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PRIME MINISTER

Pik Botha telephoned me about an hour ago. President de Klerk still hopes very much to telephone you at 1345. But things are moving so quickly that he may not be able to get to the telephone then. In case that happens, he wants you to know that he will be announcing at 3.00 pm our time this afternoon that Mandela will be freed tomorrow.

I said that I knew you would very much welcome this news. We had a statement ready to release as soon as an announcement was made, and I was sure the South African government would find it helpful. Pik Botha asked me to convey to you the South African government's appreciation for your strong stand over the years.

I suggest that you be ready to take the call at 1345 and we give it about 5 minutes. If nothing comes through, it would be better then to continue with your programme. De Klerk is likely then to telephone you next week some time. The important thing is that you have been informed in advance and we will make this clear to the press.

Knipe

CHARLES POWELL

10 February 1990 (1.10pm)

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SECRET
UNTIL 1500 HOURS GMT TODAY



10 DOWNING STREET

LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

10 February 1990

SOUTH AFRICA

I had a call this morning from President de Klerk's office to say that the President would wish to speak to the Prime Minister in the course of this afternoon, in advance of an important announcement which he would be making. I arranged for the Prime Minister, who is in Torquay, to be available at 1345.

The South African Foreign Minister subsequently telephoned me to say that events were moving very fast and it was not absolutely certain that the President would be able to telephone the Prime Minister as planned. In case that was not possible, he would be grateful if I would inform her that the President would be making an announcement at 3pm GMT today that Nelson Mandela would be freed tomorrow. The process of release was already in motion. I said that I knew the Prime Minister would very much welcome this news. We had a very positive statement ready which we would release to the press as soon as President de Klerk had made his statement. Pik Botha said that would be very useful. He would be grateful if I would also pass to the Prime Minister his Government's enormous appreciation for her strong stand over the years.

I am alerting the No. 10 press office to the likelihood of an announcement at 3pm. I enclose a copy of the statement by the Prime Minister which we will make available to the press from here as soon as the formal announcement has been made.

C. D. POWELL

The Resident Clerk,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

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STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER ON THE
ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE RELEASE OF NELSON MANDELA

I very warmly welcome the announcement today of the unconditional release of Mr Nelson Mandela. This is a goal towards which the British Government and many others in Britain have worked long and hard. President de Klerk is to be congratulated on his wise decision and on the other bold and courageous steps he has taken to enable negotiations to take place in which all parties can participate to work out a new democratic constitution for South Africa which - as Mr de Klerk has said - must have the support of the majority of South Africans. This opens the way for all the parties, including the ANC, to enter into negotiations to that end and we urge them to do so. It is essential to find a peaceful solution to South Africa's problems. There could be no greater prize for all South Africans.

In the period when the South African Government took steps of which we strongly disapproved, we condemned those actions and introduced a number of measures designed to bring home to the South African Government the strength of our disapproval. Now that the new President of South Africa manifestly is trying to achieve a political solution to South Africa's problems, it is right to give practical encouragement to that process.

We have already made clear that we believe that it is now right, instead of discouraging, actively to encourage scientific, academic and cultural contacts with South Africa.

Given that President de Klerk has now announced the release of Nelson Mandela, has already set free other long-term security prisoners, has unbanned the ANC and other political organisations and is offering to lift the State of Emergency if conditions of calm are maintained, we believe that it no longer makes sense to discourage new investment in South Africa - a restraint which in our case in any event has been voluntary - and we shall be discussing this with our EC Partners.

We do not believe that in these changed circumstances it is reasonable to discourage tourism or visits to South Africa: it is for individual British citizens to make up their own minds on that score.

In short, we believe that the steps President de Klerk, has taken merit a positive practical response. He has opened the way for all the parties in South Africa to find a negotiated solution to the country's problems and in doing so he has created a new sense of hope and optimism about the country's future.

NO. 10 DOWNING STREET

10 FEBRUARY 1990