

Howe in Mozambique: Respect for Thatcher "Dwindling"

(a) Maputo home service (i) 1700 gmt 10 Jul 86 (ii) 0400 and (iii) 0500 gmt 11 Jul 86

(i) Text of report:

Just received: British Foreign Secretary Sir Geoffrey Howe said on his arrival in Maputo today that it was with great pleasure that he was visiting our country for the first time. He said his visit is aimed at holding talks with Mozambican authorities, giving as an example the meeting which is scheduled for tomorrow morning with President Samora Machel.

The British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs recalled that he had met President Samora Machel when President Machel visited Britain eight months ago and on three other occasions, namely in London, in Moscow and at the United Nations. He also pointed out that he was in Maputo on an EEC mission aimed at promoting dialogue in South Africa between the South African government and black leaders.

He said he hoped that his brief stay in Maputo, which was due to end late tomorrow morning, would be positive and bring about a constructive contribution to the mission that brought him to southern Africa.

Geoffrey Howe arrived in Maputo from Harare where he discussed the South Africa issue with Zimbabwean authorities. Earlier, he was in Zambia where (he put

forward) the British suggestion for resolving the problem through negotiations with the South African government. Observers note that Sir Geoffrey Howe will find no other answer than the already known stand of the frontline states in advocating sanctions against the Pretoria regime.

(ii) Text of report:

British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Sir Geoffrey Howe, who has been in our country since yesterday, is to be received by President Samora Machel today. Yesterday the British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs held talks with Mozambican Minister of Foreign Affairs, Joaquim Chissano. Today Sir Geoffrey Howe ends his EEC tour of southern Africa designed to discuss sanctions against South Africa. He thanked the Mozambican authorities' response to the mission that he heads. Earlier he toured Zambia and Zimbabwe, where the respective authorities defended the need to apply sanctions against South Africa as a means of forcing the South African regime to end apartheid.

Speaking to foreign journalists at a function held yesterday in honour of his British counterpart, the Mozambican Minister of Foreign Affairs said that the stand of the Mozambique government on sanctions is very clear. Although Mozambique cannot apply sanctions, this cannot be used as a pretext for other countries refusing to apply them against South Africa, Joaquim Chissano stressed. He added that the only way of avoiding sanctions against South Africa is to solve the problem.

(iii) Excerpt from report:

... Yesterday at the start of the talks between Mozambique and British delegations, Minister of Foreign Affairs Joaquim Chissano told his British counterpart that the Mozambican authorities are prepared to listen to his suggestions so as to have another approach to the issue and hold further talks...

(b) Maputo in English for southern Africa 1100 gmt 10 Jul 86

Text of commentary:

The British Foreign Secretary, Sir Geoffrey Howe, has had a chance this week to hear once again the views of frontline leaders on what is to be done about South Africa. It is unlikely that he has heard or will hear any surprises in this respect. The views of Zambia and Zimbabwe were expressed to the British government in no uncertain terms at the last Commonwealth conference, and the Mozambican government in no uncertain terms made its position clear at the conference on sanctions against Pretoria held in Paris last month. The issues are now very clear.

All the arguments against imposing sanctions on South Africa have fallen. It was said that sanctions would hurt South African blacks more than whites, but the political leaders of the black majority say they are in favour of sanctions nevertheless. It was said that sanctions would not work, yet South Africa's white rulers persecute citizens who call for sanctions and Pretoria is virtually pleading the west not to act.

It was said that the neighbouring states would suffer if sanctions were imposed, but the neighbouring states are already suffering precisely because the apartheid regime is imposing sanctions against them. Sir Geoffrey Howe cannot afford to see this on his current tour. One example is enough to make the point: Zambia and Zimbabwe are forced to use South African ports and railways because of South African-sponsored sabotage of the railways which give access to Mozambican and Angolan ports. Thus Mozambique loses one of its main sources of revenue while Zambia and Zimbabwe must use routes to the sea which are much longer and more expensive than the Angolan and Mozambican routes, and, of course, Pretoria reaps huge profits while keeping landlocked neighbours in a state of dependence on South Africa.

There are many other examples of South Africa's selective sanctions against neighbours and the unpleasant reality is that this state which imposes sanctions is helped by investments and loans from certain Western powers. As long as this situation continues, these powers will stand accused of being allies of the apartheid regime.

Sir Geoffrey Howe will still be reporting back to the Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher. If he has a sense of history he will warn Mrs Thatcher of the dangers for Britain of continuing to be seen as allies of apartheid and will advise her to change her position on sanctions. There is a widely held belief that Mrs Thatcher is a stubborn woman who cannot be persuaded to modify her political position, but people who believe this have short memories. In early 1979, Mrs Thatcher was openly supporting the puppet Rhodesian regime of Bishop Muzorewa, but in August of that year at the Commonwealth conference in Lusaka she has changed enough to accept the need for a democratic solution to the Zimbabwe question. By the end of the same year the conference of Lancaster House in London had brought an end to the conflict in Zimbabwe and paved the way for that country's independence.

That conference was chaired by Mrs Thatcher's Foreign Secretary at the time, Lord Carrington, who had played an important role in convincing the Prime Minister that her pro-Muzorewa policy was not in Britain's interests. Lord Carrington's action helped to woo a certain respect for Mrs Thatcher's government from the frontline states, but that respect has dwindled almost to nothing because of her opposition to decisive action against Pretoria. It can only be restored if Sir Geoffrey Howe shows the same sense of history and political foresight that his predecessor Lord Carrington showed six years ago. Decisive action is in the long-term interest of Britain as well as the immediate interests of the people of southern Africa.