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TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 135 OF 30 APRIL 1981

INFO PRIORITY UKMIS NEW YORK

INFO ROUTINE GABORONE, MASERU, MBABANE, SALISBURY, JOHANNESBURG,
INFO SAVING CONSULATE-GENERAL CAPE TOWN AND CONSULATE DURBAN.

SOUTH AFRICAN GENERAL ELECTION.

1. WITH RESULTS IN 34 OF THE 165 SEATS STILL TO COME IN (1100 HRS LOCAL) THE NATIONAL PARTY (NP) HAVE WON 102, THE PROGRESSIVE FEDERAL PARTY (PFP) 24 AND THE NEW REPUBLIC PARTY (NRP) 5. COMPUTER PREDICTIONS OF THE FINAL RESULT GIVE THE NP 135 SEATS, THE SAME NUMBER THEY WON IN THE LAST ELECTION IN NOVEMBER 1977.
2. THE PFP HAVE DONE BETTER THAN MOST PEOPLE EXPECTED WINNING SEATS FROM THE NP (DEFEATING DR DAWIE DE VILLIERS, THE MINISTER OF INDUSTRIES, COMMERCE AND TOURISM IN A CAPE TOWN CONSTITUENCY) AND THE NRP. THEY HAVE SO FAR POLLED 23% OF THE VOTES CAST. THE NRP HAVE LOST SEATS BOTH TO THE PFP AND THE NP BUT WILL REMAIN IN BEING AS A PARLIAMENTARY PARTY : THEY ARE ALSO LIKELY TO RETAIN CONTROL OF THE NATAL PROVINCIAL COUNCIL.
3. NEITHER OF THE PARTIES OF THE EXTREME RIGHT THE HERSTIGTE

3. NEITHER OF THE PARTIES OF THE EXTREME RIGHT, THE HERSTIGTE NASIONALE PARTY (HNP) AND THE NATIONAL CONSERVATIVE PARTY (NCP), HAVE SO FAR WON ANY SEATS AND ARE UNLIKELY TO DO SO. BOTH PARTY LEADERS HAVE BEEN DEFEATED. BUT THE PERCENTAGE OF VOTES FOR THE HNP HAS RISEN TO NEARLY 13% AND NATIONAL PARTY MAJORITIES IN MANY SEATS HAVE BEEN SEVERELY REDUCED BY THEIR INTERVENTION.

4. THIS IS A MIXED RESULT FOR P W BOTHA. IF HE WINS 135 SEATS OUT OF 165 IT CANNOT BE DESCRIBED AS ANYTHING BUT AN OVERWHELMING VICTORY. HE CAN CLAIM TO HAVE EMERGED WITH HIS OWN MANDATE AND TO HAVE FOUGHT OFF THE IMMEDIATE THREAT FROM THE HNP. HE HAS, HOWEVER, CLEARLY LOST SUPPORT WITHIN THE AFRIKANER COMMUNITY TO THE EXTREME RIGHT : AND THE PFP HAVE STRENGTHENED THEIR POSITION IN ENGLISH-SPEAKING URBAN AREAS.

5. I SHALL SEND A SEPARATE ASSESSMENT LATER OF THE PROBABLE EFFECT OF THIS RESULT ON P W BOTHA'S POLICIES. HIS IMMEDIATE REACTION THIS MORNING WAS THAT THE NP HAD ENOUGH PUBLIC SUPPORT TO CONTINUE UNDAUNTED. HE WOULD NOT BE DIVERTED FROM HIS CHOSEN PATH.

LEAHY

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