

SOUTH AFRICA: THE NUCLEAR FILE

A sixty-minute documentary

Text: Kalahari Desert. South Africa. August 1977.

Narration: Washington, August 6, 1977. The Russian Embassy contacts the White House with the warning that South Africa is about to test a nuclear device in the Kalahari Desert. Will the Americans co-operate in trying to prevent it?

As the story goes, President Carter was taken by surprise at this news. He ordered immediate satellite surveillance of the area in question. American intelligence confirmed that the South Africans were indeed preparing what looked like an underground test explosion. The Americans threatened South Africa with the gravest possible consequences if the test took place.

President Carter: (text: August 23, 1977) In response to our own direct inquiry, and that of other nations, South Africa has informed us that they do not have and do not intend to develop nuclear explosive devices for any purpose, either peaceful or as a weapon; that the Kalahari test site which has been in question is not designed to test nuclear explosives, and that no nuclear explosive tests will be taken in South Africa.

Narration: The Kalahari incident demonstrated that the Great Powers could act together forcefully where their mutual interest was at stake - and to both, nothing was more vital than halting nuclear proliferation.

While the Great Powers could halt an atomic test, they could not stop repression in South Africa. Within a month of the test that never was, Steve Biko had died of injuries inflicted in a South African prison. Within two months, there were mass arrests of opponents of the regime.

Von Wechmar: (text: United Nations, October 31, 1977: West German Ambassador Von Wechmar) The bannings, prohibitions, detentions and acts of repression must come to an end. The Federal Government is deeply dismayed at the developments in South Africa of which the events in Soweto and the death of Steve Biko are the most tragic results. The Security Council must declare in a manner which is binding on all states that the supply of weapons to South Africa is bound to heighten even further the tension in that area. This supply must therefore cease.

Narration: In the wave of revulsion against South Africa, for the first time, West Germany, France, Britain and the United States voted in favour of a full arms embargo.

Andrew Young: (text: United States Ambassador to the United Nations) In addition, we are undertaking a thorough review of relations with South Africa in all areas, including the area of nuclear co-operation. The possibility that South Africa might explode a nuclear device and develop nuclear weapons capability has been of gravest concern to my government, as it has to all members of the international community. Such a step would be a serious blow to the security situation in Africa, and also to global efforts to prevent the further proliferation of nuclear weapons.

Narration: But the value of the arms embargo was almost completely negated by the omission of any ban on the materials and technology for apartheid's most vital weapon: nuclear capability.

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And a recent book has effectively demonstrated that, without the help of the western powers - above all, West Germany and the United States - South Africa today would not be in a position to build nuclear weapons.

The Julian Friedmann publishing company operates out of a cramped and busy attic in North London. Himself an expatriate South African, many of Friedmann's books deal with Africa, and he harbours strong feelings about the government of his native land. In exile, he can publish works that would be banned in South Africa. Recently, he produced a book on South Africa's nuclear development, entitled "The Nuclear Axis".

Friedmann: Publishing a book like this is up to a point a crusade. I do select some of the books I publish because of the political values I hold. I believe that nuclear proliferation is a very serious problem. I believe that the South African government is trying to win its way, or woo its way into a sort of Western anti-Communist front. The South African government has policies which are completely abhorrent, and any attempt which the West makes to bolster up a white regime in South Africa must be opposed.

Narration: The co-authors of "The Nuclear Axis" have long experience in African affairs. At Upsala, in Sweden, Zdenek Cervenka is Research Director of the Scandinavian Institute of African Studies.

Cervenka: In my opinion, I think that the very fact, the very fact that it has been proved that she was ready to test the bomb amounted to the same as if she indeed did test the bomb. The political effect was the same.

Narration: Barbara Rogers is a political scientist who has worked for the British Foreign Office and the United Nations.

Rogers and Cervenka have sifted through a mass of material - mining statistics, export licenses, Congressional Hearings, magazine articles, documents stolen from a South African Embassy - to compile an impressive file of data that the South Africans and Western powers have tried to keep secret.

The book examines how a renegade state like South Africa, starting in the 1950s with no nuclear technology whatsoever, could advance to nuclear weapons status in an amazingly short space of time; it points out the failures of American nuclear policy, and raises serious questions about West Germany's nuclear intentions.

Friedmann: And when we launch it with the statement about Germany wanting its own nuclear deterrent quite independent of Nato, I think we're going to interest a lot of people in it who have no interest in South Africa specifically. So far, most people think the story is about the transfer of nuclear technology to South Africa, which is fine, but actually, if we're going to get the book off to a really big launch, um, I want to play up the other side of it - which in fact I think is more important.

Narration: The issues raised are so important that we decided to examine some of the book's claims by talking to the people concerned in West Germany, Sweden, London and Washington.

Barbara Rogers' research has convinced her that the root of nuclear proliferation lies in the American capital.

Rogers: When you start looking into the archives, talking to people in Washington, you begin to realize that there have been conflicting policies in the nuclear field.

Narration: The atom bombs which ended World War II made the United States master of the world. But this situation soon came to an end. When the Russians exploded their bomb in 1949, the world became a much more dangerous place to live in - even for Americans.

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President Eisenhower: (text: United Nations, 1953) The secret is also known by the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union has informed us that over recent years it has devoted extensive resources to atomic weapons. During this period, the Soviet Union has exploded a series of atomic devices - devices - including at least one involving thermonuclear reactions. If at one time the United States possessed what might have been called a monopoly of atomic power, that monopoly ceased to exist several years ago.

Narration: In this new realpolitical situation, Eisenhower's solution was the "Atoms for Peace" programme.

President Eisenhower: It is not enough to take this weapon out of the hands of the soldiers. It must be put into the hands of those who will know how to strip its military casing and adapt it to the arts of peace.

Narration: The aim of the Atoms for Peace programme was twofold: to try to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons; and to open up markets for the immensely costly domestic nuclear industry.

With its head start, the United States became the dominant producer of nuclear technology. More - at the present time, the US produces almost the entire supply of enriched uranium outside the Communist world.

Enriched uranium is critical: it is the fuel for reactors, as well as the explosive material for atomic weapons. And at this moment, the United States has a near monopoly.

It is big business - but a business that is immensely dangerous to world peace.

The International Atomic Energy Agency - the IAEA, a United Nations body - was set up to try to ensure that nuclear fuel is used for peaceful purposes only. Unless a country opens its reactors to IAEA inspectors, it cannot receive enriched uranium from the handful of supplier countries. The system has its inadequacies, as Dr. Barnaby, head of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute explains:

Dr. Barnaby: IAEA safeguards are not 100% effective, and they could not be by the very nature of the safeguards even if perfect technology were used, safeguards can not be 100%, it's just not possible.

Narration: An attempt was made to plug the holes in the safeguards system through the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. By this treaty, nuclear "have-nots", in order to gain access to the materials, pledge not to acquire nuclear weapons; while the "haves" pledge not to give others the possibility to make nuclear weapons.

But neither the IAEA safeguards nor the Non-Proliferation Treaty solve the basic contradictions of the nuclear marketplace - especially for the United States, the principal supplier.

Cervenka: You have a very strong anti-nuclear lobby, you know, the people who are pressing for arms limitations, for non-proliferation; but then you have an equally powerful lobby of the nuclear industry, the people selling, making and exporting the nuclear power stations.

Narration: Cervenka maintains that security was sacrificed to business.

Cervenka: First of all, it was the Americans who started it all, you know, the "Atoms for Peace" programme was the beginning of this new era, and what we now describe as the proliferation of nuclear energy, and then of course, as a result, nuclear weapons.

Alvarez: And this raised the big question which politicians in the United States, and

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Western Europe and Japan refuse to face: Who are the real proliferators? Is it the country who is seeking to obtain the technology and divert the materials to fashion a bomb, to become a member of the Nuclear Club? Or is it the exporting country, that provides the technology, the manpower, the equipment, and the material necessary for membership? I contend that it is the exporting country. And it is a mythical notion to assume that when you sell somebody nuclear power technology, you are not selling them nuclear bomb technology.

Narration: Of the many countries that have refused to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, South Africa is one. This does not seem to have impeded in any way South Africa's march towards nuclear weapons capability.

Exploitation of South Africa's vast uranium resources began in the 1950s. Financed by British and American capital, it was tied to the guaranteed supply of uranium to those countries. South African uranium was considered essential to the West's strategic stockpile of weapons.

From the beginning, all nuclear activities came under the strict control of the South African government through the Atomic Energy Board. Pelindaba/Valindaba is South Africa's nuclear headquarters. By stringent laws, all stages of South Africa's nuclear activities are hidden in secrecy.

Not content to be merely a supplier of raw uranium, the South African government decided to acquire reactors, and to compete in the field of uranium enrichment.

Donald B. Sole: It was only natural that we should enter the field of nuclear power, bearing in mind that we are a major producer of uranium. In fact, if I can recall the figures correctly, we produce at the moment about 18% of the requirements of uranium, which is number 3 in the western world. And when you do have a natural resource, it is the natural tendency to develop that resource, to use it in every possible application, and that is what we are doing. In the nuclear field, we are in a position to cover the whole nuclear cycle with the exception of reprocessing plants.

Narration: The importance that South Africa places on nuclear co-operation with the United States can be seen at the South African Embassy in Washington. The present Ambassador is a specialist in nuclear affairs, having served for some years with the International Atomic Energy Agency. However, Ambassador Sole is unwilling to concede that South Africa received any special assistance from the United States.

Ambassador Sole:...this was a contribution, but the development of South Africa's nuclear energy advances had in its origin fundamentally our own particular genius, if I may call it that, in this particular field.

Ron Walters: (text: Associate Professor of Political Science, Howard University) US co-operation with South Africa in the nuclear field has been going on since at least 1957. The United States signed agreements for co-operation with South Africa at the time and it is fair to say that without this particular co-operation, South Africa wouldn't be as advanced as it is today. The co-operation is broad. It runs the gamut from trade in special nuclear materials, that is, nuclear materials that can produce explosives, to exchange and technical assistance to many other fields where it is necessary for South Africa to have expert advice on the development of its technical capability.

Rogers: Without the Americans, the South Africans would have no research establishment and development capability for nuclear power today. There only reactor is an American reactor.

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Narration: In buying this reactor, built by the American company Allis-Chalmers for a mere $4\frac{1}{2}$ million dollars, South Africa gained access to the fruits of years of American research and development. It is part of US-South African nuclear co-operation that is to extend beyond the year 2,000.

The Pelindaba reactor uses uranium enriched to weapons grade. Since the enriched uranium is supplied by the United States, it comes under strict IAEA controls. What is not controlled is the training of South African scientists, which has been carried out on a wide scale by the United States - a favour not extended to all countries.

As a result of more than a little help from their friends, the South Africans were quickly able to build their own reactor, and then a pilot uranium enrichment plant.

Although the enrichment plant comes under no safeguards, the United States government nevertheless in 1974 granted a licence to an American company, the Foxboro Corporation, to export computers essential for running the South African plant. It is not known why the US did not insist on safeguards as a condition of sale, since the South Africans would probably not have been able to buy the computers elsewhere.

Walters: The problem really doesn't begin with the production of nuclear weapons by South Africa. It begins in a chain which has at its beginning technological co-operation. To that extent, South Africa has been shopping around for sophisticated laser technology and other electronic means of not only adding to its ability to enrich uranium but to develop processing and reprocessing capability. So that it seems to me we have to look at this situation as one of a broad range of technological co-operation which at the end of it you may or may not have - as I argue, you probably will have - the production of nuclear weapons.

Alvarez: I believe that the attitude of government officials, particularly in the State Department and the Department of Energy, about South Africa acquiring a nuclear weapons option is cynical and self-serving. And that although publicly these officials do espouse rhetoric concerning their distress over South Africa developing nuclear power, they privately have conceded to me in fact that South Africa's acquisition of nuclear weapons has been inevitable, and that because proliferation worldwide is inevitable, it might as well be the United States doing the selling, since we're more responsible than the next guy.

Narration: While sales of fuel and equipment may have been the prime motivation for the critical American involvement in South Africa's nuclear development, there is no doubt that the South Africans gained infinitely more than the Americans. It might even be asked, Where was the business acumen in establishing a nuclear industry that would inevitably compete one day with the United States - as well as being outside proliferation controls?

With the US role in South Africa's nuclear development in mind, it is worth looking more closely at the published version of the discovery of South Africa's underground test. It will be remembered that it was stated that President Carter reacted to Russian warnings of the forthcoming test; but with the critical importance of this area, why were the Americans caught unawares? Or were they? After all, they too had been monitoring the area by spy satellite.

In Sweden, at the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, Bhupendra Jasani, a nuclear physicist, analyses the movements of spy satellites. From open information available from Nasa, it is possible to plot ground-tracks of a satellite, and thus make an intelligent guess at what the satellite is monitoring on the ground.

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Jasani: And here is an example of the very well-known satellite called the Big Bird, which was launched on 27th of June, 1977, and as you can see on this chart that there are several passes made in the region of South Africa. Rather close passes and at regular intervals. But there are specifically 3 which I'd like to point out, which made passes over the South African nuclear test site on the 4th of July, 15th, and 26th of July. And it's possible that at that time the Americans may well have seen what was happening.

Narration: The ground-tracks of the Big Bird satellite follow a path directly over the test-site in the Kalahari Desert. What is significant is that, at the end of July, before being warned by the Russians on August 6 about the South African test, Big Bird had been manoeuvred into a position which would give it a closer view of the test site area.

These preparations for an underground test took place in a location not unlike the supposed South African site in the Kalahari. In a desert landscape, with no cover, the conditions for aerial photography are perfect. Misinterpretation of what was going on was hardly possible. Elaborate structures and equipment not easily concealed are essential to such a test. Portable buildings have to be moved in. Miles of cable have to be laid out for recording the blast and its effects.

Controller at Nevada site: "...5,4,3,2,1 - Zero Time!"

Narration: The South Africans must have known that neither their preparations nor the test itself could go undetected. What the Russians said could be discounted as propaganda; as for the Americans, did the South Africans have reason to believe that they would not interfere?

Rogers: Obviously the Americans knew about the Kalahari test. They must have known about that test-site before the Russians did. So then the question becomes, Why did they keep quiet about it? It seems obvious to me that those elements in the American administration which received the information about the test in the Kalahari were precisely those which had an interest in allowing South Africa, or even helping it along a bit, to get its own nuclear potential. Whereas those who were trying to stop South African proliferation were those who don't get access to the most sensitive and secret material.

Text: Johannesburg, South Africa, 1976.

Narration: In the pre-Carter administrations of Ford and Nixon, it was Kissinger who decided foreign policy. And Kissinger's policy towards South Africa had been one of accommodation with Prime Minister Vorster. It was during Kissinger's tenure at the State Department that the computers went to South Africa's enrichment facility.

The Carter administration is less well disposed towards South Africa's white regime.

Amabassador Young: (Text: United Nations, November 1, 1977) Finally, I am sure you are aware of assurances Prime Minister Vorster has given to President Carter concerning their nuclear program. We take these assurances seriously, and would respond promptly and vigorously, in concert with others, should it appear that South Africa does not intend to honor them...

Narration: But the Americans have left themselves with very little leverage. They sold, without safeguards, the computers that now enable the South Africans to enrich their own uranium, and thus eventually become independent of US supplies. For that reason, the one weapon available - the cut-off of American fuel - no longer holds any fears for South Africa.

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Ambassador Sole: We would then simply have to produce our own fuel. This might lead to a couple of years' delay, but no longer.

Narration: Of all the countries outside the Non-Proliferation Treaty, South Africa is unique, for it is the only one that has abundant supplies of domestic uranium, as well as the ability to enrich it. As a result, US policy towards South Africa has been a carrot and stick approach. Since 1976, the US has withheld supplies of enriched uranium to South Africa; these supplies would be resumed were South Africa to accede to the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Text: South Africa's enrichment plant, Valindaba.

Weiss: Yes, I think the United States has - up to a point is better off in supplying South Africa with certain types of nuclear materials, assuming the South Africans were willing to abide by an international safeguards agreement, than by trying to prevent these materials from going to South Africa. If you drive a country that is on the fringe further away from the centre, it seems to me that you run the risk of having that country simply say, We will not pay any attention whatsoever as to what the international community thinks, and we will go ahead and make nuclear weapons, and do whatever we like in order to assure our continued existence. That has to be balanced against the obvious pressures that can be brought to bear as a result of withholding trade, and, you know, and other contacts with the South Africans, for example. I think it's fair to say that a certain mixture of rewards and punishments, if you will, you know, might be applied in this case in order to achieve the result that we seek in the case of South Africa.

Professor Johnson: Officials still do articulate the idea, which I think is rather far-fetched, that if you continue to supply them relatively small amounts of enriched material, and supply technological assistance, training, and so forth, that this will guarantee some sort of access for the United States to their operations, and will give us some leverage against them. That almost assumes that South Africa has no intention of competing with the United States, when in fact much of what they say and what they are doing would imply just the reverse.

Rogers: Probably the most important installation that South Africa has, as of now, is its enrichment plant. And this is the thing that is most worrying the non-proliferation specialists. It has an enrichment plant which is totally unsafeguarded. In other words, no outsider has any access to it, despite the fact that it is precisely this process of enrichment which has been isolated by many, including the Americans, as the one process which they have to keep control of at all costs.

Narration: In 1976, during Congressional Hearings, an attempt was made to find out why the South Africans were so interested in enrichment capability. The Energy Research and Development Administration, defending the policy of nuclear co-operation, saw no need for concern: "We believe that South African officials have been open and candid in discussing their reasons and plans for achieving an independent enrichment capability...there is nothing suspicious, illogical, or inconsistent in South African claims that the enrichment plant is for commercial purposes."

And yet this statement was made against a history of South Africa's refusal to sign the Non-Proliferation Treaty, where signing would be an indication that they did not want atomic weapons.

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Ambassador Sole: For example, if we were to accede to the Non-Proliferation Treaty it would be necessary for all our nuclear activities to be placed under IAEA controls. Now, we do have in South Africa an enrichment facility - at present not on a commercial scale - but the IAEA is not in a position to tell us what safeguards would apply to an enrichment facility. There is no IAEA safeguard for an enrichment facility. The only countries which do have enrichment facilities are countries which have nuclear bomb capacity, and, to the best of my knowledge they have never admitted IAEA inspectors into their enrichment facilities.

Narration: The formulators of the Non-Proliferation Treaty already have nuclear weapons, and, for security reasons, are not about to share their secrets with anyone. It is to be assumed that the same security guides South Africa. It reveals a gaping hole in the Non-Proliferation Treaty which South Africa, as a producer of both raw and enriched uranium, is uniquely free to exploit.

Professor Johnson: I think it's very evident that South Africa has something to gain in holding out against signing the NPT, because what it seeks by developing its own enrichment facility is the capacity to sell enriched material on the open market to whomever wishes to buy it, whether or not the purchaser has signed the NPT, or intends to abide by the inspection obligations and so forth. It gives South Africa an expanded market, a competitive edge against the Western powers, if it is free from those limitations as it tries to sell its enriched materials.

Rogers: South Africa in fact could in a sense undercut the traditional suppliers of enriched uranium, who are in fact the Americans and the Soviets, simply by saying, We will quietly ignore, or we will truncate in some way the normal safeguards on the supply of this material. This is where the real danger to nuclear proliferation comes in.

Dr. Barnaby: And particularly as South Africa becomes more desperate in its situation, possibly desires and is finding it very difficult to get allies and friends, it may use enriched uranium, even to weapons grade uranium, as a means of winning allies and friends. It could be extremely serious. There are obviously a number of countries who may decide to be in a market for weapons grade fissile material, including enriched uranium. I think most people now believe that a world of many nuclear powers is a very dangerous world, in the sense that the probability of nuclear war will increase. And therefore the situation would for these reasons be a very dangerous one indeed - something we should do our utmost to avoid.

Narration: In August of 1977, shortly after abandoning the test, then Prime Minister Vorster made a defiant attack on the Non-Proliferation Treaty countries.

Prime Minister Vorster: ...Why must South Africa again be singled out? The USA; the Soviet Union; and the United Kingdom are parties to the Treaty, but they have fully protected their positions as nuclear weapon states, with large nuclear arsenals. Such, ladies and gentlemen, are the double standards to which South Africa is subjected to in this way. And I say so in all seriousness. Matter of fact, I say so in all humility. If these things continue, and don't stop, the time will arrive when South Africa will have no option - small as it is - to say to the world, "So far and no further. Do your damndest, if you so wish!"

(Ovation)

Narration: South Africa's survival as a white state depends ultimately on the support of the West. Was it Vorster's hidden threat that the West should continue that support, or face uncontrolled proliferation and nuclear chaos - which South Africa is in a position to bring about?

END OF REEL I

REEL I

REEL II

Narration: The Ruhr is West Germany's industrial heartland. Formerly, the might of the Ruhr, of Germany, was based on coal. Now, the mines are dying.

But the companies that own the mines are not dying. Their interest is in energy, wherever it comes from; yesterday it was coal; tomorrow, uranium.

West Germany, like the rest of Europe, has decided that its future lies with nuclear power. Nuclear technology is one of West Germany's fastest growing industries. In international markets, the West Germans - who started much later - are competing very seriously with the Americans.

Seeking independence from the American enrichment monopoly, the Germans developed their own technology to enrich uranium. Known as the jet-nozzle, it is more expensive than the American system - but it is German.

The company responsible for the development and marketing of the jet-nozzle is Steag of Essen.

In 1969, after great pressure from the United States, West Germany signed the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Cervenka: One has to recall the debate about Germany signing the Non-Proliferation Treaty - which was done after heated debate, against very strong opposition, and after a long delay. I mean, after a delay when it started, when people started to have suspicions why, you know, Germany hesitated to sign.

Narration: There was now a double nuclear restraint on West Germany, since the Nato Treaty also binds her not to build atomic weapons on German soil. The army of the Federal Republic is now the strongest in Western Europe, the backbone of Nato; yet so wary were the Nato allies of a revival of German militarism that West Germany became a Nato member only on condition that she did not have access to the atomic weapons stationed on German soil, yet firmly under US control.

But in 1976, a major scandal in West Germany brought into question the way that country was honouring both the Nato Treaty and the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

South Africa's newly built embassy in Bonn houses an active staff. South African -West German trade has increased enormously in the past decade, and the relationship between the two countries has been excellent, despite official German condemnation of apartheid.

But in 1975, the South African Embassy mislaid some files. It is not known how, but these files came into the hands of the African National Congress, a South African liberation organization, which made them public. To the embarrassment of South Africa and West Germany.

Dr. Francis Meli (African National Congress): We managed to get documents which showed the close collaboration between the West German government and the racist regime of South Africa. The documents which we have show clearly that South Africa has support not only from firms and corporations in West Germany, but from the government, direct government support.

Narration: Dr. Cervenka believes it is impossible to overestimate the importance of the documents.

Cervenka: In any research, especially research in international relations, on such hot topics like nuclear co-operation, it happens very seldom that you are actually in possession of a hard piece of evidence, which of course changes the whole picture. In most cases, it is always based on pieces of evidence, how they fit together, and you deduce your conclusions, but they could be always challenged, unless you are in a position to produce what we call irrefutable evidence.

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Narration: The evidence published by the African National Congress consists of sensitive correspondence between the West German government, military and industry, and the South African Embassy, much of it on nuclear affairs. The personal files of the South African Ambassador were laid open.

Prior to becoming Ambassador to the United States, Donald Bell Sole was South African Ambassador to West Germany. Before that, he was South Africa's representative to the International Atomic Energy Agency. He has also been president of that body.

In a letter written when Sole was taking up his new duties as Ambassador to West Germany, his predecessor warned him to tone down his nuclear enthusiasm: "I feel that the less said in public at this stage about this aspect of our relations with the Federal Republic, the more success we shall be able to achieve behind the scenes..." But it seems likely that Sole's background was the very reason he was chosen as Ambassador, for the relationship between South Africa and West Germany in matters nuclear starts a chain reaction from the time of his appointment. It was Sole who brought together Steag, the German company, and the South African Atomic Energy Board. It was the beginning of a flurry of contacts between Pelindaba and Steag, culminating in a great coup for South Africa, and for Sole personally.

Cervenka: The most important aspect of the co-operation between the state company Steag and the South African Atomic Energy Board was that it was through West Germany that South Africa acquired the most important and crucial link in the whole of the nuclear business, the enrichment technology.

Dr. Geisler: The enrichment plant is the decisive step for South Africa to get atomic weapons. There are two ways to get nuclear bombs, the one by plutonium, the other one by highly enriched uranium. And South Africa has chosen the way by highly enriched uranium. The technology to enrich uranium which was applied in South Africa is the jet-nozzle technology. This technology was given to South Africa, and it was tested by the Steag Company of Essen, in South Africa.

Cervenka: When the co-operation between South Africa and Steag was exposed, instead of taking measures that this would not continue, would not happen, the government took into protection, you know, the company, defending it against its left - as they call it, - its left-wing critics.

Narration: Dr. Geisler, a leader of the West German Anti-Apartheid movement, has taken a leading role in asking awkward questions about the contents of the stolen documents. In return, he claims to have suffered harrassment from the German authorities.

Geisler: Members of the Anti-Apartheid Movement were called to be agents of East Germany.

Narration: In the present atmosphere in West Germany, criticism is easily confused with terrorism, an attempt to destabilize the government. It is an atmosphere conducive to cover-ups.

Geisler: ...trying to create the impression that these people are criminals.

Cervenka: Instead of admitting that a mistake was made, and to do something about it, all efforts of the government would be to, were directed against those who were raising these allegations and accusations, and presenting evidence, which was never answered. This is the most interesting thing, that not one of the documents which was presented with a question to the government was ever commented upon, was never denied, but was never answered.

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But the question of responsibility of a government comes to the point, you know, when you find out that your own companies - and this is even more serious - when your own state-owned or -subsidized companies - are trespassing or go beyond the limits, breaching your own agreements, like the Non-Proliferation, providing the know-how to a country which is not a signatory, like South Africa. And also I think going ahead with business and not sort of fully informing the government. But when the government knows, and does not act, you have the question, the question of responsibility arises. And I dare to say, that the West German government did not behave very responsibly when the exposure of a corporation was made.

Geisler: The government has financed the development of this technology, and the government has given the allowance to the companies to deliver material, sensitive nuclear material, to South Africa.

Narration: Since the West German government is supposed to control the nuclear industry, Dr. Geisler interprets the government's failure to explain as complicity. How much the highest levels of government knew about Steag's dealings with South Africa is by no means clear - possibly deliberately so. Certainly government approval had to be given for the kind of co-operation that took place between Steag and Pelindaba. Nevertheless, Geisler's final accusation cannot be proved beyond a shadow of a doubt.

Geisler: ...it must be said that the West German government is giving voluntarily and with consciousness this technology for the building of atomic weapons to South Africa.

Text: "Stern" magazine, Hamburg.

Narration: That there was a West German military interest in South Africa's nuclear potential was revealed in the affair of General Rall.

The Rall scandal was broken by the reporter Werner Heine of the influential German magazine "Stern".

Heine: One day, in September '75, someone from Bonn called me and said he would have hints that the highest in rank German officer to Nato had been in South Africa on an official trip. So I took the next flight to Bonn, met some people there, and they gave me the whole file. And when I saw this file through, it seemed very interesting.

Narration: What Werner Heine had been given was Ambassador Sole's correspondence concerning General Rall.

Heine: General Günter Rall, an ex-Nazi officer, later on in Germany in the new Bundeswehr supreme head of the Luftwaffe, and then later on highest officer at the German delegation in Brussels at the Nato had visited the apartheid regime in South Africa for three weeks in October of '74. The South African Ambassador had prepared for this trip of Mr. Rall a complete programme with about 70 items, and that one of these items was a visit to the Nuclear Research Centre in Pelindaba, South Africa.

Narration: Rall's itinerary was as follows: "11.00 am, Drive to Atomic Energy Board, Pelindaba. 11.30, Conference with the President of the Atomic Energy Board; 14.30, Visit to the Laboratories..."

West Germany is highly sensitive to accusations of fascist tendencies, and so military co-operation with South Africa is political dynamite. When a leading member of West Germany's military establishment visited South Africa, a good cover story had to be found. This was that he was going on a private visit to an old Luftwaffe buddy who now lived there.

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Heine: And here's an outgoing secret telegram from, er, the South African Embassy in Cologne to the South African Embassy, London, just to show how they tried to hide how General Rall was indeed official there. He writes here, "I've arranged for Lt. General Rall and Mrs. Rall to visit South Africa as the guests of our Dept. of Defence" (that can't be private) "but ostensibly as the guests of Mr. Kurt Dahlman, Editor of the Windhoek "Algemeine Zeitung". General Rall was until the 31st of March of this year head of the Luftwaffe, and is now German military representative to the Military Council of Nato. No publicity whatsoever is being given to this visit and for security reasons General and Mrs. Rall will travel as Mr. and Mrs. Ball." At the end of his visit, Guntar Rall wrote a letter on his private paper, handwritten, to Donald B. Sole, and Rall says that such a visit is still a riskful undertaking, because of, in quotes, "our official political position". He said that there are some rumours in Bonn because some people in the Parliament got to know that he was in South Africa as a guest. But then he says further that they both, Rall and Sole, should further build up their cover-up that he was as a private man on a private trip.

Narration: When Heine went to see Rall - who didn't know that Heine had all the correspondence - the General stuck to his cover story.

Heine: He said, "There was nothing official. Of course, I had some official contacts, that's quite clear in my position, and they gave me some facilities to do my trip there". But, well, we knew better, we knew that these facilities were the aircraft of the South African Defence Forces, that these facilities were speeches with the chief of the Research Centre in Palindaba. At the end of the talk with Mr. Rall and his secretaries, I had the impression that Rall was nearly smashed. The official speaker of the Ministry of Defence said to me afterwards that he had given the advice to Rall to deny everything which wasn't proved by us that he was lying.

Narration: Unfortunately for Rall, Heine had all the proof he needed. In correspondence with his government in Pretoria, Sole had written that he had the approval of the German Defence Minister, Georg Leber, for Rall's visit, but this was now vehemently denied by Leber. Sole insisted that it was all a misunderstanding: astonishingly, he maintained that he had misrepresented Leber's involvement to his own superiors in South Africa. So, either Sole or Leber was lying, or both.

Shortly afterwards, Sole was recalled from the Bonn Embassy. Far from being admonished for lying to his government, he was rewarded with the even more prestigious Washington Embassy.

Repercussions for Leber, the West German Defence Minister, were thus avoided. General Rall took full responsibility for the trip, and was allowed to resign.

Heine: And Rall, Rall, well he had no real damage of this affair - a few months' later, he was employed by an arms manufacturing corporation.

When I had my talk with Rall, I asked him of course what his impression of Palindaba was, and he said, "Well, he had no knowledge of nuclear things, and he was led by these officials through great clean rooms and he met clean people in white dresses, and there was no impression he said he could give me of the technical side.

Narration: No explanation was ever offered of why a top German general, in a key position inside Nato, was invited to South Africa as a guest of the Department of Defence, and granted the rare privilege of access to South Africa's nuclear facilities, including a conference with the president of the Atomic Energy Board.

Irrefutable evidence for their final thesis is not available to the authors: if they had it, it could split the Nato alliance wide open, and even start a European war. But based on their research, they offer one possible interpretation of the Bonn-Pretoria axis.

ARMED

Friedmann: ...we've moved the emphasis more onto Germany, away from South Africa. I think in fact that's where the real story lies. I mean, South Africa is not getting its weapons because there are people in Germany with Nazi or ex-Nazi connections, who feel altruistic towards the white regime in South Africa. They're not doing it for any other reason than it's going to benefit themselves directly in Germany.

Cervenka: And one has to look at it in the light of the fact that until today, the Americans have not made it clear whether or not they would come to the defence of West Germany with the use of nuclear weapons. That means there is not yet a German finger on the nuclear trigger, of the nuclear weapons which are stored on Nato sites in Germany. This is a situation which is difficult for West German generals, very difficult for West German generals to bear.

Narration: There remains one way for West Germany to develop its own atomic weapons, and still keep within its Nato obligations - although it would violate the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Geisler: The Treaty of Paris and Brussels, of the West European Union in 1954, has forbidden it to West Germany to build atomic weapons "on its own territory". And this funny formulation allows it, West Germany, to build this kind of weapons, and also rockets, on foreign, other territories. And exactly this is what happened, West Germany tried to acquire atomic weapons, and the main partner for this, the main partner, is South Africa.

Text: Atomic business between West Germany and South Africa: poster published by West German anti-Apartheid Movement. ID Prime Minister Vorster and Chancellor Schmidt.

Cervenka: And having a access to a nuclear weapon of a country which acquired it through their help, this creates a situation that they would have an alternative. The kind of alternative you don't have to spell out but everybody knows about. That means an alternative to own nuclear deterrent.

Narration: "Pelindaba" and "Valindaba", South Africa's nuclear heart, are two Zulu words.
"Pelindaba" means, "We don't talk about this any more".
"Valindaba" means, "We don't talk about this at all".

END

ELMER