



10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

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From the Private Secretary

13 February 1990

See Stapler,

SOUTH AFRICA

You may be interested to know that Mr Bernie Grant, M.P., telephoned me out of the blue today to say that he would like to see the Prime Minister to report on his visit to South Africa and brief encounter with Mr Mandela. The Prime Minister agreed to meet him after Questions today.

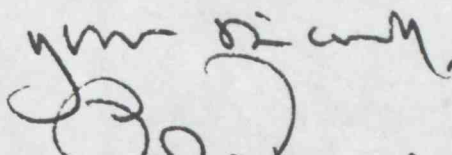
Mr Grant said that he had spent only two or three minutes with Mr Mandela. It was clear that he was trying to conduct a delicate balancing act. He had to keep some of the more radical elements in the ANC under control, while maintaining support for his policy of discussions with President de Klerk. Mr Mandela had made clear that he wanted sanctions against South Africa maintained. They had been imposed as a response to apartheid, not to his imprisonment. They should therefore continue until apartheid was removed. The Prime Minister's statements about lifting sanctions created some problems for Mr Mandela. He wondered whether it might be possible for her to be less vocal on the subject and give Mr Mandela time to make progress.

The Prime Minister explained to Mr Grant the various categories of sanctions and measures against South Africa. She had spoken only of removing some of the voluntary measures. She was particularly concerned to lift the voluntary ban on investment, because that would help create jobs in South Africa. The Prime Minister continued that she had watched both Mr Mandela's first speech and his press conference. He was clearly a most dignified and distinguished man, but the speech had been rather a disappointment in its references to armed struggle and nationalisation. She thought that President de Klerk would have found little comfort in it. It was very important to give President de Klerk encouragement to continue down the road on which he had started. This was why she was determined to relax some of the measures. There was no doubt that he had a problem with hard-liners in the white community.

Mr Grant suggested that Mr Mandela's statements should be seen as bargaining points: the ANC did not have much leverage. As regards sanctions, black people in South Africa did not understand the finer points: they thought the Prime Minister was in favour of the lifting of all sanctions immediately. She was seen as protecting the whites in South Africa.

Mr Grant ended by saying that he had one practical proposal to make. He wondered whether the Government could not give some modest aid to the various different political groups in South Africa to help them prepare for the task of entering negotiations with the South African Government. This might cover both equipment and training. He noted that the Government was providing similar assistance in some Eastern European countries to help democracy get established. The Prime Minister said she would consider the idea. It would have to be available to organisations of every political persuasion, not just the ANC and MDM.

The Prime Minister would be grateful if the Foreign Secretary could give consideration to this suggestion. She sees some merit in it, particularly if we could combine with one or two other European countries and ensure that any assistance also reached groups like Inkhatha. She would be interested to have any comments from Sir Robin Renwick.


Charles Powell

Stephen Wall Esq
Foreign and Commonwealth Office