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FM PRETORIA
TO DESKBY 231200Z FCO
TELNO 517
OF 231030Z NOVEMBER 1985

RESIDENT CLERK PLEASE INFORM JOHNSON (AUS) AND SAFD.
YOUR TELS NO 295 AND 296: COMMONWEALTH EMINENT PERSONS GROUP.

1. I FEEL BOUND TO DRAW ATTENTION TO THREE POINTS WHICH COULD TIP
THE BALANCE INTO SOUTH AFRICAN REJECTION OF THE EPG:

(A) THE INCLUSION OF REMARKS ABOUT ANTI-SOUTH AFRICAN MEASURES
IN THE STATEMENT TO BE RELEASED IN LONDON. (YOU DO NOT GIVE
US THE TEXT, ALTHOUGH THE SAG WILL HAVE ONE MORE CAUSE FOR
COMPLAINT IF THEY RECEIVE NO ADVANCE NOTICE OF THE STATEMENT
ITSELF, ONLY THE LIST OF NAMES PLUS COMMONWEALTH ACCORD AS
INTENDED AT PRESENT).

(B) THE PROPOSED SEPARATE STATEMENT BY RAMPHAL, CONTENTS UNKNOWN.

(C) RAMPHAL'S DECISION TO APPOINT FRASER AND OBASANJO AS
CO-CHAIRMAN OF THE GROUP. (FRASER IS LIKE A RED RAG TO A
BULL SO FAR AS THE SAG ARE CONCERNED, AS I POINTED OUT
EARLIER THIS WEEK. AND A CO-CHAIRMAN FROM NIGERIA WITH ITS
HISTORY OF FAILED DEMOCRACY IS ALSO GOING TO ATTRACT PARTICULAR
CRITICISM).

2. I AM GLAD YOU ARE ALREADY IN TOUCH WITH THE SECRETARIAT ON
A AND B. MAY I URGE ONCE MORE HOW IMPORTANT IT IS TO KEEP THE
ANNOUNCEMENT OF NAMES TO A BARE MINIMUM, NOT IN ORDER TO BE NICE
TO THE SAG BUT TO AVOID THE VERY REAL DANGER OF THE EPG BEING
REJECTED HERE BEFORE IT HAS EVEN STARTED. ALL THE SIGNS ARE
THAT WHITE PUBLIC OPINION WILL BE SOLIDLY BEHIND THE SAG IF THEY
DISMISS THE EPG OUT OF HAND, WHICH IS ALL TOO POSSIBLE IF
STATEMENTS AT THIS STAGE BY RAMPHAL ARE PRESENTED HERE AS
PROVOCATIVE. I TRUST THAT THE COMMONWEALTH SECRETARIAT REALISE
THIS, AND THAT THEY ARE IN NO DOUBT AS TO THE VIEW OF AT LEAST
ONE COMMONWEALTH AMBASSADOR ON THE SPOT.

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INFORMATION RELATED TO CONTENTS OF THIS FILE

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3. AS FOR C ABOVE, PUBLIC REFERENCE TO FRASER NOW AS CO-CHAIRMAN WILL BE NOTHING SHORT OF DISASTROUS. AGAIN, HAS RAMPHAL ANY IDEA OF THE FIERCELY LOW OPINION IN WHICH FRASER IS HELD HERE BY THE GREAT MAJORITY OF WHITES AS A RESULT OF STATEMENTS HE MADE AFTER VISITING SOUTH AFRICA EARLIER THIS YEAR? IN ANY CASE I WONDER IF WE MIGHT NOT ARGUE THAT THE CHOICE OF CHAIRMAN OR CO-CHAIRMAN SHOULD BE A MATTER FOR THE GROUP THEMSELVES TO DECIDE.

4. I SHOULD WELCOME ANYTHING FURTHER YOU CAN TELL US ON THESE POINTS BEFORE ACTION IS TAKEN HERE IN CONJUNCTION WITH CANADIAN AND AUSTRALIAN AMBASSADORS ON MONDAY MORNING, WHICH IN PRACTICE CANNOT BE MUCH LATER THAN 0900 HOURS GMT.

MOBERLY

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HD/SF D

HD/CLD

PS

PS/MR. RIFKIND

PS/PUS

MR. FERGUSSON

MR. JOHNSON

MR. HOUSTON

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