

## SITTING OF MONDAY, 12 FEBRUARY 1990

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## IN THE CHAIR: MR BARON CRESPO

*President*

(The sitting was opened at 5 p.m.)

## 1. Resumption of the session

**PRESIDENT.** — I declare resumed the session of the European Parliament adjourned on 19 January 1990.<sup>1</sup>

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**PRESIDENT.** — I have received in accordance with Rule 30 of the Rules of Procedure a motion of censure against the Commission presented by Mr Le Pen on behalf of the Technical Group of the European Right. This has been printed and distributed (Doc. B3-272/90). The procedure for dealing with this will be dealt with as part of the establishment of the agenda.

<sup>1</sup> Approval of the Minutes of the previous sitting: see Minutes.

## 2. Statement by the President

**PRESIDENT.** — As you know, the South African Government yesterday released Nelson Mandela after almost 28 years of imprisonment. Without wishing to anticipate the debate which Parliament will probably hold on Thursday, I should like to express the satisfaction of the European Parliament at this development which paves the way for the introduction of a genuinely democratic system in South Africa.

I should like to read to you the telegram which I sent personally yesterday to Mr Mandela. This read as follows:

‘Personally and on behalf of the European Parliament, I should like to express to you and your family our sincere pleasure that you have regained your liberty. We all share your joy and emotion. For many years the European Parliament has been supporting all the efforts made to secure your release and has totally rejected the system of apartheid. Important work awaits you and we wish you success in your struggle to establish by peaceful means a multiracial society in South Africa in

## PRESIDENT

which the various communities can live together in harmony. The European Parliament would be extremely pleased if you could visit us in the near future as the first recipient of the Sakharov Prize...

*(Applause)*

for freedom of expression...

*(Applause)*

which was presented to your nephew because you were in prison.'

**FORD (S).** — Mr President, I wish to make a comment on the statement you have just made. I express the support of the Socialist Group for the telegram you have sent and certainly I and, I hope, the whole of Parliament would like Nelson Mandela to attend this Parliament sometime in the near future to address us and formally receive his Sakharov Prize. I would also like to ask, under Rule 56, for a statement from the Council of Ministers with respect to the request that has been made by Mrs Thatcher on the issue of economic sanctions and which is going to be discussed on 20 February. It is important that the Council of Ministers goes on record here following a debate by Parliament on this issue. Of course, the view of the Socialist Group is very clear. We are totally opposed to any relaxation of the sanctions at this stage, while the apartheid regime remains in force in South Africa.

We also want to raise the issue with the Council of Ministers of an approach to the United Nations to make 11 February Mandela Day throughout the world when the issue of political prisoners can be brought to the fore politically with an annual commemoration.

Finally, I believe it would be better for this Parliament to have a proper debate on the subject than to take the issues under urgencies when, of course, the Commission replies but the Council, which is vital in this matter, does not.

*(Applause)*

**PRESIDENT.** — Ladies and gentlemen, the group chairmen agreed this morning that this was not the point to embark on a debate on this subject.

**MAHER (LDR).** — Mr President, on a point of order, I would like to protest at the ring of steel which was constructed around this Parliament today on the occasion of a peaceful and orderly farmers' demonstration. One could easily get the impression that these farmers were some kind of terrorists who were going to wreck the Parliament or attack people. That is not the case. Farmers are normally peaceful people. The complete over-reaction by the authorities in this regard was very provocative.

*(Applause)*

**PRESIDENT.** — Ladies and gentlemen, I have commended the President of COPA for the self-discipline shown by that organization.

**PIQUET (CG).** — *(F)* Mr President, at the meeting of the group chairmen this morning we noted the telegram which you had sent to Mr Mandela, and we concluded, I believe, that all the chairmen and political groups fully endorsed the telegram and the proposal it contained. Following the example set by my friend from the Socialist Group, I would like to express my satisfaction at the invitation which you have extended to Mr Mandela, thus responding so positively to my letter to you on the subject.

Like my friend, I hope that our Parliament will have a chance to say how committed it is to the abolition of apartheid in South Africa and how Mr Mandela's presence will be for our Parliament a great moment in the advance of democracy in that country.

*(Applause)*

**SANTOS, Maria (V).** — *(PT)* Mr President, this morning at the meeting of the chairmen of the political groups, we talked about the need to have speeches from representatives of all the political groups today in this plenary on the release of Nelson Mandela, which not only symbolizes the release of a man who was imprisoned for so many years and whose freedom of expression both as an individual and as a member of society was restricted, but also the release of a man who has made an invaluable contribution on the major issues of freedom, human rights and self-determination.

Mr President, without our vote, the meeting of the chairmen of the political groups decided that we would not make speeches. Nevertheless, I would like to support the concerns that were raised and say that the Green Group considers this momentous act, namely, the release of Nelson Mandela, to be extremely important and significant at the present time. On the other hand, we are pleased that he is coming to the European Parliament to receive the prize, so that we will really be able to show that we totally identify with his struggle — since this was not possible today — and so that the importance of the South African people's struggle against the heinous crime of apartheid is not forgotten. Mr President, we are reaffirming here what we said this morning at the meeting of the chairmen of the political groups.

*(Applause)*

**COLOMINAVAL (S).** — *(ES)* Mr President, as you are well aware, the first obligation of a member is to be present at the plenary sessions of his parliament, and I therefore wish to express on behalf of the Socialist Group our concern, to put it no more strongly, at the repeated organization by the Council of Ministers of conciliation meetings with the Parliament on the same dates as the plenary session. It has happened again today, and I call upon the Bureau of the Parliament to intervene so as in future to avoid the organization of budgetary conciliation meetings in Brussels during the Parliament part-session week.

**KILLILEA (RDE).** — Mr President, I agree with my colleague, Mr Maher, on the matter that he raised. But I also wish to raise another matter, Mr President, concerning the death last week of 27-year-old leading seaman Michael Quinn who lost his life near Castletownbere while attempting to rescue 16 sailors from the Spanish trawler, *Garzotia*. She was one of a number of Spanish trawlers which put to sea from Castletownbere in gale force winds to evade fishery inspectors who were in the area at the time. It has emerged that the Spanish trawler not only was fishing illegally, but was actually unregistered and has been unregistered since 1988. It is tragic that the sea rescue services are asked to go out in such conditions to save the lives of fishermen who, because of their illegal actions, cannot take shelter in Irish ports.

The Spanish fishing fleet are notorious for their illegal fishing off our coasts. Only yesterday we had another instance off the coast of Donegal. We need new regulations, Mr President, with new severe penalties. Above all, we need a new and properly acknowledged law to deal with these illegal acts. I am asking you, Mr President, to request Commissioner Marin and his staff to do something about these outrageous and repeated acts off our coasts.

**GALLAND (LDR).** — (F) Mr President, on a point of order. I have listened carefully to those who have spoken on behalf of the various groups on the subject of Mr Mandela and who represent, of course, the feelings of virtually the whole of this Parliament.

I therefore believe I know why it was decided at the meeting of the group chairmen this morning that there would be no debate or statements from the groups on this subject and that the whole of Parliament would endorse the telegram which you have read out to us.

That being the case, Mr President, could you confirm that what I have been told about the group chairmen's decision is correct, and if so, how it can be ensured that this decision is respected once they are in the Chamber?

(Applause)

**PRESIDENT.** — Mr Galland, your remarks coincide with what I said at the beginning of the sitting but I share the responsibility with the group chairmen of seeking to bring some self-discipline into our proceedings. With rather doubtful results.

**SAKELLARIOU (S).** — (DE) Mr President, I think what Mr Ford has just proposed is very important. It is not enough that you had the good idea — on which I should like to congratulate you — of sending Mr Mandela a telegram: what we must also have is a debate in this Parliament, and we must require the Council and Commission to move in what we consider to be the right direction.

**PRESIDENT.** — I have already said that on Thursday, if this is approved as a subject for urgent debate, this matter can be discussed in depth.

**GUTIERREZ DÍAZ (GUE).** — (ES) Mr President, I should like to say on behalf of our group that we fully agree with everything you just said and that, therefore, I should not like our silence to be interpreted as a lack of support for the views which you have just expressed in Parliament on behalf of all the political groups.

**TINDEMANS (PPE).** — (NL) Mr President, we welcome the release of Nelson Mandela, the symbol of the struggle against apartheid, and we naturally endorse the telegram that you have compiled. I say this on behalf of the Christian-Democratic Group in this Parliament, whatever may have been said previously. Had this been done earlier, when, for example, the Council of the Community proposed this, when Sir Geoffrey Howe visited South Africa, a great deal of doom would have been avoided and all the conditions for major negotiations might have been satisfied. But there is still hope, we are on our way there, and my group welcomes what has happened.

(Applause)

**ANDREWS (RDE).** — Mr President, I congratulate you on the telegram you sent to Nelson Mandela. Yesterday was a highly emotional day for the Irish anti-apartheid movement, of which I am a member of long standing.

The act of President F.W. de Klerk in freeing Nelson Mandela was, as Mrs Thatcher said, a courageous step amid all the events that have occurred in South Africa. But it is only a beginning. Perhaps Mrs Thatcher, after her fulsome praise of Mr de Klerk, might think and act like a statesperson and release the Birmingham Six and thus become five times more statesman-like than Mr de Klerk.

### 3. Welcome

**PRESIDENT.** — On behalf of the European Parliament I should like to extend a most cordial welcome to the members of a delegation from the joint committee of the *Dáil* on derived Community law which is headed by Mr Barry. It has become an excellent practice of this committee to send regular delegations to Parliament so that its members can acquire firsthand knowledge of our procedures.

I had an opportunity to meet with the delegation and I am sure that all our colleagues will do everything possible to make its visit a complete success. I hope that all the members of the delegation and all the Irish