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FM FCO 191004Z APR 83

TO IMMEDIATE JOHANNESBURG

TELEGRAM NUMBER 49 OF 19 APRIL

AND TO IMMEDIATE CAPE TOWN EMBASSY

INFO ROUTINE TO PRETORIA

YOUR TEL NO.39: GANDHI

1. AS FORESHADOWED IN FCO TELEGRAM NO.47, SIR RICHARD ATTENBOROUGH CALLED ON LEAHY YESTERDAY AT HIS OWN REQUEST. HE SAID THAT HE HAD BEEN TAKEN ABACK BY THE VEHEMENCE OF THE REACTION OF THOSE PEOPLE BOTH HERE AND IN SOUTH AFRICA OPPOSED TO HIS VISIT. THE ANC, FOR EXAMPLE, HAD THREATENED WHAT HE TERMED QUOTE GHASTLY REPRISALS UNQUOTE IF HE WENT AHEAD WITH IT.
2. ATTENBOROUGH SAID THAT HE HAD CONSULTED HELEN SUZMAN, BISHOP TUTU, CHRISTOOPER NEWTON THOMPSON AND THROUGH HIM BEYERS NAUDE, AS WELL AS ATHOL FUGARD. THE GENERAL BURDEN OF THEIR ADVICE WAS THAT WHILE IN MANY WAYS THEY WOULD LIKE HIM TO MAKE HIS VISIT, THEY THOUGHT THAT PASSIONS WERE NOW SO AROUSED THAT THERE WAS A SERIOUS RISK OF VIOLENT DISTURBANCES IF HE WENT AHEAD WITH IT. ATTENBOROUGH SAID HE ACCEPTED THIS ADVICE BUT FOLLOWING A SUGGESTION PUT TO HIM BY NAUDE HIS TACTIC WOULD BE TO STATE PUBLICLY THAT HE WOULD NOT GO TO SEE THE FILM IN SOUTH AFRICA UNLESS ALL SHOWINGS OF IT, NOT MERELY THE CHARITY PREMIERES, WERE OPEN TO ALL RACES. THE GOVERNMENT COULD NOT POSSIBLY ACCEPT THIS, SO HIS VISIT WOULD BE OFF.
3. ATTENBOROUGH ASKED LEAHY WHETHER HE AGREED WITH THIS. LEAHY REPLIED THAT HE SEEMED TO HAVE TAKEN THE DECISION ALREADY (ATTENBOROUGH CONFIRMED THIS) AND HE WOULD NOT THEREFORE OFFER ANY ADVICE. IN ANY CASE HE ASSUMED THAT ATTENBOROUGH WOULD NOT WANT IT TO BE THOUGHT HE HAD ACTED AT THE BEHEST OF THE FOREIGN

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OFFICE. ATTENBOROUGH AGREED. LEAHY ADDED THAT IF SUZMAN, TUTU AND NAUDE WERE AGAINST HIS GOING THAT WAS WEIGHTY ADVICE FROM HIGHLY RESPECTED QUARTERS.

4. ATTENBOROUGH SAID THAT THE ANC WERE ALSO TRYING TO PERSUADE HIM TO HAVE THE FILM WITHDRAWN ALTOGETHER. HE WAS AGAINST THIS. LEAHY SAID THAT HE THOUGHT THERE WAS A GOOD ARGUMENT FOR SAYING THAT THE FILM SHOULD BE WIDELY SEEN IN SOUTH AFRICA. IN GENERAL HE BELIEVED SOUTH AFRICAN SOCIETY NEEDED TO BE PERMEATED BY FRESH IDEAS FROM OUTSIDE.

PYM

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