



HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

P.O. Box 15
CAPE TOWN
8000
South Africa

30 November 1982

Congressman George W. Crockett
House of Representatives
Capitol Hill
Washington D.C.
United States of America

Dear Mr Crockett

I wish to thank you for having received me in such a friendly way and for sparing the time for a discussion on affairs of mutual interest. May I also congratulate you on your re-election although it was obviously a fairly easy passage for you.

I include herewith the promised information on the South African Government policy change regarding prisoners convicted of politically related offences. Unfortunately, the announcement by the Minister in column 1005 of our parliamentary record is in Afrikaans, but the underlined part means simply that a decision has been taken that prisoners convicted of offences against the state will, in future, qualify for reduction (remission) of sentence on an individual basis.

My own view of the matter is not quite as pessimistic as the editorial from "The Sowetan" as I do not believe that spying on friends and associates will necessarily be a condition for release. However, as I pointed out to you before, I do not expect to see a large-scale release of political prisoners taking place. The government is terribly sensitive to pressures from those more right-wing than they are and will try to avoid publicity on the matter.

The newly appointed Advisory Release Board, about which I include some information, may be able to provide some "objective" justification to the Government for releasing certain prisoners.

Overall, I do believe that the policy shift will have some positive effect. A few prisoners have, in fact, already been released in terms of the new arrangement, although the reduction in their prison terms were marginal.



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As far as the more controversial of these prisoners are concerned, I think the S.A. Government will be more sensitive to ultra right wing pressure, but once people get used to the idea, and once the earlier releases prove not to be problematical, the situation should be more hopeful.

I trust this information will be of some assistance to you.

Kind regards.

S.S. (TIAN) VAN DER MERWE M.P.