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FM PRETORIA

TO PRIORITY FCO

TELNO 289

OF 091450Z SEPTEMBER 85

INFO PRIORITY LAGOS (FOR SECRETARY OF STATE'S PARTY, LUXEMBOURG
(FOR MINISTER OF STATE'S PARTY)INFO ROUTINE ATHENS, BONN, BRUSSELS, COPENHAGEN, DUBLIN, THE HAGUE
PARIS, ROME, UKREP BRUSSELS, LUANDA, LUSAKA, HARARE, GABORONE,
MAPUTO, MADSERU, MBABANE, OTTAWA, CANBERRA, WELLINGTON, NEW DELHI,
WASHINGTON, UKMIS NEW YORK..

INFO SAVING JOHANNESBURG, CAPE TOWN, DURBAN.

SOUTH AFRICA: INTERNAL SITUATION AND PROSPECTS

SUMMARY

1. PRESSURES MOUNT ON THE GOVERNMENT. ONE COULD EXPECT THEM TO SHOW GREATER POLITICAL FLEXIBILITY IN ORDER NOT ONLY TO COUNTER-BALANCE THE EFFECTS OF STRONG-ARM POLICE METHODS ON THE BLACK COMMUNITY BUT ALSO TO TRY AND REGAIN CONFIDENCE AMONGST OVERSEAS BANKERS. THE PRESIDENT IS TO ADDRESS MORE MEETINGS THIS MONTH. BUT THERE IS STILL LITTLE SIGN OF HIS MOVING MUCH BEYOND THE PARAMETERS OF HIS DURBAN SPEECH. PRIOR DEMANDS OF BOTH SIDES STAND IN THE WAY OF A DIALOGUE BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND BLACKS.

DETAIL

2. THE STATE OF EMERGENCY HAS NOW BEEN IN FORCE FOR 7 WEEKS. I DO NOT BELIEVE THE GOVERNMENT CAN BE FEELING REASSURED. THEY RESEMBLE MEN FIGHTING A BUSH FIRE. AS SOON AS ONE AREA IS DAMPENED DOWN ANOTHER FLARES UP, AND BEFORE LONG PARTS OF THE ORIGINAL AREA BECOME ALIGHT AGAIN. THIS PATTERN OF SHIFTING CENTRES OF UNREST WAS ALSO A FEATURE OF THE VIOLENCE IN 1976 AND 1980 AND THE MINISTER OF LAW AND ORDER CLAIMS THAT THE SITUATION IS NOW EASIER IN THE AREAS WHERE THE STATE OF EMERGENCY WAS DECLARED. OVER-REACTION BY POLICE HAS SUCCEEDED NOT IN ERADICATING VIOLENCE BUT IN RADICALISING BLACK OPINION, PARTICULARLY AMONG THE YOUNG, AT A TIME WHEN THE GOVERNMENT DESPERATELY NEED TO CONVINCe BLACKS THAT A NEGOTIATED FUTURE IS POSSIBLE. THE BELIEF THAT INTERNATIONAL PRESSURES ON SOUTH AFRICA WILL INTENSIFY AND WILL ADD TO EXISTING DIFFICULTIES FOR THE GOVERNMENT IS ENCOURAGING BLACKS TO SUSTAIN PROTEST RATHER THAN NEGOTIATE.

3. THUS THE GOVERNMENT HAVE PAINTED THEMSELVES INTO A CORNER OVER THE QUESTION OF WHETHER LAW AND ORDER OR REFORM SHOULD COME FIRST. THEIR ANSWER WOULD BE THAT ORDER IS A NECESSARY CONDITION FOR REFORM. BLACKS SEE IT THE OTHER WAY AROUND.

4. THE GOVERNMENT WERE WRONG-FOOTED BY THE COLLAPSE OF THE RAND AND SUDDEN DRYING UP OF OVERSEAS CREDIT WHICH THEY BROUGHT LARGELY

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ON.

ON THEMSELVES BY THE SCALE OF THEIR SHORT-TERM COMMITMENTS. FINANCIAL COUNTER-MEASURES WERE SWIFTLY TAKEN ALTHOUGH THEIR SUCCESS HAS YET TO BE PROVED. WORRIES ABOUT THE ECONOMIC SITUATION ARE LIKELY TO BE A MORE EFFECTIVE FORM OF PRESSURE ON SOUTH AFRICA THAN MEASURES ALREADY ADOPTED BY FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS. SOUTH AFRICA IS DIRECTLY DEPENDENT ON FOREIGN MONEY MARKETS AND AFFECTED BY PRIVATE SECTOR JUDGEMENTS. IT IS EASIER FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO JUSTIFY CHANGES FOR BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC REASONS THAN IN RESPONSE TO DEMANDS FROM OTHER GOVERNMENTS.

5. NO MAJOR NEW INITIATIVE HAVE YET EMERGED ON THE POLITICAL FRONT. I DO NOT FIND THIS SURPRISING. IT IS AGAINST THE GRAIN OF THE AFRIKANER TO MAKE HURRIED DECISIONS. TO DO SO SEEMS TO THEM A SIGN OF WEAKNESS. THEY WISH TO AVOID APPEARING TO REACT UNDER PRESSURE THEREBY RISKING YET MORE PRESSURE FOR CONCESSIONS THAT THEY WOULD SEE AS DISASTROUS. FOR THIS REASON AND BECAUSE THEY HAVE A STRATEGY WHICH THEY CONSIDER ESSENTIAL FOR WHITE SURVIVAL I DO NOT LOOK FOR DRAMATIC CHANGES. I BELIEVE THEY INTEND, FOR ENTIRELY PRAGMATIC REASONS, TO MAKE SOME REAL REFORMS BUT HESITATE TO SPELL THIS OUT BECAUSE TO DO SO WOULD RISK HAVING THESE DISCOUNTED BEFORE THEY HAPPEN.

6. MINISTERS LIKE PIK BOTHA CONTINUE TO MAKE THE MOST OF THE GOVERNMENT'S GOOD INTENTIONS. ON SPECIFIC REFORMS, CHANGES IN LEGISLATION ON INFLUX CONTROL AND CITIZENSHIP APPEAR TO BE ON THE STOCKS, AS FORESHADOWED IN P W BOTHA'S DURBAN SPEECH. A REPORT FROM THE PRESIDENT'S COUNCIL DUE SHORTLY IS EXPECTED TO RECOMMEND SIGNIFICANT CHANGES IN THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE PASS LAWS. MEASURES MAY THEN BE PUT TO PARLIAMENTARY STANDING SELECT COMMITTEES MEETING NEXT MONTH TO ELABORATE PRIOR TO THE JANUARY PARLIAMENTARY SESSION. BUT THE GOVERNMENT SEEM NO NEARER TO GETTING THEIR MUCH HERALDED DIALOGUE WITH BLACKS OFF THE GROUND.

7. INCREASINGLY THE DIFFICULTY IS SEEN AS BEING ONE OF IDENTIFYING WHO SHOULD SPEAK FOR THE BLACK COMMUNITY. ALTHOUGH THE GOVERNMENT SAY THEY WILL TALK TO ANYONE WHO RENOUNCES VIOLENCE THEY ARE NEVERTHELESS IN A BOX. AMONG TOWNSHIP BLACKS NONE WHO MATTER HAVE ANY MANDATE TO TALK AND EITHER DARE NOT OR WILL NOT COME FORWARD WITHOUT CLEARER EVIDENCE OF THE GOVERNMENT'S COMMITMENT TO POWER-SHARING. YET LEADERSHIP IN THE TOWNSHIPS IS INCREASINGLY PASSING TO PEOPLE WHOM THE GOVERNMENT REGARD AS THEIR PRIME OPPONENTS.

8. CONCERN AT CONTINUED VIOLENCE COUPLED WITH A BOYCOTT OF WHITE SHOPS NEAR TOWNSHIPS, PLUS THE PROSPECT OF A PROLONGED STAND-OFF BY INTERNATIONAL BANKERS, HAS HAD AN UNDOUBTED EFFECT ON THE SOUTH AFRICAN BUSINESS COMMUNITY. LEADERS OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY ARE PRESSING THE GOVERNMENT FOR FASTER PROGRESS. THERE IS STILL NERVOUSNESS IN THE NATIONAL PARTY ABOUT CHANGE BUT THE OUTSPOKENNESS OF A NUMBER OF AFRIKANER MPS, ACADEMICS, JOURNALISTS AND BUSINESSMEN WHO IDENTIFY THEMSELVES WITH EXHORATIONS FOR CHANGE MAY BE HAVING SOME EFFECT. WE HAVE BEEN TOLD BY NATIONAL PARTY MPS THAT THE PARTY AS A WHOLE IS NOW CONVINCED THAT LAW AND

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ORDER

ORDER ALONE WILL SOLVE NOTHING. THEY WOULD BACK CAUTIOUS CHANGES TO ACCOMMODATE BLACKS IN THE CONSTITUTION.

9. THE PRESIDENT WILL BE ADDRESSING A CLOSED SESSION OF THE ORANGE FREE STATE CONGRESS OF THE NATIONAL PARTY ON 11 SEPTEMBER BUT IS NOT GIVING THE KEYNOTE SPEECH HIMSELF. HE IS EXPECTED TO SPEAK AT THE TRANSVAAL PARTY CONGRESS (19-21 SEPTEMBER) AND IN THE CAPE (30 SEPTEMBER TO 2 OCTOBER). THESE PARTY OCCASIONS GIVE HIM AN OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE UP THE GROUND WHICH HE LOST IN AUGUST THROUGH MISCALCULATING HIS DURBAN SPEECH. BUT HIS MAIN AIM PROBABLY REMAINS TO GET A MANDATE FOR THE GENERAL PRINCIPLE OF INCLUDING BLACKS IN A POLITICAL DISPENSATION.

10. AS BEFORE, HOWEVER, THE PRESIDENT WILL PROBABLY FALL FAR SHORT OF MANAGING TO TRANSFORM THE SITUATION. WE MAY SEE SOME ADVANCE ON DURBAN BUT NOT MUCH. THE WHOLE INSTINCT OF AFRIKANER POLITICIANS IS TO CLOAK THEIR POLICY STATEMENTS IN COTTONWOOL CATCHWORDS. ONE OF THE MERITS OF THE RECENT STATEMENT TO THE TROIKA (MY TELNO 267) IS THAT IT DID SO LESS THAN USUAL.

11. FOR THE FIRST TIME THERE ARE STORIES ABOUT SOME OF HIS CABINET COLLEAGUES THINKING THAT P W BOTHA IS NO LONGER THE MAN FOR THE JOB. HIS STANDING HAS UNDOUBTEDLY TAKEN A KNOCK. I DO NOT BELIEVE HE WILL GIVE UP YET. BUT THE CONTINUING CRISIS COULD ADVANCE THE DATE WHEN HE HANDS OVER TO A SUCCESSOR.

12. OUR INTERESTS DEMAND PEACEFUL REFORM. THE MAJOR CHANGE HERE IN THE LAST YEAR IS THAT TIME NO LONGER LOOKS ON THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT'S SIDE. THEY CAN USE THIS, IF THEY WISH, TO CARRY THEIR OWN SUPPORTERS ALONG WITH A PROCESS OF REFORM. WE SHOULD CONTINUE TO DEMAND FIRM ACTION. BUT A REAL DIALOGUE IS UNLIKELY TO GET OFF THE GROUND UNLESS BOTH SIDES DROP PRIOR DEMANDS. THIS IS RECOGNISED BY SOME HERE. BUTHELEZI AND THE PROGRESSIVE FEDERAL PARTY ARE JOINTLY SPONSORING A NATIONAL CONVENTION ALLIANCE FOR UNCONDITIONAL TALKS BUT THE INITIATIVE LACKS ANY WIDE SUPPORT. INTERNATIONAL PRESSURE MIGHT USEFULLY BE DIRECTED TOWARDS PRESSING ALL PARTIES TO AGREE TO TALKS WITHOUT PRIOR CONDITIONS.

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