

RECORD OF THE MAIN CONTENT OF THE CONVERSATION
BETWEEN A.A. GROMYKO AND U.S. SECRETARY OF STATE C. VANCE

May 31, 1978, New York

[excerpts regarding Africa]

C. Vance.- [...]

Another major issue which alarms us is Africa, which President Carter and I have already discussed with you in detail. I think we all recognize that elements of rivalry will remain between us in the future. But at the same time there will be areas, in which we will be able to achieve mutual understanding and find a common language. If you look at the situation in Africa today, it seems that the areas of rivalry have developed beyond the limits of normal competition and led to military conflicts, fed by Soviet weapons and equipment and by armed combat detachments provided by Cuba.

I am acquainted with your explanation of the factors which stimulated certain military actions in Africa, and I will not repeat what was already said by both sides. However, in answering your question, I want to set forth the evaluation of the actions of the Soviet Union in Africa which is being formed in the USA and many other countries (not only European). Many people now presume that the Soviet Union sets fires in various regions of Africa instead of preventing those fires in a peaceful way.

[...]

In conclusion I must point out that, relating to the fact that detente should be a two-way street, and in the context of the situation in Africa, we must determine how we should act so that all these questions do not continue to be a constant source of confrontation between us.

A.A. Gromyko.- [...]

You spoke further on about the situation in Africa. I must say that in this case a total and crude distortion of the real situation is taking place. If I, discussing this topic, behaved like some of your high ranking officials, who let loose with simply insulting declarations directed toward the Soviet Union, I would have been forced to use not those, but sharper expressions. By the way, those American officials who make such declarations should study how to communicate with people, especially with representatives of foreign states.

Who should know better than the USA, with its far-reaching espionage network, that the Soviet Union had absolutely nothing to do with events in Zaire, Rhodesia, Namibia. As for the conflict between Ethiopia and Somalia, when Somalia launched an attack against Ethiopia we, responding to a request from the latter, helped out by sending to Ethiopia a certain amount of weapons and a group of specialists to train them how to use the weapons. At the same time, as I already told you, we would at that time have welcomed any help of this kind from other countries, including the USA, if any such assistance had been requested of them.

But instead of this we face the fiction that Ethiopian troops acted under Soviet command, etc. Why is this done? Being realists, we started to look for reasons for such absurd assertions. We came to the conclusion that it is necessary to search for those reasons in the attempts of some definite forces, particularly in the United States, to create a screen through which it would be more difficult for people to understand the true situation, in order to justify its own actions in Africa, which appear as interference in the domestic affairs of the countries on that continent.

An illustration of this statement is the slaughter which took place in Zaire not long ago. In fact neither USSR nor Cuba had anything to do with it. As you

remember, I told President Carter about this. We were indignant at this slaughter and at the insinuations in our address. I have already said that there is not a single Soviet person in Namibia or in Rhodesia, and in Zaire we have only official diplomatic representatives.

Pass my words on to the President. Tell him that the assertions, which we confront in connection with events in Africa, in particular in Zaire, we can treat only as a pure and deliberate fiction.

As it happened, some individuals and governments themselves threw an explosive ball of lightning into the arena and now are saying: look, how terrible that looks. We are not responsible for somebody else's sins and do not intend to be. Those who sin are responsible.

[...]

C. Vance.-

Let me now respond to your remarks regarding our information about the participation of Cubans in the events in Zaire. According to our intelligence data, Cubans took part in planning and preparation of the intrusion there. As for the sources of our information, it was the Commander of Katang armed forces, General Mbumba, and Cuban sources in East Germany. We considered these sources reliable.

A.A. Gromyko.-

Oh, then you are simply victims of disinformation. If we were not sure that our information was authentic, we would not have told you about it. We take great responsibility for what we are saying.

C. Vance.-

But how could we know that information provided to us by Mbumba and Cubans themselves does not correspond with reality? When this information came to us we assumed that it was based on solid evidence.

A.A. Gromyko.-

But who on Earth knows what kind of General this is? Who does he serve? Is he really the only one to tell the truth, like Jesus Christ for the Bible legend?

You have information from us -- accept it. Your sources of information are bad if they present lies as truth. You yourself know from experience that you must not believe every report. Man was given his brain in order to analyze information, think and make realistic conclusions.

Unfortunately, there are officials in the USA who easily, to put it mildly, present lies for truth. But a serious policy cannot be built on this.

C. Vance.-

I take into consideration what you have said. Yet I want to say that we have to take as serious the information, which we receive from people like the Commander of the Katang forces.

A.A. Gromyko.-

But may be the General you mentioned is only saving his skin? You do not know his reasons, who he works for, do you? Many questions arise here.

C. Vance.-

Evidently it does not make much sense to continue this argument. I mentioned these facts only to illustrate difficulties in receiving trustworthy

information. Probably it is one more argument in support of the necessity of having more frequent meetings and exchanges of opinions between us.

A.A.Gromyko.-

Perhaps. But if on the basis of this type of information, known to be false, a broad campaign, hostile to us, is developed in the USA, then it is another kettle of fish. And if, on top of everything, the government takes part in this process and heats up this campaign, then what conclusion should we draw? Really, this is not happening within the four walls of a working study. It is taking place on a national scale.

[...]