

CONFIDENTIAL
FM PRETORIA
TO DESKBY 240900Z FCO
TELNO 419
OF 240700Z NOVEMBER 88
INFO IMMEDIATE UKMIS NEW YORK, WASHINGTON
INFO PRIORITY HARARE, LUSAKA

MY TELNO 418 (NOT TO ALL): SHARPEVILLE SIX

1. PRESIDENT BOTHA LAST NIGHT REPRIEVED THIRTEEN PERSONS UNDER SENTENCE OF DEATH, INCLUDING THE SHARPEVILLE SIX AND FOUR WHITE POLICEMEN FOUND GUILTY OF MURDERS IN SOWETO AND CRADOCK.
2. FOR THE SHARPEVILLE SIX THE SENTENCES WERE COMMUTED TO TERMS OF IMPRISONMENT VARYING FROM 18 TO 25 YEARS.
3. THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT THE PRIME MINISTER'S INTERVENTION MADE A CRITICAL DIFFERENCE. THE JUSTICE MINISTER, FOREIGN MINISTER AND HEAD OF THE REFORMED CHURCH ALL HAVE TOLD ME THAT THEY WERE PREPARED TO SUPPORT OUR REPRESENTATIONS IN THIS CASE BECAUSE OF A RECOGNITION THAT WE HAD GENUINE REASONS FOR CONCERN ABOUT THE SEVERITY OF THE SENTENCES IMPOSED AND THAT IT IS NOT OUR PRACTICE TO INTERVENE IN OTHER MURDER CASES WHERE THE ARGUMENTS FOR CLEMENCY ARE MUCH WEAKER AND CAN ONLY BE CONSIDERED ON TECHNICAL JUDICIAL GROUNDS.
4. I HAVE WRITTEN TO ALL THREE TO EXPRESS MY APPRECIATION FOR THEIR HELP IN CONTRIBUTING TO THIS OUTCOME.
5. FCO PLEASE PASS TO NO 10 DOWNING ST.

RENWICK

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