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MIPT. SOUTH AFRICA INTERNAL

1. THE GENERAL PICTURE DESCRIBED IN MY PREVIOUS TELEGRAM IS ONE OF THE GOVERNMENT FINDING THEMSELVES UNABLE TO BREAK OUT OF A VICIOUS CIRCLE. THEY CANNOT AFFORD TO WITHDRAW POLICE AND ARMY FROM TOWNSHIPS WHICH WOULD THEN BE LEFT IN THE HANDS OF TROUBLEMAKERS. EQUALLY THEY CANNOT PERSUADE AUTHENTIC BLACK REPRESENTATIVES TO COME FORWARD AND TALK TO THE GOVERNMENT IN PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES. THERE IS STILL TOO WIDE A GAP BETWEEN WHAT THE BLACKS SEE AS GOVERNMENT PROMISES OF REFORM AND ACTUAL CHANGES IN POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL TERMS. SOMETIMES THE AUTHORITIES ARE PAINFULLY SLOW TO PUT PROMISES INTO EFFECT, AT OTHER TIMES TRADITIONAL-MINDED CIVIL SERVANTS FRUSTRATE MINISTERIAL GOOD INTENTIONS FROM BEING APPLIED MORE LIBERALLY IN PRACTICE. FOR BLACKS THE RESULT IS THE SAME.

2. MY IMPRESSION IS THAT, ASSUMING TOMORROW'S BY-ELECTIONS GO REASONABLY WELL FROM THE GOVERNMENT'S POINT OF VIEW, WE ARE UNLIKELY TO SEE MUCH FURTHER MOVEMENT ON REFORM OR DIALOGUE IN THE WEEKS UP TO THE END OF THE YEAR OR INDEED UNTIL PARLIAMENT RESUMES FOR ITS NEXT SESSION IN LATE JANUARY. EVEN THEN IT MAY BE UNREALISTIC TO SUPPOSE THAT THE GOVERNMENT WILL EMBARK ON COMPLETELY NEW MEASURES. THE PATTERN IS MORE LIKELY TO BE ONE IN WHICH LEGISLATION IS TABLED TO GIVE EFFECT TO PROMISES OR HALF PROMISES ALREADY GIVEN BY THE GOVERNMENT. THIS WOULD INCLUDE MATTERS LIKE FREEHOLD FOR BLACKS, RESTORATION OF SOUTH AFRICAN CITIZENSHIP TO CITIZENS OF 'INDEPENDENT' HOMELANDS, AND ABOVE ALL REFORM OF INFLUX CONTROL AND URBANISATION. THE MOST SIGNIFICANT MOVE BY THE GOVERNMENT WOULD BE TO ABOLISH THE PASS LAWS THOUGH WE HAVE YET TO SEE HOW FAR THEY WILL GO ON THIS.

3. IF THIS SCENARIO IS RIGHT, IT HAS IMPLICATIONS FOR ANY COMMONWEALTH MISSION. GIVEN THE EXISTING GAP BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND BLACKS I DOUBT IF A COMMONWEALTH GROUP WILL GET FAR IN BRINGING THEM TOGETHER WITHIN THE NEXT TWO TO THREE MONTHS. THEY MIGHT HAVE MORE SUCCESS, IF ALL GOES WELL, TOWARDS THE LATTER PART OF THE SIX MONTH PERIOD ENVISAGED IN THE COMMONWEALTH ACCORD.

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4. AS SEEN FROM HERE THIS SUGGESTS THAT ANY EARLY VISIT BY A COMMONWEALTH GROUP SHOULD PERHAPS BE SEEN PRIMARILY AS A RECONNAISSANCE TO MAKE CONTACT WITH THE GOVERNMENT AND THE PRINCIPAL ORGANISATIONS AND INDIVIDUALS INVOLVED. A SUBSEQUENT VISIT OR VISITS IN THE FIRST MONTHS OF 1986 MIGHT HAVE MORE TO BUILD ON IN RESPECT OF SPECIFIC REFORMS ENACTED OR IN THE PIPELINE, AND THUS BE BETTER PLACED TO MAKE PROGRESS OVER DIALOGUE BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND BLACKS.

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