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TELNO 329

OF 191415Z JUNE 86

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**SOUTH AFRICA: THE CURRENT MOOD****SUMMARY**

1. STATE OF EMERGENCY HAS TEMPORARILY NUMBED BLACKS. ALL THE UNDERLYING PROBLEMS STILL REMAIN TO BE TACKLED. THE GOVERNMENT NONETHELESS SEEM DETERMINED TO PRESS AHEAD WITH THEIR OWN PLANS FOR LIMITED REFORM AND POWER SHARING. SOME REFLECTIONS ON THEIR HANDLING OF THE EPG.

**DETAIL**

2. IN THE SHORT RUN THE GOVERNMENT'S EMERGENCY MEASURES HAVE SO FAR PROVED BROADLY SUCCESSFUL IN ANAESTHETISING UNREST. THEY HAVE ACHIEVED THIS BY RESTRICTIONS WHICH ARE CONSIDERABLY MORE WIDE-RANGING THAN IN PREVIOUS EMERGENCIES. THE DETENTION OF RADICALS AND SYMPATHISERS HAS EXTENDED DEEPLY INTO NATIONAL ORGANISATIONS AND LOCAL COMMUNITY GROUPS ALIKE. THE NET HAS CAUGHT MODERATE WHITE CHURCHMEN AND RELIEF WORKERS, AND FOR THE FIRST TIME THE TRADE UNIONS ARE A MAJOR TARGET. THIS HAS BEEN ACCOMPANIED BY A MASSIVE DISPLAY OF FORCE FROM THE ARMY AND POLICE, BY DRASTICALLY MUZZLING THE PRESS FROM REPORTING WHAT IS HAPPENING, AND BY STIFLING PUBLIC CRITICISM OF GOVERNMENT POLICY. IT SUITED THE GOVERNMENT TO BE ABLE TO SAY THAT THE THREAT OF IMMINENT DISORDER ON 16 JUNE WAS SERIOUS. THIS HAS JUSTIFIED THE EMERGENCY AND REASSURED WHITES ABOUT THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SECURITY FORCES. IT HAS ALSO DEMONSTRATED THE STRENGTH AND DETERMINATION OF THE GOVERNMENT.

3. AS A RESULT, BLACKS ARE FRUSTRATED BUT RELATIVELY POWERLESS TO REACT. SPORADIC UNREST CONTINUES (45 DEATHS OF BLACKS ADMITTED BY THE AUTHORITIES SINCE THE EMERGENCY) AND STRIKES ARE BEGINNING TO DEVELOP AGAINST DETENTION OF TRADE UNIONISTS. ON THE OTHER HAND THERE IS GENERAL RELIEF AMONG WHITES THAT THE SOWETO ANNIVERSARY HAS PASSED WITHOUT ANY MAJOR DISASTER.

4. IN THE LONG RUN, THE GOVERNMENT'S CLAMPDOWN ON LAW AND ORDER WILL SOLVE NOTHING UNLESS PRESSURE FROM THE BLACK COMMUNITY ITSELF BEGINS TO SLACKEN. IT IS NOT IMPOSSIBLE THAT THE SHOW OF FORCE WILL ENCOURAGE BLACK MODERATES TO COME FORWARD IN DUE COURSE AS THE GOVERNMENT HOPE. BUT I CONSIDER IT MORE LIKELY THAT BLACK REACTIONS ARE ONLY BEING BOTTLED UP AND THAT THE UNREST WILL BREAK

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OUT AFRESH ONCE RESTRICTIONS ARE EASED.

5. THE STATE OF EMERGENCY HAS OVERSHADOWED PUBLIC INTEREST IN THE EPG REPORT. THE MAIN LINES OF THE COMMONWEALTH GROUP'S CONCLUSIONS WERE REFLECTED IN THE PRESS HERE, BUT THERE HAS BEEN NO EXTENSIVE COVERAGE OF THE REPORT. ATTENTION HAS NOW SHIFTED TO THE INTERNATIONAL DEBATE ON SANCTIONS.

6. THE COMMONWEALTH GROUP THEMSELVES APPEAR TO THINK THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S ATTITUDE TO THEIR INITIATIVE SUDDENLY CHANGED. I REGARD THIS AS OVER-SIMPLIFIED. ALTHOUGH IT MUST STILL BE LARGELY GUESSWORK, I BELIEVE THAT IT WOULD BE TRUER TO SAY THAT THE GOVERNMENT PUT OFF FACING UP TO THE FUNDAMENTAL ISSUES RAISED BY THE EPG AS LONG AS POSSIBLE. IN THE EARLY STAGES WHILE THE TPG WERE DEVELOPING THEIR IDEAS IT WAS PIK BOTHA WHO MADE MOST OF THE RUNNING AND MANAGED TO CARRY THE PRESIDENT WITH HIM. WHEN EVENTUALLY THE PRESIDENT'S ATTENTION WAS FULLY ENGAGED AND OTHER KEY MINISTERS WERE BROUGHT IN, A CONSENSUS EMERGED AGAINST THE PACKAGE ON OFFER FROM THE EPG. THEREAFTER THE DIE WAS CAST. RAIDS AGAINST ANC TARGETS IN NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES WERE THE FIRST DELIBERATE INDICATION THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD RULED OUT NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE ANC BEING POSSIBLE AT THIS STAGE.

7. OF COURSE THERE WAS MORE TO IT THAN THAT. TWO STRANDS OF THINKING AMONG MINISTERS MAY HAVE BEEN UNDER-ESTIMATED IN RECENT MONTHS: FIRST INCREASING RESENTMENT AT ALL FORMS OF OUTSIDE INTERFERENCE, SECONDLY BITTER DISAPPOINTMENT AT THE LACK OF CREDIT GIVEN BY THE REST OF THE WORLD FOR REFORMS WHICH THE GOVERNMENT CONSIDERED SIGNIFICANT. ABOVE ALL, FEELINGS IN THE GOVERNMENT ABOUT THE ANC APPEAR TO HAVE HARDENED INTO TOTAL DISTRUST. NOR WERE THEY PERSUADED THAT ANY SUSPENSION OF VIOLENCE COULD BE COUNTED UPON TO LAST: A KEY POINT FOR THEM. NO DOUBT THIS REFLECTED THE STRENGTH OF ARGUMENTS FROM THE SECURITY LOBBY, BUT IT MAY ALSO HAVE BECOME PRESIDENT BOTHA'S PERSONAL CONVICTION. THE FURTHER THE IMPLICATION OF RELEASING MANDELA AND SERIOUSLY ENGAGING THE ANC IN DIALOGUE SANK IN, THE MORE IT SEEMS TO HAVE DRIVEN KEY MINISTERS TO THE CONCLUSION THAT A DEAL WITH THE ANC WAS SIMPLY NOT ON THE CARDS. TO ATTEMPT IT WOULD ACHIEVE NOTHING EXCEPT CONFER ON THE ANC EQUAL STATUS WITH THE GOVERNMENT. MINISTERS WERE CONVINCED BY THEIR OWN CLAIM THAT TALKING TO THE ANC WOULD BE LIKE TALKING TO MOSCOW AND THAT THE ANC WAS INTERESTED ONLY IN REVOLUTION, NOT IN COMPROMISE. SUCH EVIDENCE AS THEY HAVE HAD OF ANC PLANS TO MARK THE SOWETO ANNIVERSARY BY SPECTACULAR UNREST WOULD ONLY HAVE CONFIRMED THESE SUSPICIONS.

8. I FIND IT REVEALING THAT PRESIDENT BOTHA TOLD THE PFP LEADER, COLIN EGLIN, THE DAY AFTER THE STATE OF EMERGENCY WAS DECLARED LAST WEEK THAT IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO RELEASE MANDELA 'BECAUSE OF CONSEQUENCES'. WE KNOW THAT THE GOVERNMENT IN THE PAST HAVE BEEN ALARMED AT THE PROSPECT OF AN UPSURGE OF BLACK EMOTION IN THE TOWNSHIPS IF MANDELA WERE RELEASED. BUT COLIN EGLIN'S VIEW, WHICH I SHARE, IS THAT THE PRESIDENT WAS REFERRING THIS TIME TO THE CONNECTION

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BETWEEN

BETWEEN THE RELEASE OF MANDELA AND THE UNBANNING OF THE ANC. I BELIEVE THAT THE REALISATION THAT THERE WAS NO HALFWAY HOUSE BETWEEN RELEASING MANDELA AND ALLOWING THE ANC TO OPERATE FREELY IN SOUTH AFRICA AS A POLITICAL PARTY MAY HAVE TIPPED THE BALANCE IN A DECISION NOT TO EVEN MAKE A START MOVING IN THAT DIRECTION.

9. IF I AM RIGHT, THEREFORE, PIK BOTHA GOT OUT AHEAD OF HIS COLLEAGUES AND WAS ALLOWED TO DO SO UNTIL THE MOMENT OF DECISION ARRIVED. IN ANY CASE IT SUITED THE GOVERNMENT TO PLAY IT LONG WITH THE EPG. APART FROM PRESIDENT BOTHA HIMSELF, AN IMPORTANT VOICE WOULD HAVE BEEN THAT OF HEUNIS, ON WHOM RESPONSIBILITY FOR MUCH OF THE REFORM PROGRAMME RESTS. HEUNIS SEEMS TO HAVE COME DOWN FIRMLY AGAINST THE EPG'S IDEAS AS CUTTING ACROSS HIS OWN PLANS FOR REFORM AND FOR INTERNAL DIALOGUE WITH BLACKS.

10. IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES THE GOVERNMENT ARE TAKING AN ALMOST FATALISTIC ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE OUTSIDE WORLD. THE HAWKS ARE ASCENDANT. THEIR OVERRIDING PRIORITY IS TO RESTORE LAW AND ORDER BOTH FOR ITS OWN SAKE AND TO FEND OFF THE PERCEIVED THREAT FROM THE RIGHT. THUS THE GOVERNMENT SEEM DETERMINED TO DO THEIR OWN THING AND DAMN THE CONSEQUENCES. THEY WILL PRESS ON DOGGEDLY WITH PLANS ALREADY DECLARED. FURTHER INTERNATIONAL PRESSURE WILL BE BRUSHED ASIDE.

11. AT THE SAME TIME THE PRESIDENT GAVE EGLIN THE IMPRESSION AT THEIR PRIVATE MEETING LAST WEEK THAT, WHILE TAKING A VERY TOUGH LINE ON LAW AND ORDER, HE DID NOT RULE OUT THE POSSIBILITY OF SOME COMPROMISE OF A KIND PUT FORWARD BY THE EPG BEING EXAMINED AGAIN ONE DAY. IF SO, I BELIEVE IT WILL TAKE TIME BEFORE THIS HAPPENS, AND THEN IT MIGHT BE TO LOOK AT SOME IDENTIFIABLY HOME-GROWN COMPROMISE IN PREFERENCE TO ANOTHER IMPORTED EFFORT.

12. FOR THE MOMENT THE GOVERNMENT'S VISION OF BOTH INTERNAL SITUATION AND EXTERNAL SCENE HAS NARROWED, AND WITH IT THEIR OPTIONS. THE MOST ONE CAN SAY IS THAT THEIR RESORT TO SUPERIOR FORCE HAS GAINED THEM A BREATHING SPACE AT THE COST OF LOCKING UP PEOPLE TO WHOM THEY MAY EVENTUALLY HAVE TO TALK. THE ANAESTHETISING EFFECT ON BLACKS CANNOT BE EXPECTED TO LAST INDEFINITELY.

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