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FM CAPE TOWN EMBASSY 151015Z APR 1980

TO PRIORITY FCO

TELEGRAM NO 299 OF 15 APRIL

MY TELEGRAMS NOS 282 AND 290

Read in full. Lord Hunt will be calling on you shortly.

Read

VISIT OF PRIME MINISTER'S EMISSARY

1. LORD HUNT BROUGHT OFF THE DIFFICULT TASK OF SATISFYING THE SOUTH AFRICAN PRIME MINISTER THAT WE TAKE HIS PREOCCUPATIONS SERIOUSLY WITHOUT COMMITTING US TO ANY SPECIFIC FOLLOW-UP ACTION. MR BOTHA DID NOT PURSUE THE IDEA OF A MEETING WITH W MRS THATCHER NOR PRESSED THE SUGGESTION HE MADE AT THE FIRST MEETING WITH LORD HUNT FOR COMPREHENSIVE BILATERAL TALKS. ON THE OTHER HAND BOTH PIK BOTHA AND BRAND FOURIE INDICATED PRIVATELY AT THE END OF THE TALKS THAT THEY THOUGHT THEY HAD GONE WELL.

2. WHAT WAS THEIR USEFULNESS TO US? I FIND IT DIFFICULT TO PUT MY FINGER ON IT EXACTLY. BUT I HAVE NOTICED BEFORE THAT EVEN WHERE THERE IS NO OBVIOUS MEETING OF MINDS BETWEEN OUR TWO GOVERNMENTS OR OUR BASIC INTERESTS DIFFER THE MERE FACT OF KEEPING THE SOUTH AFRICANS INFORMED OF OUR THINKING AND OF EXCHANGING VIEWS WITH THEM ON THE LATEST DEVELOPMENTS PAYS DIVIDENDS. IN PARTICULAR IT MAKES IT THAT MUCH EASIER FOR THE TWO BOTHAS TO CHECK THEIR NATURAL IMPETUOSITY AND TO REFLECT BEFORE EMBARKING ON A COURSE OF ACTION. THIS WAS APPARENT ON A NUMBER OF OCCASIONS DURING THE LANCASTER HOUSE CONFERENCE AND MOST RECENTLY WHEN THE RHODESIAN ELECTION RESULT WAS ON THE POINT OF BEING ANNOUNCED. SIR A DUFF'S VISITS WERE ALSO VERY USEFUL IN HELPING TO KEEP THE SAG STEADY. DURING LORD HUNT'S TALKS IT WAS CLEAR THAT ALTHOUGH BOTH THE PRIME MINISTER AND PIK BOTHA LIKE HOLDING THE FLOOR THEY ALSO LISTENED CAREFULLY TO WHAT HE HAD TO SAY. THIS MOREOVER AT A TIME WHEN THEY ARE NOT INCLINED TO PAY MUCH ATTENTION TO THE VIEWS OF ANY OTHER WESTERN GOVERNMENT. THEY REGARD THE AMERICANS AS HOSTILE WITNESSES.

3. I UNDERSTAND THE RELUCTANCE TO SEE US "SUCKED INTO" JOINT STUDIES AND THE LIKE AND I SEE NO NEED TO COMMIT OURSELVES TO ANYTHING OF THIS KIND AT THIS STAGE. BUT I HOPE THAT WE CAN KEEP IN MIND THE POSSIBILITY OF HOLDING TALKS, FOR EXAMPLE BETWEEN MIDDLE-RANKING OFFICIALS OF THE TWO FOREIGN OFFICES, IN THE REASONABLY NEAR FUTURE IN ORDER TO EXCHANGE VIEWS IN GREATER DEPTH ON BOTH INTERNATIONAL AND BILATERAL QUESTIONS. IT WOULD PROBABLY NOT BE POSSIBLE TO KEEP THE FACT OF SUCH TALKS CONFIDENTIAL. INDEED IT MIGHT GIVE THEM AN UNNECESSARY AIR OF MYSTERY IF WE TRIED. ON THE OTHER HAND IF CIRCUMSTANCES WERE RIGHT, THAT IS IF

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WE WERE NOT AT THE TIME IN THE MIDDLE OF AN ACUTE CRISIS OVER, SAY, NAMIBIA Ø (IN WHICH CASE WE PROBABLY WOULD NOT BE HOLDING THE TALKS ANYWAY) IT SHOULD NOT BE IMPOSSIBLE TO FIND WAYS OF PRESENTING THE TALKS TO THE OUTSIDE WORLD IN A POSITIVE AND CONSTRUCTIVE LIGHT.

4. IN THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE I SHOULD LIKE TO SUGGEST THAT THE PRIME MINISTER SEND A LETTER TO MR BOTHA TO ROUND OFF LORD HUNT'S TALKS. IT WOULD OBVIOUSLY BE WISE TO AWAIT THE SAG'S REPLY ON THE NAMIBIA DMZ BEFORE DOING SO AND, DEPENDING ON THE NATURE OF THE REPLY, IT MAY WELL BE DESIRABLE TO REFER TO IT IN THE LETTER. THAT APART THE GENERAL LINES OF SUCH A LETTER MIGHT BE AS FOLLOWS. MRS THATCHER HAS BEEN VERY INTERESTED TO HEAR LORD HUNT'S ACCOUNT OF HIS TALKS AND HAS BEEN ENCOURAGED BY THE FACT THAT WE SEEM TO SEE EYE TO EYE WITH THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT ON A NUMBER OF MAJOR POINTS. (IF IT WAS THOUGHT DESIRABLE TO FILL THE LETTER OUT A BIT, MRS THATCHER COULD RECAPITULATE THE MAJOR POINTS IN PARAGRAPH 3 OF MY TEL NO 29Ø.) IT WAS A GOOD IDEA OF MR BOTHA'S TO SUGGEST THESE TALKS. EVEN WHERE WE DO NOT AGREE, THE ISSUES ARE TOO SERIOUS TO ALLOW FOR ANY UNCERTAINTY ABOUT WHERE WE EACH STAND. WE ALSO NEED TO BE CLEAR ABOUT THE EXTENT TO WHICH WE CAN HELP ONE ANOTHER IN TRYING TO FIND SOLUTIONS TO THE INTERNATIONAL PROBLEMS WE BOTH HAVE TO CONTEND WITH. SHE THEREFORE ATTACHES THE GREATEST IMPORTANCE TO KEEPING IN CLOSE TOUCH AND SHARING OUR THOUGHTS IN THE MONTHS AHEAD THROUGH OUR AMBASSADORS AND IN ANY OTHER WAY WHICH MAY SEEM APPROPRIATE.

Handwritten signature/initials

LEAHY

[COPIES SENT TO NO 10 DOWNING ST]

FILES

HD/SAFD

PS

PS/LPS

PS/MR LUCE

PS/PUS

MR DAY

COPIES TO :

SIR R. ARMSTRONG

CABINET OFFICE

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