

PS/PRIME MINISTER

10 DOWNING ST

S. Afr. : Pels : P. 4

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FROM PRETORIA 311245Z
TO PRIORITY FCO
TELEGRAM NUMBER 580 OF 31 OCTOBER 84

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MY TEL NO 575: DURBAN

1. IN DISCUSSION WITH PRESIDENT BOTHA AFTER PRESENTING MY CREDENTIALS THIS MORNING HE WAS TREATED TO SOME STERN WORDS ABOUT THE DURBAN CONSULATE.
2. SPEAKING IN MEASURED TONES, THE PRESIDENT SAID THAT RECENT DEVELOPMENTS (CLEARLY MEANING COVENTRY AS WELL AS DURBAN) HAD PLACED A STRAIN ON OUR RELATIONS. IT WAS UP TO THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT TO FIND A WAY OF BRINGING THE SITUATION TO AN END. A GROWING BODY OF SOUTH AFRICAN OPINION TOOK THE VIEW THAT OUR HANDLING OF THE DURBAN AFFAIR COULD NOT BE ACCEPTED ANY LONGER.
3. HE POINTED TO THE CONSTRAINTS AND PRESSURES FELT IN LONDON ON THESE ISSUES. THERE WERE GOOD REASONS WHY WE ACTED AS WE HAD. WE WOULD BE ONLY TOO GLAD TO SEE AN EARLY AND SATISFACTORY OUTCOME TO THE CONSULATE AFFAIR. WE HAD MADE THIS PLAIN FROM THE BEGINNING AND WOULD CONTINUE TO DO SO.
4. THE PRESIDENT REPLIED THAT HE STRONGLY OBJECTED TO THE PRESENT STATE OF AFFAIRS BEING ALLOWED TO CONTINUE. HE MADE IT CLEAR THAT HE LOOKED TO US TO FIND A SOLUTION. HE AGAIN UNDERLINED THE STRENGTH OF HIS OWN FEELINGS ON THE SUBJECT.
5. WE THEN TURNED TO OTHER MATTERS ON WHICH A REPORT FOLLOWS BY BAG. PRESIDENT BOTHA SPOKE APPRECIATIVELY OF HIS MEETING WITH THE PRIME MINISTER AT CHEQUERS THIS SUMMER. HE CALLED FOR BRITAIN AND SOUTH AFRICA TO COOPERATE OVER PROBLEMS FACING THE COUNTRIES OF AFRICA, ALTHOUGH HE ADDED THAT REAL PROGRESS WOULD BE POSSIBLE ONLY WHEN SOUTH AFRICA'S POSITION WAS FULLY RECOGNISED BY BRITAIN AND OTHER WESTERN COUNTRIES.

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6. COMMENT. THERE IS NO MISTAKING THE SERIOUSNESS WITH WHICH THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT VIEW THE CURRENT IMPASS AT DURBAN. THE PRESIDENT'S REMARKS CONTAINED AN IMPLIED THREAT OF SOUTH AFRICAN ACTION IF THE DEADLOCK CONTINUES. BUT I JUDGE THAT HE INTENDED HIS REMARKS MAINLY AS A MEANS OF STEPPING UP PRESSURE ON US TO END THE SIT-IN AND NOT ALLOW IT TO DRAG ON INDEFINITELY. THIS IS IN FACT A MIRROR IMAGE OF OUR OWN TACTICS (YOUR TEL NO 315) EXCEPT THAT IT IS WE WHO ARE TRYING TO PERSUADE THE SOUTH AFRICANS THAT THEY SHOULD BE THE ONES TO MAKE A MOVE.

MOBERLY

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