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FM CAPE TOWN

TO PRIORITY FCO

TELNO 308

OF 040800Z JUNE 86

INFO ROUTINE LUSAKA, HARARE, MBABANE, MASERU, GABORONE, MAPUTO
 INFO ROUTINE LUANDA, WASHINGTON, UKMIS NEW YORK, CANBERRA, OTTAWA
 INFO ROUTINE DAR ES SALAAM, NEW DELHI, LAGOS
 INFO SAVING PARIS, BONN, ROME, THE HAGUE, JOHANNESBURG, DURBAN
 INFO SAVING CAPE TOWN CONSULATE

SOUTH AFRICA INTERNAL

SUMMARY

1. AFTER A LONG PERIOD OF TRYING UNSUCCESSFULLY TO COPE WITH BLACK UNREST, THE GOVERNMENT SEEM TO HAVE DECIDED THAT THEIR FIRST PRIORITY MUST BE TO CLAMP DOWN ON THE CONTINUING VIOLENCE. WE CAN EXPECT TO SEE STRONGER MEASURES BEING TAKEN TO ENFORCE LAW AND ORDER EVEN IF THIS GETS THEM A BAD PRESS OVERSEAS AND RESULTS AT LEAST INITIALLY IN MORE CASUALTIES.

DETAIL

2. I BELIEVE WE MAY HAVE REACHED SOMETHING OF A WATERSHED IN THE GOVERNMENT'S HANDLING OF THE INTERNAL SITUATION. THE GOVERNMENT HAD BECOME INCREASINGLY AWARE OF UNCERTAINTY AMONG WHITES AS TO WHERE THE COMBINATION OF REFORMS AND UNREST WAS TAKING THE COUNTRY. MANY OF THEIR SUPPORTERS PARTICULARLY IN THE AFRIKANER COMMUNITY WERE APPREHENSIVE THAT THE GOVERNMENT WERE NOT GIVING A CLEAR ENOUGH LEAD. THERE ARE ABUNDANT SIGNS NOW THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAVE DECIDED TO END THIS UNCERTAINTY BY TAKING STRONG ACTION AGAINST THE ANC, ITS AGENTS AND SYMPATHISERS WHOM THE AUTHORITIES HOLD YRESPONSIBLE FOR ORGANISING MUCH OF THE UNREST.

3. A CENTRAL CONSIDERATION BEHIND GOVERNMENT POLICY IS THEIR BELIEF THAT THE ANC THEMSELVES ARE NOT SERIOUSLY INTERESTED IN NEGOTIATION, THAT THEIR AIM REMAINS THE VIOLENT OVERTHROW OF THE PRESENT SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT AND THAT NEGOTIATIONS WOULD ONLY BE USED AS A TACTIC TO ASSIST THE ANC IN ITS ENDEAVOURS TO SEIZE POWER. THE GOVERNMENT'S ASSESSMENT IS THAT THE ANC ARE ALREADY DOMINATED BY MEMBERS OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN COMMUNIST PARTY AND WOULD INEVITABLY BE USED BY EXTREMISTS. THROUGHOUT THE COURSE OF THE COMMONWEALTH INITIATIVE THE GOVERNMENT HAVE REFERRED IN PRIVATE TO THEIR DOUBTS ABOUT WHAT CAN BE ACHIEVED BY CONTACT WITH THE ANC.

4. THEY HAVE NOW MADE THEIR DOUBTS PUBLIC. A BOOKLET 'TALKING WITH THE ANC' PUBLISHED YESTERDAY BY THE BUREAU OF INFORMATION CONTAINS SELECTIVE QUOTATIONS IN SUPPORT OF THE ABOVE THESIS. IT ASSERTS THAT 'AT THE MOMENT' THE ANC DO NOT FULFIL THE NECESSARY CONDITIONS FOR NEGOTIATION, ABOVE ALL BY RENOUNCING VIOLENCE, AND CONCLUDES THAT THOSE IN FAVOUR OF TALKING WITH THE

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ANC SHOULD ASK THEMSELVES WHAT CHANCE THEY WOULD HAVE OF SECURING THEIR BASIC INTERESTS THROUGH NEGOTIATIONS AND WHAT GUARANTEES THERE WOULD BE THAT PROMISES MADE AT THE NEGOTIATING TABLE WOULD BE KEPT (COPY BY BAG TO SAFD).

5. PIK BOTHA HAS ALSO SAID IN AN INTERVIEW WITH TIME MAGAZINE THAT SOUTH AFRICA WOULD DEFEND ITSELF AGAINST TERRORISM EVEN IF IT MEANT INTERNATIONAL ISOLATION AND SANCTIONS. IF THE COUNTRY WAS FORCED TO CHOOSE BETWEEN INTERNATIONAL CRITICISM AND PUNITIVE MEASURES ON THE ONE HAND, AND ITS RIGHT TO DEFEND ITSELF AGAINST TERRORISM ON THE OTHER, THEN IT HAD NO CHOICE.

6. THIS IS NOT ALL POSTURING. I AM IN NO DOUBT THAT THE GOVERNMENT ARE SERIOUSLY WORRIED THAT THERE WILL BE TROUBLE TO COINCIDE WITH THE TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE 1976 SOWETO RIOTS OF 16 JUNE (MY TELNO 307). THEY ARE UNDER ATTACK FROM THEIR OWN SUPPORTERS FOR FAILING TO PREVENT LANDMINE EXPLOSIONS AND FEEL THAT THE WORLD IS GUILTY OF DOUBLE STANDARDS IN BEING SO OUTSPOKE ABOUT CRITICISM OF SOUTH AFRICA WHILE SAYING NOTHING SPECIFIC ABOUT THE ANC'S CONTINUED ESPOUSAL OF VIOLENCE. INCREASING ACTIVITY BY YOUNG MILITANTS IN HITHERTO QUIET RURAL AREAS WILL BEGIN TO BE ANOTHER WORRY, FOR WHITE FARMERS ARE MORE ISOLATED AND VULNERABLE THAN IN THE TOWNS. NEW LEGISLATION TO EXTEND POLICE POWERS IS PART OF THEIR OWN PREPARATION FOR TOUGHER ACTION.

7. OF COURSE THE FIGHT AGAINST THE ANC IS NOT LIMITED TO THE HOME FRONT, AS RECENT RAIDS SHOW. THE ANC THREAT IS SEEN AS INDIVISIBLE. IT WAS DEPRESSING TO HEAR THE DEPUTY DIRECTOR GENERAL FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS SAY ON 2 JUNE (PRETORIA TELNO 29 TO ME) THAT MORE RAIDS COULD BE EXPECTED IF THERE WAS NO IMPROVEMENT. HE ADMITTED THAT THE SECURITY LOBBY HAVE THE UPPER HAND AT THE MOMENT AND THAT THEIR ARGUMENTS OVERRIDE THOSE OF THE DIPLOMATS.

8. AFTER THE RECENT RAIDS THERE WAS SOME SPECULATION THAT HAVING RE-ESTABLISHED THEIR CREDENTIALS WITH RIGHT WINGERS, THE GOVERNMENT MIGHT BE PREPARING SOME EARLY CONCILIATORY GESTURE AIMED AT BLACK OPINION. I THINK THIS IS NOW UNLIKELY. THE MOOD SEEMS TO BE RUNNING FIRMLY AGAINST IMMINENT RELEASE OF MANDELA. IT CALLS INTO QUESTION ANY DEAL WITH THE ANC BEING POSSIBLE AT PRESENT.

9. PLACATING THE RIGHT WING IS CERTAINLY AN IMPORTANT CONSIDERATION FOR THE GOVERNMENT. MY OWN GUESS IS THAT THEY ARE MOVED EVEN MORE BY THEIR JUDGEMENT THAT THE ONLY WAY TO DEAL WITH VIOLENCE IS TO HIT BACK HARDER AND THAT THEY ARE PREPARED TO ACCEPT THE CONSEQUENCES OF THIS POLICY BOTH WITH BLACKS AND INTERNATIONALLY. ONCE AGAIN THEIR OWN DOMESTIC REQUIREMENTS - OR WHAT THEY SEE THESE REQUIREMENTS TO BE - HAVE PRIORITY OVER ANYTHING ELSE. WHETHER THE TACTIC WILL WORK IS ANOTHER MATTER, BUT WE SHOULD NOT UNDERESTIMATE THE GOVERNMENT'S RESOLVE.

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