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CONFIDENTIAL

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CONFIDENTIAL

-DEDIP

FM CAPETOWN

TO DESKBY 121300Z FCO

TELNO 014

OF 121430Z JANUARY 87

INFO IMMEDIATE LUSAKA (PERSONAL FOR HIGH COMMISSIONER)

PERSONAL FOR HEAD OF SAFO.

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YOUR TELNO 005: MESSAGE FROM PIK BOTHA

1. YOU ASKED FOR MY ASSESSMENT, WHICH I GIVE BELOW IN THE FORM OF COMMENTS ON THE POINTS RAISED IN YOUR PARA 6:

(A) IN ASSESSING PIK BOTHA'S APPROACH, MUCH DEPENDS ON WHICH OF THE TWO MESSAGES YOU LOOK AT. THE MESSAGE CONVEYED THROUGH EDWARDES GOES VIRTUALLY THE WHOLE WAY TO MEET OUR PROPOSALS (ALTHOUGH THERE WOULD STILL BE THE QUESTION OF WHAT IS MEANT BY AN ADVANCE UNDERSTANDING AND WHETHER ONE SIDE WILL BE COMMITTING ITSELF BEFORE THE OTHER). BY CONTRAST, PIK BOTHA'S OWN LETTER DOES NOT REALLY TAKE US FURTHER THAN DURING THE SECRETARY OF STATE'S VISIT. HE SEEMS MERELY TO BE REASSERTING TWO POSITIONS: THAT THE SOUTH AFRICAN REACTION TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE'S APPROACH IN JULY WAS ENCOURAGING, AND THAT WE ARE WRONG ONLY TO PRESS ONE SIDE TO MOVE. ON THE LATTER POINT WE HAVE A PERFECTLY REASONABLE ANSWER. THE FORMER POINT FLIES IN THE FACE OF WHAT P W BOTHA SAID AT THE TIME. AS BETWEEN THE TWO MESSAGES I BELIEVE WE HAVE TO TAKE PIK'S OWN LETTER AS THE WEIGHTIER, EVEN THOUGH IT IS FAR LESS PROMISING FROM OUR OWN POINT OF VIEW. THE TROUBLE IS THAT PIK'S LETTER CONTAINS NO HINT WHATEVER OF THE MORE HOPEFUL LINE REPORTED BY EDWARDES. NOR WOULD IT BE SAFE TO RELY ON THE PRECISE FORMULATION OF AN ORAL MESSAGE, ESPECIALLY WHEN AN ENTIRELY DIFFERENT WRITTEN ONE FROM THE SAME SOURCE FOLLOWS SO QUICKLY ON ITS HEELS.

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(B) I EXPECT PIK WOULD HAVE CLEARED HIS LETTER WITH THE PRESIDENT. BUT I DOUBT IF HE WOULD HAVE CLEARED WHAT AMOUNTS TO A COMPLAINT ABOUT THE BRITISH POSITION WITH THE CABINET AS A WHOLE. STILL MORE WOULD I DOUBT WHETHER THE ORAL MESSAGE BROUGHT BACK BY EDWARDES REPRESENTS A CONSIDERED CABINET VIEW. MY OWN GUESS IS THAT BOTH MESSAGES ARE ESSENTIALLY A PERSONAL INITIATIVE. AS YOU KNOW, PIK GOT OUT ON A LIMP OVER THE EPG. HE HAS BEEN RE-ESTABLISHING HIMSELF SINCE THEN. HE STILL HAS NOTHING TO SHOW FOR GOING OUT AS FAR AS HE DID OVER THE EPG. IT WOULD BE A FEATHER IN HIS CAP IF HE COULD NOW POINT TO EVIDENCE OF WESTERN GOVERNMENTS SHOWING RENEWED INTEREST IN A FORMULA FOR CALLING OFF BLACK VIOLENCE. I AM SURE HE WOULD HAVE THE BACKING OF HIS DFA OFFICIALS FOR THIS. NEVERTHELESS, I SEE NO IMMEDIATE PROSPECT OF THE SOUTH AFRICANS BEING WILLING TO REOPEN AN EPG-TYPE PACKAGE. IT WOULD RUN COUNTER TO EVERYTHING THEY ARE SAYING AND DOING NOW IN REGARD TO THE ANC. IT WOULD ALSO RISK HANDING THE RIGHT-WING OPPOSITION AN ELECTION BONUS. BUT PIK HIMSELF MAY BELIEVE IT WORTH KEEPING THE POSSIBILITY ALIVE FOR LATER, I.E. SOME TIME AFTER THE FORTHCOMING ELECTION. POSSIBLY EDWARDES' MESSAGE MAY ALSO BE CONNECTED INDIRECTLY WITH THE SUCCESSION TO P W BOTHA. PIK ALMOST CERTAINLY SEES HIMSELF AS A CANDIDATE. (HE IS NOT AS WELL PLACED AS F W DE KLERK OR HEUNIS, BUT HE ENTERED THE CONTEST LAST TIME ROUND AND COULD HOPE TO BE A COMPROMISE CHOICE IN THE EVENT OF STALEMATE BETWEEN TWO FRONT RUNNERS). OF ALL THE PRESENT LEADERSHIP, PIK IS THE ONE WHO MOST CLEARLY RECOGNISES THAT THE EPG WERE ON THE RIGHT TRACK. EVEN IF HIS RENEWED INTEREST IS GENUINE, HOWEVER, IT ASSUMES THE LEADERSHIP CAN EVENTUALLY BE BROUGHT ROUND TO SOMETHING ON THE LINES OF MATCHING COMMITMENT, WHICH IS A BIG IF AT THIS STAGE.

(C) AS I HAVE ALREADY INDICATED, MUCH AS I WOULD LIKE TO BELIEVE THAT THE MESSAGES REPRESENT A REAL SHIFT I CANNOT HONESTLY SEE THEM IN THAT WAY. AT BEST, PIK MAY HOPE TO KEEP THE PROSPECTS ALIVE FOR THE IDEA OF MATCHING COMMITMENTS AND ALSO TO SUSTAIN HIS OWN CREDIBILITY. A LESS FAVOURABLE INTERPRETATION IS THAT PIK IS ONLY TRYING TO SCORE POINTS OFF US AND TO KEEP THE MAIN WESTERN GOVERNMENTS ON THE DEFENSIVE. DID HE KNOW THAT THE SECRETARY OF STATE AND SCHULTZ WERE TO MEET, I WONDER? I COME BACK TO THE FACT THAT WE ARE DEALING WITH TWO VERY DIFFERENT MESSAGES, AN ORAL ONE WHICH IS POSITIVE AND A WRITTEN ONE WHICH IS FAR LESS SO. IT WOULD BE EASIER TO TAKE THE ORAL ONE AS THE REAL MESSAGE IF ONE COULD BE MORE CONFIDENT ABOUT PIK BEING IN A POSITION AT PRESENT TO DELIVER THE GOODS.

... REFERRING TO THE LETTER, THE SECRETARY MIGHT SAY
THAT PIK BOTHA IS RIGHT TO RECALL OUR SUPPORT FOR THE IDEA THAT
SOME KIND OF MATCHING COMMITMENTS ON EACH SIDE COULD HOLD OUT
A REALISTIC POSSIBILITY FOR GETTING NEGOTIATIONS GOING. THERE IS
NO CHANGE IN OUR POSITION ON THIS. WE HAVE REPEATEDLY SET OUT
OUR VIEW OF WHAT WE EXPECT THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT TO DO.
THE SECRETARY OF STATE STATED THIS AGAIN IN STRASBOURG. BUT WE
HAVE EQUALLY MADE OUR VIEWS KNOWN TO THE ANC. THE SECRETARY
OF STATE TOLD TAMBO IN SEPTEMBER THAT VIOLENCE WAS NOT THE
WAY TO ACHIEVE A SOLUTION. THE ANC SHOULD MAKE CLEAR THAT THEY
WERE ANXIOUS TO FIND WAYS OF PROMOTING CHANGE WITHOUT VIOLENCE
I.E. THROUGH DIALOGUE. HE MADE A SIMILAR POINT TO FOREIGN
MINISTERS OF NON-ALIGNED COUNTRIES WHO VISITED LONDON IN OCTOBER.
IT WAS THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT'S ACTIONS HOWEVER WHICH MADE
IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR THE EPG TO TAKE THE IDEA OF MATCHING COMMITMENTS
FURTHER. NOR DID THE SECRETARY OF STATE GAIN THE IMPRESSION
FROM HIS OWN VISIT TO PRETORIA THAT THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT
WERE PREPARED TO TAKE STEPS LEADING TO A REVIVAL OF THE EPG
APPROACH. INDEED AT HIS PRESS CONFERENCE BEFORE THE SECRETARY
OF STATE LEFT, PRESIDENT BOTHA SPOKE STRONGLY AGAINST PRESCRIPTIONS
FROM OUTSIDE. SUBSEQUENT ACTIONS HAVE APPEARED TO CONFIRM THIS
PRE-OCCUPATION IN UNMISTAKEABLE TERMS. WE DO NOT BELIEVE IT WILL
BE POSSIBLE TO MAKE PROGRESS WITH OTHER PARTIES UNLESS THE SOUTH
AFRICAN GOVERNMENT THEMSELVES SHOW CONVINCINGLY THAT THEY ARE
WILLING TO TAKE THE KIND OF STEPS INDICATED. IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES
IT IS HELPFUL TO KNOW THAT PIK IS STILL INTERESTED IN THE CONCEPT
OF RECIPROCAL COMMITMENTS. IF HE HAS FURTHER IDEAS ABOUT HOW THESE
MIGHT BE CARRIED FORWARD, THE SECRETARY OF STATE WOULD BE GLAD TO
HEAR THEM.

(E) I WOULD NOT EXPECT PIK TO REVEAL THE ACTUAL TEXT OF HIS
LETTER NOR EVEN THE FACT THAT HE IS IN PRIVATE CORRESPONDENCE
WITH THE SECRETARY OF STATE. BUT IN THE RUN-UP TO AN ELECTION
HE MIGHT BE TEMPTED TO REFER PUBLICLY TO FURTHER CONTACTS
WITH WESTERN GOVERNMENTS, POSSIBLY ADDING SOMETHING DISOBLIGING
ABOUT THE BRITISH POSITION. PIK IS NOTORIOUS FOR LEAKING CONFID-
ENTIAL EXCHANGES. MOREOVER THE PRESIDENT IN HIS NEW YEAR
MESSAGE MADE A POINT OF SAYING THAT HE HAD ASKED HEADS OF
GOVERNMENTS IN VAIN ABOUT OBTAINING AN ANC COMMITMENT TO ABANDON
VIOLENCE. THIS REINFORCES THE CASE FOR A REASONED REPLY ON THE
LINES I HAVE SUGGESTED, I.E. GIVING PIK THE BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT
ABOUT HIS MOTIVES AND OFFERING HIM AN OPENING TO COME BACK WITH
MORE SPECIFIC IDEAS. THE SUGGESTED REPLY ALSO TRIES TO
GUARD AGAINST A PUBLIC CLAIM BY PIK THAT WESTERN GOVERNMENTS
HAVE TRIED TO EXTRACT A COMMITMENT FROM THE ANC BUT HAVE FAILED.
IT IS THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT'S CREDIBILITY WHICH HAS
FALLEN EVEN LOWER AS A RESULT OF THEIR OWN ACTIONS.

MOBERLY