

Still big gulf between SA and Cubans

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Foreign Service

America's strategy at the Moscow summit will be to urge the Soviets to help bring about a timetable for Cuban troop withdrawal from Angola which is acceptable to South Africa.

Beyond that goal, the Americans will also push for Soviet encouragement of a process of national reconciliation inside Angola — a process that will bring Unita into the country's national political life.

In spite of apparent American optimism that there is the possibility of agreement on Angola when President Reagan and Mr Mikhail Gorbachev meet in the Soviet capital from May 29 to June 2, it is clear that it will be easier to tackle the issue of reconciliation than that of the troop withdrawal.

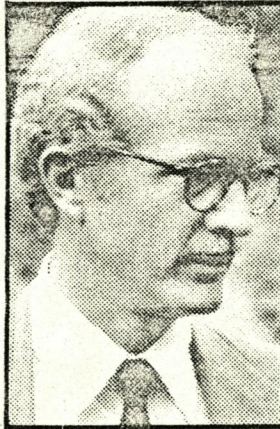
Both Angola and Cuba have accepted a total withdrawal of Cuban troops in principle, but there is still a wide gulf between their proposed timetable and a withdrawal plan that might be accepted by the South African Government.

Sources here say the difference between the two sides adds up to three years.

The Angolans and Cubans have offered a conditional withdrawal time of four years while the South African Government will not consider anything less than one year.

But even the question of a future role for Unita is difficult to negotiate.

Soviet commentators



Chester Crocker: US negotiator

Aid to Unita may doom peace talks

have referred recently to the rebels as a gang of terrorists — a term that hardly suggests a change of attitude in the Kremlin.

The issue of aid to Unita is another major stumbling block in the negotiations.

The Angolans and Cubans want America and South Africa to cease all support of the anti-communist rebel forces — but the Americans have repeated that they have no intention of abandoning Unita.

These were among the points discussed in Lisbon yesterday by United States negotiator, Dr Chester Crocker, and his Soviet counterpart Mr

Anatoly Adamishin.

The two men were due back in their capitals today to brief their governments.

It is expected that the South African Ambassador in Washington, Dr Piet Koornhof, will also receive a full account of the Lisbon meeting.

The strong possibility that a Democratic administration in the White House would stop aid to Unita could scuttle the peace effort in Moscow, with the Soviets and their clients perhaps preferring to wait until 1989 to find out the fate of the Savimbi forces.

But in spite of all the uncertainties, United States negotiators continue to say that they see a real possibility of moving toward a settlement of the Angolan conflict.

They cite as one of the main factors the agreement by all parties that further meetings should follow the historic meeting in London a fortnight ago.

Regarding the Angola-Namibia discussion in Moscow, the Americans seem anxious to make it clear that the two superpowers will not be seeking a plan to impose upon South Africa, Cuba and Angola.

Rather, the three countries have to sort out the details of a settlement themselves.

All Washington and Moscow can do, according to the Americans, is to provide guidance, counsel and influence.

Beyond that, the Americans are also holding out the possibility of economic support for an Angola which has a government of national reconciliation and which is free of Cuban and South African troops.

UNLIKE some of my colleagues, I did not know Alan Paton well, but I knew him well enough over the years to appreciate his wisdom, moderation and sense of humour, especially the latter.

He was not a pious Percy. On the contrary, he could be very funny.

Funerals are not my favourite form of entertainment, but one that I remember with a smile was that of Barend van Niekerk, the controversial and cantankerous law professor at Natal University.

Alan Paton delivered the funeral oration and the large congregation chuckled aloud as he speculated on how Barend would behave once he had entered the pearly gates, ordering people around and making his own improvements to the existing arrangements. It was not impious or disrespectful, it was warm and human.

These are the qualities that emerge very clearly in Paton's last book, completed a few months before his death in April this year. It is the second volume of his autobiography, entitled *Journey Continued* (published by David Philip at R36,90), and it covers the period from 1948, when *Cry the Beloved Country* was published.

He describes his life as a literary celebrity here and abroad before he became involved in Liberal Party politics and a melancholy observer of Nationalist policies.

This sad story — group areas, the removal of the coloured vote, population registration, the Immorality and Mixed Marriages Acts — will be familiar to his older readers but younger people may find it instructive. It would, for one thing, enable them to understand better why the world is so harsh to South Africans today.

Sharpeville, Soweto, the Rivonia trial, these are all part of the tale, and it is told in the simple yet eloquent English that is Paton's hallmark.

Bram Fischer, the Afrikaner communist, is one of the people in these pages. He came from a famous family and was a brilliant lawyer. He was eventually sentenced to life imprisonment for conspiring to commit sabotage.

Paton says that he had a deep affection for him, even though his liberal friends would say, "Don't bluff yourself. When Bram comes to power you'll be the first to have your throat cut".

LOOKING AROUND

Michael Green



Wisdom, THE DAILY NEWS humour 19/05/88 and the honesty of Alan Paton

What, asks Paton, would Bram have done if he had come to power? "What would he have done to those who opposed him? Would he have killed them? I must confess I do not know the answer. In any case I do not need to answer the question; it is totally hypothetical".

I wonder. I never knew Bram Fischer, but I did know his brother

and many friends of his in Bloemfontein.

One of these was Davie Marquard, an intellectual, a liberal, and a former president of the South African Cricket Association. He recalled a conversation he had had with Bram Fischer soon after the uprising of Hungarians in the streets of Budapest in 1956, an insurrection which the Russians put down ruthlessly with tanks and soldiers.

Hadn't this caused Bram Fischer to revise his views, Davie Marquard asked. Not one bit, Fischer indicated. The reports and pictures were probably Western propaganda, but even if they were not... well, if it was necessary to break some heads, so be it.

Of course what people say and what they do can be very different.

In his book, as he was in his life, Alan Paton is unfailingly honest. He was a member of the Order of Simon of Cyrene, an honour given to 50 Anglican laymen for outstanding service to the church in South Africa, when he married for the second time, in 1969.

The Archbishop of Cape Town, the Most Rev Selby Taylor, wrote to him saying: "It is, as you well understand, a great sorrow to us that your intended wife should be a divorced person, and in these circumstances I fear that I must accept your resignation from the Order of Simon of Cyrene."

I know what I would have done. I would have told the archbishop to go and 'ump in the lake and take the Order of Simon of Cyrene with him, but then people like me are not usually awarded honours like that.

Paton writes with, dare I say it, Christian forbearance about this archiepiscopal rebuke. A year later Selby Taylor restored him to the Order and he agreed to rejoin.

Alan Paton was small in physique but in every other respect he was a big man.