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SOUTH AFRICA: WHITE ELECTION**SUMMARY**

1. GOVERNMENT HAVE INCREASED MAJORITY BUT RIGHT WING HAVE DOUBLED THEIR POPULAR VOTE. IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES GOVERNMENT ARE LIKELY TO BE EVEN MORE CAUTIOUS ABOUT TAKING RISKS OVER REFORM AND SECURITY. NO PROSPECT OF CONCESSIONS TO INTERNATIONAL OPINION.

DETAIL

2. FINAL RESULTS OF THE ELECTION ARE SET OUT IN MIFT. THEY LEAVE THE NATIONAL PARTY (NP) WITH AN INCREASED MAJORITY IN THE WHITE CHAMBER OF PARLIAMENT. THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY (CP) HAVE THREE MORE SEATS THAN THE PROGRESSIVE FEDERAL PARTY (PFP) AND WILL BECOME THE OFFICIAL OPPOSITION. THE BATTLE BETWEEN WORRALL AND HEUNIS WAS SETTLED IN THE LATTER'S FAVOUR, BUT ONLY BY 39 VOTES.

3. THERE HAS BEEN AN UNEXPECTEDLY STRONG SWING TO THE RIGHT, AWAY FROM THE PFP AND THEIR ALLY, THE NEW REPUBLIC PARTY (NRP), TO THE NP AND AT THE SAME TIME FROM THE NP TO THE CP. THE GOVERNMENT NEVERTHELESS END UP WITH 7 MORE SEATS. THE PFP LOST 7 SEATS ACROSS THE COUNTRY AND HELD ON TO SEVERAL OTHERS BY PRECARIOUS MAJORITIES. THE NRP HELD ONLY 1 OF THEIR 5 SEATS. WHILE THE NP BENEFITED AT PFP/NRP EXPENSE, THEY LOST SUBSTANTIAL GROUND TO THE CP, WHICH ACHIEVED A HIGH POLL OF 26% OF THE ELECTORATE (BUT A GAIN OF ONLY 5 SEATS). THE HNP FARED EXTREMELY BADLY, LOSING ITS ONLY SEAT TO THE NP.

4. ONLY THE INDEPENDENTS TO THE LEFT OF THE NP RAN COUNTER TO THE TREND. ALL THREE CANDIDATES SEEM TO HAVE ATTRACTED VOTES FROM THE NP AS WELL AS FROM PFP SUPPORTERS. FOR MALAN, HIS VICTORY WAS A PERSONAL TRIUMPH, THE FIRST INDEPENDENT TO WIN AN ELECTION IN 50 YEARS.

CAUSES OF RIGHT WING SWING

5. THE PFP/NRP BEGAN THE CAMPAIGN WITH HIGH HOPES OF A SIGNIFICANT BREAKTHROUGH. IN JANUARY, THE OPTIMISTS WERE SPEAKING OF THEIR WINNING 40 OR MORE SEATS. IN LATE MARCH, OPINION POLLS WERE GIVING THEM UP TO A QUARTER OF THE TOTAL VOTE. IN THE EVENT, THE ALLIANCE VOTE COLLAPSED TO THE RIGHT.

CONFIDENTIAL

6. IN RETROSPECT IT IS CLEAR THAT THE CAMPAIGN WAS ESSENTIALLY ABOUT THE PLACE OF BLACKS IN SOUTH AFRICA. THE ISSUES WERE REALLY TWO SIDES OF THE SAME COIN: REFORM AND SECURITY. CONSCIOUS OF THE THREAT FROM THE RIGHT, THE NP WAS AT PAINS TO ASSURE THE AFRIKANER VOLK THAT THERE WOULD BE NO SURRENDER TO BLACK MAJORITY RULE. THEY PLAYED SKILFULLY TO WHITE FEARS OF THE UNKNOWN AND ON THE REVOLUTIONARY THREAT. THIS SEEMS TO HAVE STRUCK HOME, PARTICULARLY IN THE LAST DAYS OF THE CAMPAIGN. FORMER NRP SUPPORTERS DESERTED IN DROVES TO THE NP, WHILE MANY POTENTIAL PFP VOTERS RAN FOR THE COVER OF THE TRUSTED PARTY IN POWER. THUS THE NP MORE THAN MADE UP IN SEATS GAINED FROM THE LEFT THOSE THEY LOST TO THE RIGHT. IN TERMS OF POPULAR VOTE, HOWEVER, THE NP'S OVERALL SHARE ACTUALLY FELL BY 5% BECAUSE OF THE RIGHT-WING'S STRONG SHOWING.

7. IN THE END, OVER 80% OF THE WHITE ELECTORATE OPTED FOR PARTIES WHICH ADVOCATE EITHER PARTITION OR A GROUP APPROACH DESIGNED TO ENSURE WHITE CONTROL. LESS THAN ONE FIFTH SHOWED THEMSELVES WILLING TO CONTEMPLATE FUNDAMENTAL POLITICAL CHANGE.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE GOVERNMENT

8. ON THE FACE OF IT, THE ELECTION IS SOMETHING OF A TRIUMPH FOR THE GOVERNMENT AND FOR PRESIDENT BOTHA IN PARTICULAR. HAVING BEGUN THE CAMPAIGN WITH GENERAL EXPECTATIONS THAT THE NP WOULD LOSE GROUND, THE PARTY HAS ENDED UP IN A STRONGER PARLIAMENTARY POSITION. THE PFP/NRP HAVE EMERGED BATTERED AND THE RIGHT WING THREAT CONTAINED. PRESIDENT BOTHA HAS HIS MANDATE FOR REFORM. ALL THIS SEEMS BOUND TO INCREASE GOVERNMENT AND PARTY CONFIDENCE AND TO RULE OUT THE POSSIBILITY OF DEFECTIONS FROM WITHIN THE NP.

9. NONETHELESS, THE STRONG CP SHOWING CONFIRMED THE GOVERNMENT'S WORST FEARS OF BEING CHALLENGED ABOVE ALL FROM THE RIGHT. THE THREAT WAS INDEED CONTAINED, BUT ONLY JUST, HELPED BY THE REMARKABLE CP/HNP FAILURE TO STRIKE AN ELECTORAL PACT. ALTHOUGH THERE WERE ONLY 8 SEATS WHERE THE COMBINED CP/HNP VOTE WAS MORE THAN THAT OF THE NP WINNER, THERE ARE TWENTY OR MORE OTHERS WHERE THE NP REMAINS VULNERABLE TO ANY FURTHER SWING TO THE RIGHT IN THE FUTURE. THE GOVERNMENT WILL NOT RELISH GOING TO THE POLLS AGAIN IN 1989 AND THE CHANCES OF A POSTPONED ELECTION (BY MEANS OF A CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT) SEEM TO HAVE RISEN.

10. SOME OBSERVERS HAVE SUGGESTED THAT A GOVERNMENT FACING AN OFFICIAL OPPOSITION TO THE RIGHT COULD SHIFT THEIR OWN STANCE LEFTWARDS IN ORDER TO LEAVE CLEAR WATER BETWEEN THEMSELVES AND THE OPPOSITION. I DOUBT THIS. THE SIGNAL FROM THE ELECTORATE IS SUCH THAT THERE SEEMS EVEN LESS PROSPECT NOW OF THE GOVERNMENT CHANGING ITS CAUTIOUS, LIMITED APPROACH TO CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM BASED ON GROUP IDENTITY. THEY WILL CERTAINLY TRY TO PRESS AHEAD WITH THE NATIONAL STATUTORY COUNCIL, BUT WILL SEE NO CAUSE TO PURSUE THE INDABA PROPOSALS GIVEN THE PFP/NRP DEFEATS IN NATAL. EVEN IF AMENDED, THE GROUP AREAS ACT WILL STAY. WHILE ANOTHER ELECTION REMAINS IN THE OFFING, THERE WILL BE NO ROOM FOR ANY NEW INITIATIVE WHICH WOULD OPEN THE DOOR TO CP CHARGES OF BETRAYING WHITE INTERESTS. MOREOVER, THE GOVERNMENT WILL FEEL FREE TO CONTINUE WITH TOUGH SECURITY POLICIES.

THE SUCCESSION

11. THE ELECTION RESULT WILL PROBABLY CONFIRM PRESIDENT BOTHA IN A DECISION TO SOLDIER ON FOR A YEAR OR MORE. ADMITTEDLY IT WOULD BE OPEN TO HIM TO RETIRE HAVING LED HIS PARTY TO VICTORY AGAIN AND HAVING SALVAGED HIS OWN PRESTIGE IN THE FACE OF WIDESPREAD CRITICISM. BUT HIS FAVOURITE SON, HEUNIS, HAS BEEN DAMAGED BY THE CLOSE FIGHT WITH WORRALL AND AT THE VERY LEAST WILL TAKE TIME TO RECOVER HIS STANDING. THE OTHER MAIN CONTENDER FOR THE SUCCESSION, F W DE KLERK, DID NOT EMERGE UNSCATHED EITHER. HIS OWN MAJORITY WAS CUT BY TWO THIRDS AND HE MAY TAKE SOME OF THE BLAME FOR CP GAINS IN THE TRANSVAAL WHERE HE IS NP LEADER. WHILE THE SUCCESSION IS UNRESOLVED AND STORMY SEAS LIE AHEAD, I BELIEVE PRESIDENT BOTHA WILL BE RELUCTANT TO RELINQUISH THE HELM.

IMPLICATIONS FOR OTHER PARTIES

12. THE FIELD HAS EFFECTIVELY BEEN REDUCED TO THREE PARTIES. THE NRP IS LIKELY TO FOLD IN THE NEAR FUTURE AND ITS ONE REMAINING MP TO JOIN THE PFP. THE HNP MAY STAGGER ON A LITTLE LONGER IF ONLY BECAUSE OF THE FANATICISM OF ITS LEADER, JAAP MARAIS, AND SOME OF ITS MEMBERS. BUT IT NOW SEEMS A SPENT FORCE.

13. THE CP SHOULD BE WELL PLEASED WITH THE OVERALL RESULT. THEY HAVE BECOME THE UNCHALLENGED STANDARD BEARER ON THE RIGHT. THEIR STRENGTH IS WHERE IT MATTERS, IN THE HEART OF AFRIKANERDOM IN THE TRANSVAAL, ALTHOUGH THEY HAVE ALSO GATHERED SIGNIFICANT VOTES IN PARTS OF THE CAPE AND ORANGE FREE STATE. THEY WILL SEE THEIR HIGH POPULAR VOTE AS A SPRINGBOARD FOR THE NEXT ELECTION.

14. THE PFP, ON THE OTHER HAND, WILL BE SEVERELY DEMORALIZED. IT SEEMS CLEAR THAT THE PARTY CAN NO LONGER HOPE TO CHALLENGE THE NP SERIOUSLY. THEY HAVE NOT EVEN GAINED THE SUPPORT OF A MAJORITY OF ENGLISH SPEAKERS, LET ALONE BROKEN THROUGH THE BARRIER TO AFRIKANERS. THERE WILL BE CONSIDERABLE SOUL SEARCHING ABOUT THE FUTURE DIRECTION OF THE PARTY. THE DECISION TO RUN IN HARNESS WITH THE NRP WILL BE SEEN AS A SERIOUS MISTAKE. EGLIN'S LEADERSHIP MAY WELL BE QUESTIONED ALTHOUGH THERE IS NO OBVIOUS CONTENDER TO SUCCEED HIM. THE PARTY IS IN FOR A DIFFICULT TIME.

15. THOUGH THE INDEPENDENTS DID WELL PERSONALLY, THE ELECTION RESULT HAS SOBERING IMPLICATIONS FOR THEM. WORRALL'S FAILURE TO PIP HEUNIS WILL DEPRIVE HIM OF A FOOTHOLD IN PARLIAMENT. IN ANY CASE, THE INDEPENDENTS WILL SCARCELY BE TEMPTED TO FORGE A REFORM ALLIANCE WITH THE PFP. THEIR CREDIBILITY WITH AFRIKANERS WILL DEMAND DISTANCE BETWEEN THE TWO OF THEM. EQUALLY THE ROOM FOR FURTHER EXPANSION ON THEIR OWN LOOKS LIMITED. FOR THE FORSEEABLE FUTURE, THERE IS NO HOPE OF THEM BEING JOINED BY PARLIAMENTARY DEFECTIONS FROM THE NP. FEW NP SEATS OFFER SUCH PROMISING GROUND AS HELDERBERG AND RANDBURG FOR AN INDEPENDENT CHALLENGE. THOUGH INTELLECTUAL AND YOUNGER PROFESSIONAL AFRIKANERS WILL

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CONTINUE TO QUESTION GOVERNMENT POLICY AND TO PUSH FOR FASTER REFORM, THESE SENTIMENTS WILL BARELY REACH THE GRASS ROOTS. NONETHELESS, IT IS LIKELY THAT EFFORTS WILL BE MADE TO FORM A NEW PARTY AROUND THE INDEPENDENTS' MOVEMENT IN THE COMING MONTHS.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE OUTSIDE WORLD

16. PRESIDENT BOTHA WILL INTERPRET THE RESULT AS CLEAR ENDORSEMENT FOR HIS INTERNAL POLICIES AND HIS DEFIANCE OF FOREIGN PRESSURES. THE GOVERNMENT WILL BE STRENGTHENED IN THEIR RESOLVE TO GO THEIR OWN WAY AND AT THEIR OWN SPEED ON REFORM. AN EVEN TOUGHER LINE ON LAW AND ORDER, FURTHER SUPPRESSION OF OPPOSITION ACTIVITY AND RENEWED PRESSURE ON NEIGHBOURING STATES ARE ALL ON THE CARDS. WE CAN EXPECT NO CONCESSIONS TO INTERNATIONAL OPINION.

17. IT IS A DISAPPOINTINGLY HARD OUTCOME TO A LONG DRAWN-OUT ELECTION. BUT THE MESSAGE FROM WHITE ELECTORS FOR THE TIME BEING IS UNMISTAKEABLE: NO RISKS TO BE TAKEN WITH THEIR OWN FUTURE AS THE GOVERNMENT CONTINUE TO GRAPPLE WITH THE PROBLEMS OF A BLACK MAJORITY.

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-4-

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