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FM CAPE TOWN 231630Z APR 1985

TO PRIORITY FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 156 OF 23 APRIL

INFO PRIORITY WASHINGTON, UKMIS NEW YORK, HARARE, LUSAKA
INFO SAVING MBABANE, MASERU, GABORONE, MAPUTO, JOHANNESBURG,
DURBAN (PRETORIA PSE PASS) CAPE TOWN CONSULATE (ACTIONED)

MY TELNO 152: (NOT TO ALL): SOUTH AFRICA INTERNAL

SUMMARY

1. PRESIDENT BOTHA HAS CONFIRMED THE GOVERNMENT'S INTENTION TO INTRODUCE FREEHOLD PROPERTY RIGHTS FOR BLACKS AND TO CONSULT WIDELY ABOUT PROPOSALS FOR BLACK CITIZENSHIP. TWO OUT OF THREE WHITE OPPOSITION PARTIES HAVE ACCEPTED THE GOVERNMENT'S INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN THE SPECIAL CABINET COMMITTEE ON BLACKS. BUT PROSPECTS FOR DISCUSSION WITH BLACKS ABOUT CONSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT DO NOT LOOK ENCOURAGING. UNREST IN THE EASTERN CAPE CONTINUES UNABATED, WITH SYSTEMATIC VIOLENCE AN INCREASINGLY WORRYING FEATURE OF LIFE IN THE TOWNSHIPS, FOR MUCH OF WHICH THE GOVERNMENT ARE BLAMING THE UDF.

DETAIL

2. THE STATE PRESIDENT'S SPEECH IN PARLIAMENT ON 19 APRIL WAS AN IMPORTANT DECLARATION OF INTENT. IT CAN BE SEEN AS A FOLLOW-UP TO HIS STATEMENT AT THE OPENING OF PARLIAMENT IN JANUARY. IT DENOTES FURTHER MOVEMENT BY THE GOVERNMENT ON FREEHOLD RIGHTS, CITIZENSHIP AND EFFORTS TO ESTABLISH A DIALOGUE WITH LEADING BLACKS. AS BEFORE, HOWEVER, THE GOVERNMENT ARE STILL EDGING FORWARD ON MOST MAJOR ISSUES. THEY REMAIN UNCERTAIN HOW TO ATTRACT BLACKS INTO GENUINE DISCUSSION OF POSSIBLE REFORMS IN THE PRESENT MOOD OF DISCONTENT AND VIOLENCE. THEY MAY WELL BE TEMPTED TO OUTLAW THE UDF. YET THIS STEP WOULD ALIENATE POTENTIALLY MIDDLE-OF-THE-ROAD BLACKS EVEN MORE FROM CO-OPERATING WITH THE AUTHORITIES.

BLACK UNREST

3. IT IS PERHAPS SIGNIFICANT THAT THE FIRST PART OF THE PRESIDENT'S SPEECH DEALT WITH CURRENT BLACK UNREST. THE GOVERNMENT ARE SERIOUSLY WORRIED BY EVENTS IN THE EASTERN CAPE. THESE HAVE BECOME INCREASINGLY VIOLENT SINCE THE SHOOTINGS AT UITENHAGE AND WERE REFERRED TO BY THE DEPUTY MINISTER FOR LAW AND ORDER DURING THE WEEKEND AS THE BEGINNINGS OF A REVOLUTIONARY SITUATION.

4. THE APPROACHES TO UITENHAGE TOWNSHIPS AND OTHER BLACK URBAN AREAS AROUND PORT ELIZABETH ARE NOW GUARDED BY TROOPS. BUT ROAD BLOCKS AND MOVEMENT CONTROL HAVE FAILED TO BRING AN END TO DAILY INCIDENTS OF MURDER, ARSON AND INTIMIDATION BY BLACKS AGAINST BLACKS. TENSIONS ARE ALSO EXACERBATED WHENEVER BLACKS ARE KILLED IN CONFRONTATION WITH THE POLICE OR (AS HAPPENED IN ONE CASE LAST WEEK) WITH THE ARMY. A WHITE RESIDENT AND A COLOURED WOMAN WERE COVERED WITH PETROL AND SET ALIGHT BY BLACKS IN SEPARATE INCIDENTS DURING THE WEEKEND.

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5. MEMBERS OF THE WHITE OPPOSITION WHO HAVE BEEN TO Uitenhage AND PORT ELIZABETH IN THE PAST FEW DAYS HAVE TOLD US THAT TENSION AMONG BLACKS IS WORSE THAN THEY HAVE EVER ENCOUNTERED IN SOUTH AFRICA. THERE IS DEEP BITTERNESS AND DISTRUST OF THE GOVERNMENT AND THE FORCES OF LAW AND ORDER. THIS EXTENDS HERE AND THERE TO THE COLOURED COMMUNITY WHO ARE BEING BLAMED BY SOME BLACKS FOR CO-OPERATING WITH THE GOVERNMENT. IT SO HAPPENS THAT THE LEADER OF THE COLOURED LABOUR PARTY, HENDRICKSE, REPRESENTS THE COLOURED DISTRICT OF Uitenhage.

6. IN HIS HARDHITTING ATTACK ON THE UNITED DEMOCRATIC FRONT (UDF) PRESIDENT BOTHA NOT ONLY BLAMED IT FOR SUPPORTING VIOLENCE BUT ALSO BRACKETED IT WITH THE ANC. THE GOVERNMENT'S INSTINCTIVE REACTION IS TO CONCENTRATE FIRST ON EFFORTS TO RESTORE LAW AND ORDER. IN THIS WAY THEY UNDOUBTEDLY HAVE GENERAL WHITE SUPPORT. THE LEADER OF THE PFP ASSOCIATED HIS PARTY WITH CONDEMNATION OF ACTS OF VIOLENCE ALTHOUGH NOT WITH THE PRESIDENT'S SPECIFIC REMARKS ABOUT THE UDF AND ANC. IN PARTICULAR VAN ZYL SLABBERT MADE A PLEA TO THE GOVERNMENT NOT TO REGARD EVERYONE IN THE UDF AS EXTREMISTS BUT TO TRY AND BRING UDF MODERATES INTO THE PROCESS OF CONSULTATION.

HOUSING

7. THE DECISION FORESHADOWED IN JANUARY TO PROCEED WITH GRANTING FREEHOLD PROPERTY RIGHTS SHOULD BE WELCOMED BY MOST BLACKS. LEGISLATIVE ACTION MAY HAVE TO WAIT UNTIL 1986. BUT PROPOSALS FOR CONTROLLED URBANISATION AND FOR IMPROVED RURAL DEVELOPMENT ARE TO BE REFERRED TO STANDING COMMITTEE LATER THIS YEAR.

CITIZENSHIP

8. THE PRESIDENT DID NOT CLARIFY WHAT THE GOVERNMENT INTEND TO DO ABOUT CITIZENSHIP. BUT THERE HAVE BEEN INDICATIONS (INCLUDING COMMENT BY THE GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED BROADCASTING CORPORATION) THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAVE IN MIND A BROAD SOUTH AFRICAN CITIZENSHIP FOR ALL RESIDENTS OF THE REPUBLIC. THIS COULD INCLUDE BLACKS DEEMED TO BE CITIZENS OF "INDEPENDENT" HOMELANDS, PERHAPS WITH A FORM OF DUAL CITIZENSHIP.

DIALOGUE WITH BLACKS

9. ACCEPTANCE BY PARTIES IN ALL THREE HOUSES, EXCEPT THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY, OF THE PRESIDENT'S INVITATION TO JOIN IN AN ALL PARTY FORUM FOR NEGOTIATION WITH BLACK LEADERS IS NOT ONLY UNPRECEDENTED IN ITSELF BUT MAY HELP TO MAKE THE CABINET COMMITTEE MORE ATTRACTIVE TO BLACKS. THE PROGRESSIVE FEDERAL PARTY (PFP) HAVE AGREED TO PARTICIPATE ON CONDITION THAT IT WILL BE THE TYPE OF INFORMAL OPEN-ENDED FORUM THE PRESIDENT ANNOUNCED ON 25 JANUARY. THE PRESIDENT HAS MADE IT PLAIN THAT HE DOES NOT REGARD THE WIDER CABINET COMMITTEE AS OPENING THE DOOR TO COALITION GOVERNMENT SEMI COLON BUT HE CLEARLY WANTS TO ADDRESS BLACK PROBLEMS FROM A MORE NON-PARTISAN POSITION, WHILE ISOLATING THE RIGHT WING PARTIES.

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10. NEVERTHELESS PFP LEADERS HAVE TOLD US THAT THEY FELT UNABLE TO REFUSE THE GOVERNMENT'S OFFER BUT ARE DUBIOUS ABOUT THE PROSPECTS OF RESULTS. THEY SEE THE GOVERNMENT AS CAUGHT IN A DILEMMA BECAUSE RECENT EVENTS, INCLUDING THE COMPLETE DISCREDITING OF BLACK LOCAL COUNCILLORS AS COLLABORATORS WITH AN UNPOPULAR GOVERNMENT, HAVE MADE BLACKS RELUCTANT TO JOIN IN. THE UDF HAVE ANNOUNCED THAT THEY WILL HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH THE COMMITTEE.

REMAINDER OF THE PARLIAMENTARY SESSION

11. BILLS TO REPEAL THE MIXED MARRIAGES ACT AND SECTION 16 OF THE IMMORALITY ACT WILL BE DEBATED IN PARLIAMENT NEXT WEEK. THEY HAVE THE FULL SUPPORT OF THE GOVERNMENT AND WILL BE OPPOSED IN PARLIAMENT ONLY BY THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY.

12. WITH ONE POSSIBLE EXCEPTION, NO OTHER MEASURES UNDER CONSIDERATION ARE LIKELY TO RESULT IN LEGISLATION DURING THIS SESSION WHICH ENDS IN JUNE, WITH PARLIAMENT NOT MEETING IN FULL SESSION AGAIN UNTIL NEXT JANUARY. BUT WE UNDERSTAND THAT THERE HAS BEEN DISCUSSION IN THE NATIONAL PARTY CAUCUS ABOUT TRYING TO COMPLETE SOME FURTHER LEGISLATIVE ACTION BEFORE PARLIAMENT RISES. ONE POSSIBILITY BEING CONSIDERED IS REPEAL OF THE PROHIBITION OF POLITICAL INTERFERENCE ACT WHICH PRECLUDES MEMBERS OF DIFFERENT RACE GROUPS FROM APPEARING LEGALLY ON THE SAME PLATFORM AT PARTY POLITICAL MEETINGS AND FROM JOINING THE SAME POLITICAL PARTIES.

UITENHAGE ENQUIRY

13. HANDLING THE KANNEMEYER REPORT ON THE DEATHS AT UITENHAGE WILL ALSO BE A MAJOR TEST FOR THE GOVERNMENT. THE ENQUIRY IS LIKELY TO LAST ANOTHER TWO WEEKS OR SO. COUNSEL FOR THE FAMILIES OF BLACKS WHO DIED HAVE BEEN GIVEN FULL OPPORTUNITY TO CROSS-QUESTION AND SUMMON WITNESSES AND ARE OPTIMISTIC THAT THERE WILL BE A FAIR FINDING. THE GOVERNMENT'S WILLINGNESS TO HAVE THE ENQUIRY CONDUCTED IMMEDIATELY AND IN PUBLIC IS TO THEIR CREDIT. BUT THEY MAY BE HARD PRESSED TO RESPOND CONVINCINGLY IF THE FINDINGS ARE CRITICAL OF GOVERNMENT AND POLICE ACTIONS.

FCO PLEASE PASS SAVING TO MBABANE, MASERU, GABORONE, MAPUTO.

MOBERLY

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