

Confidential Filing

Visit of Dr Van Zyl Slabbert:
Leader of the Opposition

SOUTH AFRICA

September 1980.

Referred to	Date	Referred to	Date	Referred to	Date	Referred to	Date
10-9-80							
12-9-80							
16-9-80							
20-9-80							
23-9-80							
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PREM 19/370

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FM PRETORIA 011310Z OCT 80

TO ROUTINE FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 379 OF 1 OCTOBER.

OUR TELNO 369: VAN ZYL SLABBERT.

1. SLABBERT'S RETURN LAST WEEKEND DID NOT ITSELF REOPEN CONTROVERSY OVER HIS CALL ON MRS THATCHER. BUT P W BOTHA IN HIS SPEECH ON 29 SEPTEMBER TO THE CAPE NATIONAL PARTY CONGRESS MADE A SLASHING ATTACK ON SLABBERT FOR, AMONG OTHER THINGS, CRITICISING THE SOUTH AFRICAN PRIME MINISTER IN HIS RECENT MEETINGS WITH LEADERS IN BRITAIN AND OTHER COUNTRIES QUOTE DR SLABBERT MUST EXPLAIN OPEN SQUARE BRACKETS HIS VIEWS CLOSE SQUARE BRACKETS TO SOUTH AFRICA, NOT TO GREAT BRITAIN OR ANYONE IN GREAT BRITAIN UNQUOTE.

2. THOUGH P W BOTHA WAS CAREFUL NOT TO COMPLAIN THAT MRS THATCHER HAD SEEN SLABBERT OR ABOUT THE WAY IN WHICH THE MEETING HAD BEEN ARRANGED, IT WAS CLEAR TO ME AS I LISTENED TO P W BOTHA THAT THE MEETING WITH MRS THATCHER STILL RANKLED AND THAT HE WAS INTENT ON MAKING POLITICAL CAPITAL OUT OF IT.

3. SLABBERT HAS SINCE ISSUED A STATEMENT THAT HE HAS A PERFECT RIGHT TO CRITICISE P W BOTHA IN HIS DISCUSSIONS WITH OVERSEAS LEADERS. HE HAD ALREADY MADE SUCH CRITICISMS IN MUCH STRONGER TERMS IN SOUTH AFRICA.

4. NO ONE HAS RAISED THE SUBJECT WITH ME DIRECTLY SINCE MR LUCE'S TALK WITH PIK BOTHA.

LEAHY

[THIS TELEGRAM WAS NOT ADVANCED]
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PS/LPS
PS/MR LUCE
PS/PUS
SIR E YOUDE
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GRS 100
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FM PRETORIA 241430Z SEP 80
TO IMMEDIATE FCO
TELEGRAM NUMBER 369 OF 24 SEPTEMBER 1980.
INFO IMMEDIATE MBABANE (FOR PS/MR LUCE).

FROM REID

YOUR TELNO 178: VISIT OF DR VAN ZYL SLABBERT

1. THE STORM HERE HAS NOW SUBSIDED THOUGH IT COULD BLOW UP AGAIN WHEN SLABBERT RETURNS, PROBABLY LATER THIS WEEK. THE PAPERS WERE SILENT YESTERDAY AND BEELD IS THE ONLY PAPER TODAY (24 SEPTEMBER) TO REPORT SLABBERT'S CALL ON SIR IAN GILMOUR, AND DOES SO BRIEFLY ON AN INSIDE PAGE.
2. FOURIE DID NOT MENTION THE MATTER WHEN I CALLED ON HIM THIS MORNING ON OTHER BUSINESS.
3. WE HAVE STILL HAD NO PRESS ENQUIRIES.

LEAHY

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S. Africa

23 September 1980

We spoke about your letter of 22 September enclosing a draft telegram to Pretoria following the visit of Dr. Van Zyl Slabbert.

In the Prime Minister's absence, we agreed that the proposed instructions should now be issued.

M. A. PATTISON

M.A. Arthur, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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OO PRETORIA
OO MBABANE
GRS 267
CONFIDENTIAL
FM FCO 231503Z SEP 80
TO IMMEDIATE PRETORIA
TELEGRAM NUMBER 178 OF 23 SEPTEMBER
INFO IMMEDIATE MBABANE (FOR PS/MR LUCE)

na
M/D

YOUR TELNO 358 : VISIT OF DR VAN ZYL SLABBERT

1. IF PIK BOTHA, OR FOURIE, REVERTS TO THIS, YOU SHOULD SAY THAT THE PRIME MINISTER AGREED TO SEE DR SLABBERT IN ACCORDANCE WITH HER NORMAL CUSTOM OF SEEING MANY VISITING OPPOSITION LEADERS. SINCE (AS IS ALSO USUAL PRACTICE) THE SOUTH AFRICAN AMBASSADOR ACCOMPANIED HIM, THERE WAS NO QUESTION OF GOING BEHIND THE BACK OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT. THEY WERE WELL AWARE OF THE CALL IN ADVANCE AND CANNOT CLAIM THAT ANYTHING UNDERHAND OCCURRED. YOU SHOULD VIGOROUSLY REJECT ANY SUGGESTION OF THE SLIGHTEST IMPROPRIETY.

2. YOU SHOULD REFER PRESS ENQUIRIES TO NEWS DEPARTMENT WHO, IN AGREEMENT WITH NO 10, WILL SAY IF ASKED THAT IT IS COMMON PRACTICE FOR THE PRIME MINISTER (AND OTHER MINISTERS) TO RECEIVE VISITING OPPOSITION LEADERS (AND, IF THE POINT IS RAISED, FOR THEM TO BE ACCOMPANIED BY THEIR COUNTRY'S AMBASSADOR). FOR YOUR OWN INFORMATION WE HAVE A REPORT THAT DR SLABBERT HAS TOLD THE PRESS THAT HE WAS ANNOYED TO BE ACCOMPANIED ON HIS CALL BY A QUOTE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT SPY UNQUOTE. HE MADE NO SUCH COMPLAINT WHEN DAY GAVE HIM LUNCH ON 19 SEPTEMBER AND INDEED SPOKE WARMLY OF HIS CALL ON THE PRIME MINISTER.

3. THE LORD PRIVY SEAL WAS UNABLE TO SEE DR SLABBERT AS PLANNED ON 19 SEPTEMBER, BUT DID SO TODAY. ARRANGEMENTS WERE MADE THROUGH THE SOUTH AFRICAN EMBASSY.

IN THE EVENT, DR SLABBERT CAME UNACCOMPANIED. THEY HAD A FULL AND FRANK DISCUSSION OF SOUTHERN AFRICAN QUESTIONS AND NAMIBIA. RECORD FOLLOWS BY BAG.

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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

22 September 1980

Dear Michael

I enclose a copy of a telegram from HM Ambassador in Pretoria about the call by Dr Van Zyl Slabbert, the South African Opposition Leader, on the Prime Minister on 17 September.

I also enclose a draft of our proposed reply to Mr Leahy for the Prime Minister's approval.

Yours ever

Michael Arthur

M A Arthur

M O'D B Alexander Esq
10 Downing Street

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File No.....

Department

Drafted by
(Block Capitals)

Tel. Extn.....

OUTWARD

TELEGRAM

Security Classification
CONFIDENTIAL

Precedence
IMMEDIATE

DESKBYZ

FOR
COMMS. DEPT.
USE

Despatched

(Date)

(Time)Z

POSTBYZ

PREAMBLE

(Time of Origin) Z (G.M.T.)

(Restrictive Prefix)

(Security Class.)

(Caveat/
Privacy marking)

(Codeword)

(Deskby) Z

TO IMMEDIATE PRETORIA
(precedence) (post)

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AND TO (precedence/post)

AND SAVING TO

REPEATED TO (for info) IMMEDIATE MASERU (FOR PS./MR. LUCE)

SAVING TO (for info)

Distribution:-

- Limited
- SAfD
- News Dept
- PS
- PS/LPS
- PS/Mr Luce
- PS/PUS
- Mr Day

[TEXT]

YOUR TELNO 358: VISIT OF DR VAN ZYL SLABBERT

1. If Pik Botha, or Fourie, reverts to this, you should say that the Prime Minister agreed to see Dr Slabbert in accordance with her normal custom of seeing many visiting opposition leaders. Since (as is also usual practice) the South African Ambassador accompanied him, there was no question of going behind the back of the South African Government. They were well aware of the call in advance and cannot claim that anything underhand occurred. You should vigorously reject any suggestion of the slightest impropriety.

2. The LPS was unable to see Dr Slabbert on 19 September. We are now making arrangements for him to do so on 23

/September

Copies to:-

September.

3. You should refer press enquiries to News Dept who, in agreement with No 10, will say if asked that it is common practice for ^{the} Prime Minister (and other Ministers) to receive visiting Opposition Leaders (and, if the point is raised, for them to be accompanied by their country's ambassador). For your own information we have a report that Dr Slabbert has told the press that he was annoyed to be accompanied on his call by a quote South African Government spy unquote. He made no such complaint when Day gave him lunch on 19 September and indeed spoke warmly of his call on the Prime Minister.

NOTHING TO BE WRITTEN IN THIS MARGIN

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OO FCO DESKBY 191030Z

OO MASERU

GR 900

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DESKBY 191030Z

FM PRETORIA 190900Z SEP 80

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 358 OF 19 SEPTEMBER

INFO IMMEDIATE MASERU (FOR PS/MR LUCE)

MR LUCE'S VISIT.

1. MR LUCE, WHO LEFT EARLY THIS MORNING FOR MASERU, HAD MORE THAN TWO HOURS DISCUSSION ALONE WITH PIK BOTHA YESTERDAY EVENING 18 SEPTEMBER. THEY ALSO HAD FURTHER CONVERSATION DURING SUBSEQUENT DINNER AT MY HOUSE.
2. THE EARLIER DISCUSSION WAS A BIT OF AN UP AND DOWNER IN WHICH BOTH MINISTERS EXCHANGED SOME HARD BLOWS. DURING THE FIRST HALF OF IT PIK WAS GRIM AND AGGRESSIVE AND WORKED HIMSELF UP INTO A LATHER OVER THE HOPELESS ECONOMIC STATE OF AFRICAN COUNTRIES GENERALLY, BRITISH MISUNDERSTANDING OF THE AFRICAN PSYCHOLOGY, THE WRONGHEADEDNESS OF OUR POLICIES (QUOTE YOU DON'T CARE YOU WILL APPLY ECONOMIC SANCTIONS AGAINST US UNQUOTE), THE INIQUITIES OF WALDHEIM, AND THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF ALLOWING THE NAMIBIA NEGOTIATIONS TO GO ON AS THEY WERE (QUOTE WE HAVE REACHED THE END OF THE ROAD UNQUOTE). HOWEVER, WHEN MR LUCE TOOK HIM UP ON VARIOUS WILD STATEMENTS OF THIS KIND, HE BEGAN TO BACK-PEDAL AND DURING THE SECOND HALF OF THE CONVERSATION HE SPOKE IN A MUCH CALMER AND MORE REASONED WAY. I HAVE SEEN HIM ACT THIS WAY SEVERAL TIMES IN THE PAST.

NAMIBIA NEGOTIATIONS TO GO ON AS THEY WERE (QUOTE WE HAVE REACHED THE END OF THE ROAD UNQUOTE). HOWEVER, WHEN MR LUCE TOOK HIM UP ON VARIOUS WILD STATEMENTS OF THIS KIND, HE BEGAN TO BACK-PEDAL AND DURING THE SECOND HALF OF THE CONVERSATION HE SPOKE IN A MUCH CALMER AND MORE REASONED WAY. I HAVE SEEN HIM ACT THIS WAY SEVERAL TIMES IN THE PAST.

3. I AM REPORTING PIK'S REMARKS ON NAMIBIA IN A SEPARATE TELEGRAM WITH A WIDER DISTRIBUTION (WITH A CAUTIONARY NOTE SUGGESTING THAT SOME THINGS HE SAID SHOULD BE TAKEN WITH A LARGE PINCH OF SALT). YOU SHOULD ALSO KNOW, HOWEVER, THAT TOWARDS THE END OF THE CONVERSATION PIK, WHO HAD COME DIRECTLY FROM SEEING THE PRIME MINISTER, TOLD MR LUCE IN UNMISTAKEABLE TERMS THAT MR BOTHA WAS VERY ANGRY INDEED OVER THE CALL OF DR VAN ZYL SLABBERT ON OUR PRIME MINISTER. THIS HAD BEEN WIDELY REPORTED IN THE PRESS AND ON THE RADIO YESTERDAY MORNING AND IT WAS STATED THAT THE CALL HAD BEEN AT MRS THATCHER'S REQUEST. PIK MADE IT CLEAR THAT WHAT PARTICULARLY IRKED P W BOTHA ABOUT THIS WAS THAT HE HAD THOUGHT THAT HE HAD A KIND OF UNWRITTEN UNDERSTANDING WITH MRS THATCHER THAT THEY WOULD MEET SOME TIME, ALTHOUGH IT WAS NOT YET POSSIBLE TO SAY WHEN. INSTEAD MRS THATCHER HAD INVITED THE LEADER OF A PARTY WHICH REPRESENTED HARDLY ANYONE IN SOUTH AFRICA TO CALL ON HER. P W BOTHA HAD TAKEN THIS VERY BADLY AND IT WAS BOUND TO HAVE AN ADVERSE EFFECT ON OUR RELATIONS. THERE WOULD BE A PUBLIC ROW ABOUT IT. P W BOTHA WOULD NOT CRITICIZE MRS THATCHER BUT WOULD CERTAINLY ATTACK VAN ZYL SLABBERT OVER IT. THEY HAD REASON TO KNOW THAT DURING HIS CALL VAN ZYL SLABBERT HAD SPOKEN CRITICALLY OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT AND HAD EVEN INVITED MRS THATCHER TO VISIT SOUTH AFRICA. THIS WAS TOO MUCH. MOREOVER VAN ZYL SLABBERT HAD ASKED THE SOUTH AFRICAN EMBASSY TO MAKE CERTAIN APPOINTMENTS, BUT HAD NOT SUGGESTED A CALL ON THE PRIME MINISTER. IT WAS CLEAR TO THEM THAT THE FOREIGN OFFICE HAD TAKEN THE INITIATIVE IN PROPOSING IT. MR LUCE DID NOT PURSUE THE QUESTION OF WHO HAD ASKED WHO, BUT SAID THAT IT WAS COMMON FORM IN LONDON FOR THE PRIME MINISTER TO RECEIVE VISITING OPPOSITION LEADERS. PIK REPLIED THAT IT MIGHT BE ALL VERY WELL IN LONDON BUT HE WAS THINKING OF THE MATTER IN SOUTH AFRICAN TERMS.

4. WE MUST WAIT AND SEE WHETHER WHEN THE PRIME MINISTER HAS COOLED DOWN HE GOES THROUGH WITH HIS THREAT TO ATTACK VAN ZYL SLABBERT IN PUBLIC OVER THE INCIDENT. HE IS QUOTE CAPABLE OF DOING IT - HE DID SO PREVIOUSLY OVER THE ALLEGED DISLOYALTY OF COLIN EGLIN, VAN ZYL SLABBERT'S PREDECESSOR AS OPPOSITION LEADER, IN MAKING CONTACT WITH MCHENRY OVER NAMIBIA. ON THE OTHER HAND HE

NAMIBIA NEGOTIATIONS TO GO ON AS THEY WERE (QUOTE WE HAVE REACHED THE END OF THE ROAD UNQUOTE). HOWEVER, WHEN MR LUCE TOOK HIM UP ON VARIOUS WILD STATEMENTS OF THIS KIND, HE BEGAN TO BACK-PEDAL AND DURING THE SECOND HALF OF THE CONVERSATION HE SPOKE IN A MUCH CALMER AND MORE REASONED WAY. I HAVE SEEN HIM ACT THIS WAY SEVERAL TIMES IN THE PAST.

COOLED DOWN HE GOES THROUGH WITH HIS THREAT TO ATTACK VAN ZYL SLABBERT IN PUBLIC OVER THE INCIDENT. HE IS QUOTE CAPABLE OF DOING IT - HE DID SO PREVIOUSLY OVER THE ALLEGED DISLOYALTY OF COLIN EGLIN, VAN ZYL SLABBERT'S PREDECESSOR AS OPPOSITION LEADER, IN MAKING CONTACT WITH MCHENRY OVER NAMIBIA. ON THE OTHER HAND HE MAY THINK BETTER OF IT. CERTAINLY TOWARDS THE END OF PIK'S DISCUSSION WITH MR LUCE HE BECAME QUITE FRIENDLY AND THE TWO PARTED ON GOOD TERMS. BETWEEN THEN AND COMING TO DINNER AT MY HOUSE PIK WENT BACK TO SEE THE PRIME MINISTER AND HE WAS LATER IN A RELATIVELY (I STRESS THE WORD RELATIVELY) RELAXED MOOD.

5. SHOULD THE MATTER BECOME PUBLIC, WE SHALL HAVE TO CONSIDER HOW TO HANDLE PRESS QUESTIONS. I ASSUME YOU WILL WANT US TO LEAVE IT TO NEWS DEPARTMENT AND THE NO 10 PRESS OFFICE AND, UNLESS I HEAR TO THE CONTRARY, WE SHALL REFER QUESTIONS TO NEWS DEPARTMENT. I WOULD, HOWEVER, LIKE TO BE GIVEN SOME INDICATION IN ADVANCE WHAT THEY PROPOSE TO SAY (YOUR TELEGRAM NO 174 IS NOT IN ITSELF A PRESS LINE).

6. BEFORE THE NEWS OF THE CALL BROKE, IT WAS ALREADY PROVING DIFFICULT TO ARRANGE A MEETING FOR MR LUCE WITH THE PRIME MINISTER. HOWEVER BRAND FOURIE WAS DOING HIS BEST TO FIX IT UP AND WAS REASONABLY HOPEFUL. AS SOON AS THE EARLY MORNING RADIO REPORTED THE CALL HE TELEPHONED ME TO SAY THAT UNFORTUNATELY THIS HAD NOW PUT A STOPPER ON THINGS AND THERE WAS NOT MUCH POINT IN PURSUING THE MATTER. HOWEVER, BOTH PIK BOTHA AND MR LUCE AGREED AT THE END OF THEIR TALK THAT IT MIGHT BE USEFUL FOR THEM TO MEET AGAIN DURING MR LUCE'S STOPOVER ON THE MORNING OF 1 OCTOBER IN TRANSIT BETWEEN SALISBURY AND GABORONE. MR LUCE DOES NOT WISH TO GIVE THE APPEARANCE OF RUNNING AFTER PIK BOTHA AND I WILL, THEREFORE, NOT PRESS FOR A MEETING. BUT NEARER THE TIME I WILL TAKE SOUNDINGS TO SEE IF PIK WANTS TO PURSUE THE IDEA.

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22 SEP 1980

22 SEP 1980

GR 400
UNCLASSIFIED
FM PRETORIA 221250Z SEP 80
TO IMMEDIATE FCO
TELEGRAM NUMBER 364 OF 22 SEPTEMBER

MIPT

1. BEELD ON 20 SEPTEMBER CARRIED A FRONT PAGE REPORT SAYING THAT ONE OF THE WAYS IN WHICH SLABBERT HAD BEEN "BOYCOTTING" SOUTH AFRICA ON HIS CURRENT OVERSEAS TOUR WAS THAT, ACCORDING TO BRITISH GOVERNMENT SOURCES, HE DID NOT USE THE RECOGNISED CHANNEL OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN EMBASSY IN LONDON TO MAKE APPOINTMENTS WITH BRITISH GOVERNMENT LEADERS. THE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE CALL ON MRS THATCHER WERE MADE BY THE FCO AFTER DIRECT NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE PFP.

2. RAPPORT OF 21 SEPTEMBER UNDER THE HEADLINE "BOYCOTT STORIES RUBBISH SAYS PFP LEADER" SAYS THAT IT IS STILL NOT CLEAR WHO DID ARRANGE SLABBERT'S MEETING WITH MRS THATCHER. RAPPORT QUOTES DAWIE DE VILLIERS AS SAYING THAT HE FIXED UP CERTAIN MEETINGS AT LOWER LEVELS BUT HE WAS NOT INVOLVED IN ARRANGING THE MEETING WITH MRS THATCHER, THOUGH HE ATTENDED IT. RAPPORT CONTINUES WITH LONG QUOTATIONS FROM A PGRESS STATEMENT BY SLABBERT IN WHICH HE SAID THAT DURING HIS OVERSEAS TOUR ALL APPOINTMENTS ARRANGED, CONFIRMED OR CHANGED FOR HIM IN HIS OFFICIAL CAPACITY AS LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION WERE DONE THROUGH THE SOUTH AFRICAN EMBASSY CONCERNED. SLABBERT'S STATEMENT VIGOROUSLY ATTACKED THE "PETTY PARTY POLITICAL" MOTIVES OF THE NATIONALIST PRESS. THE SUNDAY TIMES OF 21 SEPTEMBER COVERS MUCH THE SAME GROUND, ALSO QUOTING SLABBERT AS SAYING THAT BEELD'S ATTEMPT TO ACCUSE HIM OF UN-SOUTH AFRICAN ATTITUDES ABROAD REFLECTED AN "UNHEALTHY OBSESSION".

3. BEELD THIS MORNING (22 SEPTEMBER) RETURNS TO THE QUESTION WHO ARRANGED SLABBERT'S MEETING WITH MRS THATCHER. WAS IT THE FCO OR A FOREIGN INTERMEDIARY? BEELD QUOTES SLABBERT'S DENIAL THAT HE BOYCOTTED OFFICIAL SOUTH AFRICAN CHANNELS IN MAKING ARRANGEMENTS ABROAD BUT POINTS OUT THAT HE DID NOT EXPLAIN HOW HIS MEETING WITH MRS THATCHER CAME ABOUT.

/H. THE RAND

4. THE RAND DAILY MAIL OF 22 SEPTEMBER CARRIES A REPORT FROM THEIR LONDON OFFICE THAT "DR SLABBERT ARRANGED THE MEETING LAST WEDNESDAY WITH THE HELP OF BRITISH DIPLOMATS AND AN EMINENT SOUTH AFRICAN FRIEND OF MRS THATCHER'S IN LONDON". THE REPORT QUOTES SLABBERT AS DESCRIBING BEELD'S ATTACK AS "POISONOUS AND SMALL MINDED". IT HAD SERIOUSLY EMBARRASSED DE VILLIERS AND "IT IS ALSO EMBARRASSING TO FOREIGN DIPLOMATS IN SOUTH AFRICA WHO HAVE ALWAYS BEEN READY TO HELP SOUTH AFRICAN POLITICIANS OF ALL PARTIES WHEN THEY TRAVEL ABROAD".

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FM PRETORIA 221240Z SEPT 80

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 363 OF 22 SEPTEMBER 80

MY TELNO 358 : VAN ZYL SLABBERT

1. THE PUBLIC ROW HAS NOW BROKEN IN CLEARLY INSPIRED ARTICLES IN BEELD AND THE SUNDAY PAPER, RAPPORT (TWO PAPERS OF THE NATIONALE PERS GROUP WHICH IS CLOSE TO THE PRIME MINISTER). THE STORY HAS BEEN VIRTUALLY IGNORED IN PAPERS OF THE OTHER AFRIKAANS NEWSPAPER GROUP (PERSKOR). THE SUNDAY TIMES AND RAND DAILY MAIL (BOTH PRO-PFP) HAVE RALLIED TO SLABBERT'S DEFENCE. FOR A SUMMARY SEE MIFT.

2. SINCE THE RAND DAILY MAIL IN QUOTING SLABBERT SEEMS TO IMPLY THAT I HAD BEEN INVOLVED IN THE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE CALL ON MRS THATCHER (PARA 4 OF MIFT) I TELEPHONED FOURIE THIS MORNING AND TOLD HIM THAT THIS WAS NOT THE CASE. FOURIE THANKED ME AND SAID HE WOULD PASS ON WHAT I SAID.

3. WE HAVE RECEIVED NO PRESS ENQUIRIES SO FAR.

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COVERING CONFIDENTIAL



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

20 September 1980

Call by Dr. Van Zyl Slabbert

Dr. Van Zyl Slabbert called on the Prime Minister on Wednesday 17 September. He was accompanied by the South African Ambassador. I enclose a record of his discussion with the Prime Minister.

M. O'D. B. ALEXANDER

Roderic Lyne, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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SUBJECT

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RECORD OF A DISCUSSION BETWEEN THE PRIME MINISTER AND DR. VAN ZYL SLABBERT AT 10 DOWNING STREET ON WEDNESDAY 17 SEPTEMBER 1980 AT 1730 HOURS

Present:

Prime Minister
Mr. M.O'D.B. Alexander
Dr. Van Zyl Slabbert
Dr. Dawie de Villiers

Namibia

Dr. Slabbert said that he had had an interesting talk in Bonn earlier in the week with Herr Genscher and had been struck by his knowledge of and interest in Namibia. His own impression from his recent visits to Namibia was that there was increasing disillusionment there with both the United Nations and the South African Government. There was an increasing tendency to look for action by the Front Line States. He had been anxious to discover in Bonn whether there was any sign of a new initiative to build confidence between the various parties involved. However he had received no indication that such an initiative was envisaged. The Prime Minister commented that the situation in Namibia was quite different from that in Rhodesia. The absence of an external party that was responsible in the way the United Kingdom had been made it much more difficult to organise diplomatic initiatives or conferences. Dr. Slabbert agreed. Dr. de Villiers said that there were evident signs of interest among the Front Line States in a confidence-building initiative. However, it might be better if such an initiative did not have a formal structure but consisted in developing bilateral contacts.

The Prime Minister stressed the need for the South African Government not to go too slowly although of course they had to proceed on a secure basis. There was a need to show both patience and urgency. Dr. de Villiers said that his Government recognised this. But it was difficult, especially after what had happened in Zimbabwe, for them to push too hard. There were close links between the white population in South West Africa and in South Africa. To implement changes which would result in SWAPO being put in charge was a political problem of some magnitude. The Prime Minister

/commented

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commented that she had used precisely this argument in her discussions with African leaders. Nonetheless, it was important that the South African Government should not go too slowly: Western Governments were under constant pressure. Dr. de Villiers said that a new initiative by the Front Line States would be of great help, especially if South Africa could include representatives of South West Africa in their delegation so that they could speak for themselves. The Prime Minister asked about the support for Turnhalle in Namibia. Dr. Slabbert said that Mr. Mudge claimed that he would win 13 out of the 18 white seats. His party, of course, enjoyed little support in Ovanboland. But it was important to realise that SWAPO did not speak for all the non-white population. There was a middle group who were not committed to SWAPO. The picture was a very mixed one.

South Africa

The Prime Minister asked about the situation inside South Africa. Dr. Slabbert said that Mr. P.W. Botha had consolidated his position. The recent reshuffle had drawn a clear line between his Cabinet and his party's caucus. The real test would come during the next session of Parliament when it would become apparent whether Mr. Botha was prepared to use his strength to push through necessary reforms. If he were to do so the impact both inside South Africa and outside could be considerable. But it was not clear how far Mr. Botha would be able to go. Some of the Acts e.g. the Immorality Act which needed reform provided the legal basis for considerable bureaucratic machines. The existence of these machines was a major obstacle to reform.

The Prime Minister recalled that there had been a warm welcome overseas for Mr. Botha's original announcement, last autumn, of his intention to institute reforms. She herself had referred to the reforms in her speech in New York. There was a need for international leaders to encourage the tendency to reform in South Africa. In the past positive moves had not always been welcomed as warmly as they should have been. Dr. de Villiers said that the Prime Minister's New York speech had been very important. Dr. Slabbert said that South Africa was once more in a period of raised expectations. He was more sceptical than he had been last November about the possibility of making progress but nonetheless remained hopeful.

The Prime Minister asked about progress with the proposal to

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establish a President's Council. Dr. de Villiers said that unfortunately the coloured and black population had rejected the President's Council. Although the official position was that the Council would not be enlarged, he thought that there was a lot of life left in the idea. He saw it as a beginning and an innovation which might yet prove viable. Dr. Slabbert said that given the general urgency of the situation in South Africa, he could not understand why blacks were being excluded. He knew that many members of the South African Cabinet agreed. Mr. Botha would have to bite the bullet. The Prime Minister asked if South Africans would follow Mr. Botha's lead. Dr. Slabbert said that 70% of the white electorate would follow Mr. Botha even if they didn't agree with his proposals. It was evident that Mr. Botha himself was in favour of reform. He had spoken very strongly in the Transvaal Caucus. The Prime Minister said that nonetheless Mr. Botha would, no doubt, have to move cautiously in order to keep his Cabinet, his party and the people in general with him. Some time had to be given for the meaning of his statements to sink in.

Dr. Slabbert agreed. He added that it was very important that people outside South Africa should not give the impression that the white population in South Africa was expendable and that there was no option for reform. Unlike the whites in Rhodesia, those in South Africa had nowhere else to go. The Prime Minister said that she hoped everyone realised this. Her own position was that no-one was expendable. But it was important for the South African Government to go as fast as it could. There had to be movement because in the absence of movement the situation would erupt. It was in the interests of everyone, both within and outside South Africa, to find a peaceful solution.

The Prime Minister asked about possible ways forward. Dr. Slabbert said that it was clear that 90% of the black population would prefer a unitary system of Government and that 80/90% of the white population would prefer partition. The mid point between these two views was some kind of confederal system. In his view a political "culture" was developing in which compromise could be found. The situation was far from hopeless. The Prime Minister asked about relations with the neighbouring countries. Dr. de Villiers said that there was little

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in the way of formal relations but plenty of practical co-operation. The Government was committed to regional co-operation. The political difficulties had to be overcome.

At the end of the conversation, Dr. Slabbert asked the Prime Minister whether it would be possible for her to visit South Africa in the next year. The Prime Minister said that she already had an extremely full programme of overseas visits. But Dr. Slabbert and the Ambassador could be sure that the British Government would respond positively to any signs of progress either in South Africa or in Namibia.

The conversation ended at 1805.

Ans

20 September 1980

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South Africa



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

16 September 1980

Dear Michael,

Prime Minister's Meeting with Dr Van Zyl Slabbert

/ I enclose a brief for the Prime Minister for her
/ meeting with Dr Van Zyl Slabbert on 17 September, and a
/ personality note on Dr Slabbert.

yours ever ^{*La*} *R M J Lyne*

(R M J Lyne)
Private Secretary

M O'D B Alexander Esq
10 Downing Street
LONDON

CONFIDENTIAL

PRIME MINISTER'S MEETING WITH DR VAN ZYL SLABBERT: 17 SEPTEMBER 1980

Points to Make

UK/SOUTH AFRICA RELATIONS

1. We hope obstacles to better relations with South Africa can be removed and would like to see South Africa re-enter the international community. But this depends on a solution in Namibia and constitutional progress in South Africa based on the consent of all the racial communities. How can we best use our influence?

2. We are encouraged by renewed talk of internal change. Do the Cabinet changes augur well? Dr de Villiers's inclusion [South African Ambassador, accompanying Dr Slabbert] very welcome though he will be missed here. How would early elections affect the prospects for accelerated change?

NAMIBIA

3. UN Secretariat in the lead in the negotiations, but the Five remain committed to the settlement plan and support Dr Waldheim's current moves. What are South Africa's intentions? How much support have the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance and Mr Mudge?

PRIME MINISTER'S MEETING WITH DR VAN ZYL SLABBERT

Essential FactsUK/SOUTH AFRICA RELATIONS

1. In 1979 South Africa was Britain's fifteenth largest export market, taking £714m worth of exports. Britain's imports from South Africa in that year were worth £534m. UK investment in South Africa is between £4-5 billion, about 10% of our total overseas investment, making us the largest foreign investor in South Africa. Britain depends on South Africa for essential raw materials, including antimony, chromium, manganese, platinum and vanadium.

2. The Prime Minister, alone of Western leaders, has publicly welcomed signs of change in South Africa (in a speech in New York last December). It is disappointing that since then there has been so little progress.

INTERNAL POLITICAL

3. Despite Mr P W Botha's insistence that South Africa must 'adapt or die', the 1980 Parliamentary Session ended without any fundamental reforms. The Senate has been abolished and a President's Council set up, but life for the average non-white has not changed. The decision to exclude blacks from the Presidential Council gave great offence. Mr Botha has dropped plans for a separate Black Council.

4. Dr Slabbert's official Opposition has given cautious encouragement for the Botha reform programme but as it has no prospect of gaining power this has little real significance. The lack of progress is mainly attributable to resistance from hardliners in the National Party and Mr P W Botha's desire not to split it. Mr Botha is now manoeuvring to circumvent this opposition. He reiterated his commitment to reform at the Transvaal National Party Congress on 3 September. The Cabinet has been reconstituted

/as

as from 7 October (Dr de Villiers becomes Minister of Industries, Commerce and Tourism) with the addition of several Botha supporters.

5. Young urban blacks and coloureds are becoming more and more radical, increasingly rejecting moderates who believe in dialogue and peaceful change. Mr Botha's tinkering with the constitution and talk of limited change (which seem so radical to his supporters) strike many blacks as irrelevant.

6. The strength of the parties is: National Party 137, Progressive Federal Party 17, New Republic Party 9, Independents 2, Total 165.

CONSTELLATION OF STATES

7. This is an integral part of Mr Botha's policy to unite South Africa, the homelands and neighbouring states into an economic grouping leading to a more formal relationship involving political and defence cooperation. But none of South Africa's neighbours is likely to show any serious interest while apartheid continues.

NAMIBIA

8. South Africa's reply of 29 August to Mr Waldheim accepted the assurances in his letter of 20 June on the main security questions which had been at issue, but sought confirmation of some potentially controversial assumptions about others. South Africa would then be ready to discuss 'the setting in motion of implementation of the UN Plan'. Apart from the usual hard words about SWAPO, the reply criticises Mr Waldheim and the UN for alleged pro-SWAPO bias and asks that:

- (a) impartial treatment of SWAPO and the internal parties by the UN should start now; and
- (b) the 'leadership of the territory' should be included in all future consultations.

These are now the main points in dispute.

[not to be revealed]

9. Mr Waldheim has accepted a suggestion by the Front Line States that a UN Secretariat team visit Pretoria later in September to discuss a date for implementation to begin and the details of the operation. The influence of the Five on this move will be limited. We have tried to ensure that, in addition to discussing practical details of troop movements, ceasefire date and so on, the UN team will tackle South Africa's specific points and will go at least some way towards meeting their concern about impartiality.

[not to be revealed]

10. There is a chance that the outlines of a deal might emerge in which concessions on impartiality could be exchanged for agreement, but the talks in Pretoria are likely to be inconclusive. The UN Mission will bring us closer to the stage at which final decisions will have to be taken. We hope that there will be sufficient progress, given the interest of both South Africa and the Front Line States, to maintain some progress and avert resort to the Security Council for sanctions.

ZIMBABWE/SOUTH AFRICA RELATIONS

11. Zimbabwe's severance of diplomatic relations with South Africa is unlikely to have much effect on their relations. Trade Offices with limited consular functions will remain. Mr Mugabe recognises that without its trade with South Africa Zimbabwe would be in bad trouble.

12. The South Africans are nervous about Zimbabwe, fearing especially that it will be used by terrorists for attacks on South Africa. The ANC President recently visited Salisbury and the ANC are likely to have a small office there. But the Zimbabwe Government opposes military bases in Zimbabwe for operations against South Africa. Mr Mugabe has promised peaceful co-existence, provided that there is no South African aggression.

Southern African Department
16 September 1980

SLABBERT, DR FREDERICK VAN ZYL (VAN)

Leader of the Opposition and of the PFP. MP for Rondebosch, Cape Town.

Born 1940 in Pretoria. Educated at Pietersburg, Witwatersrand University and Stellenbosch University. Originally studied theology at Stellenbosch with a view to going into the Church but switched to sociology in which he took masters and doctors degrees. Lectured in sociology at Rhodes University. In 1972 was appointed senior lecturer at University of Cape Town. In 1973 he became Head of the Department of Sociology at Witwatersrand University. Entered parliament in 1974 as Progressive Party member for Rondebosch. He was chairman of the commission which in 1978 drew up the PFP's constitutional plan for the future of South Africa, by general consent an able piece of work. Elected leader of the PFP in September 1979 after dissatisfaction within the party at the leadership of Colin Eglin had come to a head.

A brilliant academic and a skilful parliamentarian, van Zyl Slabbert is a man of wide appeal. He is also very much an Afrikaner. He was a reluctant contender for the leadership of the party, but, when it became apparent that a substitute for Mr Eglin might have to be found, he was the universal choice and has accepted his new responsibilities with enthusiasm. He has got off to a good start with his convincing win in the Edenvale by-election.

His wife is senior lecturer in criminology at the University of Cape Town. Two children. He played rugby for Western Province.



S. Africa

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

12 September 1980

Mr Pattison

to Mr

Arthur

15/9

Dear Michael

DR VAN ZYL SLABBERT

I write to confirm our telephone conversation, in reply to your letter of 10 September.

We understand from the South African Embassy that although Dr Van Zyl Slabbert is currently touring Europe and cannot be contacted it is virtually certain that he will be available to meet the Prime Minister at 1730 on Wednesday 17 September.

As you agreed, the South African Ambassador, Dr Dawie de Villiers, will accompany Dr Van Zyl Slabbert.

We will provide briefing as requested.

Yours ever

Michael Arthur

M A Arthur

M O'D B Alexander Esq
10 Downing Street

B F 16/9/80

10 September 1980

Dr. Van Zyl Slabbert

The Prime Minister has seen your letter to me of 9 September. She has decided that she would, on balance, like to have a brief meeting with Dr. Van Zyl Slabbert. I should be grateful if you could enquire whether he would be available at 1730 on Wednesday 17 September.

If this is convenient, perhaps you could let me have a brief the previous evening.

MODBA

M.A. Arthur, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

R.

1700 17/ix? MAP

①



Prime Minister

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

Dr Slabbert is getting high level attention as it is, I wonder whether the additional work to his morale represented by a visit to No 10 outweighs the risk of causing offence to the present

9 September 1980

Dear Michael govt. No call - at least on this visit?

I should see him - Lawrence v. d. Poil - thought it would be

useful.
P. d. 10/9

VISIT OF DR VAN ZYL SLABBERT: LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION IN SOUTH AFRICA

You asked for our advice on whether the Prime Minister should agree to receive Dr Van Zyl Slabbert, the leader of the Opposition in South Africa, who is visiting London from 14 to 27 September.

The Lord Privy Seal is seeing Dr Van Zyl Slabbert at 10 am on 19 September, and Foreign Office officials will be giving a luncheon for him the same day. The South African Embassy are arranging appointments for him to see Mr Shore, Dr Owen and Earl de la Warr.

Dr Van Zyl Slabbert has made a very favourable impression in his first Parliamentary Session as leader of the Opposition. However Dr Slabbert's party, the Progressive Federal Party (PFP), has only 17 seats out of a total of 165. Failing a very fundamental re-alignment of South African politics therefore, the PFP is unlikely ever to come to power: the real battle in South Africa over the pace and nature of reform is taking place within the National Party, and not between the opposition and the government. We would therefore see no need for the Prime Minister to receive Dr Slabbert.

/A separate

M O'D B Alexander Esq
PS/Prime Minister
10 Downing Street

CONFIDENTIAL



A separate consideration is that the South African Foreign Minister Mr 'Pik' Botha recently asked to see the Secretary of State when he was passing through London in September. On being told that Lord Carrington would be away, he decided not to come. Against this background the South African Government, who tend to be touchy about such things, might possibly take offence if the Prime Minister were to agree to receive the leader of the Opposition, particularly at a time when the National Party's victory in the Simonstown by-election is being widely hailed as a boost for Mr P W Botha's reformist policies.

On balance therefore Sir Ian Gilmour does not recommend that the Prime Minister see Dr Slabbert.

Yours ever

Michael Arthur

M A Arthur

CONFIDENTIAL

19 SEP 1980

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