

# ANC chief attacks Howe visit

By Jonathan Steele

Mr Oliver Tambo, the acting president of the African National Congress, urged Mrs Thatcher yesterday not to play for time on sanctions by sending Sir Geoffrey Howe to South Africa.

There have been hints in Whitehall that Sir Geoffrey might go as head of an EEC mission after Britain takes over the presidency of the Council of Ministers on July 1.

"Can't he wait?" Mr Tambo said at a press conference in London shortly after delivering a powerful speech to the Royal Commonwealth Society. "I don't see why he should behave as though the Commonwealth had not produced its report, or Britain wasn't involved."

Mr Tambo emphasised that the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group had just concluded that the South African Government was not willing to negotiate, and that a tightening of sanctions was needed. Britain should not make a mockery of their report.

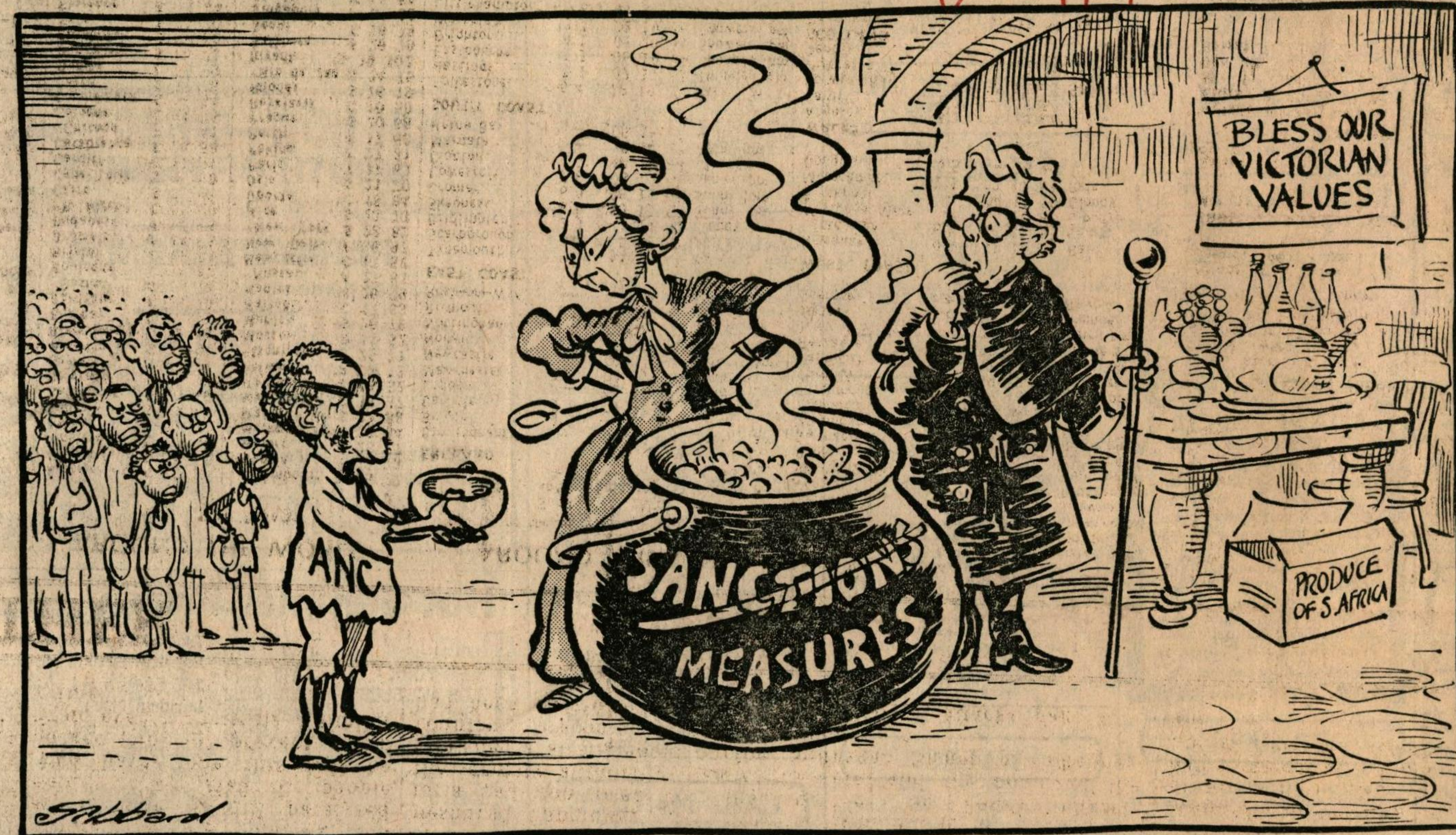
He expressed his worry that Britain might try to take over a mediation role, with or without EEC backing, as a way of gaining time. "It's beginning to look as if the Commonwealth report is being elbowed out of the way, and that the Commonwealth will be pushed aside, and that Britain is taking over the issue."

He said the way the Reagan Administration had taken over the Namibia negotiations was a salutary warning. They had dampened the urgency, and left the situation in Namibia where it was now, he said.

Speaking shortly after the Foreign Office had announced an end to the ban on ministerial meetings with the ANC, Mr Tambo was in no mood for gratitude yesterday.

Asked what he would ask Mrs Thatcher if he met her, he said: "I wouldn't ask her anything. I would simply read her this newspaper report of her visit to the Yad Vashem memorial to the victims of the holocaust."

He then read the description



"Oliver's the name . . ."

of how the Prime Minister wept in Israel after the visit and said that if people like Hitler had been confronted in time, millions of lives could have been saved. Mrs Thatcher was quoted as saying that the lesson of Yad Vashem was as relevant today as 40 years ago.

Mr Tambo said the moral issue in the fight against apartheid was the same as in the fight against Nazism. To talk about the suffering which sanctions would cause, when apartheid itself and the latest state of emergency were causing constant pain and death, displayed "lack of knowledge and a lack of appreciation of what apartheid is and continues to be."

The South African Government was clearly afraid of sanctions because it had made it an offence under the state of emergency to encourage or promote sanctions.

Mr Tambo warned against "selective and incremental sanctions" because they were flawed. They encouraged the Botha regime to believe that Britain would only act to forestall pressure for stronger measures. A ban on new investment now would be meaningless since investment had all but dried up.

"To impose such a measure now would send a signal to Pretoria that Britain is not ready to act in a decisive way," he went on.

The most pressing question now was what Britain would do in response to the Eminent Persons Group report calling for "effective economic measures." It would be wrong for one of the Commonwealth's leading members to treat it with contempt.

Mr Tambo said sanctions alone would not end apartheid. He made it clear that they

were complementary to the armed struggle which the ANC took up after it was banned as a legal organisation. It was time "to intervene on our side, on the side of humanity," he declared. The mobilisation of all South Africans, including its white population, was needed.

Whites were already joining the ANC's side, and many more would do so as it became clear that the international community was taking decisive action against the regime.

Mr Tambo, who serves as president while the ANC's elected leader, Mr Nelson Mandela, is in prison, insisted that the time for mediation was over. "The time calls for great firmness," he said. If the Commonwealth were to break up because of the intransigence of Britain, it would inevitably be interpreted as a result of racialism, of which

he said there was still a great reservoir in Britain.

"We trust the countries of the Commonwealth do not allow themselves to be dragged into an alliance against the people of Africa, against the people of South Africa, in alliance with the apartheid regime," he said.

In Whitehall, officials say that a mission by Sir Geoffrey Howe is still an option for The Hague summit to consider later this week. But the Foreign Office itself is understood to be against the notion, and will not be recommending it. The disadvantage of the mission coming back empty-handed are considered too great.

The Foreign Office also accepts that the Eminent Persons Group initiative has come to an end.

Tambo sets ANC ceasefire conditions, and other reports, page 6



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