



Anti- Apartheid Movement

for freedom in southern africa

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MEMORANDUM
TO THE BRITISH
GOVERNMENT

Anti-Apartheid Movement,
June 26th, 1980

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from the Anti-Apartheid Movement

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We welcome the opportunity for this meeting and we are grateful that it has been possible for the meeting to be arranged at such short notice.

We took the initiative to seek this meeting because of the serious developments which are taking place in South Africa. We are especially concerned because the Government has apparently believed it inappropriate to make any major warning to the South African authorities concerning the consequences of their latest actions.

We requested this meeting following the events in the Cape Town area on June 17th and 18th and the very heavy death toll as a result of police action. Such confrontations are continuing in South Africa. During the past months we have received many reports of arbitrary and unjustifiable action by the South African authorities. Some of these actions have been widely publicised, for example the arrest, detention and charging of Bishop Tutu and other church leaders, the banning of the press from areas of unrest, the shooting by the police of two of the school students in Cape Town and the generally repressive measures which have been employed to try to prevent legitimate protest.

There has been much less publicity concerning other numerous arbitrary actions by the South African authorities: the detention without trial of the leaders of the Indian community in Natal, the widespread detentions of student leaders, mass arrests in Soweto and other urban areas. There are countless other examples.

Our experience is that the South African authorities take into consideration the response of the international community and in particular those countries with extensive economic and other relations with South Africa when determining the course of action they intend to pursue. This is why we have argued that the silence of the British Government is tantamount to condoning the violence of apartheid.

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Our main proposal to the Government is that it should speak out against the injustices which are taking place in South Africa. We are aware of the very brief statement made by the Prime Minister in the House of Commons on June 19th, but we regard this as a totally inadequate response.

Our second request relates more generally to British policy towards South Africa. We have been particularly concerned since last December, following the major foreign policy statement of the Prime Minister in New York on December 18th, when she referred to "welcome initiatives on South African domestic policies" and the chance "to make progress towards the ending of the isolation of South Africa in world affairs".

We could not concur with this assessment of the situation, since the overwhelming evidence available to us was that the South African authorities were prepared to make no fundamental changes in their internal policies and that there was every prospect that there would be a growing confrontation in South Africa. Legitimate fears have been expressed that the British Government would be prepared to accept "cosmetic" changes in apartheid as a basis for re-establishing closer relations with South Africa, and reversing policies which have been applied against South Africa during the past two decades.

We were therefore encouraged by and welcomed the positive vote of the United Kingdom delegation for UN Security Council Resolution 413. We hope very much that this vote was a genuine expression of British policy and that in the light of events during the past six months the British Government has reassessed the situation and no longer seeks the ending of South Africa's international isolation and will not do so until the apartheid system has been eliminated.

In addition to these two matters of general policy there are a number of specific issues which we would urge the Government to consider acting upon, most of which are measures required to secure the implementation of Resolution 473.

The strict application of the UN arms embargo

We have welcomed the commitment of the Government to the implementation of the UN mandatory arms embargo against South Africa, but have been concerned that in its application it has proved possible for South Africa to continue to receive equipment which enhance South Africa's military and nuclear capacity.

We believe that national and international machineries need to be established (and where they exist the need to be made effective) to ensure the implementation of Resolution 418 (1977). We would particularly welcome consideration by the British Government of point (10) of UN Security Council Resolution 473, which proposes the enacting of national legislation for this purpose.

In this context we wish to raise two particular matters. The first relates to the granting of licences for the supply of radar equipment by Plessey for military use in South Africa. We have previously made representations on this issue, but we wish to express our particular concern that the Government has so far failed to respond to enquiries on this matter by the UN Security Council Committee established under Resolution 421 (1977) to monitor the arms embargo. This failure to respond only serves to undermine the authority of the Security Council.

The second is in respect of our grave anxiety concerning South Africa's nuclear weapons programme. We would urge the Government to give consideration to supporting a United Nations mandatory ban on all nuclear collaboration with South Africa.

The release of Nelson Mandela and all other South African political prisoners
UN Security Council Resolution 473 specifically calls upon the South African authorities to release Nelson Mandela and other Black leaders. The Government will also be aware of the unanimous vote of the European Assembly which called for his release. We believe that these decisions reflect widespread support for Mandela's release.

We are aware of the statement by the Lord Privy Seal on April 16th, 1980, that the British Government has no standing in this matter. In view of the UN Security Council decision we would welcome a reconsideration of this assessment, with a view to the British Government making direct representations to the South African authorities to secure his release. We believe that this is a matter of great urgency.

In addition to the case of Mr Mandela we have been concerned by the response of Foreign Office officials to requests that the Government take action in respect of other political prisoners. We know of representations which have been made in the past in respect of such prisoners and therefore cannot understand why the Government now believes that it should only act in respect of "political prisoners in South Africa who are British citizens". Again, we would urge that this matter be reviewed.

Economic and other relations with South Africa

The Government will be aware of the extensive support in this country for the application of economic sanctions against South Africa, and in this context we would like to raise two specific matters.

Firstly, we understand from Ministerial statements that the Government has abandoned the policy of the previous administration in relation to the need to restrict new investment in South Africa. In view of recent developments we would urge the Government to review this decision and at the same time consider whether steps need to be taken to end the promotion of trade with South Africa.

Secondly, the Government will be aware of the policies of OPEC countries and others in relation to an oil embargo of South Africa. We have followed with interest the developments in the Netherlands Parliament with respect to the imposition of an oil embargo and we would be interested to know if this matter has been discussed between the British and Dutch governments and whether the British Government has considered supporting a mandatory oil embargo.

Conclusion

We look forward to your detailed consideration of the points we have raised in this memorandum. We are convinced that we represent an important section of public opinion, which is not only anxious about the situation in Southern Africa, but also concerned at the failure of the British Government to clearly associate itself with those striving for freedom.

Finally, we would reiterate our proposal that the British Government make one final effort to publicly persuade the Lions to abandon their tour of South Africa, as this would serve as a dramatic sign to the apartheid regime that Britain is no longer willing to be seen to be a partner in apartheid.