid incidents. Incidents made things difficult and made it look as if the countries were working against each other which was the last thing we want to do from our side. South Africa recognised and appreciated the authority of the Angola Government. We recognised that all the works in the Cunene scheme on the Angolan side of the border became the property of the People's Republic of Angola. These works were in the interest of the development of Angola as well as being in the interest of Owambo. It is our hope by completing them in as short a time as possible that we would demonstrate our wish for peaceful co-existence between Angola and South West Africa.

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Channels of Communication

To promote this objective Mr Fourie proposed that there should be contact at three different levels:

1. Regarding the construction works which fell under the Department of Water Affairs there was already reasonable contact, but there were some other matters that needed attention and he would mention one. The contractors required more sand and they needed permission to get this sand from Angola. However, the Department of Water Affairs did not know where they could seek this permission.
2. In a more sensitive area and to avoid incidents we needed to know who was in command locally with whom our own local military commander could get in touch. There had been incidents, for instance the overflying of Angola at Ruacana by a South West Airlines pilot. The matter had been investigated, the pilot had been found at fault and had been dismissed. There were also two cases of overflying which Angola had brought to notice which we were still investigating. If they had in fact happened, we presume that they would also have been unauthorised. But there were also problems from their side of the border. There had been incursions, not necessarily by to go Angolan forces, but maybe by units of SWAPO or even Unita. It was therefore important to

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have contact at local commander level. In an effort to reduce the possibility of incidents we had started on a programme of clearing a strip one thousand meters wide on our side of the border of all inhabitants. This would become a prohibited zone.

Mr Martins enquired whether the measures regarding the clearing of the strip of one thousand meters could be regarded as a first attempt to meet the Angolan proposals made at the last meeting.

Mr Fourie said that this was partly so. They were also the result of our own wish to avoid friction.

3. For pressing matters falling outside the foregoing two categories Mr Fourie said that we needed to have contact by telex direct to Mr Martins on a personal basis so that if any problems arose we could tackle them straight away.

Refugees

South Africa had another difficult and practical problem, viz. the large number of refugees from Angola who were camped near Rundu. Mr Fourie said that we would like to resolve this problem but the people were hesitant about returning to Angola. Would it be feasible for some representatives of the Angolan authorities to go and talk to them to clarify the position in Angola as they did not

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understand the present situation. There were 245 people who had elected to leave for Portugal and this group was not under discussion now. There are 123 who said they were Angolans and seemed to be willing to go back to Angola. If any of them were to leave for Angola we would tell the Angolan authorities. There are also 675 people who were Angolans but seemed to be undecided what to do. It was this group that needed reassurance.

Referring to the question of refugees, Commander Kito said that it was Angola's intention to establish a mixed committee under the United Nations to effect the evacuation of the refugees. Regarding prisoners, he wished to enquire how many Angolan prisoners we had and their names.

General Viljoen replied that we held only three Cuban prisoners who had had to receive medical treatment in hospital. We held no Angolan prisoners. He then gave Commander Kito the names of the three Cuban prisoners.

Commander Kito asked whether we were satisfied about their proposal to bring the High Commissioner for Refugees into the question of Angolan refugees with the participation of a mixed committee. Mr Fourie replied that we could accept that.

Mr Fourie asked whether Angola would take up the question of the refugees with the UN Secretary-General or should South Africa do it, or perhaps both countries together.

Commander Kito said that they preferred that Angola should raise the matter.

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Mr Fourie said that South Africa would then do nothing until we heard from Angola but he emphasised that action should be taken soon as the refugees were a problem.

Prisoners of War

There was another important matter which was causing high emotions and feelings in South Africa, viz. the seven young South African soldiers who were held by Angola. These very young men were well known throughout the world as a result of Angola's propaganda about them. South Africa asked Angola very earnestly if it could consider returning them to their homeland.

Points of Entry

Arising out of one of the matters raised at the last meeting on 26 April, Mr Fourie wished to inform the Angolans that there were three points of entry from Angola, viz. at Oshikango, Rundu and Nakurukuru. These positions were manned by police. The army had tried to reduce causes of tension by taking heavy armaments away from the border area but they could not take everything away because of the incursions that came from the Angolan side.

Demilitarised Zone

Mr Martins enquired what were our views on their proposal for a fifty kilometer demilitarised

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zone.

Mr Fourie said that while incursions from Angola continued we could not leave the border unprotected, but if by understanding and co-operation we can reach that position where protection at the border would not be necessary, then we would be glad to talk further.

Commander Kito explained that at the last meeting when they had first raised the question of the fifty kilometer demilitarised zone on either side of the border, what they had meant to say was that there should be no more military concentrations or installations within that area. They did not mean that there should be no patrols. The security of a border must be ensured at the border. Important concentrations tended to increase tension and that was the reason for their proposal.

Mr Fourie said that in principle, on a reciprocal basis, South Africa would not be against such a proposal, but it had to be worked out and discussed in a practical way.

Commander Kito explained that important installations in their view included tanks, battalion-strength groups, bases and fortifications along the border.

Mr Fourie said that we had one town, Oshikati, 45 kilometers from the border which is the administrative capital of Owambo and where troops were stationed, though not necessarily in battalion strength.

Commander/...

Commander Kito said that whether the distance was 45 or 50 kilometers was not important. What the Angolans would like is an agreement to abide by a demilitarised zone and that big military installations should be behind that.

Mr Fourie expressed the view that the South African Government could possibly agree to such an arrangement but it would be first necessary to get people from their side and people from our side to talk about the practical implementation.

Commander Kito said that once agreement had been reached they would only have police at the crossing points.

Mr Fourie said that this was already our position.

Commander Kito said that the conclusion of such a military agreement was the basis for any other agreement. Angola had already given permission for the Cunene work to continue. They had said last time that it would depend on good relations in the border area. A military agreement would contribute to this. Once agreement had been reached on a demilitarised zone, we could have mixed committees on a military level to check whether the agreement was being adhered to.

Mr Fourie agreed that this would be a good idea.

Compensation for War Damage

Mr Fourie expressed the hope that the groups operating from Angola on our side of the border were

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doing so on their own without co-operation from Angolan authorities.

Commander Kito said it was Angola's policy to respect the sovereignty and frontiers of others. When Angola was already a Republic maintaining troops on its territory, lots of damage had been done to Angolan territory by South African forces. This was a feature in the development of good relations and good-neighbourly feelings. Commander Kito said that this would depend on an effort from South Africa to show the Government and people of Angola that we were interested in developing these relations. The South African Government should abide by the UN resolution concerning compensation for war damage.

Mr Fourie said that he would not go into the reasons but the South African Government had made it clear that it did not accept the Security Council resolution. This did not mean that we wanted to be unco-operative in Angola's economic progress. That was one of the reasons why we continued with the Cunene project which was one of the strongest points for the development of southern Angola. The scheme had great potential and the fact that we had speeded up construction illustrated our goodwill.

Mr Fourie asked what the attitude of the Angolans was to the question of the seven prisoners of war. He emphasised that this was a humanitarian issue as seen from our side.

Governor

Commander/...

Commander Enrico said that Angolans had told international circles that the seven would not be dealt with as mercenaries and had indicated that they were trying to deal with the matter in another way.

Commander Kito said that Angola had suffered invasion by South African armed forces and considered the seven to be prisoners of war. They were being treated differently from the mercenaries. They had enquired how many Angolan prisoners were held by South Africa and this may be the beginning of a solution. His delegation will now report to the Angola Government and perhaps at the next meeting would be in a position to give a conclusive answer.

Mr Fourie said that the South African press were highly interested in this question but from the Government's side they were being asked to leave the issue alone.

Mr Martins referred to the payment for damage caused to the Angolan economy by South African forces, saying that this was a fundamental issue to them. Angola believed that it was South Africa's responsibility to pay the damages in accordance with the UN Security Council resolution. Payment of damages would also mean a goodwill gesture by South Africa. There should be a positive attitude and response by South Africa to the UN resolution and he asked for a clearer view of South Africa's attitude.

Mr Fourie replied that his Government's attitude to the resolution had been clearly stated at the time and

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he did not want to go into the legal arguments now. The South African Government wished to show its goodwill in other practical ways. Most of the damage had in anyway not been done by South African forces, but he did not want to go into details.

Commander Kito said that there was a flagrant example of damage, viz. the sabotage of a nine hundred meter bridge at Rocadas. The South African army had been present at the time.

General Viljoen said that Unita forces had been responsible for this and for other damage. After the decision had been taken to withdraw South African forces, he had given specific orders to the South African troops not to cause damage.

Commander Kito said he had only quoted the bridge as an example. There are innumerable other examples. If the principle of indemnity were accepted by South Africa, Angola would recite specific damages caused. Could South Africa give some guarantee that it accepted the principle of indemnity.

Mr Fourie replied that he was afraid it could not.

Contacts at Local Level

Commander Kito referred to the nomination of military commanders for contacts at local level and said that meetings at present could only be held at the present level. Contacts between the two Governments at diplomatic level would have to come later. When these

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present meetings became fruitful other measures could be taken regarding practical problems, for example, the revival of the old Commission for the Cunene River Basin.

Commander Kito then referred to the question of liaison as used to exist in the form of the Commission for the Cunene Plan. Angola had authorised the continuation of the construction work and something like the Commission should be an integral part of the whole project. They were therefore prepared to institute a commission but they needed to know more precisely what we had in mind, as they did not know how the Commission functioned previously. They had heard about the two telegrams sent by Water Affairs regarding the water at Gove and Malala dams but they needed more details so that they can look for a suitable person to act in a liaison capacity.

Mr Fourie said that we would be very glad to provide further details.

Mr Truebody said that what we required was, firstly, an engineer and a few assistants with whom we could discuss the hydrological problems of the Cunene and, secondly, technicians to assist us in the operations of Gove and Malala dams. He would be glad to make the necessary information available and to have his engineers and technicians discuss it with Angolans. He could have the information available shortly and it was agreed, subject to confirmation, that there would be a further meeting on 23 June when Mr Truebody would hand over the information and discuss

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it in a preliminary way with the engineer nominated by the Angolans. More detailed discussions could follow later..

Mr Fourie gave Commander Kito the name of Colonel Bischoff, Commander at Oshikati, as the contact at military level. The message could be passed through the police at the gate at Ruacana. Both sides expressed gratitude for the meeting and expressed the hope that further meetings would contribute to the lessening of tension.

Sand for Construction

Commander Kito referred to the question of the sand requirements of the contractors and said that he could not give a satisfactory answer, for as long as the Angolans did not feel satisfied with the military position they could not agree to the contractors penetrating more deeply into Angola to get sand. Once there had been agreement on certain points and when tension on the border had diminished then he felt permission could be granted.

Mr Fourie said that it was not a question of penetrating deeper into Angola to get the sand, and Mr Truebody explained with the aid of a map where the three sources of sand were located. One was no more than one and a half kilometers outside the construction domain and two were no more than five kilometers outside the domain. All three were well within the

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permit zone. His engineers were prepared to show the Angolans precisely where the deposits were.

Commander Kito said they had been misinformed previously and thanked Mr Truebody for his clarification.

Pretoria

11 June 1976