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Filed on SOUTH AFRICA:
Visits of Pres. de Klerk & 2



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From the Private Secretary

Dear Stephen,

PRIME MINISTER'S MEETING WITH
THE PRESIDENT OF SOUTH AFRICA

The Prime Minister had a talk lasting some one and a half hours with President de Klerk at Chequers this morning. The President was accompanied by the South African Ambassador. It was a very friendly occasion. The Prime Minister commented to me afterwards that she felt President de Klerk had grown considerably in stature since their last meeting a year ago. The speeches at lunchtime were both rather moving (I enclose the text from which the Prime Minister spoke), marking South Africa's acceptance back into the international community.

Distribution of this record should be limited to those with a need to know.

Introduction

The Prime Minister congratulated President de Klerk on the achievements of his first year in office and on the success of his tour of European capitals. President de Klerk said he was satisfied with the progress that had been made. He had been able to carry his party with him and had made great efforts to involve the party caucus in all the main decisions. The President continued that he and all the members of the South African delegation had been shocked and dismayed by an article in today's Independent alleging that the South Africans were not paying much attention to their visit to the United Kingdom, because they could take us for granted. It was an absolute travesty of the truth. The Prime Minister said she had not read the article in question but it sounded characteristic of the Independent.

Progress in South Africa

President de Klerk said that he wanted to give the Prime Minister an account of developments in South Africa. He had established a good rapport with Mandela. Mandela was a very interesting person, who had thought deeply about certain things. But there were some large empty areas as well, particularly on economic matters. His European visit would be important in opening his eyes to the fact that free enterprise was the key to prosperity. He hoped that the Prime Minister would impress on

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Mandela the need to be realistic about the South African economy. More generally, he thought that Mandela accepted his integrity. The two of them were able to work well together. The Groote Schuur meeting had gone well. There had been a perceptible will to succeed on the part of the ANC and an absence of acrimony. The commitment to eliminate violence had been a breakthrough and he was sure that the ANC meant it. The meeting had also been an instructive guide to the ANC's culture of collective decision-making. There had been constant adjournments to enable Mandela to consult his delegation even on trivial points. He seemed to lack self-confidence and this made for slow decision-taking.

President de Klerk continued that the South African Government would insist that the ANC give up the armed struggle. The ANC for their part wanted to focus on practical issues, in particular the return of exiles and the release of political prisoners. Neither of these presented insuperable difficulties. He already had the power to grant pardons or immunity from prosecution. The working group which had been set up to look into the question of political prisoners had already completed its work, and their conclusion was one with which he could live (although there were some doubts whether the ANC's National Executive would accept it). He hoped to be able to take the necessary steps quite soon to allow the exiles to begin to return. The ANC also wanted him to lift the state of emergency and make changes in the security laws. He had made clear that the ANC, for their part, must exert themselves to help bring down levels of violence and intimidation. The state of emergency came up for renewal on 12 June. He could not yet predict what action the Government would take. One possibility would be to lift it in large parts of South Africa, while keeping it in Natal and some other districts. He hoped that such action would be accepted internationally as another major step forward. It was important to understand the fabric of violence in South Africa. It used to be directed at overthrowing the State. Now it was essentially black fighting black in order to get the upper hand in negotiations leading to power.

President de Klerk continued that the ANC had been more successful than Inkatha in broadening its base and indisputably now had majority support in urban areas. Buthelezi had more support in Natal, but westernised and unionised Zulus were moving against him. The President added that his aim was to bring Mandela and Buthelezi together with himself to form the core group for future negotiations. But the ANC wanted first to cut Buthelezi down to size and try and make him a junior partner. They were trying to blame him for the problems in Natal and drive wedges between him and other homeland leaders. This at least had the advantage that the ANC were now themselves talking to some of the homeland leaders. It was significant that the ANC had postponed their party congress from June until mid-December. This was to enable them to get their people back into South Africa. The ANC saw 1990 as a year for consolidation and positioning themselves as the major black political movement in South Africa. 1991 would then be the year for negotiations. The ANC claimed that they and the Government were the two main players in negotiations. But the Government itself drew a clear distinction between talks with the ANC on matters which affected

only them, and actual negotiations. When it came to the latter, there would have to be the widest possible representation covering all racial constituencies. The Prime Minister commented that Buthelezi would not give up easily. President de Klerk said he was determined to give Buthelezi a major part in negotiations.

President de Klerk said that he was optimistic that an accord could be reached in South Africa on a new constitution, and he sensed that the ANC believed this too. The Prime Minister said that there was probably a lot of education still to be done. Africans tended to use power in an all embracing way. They did not recognise the concept of limitation of power in the interests of democracy and freedom. That was the clear lesson from experience elsewhere in Africa. President de Klerk said this was precisely what he had in mind when he insisted on some kind of protection for minorities. He meant protection against misuse of power by a majority. At this stage, he was not committing himself to any specific constitutional model. But there would have to be a Bill of Rights and a system of checks and balances. One possible model was a Second Chamber with guaranteed representation for minorities. Certain principles must be firmly entrenched in the constitution, in particular the right to private property. He was also looking at the scope for cantonisation, involving devolution of power to very small units. Returning to the subject of the security laws, the President said there was scope for considerable amendment. For instance communism would have to be legalised now that the Communist Party had been unbanned. The ANC as an instrument in the hands of a powerful and expansionist Soviet Union had been dangerous. Without Soviet backing it was a political movement and manageable. It would take time to swing the ANC round to giving up the rhetoric of violence. Mandela was constantly worried about estranging his followers and was himself considerably more moderate than his lieutenants.

President de Klerk added that the far right were getting very emotional. They were coming to realise that any chance of getting rid of him in an election was vanishing. If all went well, the next election would be held under a new constitution under which they would have no chance of victory, although he was honour bound to have a referendum of the white electorate before introducing such a constitution. This might have to be matched by referenda among other racial groups.

International reactions to events in South Africa

President de Klerk said that, on sanctions, he was not like a dog begging for a biscuit, seeking rewards for actions which South Africa had taken. Rather he wanted the widest possible international recognition and support for what had been done, leading to a fundamental revision of attitudes towards South Africa. He wanted to convince people that South Africa had crossed the Rubicon and that the time had come to normalise relations. The main obstacle to this was the ANC's attempt to internationalise the negotiating process. Their ideas of a United Nations Resolution, election of a constituent assembly and appointment of an interim government were simply not acceptable. South Africa was an independent sovereign country and the present

government would continue to govern constitutionally. He thought that Europe offered the best hope of securing recognition for what he was doing. He almost despaired of the United States. The Prime Minister interjected that she despaired of the Commonwealth without any "almost". The President continued that, despite his request to the contrary, the Americans had arranged his visit and that of Mr. Mandela back to back. This would be very unfortunate since they would be forced into a battle for public attention. Mr. Mandela would certainly be invited to address Congress while he would not. This would be a bad situation. He was not asking the Prime Minister to intervene but simply explaining why he attached such importance to making a success of his European tour. The Prime Minister said that one could argue that Mandela would be honour bound to stick to the agreements which he had made with President de Klerk when it came to public pronouncements in the United States. We were reaching the point where he could no longer say one thing in private and another in public. President de Klerk said he could tell the Prime Minister in confidence that he was discussing with Mandela the possibility that both of them might change the dates for their prospective visits to the US.

The Prime Minister said that the President's visit to Europe had clearly been very successful and there were signs that sanctions were beginning to slip. President de Klerk agreed that sanctions were crumbling. He wanted to make one point about that. He could understand a phased approach to lifting sanctions, but did not like a check-list approach under which specific actions by the South African Government would meet a specific response. He was trying to put together a practical package of measures comprising the early release of a fairly impressive number of political prisoners: return of well-known ANC figures: repeal of the Separate Amenities Act: and probably some movement on the state of emergency. He hoped that such a package would have a considerable impact. The Prime Minister said that it certainly ought to, although the President should not discount the need of European governments to save their own faces.

President de Klerk continued that he had been agreeably surprised by the warm welcome which he had received from President Mitterrand. Mitterrand had said that if South Africa took concrete steps to implement what had been promised, France would be ready to normalise relations fully. He had mentioned the possibility of despatching a French rugby XV to South Africa. He had acknowledged that South Africa could not be expected to get rid of apartheid in a trice. His meeting with Rocard had also been very positive, with Rocard saying that it was an emotional experience for him to change his stance on South Africa. The President continued that he had been able to consolidate positive relations with Portugal and regarded Cavaco Silva as a personal friend. In Greece, Mitsotakis had said that he could not take the lead in removing sanctions but would support steps to alleviate them. He had found Martens rather reserved and ill-informed, but had been impressed by Delors, who had said that the Commission would look at South Africa purely from the point of view of economic principles. He hoped for a reasonably positive response from his visits to Germany,

Switzerland, Spain and Italy. His two key requirements were to be able to demonstrate support for his policies, so as to reinforce moderates in South Africa, and to attract investment.

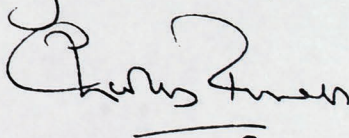
Southern Africa

President de Klerk said that South Africa was deeply involved in efforts to achieve reconciliation in Mozambique and Angola. In the former, Chissano was now asking for direct talks with Renamo and South Africa would try to facilitate these. In Angola, Savimbi was once again in a strong position militarily and there was some possibility of a meeting between him and Dos Santos. His general conclusion was that, apart from Mugabe, the whole of Southern Africa was being reasonable.

Prime Minister's visit to South Africa

President de Klerk said that he very much hoped the Prime Minister would pay a visit to South Africa. The Prime Minister said that she would love to come but would not want to make things more difficult for President de Klerk by attracting demonstrations. It might be better for her to stand back for the moment and at least wait until negotiations were under way. There was too much at stake to risk making matters worse at a crucial moment in South Africa. President de Klerk wondered whether it might not be an idea for the Prime Minister to come to South Africa in the context of a visit to several Southern African countries such as Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland. If he was asked by the press, he would say that the Prime Minister had an open invitation to visit South Africa and the two of them would consult about the appropriate time.

I am copying this letter to John Gieve (H.M. Treasury), Simon Webb (Ministry of Defence), Martin Stanley (Department of Trade and Industry) and Myles Wickstead (Overseas Development Administration).

Yours sincerely,


(CHARLES POWELL)

J.S. Wall, Esq., L.V.O.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.