



House of Lords

Box ②

I have asked.

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Prime Minister

CDP
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Prime Minister

I send notes on meetings
I had this week with Senator
Howard Baker & Dr. Tambo.

Lugh Thomas

October 31 1985

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MR OLIVER TAMBO

Anthony Kershaw asked me to have tea with Mr Tambo on Monday and I went along to a dining room of the Commons where some ten persons were gathered. All were Conservatives apart from Mr Tambo and his delegation. His English is impeccable, and he has a friendly, relaxed and attractive manner. He talked a good deal about the roots of the problem stretching back to 1910. Indeed, he dwelt on the past as much as the present. If he were solely in charge of the African National Congress I should guess there would be a chance of a humane outcome to its present policies. But it was difficult to see, in the context concerned, whether he is a real leader, or whether, as is often the case, he is merely an attractive front for more dangerous forces: one of his colleagues, Mr Mbeki, seemed a rougher character, though also courteous.

Mr Tambo said he was here to tell leaders of British opinion that apartheid must be ended in some way. He described how the situation in South Africa had, in his opinion, become "more and more violent" and how, at the beginning of the period of control by the African Nationalist Party in 1948, that Party had sought to provoke the Africans to violence in order to force an alliance between Anglo-Saxons and Dutch. The consequence was the African National Congress. At first, the ANC pursued its struggle without violence, though the South African government was becoming increasingly rough itself. Since the 1960s, the ANC had pursued a policy of "selective sabotage", e.g. against pylons, with "a special care to avoid injury to people". They had not been entirely successful in this attempt, though Mr Mandela had criticised the recent (?) bomb placed in Pretoria. The real "armed struggle" had not yet begun. The reason for the delay was that Mr Tambo and his friends know the damage which could be caused if it were to begin seriously.

Now matters had changed: not only because the South African government had become physically brutal, but because of the independence of Mozambique, Rhodesia and other places whose African population "we used to look down on as backward". The black South Africans see themselves as more advanced than the populations of those countries. Yet their present position is worse even than it was in 1910 when, after all, they had had four coloured members of parliament. Branch secretaries of the ANC had crossed the border to Bechuanaland and Swaziland to become ministers.

The South African people, he said, sought democracy. They did not want majority rule simply to become black majority rule. The ANC recognised that white South Africans belong in Africa and believe firmly that South Africa could become a country in which colour bar had no meaning. But

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given the unyielding attitude of the South African government, Mr Tambo believed that they now had to embark upon the "armed struggle". In reply to a later question, he said "it's going to be brutal and many thousands are going to have to die". He added that, at "a certain level" (presumably, of violence) "we would expect to see the international community intervening, including this country" (i.e. Britain): "the responsibility for all this violence does not lie with us".

Tambo recognised that the South African army could not be defeated, but "we could cause a lot of chaos". He did not think that a truce was necessary in order to embark on talks with the South African government since, after all, such a truce had been found necessary neither in Rhodesia or Vietnam.

I asked Tambo what his attitude was to the proven inadequacy of sanctions in other instances, and the argument (e.g. of Helen Suzman) that economic development was more likely to produce change than a boycott. Tambo passed this question to Mbeki to answer. He did not at first do so, but on being pressed commented that maximum repression had coincided in the past with a period of economic development. He apparently saw sanctions as a way of dragging in other parts of the world. In reply to another question, he rejected any suggestion that there could be a federal solution in South Africa: "we cannot federate if federation means the continuance anywhere of white South African superiority".

In conclusion Tambo said "we cannot persist in cautious sabotage such as we have pursued for two decades": more was needed. In reply to a final question from Anthony Kershaw as to whether the African National Congress was a Marxist party, Tambo answered, after hesitating, "no".

October 31st, 1985

SENATOR HOWARD BAKER

[He already
announced
it publicly
months
ago]

At lunch with the American Minister yesterday Senator Howard Baker announced that he is going to run for President in 1988. The Senator said he already had 1¼ million dollars in his campaign fund. In order to run for the presidency he would need \$40-60 million. A similar figure would also be needed if he was a Democratic candidate, he added. (That does not include the \$25 million which will be made available to him if formally adopted as presidential candidate).

I do not know if you know Senator Baker; he struck me as a tough little man with a ready reply, in all circumstances, of no great depth. He was, as you will know, Republican leader in the Senate throughout President Reagan's first term. Although he stood against Reagan in the 1980 Republican contest he now looks on him as "the most presidential President" he can remember.

The most interesting thing he had to say was that he thought the President was taking his meeting with Mr Gorbachov extremely seriously, was really interested in a deal and was perhaps "too interested in a deal". The reasons for this attitude in the President were, in his view, not particularly novel though he expressed himself vigorously. Senator Baker is a strong supporter of the SDI and thought that Japan would, after the United States, be the most likely nation to make use of its potential.

November 1, 1985

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