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RECORD OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE
PRIME MINISTER OF SOUTH AFRICA AT 1230 PM ON SATURDAY 2 JUNE
1984 AT CHEQUERS

Present:

The Prime Minister
The Foreign and Commonwealth
Secretary
Mr. Malcolm Rifkind
Sir Antony Acland
Sir John Leahy
Mr. John Coles

The Honourable P.W. Botha
Prime Minister
The Honourable R.F. Botha
Foreign Minister
Mr. J.H. van Dalsen
Director General, DFA
Mr. C. von Hirschberg
Deputy Director General, DFA
Dr. L.D. Barnard
Head of National Intelligence
Service
The Charge d'Affaires of the
Republic of South Africa
(Mr. L.H. Evans)
Mr. A.L. Manley
Private Secretary

After formally welcoming the South African delegation, the Prime Minister said that she hoped that the discussions could be frank. There were differences between us about which we should talk. At the end of the talks we could agree jointly on what should be said to the press.

Many people in Britain had relatives in South Africa. So that was a natural reservoir of goodwill. But our political attitude was affected by one enormous problem: we felt strongly that peoples' rights should not be determined by the colour of

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their skin. Particular repugnance was felt at the forced removal of blacks to new areas. We appreciated the great strategic importance of South Africa. Nor did we wish Communism to spread in Africa or elsewhere because to us Communism represented denial of human dignity.

We welcomed the agreements reached between South Africa and some of its neighbours. We were trying to help on aid to Mozambique. We felt strongly that the people of Mozambique must see and feel the benefits of their agreement with South Africa. The Machel Government was still concerned about the activities of RENAMO which they had hoped would cease when the agreement was signed. We welcomed South Africa's withdrawal from Angola. Finally, we had taken note of Mr. Botha's advice to South Africa - "adapt or die", and were also aware of the speech he had made the previous night in Zurich.

Mr. P.W. Botha said that he wanted to speak as candidly as he had done in the earlier tete-a-tete conversation. With regard to South West Africa or Namibia, it was well-known that he had opposed United Nations Security Council Resolution 435 when, as Minister of Defence, he had been present at the relevant Cabinet discussion. But when the Cabinet had decided to accept the Resolution he had said that he would do too. On becoming Prime Minister, he had felt it his duty to adhere to the undertaking given by his predecessor. There was no real obstacle to achieving implementation of Resolution 435 except that South Africa supported the United States view that as long as there was a Cuban presence in Angola, there was no chance of fair elections in Namibia.

South Africa was being criticised for its position on Namibia. But it did not want Namibia as a part of its territory. His own political party had been founded following a rebellion in South Africa against the occupation of Namibia.

South Africa was responsible for the security of Namibia

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and at present was also responsible for its development. This year's budget showed that South Africa would guarantee loans of 180 million rands in the current financial year, that it would contribute 318 million rands to the budgetary deficit and that it would make a further contribution of 250 million rands through customs and excise. This gave a total of more than 600 million rands which did not take into account the cost of security. The idea that Namibia was rich was a myth. He assumed that as soon as South Africa withdrew troops and Namibia became independent, South Africa would be blamed if it cut off its financial assistance. The Prime Minister commented that a cut in aid was surely unlikely. Namibia would continue to depend on South Africa. We understood the need to get the Cubans out of Angola though we made no specific linkage with a Namibia settlement. We also understood that the situation was complex (in parenthesis the Prime Minister thanked Mr. Botha for the help given by the South African Government to Sir John Leahy during his recent visit in connection with the British citizens held by UNITA).

Mr. P.W. Botha said that either the world acknowledged that South Africa had a contribution to make to Namibia or it did not. He could use the funds he had described for a variety of projects within South Africa - or even in Mozambique. He now wished to work out an arrangement with the five states in the Contact Group that South Africa should look after the security of Namibia until Resolution 435 was implemented but that the five should make a contribution to the cost of administration and development of Namibia.

In response to a question from the Prime Minister, Mr. R.F. Botha described the progress of the withdrawal of South African troops from Angola. They were now only some 30 kilometres from the border which might be reached next week. The Lusaka Agreement provided that the Joint Monitoring Commission would last for only 30 days after that point had been reached. There could be a dangerous vacuum. He had therefore suggested that

when the Monitoring Commission expired, a peace-keeping organisation should be substituted.

It was noteworthy that South African and Angolan forces were now acting jointly, even in skirmishes with SWAPO. Angola had even asked South Africa to operate outside the area defined in the agreement in order to deal with SWAPO. But if, after the 30 day deadline, there was no peace-keeping organisation in place, SWAPO activity might force South Africa to re-enter Angola. He was now awaiting a response to his proposal. Mr. Crocker had strongly urged its acceptance.

South Africa had also suggested that the Government of Angola should join with it in issuing a joint declaration to the effect that neither territory would be used for launching attacks on the other.

He had argued strongly that President Dos Santos and Savimbi should meet. President Machel supported this idea and had sent an emissary to Lusaka to urge it upon President Kaunda. The latter also supported the idea but was afraid to say so publicly. Other African countries were similarly reluctant to make public their support.

UNITA was in a very strong position. Savimbi could now take almost any town at random. Of course, if the MPLA agreed to meet Savimbi this would in effect be a victory for the latter. But he would probably take MPLA members into his Government.

The recent meeting in Lusaka between SWAPO and the Multi-Party Conference had progressed well for a few days. But suddenly Njoma had gone berserk and lashed out at the MPC leaders. President Kaunda had said that he was flabbergasted by this development. Later the South Africans had learnt that a certain diplomat, who was no doubt Russian, had visited Njoma just before he had made his outburst.

The Prime Minister said that the irony was that the more successful Savimbi was the less likely the Cubans were to leave Angola. Mr. P.W. Botha said that the weaker the MPLA became, the more intolerable the position of the Cubans would be. They were not liked by the local population. Sir John Leahy commented that those African leaders who favoured reconciliation between the MPLA and Savimbi were not prepared to say so - but neither we nor the South Africans were in a position to persuade SWAPO to talk. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary asked whether it was being suggested that the MPLA could reach the conclusion that the only way of getting rid of the Cubans was to talk to Savimbi. Mr. R.F. Botha said that, according to South African information, a majority of the Politburo in Luanda wished to talk. Sir John Leahy recalled the Prime Minister hinting in New Delhi that the African Front Line States themselves had a role in promoting reconciliation. Mr. P.W. Botha pointed out that for Zambia a settlement in Angola would mean that it could again use the Benguela railway. The Prime Minister asked whether there were any African leaders who would be strong enough to give a lead in promoting reconciliation. Mr. R.F. Botha named President Machel and President Houphouet-Boigny.

Mr. P.W. Botha then added in confidence that President Machel had promised him that he would speak to Dos Santos about the possibility of talks with Savimbi. It was noteworthy that not only the Politburo but the Angolan Defence Force was split on the desirability of talks.

The economic deterioration now taking place in Southern Africa was so rapid that the countries concerned would be forced by the facts to deal with each other. Hunger was striking down hundreds of thousands of children. Unless something was done quickly, the area was heading for disaster.

The discussion then turned to Zimbabwe. Mr. Rifkind said that the country was in great difficulty after three years of

drought. Mr. P.W. Botha said that his latest information was that Zimbabwe might be prepared to conclude a security agreement with South Africa. The Harare Government feared that some 20 - 30 leading industrialists were about to leave Zimbabwe; if they did, the country was finished. He had even been asked to try to persuade Ian Smith not to leave Zimbabwe.

The Prime Minister said that for some time she had found it difficult to have a reasonable relationship with Mr. Mugabe, particularly because of the issue of the detained Air Force officers. But when they had met in New Delhi at CHOGM, Mugabe had explained that the officers would be released if a review tribunal so recommended. This had occurred - and indeed Mugabe had kept his word on all that he had said on that occasion. Zimbabwe wanted BMATT to stay. She understood that the North Koreans were no longer training the Zimbabwe army. BMATT also provided a sign of hope to the white community. She hoped that South Africa would also discover that Mr. Mugabe could be relied upon. Mr. P.W. Botha said that he was dealing with Mugabe in a low key because the latter preferred it that way. Mr. R.F. Botha said that he had little difficulty in dealing with Zimbabwe. He had sent Mugabe a message to the effect that though he did not approve of him he recognised that he was the leader with whom South Africa must deal. And no sooner had he said in the South African Parliament that South Africa did not need a security agreement with Zimbabwe, than he had received a complaint that Zimbabwe was being left in the cold.

At this point in the discussion the participants moved to lunch. The discussion continued over lunch.

Mr. R.F. Botha reverted to the situation in Angola. The moment that Dos Santos and Savimbi came together, the Cubans would have to leave. Mr. P.W. Botha commented that if they did not come together, Angola would disintegrate. Sir John Leahy observed that President Dos Santos must feel that as soon as he began to negotiate with Savimbi he would be politically dead.

Mr. R.F. Botha agreed - Savimbi knew that and that was his aim. But he would take MPLA members into his Government. Mr. P.W. Botha described Savimbi as a personal friend. He saw him often. Savimbi had recently told him that he was more optimistic than ever before. In response to a question, Sir John Leahy said that judging from the UNITA headquarters which he had visited, Savimbi's force was well organised and well disciplined with a good public relations structure.

The Prime Minister asked what the next steps should be on Namibia if Resolution 435 was to be implemented. Sir John Leahy replied that both South Africa and the United States said that the implementation of Resolution 435 was not possible while the Cubans remained in Angola - and that was not possible until the contending parties in Angola had become reconciled. Mr. P.W. Botha said that he believed that President Kaunda could play a crucial role in reconciliation.

Mr. R.F. Botha said that Savimbi was going to win the war and the present Angolan Government must capitulate. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary recalled that only recently the South African judgement was that neither side could win. Sir John Leahy commented that Savimbi had given him the same assessment. Mr. R.F. Botha replied that things had changed. Savimbi could now take any town he liked though he did not have the administrative resources to hold on to his conquests and administer the area. Mr. Rifkind asked whether the South African side were saying that Savimbi had the military capability to win the war. Mr. R.F. Botha said that we could expect very interesting developments in the next two or three months. The Portuguese Government entirely agreed with the South African view. Incidentally, President Eanes had also congratulated South Africa on the recent constitutional changes.

At this point, Mr. R.F. Botha appeared to change his ground. He said that stalemate in Angola was inevitable. In response to questions, he then stated that as a result of

stalemate the population of Angola would give their support to Savimbi rather than the MPLA.

Mr. Rifkind asked whether, if SWAPO and the Multi-Party Conference reached agreement with regard to Namibia, South Africa would still insist on Cuban withdrawal from Angola. Mr. P.W. Botha said that this was a hypothetical situation. But if it came about internal dissention would break out within SWAPO. Mr. R.F. Botha said that whatever the Namibian parties decided, South Africa would insist on a Cuban withdrawal. This alien presence in its immediate vicinity was not to be tolerated. If necessary, South Africa, which was a regional power, would go to war. The Prime Minister said that it would be much better if that could be avoided. Namibia might cost South Africa a lot now - but such a war would cost a lot more. Mr. P.W. Botha agreed and said that he was doing all in his power to avoid such a step, but in the last instance South Africa was prepared for it.

Mozambique had requested South Africa to provide helicopters to protect the transmission line on which it depended for its power supplies. South Africa had declined to supply such helicopters while the arms embargo was maintained. He had told President Machel that while he behaved as Father Christmas in Namibia, he was not prepared to do so in Mozambique. He had also told him that if he wanted South African support and co-operation he must create the opportunities for the South African private sector to invest in profitable projects in Mozambique. Mr. R.F. Botha asked whether Europe could put together a co-ordinated aid programme of perhaps \$40-50 million to help President Machel and to create employment for RENAMO. Mr. P.W. Botha commented that Africa was tired of conventional aid as distinct from joint projects which enabled Africans to utilise their soil, exploit their seas and educate themselves.

Mr. R.F. Botha observed that 20% of Africa was now a desert

and that experts predicted that the uncultivable area would increase to some 40% within 20 years. This was largely due to the wrong use of land. Mr. Rifkind suggested that it was also due to the southward drift of the Sahara and to climatic changes.

Reverting to Angola, the Prime Minister said that she was still pre-occupied with the question of what should happen next. Mr. R.F. Botha replied that Angola should accept the South African proposal for a peace-keeping organisation after the expiry of the 30 day period to which he had referred. Mr. Crocker had said in Luanda last week that the time for decisions was running out. South Africa agreed. Either the MPLA undertook to talk to Savimbi or the latter would continue until he had forced talks upon Luanda. The Cubans would not withdraw without an agreement between the two. Or, Mr. P.W. Botha added, the total collapse of Luanda.

Sir John Leahy asked whether there was any information about an increase in the number of Cubans in Angola. Dr. Barnard said that there were suggestions that some Cubans had entered Angola from Ethiopia but this information had not yet been confirmed.

Mr. P.W. Botha then suggested that a conference of Southern African states would be useful. He believed that the possibility of this was now greater. The conference could draw up a list of priorities for the area. Much preparation would be needed. He would like to see the private sector playing a role. The main purpose would be to discuss economic questions. People throughout the area were becoming more aware of the fact that children were short of food and that health facilities were poor. These were the matters to tackle first. The political solutions could come later.

At the invitation of Mr. P.W. Botha, Mr. R.F. Botha described recent exchanges between South Africa and Botswana. A

classified information showing that 36 ANC members were operating from Gaborone and other places in Botswana. He had also warned him about attempts by some people to work with the opposition to President Masire whom South Africa wished to see stay in power. Mr. Mogwe had thanked him for this information and had said that Botswana would at last be able to take action against the ANC. Nothing further had been heard. South Africa had then suggested co-operation between the police forces of the two countries. Mr. Mogwe had welcomed this but the Botswanan Cabinet had not backed him. More recently, South Africa had arrested some SWAPO terrorists who admitted that they had entered South Africa through Botswana. Until that point there had been no pressure upon Botswana to sign a security agreement. Then Mr. Mogwe had said that BP wished to erect a soda-ash plant and hoped that South Africa would take much of the product, perhaps ceasing to take supplies from other foreign suppliers. He had responded to the effect that, if South Africa was to depend on Botswana in this way, police co-operation was essential. He had given Mr. Mogwe a copy of the Nkomati Accord but Botswana had not responded favourably to this. He had then told Mr. Mogwe that provided there was adequate police co-operation to guarantee security for the plant, this would be acceptable. South Africa was not insisting that Botswana should sign a security agreement. It was a sovereign state.

The discussion was continued after lunch.

The Prime Minister said that she wished to refer to the internal situation in South Africa. She had indicated earlier that there were international dimensions to this matter because it appeared to the outside world that in South Africa political rights depended on the colour of a person's skin. That was totally unacceptable. But she recognised the complexity of the South African situation and the significance of the recent constitutional measures. The matter of greatest concern was the forced movement of blacks.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary said that the existence of institutions which differentiated between people on the basis of race were regarded by the overwhelming majority of opinion in Britain as unacceptable, as were such manifestations as the forced movement of blacks. At the same time, we understood that some people in South Africa were seeking to move in a different direction. One of the roles that the British Prime Minister played within the Commonwealth was to ensure that the condemnation of South Africa did not exceed rational limits. We very often found in Commonwealth circles that we were fighting South Africa's battle because we believed that the maintenance of economic contacts between South Africa and the rest of the world were essential. The South African Government might regard the arms embargo and the Gleneagles Agreement as unattractive but they helped to ward off more extreme measures. We had given a certain welcome to the recent constitutional changes.

The Prime Minister said that on the question of forced removals there had recently been some publicity in Britain for the case of the Ngema community. Its representatives had written to The Queen. The Prime Minister read out extracts from the letter.

Mr. P.W. Botha said that he would not shirk his responsibility to comment on South Africa's internal policies on the condition that it was no-one's intention to interfere in his country's internal affairs. No two countries in the world could agree on the internal policies of the other - the European Community provided an outstanding example of differing internal policies.

It was not the aim of South Africa's internal policy to satisfy international opinion. The latter required one man one vote in a unitary state. South Africa could not accept that. He was not just talking about the white population. In essence South Africa was a country of minorities - white, coloured,

Indian and various black minorities. The problem was to build a structure under which different minorities could retain their own rights and their own way of life and have a say in the future of the country as a whole. That was the dilemma.

It was necessary to solve the problem of the domination of one minority by another. When a solution to this had been solved, 60-70% of South Africa's current difficulties would be removed.

He saw a good deal in the system of the Swiss confederation from which South Africa could draw conclusions. The aim might be a Confederation of States. When South Africa had accepted the Westminster system, rights had not been provided either for blacks or for most of the coloureds. But it had become clear to him and his colleagues - who believed that South Africa must move with the times - that the Westminster system would have to be changed in such a way as not to destroy its good points. That was why the recent measures with regard to coloureds and Indians had been adopted. To a great extent, South Africa now had a system where people would have a say and would, under a system of devolution, be able to deal with their own affairs as much as possible. He had to reject the idea that South Africa was composed of a small minority of whites and the vast majority of blacks. It was made up of a number of minority groups, including black minority groups. Some of the latter would never accept domination by the Zulus.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary pointed out that the decision-taking power was in the hands of the white minority - for example the decisions which had resulted in the forced removal of some two million people. Mr. P.W. Botha replied that South Africa still had the Westminster system which it was seeking to change. The Transkei had obtained self-government because it had asked for it - much as Lesotho had sought self-government from the United Kingdom. Mr. Rifkind observed that the vast majority of black people did not live in the homelands.

Mr. Botha asked that he should be allowed to finish his case. The Transkei had wanted independence but would never accept Zulu domination. Nor would other black minorities accept such domination. Some eight million blacks had flocked to the urban areas. He believed that a way must be found to give these communities third tier government so that they could build up a democratic system on a local basis. It was also necessary to find ways of linking these communities with their natural homes. Structures had to be created and serve as agencies for leadership i.e. they would produce people to whom he could talk as leaders.

A Cabinet Committee of senior Ministers had now been appointed whose terms of reference included talking to, among others, the leaders of urban communities and discovering what could be done to create structures under which they could deal with their own affairs and combine to discuss matters of common concern. The eventual aim was a Confederation of States with permanent secretariats working together on mutual interests. There could be a Southern African Development Bank and annual meetings on issues of mutual concern.

Mr. Rifkind asked whether, if this goal was attained, the black communities would be represented in the Government of the Confederation. Mr. P.W. Botha said that he foresaw such representatives coming together in permanent institutions. But it would be wrong to expect South Africa to do in five years what Switzerland had taken three or four centuries to accomplish.

The Prime Minister pressed further on this point. If and when a Confederation was established would there be black representatives in the South African Government? Mr. P.W. Botha said that at the end of the road there would be a Confederation of Southern African States joining in common discussion. Mr. R.F. Botha said that for at least a year there had been eight joint committees, on a whole range of

matters, on which the South African Government had only very limited representation. This was a move towards joint decision making on matters of common concern. The Prime Minister asked why there was not more publicity for this. Mr. R.F. Botha said that too much propaganda caused trouble from the right wing and criticism from the rest of the world. He was much encouraged by the new pattern in Southern Africa where black and white leaders were talking together. The new Cabinet Committee would try to consult and negotiate agreements with black leaders.

Reverting to the case of the Ngema community, which the Prime Minister had raised, he attributed the difficulties to a dispute between two black leaders. The South African Prime Minister had said publicly that he was not in favour of forced removals. But circumstances sometimes made voluntary departures necessary. Following a detailed explanation of several cases, he added that it was fully appreciated that one of the most painful experiences was for people to move. And he knew how bad this was for South Africa's image abroad. But South Africa's enemies were now attacking on the new front of "forced removals". The South African Government would handle these matters carefully and hoped to proceed only by voluntary moves.

The Prime Minister recalled that during her last visit to South Africa she had met a person in District 6 of Cape Town who had told her that he was obliged to move for the second time because land was being cleared for whites. Was Mr. Botha saying that the object of the removals was not to make way for whites? Mr. P.W. Botha said that he was not saying this but many whites had had to move to make way for others. His own party was under attack for giving away white land. Mr. Rifkind asked how many whites had been obliged to move. Mr. P.W. Botha replied - hundreds and thousands. Compensation was given amounting to the market value of the land plus 20% of that value as a hardship grant. Mr. R.F. Botha said that the Government well understood people's attachment to land. Mr. P.W. Botha said that that was

why it was working with local leaders to persuade them of the advantages of voluntary movement. The Prime Minister asked whether that meant that if they were not persuaded they did not have to leave. Mr. P.W. Botha replied that one continued until they were persuaded, though one or two cases of stubbornness did arise.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary said that the key point seemed to be that the people who were being moved did not have a voice in Government. Mr. P.W. Botha said that he would gladly accept that the blacks should have the land owned and occupied by the whites at present, if the whites could have the land owned by the blacks. He had said this publicly.

Mr. R.F. Botha said that of course the South African Government, like any Government, had made mistakes. But the South African Prime Minister had allowed his party to split because of his policies. At a constituency meeting in Transvaal next week he expected to be told that he was a kaffir lover who was giving away white land to blacks. It should be recognised that the present Government could be replaced only by a Government to its right. It was hurtful that while he had received telegrams from several heads of African states congratulating the Government on the outcome of the constitutional referendum, none had been received from the West. The Prime Minister suggested that South Africa did not always explain itself to the outside world in the best possible way. This was perhaps one of the dangers of isolation. People in this country had seen on television the scenes of large numbers of people being moved to apparently poor land. Mr. P.W. Botha said that he could not recall people being removed in large numbers to worse conditions. Mr. R.F. Botha recalled that he had been present in Cabinet when the Prime Minister had instructed that no-one should be moved until adequate amenities existed. Mr. Rifkind suggested that most of the removals occurred because of the Group Areas Act. Mr. P.W. Botha contested this. The removals were based on other acts such as

contested this. The removals were based on other acts such as legislation introduced by Smuts in 1936. The South African Government had purchased large areas of good land from whites in order to resettle blacks. The outside world did not hear about the successful movement of people from conditions of squalor, it heard only of the mistakes. Mr. R.F. Botha pointed out that Britain had given independence to Lesotho which had 140,000 male workers permanently in South Africa who were remitting about half of Lesotho's income. The Prime Minister said that it might be helpful if the South African Embassy would provide more facts about this question.

Mr. R.F. Botha reiterated that the task of the new Cabinet Committee was to tackle the future of South Africa together with leaders of the black communities. Mr. P.W. Botha added that if he were to state that he was in favour of one man one vote he would lose the next election disastrously. Not only would whites not accept this - nor would minorities among the blacks. The only way forward was to seek a solution under which minorities could live together.

The Prime Minister asked whether there were any other matters which should be discussed before the talks were concluded.

Mr. P.W. Botha said that he wished to reiterate that South Africa would not be able to provide helicopters to Mozambique to enable it to guard the power line on their side of the border. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary said that the South African Foreign Minister had explained the background to this.

With regard to sporting contacts, Mr. R.F. Botha asked why it was not possible to remove individual sports from the boycott list when we were convinced that integration in that sport had been achieved. The Prime Minister said that this was a matter for the Commonwealth to consider. Mr. R.F. Botha observed that Mozambique was about to begin soccer matches with South Africa.

Mr. P.W. Botha said that he had a different point to make. British Government spokesmen often referred to South African policies in objectionable ways. He instanced a recent speech by the Chairman of the Conservative Party. If we did not like South African policies, no-one could blame us for saying so. But the use of such descriptions as "abhorrent" went too far. The Prime Minister commented that the basic difficulty was that South African policies discriminated on the basis of colour. Mr. P.W. Botha pointed out that a process had begun of permitting blacks to attend white universities and vice versa. Moreover, in a few months time, non-whites would join the South African Government. But if it was suggested that South Africa should move to a one man one vote system he would utterly oppose it and would take the international consequences.

Following a further discussion of the practice of segregation, Mr. P.W. Botha said that many of the problems had been dealt with quietly. The more the South African Government was shouted at, the harder it became to act. Mr. R.F. Botha said that the South African Government was portrayed as animated by racial hatred. The duty of a Government was to maintain social conditions which avoided racial confrontation. There was no comparison between the South Africa of today and the South Africa of fifteen years ago. Mr. P.W. Botha observed that if he lived in the United Kingdom his attitude would be the same as that expressed by the Prime Minister. But South Africa's history and circumstances were different. The same strict standards could not be applied. He was doing his best to apply civilised standards where possible.

The discussion ended at 1630.

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