



PM/86/045

PRIME MINISTER

South Africa

1. The purpose of this minute is to bring colleagues up-to-date on the progress of my mission.
2. From 8-11 July I visited Zambia, Zimbabwe and Mozambique where I had talks with Presidents Kaunda and Machel and Prime Minister Mugabe.
3. In these talks I stressed:
 - our conviction that apartheid must give way to a non-racial fully representative society as soon as possible;
 - our belief that negotiations will end apartheid more quickly than violence, which will actually slow the process of change; and that the South Africans could resist a military "solution" for many years;
 - the need to acknowledge that the South African Government had already taken some steps towards removal of apartheid;
 - our sincerely held view that comprehensive sanctions will not bring down apartheid and that the South Africans would more probably retaliate against their

/neighbours.



neighbours. The EC's decision to study further measures which might be needed was in itself a carefully considered fresh signal;

- the need to do everything possible to advance dialogue so long as the option of peaceful negotiation remained available.

4. President Kaunda was sceptical of the possibility of persuading the South African Government to move; he genuinely believes that nothing less than comprehensive sanctions will induce the South African Government to do so, and that they will buy time for change by persuading the South African blacks to hold back from further violence, because they will see that the West is not against them. But he was willing to wish my mission success.

5. President Machel espouses the case for dialogue. Of the three he was the most realistic in his assessment of the internal political situation in South Africa. He and his Foreign Minister made it clear that they did not favour comprehensive sanctions. But they warned that the dominant influence of the military would make the South African Government hard to shift.

6. Mugabe, though friendly, was the least sympathetic: he made it clear that he suspects our motive to be the preservation of white rule; in his view only military pressure from the ANC, backed by comprehensive sanctions by the world outside, could be effective.

7. I did not seek a meeting with the ANC in Lusaka because there were no credible leaders present at the time. The ANC continued throughout my visit to say that they would refuse to meet me during my mission, since they too still have to be convinced of its sincerity.



8. We now need to look forward to my further visit to South Africa and to the Commonwealth Review Conference. We need to reconcile what makes sense in a purely South African context with our duty to defend Britain's wide interests in the world as a whole. We must take care that our understandable concern with the former does not lead us to put more fundamental interests at risk.

Tactics with the South Africans

9. The difficulties of convincing African leaders that my mission stands any chance of success (and is not just an attempt to buy time for Britain) highlight the need to obtain some evidence of South African flexibility in my first meeting with P W Botha. Ewen Fergusson, our former Ambassador in South Africa, accompanied me on my recent visit to Southern Africa and then went on to Pretoria, where he saw Pik Botha on 14 July. He left the South Africans in no doubt of the mounting pressures throughout the West for early action, and underlined the need for a forthcoming and substantial response. He also warned of the danger of military action, which would make our attempt to get negotiations under way even more difficult than it is already (there is some evidence that the SADF may be contemplating further action against her neighbours of the kind which wrecked the COMGEP initiative).

10. My immediate objective when I get to South Africa must be to persuade them to create the necessary conditions for a start of dialogue by releasing Mandela and other political leaders and unbanning political organisations including the ANC. Clearly we should not try to prescribe the political and constitutional arrangements which might emerge from any negotiations, but it might be useful to develop formulae which could be deployed if necessary once negotiations were in train (for example we recognise the need for safeguards for minorities and that this is the reason for South African

/anxiety



anxiety about an unqualified one-man one-vote system in a unitary state). In order to avoid foreclosing options, we should meanwhile refrain from public utterances which might conflict with them.

The ANC

11. The South Africans will be anxious to ensure that negotiations only commence in the context of an abandonment of violence. They have resiled from their earlier publicly implied willingness to settle for a "suspension" of violence. It will be necessary, but very difficult, to try to find a *formula* which both sides can accept.

12. This underlines the importance of my making contact with the ANC. It will be less difficult to persuade the South Africans to talk to them if I have done so myself and can say that I believe there would be a response if the South Africans were ready to make a gesture. I am trying a number of avenues to arrange a meeting with Tambo, who is in Europe. Tambo's attitude may well determine Mandela's willingness to see me.

Contact with other industrialised countries

13. In the meantime I am in contact with other industrialised countries both in order so far as possible to coordinate policy with them and to bring out to the South Africans the broadly based nature of my mission. I intend to visit Washington on 17/18 July and to meet Shultz and Vice-President Bush. My Political Director, Derek Thomas, who was also with me in Southern Africa, has visited Canberra and Tokyo. You have of course already had contact with the Canadian Government.

/The Commonwealth Review Conference



The Commonwealth Review Conference

14. The Commonwealth Review Conference in early August, judging from my contacts on this trip, will be extremely difficult. Following COMGEP's lack of success, all those who will be present (including even the Canadians and Australians) can be expected to demand the immediate implementation of most of the measures listed in the Commonwealth Accord. The vigour and persistence with which we have continued to make the case against comprehensive sanctions has led them to conclude, contrary to the Hague understanding, that we have ruled out any move in that direction. This has prompted many of them to see us not just as the sole obstacle to that course, but often as the sole defender of apartheid. The African countries are already threatening action against us: some of this is rhetoric, but concrete measures against our interests now appear quite likely. Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania have withdrawn from the Commonwealth Games; others, most notably President Kaunda, have been talking about withdrawal from the Commonwealth. There are also some signs that the African Commonwealth states may take action against British airlines: certain of their Ambassadors in Bonn told Herr Genscher on 8 July that they already had Indian support for such a move. If there were to be a ban on British airlines, the survival of British Caledonian as well as the flotation of British Airways could be at risk.

15. If there were tangible signs of progress arising from my visit to South Africa, it would be easier to get through the Review Meeting without serious damage to our interests. Correspondingly, any further repressive acts by the police or security forces (particularly if they involved large-scale loss of life), or fresh raids by the SADF on South Africa's neighbours, would greatly add to the difficulties.

This is
what
would
be
Foreign
Security
Matter



16. Even without such actions, in the absence of a real breakthrough an attempt by us simply to stand pat at the review meeting could have dangerous implications for our wider interests. On the other hand, the Hague declaration allowed 3 months for consultations between the community and other industrialised countries on further measures. The Nassau Accord committed Heads of Government to consider the adoption of further measures if in their opinion adequate progress towards the objectives outlines in the Accord had not meanwhile been made. Our Commonwealth partners would not accept that their decisions should wait on the timetable subsequently laid down by the European Community. We should have to try to reconcile these conflicting priorities: one possible means of doing so would be to try to gain acceptance of the idea that if any measures are to be taken they will only be adopted, by ourselves at least, if the three month period ends with no substantial movement from the South African Government. In the circumstances I have suggested, the very minimum which might get us through would be agreement in principle to specific limited measures if the mission has not achieved tangible and substantial progress, and also to recommend them to the EC and other industrial countries.

17. Meanwhile we need to be very careful how we present our policy in public. We have registered clearly enough the case against comprehensive economic sanctions. Our aim now should be to concentrate our moral indignation on apartheid and those who uphold it. This emphasis would be consistent with the case that you have put in private correspondence with Commonwealth leaders.

18. We should instead stress the positive attempt to get dialogue going. At the same time willingness to adopt economic measures if all else fails was implicit in the EC decision at The Hague, and we should say nothing to suggest that we rule it out. In this way we can avoid fuelling the

/suspicions



suspensions (already widespread and deep) that our main purpose is simply to delay sanctions rather than to achieve change in South Africa.

19. I was struck in my visit to Maputo by the crucially important geographical position of Mozambique in relation to the Central African countries. At the moment Zimbabwe, Zambia and Botswana are thrust into dependence on South Africa to a large extent by the unworkability of the transport links through Mozambique. We and some of our European partners are already doing a good deal through our aid programmes to rehabilitate these links. But I think there may be room for a still more closely coordinated European policy along these lines. This would have the advantage of strengthening the influence in the region of the Government which has the most moderate and realistic assessment of the South African situation. It would also help to persuade Zambia and Zimbabwe that we are not espousing the cause of South Africa against them. We should therefore discuss this possibility with our European partners.

20. I am copying this minute to OD colleagues and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

(GEOFFREY HOWE)

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

15 July 1986

