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FM CAPE TOWN
TO PRIORITY FCO
TELNO 125

OF 271500Z FEBRUARY 86

INFO ROUTINE PRETORIA, JOHANNESBURG, MASERU, MBABANE, GABORONE
INFO ROUTINE LUSAKA, HARARE, MAPUTO, LUANDA, DAR ES SALAAM, LAGOS
INFO ROUTINE NEW DELHI, OTTAWA, CANBERRA, WASHINGTON, UKMIS NEW YORK
INFO SAVING PARIS, BONN, ROME

mt

SOUTH AFRICA : INTERNAL

SUMMARY

1. THERE IS SOMETHING OF A PAUSE IN DEVELOPMENTS HERE. THIS MAY NOT LAST. IT IS CLEAR THAT PRESIDENT BOTHA'S SPEECH AT THE OPENING OF PARLIAMENT HAS MADE NO DIFFERENCE TO BLACKS AMONG WHOM FURTHER UNREST IS EXPECTED. CONSIDERABLE UNCERTAINTY ABOUT THE FUTURE. THE GOVERNMENT LIKELY TO HOLD THEIR PRESENT COURSE FOR THE TIME BEING.

DETAIL

2. THE STATE OF EMERGENCY HAS BARELY SUCCEEDED IN SMOTHERING UNREST IN BLACK TOWNSHIPS. VIOLENCE CONTINUES TO BREAK OUT IN FIRST ONE PLACE AND THEN ANOTHER. ALTHOUGH BLACK STUDENTS ARE MOSTLY BACK IN THEIR CLASSES THERE IS A STRONG LIKELIHOOD OF FURTHER SCHOOL BOYCOTTS AND ACCOMPANYING UNREST FROM THE END OF MARCH, WHICH IS THE DATE SET BY STUDENT ORGANISATIONS FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO MEET THEIR DEMANDS. THIS COULD BE ACCOMPANIED ON THE LABOUR FRONT BY PRESSURE FROM BLACK TRADE UNIONS. WE ARE TOLD THAT PREPARATIONS ARE ALREADY MADE FOR PROTEST AND RESISTANCE TO POLICE BEING ORGANISED STREET BY STREET IN VARIOUS TOWNSHIPS. THE AUTHORITIES ARE AWARE OF THIS AND SEEM TO BE RESIGNED TO FURTHER OUTBREAKS OF VIOLENCE.

3. AMONG WHITES THE MOOD IS ONE OF UNEASE AND UNCERTAINTY. MANY WHITES GIVE THE GOVERNMENT CREDIT FOR THE REFORM PROGRAMME SO FAR. THERE IS MORE ACCEPTANCE OF MEASURES TO DISMANTLE OUTWARD FORMS OF APARTHEID HOWEVER, THAN OF PROPOSALS FOR POWER-SHARING. YET WHILE THE GOVERNMENT LAY STRESS MAINLY ON MEASURES TO END RACIAL DISCRIMINATION THIS IS ONLY UP TO A POINT: OPENING UP HOUSING AREAS AND SCHOOLS TO ALL RACES IS RULED OUT.

4. BUT IT IS THE PROSPECT OF SHARING POWER WITH BLACKS WHICH DISTURBS THE VAST MAJORITY OF WHITE SOUTH AFRICANS. THIS IS STILL A TOTALLY NEW CONCEPT FOR THEM, AND THE GOVERNMENT ARE MOVING ON IT WITH GREAT CAUTION. HENCE PRESIDENT BOTHA'S SWIFT DISTANCING OF HIMSELF FROM PIK BOTHA'S REMARKS ABOUT A BLACK PRESIDENT BEING POSSIBLE ONE DAY. SUCH A PROSPECT WAS TOO UNSETTLING FOR MANY GOVERNMENT SUPPORTERS AT THIS STAGE. THE INCIDENT SHOWS WHAT A LONG WAY THE 'EDUCATION' OF THE WHITE MINORITY STILL HAS TO GO.

*Read
Woodhouse
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5. THERE ARE SOME WORRYING REPORTS OF WHITE VIGILANTE GROUPS BEING FORMED TO PROTECT THEMSELVES AGAINST BLACKS. THE RISK OF WHITES TAKING LAW AND ORDER INTO THEIR OWN HANDS HAS LONG WORRIED THE AUTHORITIES. I WAS GLAD TO HEAR THE LEADER OF THE MAIN RIGHT WING PARTY HERE SAYING THE OTHER DAY THAT HE IS STRONGLY AGAINST INDIVIDUALS TAKING MATTERS INTO THEIR OWN HANDS, WHICH HE THOUGHT WOULD BE PLAYING WITH FIRE.

6. THE KEY QUESTION FACING THE GOVERNMENT IS STILL HOW TO GET DIALOGUE WITH BLACKS STARTED. THERE HAS BEEN MOVEMENT OF POSITIONS ON BOTH SIDES BUT ON PARALLEL LINES. WHILE THE GOVERNMENT HAVE ADVANCED ON REFORM AND ARE SERIOUS IN OFFERING DIALOGUE, LEADERS OF THE BLACK COMMUNITY HAVE CORRESPONDINGLY RAISED THEIR SIGHTS. CONVERGENCE BETWEEN THE TWO THEREFORE REMAINS AS MUCH OUT OF REACH AS EVER. NOTHING IN THE LEGISLATIVE PIPELINE FOR THIS YEAR'S PARLIAMENT WILL NOW PERSUADE BLACKS TO COME AND SIT AT THE NEGOTIATING TABLE. THE GOVERNMENT HAVE TO FIND SOME WAY OF CONVINCING BLACKS THAT A NEW DEAL IS ON OFFER. IN PRACTICE THE MAJOR MOVES OF THIS KIND OPEN TO THE GOVERNMENT WOULD BE TO END THE STATE OF EMERGENCY OR TO RELEASE MANDELA.

7. CONTRARY TO CERTAIN IMPRESSIONS AT THE END OF THE YEAR AN EARLY LIFTING OF THE STATE OF EMERGENCY NOW LOOKS UNLIKELY. THERE IS TOO MUCH UNREST FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO FEEL THEY CAN AFFORD IT. NOR CAN ONE PLACE MUCH HOPE IN AN EARLY RELEASE OF MANDELA. I BELIEVE THIS IS STILL ON THE CARDS BUT THE GOVERNMENT REFUSE TO BE RUSHED. IN REALITY HOWEVER THE LONGER THEY DELAY THE LESS CREDIT THEY WILL RECEIVE FOR EVENTUALLY RELEASING MANDELA AND THE HARDER IT WILL BE (ESPECIALLY IF A FURTHER OUTBURST IN THE TOWNSHIPS HAS MEANWHILE OCCURRED) FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO TURN HIS RELEASE TO THEIR OWN ADVANTAGE. FOR IT HAS ALWAYS LOOKED AS IF MANDELA'S RELEASE SHOULD BE ACCOMPANIED BY A NEW INITIATIVE ON THE GOVERNMENT'S PART TO GET DIALOGUE GOING. THIS WOULD PROBABLY MEAN TALKING TO OTHER ANC LEADERS BESIDES A FREED MANDELA, A STEP WHICH I DOUBT THE GOVERNMENT ARE YET PREPARED TO TAKE.

8. A FEW BRIGHTER SIGNS CAN BE SET AGAINST THIS GLOOMY ACCOUNT. I LEARNT YESTERDAY THAT THE GOVERNMENT SEEM MORE READY TO SPEAK TO LOCAL RADICAL GROUPS IN TOWNSHIPS. THIS WOULD BE A WELCOME MOVE ALTHOUGH PAINFULLY SLOW IN COMING AND WE HAVE YET TO SEE HOW FAR THE AUTHORITIES ARE WILLING TO TAKE IT OR THE RADICALS TO RESPOND. BUSINESSCONFIDENCE IS RETURNING WITH A STRONG PERFORMANCE ON BALANCE OF PAYMENTS, A STRENGTHENING RAND, AND THE AGREEMENT WITH FOREIGN BANKS ON SOUTH AFRICA'S DEBT.

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9. OVERALL I BELIEVE THE GOVERNMENT ARE LIKELY TO STICK TO THEIR PRESENT MEASURED COURSE BOTH ON REFORM AND ON LAW AND ORDER AT THIS STAGE. BUT TIME IS NOT ON THEIR SIDE AND AND THE PROSPECT FOR DIALOGUE REMAINS HIGHLY DOUBTFUL.

MOBERLY

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