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FM PRETORIA 191450Z SEPT 80

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 360 OF 19 SEPTEMBER 80

INFO IMMEDIATE MASERU (FOR PS/MR LUCE), UKMIS NEWYORK,

WASHINGTON, OTTAWA, PARIS, BONN,

INFO SAVING LUANDA, LUSAKA, DAR ES SALAAM, MAPUTO, GABORONE,

SALISBURY, LAGOS

Prime Minister ②

20.9.80

NAMIBIA: MR LUCE'S TALK WITH PIK BOTHA

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1. THE FOLLOWING IS BASED ON AN ACCOUNT WHICH MR LUCE GAVE ME OF HIS PRIVATE TALK WITH PIK BOTHA. IT IS SUBJECT TO ANY AMENDMENTS HE MAY WISH TO MAKE.

2. AFTER PIK BOTHA HAD WORKED HIMSELF UP IN SOME VIGOROUS EXCHANGES ON OTHER SUBJECTS HE SAID THAT HE HAD NOW COME TO THE END OF THE ROAD IN THE NAMIBIA NEGOTIATIONS. HE HAS USED THE SAME APOCALYPTIC LANGUAGE ON PREVIOUS OCCASIONS AND WE HAVE LEARNT TO TAKE IT WITH A PINCH OF SALT. IT IS ALSO PAR FOR THE COURSE THAT WHEN MR LUCE ASKED HIM IF HE WAS SAYING THAT SOUTH AFRICA WAS NOT PREPARED TO CONTINUE THE NEGOTIATIONS HE DREW BACK AND SAID THAT THE SOUTH AFRICANS WOULD GO ON BUT THEY WOULD QUOTE STICK TO THE LETTER UNQUOTE. AT THE SAME TIME HE EMPHASISED THE MERITS OF A PARALLEL APPROACH INVOLVING A RHODESIA-STYLE CONSTITUTIONAL CONFERENCE. IT SHOULD BE POSSIBLE TO AGREE ON THAT AND THEN TO FIND A WAY FORWARD FROM THERE. THE COMPOSITION OF THE CONFERENCE WOULD BE VITAL. THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT WOULD WANT TO PLAY A MINIMAL ROLE LEAVING IT TO THE ADMINISTRATOR-GENERAL TO LEAD THE DELEGATION OF QUOTE INSIDERS UNQUOTE (THIS IS APPARENTLY WALDHEIM'S NEW NAME FOR THE INTERNAL PARTIES).

3. PIK BOTHA CONTINUED WITH A STRONG ATTACK ON THE UNITED NATIONS. BUT WHEN MR LUCE TOOK HIM UP ON THIS HE AGREED THAT THE UNITED NATIONS HAD AN INDISPENSABLE ROLE TO PLAY. THEY MUST, HOWEVER, PROVIDE SATISFACTORY ASSURANCES ABOUT THEIR IMPARTIALITY. PIK WAS PREDICTABLY SCATHING ABOUT SWAPO. THEIR LEADERSHIP WAS NOT IN THE SAME CLASS AS MUGABE, AND THE SOUTH AFRICANS COULD NOT THEREFORE LET MUJOMA RULE THE ROOST. BUT IN ANSWER TO A DIRECT QUESTION PIK MORE OR LESS ADMITTED THAT SWAPO WOULD WIN A UN ELECTION, AND ADDED THAT HE THOUGHT THERE WOULD THEREAFTER BE EVEN GREATER POTENTIAL FOR INTERTRIBAL STRIFE THAN IN THE CASE OF ZIMBABWE.

4. THE LAST THOUGHT TRIGGERED A FURTHER EMOTIONAL PASSAGE IN WHICH PIK BOTHA DEVELOPED THE THEME THAT THERE WAS A LIMIT TO WHAT SOUTH AFRICA WOULD TAKE BY WAY OF PERSUASION FROM THE FIVE. HE CLAIMED THAT TIME WAS WORKING FOR THE SOUTH AFRICANS SINCE THE WEAKNESSES OF THE SOVIET UNION WERE BECOMING INCREASINGLY APPARENT, AS WAS THE WAR-WEARINESS OF THE FRONT LINE STATES AND SWAPO.

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5. MR LUCE'S GENERAL CONCLUSIONS WERE THAT PIK BOTHA'S VERBAL BRINKMANSHIP DID NOT POINT TO A FUNDAMENTAL CHANGE IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN POSITION, THAT THEY WILL STICK TO THEIR COMMITMENTS, THAT THEY ACCEPT THE NEED FOR A UNITED NATIONS ROLE, BUT THAT THEY NEED AND INTEND TO GAIN MORE TIME.

6. IN BRIEFING MY COLLEAGUES OF THE PRETORIA FIVE I HAVE OMITTED ANY REFERENCE TO THE FACT THAT PIK SPOKE OF A CONFERENCE IN TERMS OF CONSTITUTION-MAKING.

FCO PLEASE PASS SAVING ADDRESSEES.

REPEATED AS REQUESTED

LEAHY

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