

MEMORANDUM TO THE FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH SECRETARY

INTRODUCTION

June 1986 sees Southern Africa at a watershed. The Pretoria regime has, with the introduction of its draconian State of Emergency, signalled that it has abandoned all pretence that it is engaged in meaningful "reforms", let alone fundamental change. The situation in Namibia remains a stalemate, with the prospect of the implementation of the UN independence plan more remote than at any time since it was agreed by all parties in 1978. And as South Africa's unprovoked attacks against the capital cities of three Commonwealth countries on 19th May so vividly demonstrated, South Africa is as determined as ever to impose its "Pax Pretoriana" throughout the region.

Yet in sharp contrast to previous crises in Southern Africa, today resistance to apartheid cannot be contained by Pretoria. More than ever the Frontline states stand determined to defend their sovereignty and territorial integrity. The Namibian people daily defy South Africa's illegal occupation despite systematic repression. In South Africa itself, the scale and depth of resistance since August 1984, so dramatically displayed by the nationwide strike actions on May 1st and June 16th, has proved that the country is increasingly ungovernable and the system of apartheid unworkable.

These developments represent a fundamental challenge to the British Government. Now is the moment, possibly the last opportunity it may have, for Britain to redeem itself from its long and ignoble association with racist white supremacy in Southern Africa. It was Britain that in 1910 laid the cornerstone of today's tragedy by the Act of Union which ceded power to the white minority. Again in 1948, within three years of the defeat of Hitler, Britain ignored all the lessons of the years of appeasement which led directly to the war and the holocaust. Instead of ostracising and acting against the new Nationalist Party regime which openly espoused the ideology of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, Britain chose to treat the apartheid regime as an ally and partner in the Commonwealth.

Throughout almost four decades of Nationalist Party rule, Britain has lamentably performed the role of protecting South Africa from international action. As world-wide opposition to apartheid has mounted, Britain has chosen to play the prime role in developing and sustaining this evil system. For example, British oil companies are main suppliers of fuel to the apartheid war machine, British banks dominate the apartheid economy, British electronics companies equip much of the South African police and military, and British chemical companies sustain its explosives industry. In all international fora, South Africa has been able to count on Britain to protect it from international action. No single country has played such a vital role as Britain in creating the situation prevailing in Southern Africa today.

Successive British governments have been able to pursue policies of collaboration with South Africa by simply ignoring their opponents both in Britain and internationally. Today, however, the British Government is beginning to pay a price. Black opinion in South Africa and Namibia is becoming increasingly strident in its condemnation of British policies. African states in the region, the victims of South African aggression, can no longer disguise their anger at British inaction. And the very future of the Commonwealth and Britain's standing in the United Nations is at risk. Moreover, those policies are increasingly unpopular amongst the British electorate.

Firstly it is said that Sanctions will hit the Black community the hardest. No evidence is presented to justify this assertion. Given the structure of the South African economy the most immediate effect of sanctions would be on the beneficiaries of apartheid - the white minority and the business community including foreign investors. And for over a quarter of a century representative leaders of the Black community have repeatedly stated that they are prepared to accept the sacrifices resulting from sanctions because they are confident that they will contribute to their freedom.

Secondly, it is argued that sanctions will have a devastating impact on the economies of the independent African states in the region. This argument conveniently ignores the fact that in the absence of sanctions South Africa's policies of aggression and destabilisation have already resulted in the loss of 100,000 lives. The displacement of one million people and economic damage is estimated at over \$10 billion.

It is precisely because the neighbouring states have not only suffered this aggression and destabilisation but also have been made victims of sanctions by South Africa itself that the Frontline states at their summit meeting on 8th April 1986 "appealed to the international community to increase pressure on all fronts against the racist South African regime, including the imposition of comprehensive and mandatory sanctions in accordance with Chapter VII of the UN Charter." The Frontline states and other countries in the region have recognised that sanctions are necessary to eliminate the system of apartheid and therefore are prepared like Black South Africans themselves to make the sacrifices which may be necessary due to sanctions.

More recently, a new argument has been advanced, namely that sanctions will not be effective. Comparisons are made with the sanctions applied against the illegal regime in Southern Rhodesia. Such a comparison is meaningless since for most of the period of UDI Mozambique under Portuguese colonial rule and South Africa itself ensured that sanctions did not bite. South Africa today has no such neighbours. Moreover, without sanctions, it is probable that the liberation struggle in Zimbabwe would have been even more costly in lives than it was.

The extent of South Africa's vulnerability to international action was demonstrated last August and September. The South African economy is highly dependent on both exports and imports as well as the flow of capital loans and investment. The limited action of a few US banks threw the economy into crisis. Collective governmental action would have much greater impact.

In reality, today the main obstacles to effective international sanctions are the policies of the British and US administrations. It is they who employ their veto power to block mandatory action by the UN Security Council. Even in the one case where mandatory action has been agreed, the arms embargo, it is Britain alone which expressed reservations on all the recommendations which the Security Council's own arms embargo committee put forward to make the embargo more effective.

It is specious in the extreme for Britain to argue that its opposition to sanctions is based on the belief that they may not be effective when by its inaction it is ensuring that the limited measures already agreed by the UN, Commonwealth and the EEC are ineffective.

Finally, it is argued that sanctions will damage the British economy and lead to increased unemployment. As if by magic, figures are bandied around, ranging from 50,000 copies to 250,000 jobs will be lost as a result of sanctions. None of these figures appear to be the result of any thorough survey. The Foreign Office and Downing Street do not seem able to agree. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office gave a figure of 50,000 to the House of Commons in December 1985. Within six months Downing Street was quoting 120,000. No proponents of sanctions have ever argued that the imposition of comprehensive mandatory economic sanctions would have no impact on the British economy.

However, the extent and nature of the impact of sanctions on the British economy would depend on the form of sanctions and the circumstances in which they are applied. In certain respects, sanctions could even have a positive effect on the British economy, for example by protecting British markets from penetration by South African manufactures enjoying the competitive advantages of apartheid cheap labour.

The use of these arguments now at best reflects a failure to grasp the dimensions of the crisis now facing Southern Africa and the possible consequences and cost for human life. At worst they are a cynical justification for maintaining existing trade and investment patterns and the profits which flow from them.

The Commonwealth Group of Eminent Persons presented a challenge to the Commonwealth and the British government in particular when it concluded:

"Is the Commonwealth to stand by and allow the cycle of violence to spiral? Or will it take concerted action of an effective kind?"

POLICY PROPOSALS

The British government is under an obligation to consider what measures it should now adopt against South Africa. The Nassau Accord stated: "we agree that should all the above measures fail to produce the desired results within a reasonable period, further effective measures will have to be considered"

Likewise the Communique of the meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the Frontline States and the European Community in Lusaka on 3-4 February 1985 to which Britain was a signatory also stated: " in the event that all these various measures (against South Africa) fail to achieve the desired results, the Ministers agreed that further measures should be considered"

The most considered judgement of the impact of the Commonwealth and other measures against South Africa is that of the Commonwealth Group of Eminent Persons which was set up within the framework of the Nassau Accord and whose creation was welcomed by the European Community Foreign Ministers. They concluded that "the concrete and adequate progress looked for in the Nassau Accord towards the objectives of 'dismantling apartheid and erecting the structures of democracy in South Africa' has not materialised". They also concluded that "there is no genuine intention on the part of the South African government to dismantle apartheid"

As the Group warned in its conclusions; "we are convinced that the South African government is concerned about the adoption of effective economic measures against it. If it comes to the conclusion that it would always remain protected from such measures, the process of change in South Africa is unlikely to increase in momentum and the descent into violence would be accelerated. In these circumstances, the cost in lives may have to be counted in millions."

The extent of the responsibility now facing Britain is underlined by these assessments. The need for the British government to undertake a fundamental re-examination of its policies towards Southern Africa has never been so great. The following policy proposals we believe provide the only visible basis for future British policy:

- 1) Britain should seek the imposition by the UN Security Council of comprehensive and mandatory economic sanctions against South Africa. The aim of such measures would be to isolate South Africa, and thereby undermine the regime and hasten the process of a transfer of power from the white minority to a non-racial and democratic government. Such measures would also undermine South Africa's capacity to carry out acts of aggression against neighbouring African states; and compel South Africa to agree to the implementation of the UN plan for Namibia. Sanctions imposed within the framework of a mandatory resolution of the UN Security Council provide the only basis for universally applied measures. They would have the advantage of having an immediate and direct impact.

There is little prospect that any state would risk action against itself by defying the UN Security Council. Comprehensive economic sanctions would have an impact on South Africa's traditional trading partners including Britain but would have the likely benefit of bringing quick results. There is every prospect that such measures would rapidly lead to negotiations between the Pretoria regime and genuine leaders of the Black majority.

Comprehensive sanctions provide the best possible guarantee that all forms of military and strategic collaboration are terminated. Without comprehensive sanctions the risk of "loopholes" in the arms embargo and similar controls will always exist.

- 2) Pending action by the UN Security Council Britain should immediately implement the eight measures outlined in Paragraph 7 of the Nassau Accord. The measures contained in this Paragraph would have a significant impact on South Africa, but only a marginal impact on the British economy. None of the measures would have anything but a beneficial influence on the economies of South Africa's neighbours. As such, they are the policies which can be implemented immediately by the British government. However to have maximum impact, they should also be made obligatory on all EEC and Commonwealth countries, and steps should be taken to make them mandatory on all UN Member States by action under Chapter 7 of the UN Charter

It is vital, however, that if they are to be implemented, then strict controls should be introduced to enforce the measures. Existing machinery to enforce measures already endorsed by Britain is far from adequate and it is essential that if these measures are to be implemented that proper controls are introduced, including effective penalties in case of breaches of the controls.

- 3) Immediate action is required to ensure the strict implementation of existing measures that Britain has endorsed. These measures should also be made obligatory on all Commonwealth and EEC members, and where appropriate, by the UN Security Council on all the UN Member States.

In respect of these existing measures in most cases no effective controls are in force. Where controls do exist, eg. the arms embargo, they are far from effective.

- 4) Finally, Britain should sever diplomatic relations with South Africa. South Africa's role in sponsoring international terrorism provides an obvious basis for such action, as does the evidence of the illegal and improper activities by diplomatic staff at South Africa House. In particular, with the imposition of the draconian measures under the new State of Emergency, there can be no justification for South Africa to continue to enjoy the prestige afforded by maintaining diplomatic relations with Britain. More and more countries have reduced or severed their diplomatic relations, and such an action by the British government would serve as a very powerful message to the South African government that it is no longer regarded as a legitimate representative of the people of South Africa.

CONCLUSIONS

The Anti-Apartheid Movement has been campaigning for an effective policy of international sanctions against South Africa since 1959. It has carried out detailed research into the subject and is fully conversant with all the arguments concerning their efficacy. As early as 1964, it sponsored the International Conference on Economic Sanctions in London and it contributed to the studies carried out in advance of both the 1977 and 1981 UN Conferences, which did so much to further the case for sanctions.

We believe that we have been instrumental in securing the profound change in public attitudes to apartheid in the past 27 years, and the current groundswell of opinion in support of sanctions. Our capacity to achieve these results has depended primarily on our close association with those actively engaged in the struggle for freedom in Southern Africa.

Over the past two years in particular, the British government has failed to grasp the significance of the profound developments taking place in Southern Africa. Immediately following the Langa massacre we produced a Ten Point Programme of Action as a minimal response to the crisis in South Africa. It represented a framework for immediate action by the British government which would "serve as a powerful message to Pretoria". The government rejected all ten points. We called for action after South Africa's attack against Gaborone on the 14th of June 1985. This was rejected. We called for action in cooperation with Anti-Apartheid Movements throughout the EEC on the eve of the Luxembourg Council of Ministers meeting in September. Our main proposals were rejected. We again called for action on the eve of the Commonwealth Summit. Again our main proposals were rejected. The measures we called for were specific and minimal. If acceded to by the British government, they could have had the desired effect. However, the intransigence of the British government in its opposition to sanctions has generated a situation today in which we are convinced that only comprehensive and mandatory economic sanctions provide any guarantee that the catastrophe which the Commonwealth Group of Eminent Persons so eloquently warned of can be averted