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MIPT: MRS CHALKER'S MEETING WITH PRESIDENT MUGABE: SOUTH AFRICA

1. WHEN THE MINISTER OF OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT CALLED ON PRESIDENT MUGABE ON 31 JANUARY, THEY DISCUSSED THE PROCESS OF CHANGE IN SOUTH AFRICA AT SOME LENGTH.
2. MUGABE ACCEPTED THAT SINCE DE KLERK TOOK POWER THERE HAD BEEN SIGNS OF CHANGE IN SOUTH AFRICAN POLICY. BRITAIN HAD A ROLE TO PLAY. IF OUR POLICY WAS CONDUCTED EFFECTIVELY, IT COULD END UP WITH NEGOTIATIONS TAKING PLACE. HOWEVER, DE KLERK APPEARED INDECISIVE. INSTEAD OF RELEASING MANDELA, HE SEEMED TO BE TRYING TO FORCE HIM AS A PRE-CONDITION INTO COMMITTING HIMSELF TO CERTAIN THINGS WHICH WERE UNTENABLE FOR MANDELA.
3. MRS CHALKER SAID THAT WE BELIEVED THAT DE KLERK'S ADVENT TO POWER HAD BROUGHT WITH IT A BASIC SHIFT IN POLICY. HE WAS TRYING TO CREATE CONDITIONS IN WHICH MANDELA'S RELEASE LED DIRECTLY TO NEGOTIATIONS OR AT LEAST TALKS ABOUT TALKS. (I ADDED THAT MANDELA HAD PRECISELY THE SAME OBJECTIVE). OBVIOUSLY, DE KLERK WAS CONCERNED ABOUT THE RISK OF A WHITE BACKLASH IF HE MOVED TOO FAST. ALSO THAT, IN THE ABSENCE OF AGREEMENT ON A SUSPENSION OF VIOLENCE, A MOVE STRAIGHT TO UNBANNING THE ANC AND ENDING THE STATE OF EMERGENCY COULD LEAD TO MAJOR CIVIL DISTURBANCES. HE WANTED A COMMITMENT FROM MANDELA TO THE EPG'S NEGOTIATING CONCEPT. THE SAG WOULD MOVE IF THE ANC INDICATED THAT THEY TOO WERE READY TO MOVE ON ESCHEWING VIOLENCE. MEANWHILE, WE SHOULD NOT HAVE EXAGGERATED EXPECTATIONS OF DE KLERK'S SPEECH IN PARLIAMENT ON 2 FEBRUARY, THOUGH WE HOPED FOR SOME WELCOME ANNOUNCEMENTS.
4. MUGABE SAID THAT THE ANC HAD MOVED, BY DRAWING UP THE 1989 DOCUMENT WHICH THE OAU HAD ENDORSED. THIS PROCESS HAD BEEN TAKEN FURTHER BY THE RESOLUTION AT THE UN SPECIAL SESSION IN DECEMBER. THE ANC HAD MOVED IN THE DIRECTION OF MODERATION. THEY WERE THEORETICALLY COMMITTED TO NATIONALISATION BUT MUST REALISE THAT IT WAS NOT PRACTICAL. I SAID THAT THE RECENT STATEMENT ATTRIBUTED TO MANDELA ON NATIONALISATION HAD CAUSED AN UNWELCOME FRISSON IN

THE WHITE COMMUNITY IN SOUTH AFRICA. MUGABE SAID THAT IT WAS UNFAIR FOR MANDELA'S SUPPORTERS IN SOUTH AFRICA TO VENTRILOQUISE HIS ALLEGED VIEWS. HOWEVER, IT WAS UNDERSTANDABLE FOR THE ANC TO SET OUT AN OPENING POSITION WHICH WAS MORE EXTREME THAN WHAT THEY WOULD SETTLE FOR IN THE END. THIS WAS NECESSARY TO REASSURE THE ORDINARY PEOPLE.

5. MRS CHALKER SAID THAT ZIMBABWE HAD A ROLE TO PLAY IN ENCOURAGING THE ANC DOWN THE PATH OF CHANGE THROUGH PEACEFUL MEANS AND TO REIN IN THE ARMED WING. MUGABE ASKED RHETORICALLY HOW MUCH FIGHTING THERE HAD ACTUALLY BEEN IN SOUTH AFRICA. A GRENADE HERE OR THERE DID NOT AMOUNT TO MUCH. THIS WAS JUST TALK, MEANT TO KEEP UP MORALE. I SAID THAT NEVERTHELESS SOUTH AFRICAN WHITES WERE RATHER LITERAL-MINDED. THE ANC OUGHT TO BE SENDING A CLEAR SIGNAL ABOUT THEIR READINESS TO MAKE PROGRESS BY PEACEFUL MEANS. AT PRESENT THEY WERE PUTTING OUT MIXED SIGNALS.

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