

GRS 1140

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copy to Mr Colas

No 60.

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FM CAPE TOWN EMBASSY

TO PRIORITY FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 316 OF 8 DECEMBER

INFO PRIORITY UKREP BRUSSELS (FOR PRIVATE SECRETARY)

S. Africa

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YOUR TELEGRAM NUMBER 147 : CALL ON PRIME MINISTER

1. I HAD 50 MINUTES ALONE WITH MR P W BOTHA THIS MORNING (DECEMBER). HE WAS IN A RELAXED AND FRIENDLY MOOD AND THOUGH AT TIMES HE SPOKE CRITICALLY OF THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT'S ATTITUDE TO SOUTH AFRICA HE GAVE THE APPEARANCE OF SPEAKING MORE IN SORROW THAN IN ANGER. I WILL SEND A FULL RECORD BY BAG TO THE DEPARTMENT; THIS TELEGRAM PICKS OUT THE HIGHLIGHTS (THE ORDER IS MINE).

GENERAL

2. MR BOTHA WARMLY RECIPROCATED THE PRIME MINISTER'S PERSONAL GOOD WISHES WHICH I HAD PASSED ON TO HIM AT THE START OF OUR CONVERSATION. HE SAID HE MUCH ADMIRER HER COURAGE AND DETERMINATION. ALTHOUGH HIS FATHER HAD FOUGHT THE BRITISH IN THE BOER WAR AND QUOTE HAD NEVER BEEN CAUGHT UNQUOTE, HE HAD BROUGHT UP HIS SON (IE P W BOTHA HIMSELF) TO HAVE HIGH REGARD FOR THE BRITISH. WHEN WE HAD FOUGHT ONE ANOTHER WE HAD BOTH BEEN HARMED, WHEN WE HAD WORKED TOGETHER WE HAD BOTH BENEFITED.

3. I TOLD MR BOTHA THAT WE HAD RECENTLY MADE A REAL EFFORT TO STRIKE A POSITIVE NOTE IN OUR RELATIONS IN VARIOUS DIFFERENT WAYS. WE WANTED BETTER RELATIONS AND THOUGHT THIS WAS IN OUR OWN INTERESTS AS WELL AS IN SOUTH AFRICA'S. BUT WITH ALL OUR JOINT HISTORY BEHIND US WE COULD NOT TAKE GOOD RELATIONS FOR GRANTED, WE HAD TO WORK AT THEM. THERE WERE PEOPLE IN BOTH COUNTRIES WHO DID NOT WANT GOOD RELATIONS. I THOUGHT IT RIGHT THAT WE SHOULD TRY TO ENCOURAGE THOSE PEOPLE IN SOUTH AFRICA WHO WERE WANTING TO MOVE FORWARD AND TO INDICATE TO THEM SOME OF THE BENEFITS THAT MIGHT ACCRUE TO SOUTH AFRICA FROM DOING SO. ON THE OTHER HAND WE SHOULD NOT GIVE ANY COMFORT TO THOSE WHO DID NOT WANT CHANGE AND WHO ARGUED THAT SOUTH AFRICA STOOD TO GAIN NOTHING FROM IT IN AN INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT BECAUSE SHE NEVER RECEIVED A FAIR HEARING ANYWAY.

4. MR BOTHA SAID THAT DEEP IN HIS HEART HE RESENTED THE UNFAIRNESS OF THE WORLD TOWARDS SOUTH AFRICA AND THE UNWILLINGNESS OF OTHER COUNTRIES TO RECOGNIZE ALL THE EFFORTS BEING MADE TO IMPROVE THE LOT OF THE ENTIRE POPULATION. WESTERN GOVERNMENTS THAT KNEW WHAT WAS HAPPENING HERE AND IN SOUTHERN AFRICA GENERALLY (HE DID NOT MENTION US BY NAME BUT CLEARLY MEANT TO INCLUDE US) SHOULD NOT ALWAYS JOIN IN THE CHORUS OF CONDEMNATION BUT SHOULD GIVE THE WORLD THE TRUE PICTURE. I SAID THAT WE HAD BEEN INSTRUMENTAL IN LOWERING THE LEVEL OF THE RHETORIC IN THE UNITED NATIONS RECENTLY. MOREOVER

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/ HE MIGHT

HE MIGHT HAVE NOTICED THAT WE HAD BEEN RETICENT IN PUBLIC OVER THE HANDLING OF THE SEYCHELLES HIJACKERS AND HAD NOT SAID ANYTHING DISOBLIGING ABOUT CISKEI QUOTE INDEPENDENCE UNQUOTE EITHER. HE SHOULD ALSO KNOW THAT THE POSITIVE REMARKS IN THE SPEECH I MADE IN JOHANNESBURG RECENTLY HAD NOT BEEN MADE OFF THE TOP OF MY HEAD: ON THE CONTRARY THEY HAD BEEN CLEARED AT A HIGH LEVEL IN THE FCO.

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5. I SAID THAT THIS WAS NOW OUR FIRST PRIORITY IN SOUTHERN AFRICA. WE FULLY SUPPORTED THE AMERICANS IN THEIR EFFORTS TO BRING THE NEGOTIATIONS TO A SUCCESSFUL CONCLUSION. WE HAD ALSO NOTED WITH APPRECIATION THE PERSONAL COMMITMENT WHICH HE AND PIK BOTHA HAD RECENTLY DEMONSTRATED, PARTICULARLY IN WINDHOEK, TO GETTING AN AGREEMENT. I REALISED THE POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS FOR HIM AND IN THIS CONTEXT THE DESIRABILITY OF CUBAN WITHDRAWAL FROM ANGOLA, THOUGH THIS WAS NOT SOMETHING WHICH THE FIVE AS SUCH FELT ABLE TO NEGOTIATE ABOUT. MR BOTHA SAID THAT HE WAS GLAD THAT THE AMERICANS WERE RECEIVING SAVIMBI AND THOUGHT THE REST OF US WERE MAKING A BIG MISTAKE OVER HIM. HE WAS AN IMPRESSIVE AFRICAN LEADER AND WAS WILLING TO COME TO A REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION WITH THE MPLA. I SAID THAT I COULD NOT HELP WONDERING WHETHER HE WAS SOMEONE WHO COULD EVER PLAY SECOND FIDDLE, EVEN IF UNITA AS SUCH MIGHT BE RECONCILED TO IT. MR BOTHA REPLIED THAT HE FELT QUITE SURE THAT SAVIMBI QUOTE DID NOT WANT THE WHOLE OF ANGOLA OR TO GET MIXED UP WITH THOSE PEOPLE UP IN THE NORTH UNQUOTE.

6. MR BOTHA EXPRESSED SOME OPTIMISM THAT SWAPO WOULD NOT DO ANYTHING LIKE AS WELL AMONG THE OWAMBOS IN AN ELECTION AS WAS COMMONLY THOUGHT. HE SAID THAT THE OWAMBOS WERE PRACTISING CHURCH-GOING CHRISTIANS AND WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO SWALLOW THE UNGODLINESS OF COMMUNISM. I LET THAT PASS.

7. I ALSO TRAILED MY COAT BY SAYING THAT I HAD NOTICED THAT IN HIS RECENT SPEECH TO THE BUSINESS CONFERENCE IN CAPE TOWN HE HAD ONCE AGAIN REFERRED TO THE IDEA OF A REGIONAL NON-AGGRESSION PACT. MR BOTHA FOR HIS PART LET THAT ONE PASS AND WE DID NOT MENTION IT AGAIN.

ZIMBABWE

8. MR BOTHA SAID THAT WE HAD MADE A TERRIBLE MISTAKE OVER RHODESIA. BY RUSHING THINGS THE WASY WE HAD WE HAD DONE A DISSERVICE TO SOUTHERN AFRICA. HE HAD WARNED US QUOTE AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL UNQUOTE NOT TO DO THIS. NOW ZIMBABWE WAS GOING RAPIDLY DOWN THE DRAIN: BUSINESSMEN WHO HAD INTERESTS THERE WERE UNANIMOUS IN TELLING HIM THIS. IN TWO YEARS TIME THE COUNTRY WOULD BE REDUCED TO CHAOS. THE TRANSPORT SYSTEM WAS GRINDING TO A HALT, VERY MUCH TO THE DETRIMENT OF ZAIRE, MALAWI, AND ZAMBIA. HE HAD ONCE THOUGHT THAT MUGABE WOULD BE REASONABLY FLEXIBLE, BUT HE WAS PROVING

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TO BE A VERY STUBBORN MAN. HE (PWB) HAD SECRETLY PROPOSED A MEETING BETWEEN THE TWO OF THEM SOME TIME AGO, BUT MUGABE HAD NOT RESPONDED. I SAID THAT WE HAD A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE ON ZIMBABWE. WE HAD HELPED TO BRING IT TO BIRTH AND FELT IT WAS IMPORTANT THAT IT SHOULD SUCCEED. MUGABE SEEMED TO US TO BE THE BEST PRIME MINISTER ANY OF US COULD EXPECT TO HAVE IN SALISBURY : IF HE WERE SUPPLANTED IT COULD ONLY BE BY SOMEBODY WORSE FROM SOUTH AFRICA'S POINT OF VIEW. WE HAD BEEN PLEASED, THEREFORE, TO NOTE SOME IMPROVEMENT IN RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES RECENTLY FOLLOWING CERTAIN SOUTH AFRICAN GESTURES AND HOPED THIS IMPROVEMENT WOULD LAST.

SEYCHELLES

9. THE PRIME MINISTER SPOKE AT SOME LENGTH ABOUT THIS QUOTE COWBOY OPERATION UNQUOTE WHICH HAD EMBARRASSED BOTH OUR GOVERNMENTS. HE THOUGHT MIKE HOARE MUST INDEED BE MAD. MR BOTHA WAS AT PAINS TO EXPLAIN THAT AT THE TIME THE 39 WERE RELEASED THERE WAS NOT ENOUGH EVIDENCE TO CHARGE THEM AND THE GOVERNMENT COULD NOT HAVE DIRECTED THE TRANSVAAL ATTORNEY-GENERAL OTHERWISE. HE DID NOT KNOW WHETHER THIS WAS STILL THE CASE. HE IMPLIED THAT NOW THE MATTER HAD BEEN HANDED OVER TO THE NATAL ATTORNEY-GENERAL THE POSITION MIGHT HAVE CHANGED. BUT HE STOPPED SHORT OF SAYING THIS, FALLING BACK INSTEAD ON THE OLD FORMULA THAT THE LAW MUST BE ALLOWED TO TAKE ITS COURSE (QUOTE YOU BRITISH OF ALL PEOPLE SHOULD UNDERSTAND THIS UNQUOTE) I SAID THAT WE HAD NOT RUSHED TO MAKE ANY JUDGEMENTS OURSELVES AND YOU WERE FIRST TRYING TO ESTABLISH, THROUGH ME, WHAT THE FACTS WERE. OUR CONCERN, LIKE HIS, WAS THAT THE GUILTY PEOPLE SHOULD BE BROUGHT TO JUSTICE AND THAT AS WELL AS BEING DONE JUSTICE SHOULD BE SEEN TO BE DONE. IN THE MEANTIME HE SHOULD NOT JUMP TO ANY CONCLUSIONS ON THE BASIS OF PRESS REPORTS ABOUT WHAT THE SEVEN MIGHT OR MIGHT NOT DO. MR BOTHA NODDED HIS HEAD.

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MR DAY
SIR L ALLINSON
MR GOODISON
SIR A ACLAND
CABINET OFFICE

[NOT ADVANCED]