



## General Assembly

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Thirty-ninth session  
Items 29 and 31 of the preliminary list\*

### QUESTION OF NAMIBIA

#### POLICIES OF APARTHEID OF THE GOVERNMENT OF SOUTH AFRICA

Letter dated 2 July 1984 from the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to refer to the summary records of the 545th and 546th meetings of the Special Committee against Apartheid, which were distributed as documents A/AC.115/SR.545 and SR.546, dated 15 June 1984.

With reference to certain statements made in the relevant meetings of the Special Committee against Apartheid about the British Government's policy, I would like to draw your attention to the enclosed letter which I have addressed to the Chairman of the Special Committee.

I have the honour to request that the text of this letter and of its enclosure should be circulated as a document of the General Assembly under items 29 and 31 of the preliminary list.

(Signed) J. A. THOMSON

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\* A/39/50.

ANNEX

Letter dated 2 July 1984 from the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Chairman of the Special Committee against Apartheid



UNITED KINGDOM MISSION  
TO THE UNITED NATIONS

845 THIRD AVENUE  
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10022

2 July 1984

His Excellency Major General Joseph Garba  
Chairman  
Special Committee Against Apartheid

*Dear Colleague,*

I have recently received the summary records of the 545th and 546th meetings of the Special Committee Against Apartheid, which took place on 12 June. These records were distributed as documents A/AC115/SR545 and SR546.

In certain statements made during these meetings, the position of the British Government was seriously misrepresented. In particular, I would like to draw your attention to the following points.

Sporting Contacts with South Africa

It was alleged at the 545th meeting that 'the tour by the British Rugby Football Union...had been facilitated by the United Kingdom's covert support of apartheid in sports'; and that 'in allowing the British Rugby Football Union to go on its tour of South Africa, the Government of the United Kingdom had flagrantly violated the International Declaration Against Apartheid in Sports and other United Nations and Organisation of African Unity resolutions'. It was suggested that the Special Committee should 'study the United Kingdom Government's defence of the British Rugby Football Union tour'.

As you and other members of the Special Committee will be aware, having received my letter of 3 April 1984, these statements are factually incorrect and give a wholly false impression of the position of the British Government. I regret that the Special Committee's decision to circulate as an official document my letter of 3 April (a decision taken at the 541st meeting of the Special Committee, on the same date) has not been implemented. Publication of my letter, in accordance with your decision, would have ensured that my Government's position was correctly understood.

The tour of South Africa was carried out only by a team from the English Rugby Football Union. The separate Rugby Football Unions for Scotland, Wales and Ireland were not involved. The English Rugby Football Union is a private body, and is not answerable to the British Government.

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The British Government did not in any way 'defend' the tour. It is most offensive to suggest that the United Kingdom gives 'covert support' to apartheid in sport. Successive British Governments have followed a consistent policy with regard to sporting contacts with South Africa, based on the statement on Apartheid in Sport adopted by heads of government of the Commonwealth at their meeting at Gleneagles in the United Kingdom in 1977. In that statement, Commonwealth Heads of Government 'accepted it as the urgent duty of each of their Governments vigorously to combat the evil of apartheid by withholding any form of support for, and by taking every practical step to discourage, contact or competition by their nationals with sporting organisations, teams or sportsmen from South Africa or from any other country where sports are organised on the basis of race, colour or ethnic origin'. This statement was reaffirmed by the Heads of Government of the Commonwealth at their meetings in Lusaka in 1979, in Melbourne in 1981 and in New Delhi in November 1983.

It goes without saying that the British Government has adhered scrupulously to the Gleneagles statement. The Government made every effort to dissuade the English Rugby Football Union from proceeding with its tour of South Africa. As I informed you in my letter of 3 April, the Prime Minister herself and other Ministers were personally involved in these efforts. The British Government's strong opposition to the tour is a matter of record.

Meeting between the British and South African Prime Ministers

At the 546th meeting of the Special Committee, one speaker, Mr A S Minty, described the meeting between the British and South African Prime Ministers which took place on 2 June. Mr Minty had the privilege of being received by the British Prime Minister on 30 May, but his account of the subsequent meeting with Mr Botha (at which he of course was not present) was not accurate.

I enclose for your information a copy of the statement made to the House of Commons on 5 June 1984 by Mrs Margaret Thatcher about her meeting with Mr P W Botha.



Mr Minty asserted that there had been 'some setback with respect to Namibia' because the British Government had made its 'most explicit statement...to date...with respect to linkage'. There has been no change in the British Government's position on Namibia, which remains as described by me in two meetings of the Security Council last year. With other Governments of the Contact Group, the British Government helped to formulate the United Nations settlement proposal. We remain committed to the implementation of Security Council Resolution 435. Mrs Thatcher agreed with Mr P W Botha that early independence for Namibia was desirable and should be achieved as soon as possible under peaceful conditions. As the Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Mr Malcolm Rifkind MP, said in a radio interview on 2 June, we do not believe that there should be any constitutional linkage between the particular problem of Cuban troops in Angola and the independence of Namibia.

Mr Minty raised doubts about the British Government's adherence to the arms embargo enacted in accordance with Security Council Resolution 418. Seven days before Mr Minty made his statement to the Special Committee, Mrs Margaret Thatcher told the House of Commons that the South African Prime Minister had made no request for arms, and reminded the House that the British Government had honoured the United Nations embargo against South Africa and would continue to do so. Likewise, Mr Malcolm Rifkind MP, in a television interview on 2 June, said that the Prime Minister made it clear to Mr P W Botha that the United Kingdom subscribed to the United Nations mandatory arms embargo on South Africa. As Mr Rifkind said, there is no intention to change that policy. Nevertheless, Mr Minty told your Committee that 'the Foreign Office had declined to give assurances that no spare parts would be supplied, stating that the matter was a purely hypothetical one'. The matter is indeed purely hypothetical, as I have demonstrated. However, I would point out that - if he is correctly reported - Mr Minty regrettably failed to bring to the attention of the Special Committee the important last sentence of the statement in question by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (a statement which was embodied in a letter to him signed by Mr Malcolm Rifkind MP). Having said that it would not be proper to offer a definitive view on a hypothetical question, Mr Rifkind said the following: 'You may however be assured that if we had to reach a decision on this question we would fully comply with our obligations under the UN Arms Embargo'.

Mr Minty said that some Western powers, including the United Kingdom, 'were now attempting to coerce Lesotho into signing an agreement with South Africa'. The United Kingdom has close and friendly relations with the Kingdom of Lesotho, a



Commonwealth partner. To suggest that the United Kingdom is attempting to coerce Lesotho is totally false and a grave misrepresentation of the nature of the relationship between our two sovereign independent countries. It is my Government's view that agreements between States should be concluded freely and without duress.

Mr Minty went on to say that 'the South African press had stated that Mrs Thatcher had wished to raise the issue of United Kingdom naval vessels using the Simonstown naval base in South Africa'. As Mrs Thatcher has indicated in the House of Commons, she did not go into such matters with the South African Prime Minister.

I am sending a copy of this letter to the Secretary-General.

*Yours sincerely*  
*J Thomson*

J A Thomson

APPENDIX

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*South African Prime Minister (Visit)*

5 JUNE 1984

South African Prime Minister (Visit)

3.51 pm

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher):  
With permission, Mr. Speaker, I shall make a brief statement about the visit of the South African Prime Minister and Foreign Minister on Saturday 2 June.

We had over five hours of discussions. I was accompanied by my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary and my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Pentlands (Mr. Riskind), the Minister of State. The meeting was a working one, and the discussions were comprehensive and candid. They covered the problems of southern Africa as a whole, including Namibia. There was considerable discussion of the internal situation in South Africa. I made clear to Mr. Botha our desire to see peaceful solutions to all the region's problems.

On Namibia, we agreed that early independence for Namibia was desirable and should be achieved as soon as possible under peaceful conditions. We also agreed that all foreign forces should be withdrawn from the countries in southern Africa so that their peoples can settle their destinies without outside interference. The withdrawal of South African forces from Angola is an important first step in this process.

On the internal situation in South Africa, I expressed our strongly-held views on apartheid. I told Mr. Botha of my particular concern at the practice of forced removals and raised the question of the continued detention of Mr. Nelson Mandela. Mr. Botha gave me an account of his government's recent constitutional measures and of the appointment of a Cabinet committee to make proposals for the political future of the black population outside the homelands.

I believe that the South African Prime Minister now understands much more clearly where Her Majesty's Government stand on all the major issues. My talks with Mr. Botha are part of the process through which we and other western and African countries must continue to press for the sort of changes that we all want to see in southern Africa.