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TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 358 OF 19 SEPTEMBER

INFO IMMEDIATE MASERU (FOR PS/MR LUCE)

MR LUCE'S VISIT.

1. MR LUCE, WHO LEFT EARLY THIS MORNING FOR MASERU, HAD MORE THAN TWO HOURS DISCUSSION ALONE WITH PIK BOTHA YESTERDAY EVENING 18 SEPTEMBER. THEY ALSO HAD FURTHER CONVERSATION DURING SUBSEQUENT DINNER AT MY HOUSE.
2. THE EARLIER DISCUSSION WAS A BIT OF AN UP AND DOWNER IN WHICH BOTH MINISTERS EXCHANGED SOME HARD BLOWS. DURING THE FIRST HALF OF IT PIK WAS GRIM AND AGGRESSIVE AND WORKED HIMSELF UP INTO A LATHER OVER THE HOPELESS ECONOMIC STATE OF AFRICAN COUNTRIES GENERALLY, BRITISH MISUNDERSTANDING OF THE AFRICAN PSYCHOLOGY, THE WRONGHEADEDNESS OF OUR POLICIES (QUOTE YOU DON'T CARE .... YOU WILL APPLY ECONOMIC SANCTIONS AGAINST US UNQUOTE), THE INIQUITIES OF WALDHEIM, AND THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF ALLOWING THE NAMIBIA NEGOTIATIONS TO GO ON AS THEY WERE (QUOTE WE HAVE REACHED THE END OF THE ROAD UNQUOTE). HOWEVER, WHEN MR LUCE TOOK HIM UP ON VARIOUS WILD STATEMENTS OF THIS KIND, HE BEGAN TO BACK-PEDAL AND DURING THE SECOND HALF OF THE CONVERSATION HE SPOKE IN A MUCH CALMER AND MORE REASONED WAY. I HAVE SEEN HIM ACT THIS WAY SEVERAL TIMES IN THE PAST.



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3. I AM REPORTING PIK'S REMARKS ON NAMIBIA IN A SEPARATE TELEGRAM WITH A WIDER DISTRIBUTION (WITH A CAUTIONARY NOTE SUGGESTING THAT SOME THINGS HE SAID SHOULD BE TAKEN WITH A LARGE PINCH OF SALT). YOU SHOULD ALSO KNOW, HOWEVER, THAT TOWARDS THE END OF THE CONVERSATION PIK, WHO HAD COME DIRECTLY FROM SEEING THE PRIME MINISTER, TOLD MR LUCE IN UNMISTAKEABLE TERMS THAT MR BOTHA WAS VERY ANGRY INDEED OVER THE CALL OF DR VAN ZYL SLABBERT ON OUR PRIME MINISTER. THIS HAD BEEN WIDELY REPORTED IN THE PRESS AND ON THE RADIO YESTERDAY MORNING AND IT WAS STATED THAT THE CALL HAD BEEN AT MRS THATCHER'S REQUEST. PIK MADE IT CLEAR THAT WHAT PARTICULARLY IRKED P W BOTHA ABOUT THIS WAS THAT HE HAD THOUGHT THAT HE HAD A KIND OF UNWRITTEN UNDERSTANDING WITH MRS THATCHER THAT THEY WOULD MEET SOME TIME, ALTHOUGH IT WAS NOT YET POSSIBLE TO SAY WHEN. INSTEAD MRS THATCHER HAD INVITED THE LEADER OF A PARTY WHICH REPRESENTED HARDLY ANYONE IN SOUTH AFRICA TO CALL ON HER. P W BOTHA HAD TAKEN THIS VERY BADLY AND IT WAS BOUND TO HAVE AN ADVERSE EFFECT ON OUR RELATIONS. THERE WOULD BE A PUBLIC ROW ABOUT IT. P W BOTHA WOULD NOT CRITICIZE MRS THATCHER BUT WOULD CERTAINLY ATTACK VAN ZYL SLABBERT OVER IT. THEY HAD REASON TO KNOW THAT DURING HIS CALL VAN ZYL SLABBERT HAD SPOKEN CRITICALLY OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT AND HAD EVEN INVITED MRS THATCHER TO VISIT SOUTH AFRICA. THIS WAS TOO MUCH. MOREOVER VAN ZYL SLABBERT HAD ASKED THE SOUTH AFRICAN EMBASSY TO MAKE CERTAIN APPOINTMENTS, BUT HAD NOT SUGGESTED A CALL ON THE PRIME MINISTER. IT WAS CLEAR TO THEM THAT THE FOREIGN OFFICE HAD TAKEN THE INITIATIVE IN PROPOSING IT. MR LUCE DID NOT PURSUE THE QUESTION OF WHO HAD ASKED WHO, BUT SAID THAT IT WAS COMMON FORM IN LONDON FOR THE PRIME MINISTER TO RECEIVE VISITING OPPOSITION LEADERS. PIK REPLIED THAT IT MIGHT BE ALL VERY WELL IN LONDON BUT HE WAS THINKING OF THE MATTER IN SOUTH AFRICAN TERMS.

4. WE MUST WAIT AND SEE WHETHER WHEN THE PRIME MINISTER HAS COOLED DOWN HE GOES THROUGH WITH HIS THREAT TO ATTACK VAN ZYL SLABBERT IN PUBLIC OVER THE INCIDENT. HE IS QUOTE CAPABLE OF DOING IT - HE DID SO PREVIOUSLY OVER THE ALLEGED DISLOYALTY OF COLIN EGLIN, VAN ZYL SLABBERT'S PREDECESSOR AS OPPOSITION LEADER, IN MAKING CONTACT WITH MCHENRY OVER NAMIBIA. ON THE OTHER HAND HE

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COOLED DOWN HE GOES THROUGH WITH HIS THREAT TO ATTACK VAN ZYL SLABBERT IN PUBLIC OVER THE INCIDENT. HE IS QUOTE CAPABLE OF DOING IT - HE DID SO PREVIOUSLY OVER THE ALLEGED DISLOYALTY OF COLIN EGLIN, VAN ZYL SLABBERT'S PREDECESSOR AS OPPOSITION LEADER, IN MAKING CONTACT WITH MCHENRY OVER NAMIBIA. ON THE OTHER HAND HE MAY THINK BETTER OF IT. CERTAINLY TOWARDS THE END OF PIK'S DISCUSSION WITH MR LUCE HE BECAME QUITE FRIENDLY AND THE TWO PARTED ON GOOD TERMS. BETWEEN THEN AND COMING TO DINNER AT MY HOUSE PIK WENT BACK TO SEE THE PRIME MINISTER AND HE WAS LATER IN A RELATIVELY (I STRESS THE WORD RELATIVELY) RELAXED MOOD.

5. SHOULD THE MATTER BECOME PUBLIC, WE SHALL HAVE TO CONSIDER HOW TO HANDLE PRESS QUESTIONS. I ASSUME YOU WILL WANT US TO LEAVE IT TO NEWS DEPARTMENT AND THE NO 10 PRESS OFFICE AND, UNLESS I HEAR TO THE CONTRARY, WE SHALL REFER QUESTIONS TO NEWS DEPARTMENT. I WOULD, HOWEVER, LIKE TO BE GIVEN SOME INDICATION IN ADVANCE WHAT THEY PROPOSE TO SAY (YOUR TELEGRAM NO 174 IS NOT IN ITSELF A PRESS LINE).

6. BEFORE THE NEWS OF THE CALL BROKE, IT WAS ALREADY PROVING DIFFICULT TO ARRANGE A MEETING FOR MR LUCE WITH THE PRIME MINISTER. HOWEVER BRAND FOURIE WAS DOING HIS BEST TO FIX IT UP AND WAS REASONABLY HOPEFUL. AS SOON AS THE EARLY MORNING RADIO REPORTED THE CALL HE TELEPHONED ME TO SAY THAT UNFORTUNATELY THIS HAD NOW PUT A STOPPER ON THINGS AND THERE WAS NOT MUCH POINT IN PURSUING THE MATTER. HOWEVER, BOTH PIK BOTHA AND MR LUCE AGREED AT THE END OF THEIR TALK THAT IT MIGHT BE USEFUL FOR THEM TO MEET AGAIN DURING MR LUCE'S STOPOVER ON THE MORNING OF 1 OCTOBER IN TRANSIT BETWEEN SALISBURY AND GABORONE. MR LUCE DOES NOT WISH TO GIVE THE APPEARANCE OF RUNNING AFTER PIK BOTHA AND I WILL, THEREFORE, NOT PRESS FOR A MEETING. BUT NEARER THE TIME I WILL TAKE SOUNDINGS TO SEE IF PIK WANTS TO PURSUE THE IDEA.

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22 SEP 1980



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