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FM PRETORIA
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TELNO 188
OF 121225Z AUGUST 88

SOUTH AFRICA : REQUEST FOR AN INTERVIEW WITH THE PRIME MINISTER FROM
THE EDITOR OF ''BEELD''

1. THE EDITOR OF THE LEADING AFRIKAANS NEWSPAPER ''BEELD'' HAS
APPROACHED ME TO ASK IF THERE IS ANY CHANCE OF THE PRIME MINISTER
AGREEING TO AN INTERVIEW IN OCTOBER OR NOVEMBER. THE PURPOSE WOULD
BE TO GET THE PRIME MINISTER'S VIEWS ACROSS TO THE WIDEST POSSIBLE
AFRIKANER AUDIENCE. THE CIRCULATION OF ''BEELD'' CURRENTLY IS
AROUND 100,000, OUTSTRIPPING THAT OF THE OTHER AFRIKAANS DAILIES.
2. WE KEEP IN CLOSE TOUCH WITH WEPENER AND HIS STAFF AND ''BEELD''
OF LATE HAS CARRIED SOME COURAGEOUS EDITORIALS CRITICISING THE
SLOW PACE OF REFORM. IT CAUSED SOMETHING OF A SENSATION RECENTLY
WITH A STRONG EDITORIAL CALLING FOR MANDELA'S RELEASE AND THE
REFUSAL OF THE EDITOR TO BACK DOWN IN THE FACE OF GOVERNMENT
PRESSURE. WEPENER IS NO LIBERAL, BUT A MAINSTREAM AFRIKANER FIGURE.
HE IS RATHER RESERVED IN MANNER, BUT A THOUGHTFUL AND SERIOUS MAN.
HE WILL BE GOING TO THE UNITED STATES TO COVER THE PRESIDENTIAL
ELECTION BETWEEN 27 OCTOBER AND 10 NOVEMBER AND HOPES THAT HE MIGHT
BE ABLE TO SECURE AN INTERVIEW WITH THE PRIME MINISTER BEFORE OR
AFTER THOSE DATES. HE WOULD GIVE NOTICE OF THE QUESTIONS HE INTENDS
TO RAISE IN ADVANCE.
3. I HOPE THAT, DESPITE ALL THE PRESSURES ON HER TIME, THE PRIME
MINISTER MIGHT CONSIDER AGREEING TO THIS. IT WOULD BE AN EXCELLENT
VEHICLE TO GET A FIRM MESSAGE ACROSS HERE.
4. THE PRIME MINISTER HAS AGREED IN PRINCIPLE TO GIVE AN INTERVIEW
TO BLACK JOURNALISTS FROM SOUTH AFRICA AND THERE IS KEEN INTEREST IN
THIS ON THE PART OF THE EDITOR OF THE ''SOWETAN''. I SHALL BE MAKING
SEPARATELY SUGGESTIONS ON POSSIBLE TIMING FOR SUCH AN INTERVIEW.

RENWICK

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