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The Director of Central Intelligence

Washington, D.C. 20505

National Intelligence Council

NIC #03888-85
2 August 1985

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence
Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

FROM: Herbert E. Meyer
Vice Chairman, National Intelligence Council

SUBJECT: The Real Stakes in South Africa

1. As we go about the business of reviewing our policy toward South Africa, it will be vital to perceive that country not merely as an isolated hot-spot or even as the lynchpin of our diplomatic efforts in that region of the world, but rather as part of a larger, globe-girdling phenomenon: as one bead in the necklace of countries whose governments are non-communist but authoritarian, each in its own way embarked on a course of internal reform leading toward democracy. In addition to South Africa, beads in this necklace include the Philippines, South Korea, Chile, and Pakistan. Some would add Taiwan and Mexico.

2. The struggle over this necklace is a major element of the US-Soviet competition. Our goal in each country is true democracy; our strategy is to offer each government our full support--moral even more than material--while simultaneously using the influence this support brings us to pressure each government to continue along its power-sharing course. In contrast, the Soviet goal is to destabilize each country in hopes of bringing to power Marxist governments; the Soviet strategy is to force each government toward political repression--for example in response to domestic violence--in hopes that when the road closes toward evolution the road will open toward revolution. The key to this strategy is to drive a wedge between the US and the target government, and by doing so to remove US influence on the theory that when left to its natural instincts, an authoritarian government will revert to repression. It's a bit like cutting off a reformed alcoholic from his AA meetings, in hopes the poor devil will weaken and take just one little nip.

3. Without in any way getting tangled in the question of whether the whole thing has been masterminded by some genius in Moscow, it is an observable and irrefutable fact that in South Africa the Soviet strategy

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has now succeeded. The government in Pretoria has declared a State of Emergency in response to domestic violence, and thrown more than a thousand people into jail. (Prediction: Before long some American journalist will discover that the concentration camp is a South African invention, dating to the Boer War, and use this fact to launch a damaging report on prison conditions for the current detainees.) At the same time, there now exists a political wedge between the US and South Africa. And the wedge is being driven in more deeply each day. Even more appalling, the Soviet strategy has succeeded in less than six months.

4. While it is too soon to report implications, it is easy to make some projections. Within the other countries that comprise the necklace I've described, leaders will take note of events in South Africa. If they have not already focused on the old political adage--that revolutions tend to happen not when oppression is at its worst, but rather when conditions begin to improve--they will focus on this adage now. We should anticipate that in at least some of these countries, evolution toward democracy will be slowed or even aborted. Moreover, leaders in all these countries will note the breathtaking ease with which the wedge between the US and South Africa was driven in. This latter fact will also be noted in Moscow, and within the leadership of all those Western-based "public interest" groups that did so much to bring about the present debacle. Having won such a big victory so quickly and so easily, our adversaries would be fools not to press on to the next target.

5. In the present circumstances, US policy must be directed toward one overriding goal: removal of the wedge that now rests between the US and South Africa. This is vital if we hope to keep open the road toward evolution in that country, and by doing so keep closed the road toward revolution. Moreover, a visible and successful effort to remove this wedge will be seen by leaders of the other target countries--accurately--as evidence of US resolve to support them. So they will be more likely to resist the temptation to slow down or abort their own domestic reform programs. And removal of the wedge will cool the enthusiasm, both of the Soviets and of "public interest" groups whose leaders now think that defeating the US is easy, for taking advantage of their current momentum.

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Herbert E. Meyer

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