

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.

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1700 17/ix? MAP

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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 govt. No call - at least on this visit?

9 September 1980

I should see him - Lawrence v. d. Poil - thought it would be useful.
 P. H. 10/9

Dear Michael

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

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 PS/Prime Minister
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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

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19 SEP 1980

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