



STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION
DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

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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,

to say nothing about the moral indignity, the moral abomination, of racial discrimination, which debases not only the states who practise it but those individuals who have it in their hearts. It poisons the relations between human beings. It makes peace in the world a less possible matter, a less possible eventuality.

I've enjoined everyone to talk not just about the short-term but about the long-term scenario. It just isn't enough for Britain to say: "Well, we must make shipping safer on the oceans." Mr. Heath must say how the total racial problem in South Africa develops according to his view of the future and how his present action can be justified in the light of his total commitment to peace. And I said the same thing to President Kaunda and President Obote! It is not sufficient to tell Britain not to sell arms to South Africa lest that cause a racial war, because what will your position be if Britain does not sell arms to South Africa -- does the right thing by you? If Britain should make that decision, what will you say about France and those other countries? And even if those other countries do not sell, what then will you say about Portugal? Will you guarantee that if these countries don't sell arms to South Africa we will not have a racial war in South Africa, that you will go on record as being against such a war? You will also want the Portuguese to get out of Angola and Mozambique. And what will your position then be on the presence of Portugal in NATO? And what will your position be on the mere trading with South Africa by all nations, which you say now is all right? But are you going to say this forever or are you going to say, at some point, well you are strengthening the motives for an eventual civil war there?

And what if none of this happens? What if none of us co-operate in any way with South Africa? South Africa still remains the strongest military power by far south of the Sahara and will remain such, especially if you add it on to Rhodesia, for a long while to come. So what if all the Western nations behave well, are you going to say then there will be no racial war? And if there is a racial war won't you still blame the white nations or the Western nations for being the cause of it? And even if you don't what about the Communists, what about the freedom fighters? Who's going to arm them? It's unlikely that Canada would ever want to arm freedom fighters, though we might respect the justice of their cause. So who's going to arm them? If it's the Communists from some part of the world, aren't they going to get the credit for being on the side of the Africans, of the black Africans? How do you see a racial war being avoided in South Africa? You are just asking the British to take the first step, but you're not telling them or us or any of us what the next steps are. And this is what the Commonwealth meetings should be used for, in order that together we try to establish a scenario for world peace and especially for racial harmony in Africa.

I have always felt that we had to force all parties in the debate to spell out what I call the long-term perspective. As a nation in North America, Canadians, even though they be far removed from the Indian Ocean and South Atlantic, will not be free of the kind of violence which can arise in our countries, the kind of dissension which did arise in some countries

over Vietnam, and which would most likely arise in Canada. We know about urban guerrillas now. We know they can, and probably will, some day upset peace in South Africa. And, if we are on the wrong side, they could also upset peace in our own countries. And to this extent we're very concerned with any part of the world where peace can be upset and have consequences on the rest of humanity.

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