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DESKBY 141200Z

FM CAPE TOWN EMBASSY 140955Z AUG 81

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 122 OF 14 AUGUST

MY TELNO 119 : SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT ACTION AGAINST SQUATTERS.

1. IN HIS CAPACITY AS ACTING DEAN OF THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS, THE FRENCH AMBASSADOR (DORIN) YESTERDAY (13 AUGUST) CALLED A MEETING OF ALL HEADS OF DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS PRESENT IN CAPE TOWN AT WHICH HE PROPOSED THAT THEY SHOULD TAKE JOINT ACTION OVER THE RECENT CALLOUS TREATMENT OF SQUATTERS IN THE NYANGA AREA NEAR CAPE TOWN. IN ADDITION TO DORIN, THE MEETING WAS ATTENDED BY HEADS OF MISSION OF AUSTRALIA, BELGIUM, CANADA, GERMANY, GREECE, SWEDEN, SWITZERLAND, UNITED KINGDOM AND UNITED STATES.
2. DORIN, WHO WAS ACTING ON HIS OWN INITIATIVE WITHOUT INSTRUCTIONS FROM PARIS, SAID THAT COLLECTIVE ACTION MIGHT TAKE THE FORM EITHER OF A PROTEST OR APPEAL TO THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT, OR OF SOME PRACTICAL ASSISTANCE TO THE HOMELESS, OR BOTH. HE SAID THAT PUBLIC OPINION ABROAD WAS DEEPLY STIRRED. THERE WOULD BE AN OUTCRY IF, FOR EXAMPLE, A CHILD DIED FROM EXPOSURE. DORIN IS A COMPASSIONATE MAN WHO IS GENUINELY MOVED BY THE SUFFERINGS OF THE PEOPLE CONCERNED. BUT HE ALSO MADE IT CLEAR THAT IT WOULD BE VALUABLE TO GOVERNMENTS, IN RESPONDING TO COMPLAINTS AND CRITICISMS, TO BE ABLE TO SAY THAT THEY HAD TAKEN SOME ACTION WITH THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT.
3. IN DISCUSSION, THERE WAS GENERAL AGREEMENT THAT SOMETHING SHOULD BE DONE AND A MAJORITY WERE PREPARED TO AGREE THERE AND THEN TO A JOINT APPEAL TO THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT. SEVERAL TOUGH DRAFTS WERE PROPOSED. THE US CHARGE D'AFFAIRES SAID HIS GOVERNMENT WOULD BE UNLIKELY TO AGREE TO AN QUOTE ACCUSATORY UNQUOTE FORM OF WORDS, ESPECIALLY IN VIEW OF THE CURRENT NAMIBIA NEGOTIATIONS. I SUPPORTED HIM. IN THE END, IT WAS AGREED THAT AN APPROACH TO THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT SHOULD BE BRIEF, FOCUS ON HUMANITARIAN CONSIDERATIONS AND AVOID EXPOSING SURFACE TO ANY CHARGE OF FACTUAL INACCURACY OR ACCUSATION OF INTERFERENCE IN SOUTH AFRICA'S INTERNAL AFFAIRS. A MAJORITY THOUGHT THAT THE FACT OF HAVING MADE A COLLECTIVE APPROACH WAS MORE IMPORTANT THAN WHAT IT SAID.
4. DORIN SAID THAT THERE WAS LITTLE POINT IN TAKING ACTION IF IT WAS NOT KNOWN. ON THE OTHER HAND ANY BENEFICIAL EFFECT THAT THE APPROACH MIGHT HAVE IN MOVING THE SOUTH AFRICANS WOULD BE LOST IF THEY THOUGHT WE WERE MERELY MANIPULATING PUBLICITY AGAINST THEM.

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5. EVENTUALLY THE BRIEF TEXT IN MIFT WAS AGREED AD REFERENDUM REPEAT AD REFERENDUM. THE PROPOSAL IS THAT DORIN SHOULD CALL ON FOURIE, READ THE AGREED TEXT AND LEAVE A COPY. DORIN WOULD VOLUNTEER NOTHING ABOUT RELEASING THE TEXT TO THE PUBLIC, AND, IF ASKED, WOULD SAY THAT THIS WOULD REST WITH GOVERNMENTS: HE WAS NOT RELEASING THE TEXT HERE NOW. THE UNDERSTANDING OF THE GOVERNMENTS WHICH AGREED TO JOIN IN WOULD BE THAT ANY OF THEM MIGHT SAY IN THEIR RESPECTIVE CAPITALS THAT THEY HAD TAKEN ACTION WITH THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT BUT WITHOUT SPECIFYING EXACTLY WHAT WAS SAID, OR IN WHOSE COMPANY.

6. DORIN IS ARRANGING FOR OTHER HEADS OF MISSION NOT NOW IN CAPE TOWN NOTABLY THOSE OF ITALY, THE NETHERLANDS, FINLAND AND BRAZIL TO HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO JOIN IN THE APPROACH. THERE IS TO BE A FINAL MEETING AT 1800Z ON 17 AUGUST TO FINALISE DETAILS. I RECOMMEND THAT YOU AGREE TO THE TEXT AND ARRANGEMENTS PROPOSED FOR HANDLING IT. GRATEFUL FOR INSTRUCTIONS DESKBY 171400Z .

7. MY SECOND IFT REPORTS ON THE LASTEST SITUATION AT NYANGA.

REID

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