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REPORT OF THE OAU FACT-FINDING MISSION
TO LESOTHO



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REPORT OF THE OAU FACT-FINDING MISSION
TO LESOTHO

1. The Mission was undertaken on 20th and 21st June, 1980, in response to an invitation from the Government of Lesotho by Mr. Lameen Metteden, Assistant Executive Secretary of the Liberation Committee and Mr. A. Sebastiao, Head of the OAU Sub-Office in Maputo. The OAU delegation was received at the Airport by the Deputy Chief of Protocol in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mrs. Thakane Chimombe. An immediate audience was thereafter arranged with the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Vicent M. Malebo.

Rebel Casualties -- June 2nd Incident:

2. The Permanent Secretary gave a detailed account of the racist South African-aided armed incursions of Basutaland Congress Party (BCP) bandits, beginning with the attempted coup d'etat in 1974, and culminating in the most recent encounter on 2nd June, 1980, when Lesotho security forces killed several insurgents and captured a large quantity of arms and ammunitions. Nine bodies, he said, were brought-back to the Meseru Hospital mortuary, and the Lesotho police were still in the process of investigating their identities. The captured-materials displayed included about half a dozen automatic rifles and a revolver with South African coast of arms and other markings, soft-noze 303 ammunition for hunting, shells of tracer bullets, kit-bags with inscriptions of Afrikaaner names of South African troopers and wiring and other equipment for the blowing up of bridges and buildings.

Intensified Incursions:

3. Within the past year the armed wing of the BCP has intensified its raids into Lesotho from across the South African border. There have been incursion from the Transkei side of the border to the

South East, attacks on Mafeteng in the South-West border; and in particular from the Northern border with Qua-Qua homeland. It is in the Northern border area that the rebels have their largest hide-out in a cave across the border. The incursions have been carried out in strength, ranging from 25 men in the last incident to 200 in one of the others. A lot of innocent civilians have been victims of these unprovoked incursions, quite besides the daily killings of Lesotho citizens in South Africa itself.

4. Damage caused by the insurgents within the past year include the blowing up of the Central Post Office in Maseru, the burning of houses in villages to the North-Western border area, the burning of a shop belonging to the former Vice Premier and current Minister of Interior, Mr. Maseribani, in the South-East border area. They even once made an unsuccessful attempt to take over a village in the Northern border area.

South African Involvement:

5. The suspicion of South African involvement was aroused since the attempted coups of 1974, when the armed rebels ran back across the river into South Africa, rather than taking to the mountains in the hinterland. In the subsequent years, the Lesotho government continued to receive intelligence reports of deeper involvement of South Africa in the armed activities of the BCP. Intelligence reports, documentary evidence and captured materials since the 2nd of June invasion, indicate that the South African authorities have given the BCP base and training facilities in Ficksburg; and that wounded BCP cadres were always taken to the Elizabeth Ross Hospital in Bethlehem where the South African authorities have also since December 1979/January 1980, established a so-called refugee camp in Bethlehem.

6. The exodus or movement of the refugees across the border into South Africa, initially dismissed as a mere racist propaganda by Lesotho, remained a big puzzle for the authorities in Maseru until some of the refugees began to return to their villages in the past recent months. The villagers were apparently being harrassed and thrcatened by armed men and night marrauders claiming to be members of government security forces to flee across the border or face the consequences. The refugees were only to discover later that it was these same night visitors that indoctrinated them in the South African camp against their own government.

7. Some of the returnees, who are all mostly back to their village huts and properties, have told stories that shed some light into the South African motives and intentions. The women whose husbands were away working in the South African mines were made to write letters to their husbands to incite them into taking up arms against the Lesotho Government. Opposition to the government is apparently also now being made a condition for the employment of Basutos in the South African mines.

BCP Connections with Leballo's PAC:

8. The Lesotho authorities have also established that BCP cadres trained abroad are given free access to recruit from workers in the South African mines. The Lesotho authorities have been aware for quite some time that the former Chairman of the PAC of Azania (SA), Mr. P. K. Leballo, had some BCP supporters amongs the cadres he sent for training in Amin's Uganda and in Libya. These cadres have also stayed in the PAC former training, but now transit, camp in Southern Tanzania.

12. The racist attacks on neighbouring independent African countries in violation of their territorial integrity is typical of the tactics used by racist South Africa to try to destabilize the African regimes that host freedom fighters. The racists raid the territories of neighbouring States under the pretext of exercising their right of hot-pursuit and in the guise of reprisal or pre-emptive action for guerrilla activities by nationalist freedom fighters. Such attacks have been carried out and continue to be carried out against the People's Republic of Angola, either directly by South African Security Forces or in collusion with UNITA bandits. In Lesotho, the incident of June 2nd, 1980, for instance, took place barely six hours after the spectacular ANC strike on SASOL oil installations. The Republics of Zambia and Mozambique, in particular, were also threatened with reprisal action by the South African racists after the SASOL incident.

13. Racist South African assistance to dissidents in the neighbouring countries is also partly designed to infiltrate the National Liberation Movements of South Africa, who have their members and supporters living in exile in the neighbouring countries. Lesotho has evidence, for instance, that the deal struck with South Africa by the BCP leader, Mr. Mokhekhle, requires him to supply detailed information on the bases, camps and activities of the PAC in particular, and even of the ANC.

14. For the first time, migrant labour is being exploited for political ends by the South African racist regime. This new development perhaps merits a careful study by all the neighbouring States that supply migrant labour to South Africa.

Conclusion

15. The Council may, therefore, wish to condemn most strongly the South African-aided attacks on Lesotho; and to congratulate Lesotho on the victories so far scored against the dissidents. Lesotho also deserves the special commendation of the Council for its uncompromising stand against apartheid and for its refusal to accord recognition, despite all provocation, to the so-called independent homelands of the Republic of South Africa.

16. The Council may also wish to recommend to Member-States of the Region to convene an urgent meeting to examine the grave threat to security occasioned by South African destabilization activities in the region, either within the context of the Southern Africa Economic groupings or at mini-Summit of the Sub-Region, specially convened to consider the three aspects of destabilization, infiltration of the Liberation Movements of South Africa, and South African political exploitation of migrant labour that have emerged from the particular case of Lesotho.

17. All OAU Member-States who are in a position to do so, could also be encouraged to establish some form of diplomatic presence in Maseru.



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