

SOUTHERN AFRICA

PS  
PS/MR RIFKIND  
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MR FERGUSSON  
SIR J FREELAND  
MR JOHNSON  
MR O'NEILL  
HD/SAFD  
HD/CAFD  
HD/UND  
HD/NEWS DEPT  
RESIDENT CLERK

MR CLG MALLABY, CABINET OFFICE

PS/NO 10 DOWNING STREET

15.11.81

RESTRICTED  
FM PRETORIA  
TO IMMEDIATE FCO  
TELNO 443  
OF 311025Z OCTOBER 1985  
INFO ROUTINE JOHANNESBURG  
INFO SAVING CAPE TOWN CONSULATE, DURBAN.

BY ELECTIONS

## SUMMARY

1. THE GOVERNMENT HELD ON TO FOUR OUT OF THE FIVE SEATS CONTESTED IN BY-ELECTIONS ON 30 OCTOBER LOSING ONE TO THE EXTREME RIGHT-WING HERSTIGTE NASIONALE PARTY. THE OUTCOME COULD HAVE BEEN WORSE BUT THE STRONG RIGHT-WING VOTE IN ALL THE SEATS WILL NOT ENCOURAGE THE GOVERNMENT TO ACCELERATE THE PACE OF REFORM OR TO SOFTEN THEIR APPROACH TO LAW AND ORDER.

## DETAIL

2. THE 30 OCTOBER BY-ELECTIONS WERE IN TWO RURAL SEATS, ONE IN THE ORANGE FREE STATE AND ONE IN NORTHERN CAPE (BETHLEHEM AND VRYBURG), AN INDUSTRIAL CONSTITUENCY IN THE NORTHERN FREE STATE (SASOLBURG), A CENTRAL DURBAN CONSTITUENCY (PORT NATAL), AND AN INDUSTRIAL SUBURB OF JOHANNESBURG (SPRINGS).
3. EARLIER IN THE YEAR THE NATIONAL PARTY (NP) HAD BEEN SERIOUSLY WORRIED THAT THEY MIGHT LOSE THE FIRST THREE SEATS. IN THE EVENT THEY HAVE WON FAIRLY EASILY IN THE TWO FARMING CONSTITUENCIES BEATING THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY (KP) IN A STRAIGHT FIGHT IN ONE AND HAVING ABSOLUTE MAJORITY AGAINST BOTH THE KP AND THE HERSTIGTE NASIONALE PARTY (HNP) IN THE OTHER. OF THESE TWO RIGHT WING PARTIES THE KP IS USUALLY REGARDED AS THE STRONGER. ALTHOUGH THE KP AND HNP HAVE NO FORMAL ALLIANCE, IN PRACTICE ONLY ONE OF THEM PUT UP A CANDIDATE IN EACH BY-ELECTION (EXCEPT IN ONE CASE). THE GOVERNMENT CANDIDATES THUS FACED A COMBINED RIGHT WING VOTE IN 4 OF THE 5 SEATS.
4. THE GOVERNMENT'S DEFEAT WAS IN SASOLBURG, A MAINLY INDUSTRIAL AREA IN THE NORTH OF THE STATE IN WHICH THE KP HAD WITHDRAWN TO GIVE THE HNP A CLEAR RUN AGAINST A STRONG LIBERALLY MINDED NP CANDIDATE

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5. THE HNP VICTORY WAS A SURPRISE AND REFLECTS A CLEAR SWING AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT. A MAJOR FACTOR WILL HAVE BEEN CONCERN ABOUT LAW AND ORDER SINCE BLACK UNREST HAS BEEN AFFECTING THE INDUSTRIAL REGIONS IN THE NORTH OF THE FREE STATE. BUT THE ECONOMIC DOWNTURN HAS ALSO AFFECTED INDUSTRIAL AREAS MORE THAN FARMING CONSTITUENCIES.

6. IT IS SIGNIFICANT THAT THERE WAS ALSO A STRONG SWING AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT IN SPRINGS, ANOTHER SEAT WITH A CONSIDERABLE PROPORTION OF WHITE FACTORY WORKERS, SOME UNEMPLOYMENT AND NEARBY CENTRES OF BLACK UNREST.

7. THE OPPOSITION LIBERAL PROGRESSIVE FEDERAL PARTY (PFP) RAN A POOR THIRD IN SPRINGS DESPITE THE PRESENCE OF A LARGE ENGLISH SPEAKING ELEMENT IN THE CONSTITUENCY. IT SEEMS LIKELY THAT PFP VOTERS EITHER STAYED AWAY OR MOVED THEIR VOTE TO ONE OF THE MORE CONSERVATIVE PARTIES.

8. IN THE DURBAN SEAT WON BY THE MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS THE BIG LOSER WAS THE NEW REPUBLIC PARTY (NRP) WHOSE FUTURE MUST NOW BE SERIOUSLY IN QUESTION. THE GOVERNMENT APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN MORE SUCCESSFUL THAN THE PFP IN PICKING UP SUPPORT FROM THE NRP AMONG THE ENGLISH SPEAKING COMMUNITY. RESULTS ALTOGETHER ARE DISAPPOINTING FOR THE PFP.

9. THE PERCENTAGE POLL IN ALL OF THE BY-ELECTIONS WAS LOWER THAN HAD BEEN PREDICTED. DETAILED RESULTS ARE IN MIFT.

10. A SENIOR MEMBER OF THE NP HAS TOLD US THAT THE GOVERNMENT CONSIDER THE RESULT NOT TOO BAD BUT THAT AS HAD BEEN EXPECTED THERE HAD BEEN A STRONG RIGHT-WING CHALLENGE. COMMENT FROM PRESIDENT BOTHA IS EXPECTED LATER TODAY.

11. OVERALL THE OUTCOME MAY BE SUFFICIENT FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO CLAIM IT AS A MANDATE FOR THEIR POLICIES. BUT THE CONTINUING EVIDENCE OF STRONG RIGHT-WING SUPPORT (IN ALL CASES UP ON THE 1981 FIGURES) WILL NOT ENCOURAGE THEM TO INCREASE THE PACE OF REFORM. NOT IS IT LIKELY TO SOFTEN THEIR ROBUST APPROACH TO TRYING TO RESTORE LAW AND ORDER.

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POHPAN 2450

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