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FM CAPE TOWN EMBASSY 100720Z APR 1983

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELEGRAM NO 279 OF 10 APRIL

TOP COPY

*Copy filed
on Namibia*

FOR BARDER SAFD

MY TELEGRAM NO 278: NAMIBIA

1. LORD HUNT HAD SEPARATE MEETINGS YESTERDAY AFTERNOON WITH GENERAL MALAN AND PIK BOTHA ON NAMIBIA. THE FIRST WAS AT THE PRIME MINISTER'S SUGGESTION AND THE SECOND AT PIK'S REQUEST.
2. NOTHING VERY NEW EMERGED AT THE MEETING WITH MALAN. HE EXUDED DEEP PESSIMISM ABOUT THE CHANCES THAT THE D M Z COULD ASSURE THE HOLDING OF FREE AND FAIR ELECTIONS; AND IN ANSWER TO A QUESTION HE STRONGLY IMPLIED THAT EVEN IF THE S A G COULD BE GIVEN REASONABLE SATISFACTION ON THE DETAILS THEIR ABIDING DISTRUST OF THE PRO-SWAPO BIAS OF THE U N WOULD STILL PRESENT A STUMBLING-BLOCK. HE ALSO SUGGESTED IN AN IMPRECISE WAY THAT THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT WERE WELL PLACED TO TAKE SOME INITIATIVE WHICH WOULD OPEN UP NEW POSSIBILITIES OF FINDING A SOLUTION TO THE NAMIBIA PROBLEM. HUNT MADE IT CLEAR THAT WHILE WE WOULD USE, AND WERE INDEED USING, SUCH INFLUENCE AS WE HAD BEHIND THE SCENES TO COUNSEL PATIENCE AND UNDERSTANDING OF SOUTH AFRICA'S NEED FOR MORE TIME WE WERE NOT DISPOSED TO COME FORWARD WITH ANY NEW INITIATIVE AS SUCH.
3. IN THE DISCUSSION WITH PIK BOTHA (ATTENDED ALSO BY BRAND FOURIE AND DAWIE DE VILLIERS) IT BECAME CLEARER THAN EVER THAT THE IDEA OF TALKING DIRECTLY TO SWAPO WAS IN THE FOREFRONT OF THEIR MINDS. PIK SAID THAT THEY HAD BEEN MUCH EMBARRASSED WHEN VILJOEN HAD ALLUDED TO THIS POSSIBILITY PUBLICLY IN LONDON: FIRST BECAUSE IT MIGHT PUT SWAPO OFF THE IDEA AND SECONDLY BECAUSE IT MIGHT SUGGEST THAT THEY WERE TRYING TO TORPEDO THE U N NEGOTIATIONS, WHICH WAS SOMETHING THEY NEEDED "LIKE A HOLE IN THE HEAD". THEY FULLY UNDERSTOOD THE NEED TO KEEP THE LATTER GOING. WHAT THEY HAD IN MIND- AND THEY WERE STILL ONLY THINKING ABOUT IT- WAS THAT "SOMEONE" SHOULD LET NUJOMA KNOW THAT THE ADMINISTRATOR-GENERAL WOULD BE WILLING TO TALK TO SWAPO IF THEY REALLY WANTED THIS. SWAPO WOULD NO DOUBT SET UNACCEPTABLE TERMS FOR ANY SUCH TALKS, SUCH AS THAT THE ONLY SUBJECT FOR DISCUSSION WAS HOW TO HAND OVER NAMIBIA TO THEM, BUT SOMEHOW THIS HURDLE MIGHT BE SURMOUNTED. THE S A G COULD NOT TAKE THE INITIATIVE THEMSELVES TO SUGGEST SUCH TALKS BECAUSE OF THE POLITICAL DIFFICULTIES IT WOULD CAUSE THEM WITH THE INTERNAL PARTIES, BUT IF SOMEONE ELSE COULD PUT THE IDEA FORWARD THEY WOULD FIND IT EASIER TO GET OVER THESE. AT ONE STAGE HE SEEMED TO BE SUGGESTING THAT WE SHOULD TAKE THE INITIATIVE, SINCE WE HAD A SPECIAL INTEREST IN FINDING A WAY OUT OF THE NAMIBIA IMPASSE. BUT WHEN HUNT EXPRESSED DOUBTS ABOUT THIS HE MENTIONED

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OTHER POSSIBLE INTERMEDIARIES SUCH AS HOUPHOUET-BOIGNY OR SERETSE KHAMA .(HE HAD MENTIONED EARLIER THAT FOLLOWING A CONVERSATION HE HAD HAD WITH M. PONIATOWSKI IN PARIS RECENTLY, WITH M. GISCARD D'ESTAING'S BLESSING, IT SEEMED THAT THE FRENCH WERE TOYING WITH THE IDEA OF PLAYING SOME INTERMEDIARY ROLE IN CONJUNCTION WITH "TWO OR THREE" AFRICAN COUNTRIES).

4. PIK WENT ON TO EXPLAIN THAT FOLLOWING AN INITIAL CONTACT WITH SWAPO IT MIGHT THEN BE POSSIBLE TO SET UP A LANCASTER HOUSE STYLE ROUND-TABLE CONFERENCE OF ALL THE PARTIES CONCERNED, INCLUDING SWAPO, TO THRASH OUT A CONSTITUTION AND PERHAPS AGREE ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL UNITY WHICH WOULD ENABLE THE CONFLICTING GROUPS TO GET USED TO WORKING TOGETHER, SAY OVER A PERIOD OF TWO YEARS. IN ANSWER TO A QUESTION, HE SAID THAT IDEALLY THEY WOULD LIKE UNITA TO BE INCLUDED BUT REALIZED THAT THIS WOULD PROBABLY NOT BE POSSIBLE. IN ANSWER TO A FURTHER QUESTION, HE ASSERTED THAT ONCE SWAPO WAS ENGAGED IN TALKS THERE WOULD BE NO QUESTION OF THE UN'S TRYING TO PUT A SPANNER IN THE WORKS.

5. AT ONE STAGE PIK WONDERED OUT ALOUD WHETHER HERMAN TONO JA TOIVO MIGHT NOT HAVE A ROLE TO PLAY IN THIS WHOLE PROCESS, BUT HE DID NOT PURSUE THE POINT AND NEITHER DID WE.

COMMENT

6. THE DISADVANTAGES OF OUR PERFORMING ANY INTERMEDIARY ROLE OF THE KIND THE SOUTH AFRICANS APPEAR TO HAVE IN MIND ARE OBVIOUS. MOREOVER THERE IS LITTLE TIME TO PLAY WITH IN THE U.N. CONTEXT, PARTICULARLY IF THE TEMPERATURE IS RAISED IN THE CURRENT SECURITY COUNCIL DEBATE. IN ANY CASE THE CHANCES THAT THE SOUTH AFRICANS COULD BRING OFF SUCH A PLOY, WHICH WOULD INEVITABLY LOOK LIKE A TIME-WASTING DIVERSIONARY TACTIC, CANNOT BE GOOD. BUT YOU MAY WISH TO CONSIDER WHETHER WE SHOULD ENCOURAGE THEM TO PURSUE THE IDEA DISCREETLY THROUGH SOME OTHER INTERMEDIARY. IN THIS CONTEXT COULD OUR EMBASSY IN PARIS PERHAPS ENQUIRE INDIRECTLY ABOUT THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PONIATOWSKI MEETING?

7. THERE IS NO NEED FOR HUNT TO GIVE AN IMMEDIATE REACTION TO THESE IDEAS WHEN HE SEES THE PRIME MINISTER AGAIN THIS AFTERNOON, BUT BEFORE LONG I SHALL BE ASKED TO SAY WHAT WE THINK OF THEM.

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