

Yale-UN Oral History
Mr. Roelof (Pik) Botha
Jean E. Krasno, Interviewer
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South Africa

Jean Krasno: Mr. Botha, what I thought we would start with is, if you could give me a little bit of background on yourself: where you were born and educated, and when you began your professional service, and ultimately became foreign minister.

[Discussion of tape recorder, tape length.]

Roelof Botha: I was born in a town here in South Africa called Rostenberg, about a hundred kilometers from Pretoria, on 27 April 1932. It was a Wednesday.

JK: A Wednesday. [Laughing] Okay.

RB: It was a Wednesday then. I was named after my father, Roelof Frederik Botha, because I was the third son in the family. In our tradition, the third son is named after his father. The first son is named after his father's father, the second son after the mother's father, and the third son after his own father. I was educated in a town called Broederstroom, where I matriculated. In South Africa, matriculating means, "ending your school." It is usually twelve years. You go to school at the age of six, and then after twelve years you finish school, and are then ready to go to university, if you pass your final exams in such a way. You must have taken certain subjects to go to university, and you must pass in such a way that you get what they call "exemption" to go to

university. I then attended the University of Pretoria, and studied law. I matriculated in 1949, ended my school education, and went to Pretoria University in 1950. And then at the end of '52, I obtained my first bachelor's degree in law. Three years later, the real legal degree—in South Africa you could not study what we call an “L.L.D.” until you first had a B.A. So it is a five to six year study. I completed my first degree at the end of '52, and my second degree at the end of '56. But in the meantime, I joined the Department of Foreign Affairs in 1953, and then continued with my legal studies extramurally. The classes, the lectures for the law degree at the University of Pretoria were given outside office hours; in other words, in the mornings, from seven-thirty to quarter-past-eight, and then in the afternoons from five to seven.

JK: My goodness. So you were working and going to school.

RB: Virtually all the students taking that course had what we call a contract with some attorneys or lawyers for whom they worked, or they had some other job. In my case, I joined the Department of Foreign Affairs in February '53 as a Cadet. That's what we were called at that stage, and then you were appointed on a probation[ary basis]. And every six months your seniors and controllers would send in a report on you and your adaptability and suitability for the diplomatic service. Luckily, I apparently passed, so I became a career diplomat. My first mission abroad was as a Third Secretary in our delegation in Stockholm, Sweden. That was in 1957. In '57 I was transferred there, and then in the beginning of 1960 I was transferred to our embassy in Germany, and then I was transferred back to South Africa at the beginning of '63, and I as then attached to the

legal team—South Africa’s legal team—which was preparing for our response to the case Ethiopia and Liberia brought against us on the issue of what was then known as Southwest Africa, and later, Namibia. It was a very long, drawn out case from the early ’60 until the judgment was given in 18 July 1966.

JK: Right. And this was the International Court of Justice in The Hague.

RB: The International Court of Justice in The Hague. And what happened was the Organization for African Unity passed a resolution which mandated Ethiopia and Liberia as the litigants—as the two governments of countries that would institute the proceedings of the case of South Africa on the issue of Southwest Africa, because Ethiopia and Liberia were the only two independent states in the olden days of the League of Nations. All the others came into being at a much later stage, and I think that their legal advisors told them, the OAU, “you’d better choose two African states that had been independent during the time of the League of Nations,” because we were dealing with a situation of implementation of the mandate, which was grounded by the League of Nations to the then government of South Africa in 1920 or ’21. So the whole case centered mainly on the issue of the legality of our presence in Southwest Africa, as well as the policies followed there. Ethiopia and Liberia made out a very, very strong case that there existed a norm, or a standard, but a norm in international law of non-discrimination. In other words, that it was against international law to allocate rights, duties, privileges, or responsibilities on the basis of membership in a class, a group, or on the basis of religion, sex, and what have you. They said that there was such an international [norm], and that

that is on the merits of the case. Our response to that was no, that there is not a prohibition of forms of discrimination as long as the discrimination is not in the pejorative sense of the word, that there is not to be a disadvantage of another person on the basis of color or religion. In other words, we went so far as to say that having separate toilets for men and women would also be against the law [as they argue it], but we said no, it isn't, because it is not a discrimination that damages the allocation of that discrimination in a neutral sense of the word. And so forth.

In 1953, as I said, I joined the Department of Foreign Affairs, was transferred to Stockholm, Sweden in '57, to Germany in '60, and back to South Africa in '63, when I became a member of the South African legal team, and I remained a member of the legal team until the judgment on 18 July '66. We won the case in the sense that the court "rejected" the claims of Ethiopia and Liberia, saying that they did not have sufficient legal interest in the charges they made, or in the claims...

JK: Did that mean that they were not bordering states of Southwest Africa?

RB: No. You see, to be a litigant, in litigation you must have a 'locus standi;' you must have sufficient legal interest in the outcome of the case. It must affect you in a rather direct manner. And the Court found that as members of the old League, or what have you, they did not have that standing.

JK: They did not have that standing.

RB: They lost their case on technical grounds, but for us, we considered it to be a major victory, because had the Court found against us, it would probably have ordered us to leave the territory immediately.

JK: Right.

RB: To vacate it, and if you had then refused, then in terms of the Charter of the United Nations the Security Council could take direct action against you. They need not even find that there is a breach of the peace, because normally before the Security Council acts, there must be a breach or a threat to the peace in a given region. Then there are the facts, they discuss the matter, and if that is the case, they can decide on enforcement measures, either of an economic, and even often military, a forceful nature. And in the case of a judgment of the International Court of Justice, the mere fact that the party against whom the Court has handed down a verdict refuses to implement that verdict, that judgment, then the Security Council can, ipso facto, without doing anything else, immediately decide on enforcement measures against that government refusing to implement a world court judgment. So it was of very great importance to us at that time to win the case, or not to lose it.

JK: Right.

RB: So we didn't lose it, but then all hell broke loose at the United Nations. That year, 1966, was a tumultuous year for us. Dr. Verwoerd, who was then Prime Minister of

South Africa, was assassinated in September of '66. His last public speech was on the evening of 18 July 1966, when he addressed the country on the judgment of the International Court of Justice. That was his last public statement.

JK: And then he was assassinated.

RB: And then he was assassinated just before the opening of Parliament that year in September 1966. Mr. Vorster then became Prime Minister of South Africa. And the legal team, including myself, had to go to the United Nations because there was a tremendous debate in the General Assembly as a result of the Court's judgment, with the emotions running very, very high, with many countries, particularly the African countries, demanding the resignation of the judges of the International Court of Justice, and some of them even implied that they were corrupted and bought and bribed and that sort of thing. It was a very, very emotional debate. We endeavored, our legal team and our delegation there, to put across our case in a dignified manner. There I learned the very painful lesson that it doesn't matter how much the law is on your side; you can win a legal battle, but if you lose the political battle, the legal victory is of no account. It doesn't help you; it doesn't assist you. It's just wiped off the table; it's nonexistent. It is reduced to emotion and power, and so remains even today. I can only say [about] the guideline to morality in international affairs that there isn't, in my opinion, as yet, consistent morality. Even not today in international affairs. It is still power that determines what is right or wrong, as was proved by the whole sad Kosovar war and trouble, and will be proved, in my opinion, for decades to come. I do not think that in the

field of international relations and international law we have reached the stage where people are inclined to act ethically and morally and religiously in the way in which we ought to act, from my religious Christian point of view. I'm Christian, and Christ has made it quite clear to us how you should behave even towards your enemy, and I'm afraid that that is simply not the case, and for a long time to come power—be it economic power, or military power, or a combination of both—will keep on defining the degree of morality of mankind for a long time to come. Be that as it may, we need not dwell on that too long.

As far as the rest of my career is concerned, I was a member of the South African delegation to the United Nations General Assembly: to its 22nd Session, 23rd Session, 24th Session, 26th Session, 28th Session, and 29th Session. That is of 1966 to '68, '71, '73, '74. I became a Member of Parliament in 1970.

JK: I see.

RB: I was reelected in '74, and soon thereafter, I became our Ambassador at the United Nations in '74.

JK: Okay, so you were the Permanent Representative to the UN. And I believe it was at the same time that Pérez de Cuéllar was Permanent Representative of Peru.

RB: Yes.

JK: You were there at the same time.

RB: Quite correct, and what happened then was my credentials were rejected. I will never forget, President Bouteflika was the President of the General Assembly. He was the President of the General Assembly, 1974. And there was a debate; I was allowed two or three minutes to address the General Assembly, and thereafter a vote was taken, and my credentials were rejected and we had to withdraw.

JK: So South Africa had to withdraw.

RB: Not as a member, but we could never again participate in the General Assembly or any of its committees. And our Board, with the words "Republic of South Africa" remained there, but with a vacant chair, until after Mr. Mandela became President of this country. So that in 1994, twenty years later, for the first time that seat was taken up again by a South African representative.

JK: So your credentials were not accepted and you could not be a member of the General Assembly or vote, but you could remain a member of the United Nations. You were still a Member State.

RB: Yes, we remained a member. But we stopped paying our fees because the reasoning was how could you expect us to pay for services that we are excluded from and join? Be that as it may, for twenty years that seat remained unoccupied. I was the last to

address the General Assembly. Twenty years later, our new government's representative, for the first time, again addressed them. I remained Permanent Representative of South Africa, but was then appointed also Permanent Ambassador to the United States of America. So then I had a double position of Ambassador to the United States—that is now in 1975—as well as Permanent Representative to the United Nations. Of course my head court was then shifted to Washington, and whenever there was a Security Council meeting, and some of the problems—there were immense problems at that time in Angola, Mozambique, all around South Africa, with antagonism and the hostilities increasing all the time with the reduction of Cuban troops in '74 in Angola, that created a very critical situation over the whole of Southern Africa. And eventually these led to war, so that we were entering in '74 very difficult years, and very, I can almost say “stressful” years in the whole of Southern Africa, which lasted at least until '88, when I eventually signed that agreement, I think on 22 December '88, at the headquarters of the United Nations. There is a picture of the signing (shows picture): with General Malan, our Minister of Defense, myself, de Cuéllar, Schultz, this man was Chéf de Protocol of the UN...

JK: ...Marrack Goulding, and Martti Ahtisaari, Virendra Dayal, and I don't know who that is. That's a wonderful photograph.

RB: Right. That was quite something.

JK: Let me ask you about the period of time that you held both positions. Could you then operate as an observer at the UN? You mentioned that the Security Council would be meeting. Would they invite you as a participant in the discussions of the Security Council?

RB: No, because you see, the Security Council is different from the General Assembly. It is another organ at the United Nations, within its own right in the Charter, which clearly describes the various functions of the various organs or institutions of the United Nations. Although sometimes, again as in the past, with Korea, et cetera, the Americans sometimes used the General Assembly to pass resolutions which they could not get passed in the Security Council because of the veto, which the Soviet Union enjoyed, and so forth. But be that as it is, I've never been refused a hearing or participation in the Security Council.

Whenever there was a charge brought against South Africa by one of our neighboring states, mostly centering on cross-border activities of our defense force, then I flew from Washington to New York. I had to get the fax from home, prepare myself very often by working through the night to prepare my statement for the meeting of the Security Council, which usually started at ten o'clock, ten-thirty, eleven o'clock the next morning, depending on, you know how it goes there—the orchestrating and negotiations between the various members to try and produce a resolution, which can gain the most votes in support of it—that sort of thing. So I often participated in that. That was when I was Ambassador there, as I say.

On one occasion, there was a very unsubstantiated but harmful charge by some Swedish film producers saying that they discovered a whole heap of skulls and skeletons somewhere in Angola, and that we South Africans killed people there on this massive scale. And now they've discovered it, and even had pictures of it. I invited the whole press corps at the United Nations to do Namibia, then Southwest Africa. We went there in a plane, and I took them all over the whole Northern part of Southwest Africa at the time. They couldn't find a thing, couldn't see a thing, and couldn't get anybody to confirm this. Quite recently, it was admitted that it was a false story, a totally false story, fabricated. So you had a lot of these things.

You see, on the one hand, I couldn't agree with apartheid. And in that same year, in one of my major speeches in the Security Council, I publicly stated that I could not defend a discrimination based on a person's skin color. But I then gave the history of the country. I said, "Look, we are moving away from it. We want to move away from it. Please be patient, give us time," that sort of thing. And that helped me a lot in my personal relationship with leaders in Africa, as well as ambassadors and representatives at the United Nations, because they knew it was difficult to move away from the system that we had, and that you could easily lose your job. I almost lost my job in 1986, when I stated publicly, yes, there would be a black president one day in this country, and I would be prepared to serve under him. And it worked out exactly that way.

JK: Yes, you had the vision to do that.

RB: I said this in February '86, and in 1994, we indeed had a black president, and I was taken up in that government, and did serve under him, eight years later [after my statement]. But it was a different story in 1986; it was a very, very difficult story. But be that as it may, I was then appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs at the beginning of 1977, and traded my post as Permanent Representative to the UN, as well as Ambassador in Washington, and came back to South Africa, and was Minister of Foreign Affairs from April 1977 until May 1994.

JK: That's a very long time serving as Foreign Minister.

RB: It was quite a long stretch. Then in May 1994, after the elections, in which Mr. Mandela became President, I was appointed Minister of Mineral and Energy Affairs until June 1996, a month more than two years, when Mr. De Klerk, who was then Deputy President, decided to leave the government of national unity. I was against it, I warned him about it, he wouldn't listen, but the moment he resigned he was the leader of the national party. There was no way any of us could remain, because he had the right to nominate the ministers in his party who should serve in the Cabinet. So the moment that man who has the right to nominate falls away, then there is no one to nominate us constitutionally. So the moment he goes, we go. This is what happened. I then left politics in June in 1996, and have been acting as a consultant to companies and on political matters as well in Africa, South Africa mostly. And I've been trying to write my book on my experiences, my various jobs that I had.

Looking back today, I think that the three major tasks that I had to face was first of all, the whole issue of the independence of Zimbabwe. That was a very, very difficult one, and I took part in the negotiations prior to the independence of Zimbabwe, from 1977 to 1980. And I believe I played a prominent role in that. I went to London; I attended virtually all the meetings, difficult ones, very, very difficult. Of course, we had to persuade Mr. Ian Smith all the time that there was really no alternative for him but to accept. First, there was Henry Kissinger with a six- or seven-point plan, which was almost, almost accepted. It was already accepted by Nyerere [President of Tanzania] and Kaounda, and then, because Smith revealed the plan, the others felt slighted and the whole thing fell through. And years of patient negotiations then had to continue, but in 1980 it was over, and then I negotiated what is called the “Nkomati Accord.” Nkomati is the name of a river that runs on the border between South Africa and Mozambique.

JK: I see.

RB: And animosity was building up between Mozambique and us ever since '74, '75, '76, '77, and so on. Eventually in 1984, I succeeded in getting the two governments together, and we came to a development agreement, the terms of which we would have assisted each other, guaranteeing friendly relations, ending of assistance, either they to the ANC [African National Congress], or us to the rebel group they had at the time there.

JK: Renamo.

RB: Renamo. And that was considered by the whole world as a very great achievement, because we received telegrams even within the Soviet government, from President Reagan, from all over the world. I think the world saw, in the “Nkomati Accord,” they saw the possibility of relaxing the strained atmosphere in Southern Africa. They saw maybe the first little lights at the end of a long tunnel of darkness, maybe also moving them ahead on the issue of Namibia, or Southwest Africa, and so on. The Accord was indeed a very, very important event in our country, and although later on we had a lot of problems with the Mozambique government and our government, there was evidence that our military people did secretly assisted the Renamo rebels. I was very much against it, but it created suspicion, and the whole Accord almost came to a standstill at one stage because of that. But at that time, it made a tremendous contribution, and showed South Africans that you can come to an agreement, a peaceful agreement, to implement peace and not war, even with a government that does not share your political ideas and policies. In other words, the government of Samora Machel was generally regarded as a pro-Communist government, and we were exactly the opposite here. And here they came, being neighbors, and they took this hurdle in the interest of both, to come to this agreement of peace and development.

It was an important first step to also open the way for what happened in the years that followed with Southwest Africa and Namibia, which was of course the far greater, that was by far the greater challenge was that one. There was a war then, with fifty-, fifty-five thousand Cuban troops already in the territory, with South Africa almost directly at war at times against the Cubans. There were a vast number of Soviet Russian technicians, and the Americans were neutral. I believe that they would have liked, like

us, to get rid of the Cuban troops, because that was their greatest fear, was the presence of Cuban troops in Angola. At the same time, the Americans made it clear to us that if we can succeed in the withdrawal of the Cuban troops, then we ought to agree to the independence of Namibia. "Because," and I shared that view, "it is quite clear that you can say that your troops are needed there to turn the possible tide of Cubans moving southwards. But the moment they are out, there doesn't remain much of a case for you to say that you want to remain there, because the threat would then have been removed." That was in back in the setting, the background, when I entered as Minister of Foreign Affairs in April '77. You see, my major occupation at that stage was and remained Southwest Africa, Southwest Africa, and day in, day out. It became very, very difficult, particularly in '77. I think David Owen was then British Minister of Foreign Affairs. We got on quite well together, but it was not until President Reagan was elected that we for the first time really started to make good progress, and went ahead. Even so, it took eight years, until '88.

JK: I definitely want to talk about that period, but before we move on to that, I wanted to ask you about a few of the things that were happening more during the 1970s, because during that period of time there were economic sanctions that were brought to bear against South Africa for both the practice of apartheid within South Africa, and the issue of Southwest Africa. I wanted to ask you, what were the effects of economic and political sanctions in South Africa during the 1970s and 1980s?

RB: Of course it was damaging on the one hand; on the other hand, it also forced the private sector here, as well as the government, to invest in ventures, which could overcome the effect of sanctions. So I have always been against sanctions in any form, anywhere in the world. I very well remember when the Americans introduced sanctions against Poland years ago. I then asked Henry Kissinger, who was then Secretary of State, why did you do it? He said, well, he is also in two minds about the efficacy of sanctions, but this is to show the Communists they can't get away with murder. I then said to him, "Look, it is not the Communist leaders that will pay the price. It is the people of Poland. Those leaders will arrive in the same limousines, eat the same nice, luxurious food, and have the same nice, luxurious life that they have before. It is the people who will pay the price eventually." I do not think that sanctions really assisted us to get to the negotiating table. It hardened attitudes. In many cases, people act then almost revengefully, in a vindictive way, saying, "Alright, you try to get me down that way, I'll show you, you won't." It is that kind of mental, psychological attitude which hinders rather than encourages negotiations and deals and reconciliation.

JK: But was it frustrating for South Africa in the financial sector to get loans, or to access accounts?

RB: Of course it was, trade-wise we overcame the inevitable effect of sanctions to a large extent. We created front companies in Europe and elsewhere. They were directly serving on some of the companies that my department loans... who were even very close to the governments in Europe. Like, for instance, in France or Germany or Holland,

[there] would be a director of one of my companies, front companies, not knowing at all that it's a front company. That way, whatever the list, we provided the funds for activities and so on. It will be interesting one day to reveal where we operated. We even operated in Havana. We had a company [there].

JK: In Havana!

RB: In Havana, yes. But be that as it may, in the financial field, we reached a stage which was tight, to say the least, which was potentially very, very dangerous for us at one stage, which could have led to chaos in the international financial field in the sense that for instance, if you could not pay your debts anymore, or get approval for the turnover of loans—not so much the government loans, our private sector had major loans which could not be renewed—but then you reach a situation, you know, where a bank in Europe or America could have your shipload full of food or grain or meat virtually impounded, confiscated, and [could then] sell the contents, which would have meant havoc in the South African foreign trade sector. And so luckily it did not come to that; we survived that, and I say luckily because you know when you enter a negotiating process, and the one party feels that he is being trampled upon, you're not going to get negotiations properly off the ground. The foolhardy people, those who do not want to deal, to make agreements; they are the ones that then rise. They become stronger, saying to the public, “Look, this Pik Botha wants to sell you out to the blacks. We have the guns, we have the means, let's make war and continue.” That kind of sentiment becomes attractive if the reasonable people are not supported. I often told Western, and for that matter African,

leaders, I said, “Look, if you could just more often, when we do change a law, or when we do make it clear that we are moving away from apartheid, if you could then just say, ‘Look, this is a good thing. We support this,’ so that those of us who are behind those steps can then say to our public, ‘You see, if you do the right things, we will get credit from the Western world, from America, from Britain, and so on, so let’s do more of it and then we’ll get more credit...’”

JK: And then you’ll get more credit.

RB: But if you do not get any credit, if you’re trampled upon, then it’s almost like pulling the carpet from underneath your feet. They remove your power base vis-à-vis your own people. Your own people say, “But look, this Pik Botha is clamoring for the removal of apartheid, but look what he’s getting—a slap in the face upon a slap in the face. So if this is the way it’s going to be, then it’s not going to be that way at all!” This is not always understood, that those who work very hard inside the country to affect change do need these visible forms of support from outside in order to move faster and persuade your own people that it’s in our own interest to accept change.

JK: In 1978, the Security Council passed Resolution 435, which actually established the United Nations Transition Assistance Group for what was to become Namibia. But nevertheless, that resolution wasn’t put into effect until much later. What was the support or reaction of South Africa initially to 435?

RB: Yes, maybe we should just for a moment go back to '78. In '78...when was the resolution passed, did you say?

JK: It was passed in 1978, although I don't recall the month.

RB: That's right, but in that same year, the South African government accepted it. I was then Minister of Foreign Affairs, and I got it through our Cabinet. It was not easy, it was very, very difficult, but I pointed out to our Cabinet that this was inevitable, and that unless we accepted that resolution it is quite clear to me that the five Western members of the Security Council were going to get at us in a big, big way, unless we accepted this and start serious negotiations on its implementation. I had no doubt that it was going to be a very arduous, if not intractable task to implement eventually, because of the years of mistrust between us and SWAPO, and us and the United Nations, and the international juridical side of it. But I said, "Look, we better make a beginning, and the beginning is that we must accept it in principle." Luckily, the majority of the Cabinet members supported me, and the Prime Minister of the day supported me. So that was passed.

JK: Who was Prime Minister in '78?

RB: It was still Mr. Vorster.

JK: It was still Mr. Vorster, okay.

RB: It was still Mr. Vorster, and Mr. P.W. Botha, who later became Prime Minister, was then Minister of Defense. He was very much against it, against it.

JK: Okay, right. Now when the Western five came to South Africa, President Carter was President of the United States. Did you meet with the Western five?

RB: Oh yes, quite regularly. As a matter of fact, they came out here; I think it must have been...

[End of Side 1, Tape 1]

[Beginning of Side 2, Tape 1]

JK: We were talking about the Western five.

RB: Let me see if I can find a picture of them here somewhere.

JK: What is this book? I think we should just read this into the record.

RB: That is mine, I wrote it myself.

JK: You wrote this! Can we just get the title of the book? *Namibian Independence and Cuban Troop Withdrawal*. And you wrote this yourself?

RB: Well, by and myself, but I accepted the final responsibility of it.

JK: We should try to get a copy of that, is it possible to get a copy of this book?

RB: It is very, very scarce, this book.

The five ministers at that time, and they came here, all five. They first met me in New York in February '78. They were Mr. Louis de Guiringaud, France; Mr. Donald C. Jamieson, Canada; Mr. Hans-Dietrich Genscher of West Germany; Mr. Cyrus L. Vance, and Dr. David Owen, United Kingdom. Those were the five.

JK: And they were all the foreign ministers?

RB: Yes, they were the foreign ministers, and they came, and for the first time in our history, and it was the only time that five foreign ministers from any five countries visited South Africa. It was of major, major importance to us moving ahead. And you see, the problem started because we told the DTA...

JK: The DTA is the...

RB: The Democratic Turnhalle Alliance.

JK: A political party in Namibia.

RB: It's a number of parties that got together and formed this alliance. I don't know how many of them there were before, but then they united, the white parties and black parties and what have you united. And the place where they met was called the Turnhalle. It's a German word, I think, for a gymnastics hall. And from there comes the word.

JK: Okay, I see, they met in that building in Windhoek.

RB: Because they met there and started there. And what is important is that the DTA then won an election. We warned the five, we warned them. I warned them in February that the South African government was now ready to go ahead with the Resolution 435. We wanted to go ahead, we were in a hurry. And we told the parties in Namibia, "You'd better get ready, there's going to be an election." Then SWAPO made it difficult for everyone; we could not stop the process in Namibia. There was no way we could, our own public would have rejected us, because we said there were going to be elections, we said we were going to go ahead, and it will be free and fair, et cetera. The UN was not participating, saying, "It's too fast, SWAPO is not in, give them more time," and so on, and we said, "Look, we are very sorry, we can't stop it." And then these five gentlemen, the five representatives—and France, Britain, and US of course had permanent seats there, a veto, and Germany and Canada were the two Western members for two years only, in terms of the convention of electing members of the Security Council.

So here we were heading for a real impasse with the five saying we must call off the election, and us saying, "We cannot, you can ask us other things, but that's the one

thing you cannot ask us. It has gone too far.” And then they came out here to threaten us. You can read in Cyrus Vance’s book, *Hard Choices*, and in that book he describes in detail how he had already obtained President Carter’s permission to go ahead with sanctions, severe sanctions, all around, against South Africa, if we were going to install the DTA as the government of Namibia. It was an extremely difficult time and the way we found a *modus vivendi* that saved the day was that we promised the five that the Prime Minister and I would go to Windhoek and persuade the DTA, who won the election, that they can become the interim government, but [without] independence, and we would have to implement 435.

We went there, the Prime Minister and myself, it was a new Prime Minister, Mr. P.W. Botha, it was in December ’78. We did persuade them; it was a very hard and difficult task, but the boat almost sank. The boat almost sank. But you see, Resolution 435 was perhaps the most important of the lot. Maybe I should just review quickly—of course we cannot keep on talking until midnight—about these resolutions, and how difficult it was to reach the settlement proposal. Let us first deal with the proposal. This is for Resolution 435. That resolution, after its adoption, a number of further agreements and understandings were reached by the parties. These included the following, which together with the settlement proposal formed a comprehensive whole binding on all the parties. They are as follows:

- An agreement reached in ’82 that UNTAG would monitor SWAPO bases in Angola and Zambia. And Zambia.
- Informal understandings reached in 1982 on the question of impartiality of the United Nations and the representative of the Secretary-General.

- A 1982 agreement that a constitution to be drawn up by the constituent assembly would be formulated in accordance with certain principles and will be adopted by a two-thirds majority of the assembly's total membership. That is then after the election.

JK: Right, so then these were important agreements.

RB: There's another one.

- An agreement reached in '85 that the elections would be based on the system of proportional representation.

JK: And the proportional representation was something that South Africa favored.

RB: No, I think chronologically let me say that following the unanimous adoption by the Security Council of the United Nations of Resolution 385—that was way back in '76—demanding free and fair elections in Namibia. The five Western members that I've mentioned, of the Security Council, approached the South African government with the view to developing a settlement proposal, which could lead to free and fair elections and independence for the territory. The South African government agreed that it would participate in such a process on the clear understanding that the people of the territory inside Southwest Africa should be allowed to decide their own future without intermediation from whatever quarter. Over the following two years—that's now from '76 onwards—over the following two years, serious and protracted discussions between

the Western five and South Africa on the one hand, and the South African government and the leaders of Namibia on the other hand, took place. This culminated in the settlement proposal, which the Western five presented to the South African government on 10 April '78. The objective of the settlement proposal was to bring about the transition to independence for Namibia acceptable to all the parties. It was formally endorsed by the United Nations Security Council as Resolution 435 on 29 September 1978.

JK: I see.

RB: The key elements of the proposal are important. Let me mention them. The key elements of the proposal related to the holding of free and fair elections in the territory with an appropriate United Nations role. It was foreseen that the Secretary-General of the United Nations appoint a Special Representative, whose simple task would be to see that conditions were established which would allow free and fair elections, and an impartial electoral process. The Special Representative would be assisted by a United Nations Transition Assistance Group, called UNTAG. The purpose of the envisaged elections would be to elect representatives to a constituent assembly, which would draw up and adopt by a two-thirds majority a constitution for an independent and sovereign Namibia. In carrying out his responsibilities, the Special Representative would work together with the Administrator General as the representative of the South African government in the territory. I think from your point of view and from mine it is very

important just to dwell for a moment on the role of the Administrator General, because there has been a lot of misunderstanding.

JK: All right, that's good.

RB: The settlement proposal, 435, determined that the responsibility for the administration of Namibia during the transitional period—and this is very important—the responsibility for the administration of Namibia during the transitional period would be the primary task of the Administrator General as the representative of the South African government in the territory. In other words, there was no question that the UN would come and enter the territory and start making laws for it. Not at all. It was clearly and categorically stated that that would remain the task of the Administrator General.

JK: Right. And UNTAG was simply to assist.

RB: Yes, and in this regard, in this primary task of administering the territory, he, the Administrator General, will work closely together with the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General, in order to ensure the orderly transition to independence. Now, this was a key factor, because if these two—our Administrator General and the Secretary-General's Representative—if they were two people who were at loggerheads with each other, where the chemistry was so far apart, or so mutually, what shall I say, unacceptable, then we would never have had a process at all. But luckily, in the end, a man like Mr. Martti Ahtisaari, whom I then already knew well from

my days at the United Nations, and Mr. Louis Pienaar, who was Administrator General then in Namibia—he is a steady, stable type of person who does not easily get upset or emotional about matters. Being a lawyer, he acts fairly judicially. A bit too meticulous, I sometimes thought, and too much of a hair-splitter, so to say, to my taste. But nevertheless, I think it was the right choice, difficult as it could be, with all respect, because I appointed a Permanent Representative myself there to work under him.

JK: Oh, you did?

RB: Oh yes, Mr. Carl von Hirschberg. An outstanding man, he was my assistant at the United Nations, and he was also our Permanent Representative at the United Nations. So he knew everything about it. He was very, very intellectual, well developed man with a very, very good sense of justice and fairness, and that sort of thing. Knowing the world, knowing the UN. So the team that we put together, you see, Mr. von Hirschberg would phone me and say, “Martti Ahtisaari is very upset because of this and this and this,” but his boss, the Administrator General wouldn’t move. So then I phoned the Administrator General. Then I can’t say to him, “My man complained about you.” I must ask him for a report to me, and then in giving me a report on what is going wrong or what has gone wrong, I can then react by saying, “Please, man, we can’t afford to have a stalemate over this, we must make progress, don’t you see this?” and then I would try to persuade him. What is important is really just to look at the tasks, because in these tasks you see the Secretary-General’s man, Mr. Martti Ahtisaari, had to assist.

JK: That's right.

RB: They had to work together. What were the tasks? Administer the day to day running of the territory. It's a government; it's a government by one man. Prepare regulations in regard to the procedures to be followed during the election: very important, not easy. Repeal—listen to this—all remaining discriminatory or restrictive laws, regulations, or administrative measures which might breach or inhibit the objective of free and fair elections. You mustn't forget, tremendous charges were leveled against us at the United Nations over many years, and there were still discriminatory or restrictive laws on the statute books. So we agreed it will be removed. Make arrangements for the release—very important, this one—we had to make arrangements for the release, prior to the beginning of the electoral campaign, of all alleged Namibian political prisoners or detainees, so that they can participate fully and freely in the electoral campaign without risk of arrest, detention, intimidation, or imprisonment.

JK: Right.

RB: All such prisoners held by South Africa were released some years before that already. We released them. Should a dispute in this regard, namely on the release of prisoners, should it arise it is to be resolved to the satisfaction of the United Nations Special Representative, acting on the independent advice of a jury of international standing, who will be designated by the Secretary-General of the United Nations as legal advisor to the Special Representative. Another task was the preparation for the reception

of Namibian refugees, who were outside who had returned, or Namibians detained or otherwise outside the territory who returned. Another task was to ensure the good conduct of the police forces, which are primarily responsible for maintaining law and order. Not the UNTAG. It was our police, the Namibian police.

JK: Yes, it was the police of Southwest Africa.

RB: During the transition period, take the necessary actions to ensure their suitability for continued employment during the transition period. In other words, after the transition period there is independence, and surely the country doesn't want to be without a police force in that time. Talks could be held for retaining their services. From this it must be clear to you that what was needed was the close cooperation between the Administrator General and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General. The Administrator General, in fact, acted as the sole administrative authority of Namibia during the transition period, and was assisted by the existing civil service there, the government departments throughout the territory. Now if you bear in mind the requirements of impartiality also as far as South Africa and the various political parties inside the territory are concerned, it should be noted that all political office bearers in the territory were required to vacate—listen to this—their positions before the date of implementation. In this regard, the position of tribal authorities, such as traditional chiefs and headmen, remained unaltered, and they were not affected by the requirements regarding political parties as such. Remember there was an interim government, a second tier government, a third tier. We had to disband all of them. Otherwise, SWAPO would

have said it's not impartial. Similarly, we had told the five and the UN and the Secretary-General, "Look, irrespective of the wild and irresponsible language used to Committees in the United Nations, as long as your representative and you, Mr. de Cuéllar, remain impartial and show to us your impartiality, we can go ahead.

JK: Right. So were you satisfied that Martti Ahtisaari and Pérez de Cuéllar in the UN in that regard did remain impartial during that transition period in 1989?

RB: Yes, yes, in my own mind, I am quite satisfied. Some times there were differences of opinion that did arise, but when it comes to Mr. Martti Ahtisaari—Dr. de Cuéllar was in an almost different position, he was closer to the elements most hostile to us—whilst Mr. Martti Ahtisaari was in the territory, and cooperated with all the elements. He had to cooperate with SWAPO, as well as the Administrator General, as well as the other political parties. And at that time, I already knew him quite well, and everything went well. The implementation date was 1 April '89. The previous evening he invited me, or I think the Administrator General invited me and Mr. Martti Ahtisaari and his senior staff to a dinner in the Administrator General's official residence.

JK: In Windhoek.

RB: In Windhoek. During that evening, I was informed confidentially that there were indications that SWAPO was on the point of infiltrating into Namibia from the North,

from Angola, irregularly, and armed SWAPO members in an attempt to cause havoc in Owamboland in the Northern part.

JK: And what kind of information were you getting? Was this intelligence? Was it news reporting?

RB: Yes, it was intelligence. We had an intelligence agency, and quite a number. I couldn't check at that stage, but I did mention it to Martti Ahtisaari. He said that he was convinced, at that stage, that SWAPO would be most stupid to do a thing like that. Everything is in place, it's kick-off tomorrow, and the whole world will be watching it. And he said to me he could not understand how SWAPO could be that stupid to allow such an ostensibly irregular campaign of terrorism of an armed, aggressive nature to take place. I remember saying goodnight to him, I said to him, "Martti, I haven't checked it, I have no confirmation yet, but I'm giving this to you as a friend so that both you and me and all of us are prepared and ready if something goes wrong."

JK: Was it from satellite information, or on the ground intelligence?

RB: No, our security services. We had them all over the place, and they picked it up from reliable sources. It's the normal thing. The British have a service, the Americans have the CIA and others, and so did we. And so on. Just at that critical stage, Mrs. Margaret Thatcher was in the country. She visited. The British troops were going I think to provide the communication systems, or something like that. Communications. And

they had troops to take care of that. She visited them in the territory to show her friendship to them and her support, and so on. She was always very good at that. And as I drove to the airport to meet with her—she was then on her way back to Britain by aircraft—and I rushed to the airport to get there in time to at least pay my respects to her. On the way to the airport, I received confirmation that the SWAPO guerilla fighters had indeed crossed the border in large numbers. I think the figure was already over three hundred.

JK: Three hundred persons.

RB: Yes. At that stage, the crisis suddenly became critical, very critical and explosive. Because by that time, the South African troops, in terms of the agreements with the United Nations and others, had already been confined to their barracks, so that here was now an open field for three hundred armed men to cross the border and cause havoc, which would have resulted automatically in the white farms of the North grouping together immediately and starting their own war against SWAPO, a new war. And I discussed this with Mrs. Thatcher at Windhoek airport, and I said to her—I remember it very well—that I think we'll have no choice but to allow our troops to leave their barracks to go and form a buffer against any southward movement of SWAPO, which would result in fact in a civil war.

JK: So this was the defense force.

RB: Yes, now let me just finish. Mrs. Thatcher then said to me that no, I couldn't do it without United Nations agreement. But I said to her, "But look, Mrs. Thatcher, if the dam wall breaks, and people drown and are killed, will you accept the responsibility? Who must accept the responsibility? Must we simply tell the farmers of the North...?" She said, "No," she said to me, "Mr. Botha, you cannot do this on your own. The British government will not support it." I then found Martti Ahtisaari. He said to me that he had conveyed the news already to de Cuéllar, he had not yet received a reply, and could I phone de Cuéllar. So I phoned de Cuéllar. And he said, well, he would have to wait for more information from Ahtisaari. And I said to him, "Dr. de Cuéllar, the situation is getting critical by the minute, not hour, [but] by the minute. We're heading for a war. The dam wall is going to break. May I take it that you agree?" And he was still hedging and moaning about, and so on and so on. I said, "Look, I understand you, and I must go now, people are calling for me, some generals want to meet. I take it you say yes, thank you very much Dr. de Cuéllar." And I put down the phone. And he did not repudiate me. So I took it as a yes, and I told the South African general to go ahead, and I told Margaret Thatcher that I had the Secretary-General's okay, and I phoned Martti Ahtisaari and told him also it was okay. And then our troops were released, and there were quite a lot of skirmishes, and then Mt. Etjo followed all that, you see.

JK: What was Martti Ahtisaari's response to you when you informed him that the defense forces were going to...?

RB: He accepted it, because I phoned his boss, the Secretary-General, and he accepted that I did phone him. He at first said to me—he called me Pik, I called him Martti then—he said to me, “It was not quite my understanding that the Secretary-General had agreed.” I said, “Martti, please, I will accept the responsibility that he agreed. You need not. And I authorize you here today whatever will or might go wrong, I am prepared to give you my word of honor that I will say that I’ve told you he said so, and that you accepted my word for it, and I will accept that responsibility.”

JK: And then ultimately, he did accept that responsibility for having authorized it.

RB: Yes, there were some very unpleasant letters between him and me. They are all in here (indicating the book); all of them are in here.

JK: Right. Now let me just ask you a few other questions on this. The Southwest African police had not been confined to barracks in the North.

RB: No, because in terms of the agreement...

JK: ...they didn’t have to be, right.

RB: They were to police the territory until independence.

JK: And what was the role of the Koevoet at that time?

RB: It ended.

JK: Officially, but unofficially...

RB: Well, you know, there have been such a lot of allegations and counter-allegations and claims and counter-claims. I was Minister of Foreign Affairs, I was not the Minister of Police. I had no jurisdiction over these people. This all had been very painful for me to see that people almost expected me to accept responsibility for everything that went wrong in the country. I was not the Prime Minister or President. I was the Minister of Foreign Affairs. And as such, I did my utmost to alleviate the affect of sanctions because I knew what sanctions might do economically to the country in the long run. You'll never regain those markets. Zimbabwe never regained the markets lost by Ian Smith, never. And look at what a mess the country is in today. A terrible mess, and the main reason is of an economic nature, make no mistake. And I wanted to avoid that at all costs, damage I wanted to avoid at all costs, but I sometimes get the impression that people always held me responsible for what went wrong. I was not in charge. I ended the war. I succeeded in making an agreement with the Cubans and the Angolans to get rid of the Cubans, and gave independence to the territory. And that paved the way. I concluded the Nkomati Accord. I assisted in getting the independence of Zimbabwe, and I did play a role inside this country to get rid of apartheid, and predicted in '86 there would be a [black] president. That's my record. It's recorded. I need not try and bluff anyone or hide behind anything. That's my record. It's recorded.

JK: Now shortly after that, I believe around April 8th, there was a meeting at Mt. Etjo that did conclude a cease-fire. And you were present at that meeting.

RB: Very much so.

JK: I have a picture of you in that meeting, and Chester Crocker was there.

RB: I suggested it.

JK: You suggested the meeting?

RB: Sure.

JK: Okay, good.

RB: I suggested the meeting. Just one moment, put off the [machine].

[Tape is stopped for a moment.]

JK: Okay, so we were talking about the meeting at Mt. Etjo.

RB: Just before we get there, I just want to mention a very important aspect about UNAVEM. About Cuban troop withdrawal and UNAVEM. Despite the fact that the

Resolution 435 and the settlement proposal had not dealt with matters other than domestic Namibian questions, don't forget that when it was adopted in '78, South African government had already, at that time, expressed concern regarding the presence of foreign military elements in Angola, of specific concern was the presence of a large number of Cuban troops in Angola. These forces had to come to the aid of the MPLA in the period leading up to final departure of the Portuguese from Angola, and their numbers had increased as the war between the MPLA and UNITA had escalated. One of the problems which the South African government foresaw was that the presence of a large foreign military force in Angola, which would be seen as the ally of only one of the political parties, namely SWAPO, could have a seriously disruptive effect on the free and fair elections which were envisaged in terms of the Resolution 435. The South African government thus at an early stage stated that in order for the process leading to the independence of Namibia to proceed, agreement would have to be reached regarding an acceptable time table for the total withdrawal of the Cubans from Angola. The South African position on this issue, which soon came to be termed "linkage," was the subject of considerable discussions. As a matter of fact, it formed the key to the eventual implementation of Resolution 435. Initial reaction to this position adopted by the South African government was uniformly hostile in the UN and elsewhere. With the start of the latest round of discussions in May '88, it appeared that it was becoming more generally recognized that a successful solution of the problems of the whole of the southwestern area of Africa would come about only if a serious attempt was made also to solve the vexing question of the Cuban troop presence in Angola. For a number of reasons, this was a complicated matter, which it soon became clear, would require skillful negotiation

to resolve. On the one hand, Angola-Cuba did not wish to have the question of “linkage,” the existence of which they had consistently denied, overtly exposed in any solution which would be achieved. They didn’t want this linkage thing to be dragged into the implementation of Resolution 435. On the other hand, they—that’s Angola and the Cubans—were also faced by a dilemma, since if it became obvious that the Cuban presence in Angola was the only remaining obstacle to implementation of the process which would bring independence to Namibia, and the matter was not resolved because of Angolan-Cuban unwillingness to address the issue, they ran the risk of being seen to stand in the way of independence for the territory. Additionally, Angola-Cuba argued at that time that the Cuban presence in Angola was based on an international treaty between the two countries. Any decision regarding the future disposition of Cuban troops in Angola would thus be a matter for decision between the two countries concerned, and only them. They would take their own sovereign decisions. South Africa accepted this point of view. I trusted them. It was understood that they could not merely, you know, override that.

JK: And you were involved in these negotiations.

RB: Every one of them. But nevertheless, I made it clear that progress towards implementation of Resolution 435 depended on the achievement of a firm and satisfactory agreement on a schedule for the withdrawal of the Cubans, acceptable to all the parties. Discussion of this matter took place at all the meetings which were held during the course of 1988, as already indicated to you earlier, and an agreement on the

schedule for the redeployment to the north and the stage, and total withdrawal of the Cubans from Angola, was reached on 13 October '88 at Geneva. It was included in the bilateral agreement signed between Angola and Cuba on 22 December '88 at the United Nations Headquarters, where I was also present to sign on behalf of South Africa.

Now, an important aspect relating to Cuban troop withdrawal—please remember this—was the requirement that the movements of these troops in redeploying northwards, and in withdrawing from Angola in accordance with the agreed time table be suitably and effectively monitored. In this regard, Angola-Cuba had at an early stage of negotiations regarding a possible withdrawal schedule indicated that they would request monitoring and verification of the troop movements by the Security Council of the United Nations. Consequently, the United Nations Angola Verification Mission, abbreviation UNAVEM, was created to undertake this task. Very important.

Now, let us return to 1 April '89. That was the day on which the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 435 was due to commence. To the dismay of the whole world, I can tell you, and in violation of its own commitment to the Secretary-General to observe a cease-fire and to confine its personnel to bases north of latitude sixteen degrees south, SWAPO chose to mount large-scale armed incursions across the border from Angola into Namibia on that very day.

JK: Now why do you think that Sam Nujoma decided to do that?

RB: Let us just go a little bit further. South Africa had confirmed the formalization of the *de facto* cessation of hostilities proposed by the Secretary-General in a letter by

myself, as Minister of Foreign Affairs, dated 21 March 1989. SWAPO also accepted this cease-fire in a letter by Mr. Sam Nujoma on 18 March '89 to the Secretary-General. The reply to a question in the House of Commons on 4 April '89—this is important—on the incursions, the British Prime Minister Mrs. Margaret Thatcher responded in the British Parliament as follows: She said, “The Secretary-General’s report to the Security Council specifically confirmed that there has been large scale incursions from Angola to Namibia by armed SWAPO personnel. It is a most serious challenge to the authority of the United Nations and the internationally agreed arrangement for Namibia’s independence, and I certainly condemn it. There has been no provision in the United Nations’ plan for SWAPO to have bases in Namibia. Indeed, SWAPO committed themselves to the Geneva Accord on which they are required to stay north of the 16th parallel in Angola. It is this breach by SWAPO which has led to the most regrettable fighting and loss of life. I would emphasize that the South African units involved are acting with the authority of the United Nations. It is now important that the authority of the United Nations be upheld, and the agreements implemented in full.” Similarly, while certain elements of the United Nations vacillated, and sought a compromise to accommodate the infringement by SWAPO, or the relevant agreements, the State Department in Washington, United States, published a legal analysis of the incursions which concluded unequivocally that the SWAPO incursions were “flagrant violations of the Geneva protocol.” In light of this grave situation, the joint commission created by the protocol of Brazzaville of 13 December 1988, met at Mt. Etjo, Namibia, on 8 to 9 April, 1989, for an extraordinary session. Delegations of the People’s Republic of Angola, the Republic of

Cuba, and the Republic of South Africa, parties to the New York Accord of 22 December '88, attended this meeting.

JK: Okay, now just...

RB: Just a moment, this is important. You can't just skip over this, because this almost wrecked the whole process. We were never closer to a cessation of the implementation than here. Delegations from the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics participated in their capacity as observers.

JK: Right. And on the US side it was Chester Crocker?

RB: Yes, and on the Soviet side the man's name almost sounded like "Indonesi" or something like that. At this meeting, the threat to the continued implementation of the Namibian peace then was effectively addressed. Leaders of the delegations of Angola, Cuba, and South Africa signed the Mt. Etjo declaration late on Sunday, 9 April '89, in which they reaffirmed their commitment to fulfill the obligations undertaken in the accord of 22 December '88, for the peaceful resolution of the conflict in the Southwestern region of Africa, and in conformity with United Nations Security Council Resolution 632 of 16 February '89. Further, it was determined that in order to facilitate the restoration of peace, and to promote the full application of Resolution 435. The Security Council of the UN and the subsequent agreements subscribed to by the parties, as well as their restoration of the situation in existence on 31 March '89—the night

before—the parties agreed to a package of recommendations which were formulated as an annexure to the Mt. Etjo Declaration. And that saved the day.

We also—I was a member of the three parties—we urged the Secretary-General, then, of the United Nations, to urgently adopt all the necessary measures for the most rapid and complete deployment of UNTAG so that it could fully and effectively carry out its mandate. They were not in place.

JK: No, they were not.

RB: Member States of the United Nations, particularly those who are members of the Security Council, were urged to extend their full cooperation to the Secretary-General regarding the task assigned to UNTAG. The sequence of events leading up to this important declaration is set out in a number of documents of which I can give you a list.

JK: Perhaps we can just get a copy of this? And then we could have a copy for the records.

RB: Yes. The achievement of a comprehensive settlement to the problems of Southwestern Africa in my opinion marks a milestone in developments securing a lasting peace in our subcontinent. While the signature of the peace accords in New York on 22 December 1988 in itself was symbolic of the desire of the parties involved to eschew violence and conflict as a means to secure political solutions, and visibly demonstrated that preference to follow the path to peace through dialogue. The signing of documents

alone will not be enough, and would not be enough to ensure the continued success of the new direction, which is emerging in relation to conflict resolution in the whole of Southern Africa, and in the continent as a whole. These sentiments expressed by myself at the signing ceremony in New York on 22 December 1988 were to become the focus of attention sooner than anyone expected. The peace accords, which had emerged from a period of painstaking negotiation during which mutual confidence and step-by-step agreement had played a crucial part, faced a severe test from the very start of their implementation. The cross-border incursion into Namibia by SWAPO on 1 April was a flagrant violation of SWAPO's commitments. It was a challenge to the international community, and the authority of the United Nations. In the event, the parties to the network of agreements—South Africa, Angola, and Cuba—although we were ideologically enemies of each other, opposing each other totally, but through the Mt. Etjo Declaration, we acted swiftly to reconfirm our individual commitments. If anything, the concerted action by these three countries to adopt measures to buttress the agreements reached previously underscore the high premium which each of them placed on the successful implementation of the package of agreements to which they subscribed. And this to me is one of the greatest lessons, and it is a lesson that has either been forgotten or not observed fully. Here was South Africa, Cuba, Angola. You could hardly find at that time in history...

[End of Side 2, Tape 1]

[Beginning of Tape 2, Side 1]

JK: So you mentioned that you had asked to have this meeting at Mt. Etjo.

RB: Yes, but let me just complete the sentence when we were cut off because I think it is important for the United Nations and the world to remember one thing.

JK: Okay.

RB: Here were parties, countries opposing each other. You could not get two countries further apart than South Africa and Cuba. But when we saw there was a win-win situation for both of us, we did make concessions and sacrifices and made a deal. And when that deal was threatened, we acted swiftly to remove the threat, and we saved it. We saved the situation for the world, for the United Nations, and for the people of Namibia and for Africa. We didn't then, as is often happening now with negotiations on Rwanda, Burundi, Congo, and so on, adopt this attitude today and another one tomorrow, and say [we're] an ally of this country today and [an] ally of another one tomorrow. We treated each other with respect. We did not agree ideologically, but we respected each other and trusted one another. And that is why we could have this meeting at Mt. Etjo. The way I did it was I immediately called of course Martti Ahtisaari, who called de Cuéllar, and we called the Americans. We said to the Americans, "Can you get the Soviet Union, urgently, to please exert severe pressure on all concerned? We need an urgent, urgent meeting, otherwise this whole thing will erupt into a civil war, and the whole implementation of Resolution 435 will be scattered. So everybody cooperated to get this meeting at Mt. Etjo together.

JK: So who spoke to Sam Nujoma? Because someone spoke to him during this.

RB: I can't say. I take it the Americans spoke to him; the Russians might have spoke to him; the United Nations people must have spoken to him. Maybe even the Angolans...

JK: ...the Angolans or the Cubans...

RB: ...must have spoken to him, and the Cubans. Because I had my meeting with the Angolans and the Cubans. And the three of us immediately agreed: We must save the situation. Now I didn't go there then to yell at Sam Nujoma or the SWAPO. I didn't go there to try and vindicate myself or say look, "I warned you, I told you so, we had that secret information it would happen." No, I didn't do it. It is futile to go to negotiations in that spirit. I went there to resolve the issue, and knew that it would be difficult for both the Angolans and the Cubans. Difficult to come to an agreement which would have instituted a tighter grip on SWAPO and their movements and their future movements, because they were friends. They were ideological friends, and SWAPO was enjoying the hospitality of Angola, and the friendship of Cuba for a very, very long time. So I couldn't go there thinking that suddenly the Angolans and the Cubans would now embrace Pik Botha of apartheid South Africa, and thank him for trying to control SWAPO. No, I went there knowing that this was the position, but I went there saying, "In the interest now of Angola, of Cuba, of South Africa, and the whole of southern Africa, we must stick to the rules we agreed upon. If we reopen, gentlemen, all the talks

now, we will still be talking for the next ten years as we have done up to now.” And they agreed to that.

JK: Okay. Now, I was at a lunch with Murrack Goulding just last week, and I said I’m going to be interviewing Pik Botha. I said, “What should I ask him?” He said, “You should ask him why he thinks Sam Nujoma directed some of his troops across the border that day.”

RB: I have never really—it’s strange, through all these years—succeeded in.... Although Mr. Nujoma and I are good friends today—I could go to Windhoek tomorrow and the President, he’s now President, will receive me with a smile and we’ll talk about old days, everything forgiven, forgotten, and we’re trying to assist one another, we are both Africans trying to do the best for our people and country. And I would have been hesitant to reopen the issue and perhaps cause some unpleasantness. But at the time, it was believed that they wanted to establish bases inside Namibia as part of a show of strength and power, with a view to impress the people of Namibia that “Look, here we are, we are there, we are not leaving, it’s our country, and you’d better vote for us or...”. There was a school of thought, who thought that that might have been one of the reasons behind these incursions. I’m not in a position to really confirm it.

JK: Okay. I wanted to be sure to ask you this, because I had also interviewed Ambassador Legwaila, who became the Deputy under Martti Ahtisaari. So he told me that—when you and I were discussing earlier that occasionally you had met with Louis

Pienaar—so Legwaila would tell me that there were times, especially on principles of registration for voting and a few things, that there were some difficulties between the UN and Louis Pienaar. And that sometimes then they would come to Pretoria and meet with you. What was the nature of these meetings?

RB: It is not “sometimes,” but often.

JK: Okay, often! Often is a better word, then.

RB: I was the link between everything that happened in Namibia at that time, and our President. This was a very difficult, let me say to you, but interesting and challenging position to be in. Just to give you another example, people convicted of murder inside Namibia were not executed there; they, as far as I can remember, didn't have the facilities to execute a person in Windhoek. So that was done in Pretoria in the Pretoria Central Prison. Namibian prisoners sentenced to death would then be taken to Pretoria to be executed, and Martti Ahtisaari discovered a case of two or three of them that might be due to be hanged, and he called me immediately on the phone and followed it up with a letter to say that if that happens then he quits. He would never be able to stomach that.

JK: Oh, my God, so it was that critical.

RB: Then I phoned the President, and arranged for the Minister of Justice to meet with me and the President, fly down to Cape Town. On that occasion, I told the President, I

said, “Look, I must be honest with you. Send these people back, please, to Namibia. If one day a new government there then wants to hang them, it’s for that government to do so, not for us. Don’t touch it. We cannot do it. It’s foolish, it’s stupid.” And I also issued a threat that day. I said I would not be able to proceed if this request of Mr. Martti Ahtisaari is not granted.

JK: Now at that time it was President Botha, or President de Klerk.

RB: No, Botha. He was still. Botha.

JK: All right.

RB: De Klerk never had anything to do with Namibia except attending its independence celebrations.

JK: At the end, okay.

RB: At the end, to take the glory. That’s what he did. As a matter of fact, he opposed me in the Cabinet most severely, in respect to many, many matters. Abolishing the local government, the second and third tier governments in Namibia, which I needed to implement 435, he opposed it strenuously in the government. He wouldn’t do so. Of course, he and Louis Pienaar were great friends. So Pienaar used to use him sometimes to further a particularly conservative point of view of Pienaar. And then Pienaar would

inform him so that he knew how to talk against me or argue against me. So just take it from me, Mr. de Klerk, not only did he do nothing at all to facilitate the independence of Namibia, he did his best to delay it and to make it as difficult as possible for me. This is known to Martti Ahtisaari, it is known to my colleagues. It's not that much of a secret. It has just not been stated. I suppose people are frightened sometimes to talk the truth, but I have reached a stage in my life where I don't need to fear to say the truth. So they often came to see me, they phoned me virtually every day. I had my personal assistant, Carl von Hirschberg. He was extremely well known to all these gentlemen, all of them.

JK: And this was your deputy, to Pienaar.

RB: Not my deputy. He was Pienaar's deputy, but seconded by me from my department. And Pienaar's whole office was run by my department: the typists, the security, and their salaries. Even his salary was paid by us, I think. And the building was Foreign Affairs', and the offices, and the stationary, and the bills and the costs, and so on and so on and so on. Without Foreign Affairs, 435 would never have been implemented. It was the only department that really wanted it to be implemented. All the other government departments would have preferred not to implement it.

JK: So you really had a tough battle. You had to deal with a lot of resistance.

RB: Naturally, and this was known to Chester Crocker. He knew it. He knew from experience. One day, ask him. He knew from experience that he had to help me to get a

certain proposal accepted by my Cabinet. He realized what the difficult ones were, and he also assisted me tremendously, Crocker, in showing understanding of the difficult position we were in. Namely, that there were a lot whites in this country. At that stage, you can go and check it, it's all recorded in our Hansard, it's like your records in the United Nations, that's a full record of every word spoken in our Parliament, called Hansard after the British concept of keeping records.

JK: Yes, right.

RB: But it is in our Hansard that I was accused of selling Namibia down the drain to a bunch of Communists, that the red flag will fly in Windhoek, that now our troops will not fight on the northern border anymore, but on the southern border on the banks of the Orange River, which is our northern border with Namibia, and Pik Botha will go down in history as the greatest traitor this country has ever produced. These were the things that were said quite openly, and it's against that current that I had to move internally and elsewhere. Now luckily, I had in the Cabinet colleagues like the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Commerce and Industries, and persons like that who were on my side, saying clearly that unless we get rid of this tremendous burden, it will sink us, it will make us vulnerable. It was lying ahead for us. I knew it at the time. [There were] tremendous challenges on South Africa herself. So my purpose was [to] make peace with Mozambique, which I did through the Nkomati Accord, get Zimbabwe independent so that we get the burden of Ian Smith off our shoulders, and then resolve Namibia so that we get rid of that burden. Only thus would we possibly be able to deal with the

tremendous challenge then of the ANC and the imprisonment of Mr. Mandela, and the banning of the political parties in this country. But you cannot enter into serious discussions which would have been monumental in transforming this country, if you are still engaged too much peripherally on your borders with problems like Mozambique stresses and strain, Zimbabwe, and Namibia, and the Cubans in Angola. And I saw it as my task to resolve those heavy problems. And I did so without sanctions ever having been introduced against us either on account of Mozambique, Zimbabwe, or Namibia. Never, ever. Sanctions were introduced because of apartheid inside South Africa.

JK: So then, you've mentioned that on the case of the executions that you went to President Botha. Was he supportive of you in this effort?

RB: Yes, immediately.

JK: Okay.

RB: Immediately. He saw the point. I don't think I argued for more than five minutes. I just went in there and I said to him.... I was very agitated, myself, that day, I was ready to have a fight with my colleague, the Minister of Justice, as I've never had before, and we often fought very, very much, the two of us were in very, very many pressing, what shall I say, disputes throughout the whole period of implementation. I had to take the [issue of the] admission of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to South Africa three times to the capital. It was turned down three times. The

fourth time they agreed. But three times the Cabinet turned it down, thinking that here is the United Nations: the United Nations will just be coming into South Africa and start ruling us, start being the friend of the ANC, and give the impression to all the people, black and white, that we have now been swallowed up by the United Nations. [They thought] we would lose support, vote, and respect of our people. I knew the United Nations. The United Nations with all its emotions, particularly in the General Assembly, and all its, what I call burdensome committees, cumbersome committees, which were created in the old days more for blowing off steam than for establishing anything really substantial. But I knew France was there, America was there, Britain was there. And even, for that matter, the Soviet Union, a responsible state, whether you agreed with their policies or not. For that matter, the People's Republic of China, a responsible state, whether you agreed with them or not. These were not states and others that would simply run away with emotional nonsensical attitudes and say, "We are swallowing up South Africa now," and so forth. They wouldn't do that, they haven't got the funds, they haven't got the means to do so.

JK: Exactly.

RB: It was extremely difficult for me. It was the Minister of Justice who opposed me every time. And I said to him, "My dear colleague, you often say to me that I've got to accept you, the Minister of Justice, and you know better in your particular field what can be done. Now will you not for a moment accept that I'm the Minister of Foreign Affairs, I've been almost brought up in the United Nations environment, and this is my

environment, and when I say it is perfectly safe and it is desirable to have the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, it will save us money, it will save us trouble, because they will know how to work with these people, and we don't." These were the skirmishes, these were the unpleasant hour-long talks that I had to face, but I don't complain. It was interesting. In the end, I got Namibia independence.

JK: That's right.

RB: And I consider that to be my great achievement. And I think if that was the only thing I did, was to stop the war, get the Cubans to withdraw, end the war, and give Namibia independence, I personally, with humility, great humility, say that I have a feeling of...that is my reward. That has enriched my life.

JK: But I'm very interested to hear that President Botha really was very supportive of what you were doing, and that...

RB: Not always. There were difficult negotiations in the beginning, centering on the security, and the Cuban threat, and what was considered to be the Cuban menace, and these close relations with Savimbi of UNITA. It was very difficult for me to persuade him always that we were doing the right thing, we could not carry that burden any longer: we were running their budget up to a billion Rand per year, responsible for all the defense equipment and troops and our young people were dying there in a war. And we spent billions and billions in what I considered at that stage to be a futile effort, and I said to the

Prime Minister then, later President Botha, “Look, Savimbi says he’s got the majority. Now if he has the majority, we cannot fight this election for Luanda. There will be an election one day, and so on. We can’t stay there forever. We can keep on supporting him financially, but not militarily any longer. If we can get rid of the problem of Namibia, the whole world will change, there will be a less tense attitude in southern Africa, we will be able to prepare the way for the release possibly of Mandela, and get down to our real great task, and that is to settle with the ANC. But we cannot do so unless we first remove Namibia from the agenda of the United Nations.

JK: Okay, so that would be the argument that you would present to Botha. That was the political picture.

RB: Yes.

JK: And did the rest of the Security Council...

RB: Eventually he, with hesitation, but yes, eventually he did. It was difficult. Sometimes he would recall me from Brazzaville, for instance, because of something he read in one of our papers, which I was supposed to have said in Brazzaville and which went now against what he told me or expected from me. Then I would say to him, “Please can’t I just complete the discussions.” Botha would say, “You get onto the aircraft, you fly back, and tomorrow morning you’re going to account for what you said here in the Cabinet.” And I would fly overnight, attend the cabinet meeting, work out my

strategy, go in there, apologize, say, “You’re absolutely right, Mr. President,” and I would put across to him a formulation which is really what I did, but [stated] in a different way, and claiming that this was his real idea, and then he claims credit for it, and I accept it, and then I fly back to Brazzaville and implement it. It was also a way to know how to handle the man.

JK: Okay.

RB: But he, in the end, assisted me and authorized me to conclude the agreements, to conclude the negotiations, and to sign that wonderful agreement in the Headquarters office of New York—there’s the picture—where I’ve not been allowed to address the General Assembly since 1974, eventually we signed in that same building on one of the main issues on the United Nations agenda since the end of the Second World War.

JK: One of the things that Joseph Legwaila mentioned to me [was] when they would come to the Pretoria, with Louis Pienaar they would come to meet with you, and he would mention, “Well, if we can’t get this satisfied, then the Security Council might impose additional economic sanctions,” or something like that. Did that ever become a useful piece of leverage in your arguments? The threat of the Security Council?

RB: No, I can’t even recall. Certainly not. I don’t know who your informant there is. That was not the way Mr. Martti Ahtisaari operated, or de Cuéllar. No, no. Don’t forget

that the ambassadors of the five, who initiated this whole settlement proposal, I saw them also every day. Don't forget that.

JK: Okay, so the Western five, with their ambassadors...

RB: And don't forget, I quoted to you what Margaret Thatcher said in the Parliament in Britain about SWAPO infringement. So no, no, I don't know where your informant got hold of that. Ahtisaari could phone me any time of the day or night directly. There was no instruction from me that he must work through Louis Pienaar.

JK: No, no, but I mean...

RB: He could phone me, and the same applied.... Maybe sometimes, you see, Piennar I think didn't like these people to come to me or by themselves. Maybe he wanted to be present, it's in the interest of everybody and so on and so on. But there was never, ever any threat of imposing more sanctions against South Africa, because after this initial infringement, there was just one other terrible misunderstanding of a secret that our military people claimed that they picked up of some United Nations unit reporting a further SWAPO thrust of a military nature. I phoned Ahtisaari and warned him about it, and released it to the press, and eventually proved that it was false. I don't know who ever sent out that false signal, but luckily the relationship between me and Ahtisaari was such that the two of us could say this to each other and not hold it against each other. No, no, I cannot remember. As we were moving ahead, closer to the election time, things

improved, and more and more of the parties accepted that there is going to be an election. The only thing that was uncertain was the eventual result.

JK: So just in terms of part of what we've been studying here is the use of leverage. What do people use as leverage to convince people of a particular position. And your view was much more of a holistic view that you needed to resolve these different confrontations in order to move ahead, for South Africa to move ahead in terms of its own development. And so leverage of any action by the Security Council as far as you were concerned was not useful to you in convincing anyone that....

RB: You must try to remember, it goes now back to the time I was appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs in '77, even before the adoption of Resolution 435. And I was responsible for persuading the South African Cabinet to accept 435. And ever since that time in '78, we were working on it, until '88.

JK: Okay.

RB: Until '88. Ten years—'78 to '88. And there was the government of Carter, and that was followed by Reagan, virtually his whole term office, and Chester Crocker. There was never a question that Crocker would say to me, "Look, you better hurry up or...". No, because that is not his way of working. That is not his way of working. We worked on a basis of mutual trust. So there were no Security Council threats in that case at all. That's why, also, we never got sanctions as a result of Namibia, because I resumed

negotiations every time there was an impasse or a stalemate. I never allowed it to break down completely. I always came back, went back to my colleagues. Then I suppose, you know, the Americans with their CIA and the British with their MI5 or what have they got, MI6, they have spies, they have ambassadors here, they know what's going on here. There are no secrets after a while. They attend cocktail parties, they hear how a colleague of mine talks against me, and says that Pik Botha is trying to bluff the Cabinet in giving Namibia away. They realized my difficulties, and the difficulties I had to shoulder. They didn't try to make life more difficult for me. They did assist behind the scenes.

JK: I see. One other issue that I wanted to ask you about was Walvis Bay. How was it arranged that Walvis Bay would not be a part of the discussions? In other words, in the independence of Namibia...

RB: Well, we insisted, because Walvis Bay was since the previous century an intimate part of the Cape of Good Hope Province. And the Cape of Good Hope is an integral part of the provinces of the Republic of South Africa. It is South African territory, just as Gibraltar is British, and just as Alaska is American, and just as quite a number of these odd situations do exist somewhere in the world.

JK: Right.

RB: So there was never any question: Walvis Bay was recognized as irrevocably part of the Republic of South Africa since it became a union of South Africa in 1910, and in the previous century, in 1881, in terms of agreements between Germany and Britain, written into agreements that were older than a hundred years. And nobody ever questioned it, nobody ever queried it, everybody accepted it. In the world court case that Ethiopia and Liberia brought against us, the issue of Walvis Bay was brought forward; we won the point downright from the court. It's part of South Africa, out and out. So here you have a world court decision, now what more do you want? But suddenly, at the assistance of SWAPO and others, Walvis Bay now had to become part of Namibia before independence. And I said, "But on what basis do you want to take a piece of my country, that has been a piece of my country for over a hundred years?" It never had anything to do, it was not part of Namibia, not in mandate days of the League of Nations, not in the United Nations days, nowhere else in those early days did everybody ask for it. It's just now lately, lately, lately. And I said, "Look, maybe we can resolve this issue later when there's a new government, governing it together, administering it together, and preparing it because there are a lot of South African companies operating there under South African laws with South African protection. Their court of law is in the Cape, not in Windhoek. That's the legal position. All the contracts, et cetera, are governed by South African law. All the agreements for shipping, international trade et cetera. How do you think you change that just overnight because you suddenly want to have a new owner of the farm? It doesn't happen that way." And then, the West agreed with me that they would not raise this issue.

JK: So the Western five agreed with you on that.

RB: They agreed, yes. But at a meeting in New York—at a meeting, I can't tell you exactly when it occurred—but at a meeting in New York, Genscher that day, with the five sitting there, and I with my staff, said to me he regretted to inform me, but they feel they must make a concession on the issue of Walvis Bay, and Walvis Bay better form part of the negotiations, to become part of Namibia. And at that point, I disciplined myself with a smile. Genscher wanted to continue this conversation he was reading from a piece of paper which the five had drafted. I looked at my Director-General of my department, Dr. Brandt Volie, and said to him, "Brandt, this is goodbye time," and I stood up, and greeted the five foreign ministers. I wished them good luck, and withdrew. I phoned Prime Minister Vorster—he was still Prime Minister then, so it must have been '78—and said to him, "Here, this is what I have done. I hope you agree, fully agree," and I said, "I'm flying back to South Africa. As far as I'm concerned, the negotiations are dead." I got into the plane and flew back.

JK: You actually did? You left and flew back?

RB: Yes. Of course I did.

JK: Okay, so that was a lesson that they learned that that was non-negotiable.

RB: Yes, but the point is this: they might be powerful in there, but in life...I was prepared to stick out my neck to get Cabinet approvals which no other one would have got two or three years earlier, to stand all this vicious propaganda against me that I'm a traitor and have sold my country's interests down the drain. I was prepared to accept a one man-one vote election in Namibia and see SWAPO into power. Now to come and introduce an issue that for more than a hundred years did not form an issue, there was no controversy. There was a State Department official judicial opinion from the best judicial experts in the world, saying internationally it belongs to South Africa, it cannot be taken away unless South Africa gives it away. Now to come...these particularly Western five, against the advice of their own legal people, against the international legal position.... Britain clung to Gibraltar, wasn't prepared to give it to Spain—but I must give Walvis Bay away. How do I defend that to our people here? By that time, I had persuaded our people to accept the concept of one man-one vote in Namibia, which laid the foundation for the later negotiations on South Africa. Now to come at that extremely critical stage, to take a further cut and say to our people, "Look, I've just surrendered Walvis Bay," it would have wrecked the further talks and negotiations altogether. It would probably have cost me my job, because people would say, "Look, we trusted this bastard, but look what he's up to now. We have trusted what he said, we must withdraw, but now he's withdrawing now from our own territory. He's even giving that away." So I had no choice. The only way I could save the talks was to be absolutely firm on Walvis Bay. That was to save my power base for affecting later changes. I knew if I did that it was the end of me.

JK: Okay, that's very important to understand that. I don't think that people understand that issue very well. And that's excellent, that's an excellent description.

RB: And I happened to be the Minister, who eventually, as Minister of Foreign Affairs, before 1994, did pass the law to make Walvis Bay part of Namibia. I was the one.

JK: Now explain that. Explain that next step. Why then, after the independence of Namibia, one could make that step?

RB: Namibia was independent, I had succeeded in my purpose, and nothing could happen now that could wreck the negotiations or the independence of Namibia. And the pressure was mounting, that here we still sit with something that looks now like an ex-colonial little appendix. And Namibia was independent, and Mr. Ben Gurirab, the Foreign Minister became a great friend of mine, we were also at one point enemies at the UN, invited me to Windhoek. He had a long talk with me and he said, "Please, my brother," he said, "the war days are over. I know it's a difficult position, but I will help you to make it as easy as possible. We'll make statements, we'll make concessions, we'll try and do it mutually in such a way that we don't frighten your people in Walvis Bay." And to that, I agreed. I came back, got Cabinet approval, drafted the legislation, put it through myself in Parliament, and Walvis Bay became legally, orderly, peacefully part of Namibia.

JK: And about what year was that, do you recall? Because you said it was before...

RB: It was '93.

JK: So it was before the '94 elections.

RB: Of course it was.

JK: And so it was still with President de Klerk.

RB: It was one of the last pieces of legislation that I pushed through Parliament, was this one.

JK: Interesting.

RB: But then Namibia was independent. The five wanted me to do this at the stage when we still had this heavy road to travel with negotiations. And I could only take so much weight before crashing, and that would have been the last straw.

JK: Right, that would have been the last straw.

RB: But in '93, it wasn't the last straw.

JK: This is very important for diplomatic history.

RB: Now I've got to go, lady.

JK: Now you've got to go. Well, I think that we covered everything, unless you have just a general statement, because I just wanted to know your opinion, how you thought that UNTAG had ultimately performed its job.

RB: Very well, in my opinion. There were, as you could expect anywhere, sometimes misunderstandings, mistrust sometimes between our military establishment in Walvis Bay, because Walvis Bay was part of South Africa, and we had a base there, but by and large—I say, by and large—Mr. Martti Ahtisaari fulfilled a monumentally important task there. I believe that that paved the way for him to become eventually president of Finland, which he did. And it was very interesting some ten years later; he was here in South Africa and invited me for breakfast in his hotel suite in Johannesburg. We nostalgically went through the old days, the difficult years, the challenges, and so on, but we became very, very good friends. And UNTAG performed well, responsibly, and Namibia became an independent state where there is today stability. The white people did not leave the country.

JK: They didn't leave, no.

RB: Mr. Nujoma is tightening the economic belt, even of his Cabinet ministers....

And by and large, I have great respect for his leadership and his presidency. You go to Windhoek—I believe Windhoek is the cleanest city maybe in the world.

JK: I know, it is amazing.

RB: While Johannesburg is perhaps the most ugly, dirty city in the world. Certainly Windhoek is clean. And that requires the right discipline, the right attitude. And I can look back at the situation, don't forget, there remained another border problem, and that was in olden days, the Orange River—it was not the, what they call the tolvic, or the middle of the river, that formed the border in terms of the old agreement between Britain and Germany, it was the northern bank of the river, the northern bank. And that I also changed after Namibia's independence, to make it, as is usual, the middle of the river or the tolvic, as is more normal.

No, certainly as I said to you, I look back at that challenge as to one thing I did that was of a tremendous enrichment to me. I felt enriched that God had given me the chance and the opportunity to play a role in achieving Namibia's independence, persuading the authorities of Angola and Cuba and I believe, the Soviet Union, to implement Cuban troop withdrawal. We ended a war; we prepared the way for South Africa, the South African government to release Mr. Mandela, and to start the most historically important discussions I think were ever held this century in Africa, because it was important that the southern part of Africa should come to peace with itself, for the whole continent. That's why we had no choice but to prepare the way, to pave the way to

create the kind of atmosphere which might facilitate the onward movement of the very difficult talks between the South African government of which I was one member, and Mr. Mandela's team. Namibia played, and the historians have not seen it yet, played an exceedingly important role. This was '88 when we signed this agreement, and Mr. Mandela had just been released at the beginning of 1990, a month or so before Namibia's independence. And that, as the Swedish foreign minister said to me, in Windhoek at the time, virtually the whole world attended celebrations. We gave a reception, the Administrator General, which was attended by just about the whole world. I think we expected five hundred guests, and seven hundred turned up.

JK: There was tremendous enthusiasm.

RB: Which to me was a tremendous reward by itself. I saw it. It was there, it's going to change. And the Swedish foreign minister said to me at the time, he said to me, "Look, have a bit of patience, you've done a great thing, we admire your people now. But there will still be a mistrust that you haven't changed irrevocably, despite Namibia's independence. Your main test now lies ahead. It's a good one. This will start changing the vote. But be patient." And it turned out to be exactly like that, that Namibia paved the way, it removed the suspicions, it assisted us in persuading the world that what we are doing is indeed irreversible, irrevocable. "Irreversible" was the key phrase then. And I used Namibia to persuade other governments to accept that what we were going to plan with respect to the Republic of South Africa would be like Namibia. And that helped a

lot. It played a tremendous role. Don't forget, in '88, the Berlin Wall had not come down.

RB: And virtually not one of you, any of you, expected it.

JK: No, we didn't know.

RB: Not the CIA, not the Germans, no one. I know that. So it was in that atmosphere that I assisted in making Namibia independent and obtaining Cuban troop withdrawal. Paving the way, making it easier, lessening the tension for the great steps that we were going to take in respect to '88.

JK: Right. Well, thank you so very much for taking the time to do this, and I think it's very important that we have gotten a chance to talk to you and hear your point of view. Many people said to me, "You must interview Pik Botha," so I'm really glad that we were able to do that.

RB: I will lend you this. If you find another one, send it back. Otherwise, take your time. I have only two more. If I find more—I'm unpacking my documents—I will let you know and then you can keep it. I want to give one to each of my grandchildren, and I don't even have one for each of them. I have five [grandchildren] and I have two books. But I must still look through my goods that are still packed. But here are all your records, all your dates, all the documentation in one body.

JK: Okay, I will turn this off now. Thank you.

[End of Tape 2, Side 1]