



STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION
DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
OTTAWA - CANADA

71/3

THE SITUATION IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

Excerpts from a Press Conference by Prime Minister, the Honourable Pierre Elliott Trudeau, at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Conference, Singapore, January 20, 1971.

We agreed to set up a committee of eight people to study the matter of safety of navigation in the Indian and South Atlantic Oceans, and to report as soon as possible to the Commonwealth heads through the Secretary-General. So, to the extent we agreed on that, the meetings all day yesterday and today on this subject of arms sales were well worthwhile.

As I see it, the issue of whether to sell or not to sell, the immediate issue before us, is a relatively secondary one. The British present certain arguments saying that they should do it, the others present certain arguments saying that they shouldn't do it, and both advance legal, moral, economic, strategic and political arguments.

But the position I've been trying to press on some of my colleagues is that the immediate issue can only be understood if it's placed in a scenario of the future of Africa. In other words, if, to ensure the security of the sea lanes, we encourage the British to take steps which make the assurance of Communist penetration of Africa even greater, then we have perhaps not gained much. And therefore we must look not only at the problem of security of the ocean but at the whole question of racial relations in Africa. And if, while we're arguing this short-term immediate question, we permit circumstances to develop which could end up so that in ten years, more or less, we have another Vietnam on our hands -- we have another mid-East situation on our hands --, then not only will that be disastrous for Africa but I submit it will be disastrous for the world.

A bloody racial war in Africa could leave nobody unconcerned. We saw that even the Vietnam war has divided not only the United States but many other Western nations, between themselves, among themselves, and inside of themselves. Even the question of Nigeria, you'll recall (a year and a half, two years ago, in Canada), the question of Nigeria and those who supported Biafra concerned Canadians very deeply and divided us among ourselves. So, if we set up the circumstances where a racial war in Africa, black against white, is even more probable, then we will have done a very poor service to posterity,