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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Meeting with President Sam Nujoma of Namibia

PARTICIPANTS: The President
James A. Baker III, Secretary of State
John Sununu, Chief of Staff
Brent Scowcroft, Assistant to the President
and National Security Advisor
Robert Gates, Assistant to the President
and Deputy National Security Advisor
Herman J. Cohen, Assistant Secretary of State
for African Affairs
Roger A. McGuire, Charge, American Embassy
Windhoek
John M. Ordway NSC Staff (notetaker)

President Sam Nujoma
Theo-Ben Gurirab, Foreign Minister

DATE, TIME AND PLACE: June 19, 1990, 2:40 p.m. - 3:15 p.m.
The Oval Office

The President: I would like to welcome you to the White House, and to the United States. (U)

President Nujoma: I would like first of all, Mr. President, to thank you for the support your country provided during our struggle for independence. (U)

The President: We have a very keen respect for the way you have taken hold and run things in your country. It was not an easy thing, coming back into the country, and running during the elections. (U)

Secretary Baker came back from Namibia very impressed, and has told me of his experience, and the courtesy which he received there. (U)

You were very generous in your opening comments. I meant what I said that we take your government very seriously. Also, we are proud that some American citizens were very helpful in your struggle. (U)

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I know you are concerned about aid levels. We have a level of \$10,000,000. (Ø)

Secretary Baker: That's up from \$500,000 when I went out to Windhoek. (Ø)

The President: We wish it were more. We are trying to restructure our entire aid situation. We have enormous fiscal problems here in the United States. In fact, that is one of the reasons I am late -- and I apologize for that -- we were meeting on the budget. (Ø)

We want to support you. We want to stimulate the private sector, which we find to be the most effective method. (Ø)

But mostly I want to hear from you, about the dramatic elections which is resulting in a free and open society in Namibia. (U)

President Nujoma: Let me thank the United States on behalf of the Republic of Namibia, for being a member of the Contact Group which initiated UN Security Council Resolution 435, and which helped implement that resolution which resulted in independence for Namibia. Without American efforts, South Africa might remain in Namibia to date. (Ø)

We are trying to establish a democratic society, with freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, and liberty for all Namibian citizens. We have adopted a policy of national reconciliation and unity, in order to reconstruct our economy. We have inherited a difficult situation from the South African colonial administration. This involved a deficit of about 500,000,000 rand, and they left debts behind of 700,000,000 rand, and the poverty that exists among the majority of the population of the country, from the apartheid policies. We have to overcome the legacy of the South African colonial administration in our country. This is why we have adopted a policy of national reconciliation. And, we have invited whites to stay in the country. (Ø)

The President: What has been the response to this? (U)

President Nujoma: Pretty good. Even those who sold their property and were ready to leave at independence, are now buying new properties. There is not going to be wholesale nationalization. If Parliament decided to take over some enterprises for national reasons, the owners will be fully compensated. (Ø)

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By maintaining the huge number of civil servants, we have to pay a substantial wage bill, but we feel we have to pay this price for national reconciliation and unity. We also have to bring in the African majority which was kept out by the South African apartheid policies. We want to appeal to the United States Government to make more financial assistance available to us to maintain democracy in Namibia. We hope that we will give a good example to our neighbors in South Africa. (Ø)

The President: I wanted to ask you about South Africa. Are you encouraged with Nelson Mandela out, and some discussions beginning? (Ø)

President Nujoma: Discussion has started, and we would encourage that, since there needs to be a peaceful solution. Taking into account our situation in Namibia, we had a long struggle with the loss of lives. If South Africa had been agreeable to implementing UN Security Council Resolution 435 earlier, there could have been no destruction and loss of life. (Ø)

We invited de Klerk to participate in the independence celebrations, along with Nelson Mandela. I told de Klerk that if you think you want to use our territory for negotiations, you are welcome. We maintain contact. We urge you to encourage negotiations. (Ø)

The President: We will try, since that is the only reasonable answer. (U)

President Nujoma: We are taking over a country devastated by war. Over the years, the South African Government followed a policy of racial discrimination, excluding the African population from decision making. The poverty among the African majority, 90% of the population, is very visible. We are preparing to embark on a program of crash development -- water supply, education, health and better accommodations for the people. We have a budgetary deficit, and would be most grateful if the United States Government could help us out with these projects. Otherwise, we would be faced with the difficult situation of maintaining democracy as a young country. (Ø)

The President: The debt is owed to South Africa, is that right?
(Ø)

President Nujoma: Yes, to South Africa. (Ø)

The President: Are other countries involved? (Ø)

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Mr. Cohen: The money was borrowed from South African banks, and is guaranteed by the South African Government, which expects Namibia to repay the loans. (U)

The President: Jim, would you care to comment? (U)

Secretary Baker: When we went to Windhoek for the independence celebrations, we had only \$500,000 in aid available, since that is all we could find. I said then that we would try to do better. We now have \$10,000,000 and we are looking at the possibility of continuing for another year. We will be seeking that level in our forthcoming budget discussions. (U)

The Government of Namibia is taking appropriate steps to maintain a viable private economic sector. The Government is signing an OPIC agreement after three days of discussion. We believe that foreign direct investment creates jobs and technology. (U)

The President: Have we moved forward on Peace Corps? (U)

Mr. McGuire: The cabinet has agreed to the Peace Corps agreement, and we expect to sign it shortly. By the end of August, there will be about 30 Peace Corps volunteers who will be coming from Botswana. They will be teachers, who can hit the ground running. As you know, Mr. President, since you have been there, Botswana is very similar to Namibia. (U)

Secretary Baker: Roger, perhaps you could provide a word about the situation regarding assurances of property ownership. (U)

Mr. McGuire: President Nujoma and other leaders have spoken out on the fact that there will be a mixed economy, with private property respected. Namibia has been independent for three months, but they have done a good job on public statements, and with legislation. We are very encouraged that they are doing the rights things in the right sequence. People that are interested in commercial opportunities will find Namibia a good partner. (U)

Secretary Baker: There is great mineral potential, and we are not seeing the brain drain and white flight, due to the assurances that President Nujoma has given. (U)

The President: Can the UN donors conference in New York be helpful? (U)

President Nujoma: Yes. We are very impressed by U.S. economic development, and are emphasizing the private sector. This will help us, help our people take the initiative in economic

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development, perhaps through joint ventures. Since our people do not have money to invest, joint ventures can help. (S)

Mr. Gurirab: We are also planning a private sector conference in November in Namibia. We hope that private sector representatives will come from abroad, and discuss the opportunities for investment and trade that exist. (S)

The President: How is the situation in Angola? Is there a danger for you of getting drawn into that conflict? Are passions running high in Namibia on this? (S)

President Nujoma: There has been an influx of people from Angola in the last two months, because of the fighting on the border. We all hope that negotiations will continue so that this conflict can come to an end. (S)

The President: That is what is needed. (U)

Secretary Baker: They can take a lesson from you. You were helped by free elections. (S)

President Namibia: I know that the Government of the People's Republic of Angola wants to negotiate sincerely. (S)

The President: Are they fearful that UNITA will win? (S)

Secretary Baker: They have not yet agreed to free elections. (S)

President Nujoma: We want to encourage them to negotiate. Mr. President, you and your government could encourage these peaceful efforts with UNITA and Savimbi, to agree to a negotiated settlement, since we all want to see the bloodshed end. (S)

The President: We have talked to him about reconciliation. He has said the proper things. We have been very pleased with the Cuban troop withdrawal agreement, and I agree that the answer is reconciliation and dialogue. Nothing can be decided by killing people on either side. I would welcome any suggestions on how we can be helpful. (S)

Hank, what is the latest on the negotiations? (S)

Mr. Cohen: They had a good round in Portugal. They are coming closer to free elections, and Savimbi is recognizing dos Santos. (S)

Secretary Baker: They are getting closer. (U)

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Mr. McGuire: On another angle, there is the issue of coastal security. If it is agreeable to you, President Nujoma, we could send a survey team out to Namibia in the next three weeks. (Ø)

The President: Is that part of IMET? (U)

Mr. McGuire: No. The African Coastal Security program helps protect fisheries. (U)

The President: Are poachers overfishing your waters? (U)

Mr. Cohen: Even those who have licenses are overfishing. (U)

Mr. McGuire: The Spanish are the worst. (Ø)

The President: Do they come right up to the coastline? (Ø)

President Nujoma: We have an act in Parliament to extend out to the 100 mile limit, but to enforce this is a big question. (Ø)

The President: That is always a big question, but you have every right to protect your fisheries. I hope that this team can proceed and help out the situation. (U)

Mr. Gurirab: Fishing is our second industry after mining. (U)

The President: Protecting it will undoubtedly help sustain lots of lives, along with the economic benefits. (U)

I hope you have a good visit, Mr. President. We have great respect for what you have done. You have made a lot of friends. Lots of people were asking how you would behave in the big house. We are very pleased with what you have done. We want to help. I am very glad that you have agreed to OPIC, and hope that the Peace Corps works out. We look forward to having your military people come here to the United States under IMET, if that fits in with your plans. (Ø)

We want to try hard to work with you, and facilitate further change in the region, which will make your international relations easier. For example, we see a possible role for ourselves with South Africa if Mandela and de Klerk think it useful. We don't have a colonial history, and have a slate clean of colonialism. We might find a way to help. If we can be helpful in Angola, pushing toward reconciliation, we will do that as well. (Ø)

President Nujoma: We are determined to go ahead with our system. We are learning from your great country, and other countries. We want you to get more interested in South Africa. (Ø)

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The President: We will encourage de Klerk. I worry about his right wing. I think de Klerk has shown lots of courage, and we want to be helpful, with Buthelezi, Mandela and others. We don't want to act like we can solve this problem, though. We are half way around the world. But it is a big domestic political issue here. (Ø)

Speaking of Nelson Mandela, I am concerned about some of the things he is doing -- meeting with the Puerto Rican people who shot up our Congress. He comes here with a good reputation, and then talks to these people, who have no following, and who shot up our Congress. It is stupid for the organization to put Mr. Mandela into that position. (Ø)

I am sure that his trip will go well, and I will extend to him every courtesy due to him. (Ø)

Secretary Baker: Some people want to use Mandela for their own purposes. (Ø)

Mr. Gurirab: That's right. (U)

President Nujoma: I would like to extend to you, Mr. President, an invitation to visit our country. (U)

[The conversation concluded with an exchange among the President, Secretary Baker, and President Nujoma on the possibilities of fishing in Namibia.] (U)

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