



Anti-Apartheid Movement

13 Mandela Street London NW1 0DW Tel 01-387 7966

President

Most Revd Trevor Huddleston CR

Vice Presidents

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Jack Jones CH

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Rt Hon David Steel MP

Sponsors

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Lord Brockway

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FILE : BRITISH GOVT

BRITAIN, SOUTH AFRICA AND NAMIBIA

A MEMORANDUM PREPARED BY THE ANTI-APARTHEID MOVEMENT

FOR PRESENTATION TO SIR GEOFFREY HOWE QC, MP,

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

NOVEMBER 1987

BRITAIN, SOUTH AFRICA AND NAMIBIA

MEMORANDUM FOR PRESENTATION TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN
AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS on 25 November 1987

INTRODUCTION

1. At two previous meetings on Namibia, between AAN delegations and the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on 28 February 1983 and the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on 1 May 1985, the Anti-Apartheid Movement rehearsed the long history of South Africa's intransigent refusal to grant independence to Namibia, and the failure of the international community and Britain in particular to take the steps necessary to overcome this refusal.

2. Today, two-and-a-half years after the previous meeting, we do not intend to traverse that well-worn ground again. Suffice it to point out that almost a full decade has passed since the UN Plan for the Independence of Namibia was drawn up and UN SCR 435 adopted, and yet no tangible progress towards its implementation has been achieved. Recent developments, as we show below, both make the implementation of the UN Plan more imperative, and can improve the conditions for securing South Africa's compliance with its international obligations - provided that Her Majesty's Government responds positively and actively to the opportunities now before it. Our purpose is to urge HMG to grasp these opportunities, and demonstrate the political will to contribute towards the solution of the impasse over Namibia.

3. For HMG to take up such a challenge will require it to go beyond the hitherto merely verbal assertion of support for the UN Plan, and to take practical and concrete steps that would give substance to the Foreign Secretary's admission of 22 May 1985 that -

"...we have a responsibility, along with our partners, to do all we can to bring about Namibian independence on the basis of the UN Plan."

(Letter from Sir Geoffrey Howe to Bishop Huddleston)

4. Less than a month after those words were written, the South African regime - in blatant disregard of the UN Plan, and with the evident objective of undermining it - proceeded to establish the so-called 'Transitional Government of National Unity.' It has subsequently promoted this irrelevant entity, and in the case of Britain has taken advantage of the open door provided by the assertion (in the letter quoted above) that "We shall continue to maintain informal contacts with members of the NPC..." This commitment paved the way for the meeting in February 1987 (which we criticised at the time) between the Minister of State at the FCO and two representatives of the TGNU and their subsequent tour of North Sea oil installations. With benefit of hindsight it must be acknowledged that such contacts wittingly or unwittingly give a measure of credence to the TGNU, and assist the South African regime in its aim of levering a new element, controlled by it,

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into the negotiating process. Such an aim can only serve the ultimate South African objective of supplanting the previous negotiations whose outcome (the UN Plan) was agreed by all relevant parties. This is why the Anti-Apartheid Movement regards such contacts as subversive of the UN Plan and its implementation. We therefore call upon HMG to give an assurance that no informal contacts will be established or maintained with representatives of either the Multi-Party Conference or the TGNU - at least pending the realisation of the steps endorsed recently by the UN Security Council in its Res. 601 of 30/10/87, particularly in Paras. 5 and 7. We would further urge that the Government investigate any 'information centres' or other public relations operations in Britain that may be linked to or operating on behalf of the 'Transitional Government' and take steps to prevent their functioning.

Recent developments affecting Namibia

5. Potentially by far the most significant recent development in relation to the UN Plan has been the adoption by the UN Security Council of Res. 601. Since agreement was finalised nearly a year ago on all aspects of the UN Plan, SCR 601 represents the first practical step by the international community towards its implementation. Since SWAPO had previously expressed its readiness to sign and observe a ceasefire, and has subsequently confirmed that position in a letter to the UN Secretary General, the onus is now on the international community to secure South Africa's compliance. We would expect to find Her Majesty's Government doing "all we can" (in the Foreign Secretary's own phrase) to support SCR 601 and assist its implementation.

6. We were therefore surprised that the Prime Minister, in her letter to Messrs. Robert Hughes MP and Richard Caborn MP of 3 November, in the course of a passage outlining HMG's approach to the issues, made no reference whatsoever to UN SCR 601. A week later, writing to Bishop Huddleston, she welcomed the resolution, but gave no further sign of support for it, and no indication of Government's intention to do anything to facilitate its implementation. If it is, in reality, HMG's intention to allow SCR 601 to suffer the same fate as SCR 435, by giving it verbal approval but making it clear to South Africa that the weight of the British government is not being thrown behind its implementation then we cannot think of a better way of going about it.

7. We deplore the fact that there is as yet no sign that HMG is prepared to put any diplomatic effort at all into assisting the UN Secretary-General to arrange the ceasefire. HMG's silence and apparent inaction over the proposed ceasefire in Namibia, contrasted with the high-profile diplomatic effort recently put into trying to secure a ceasefire in the Iran-Iraq conflict, inevitably give rise to the inference that HMG lacks the political will to pursue the goal of a ceasefire in Namibia. If this be the case, it can only, in our submission, result from the unwillingness of HMG to confront South Africa on the question of Namibia - a reluctance that stems directly from the refusal to countenance sanctions. In short, so long as the

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British government maintains a much stronger opposition to sanctions than its opposition to South Africa's illegal occupation of Namibia, the Pretoria regime will feel under no pressure from Britain to proceed with the implementation of the UN Plan under SCR 435. We urge HMG to respond positively to the recent appeal of the Heads of Government and State of the Front Line States to "grant all possible support to the Secretary-General's efforts to implement SCR 601."

9. The Commonwealth summit in Vancouver was a further manifestation of the concern about Namibia felt by the international community, reflected in the Okanagan Statement on Southern Africa and particularly in the observation therein (para. 25) that -

" the impasse in Namibia's progress to independence under the terms of Res. 435 seems to have assumed the proportions of a permanent stalemate. We again stress the illegality of South Africa's presence in Namibia."

In the light of HMG's support for that latter, unequivocal joint assertion, (in contrast with the reservations expressed by Britain at several other points in the statement), and especially in the light of HMG's vote for SCR 601, including its reaffirmation (Para. 2) of the 'legal and direct responsibility of the United Nations over Namibia,' we now call upon HMG to -

- (a) abandon its earlier opposition to the 1966 decision of the UN General Assembly to terminate South Africa's mandate,
- (b) accept the 1971 Advisory Opinion on Namibia of the International Court of Justice, and
- (c) recognise UN Decree No. 1.

10. We suggest that for HMG to take these steps now, whilst not yet fully satisfying Britain's responsibility "along with our partners, to do all we can" to secure Namibia's independence, would signal a measure of intent in relation to the implementation of SCR 601 that would assist the UN Secretary-General. Conversely, not to match the firm words of the Okanagan Statement on the illegality of South Africa's presence with some action would open HMG to the charge of hypocrisy and lack of good faith towards our partners in the Commonwealth.

11. We welcome the joint reaffirmation in para. 27 (to which HMG subscribed) of the Okanagan Statement, of the New Delhi agreement that -

" if South Africa continued to obstruct the implementation of Res. 435, the adoption of appropriate measures under the Charter of the United Nations would have to be considered. "

Of course we take the view that the time for such consideration is overdue. Where basic human rights are at stake for an entire nation, ten years is surely a generous period to allow for compliance with an internationally agreed plan. We invite HMG to indicate that if at the latest by the 10th anniversary of the adoption of SCR 435 (29 September

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1988) South Africa has failed to agree to a ceasefire, and therefore has not ceased to "obstruct the implementation of Res. 435" Britain will join with its partners in considering the "adoption of appropriate measures" under the UN Charter. Perhaps more than any other single action this would signify to the world, and especially to Pretoria, that Britain wished to see a speedy resolution of what is now the last decolonisation issue in sub-Saharan Africa. The sending of such a signal could only assist the UN Secretary-General in securing South Africa's adherence to a ceasefire, as the first step towards the implementation of the UN Plan.

12. Pending such consideration of action under the UN Charter, and in line with the agreed Commonwealth view that "the action which we envisaged in the (Nassau) Accord on Southern Africa should be directed equally towards ensuring South Africa's compliance with the wishes of the international community on the question of Namibia," we would further propose two additional steps that HMG could take in order to promote Namibia's independence. Both relate to the application to Namibia of measures already taken against South Africa. First, purely British measures, such as the voluntary ban on promotion of tourism, could be applied immediately to Namibia since no consultation with our partners is required. Secondly, at the forthcoming EC meeting, we urge HMG to take the lead in proposing the extension to Namibia of current EC measures applying to South Africa. We have little doubt that such a British initiative would be welcomed by our EC partners, and go some way towards recognising the importance of the collective view of the countries most directly concerned -

"The Heads of State and Government of the Front Line countries reaffirmed the need to apply mandatory economic sanctions against the Pretoria regime as a peaceful means of hastening the solution of the Namibian problem and the eradication of apartheid." (Para. 12)
(Communique of the Luanda Frontline Summit meeting - 15/11/87)

The linkage question

13. Recent weeks have seen one of the biggest invasions into the People's Republic of Angola by South Africa's armed forces since 1975, the admission by Pretoria of the most substantial casualties it has ever admitted to in such extra-territorial actions, the announcement by the South African regime that it has been operating in Angola in support of UNITA, and the revelation that the South African President and several of his ministers had, in an act of "illegal and unsolicited entry" into Angola (to cite the Luanda communique) visited the war zones in Angola. All this results, we would stress, from -

"the continued use of the illegally occupied territory of Namibia by the apartheid regime to launch direct armed aggression against the sovereign state of Angola in support of the armed bands that it arms, trains and uses as destabilising tools." (op cit. para 3)

14. We would urge HMG to take serious note of the assessment by the Front Line states of these grave developments stemming from "South Africa's deep involvement in its continued aggression and occupation of part of Angola." We share the view expressed by the Heads of State and Government that -

"The war in Angola is not between FAPLA and the UNITA puppet forces, but an open war of invasion, aggression, occupation and destabilisation by South Africa, which uses the UNITA bandits and other mercenary forces as an integral part of its regular army against the sovereign state of Angola, a member of the UN, the OAU and the Non-Aligned Movement." (ibid. para 5)

15. Since HMG has now joined with our EC partners in a clear condemnation of South Africa's latest aggression against Angola, we suggest it would now be appropriate for Britain to proffer the hand of friendship to that beleaguered country by inviting the Angolan government to meet HMG at ministerial level to discuss its current needs in the light of the latest South African actions and the possibilities for action under Chapter VII of the UN Charter to defend Angola's sovereignty.

16. In this context we deeply regret that the Prime Minister, in the letter referred to above (para. 6), spoke of urging "a policy of reconciliation upon both the MPLA and UNITA." We find it incomprehensible that the Prime Minister can urge reconciliation with UNITA in the light both of its relationship with the South African regime as correctly described by the Front Line summit, and of its known record of terroristic activities, including the kidnapping of hostages, some of whom, as you know, have been British subjects. Her statement, as we have already pointed out in our letter of 9 November, virtually equates the MPLA government, the recognised government of the People's Republic of Angola, with UNITA, and as such represents a slur on the sovereignty of the Angolan state and an unwarranted interference in its internal affairs. We fear that this signifies that British policy towards Angola is moving closer and closer towards that of the United States - whose whole approach to Southern Africa has been criticised by the Front Line States as "unrealistic." (Communique, para. 11)

17. Our fears are confirmed by the Prime Minister's effective endorsement of 'linkage' revealed by her assertion that "an agreement on Cuban troop withdrawal" would be the best way to secure "South African cooperation (which) is vital for the successful implementation of the settlement Plan." We have already pointed out that this passage in the Prime Minister's letter makes a mockery of Britain's endorsement of Para. 26 of the Okanagan Statement, with its unambiguous - and ostensibly unanimous - rejection of linkage. Also in this context we hope that it will be possible for clarification to be given of the reference (in the Foreign Secretary's letter of 22 October) to the United Nations, mentioned in the same context as support for the United States.

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18. So long as the US Administration pursues its linkage policy, it is our contention that there is a clear incompatibility between HMG's declared support for the UN Plan for Namibian independence, and its declared support for "United States efforts to reach a negotiated settlement" - whatever such efforts might be. The United States, whilst it prosecutes its hostility to the MPLA government and its partisanship towards UNITA with manifest fervour, displays little enthusiasm for progress towards the implementation of SCR 435, as its abstention in the vote on SCR 601 showed. If any government has gone out of its way to secure a settlement of the regional problems and the establishment of peace it is the MPLA government, and in this context we regret that HMG did not encourage the United States to respond positively to the new proposals put forward earlier this year by President Dos Santos's government. We call upon HMG to support UN efforts as referred to previously, to abandon its de facto support for the US policy of linkage, and to use its influence with the US Administration to persuade it to throw its weight behind the UN Secretary-General's mandate under SCR 601.

UN arms embargo undermined

19. Equally disturbing is the failure of HMG to voice any public opposition to the supply by the United States of Stinger missiles and other sophisticated weaponry to UNITA. The relationship between UNITA and South Africa being what it is (para. 14 above), the supply of such weapons to UNITA cannot avoid breaching the UN arms embargo against South Africa. With South African personnel in effective control of UNITA's training, transport and logistics, it is inconceivable that South Africa does not now possess a knowledge of the construction and use of the Stinger and Tow missiles which it would have been impossible for it to obtain had the UN arms embargo been strictly enforced. That Britain's closest ally should be so blatantly fuelling the conflict in the region, and undermining the one internationally agreed mandatory sanction against South Africa, without any public remonstrance from HMG, can only encourage South Africa to persist in the very aggression that the EC Foreign Ministers have this week condemned.

CONCLUSION

20. The international situation as regards Namibia is now poised at a critical point. Effective pressure on South Africa can only assist the UN Secretary-General in his efforts to implement SCR 601. Support to Angola to enable it to defend its independence and sovereignty can only complement such pressure. The isolation of the United States, as demonstrated by its solitary abstaining vote on SCR 601, could be the prelude to the making of a fresh assessment in Washington of the path to peace in Southern Africa. In each of these fundamental respects, Britain has special responsibilities and unique possibilities to make a positive contribution. But this cannot materialise if the ritual denunciation of sanctions serves as a substitute for a new initiative, and stands in the way of a fresh response to a situation that is rapidly becoming awesome in its gravity.