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FROM PRETORIA 311330Z
TO PRIORITY FCO
TELEGRAM NUMBER 161 OF 31 JULY 1985

INFO ROUTINE JOHANNESBURG

INFO SAVING CAPE TOWN

SOUTH AFRICA: PROSPECTS FOR DIALOGUE

1. THE GOVERNMENT CONTINUE TO TAKE THE LINE THAT THEY WISH TO SEE DIALOGUE WITH MODERATE BLACK LEADERS. BUT THEY ARE PLAYING THEIR CARDS CLOSE TO THE CHEST AND SEEM IN NO HURRY TO MAKE ANY FRESH MOVE IN THE PRESENT EMERGENCY.
2. PRESIDENT BOTHA'S REFUSAL TO SEE BISHOP TUTU EXCEPT POSSIBLY AS PART OF A DELEGATION OF CHURCH LEADERS IN 3 WEEKS TIME IS ILLUSTRATIVE OF THE GOVERNMENT'S DETERMINATION NOT TO BE RUSHED OR BE SEEN AS MAKING CONCESSIONS. THE FOREIGN MINISTER TOLD VISITORS FROM LIBERAL INTERNATIONAL YESTERDAY (INCLUDING REX COLLINGS FROM THE UK) THAT THE PRESIDENT WOULD BE WILLING TO MEET TUTU AS A CHURCHMAN ALONG WITH OTHER CHURCH LEADERS BUT NOT AS A POLITICAL LEADER.
3. TUTU HIMSELF TOLD ME YESTERDAY AFTERNOON WHEN I SAW HIM WITH CONSUL GENERAL JOHANNESBURG THAT HE WAS SADDENED BY THE PRESIDENT'S NEGATIVE RESPONSE TO HIS REQUEST FOR A MEETING. HE DID NOT YET KNOW WHETHER HE WOULD ACCOMPANY THE ANGLICAN ARCHBISHOP OF CAPE TOWN ON 19 AUGUST. BUT IF THE PRESIDENT'S REMARK ABOUT ONLY SEEING PEOPLE WHO RENOUNCED VIOLENCE AND CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE WERE TAKEN LITERALLY THEN HE (TUTU) WOULD FEEL UNABLE TO GIVE AN ASSURANCE ABOUT CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE, ONE OF THE FEW COURSES STILL OPEN TO BLACKS.
4. IN GENERAL TUTU WAS EXTREMELY CRITICAL OF THE PRESIDENT, WHOM HE CONCLUDED WAS NOT SERIOUSLY INTERESTED IN DIALOGUE. IT WAS ALL TO REMINISCENT OF IAN SMITH: A CASE OF NARROWING OPTIONS AND TOO LITTLE TOO LATE. TUTU WENT ON TO SAY THAT HE BELIEVED BRITISH AND UNITED STATES POLICIES WERE FELT AS A DEEP HURT BY BLACKS IN SOUTH AFRICA. IN HIS VIEW WE WERE MOTIVATED PRIMARILY BY SELF-INTEREST (BUSINESS PROFITS, WHITE KITH AND KIN). IF WE REALLY HAD THE INTEREST OF BLACK PEOPLE AT HEART WE WOULD JOIN THE FRENCH AND OTHER GOVERNMENTS IN TAKING SPECIFIC ACTION WHICH WAS THE ONLY LANGUAGE THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT WOULD UNDERSTAND. WHEN I EXPLAINED THE REASONS FOR OUR HONESTLY HELD VIEW THAT SANCTIONS WOULD BE UNHELPFUL AND COUNTER PRODUCTIVE, INCLUDING GIVING HIM THE TEXT OF YOUR RECENT SPEECH AT THE COMMONWEALTH SOCIETY, TUTU BRUSHED THIS ASIDE WITH THE ARGUMENT THAT OUR POLICY WAS LIABLE TO ENDANGER THE LIVES OF WHITES. TUTU HAS OF COURSE CRITICISED US BEFORE, BUT ENDED ON THE RATHER CHILLING NOTE THAT IF WHITES BEGAN TO BE KILLED WE MIGHT TAKE A DIFFERENT VIEW.

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5. WHEN PIK BOTHA SPOKE TO THE LIBERAL INTERNATIONAL GROUP EARLIER IN THE DAY HE INSISTED THAT PRIVATE TALKS WERE TAKING PLACE BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND REPRESENTATIVES OF THE BLACK COMMUNITY. WHEN ASKED ABOUT COMMON CITIZENSHIP, HE MAINTAINED THAT ITS INTRODUCTION WAS ALREADY GOVERNMENT POLICY. HE TOOK THE SAME LINE OVER POWER-SHARING PROVIDED IT MEANT PARTICIPATION AND NOT DOMINATION. (PUBLICLY MINISTERS HAVE NOT BEEN PREPARED TO PROMISE POWER-SHARING IN TERMS, AS MEMBERS OF THE PROGRESSIVE FEDERAL PARTY WHO ACCOMPANIED THE LIBERAL GROUP WERE QUICK TO POINT OUT.) ON MANDELA, PIK BOTHA TOOK THE FAMILIAR LINE THAT EXTERNAL PRESSURE MADE IT EVEN MORE DIFFICULT FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO RELEASE HIM UNCONDITIONALLY, THOUGH HE DREW A DISTINCTION BETWEEN PROPOSALS FROM OUTSIDE SOUTH AFRICA AND THOSE OF BLACK LEADERS IN TOUCH WITH THE GOVERNMENT.

6. IT IS HARD TO KNOW HOW TO ASSESS THE GOVERNMENT'S CLAIM THAT MORE IS GOING ON QUIETLY IN CONTACTS WITH BLACKS THAN CAN BE REVEALED. IT IS A FACT THAT SUCH CONTACTS WOULD DRY UP IF HINTS BEGAN BEING DROPPED FROM THE GOVERNMENT SIDE ABOUT NAMES. ON THE OTHER HAND WHENEVER WE HAVE TRIED TO CHECK WITH INDIVIDUAL BLACKS WHO MIGHT BE CONSIDERED CREDIBLE CONTACTS THEY HAVE DISMISSED THE IDEA. WE KNOW THAT THERE WERE SOME INFORMAL EXCHANGES WITH A NUMBER OF MODERATES EARLIER THIS YEAR. BUT IT MUST BE DOUBTFUL IF ANYTHING WORTHWHILE IS GOING ON IN THE PRESENT ATMOSPHERE, APART FROM CONTACTS WITH HOMELAND LEADERS WHICH ARE IN A DIFFERENT CATEGORY. AT A LOCAL LEVEL, THERE HAVE BEEN SOME EARLIER CONTACTS WITH LOCAL COMMUNITY GROUPS IN THE EASTERN CAPE. INDIVIDUAL MINISTERS TALKED TO REPRESENTATIVE BLACKS, E.G. IN CRADOCK ABOUT SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND EDUCATIONAL QUESTIONS. IN PORT ALFRED BLACKS HAD SHOWN INTEREST IN WORKING WITH THE WHITE BUSINESS COMMUNITY TO PROPOSE A SINGLE COUNCIL WITH BOTH SIDES RUNNING A TOWN JOINTLY. THE STATE OF EMERGENCY AND ARRESTS OF NUMBERS OF THE GRASS ROOTS LEADERSHIP OF BLACK GROUPS HAS PROBABLY PRECLUDED FURTHER PROGRESS WITH LOCAL DISCUSSIONS OF THIS KIND, AT LEAST FOR THE MOMENT.

7. IT IS EARLY DAYS YET IN THE EMERGENCY, AND THE GOVERNMENT WILL WANT TO SEE HOW EFFECTIVELY THEIR MEASURES ARE WORKING. CABINET HAS RESUMED ITS REGULAR WEEKLY MEETINGS ONLY TODAY. WE SHOULD NOT EXPECT QUICK DECISIONS ABOUT POLITICAL DIALOGUE. BUT WE CANNOT BELIEVE TIME IS ON THE GOVERNMENT'S SIDE IN REGAINING BLACK CONFIDENCE.

MOBERLY

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