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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Telephone Conversation Between the President
and President F.W. de Klerk of South Africa

PARTICIPANTS: The President
F.W. de Klerk, President of South Africa
Interpreter: None
Notetaker: Walter H. Kansteiner

DATE, TIME December 11, 1991, 1:10 - 1:40 pm EST
AND PLACE: The Situation Room

The President: Hello, Mr. President I'd like to bring you up to date on the Mandela visit and check in with you. (U)

President de Klerk: Thank you. You must be getting ready for your campaign. (U)

The President: It's not yet officially off and running. We probably won't really get started until February. (U)

President de Klerk: Well we are certainly holding thumbs up for you over here. Your victory would assure global security, and I want you to know that we're behind you all the way. (U)

The President: Thank you, I appreciate that. You know we have some difficult economic problems and that's always complicated for an incumbent. (U)

I'd like to give you a readout on the Mandela visit. I want to stay close and discuss these things with you and share our information. (U)

Mandela is optimistic on the negotiating proces. He perceives the parties moving closer together. He filled us in on the Convention that is starting soon. (U)

There were also a couple of specifics I'd like to mention:

Mandela is concerned about the violence and thinks the government can do more to stop it. And he talked about political prisoners, but I understand there are to be some releases? (U)

President de Klerk: Yes, we've had a breakthrough on the Bops prisoners. All but one are released. I don't want to claim public credit, but we pushed very hard behind the scenes. (U)

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The President: That's very encouraging. On economic issues, I think Mr. Mandela believes that free enterprise is the right way to go, but he's reluctant to send the right signals. We told him that a commitment to free markets is crucial, and Western investment was not going to flow until the ANC was clear and serious on this. (Ø)

President de Klerk: We appreciate that message. The ANC is playing a double game. They are sometimes pragmatic, but they must live up to the expectations that they have created among their followers. (Ø)

On political developments we are making headway with the December 20 meeting. I feel this process is on track but we can't allow the authority of government to be undermined while the negotiations are in progress. (Ø)

The President: Exactly. (U)

President de Klerk: So I share his optimism on our progress. Things are moving into place. (U)

The President: He did mention that there is a difference in terminology "transitional" and "interim." Different terms but similar structure. (U)

President de Klerk: Yes. We favor "transitional." But whichever, you must not have unconstitutional government. We cannot suspend the present constitution without having a new one. So if we go with the transitional arrangements, we'll need to implement the changes even if they require changes in the present constitution. (Ø)

The President: Well good luck, Mr. President. If there's anything we can do please call it to my attention. (Ø)

President de Klerk: I am concerned with an impression that might be in your Administration. And that is our urgent need for access to an IMF facility. It might appear we don't need it, but we cannot have political transformation without the underpinnings of a strong economy. What we need is to remove restrictions on the financial side; we are in dire need of some assurances if and when we go to the IMF. We need to know if you will be willing to support us. Perhaps some assurances, a letter, or whatever. Then we can take steps to stimulate our economy and put money into housing, education and health. (Ø)

We can't wait a year or 18 months -- which is when we'll probably go into a balance of payments deficit. We need assurances on this soon if we are to move on with our social spending. We need to know the IMF will be there and support us (Ø)

The President: O.K. We'll look into it and I'll talk with the Secretary of the Treasury. (Ø)

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President de Klerk: One other issue I thought we'd talk about is the problem the ANC has with the SACP. The SACP believes that the Marxist system in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union was Marxism applied incorrectly; that Marxism is still the answer. Of course, this is difficult for the ANC because the SACP has so many of its members as leaders of the ANC. (Ø)

The President: That's regrettable. Who took Slovo's place, a young fellow? (Ø)

President de Klerk: Yes. Chris Hani. He's capable and not to be disregarded. He's the lynch-pin between the ANC and SACP. He runs the MK, the military part of the ANC. (Ø)

What is your assessment of the Russian situation? (U)

The President: We don't have a clear picture yet. We don't think we should shape the answer. We are concerned with the nuclear safety question. (Ø)

Gorbachev will find it difficult to hold on with this Commonwealth. (Ø)

President de Klerk: Do you think the USSR will be replaced by that? (Ø)

The President: It's heading that way. (Ø)

President de Klerk: Thank you on your positive attitude on the missile problem. As you know, we have a positive attitude on using our technology for peaceful technology only. We want to be part and apply to the MTCR. I believe our technical experts will be meeting. (Ø)

The President: Yes, they ought to be good talks, in January or February, I believe. I think the technical experts can make a lot of progress. (Ø)

I remain respectful of all that you have done and what you are doing now. We want to be helpful so let me know if there's something I can do. (Ø)

President de Klerk: Well thank you. The IMF thing is very important to us. (Ø)

The media could be on to this call, is it all right if we set it straight with a statement without getting specific? (U)

The President: I have no objections at all. (U)

Merry Christmas to you and your wife. (U)

President de Klerk: Merry Christmas. Goodbye. (U)

-- End of Conversation --

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