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SOUTH AFRICA INTERNAL: GOVERNMENT STRATEGY

SUMMARY

1. GOVERNMENT STRATEGY OF FIRM REPRESSION AND CAUTIOUS REFORM WILL BE MAINTAINED. STATE OF EMERGENCY HERE TO STAY. NEW MOMENTUM TOWARDS NEGOTIATIONS WITH BLACKS, AND MORE FLEXIBLE PRESENTATION. GOVERNMENT NEEDS EVIDENCE OF PROGRESS BEFORE NEXT GENERAL ELECTION. BUT WHAT IS ON OFFER REMAINS LIMITED POWER-SHARING UNDER WHITE CONTROL, AND FEW CREDIBLE BLACKS WILL RESPOND. NEVERTHELESS, NATIONAL STATUTORY COUNCIL LIKELY TO GO AHEAD, PERHAPS WITH ELECTIONS FOR BLACK REPRESENTATIVES. NO CURRENT INTEREST IN NEGOTIATION WITH ANC. STRATEGY WILL ENSURE WHITE DOMINATION FOR CONSIDERABLE TIME, BUT WILL NOT RESOLVE BASIC PROBLEMS.

DETAIL

2. SINCE THE 6 MAY ELECTION, THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT HAVE SPRUNG FEW SURPRISES. THINGS HAVE GONE MUCH AS PREDICTED - THE STATE OF EMERGENCY EXTENDED, THE ANC CAST AS FIRMLY AS EVER AS THE VIOLENT REVOLUTIONARY VILLAINS, RESUMPTION OF EFFORTS TO PERSUADE BLACKS TO NEGOTIATE ON CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM, AND CONFIRMATION OF THE NARROW PARAMETERS WITHIN WHICH THAT IS TO TAKE PLACE. THERE IS A RENEWED MOMENTUM BEHIND THE REFORM PROCESS, BUT THE PATH REMAINS THE SAME.

LEADERSHIP

3. FOR THE MOMENT, THE GOVERNMENT EFFECTIVELY MEANS PRESIDENT BOTHA. HIS DOMINATION IS EVEN MORE COMPLETE SINCE HIS ELECTORAL TRIUMPH. HE HAS FULL CONTROL OF THE MILITARY AND SECURITY ESTABLISHMENT AND CAN BY-PASS HIS MINISTERS AT WILL. HEALTH PERMITTING (AND HE SHOWS NO SIGN OF FLAGGING), PRESIDENT BOTHA WILL REMAIN IN OFFICE FOR 18 MONTHS OR MORE. HE WILL STEP DOWN IN HIS OWN GOOD TIME. MEANWHILE, THE PARTY CAUCUS WILL BE CONCENTRATING AS MUCH ON IN-FIGHTING OVER THE EVENTUAL SUCCESSOR AS ON PROSPECTS FOR EARLY REFORM. ANY SUCCESSOR WILL FIND IT HARD TO BREAK THE MOULD, EVEN IF INCLINED TO DO SO.

SECURITY

4. THE EMERGENCY HAS RESTORED GOVERNMENT CONFIDENCE IN THEIR ABILITY TO CONTAIN PRESSURES FOR CHANGE. THEY ARE INCREASINGLY

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COMFORTABLE

COMFORTABLE WITH THE EXERCISE OF EMERGENCY POWERS. THE RENEWED STATE OF EMERGENCY HAS TURNED THE SCREW STILL TIGHTER. WHITES OVERWHELMINGLY SUPPORT STRONG MEASURES AND ARE NONE TO SQUEAMISH ABOUT THE CONSEQUENCES. THE GOVERNMENT HAVE TAKEN A FEE STEPS TO CURB SOME OF THE WORST EXCESSES. THE RECENT RELEASE OF MOST CHILD DETAINEES AND PROMULGATION OF IMPROVED REGULATIONS FOR THE TREATMENT OF DETAINEES ARE CASES IN POINT. BUT FOR THE MOST PART, THE GOVERNMENT CAN IGNORE LIBERAL WHITES AND, IF DEEMED EXPEDIENT, SQUEEZE FURTHER WHITE-RUN ORGANISATIONS SYMPATHETIC TO BLACKS.

5. MINISTERS ARGUE THAT THE EMERGENCY IS ONLY A MEANS TO AN END. THE STATED OBJECTIVE IS A CLIMATE FREE OF VIOLENCE AND INTIMIDATION IN THE TOWNSHIPS, IN WHICH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND REFORM CAN PROCEED. THE MILITARY ARE KNOWN TO BE ANXIOUS THAT ALL THESE ELEMENTS SHOULD BE PURSUED AS A COHERENT WHOLE, AND THEY ARE BEING GIVEN A MAJOR ROLE. THE NATIONAL SECURITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM, WITH ITS NETWORK OF JOINT MANAGEMENT CENTRES, HAS PROVIDED THE MEANS NOT ONLY TO CONTROL AND COORDINATE SECURITY MEASURES, BUT ALSO TO INITIATE PROJECTS IMPROVING ECONOMIC CONDITIONS IN CERTAIN TOWNSHIPS AND SO UNDERCUT THE RADICALS. THE EMERGENCY IS PRESENTED MORE AND MORE AS A POSITIVE VEHICLE.

6. ALL THIS CONTAINS A STRONG ELEMENT OF WISHFUL THINKING. MORE REALISTICALLY THE GOVERNMENT ACCEPT THAT, FOR ALL THE IMPROVEMENTS IN SECURITY, A REVOLUTIONARY CLIMATE STILL EXISTS. THEY FEAR, WITH EVERY JUSTIFICATION, THAT VIOLENT UNREST COULD EXPLODE ONCE MORE. WHEN IT DOES, THE GOVERNMENT WILL HAVE NO HESITATION IN USING WHATEVER FORCE IS NECESSARY TO QUELL IT. DESPITE PROTESTATIONS TO THE CONTRARY, THE EMERGENCY IS BECOMING A PERMANENT FEATURE.

NEGOTIATIONS

7. AFTER THE WHITE ELECTION THERE WAS MUCH SPECULATION ABOUT HOW GOVERNMENT POLICIES MIGHT RESPOND TO THE SHIFT IN THE NATIONAL PARTY'S POWER BASE TO THE LEFT AND THE GROWTH OF THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY ON THE RIGHT. THE GOVERNMENT THINK THEY HAVE FOUND A MIXTURE TO DEAL WITH BOTH SHDES OF THE SPECTRUM. PRESENTATION HAS TAKEN ON A MORE POSITIVE IMAGE. PACE HAS BEEN ACCELERATED. BUT SUBSTANCE REMAINS FIRM.

8. THE PREVIOUSLY STALLED CAMPAIGN TO SELL THE IDEA OF NEGOTIATIONS ON CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM TO BLACKS IS BEING LED BY THE NEWLY APPOINTED DEPUTY MINISTER OF CONSTITUTIONAL PLANNING, STOFFEL VAN DER MERWE, WHO RECEIVES HIS INSTRUCTIONS DIRECT FROM PRESIDENT BOTHA. THE ANC IS STILL FAR BEYOND THE PALE. BUT THE EMPHASIS IS NOW ON A WILLINGNESS TO TALK WITHOUT PRE-CONDITIONS TO ANYONE, INCLUDING UDF MEMBERS, OTHER THAN ADVOCATES OF VIOLENCE. THE NATIONAL STATUTORY COUNCIL REMAINS THE MAIN VEHICLE FOR NEGOTIATION, BUT NO LONGER THE ONLY ONE.

9. MIFT CONSIDERS BLACK REACTIONS. THE GOVERNMENT KNOW THAT THE CHANCES OF ATTRACTING SUFFICIENT PARTICIPATION ARE SLIM. BUT IT IS IMPORTANT FOR THEM TO BE ABLE TO SHOW INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL OPINION

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THAT THEY ARE OPENING THE DOOR TO BLACKS OF ALL PERSUASIONS, EVEN IF FEW WALK IN. COLLABORATIONIST BLACKS ARE BEING ENCOURAGED TO ORGANISE THEMSELVES INTO POLITICAL MOVEMENTS. THE RESULTS NEVERTHELESS CARRY LITTLE CONVICTION.

10. THE GOVERNMENT ARE BEGINNING TO TALK ABOUT HOLDING ELECTIONS FOR BLACK REPRESENTATIVES TO THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL. OUR CONTACTS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF CONSTITUTIONAL PLANNING TELL US THIS IS A REAL LIKELIHOOD FOR BLACKS OUTSIDE HOMELANDS (THE LATTERS' REPRESENTATIVES WOULD BE EX-OFFICIO). PROVISION COULD BE INCLUDED IN THE REVISED BILL FOR THE NATIONAL STATUTORY COUNCIL EXPECTED IN THE AUTUMN. AN ELECTION WOULD BE A RISKY ENTERPRISE. SHORT OF DRAMATIC MOVES SUCH AS THE RELEASE OF MANDELA, AND THAT SEEMS UNLIKELY, THE ELECTION WOULD ALMOST CERTAINLY BE MET BY A HEAVY BOYCOTT AND THERE WOULD BE A DANGER OF WIDESPREAD VIOLENT PROTEST.

11. WHETHER IT STEMS FROM CO-OPTION OR ELECTION, THE NATIONAL STATUTORY COUNCIL WILL INEVITABLY RING HOLLOW. THIS WILL NOT DETER THE GOVERNMENT. THEIR MAIN CONCERN IS TO HAVE AN APPEARANCE OF NEGOTIATIONS. WHEN THE TIME IS RIGHT, THEY WILL GO AHEAD WITH WHOMEVER IS AVAILABLE, REGARDLESS OF STATURE AND CREDIBILITY. THEY WILL AIM, WITH THE HELP OF PRESSURE AND BRIBERY, TO IMPOSE SOMETHING CLOSE TO THEIR OWN SOLUTION ON A SUFFICIENT NUMBER OF BLACKS TO PRODUCE AT LEAST A SEMBLANCE OF POWER SHARING.

12. IT IS STILL IMPOSSIBLE TO PUT A TIME-SCALE ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE NATIONAL STATUTORY COUNCIL. THE EXPERTS CONSIDER BLACK ELECTIONS, IF THAT IS THE ROUTE CHOSEN, COULD BE MOUNTED EIGHT MONTHS AFTER THE ADOPTION OF THE LEGISLATION. THESE ARE BEING SEEN AS SEPARATE FROM ELECTIONS FOR LOCAL COUNCILS ALREADY TIMED FOR OCTOBER NEXT YEAR. IF THE GOVERNMENT KEEP TO CO-OPTION, MUCH WILL DEPEND ON HOW QUICKLY THE NECESSARY MINIMUM OF TAKERS CAN BE MARSHALLED. BUT EITHER WAY WE ARE LOOKING WELL INTO NEXT YEAR.

REFORM PLANS

13. THE GOVERNMENT ARE NOT PREPARED TO MAKE SIGNIFICANT CONCESSIONS OF SUBSTANCE TO GET ANC OR ANY OTHER RADICALS ON BOARD. THEIR PLAN WILL BE BASED ON THE FAMILIAR DIVISION OF OWN AND GENERAL AFFAIRS. AT THE BOTTOM OF THE PYRAMID WILL BE RACIALLY SEPARATE LOCAL COUNCILS, DRAWN TOGETHER IN MULTIRACIAL REGIONAL AND PROVINCIAL COUNCILS UNDER WHITE CONTROL. THE MULTIRACIAL REGIONAL SERVICES COUNCILS, WHICH ARE MEANT TO CHANNEL MONEY FOR BLACK TOWNSHIP DEVELOPMENT, ARE, AFTER MUCH DELAY, NOW BEING LAUNCHED AMIDST MUCH HOSTILITY FROM WHITES AND BLACKS ALIKE. THE HOMELANDS MAY BE DRAWN FURTHER INTO COLLABORATION WITH THESE STRUCTURES AT SOME STAGE, BUT P W BOTHA'S PERSONAL HOBBY HORSE OF INDEPENDENT BLACK CITY STATES IS UNLIKELY TO RUN.

14. NEGOTIATIONS WILL CONCENTRATE ON THE TOP OF THE PYRAMID. PROGRESS IS EXPECTED FIRST IN GIVING BLACKS A NATIONAL EXECUTIVE ROLE, PERHAPS THROUGH A MULTIRACIAL COUNCIL OF STATE WITH SOME

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DECISION

DECISION MAKING POWERS. THE LEGISLATIVE SIDE WILL BE SLOWER. PRESIDENT BOTHA HAS RULED OUT A FOURTH PARLIAMENTARY CHAMBER AND THERE SEEMS SO FAR NO FRONT-RUNNER AMONG THE PLETHORA OF OPTIONS SITTING IN THE FILES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF CONSTITUTIONAL PLANNING. ONE THING IS CERTAIN, WHILE THE GOVERNMENT WILL ALLOW GREATER AUTONOMY AT LOCAL LEVEL, THEY WILL NOT ALLOW ANY REAL ENCROACHMENT ON WHITE POWER AT THE CENTRE.

15. SOME PARALLEL PROGRESS IN REMOVING DISCRIMINATORY SOCIAL LEGISLATION IS LIKELY. BUT EVEN MORE OPEN-MINDED NATIONAL PARTY MP'S HAVE EMERGED FROM THE ELECTION CONVINCED THAT SCHOOLS AND RESIDENTIAL AREAS WILL REMAIN THE LAST BASTIONS OF APARTHEID. THE GROUP AREAS AND AMENITIES ACTS WILL PROBABLY BE AMENDED IN DUE COURSE, BUT IT WILL NOT GO FURTHER THAN TINKERING.

OUTSIDE PRESSURES

16. IN ALL THIS THE GOVERNMENT IS UNLIKELY TO TAKE SIGNIFICANTLY INTO ACCOUNT ADVICE AND PRESSURES FROM WESTERN COUNTRIES. THE GOVERNMENT REMAIN SECURE IN THEIR CONVICTION THAT THE REAGAN ADMINISTRATION AND HMG, BOTH IN THEIR OWN INTEREST, WILL CONTINUE TO FEND OFF COMPREHENSIVE SANCTIONS IN THE UN AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL FORA. ALTHOUGH STILL VULNERABLE IN CERTAIN AREAS, PARTICULARLY COAL AND AGRICULTURE, THE GOVERNMENT BELIEVE THAT THEY CAN FIND WAYS ROUND MOST BARRIERS. IN ANY CASE, SANCTIONS ARE SEEN AS AN ACCEPTABLE PRICE FOR RUNNING AFFAIRS THEIR OWN WAY.

17. ABOVE ALL, THEY ARE DETERMINED THAT NEGOTIATIONS WITH BLACKS SHALL TAKE PLACE UNDER THEIR OWN AUSPICES AND ON THEIR OWN TERMS. THEY MAY FOR TACTICAL REASONS TRY TO KEEP US IN PLAY OVER "MATCHING COMMITMENTS". BUT THE SERIOUS BUSINESS IS TO BE DONE WITHOUT OUTSIDE INTERFERENCE.

PROSPECTS FOR THE NEXT ELECTION

18. UNDER THE PRESENT CONSTITUTION, AN ELECTION FOR ALL THREE HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT IS REQUIRED BY EARLY 1990 AT THE LATEST. IT IS ALREADY AN OPEN QUESTION WHETHER IT WILL BE HELD. THE KEY FACTOR WILL BE HOW FAR THE GOVERNMENT HAVE GOT WITH THEIR OWN REFORM PLANS. THE NATIONAL PARTY CANNOT AFFORD TO GO INTO ANOTHER ELECTION AGAINST THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY AGAIN ASKING FOR A BLANK CHEQUE FOR REFORM.

19. THE GOVERNMENT WILL KEEP THEIR OPTIONS OPEN AS LONG AS POSSIBLE. BUT THE ELECTION ISSUE WILL COME TO THE FORE AGAIN NEXT YEAR AND IS BOUND TO COMPLICATE THE GOVERNMENT'S PLANS AND, ALSO, POSSIBLY THE TIMING OF THE SUCCESSION TO PRESIDENT BOTHA.

CONCLUSIONS

20. SINCE THEY WISH TO RETAIN WHITE CONTROL (IN NATIONAL PARTY HANDS) FOR AS LONG AS POSSIBLE, THE GOVERNMENT ARE TRYING TO

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NEUTRALISE PRESSURE FOR RADICAL CHANGE BY A COMBINATION OF REPRESSION, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND A DEGREE OF POWER SHARING. THEIR AIM IS, THROUGH NEGOTIATIONS WITH AMENABLE BLACKS, TO START A BAND-WAGON ROLLING WHICH WILL GRADUALLY ATTRACT WIDER SUPPORT AS MORE AND MORE BLACKS ARE PERSUADED OF THE FUTILITY OF RESISTANCE AND THE MATERIAL BENEFITS OF COMPLIANCE. THIS STRATEGY LEAVES LITTLE ROOM FOR GENUINE NEGOTIATION WITH THE ANC FOR THE PRESENT AT LEAST. THERE IS A CLOSE ANALOGY WITH THE WAY THEY HAVE DEALT WITH SWTPO IN NAMIBIA.

21. THIS STRATEGY SHOULD ACHIEVE ITS MAIN OBJECTIVE OF ENSURING WHITE DOMINANCE FOR SOME YEARS TO COME. BUT IT IS UNLIKELY TO CONTRIBUTE TO RESOLVING THE BASIC CONTRADICTIONS IN GOVERNMENT POLICY. CO-OPTION (EVEN IF THINLY DISGUISED BY UNCONVINCING ELECTIONS) WILL NOT LEAD TO A CREDIBLE SYSTEM OF BLACK REPRESENTATION IN GOVERNMENT. THERE WILL BE INSUFFICIENT RESOURCES TO TACKLE ACCUMULATED ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS EFFECTIVELY, BLACK RADICALS WILL NOT GIVE UP THE STRUGGLE FOR FUNDAMENTAL CHANGE, AND THE SITUATION WILL REMAIN INHERENTLY UNSTABLE EVEN WITH THE EXERCISE OF MASSIVE FORCE. THE TRAGEDY IS THAT FEW IN GOVERNMENT, AND CERTAINLY NOT PRESIDENT BOTHA, CAN SEE AN ALTERNATIVE.

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