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From the Private Secretary

9 January 1990

SOUTH AFRICA

The Prime Minister had a talk this morning with Sir Robin Renwick about South Africa. It may be helpful if I record one or two points which could be relevant to the meeting which I know the Foreign Secretary is holding this afternoon.

The Prime Minister confirmed that she would want us to respond rapidly to the release of Mandela with a positive statement, and by rescinding or relaxing a number of measures against South Africa, starting with relatively minor ones on which the decision rests with us alone. An example would be the re-establishment of cultural and scientific contacts. She would hope to be able to include one or two others. She was inclined to agree with Sir Robin that ending the voluntary ban on new investment, by making clear that such decisions would be left entirely to the judgment of individual companies, should be reserved until the South African Government take further steps to meet the EPG conditions. In short, she was content with a step-by-step process of rescinding measures, while encouraging other Governments to follow suit. She looks forward to receiving the promised paper on this.

The Prime Minister also agreed with Sir Robin that we should give high priority to persuading South Africans to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. She noted that Article 4 of that Treaty would, in due course, put us under an obligation to consider requests by South Africa for limited co-operation in the nuclear area. She regards this as acceptable.

The Prime Minister would be content for Sir Robin to tell President de Klerk, when he sees him later this month, that she would be happy to receive him at Chequers if he visits Europe in the Spring. Sir Robin would need to make clear that it would be in the interests of both sides for such a visit to be a success (ie coded language for release of Mandela and a partial lifting of the state of emergency being a condition for coming to Chequers).

The Prime Minister raised the possibility of paying a visit to South Africa once Mandela was released. She would not want to rush in, appearing to claim credit for his release. It

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would probably be better to wait until after President de Klerk's visit to the United Kingdom. But we should keep sufficient flexibility to permit an earlier visit if the situation seemed to warrant it. Meanwhile, plans should go ahead for the Foreign Secretary to visit South Africa following Namibia's independence celebrations.

The Prime Minister accepted that it would be right for her to offer to see Mandela once he was released, and for the Foreign Secretary to see Sisulu were he to visit the United Kingdom. She acknowledged that it might well be necessary later in the year for there to be a high level contact with the external wing of the ANC. But she would wish to reserve a decision on this until we see how they respond to Mandela's release and an offer of negotiations by the South African Government.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Sir Robin Butler.

CHARLES POWELL

J S Wall Esq
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

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PRIME MINISTER

MEETING WITH SIR ROBIN RENWICK

Robin Renwick is back in London for consultations and is coming to see you tomorrow morning. He will bring you up to date on developments in South Africa since CHOGM last October. The main points to discuss are:

- release of Nelson Mandela. It seems increasingly clear that this is now imminent, probably only weeks away. It is crucial that we get our response right. Assuming he is released without restrictions, we should move promptly to rescind some of the bilateral measures we have taken against South Africa and to encourage others to embark on the process of dismantling sanctions. You have already asked the Foreign Office to do some work on this, but they need constant prodding: there is a reluctance to get ahead of others. You will find Robin Renwick sympathetic to your point of view on this and able to advise on which measures we should relax to gain most impact;

- reform in South Africa. You might explore with him how rapidly he expects the South African government to dismantle apartheid legislation, notably the Separate Amenities and Group Areas Act (and, probably in the longer term, the Population Registration Act). In some ways more important still, how far has de Klerk developed his thinking on constitutional reform? Is there some contribution we can make from here? The impression one gets is that there is no catalyst within South Africa around which a scheme of constitutional development can be worked out. They don't want outside interference, but they do need help;

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

- 2 -

- your possible visit to South Africa. You will want to consult Robin on how quickly we should go about proposing a visit by you to South Africa after Mandela's release. We do not want to appear to be jumping aboard a bandwagon or rushing in to claim credit. Rather, we want a visit to give a signal to the rest of the international community on the need for a positive response to developments within South Africa. It may not be too early for Robin to begin to discuss this with trusted contacts in South Africa;

- Namibia. He will be able to give you an account of progress since the elections with drawing up a constitution which adequately safeguards the interests of all groups. We have, of course, offered military training.

I am seeing Robin Renwick tonight and will let you know if there are other points he wants to raise.

C.D.R.

C. D. POWELL

8 January 1990

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