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10 DOWNING STREET  
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21/2/90

Charles Powell

Prime Minister

MB

Ian Gow has sent the enclosed memorandum from Sir Laurens Van der Post which he wishes you to see

MB

Prime Minister

This is a bit rambling. I have talked to Laurens. His worry is that we are all focussing too much on Mandela & the ANC, and forgetting all the other groups & organizations which have fought against apartheid,

in particular Buthelezi.

I have assured him this  
is not so: it's just that  
Mandela is the flavour of  
the moment.

I have said that  
you would be happy to  
see Levens: but he has a  
very bad back - at present,  
I would prefer to wait for  
a bit.

C.D. 12/1/72.



27 CHELSEA TOWERS  
CHELSEA MANOR GARDENS  
LONDON SW3 5PN

Given me  
by Sir L van der P.  
14.2.

Memo for the Rt. Hon. Ian Gow, MP, TD.

13th February 1990

From: Sir Laurens van der Post, CBE

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I think I can best begin by giving you this express comment I have just received from South Africa, from one of the most perceptive participants on the scene who had also been shown the letter of which I gave you a copy.

Referring to the principal recipient and the brief contact he had with him, he says: "I was surprised to have been able to make contact at all. He should have been in America at an important meeting but cancelled at the last minute because he had wind of what de Klerk was going to say, as I gather did most of the Western leaders. President Bush telephoned Mrs. Luthuli (widow of Chief Luthuli, Nobel Prizewinner and a founder of the ANC) and told her that de Klerk was going to announce the unbanning of the ANC, before de Klerk spoke. Our friend obviously had to rally around and I have not been able to see him and my only contact with him has been the brief telephone exchange of which I told you. All I can say is that Mrs. Thatcher and President Bush wasted no time in inviting de Klerk and Mandela - which made me wonder whether your Prime Minister had read, let alone received, that most telling letter of yours. Whatever the case, it would seem to me that "die koel is deur die kerk" (literally in Afrikaans "the bullet is through the church" - an idiom for saying "the shot has found its target and is lethal") and it may all be too late, anyhow. By having moved so quickly, so many people and organisations have been caught off guard, even the sports things will be in total disarray, far more than they have ever been, and all the other meetings we planned could well be scuttled. Yet the necessity for meetings would seem to be greater than ever, to ensure that the national dialogue runs on, and runs more deeply.

"But I fear the nitty gritty of achieving that will be lost for our people in the euphoria of the moment. If Mr. Bush and Mrs. Thatcher can utter what they have uttered so immediately after de Klerk's pronouncement of his initiatives, then there is little chance left to "hasten slowly" among the lesser mortals of our peoples."

At the back of this, as among many of the people I value and know who have fought the battle against apartheid (some of us for many more years than Mandela) is a general questioning of the judgement of Bush and, to a certain extent, even our revered Prime Minister. It was added to by the Minister of State's performance in the House of Commons on Monday when, making all allowances for the fact that he was terribly provoked, he gave as justification for the Prime Minister's call to end sanctions the need for consolidating de Klerk's position lest he be swept out of office by his extremists.



There may have been no harm, perhaps, if this one-sided justification were put in the context of something to this effect: "We justify the Prime Minister's call for the abolition of sanctions above all else for encouraging at this moment the many black leaders who have fought against apartheid in the heat and dust of everyday events in South Africa while the gallant Mr. Nelson Mandela was in goal, and his colleagues were in exile beyond the Limpopo. These black leaders, if ruled by a sense of expediency, could have extracted great financial rewards for themselves and their followers if they had conformed to the wishes of various apartheid governments in the last thirty years. But they have maintained their identity and self respect against all pressures, and resolutely refused consultations with government until Mr. Mandela and other political prisoners had been released.

*of the - 2nd, the largest number in South Africa*  
"Without exception these leaders attacked sanctions - which Mr. Mandela himself may have attacked if he had been exposed, as they were, to the diminishing standards of living of their people, their worsening economic prospects and growing unemployment, not only among themselves but among the independent states beyond the Limpopo."

"These are the leaders who need the recognition and who at this vital moment have been diminished by the unseemly haste to join in what this letter I have quoted describes as "euphoria"."

"It is all the more tragic because Mandela, in what is regarded as a speech read on Sunday from a document he and the ANC composed between them and was in essence a political tract, cut himself down to fallible, political size and did much to destroy the mythology built up around him. Why could not the world leaders wait to detach the man from the myth before they rushed into their gushing reaction?"

I find there is a general feeling that our Prime Minister has been badly advised by the Foreign Office and it would help to redeem the image which she deserves and which, as I told you, is so important, if she were, say on Thursday when the Opposition is bound to raise this matter again, to insert in her reply to Questions a tribute to those leaders who have behaved and are even now behaving in the way I have described, with great restraint and on whom will fall the almost superhuman task of containing the ANC aspirations.

It is clear that Mandela's years in prison did not give him the a-political integrity which imprisonment so often confers on men. He deliberately elected to settle for a collective integrity, if one can call it that, and in a statement which is marked with the language of Marxist duplicity pretends he could be two contradictory things at one and the same moment.



There must be no illusions, make no mistake about it, he is going to be "two" now, with an ANC set on a course to dominate the political scene and work for a kind of suffrage which will enable them to create a one-party state by ostensibly democratic means.

Only a deep, sustained consultation with all the people of South Africa can contain such a thrust. So far what Mr. de Klerk has done, and this impetuous reception of Mr. Mandela, will make people believe that there is no solution for the problem of South Africa except something negotiated between Mr. Mandela's ANC and Mr. de Klerk's Afrikaner-dom.

Both de Klerk and Mandela need recognition of their qualities, but not this form of political worship which has been inflicted on them. There were many sinister strains in Mandela's speech which I cannot orchestrate, but to all of us who know our South Africa, and our Africa, the alarm bells are ringing at Mr. de Klerk's choice of a dancing partner.

We pin our hope on a reawakening of the Prime Minister's unique intuition which caused her to pause and banish her meeting with the press last Sunday. What sort of advice made her falter in her evaluation of the necessities of the total and fateful South African scene?

Sir Laurens van der Post CBE  
13th February 1990

at the moment Mandela is a myth  
not a man - a myth which sums up all  
of our aspirations, for our own good and  
his, we must help to separate  
the man from the myth as soon  
as possible - a task he began  
on Sunday by letting his name  
and from our ambivalence in  
that speech of his in  
Cape Town