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SOUTH AFRICA: UK/US/FRG TRIPARTITE TALKS

SUMMARY

1. UNSTRUCTURED PRESENTATION BY FRG OF ARGUMENTS FOR A POLITICAL INITIATIVE BY UK, US AND FRG, POSSIBLY LATER INVOLVING FRANCE AND JAPAN. UK AND US RESPONDED CAUTIOUSLY, ALTHOUGH CROCKER STILL ATTACHED TO IDEA OF A SET OF GENERAL PRINCIPLES. AGREEMENT TO MEET AGAIN IN LATE NOVEMBER/EARLY DECEMBER. MEANWHILE FRG TO SET DOWN REVISED PROPOSALS ON PAPER, AND CROCKER TO PRODUCE DRAFT PRINCIPLES. CONTACTS TO BE TREATED WITH UTMOST CONFIDENTIALITY, AND NO PAPERS CIRCULATED.

DETAIL

2. FERGUSSON, CROCKER AND SUDHOFF HELD TRILATERAL TALKS ON SOUTH AFRICA ON 30 OCTOBER. IN BILATERAL CONSULTATIONS BEFOREHAND FERGUSSON AND CROCKER AGREED THAT THEIR APPROACH TO GERMAN PROPOSALS SHOULD BE CAUTIOUS AND INTERROGATIVE, NOT LEAST BECAUSE THE FOREIGN MINISTRY AND CHANCELLERY WERE NOT SPEAKING WITH ONE VOICE. CROCKER HAD RECEIVED A PAPER FROM CHANCELLOR KOHL'S OFFICE WHICH DIFFERED FROM FRG FOREIGN MINISTRY PROPOSALS

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IN SUGGESTING A TRILATERAL MEDIATION EFFORT ON SIMILAR LINES TO THE EPG MISSION. ALTHOUGH DEEPLY SCEPTICAL ON SUBSTANCE (BECAUSE OF THE INTRANSIGENT ATTITUDE OF THE SAG), CROCKER WAS CLEARLY CONCERNED AT THE DOMESTIC POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS OF A PERCEIVED POLICY VACUUM (WASHINGTON TELNO 2739).

3. SUDHOFF IDENTIFIED THREE REASONS BEHIND THE GERMAN WISH TO PROMOTE A POLITICAL INITIATIVE:

- (A) THERE WAS A CHANCE THAT A UK, US, FRG INITIATIVE WOULD HELP PRESIDENT PW BOTHA TO MOVE TOWARDS POLITICAL DIALOGUE IN SOUTH AFRICA BY PRODUCING A CHANGE IN WHITE SOUTH AFRICAN ATTITUDES:
- (B) IT WAS DIFFICULT TO ACCEPT THAT OUR FUTURE POLICY SHOULD BE SOLELY REACTIVE, AND NECESSARY TO PREEMPT THE AWKWARD PROSPECT OF FURTHER PRESSURE FOR SANCTIONS:
- (C) IN FRG PARTICULARLY THERE WERE DOMESTIC POLITICAL PRESSURES ON THE GOVERNMENT TO BE SEEN TO BE DOING SOMETHING.

4. AFTER CONSIDERABLE PRODDING SUDHOFF PRODUCED THE FOLLOWING SPECIFIC PROPOSAL. THE UK, US AND FRG SHOULD FIRST EVOLVE TOGETHER THE BASIS OF AN INITIATIVE IN TERMS OF PRINCIPLES AND OBJECTIVES. THE SECOND PHASE WOULD BE TO CONSIDER HOW TO SELL THESE IDEAS TO THE SAG, FLS AND BLACK OPPOSITION GROUPS, POSSIBLY INVITING OTHER WESTERN COUNTRIES WITH MAJOR INTERESTS IN SOUTH AFRICA (JAPAN, FRANCE) TO PARTICIPATE. IN SUBSEQUENT INTERVENTIONS, SUDHOFF MADE VAGUE REFERENCES TO GETTING PW BOTHA OUT OF SOUTH AFRICA FOR HIGH LEVEL TALKS.

5. FERGUSSON AND CROCKER EXPRESSED RESERVATIONS. NEITHER THOUGHT A SUCCESSFUL INITIATIVE POSSIBLE IN THE COMING MONTHS. THE SAG WAS REACTING TO SANCTIONS AND DETERMINED TO SHOW ITS STRENGTH. PW BOTHA DID NOT WANT TO MOVE TOWARDS DIALOGUE UNTIL HE HAD DEFEATED THE OPPOSITION AND DEMONSTRATED THAT CHANGE COULD NOT BE IMPOSED AS A RESULT OF EXTERNAL PRESSURE OR INTERNAL VIOLENCE. WESTERN INTERVENTION IN SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES COULD BECOME PART OF THE PROBLEM RATHER THAN THE SOLUTION. THERE WAS ALSO THE PROBLEM OF UK, US, FRG CREDIBILITY IN BLACK AFRICA. FOR THE TIME BEING THE PUBLIC ROLE OF THE WEST SHOULD BE LIMITED TO SEEKING TO ENGINEER AN ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH THE PRINCIPAL ACTORS IN SOUTH AFRICA WOULD BE ABLE TO MOVE TOWARDS CHANGE.

6. IT WAS NEVERTHELESS AGREED THAT WE OUGHT TO USE THE PRESENT BREATHING SPACE TO GIVE FURTHER CAREFUL THOUGHT TO HOW THE WEST COULD MAKE A PRACTICAL AND POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION WHEN CONDITIONS WERE MORE PROPITIOUS. IT WOULD BE IMPORTANT TO STUDY ALL THE OPTIONS: A FULL SCALE INITIATIVE ON THE LINES ENVISAGED BY THE FRG, AS WELL AS MORE LIMITED APPROACHES SUCH AS ELABORATION OF PRINCIPLES GOVERNING A SOLUTION NOT NECESSARILY LEADING TO A FULL BLOWN ATTEMPT TO MEDIATE ON THE BASIS OF THEM. FURTHER INFORMAL TALKS WOULD BE HELD IN LATE NOVEMBER OR EARLY DECEMBER. AT THAT MEETING THE FRG WOULD PRESENT THEIR IDEAS IN WRITING (IF GENUINELY DIFFERENT FROM THOSE PUT TO US BEFORE). CROCKER WOULD MEANWHILE DRAFT A SET OF PRINCIPLES GOVERNING AN EVENTUAL SOLUTION FOR CONSIDERATION. NOBODY WAS UNDER ANY ILLUSIONS ABOUT THE DIFFICULTY OF THAT TASK.

7. FERGUSSON STRESSED THE EXTREME IMPORTANCE OF CONFIDENTIALITY. IT WAS AGREED THAT NO PAPERS WOULD BE CIRCULATED IN ADVANCE OF THE NEXT MEETING, AND THAT THERE SHOULD BE NO PUBLICITY. PLEASE TREAT THIS REPORT ACCORDINGLY.

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PS/MRS CHALKER

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MR DEREK THOMAS

MR FERGUSSON

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