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FM CAPE TOWN 170800Z APR 84

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 303 OF 17 APRIL

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Dubs
18/4*

FOR LEAHY

MY TEL NO 302 : VISIT BY P W BOTHA TO EUROPE

1. SHORTLY AFTER I HAD SEEN VAN DALSEN AND HANDED OVER THE PRIME MINISTER'S INVITATION TO A WORKING LUNCH, PIK BOTHA ASKED ME TO CALL TO TALK OVER ONE OR TWO ASPECTS.
2. BOTHA SAID THAT HE KNEW THAT HIS PRIME MINISTER WOULD BE VERY PLEASED TO ACCEPT THE INVITATION, BUT HE (PIK BOTHA) WONDERED WHETHER THE TIMING WAS SO INFLEXIBLE. HIS PRIME MINISTER HAD ANOTHER INVITATION ON 2 JUNE. IF HE HAD TO CHANGE HIS PROGRAMME, HE WOULD CERTAINLY DO SO. BUT PIK BOTHA ASKED ME TO CONFIRM THAT THERE REALLY WAS NO OTHER OPPORTUNITY. I MADE IT AS CLEAR AS I COULD THAT THE DIARY CONSTRAINTS WERE VERY REAL, BUT I UNDERTOOK AT HIS REQUEST TO PUT THE POINT TO YOU.
3. BOTHA THEN SAID THAT HE WISHED TO RAISE ANOTHER ASPECT WITH ME. (I SUSPECT THAT IT HAD BEEN MOOTED AT THE CABINET MEETING WHICH HAD TAKEN PLACE EARLIER IN THE AFTERNOON.) THE PRESENCE OF THE SEVEN HEADS OF GOVERNMENT IN LONDON PROVIDED A GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY FOR MATTERS OF REAL IMPORTANCE IN SOUTHERN AFRICA TO ALL SEVEN COUNTRIES TO BE DISCUSSED. THERE WAS FIRSTLY THE PROBLEM OF REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, PARTICULARLY IN RELATION TO MOZAMBIQUE WHICH HE HAD ALREADY RAISED WITH LOCAL REPRESENTATIVES OF THE SEVEN (OUR TEL NO 265). THEN THERE WAS THE QUESTION OF NAMIBIA WHICH HAD AN IMPORTANT ECONOMIC CONTENT: THE FIVE CONTACT GROUP COUNTRIES WOULD ALL BE REPRESENTED. WHAT DID I THINK ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF P W BOTHA SPEAKING IN THE MARGINS OF THE SEVEN NATION SUMMIT ABOUT THESE PROBLEMS ?
4. I DID MY BEST TO POUR COLD WATER ON THE SUGGESTION THAT P W BOTHA SHOULD PAY A SECOND VISIT TO LONDON DURING THE SUMMIT. I SAID THAT THE CONFERENCE WOULD BE A VERY BUSY TIME INDEED AND THAT THE APPEARANCE OF P W BOTHA AS A KIND OF DEUS EX MACHINA IN THE MIDDLE OF THE PROCEEDINGS WOULD BE LIKELY TO BE SEEN AS AN UNWELCOME DISTRACTION. THERE WERE MANY SERIOUS PROBLEMS AROUND THE WORLD WHICH THE SUMMIT HAD TO GRAPPLE WITH AND I THOUGHT IT MOST UNLIKELY THAT THE CONFERENCE WOULD WISH TO CONCENTRATE TOO MUCH ON A PARTICULAR ISSUE OR AREA.

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5. AT THIS POINT, BOTHA WAS INTERRUPTED BY A CALL FROM P W BOTHA, WHICH HE TOOK IN ANOTHER ROOM. WHEN HE CAME BACK, HE SWITCHED TO ANOTHER MATTER (SEE HIFT), BUT AT THE CONCLUSION OF OUR DISCUSSION SAID THAT HE WOULD NONETHELESS BE GRATEFUL IF I "COULD PUT HIS IDEA TO MY GOOD FRIEND JOHN LEAHY", ON A PURELY PERSONAL BASIS. IT WAS NOT A FORMAL PROPOSAL, BUT HE WOULD LIKE TO TEST THE WATER. P W BOTHA AND HE WOULD BE SEEING COUNTRIES INDIVIDUALLY TO DISCUSS THESE PROBLEMS. BUT WHAT A WONDERFUL OPPORTUNITY TO CATCH ALL THE MAIN PROTAGONISTS TOGETHER AT ONE MEETING.

6. COMMENT: AS REGARDS THE 2 JUNE WORKING LUNCH, PIK BOTHA PROBABLY EXPECTS THE REPLY THAT THE DIARY CONSTRAINTS ARE TOO GREAT FOR MRS THATCHER TO OFFER ANOTHER DATE. AS REGARDS THE IDEA OF A SECOND VISIT TO LONDON, I IMAGINE THAT THERE WOULD BE LITTLE ENTHUSIASM IN LONDON, OR INDEED ELSEWHERE, FOR THE SUGGESTION. BUT AS BOTHA ASKED THAT I PUT IT TO YOU QUITE INFORMALLY, I FELT BOUND TO AGREE TO DO SO.

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