

March 3, 1976

South African Government Cabinet Minutes on Rhodesia, 3 March-1 September 1976

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Summary:

Excerpts from discussions on the situation in Rhodesia, the possible implications that a hostile Rhodesia would pose to South African defense calculations, and the policies South Africa should pursue with regards to Rhodesia.

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3.3.76

Report of the Rhodesia position. Worsens according to all reliable sources. Request came from Kaunda to intervene in Rhodesia as Zambia's position is becoming untenable with regard to the purpose of a thoroughfare and bases for Cubans on their way to Rhodesia and Mozambique. According to message from this source the situation in Rhodesia has reached crisis proportions. South Africa's standpoint remains unchanged in that it is not prepared to exert pressure on Rhodesia. South Africa did not pressurize or influence Rhodesia to have discussions. We informed Rhodesia that in calculations it must, in the case of war, operate with the assumption that it is alone. The difficult decision, however, awaits the government, namely if Rhodesia becomes involved in war could South Africa remain on the outside.

10.3.76

State Security Council assembled on 5/3/76. Defense Force's point of view is that we are not prepared to open a second front by fighting in Rhodesia. Defense Force feels that, at this stage, it is the most important from a military point of view.

15.6.76

Prime Minister reports about discussions with Rhodesian Prime Minister from which it appears that parity is no longer his policy, that Rhodesia believes that Mozambique will collapse and their position with regard to terrorists will improve, and that he prefers to speak with Western leaders personally.

23.6.76

Min PW Botha reports that the Prime Minister phoned from Bonn, Reception was (described) as friendly.

3.8.76

Prime Minister reports on his discussions in Germany with Kissinger. It took place in a spirit of good will. Kissinger... further worried that the Russians will call American bluff about further Russian interference in Southern Africa such as Angola. Therefore wishes to handle situation in a different manner by finding acceptable settlement for Rhodesia... The prospect of further meetings is held out, and then in South Africa... Dr. Muller gave a survey of the international scene which at present looks dark for South Africa. We have just escaped action in terms of Chapter 7 of the Charter. Circumstances favor communism which has lost face with interference in Angola. This action is now accepted to be legal and justified in Africa. The situation is serious:

The Prime Minister: We receive icy winds, economically and politically, from the front. We must not become panic stricken, or take crisis decision.

Rhodesia: Prime Minister, Adj Prime Minister and Min of Transport of Rhodesia have had discussions. There are strong differences within the Rhodesia Front. Suggestion that Rhodesia be divided in three was discussed by their caucus. The Prime Minister does not think that... will be acceptable as settlement. Their caucus requested that South Africa must take the initiative to bring the Rhodesian Government into the conversation once again. The same request was received from ANC through Kabella. The economic position is extremely weak. They want R20m for airplanes...

Min PW Botha: If Rhodesia falls into hostile hands, South Africa will have additional

defense problems with the extended border which has to be defended. South Africa can defend itself against insurgency. South Africa cannot defend itself against conventional attack such as Angola. ..We must gain time, which will require that we implement our policy and come to an agreement with the nature of the black and brown so that there is internal order....

Dr C P Mulder: We must get rid of the Rhodesian and SWA issue.... Min v.d. Spuy thinks that we must not do anything that will undermine trust. That also holds for SWA.

31.8.76

The Prime Minister is not prepared to negotiate with opposition parties of Rhodesia, but with Mr Smith who will shortly visit the Prime Minister, unless Mr Smith requests that the Prime Min speaks to the opposition parties.

1.9.76

The hospitality of the Swiss government during visit to Zurich was remarkable. .. The negotiations were tough but amicable... When he visits Dar es Salaam Dr Kissinger will try to negotiate for an interim government for Rhodesia consisting of five in which there will be three white and two black.