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10 DOWNING STREET

7 November 1984

From the Private Secretary

PRIME MINISTER'S MEETING WITH DR. VAN ZYL SLABBERT

The Prime Minister saw Dr. Van Zyl Slabbert this morning. Mr. Laurens van der Post was also present.

The Prime Minister explained our position on the three in the Durban Consulate. The most useful step now was for the South African Government to rescind the detention orders. Dr. Van Zyl Slabbert said that the South African Government had handled the whole affair very badly. He had tried to get from them the reasons for the detention orders but the Interior Minister had declined to give them. He thought that the best course now was to try to let the issue fade away, in the hope that the three would get bored. The only point of their being there was to attract publicity and if that declined they would probably give up. He would be happy to pass on to the South African Government the point about lifting the detention orders. The Prime Minister did not comment either way.

In discussion of the wider situation in South Africa, Dr. Van Zyl Slabbert said that he applauded the Prime Minister's decision to meet Mr. Botha. Meetings such as these could detach Mr. Botha from his hard-line support. Merely pontificating from outside only had the effect of increasing the Afrikaners' defensiveness. Dr. Van Zyl Slabbert said that he thought that opinion among whites was beginning to move. He estimated that 40/45 per cent of whites were now open to more liberal and pragmatic influences.

Dr. Van Zyl Slabbert continued that the South African Government's crucial error was to deny blacks citizenship. This gave them no sense of belonging. Beyond that they had to be offered some political outlet. He was not, of course, suggesting immediate transition to majority rule in South Africa. But blacks had to be able to influence conditions in South Africa and be drawn into bargaining over their own future. The South African Government ought to have the sense

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cc Myster

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cc Sir P Cadogan

to talk to people like Chief Buthelezi and to put forward confidence-building measures of interest to the black community as a whole. Something also had to be done about the pass laws. The Prime Minister said that her hope was to be able to exercise some modest influence on South Africa from outside in the direction of gradual change. She intended to continue to pursue contacts with President Botha.

The Prime Minister raised the question of the K'Wagnema. She was convinced that they were being badly treated and had appealed to President Botha on their behalf. The response had not been forthcoming. Dr. Van Zyl Slabbert agreed with the Prime Minister's view and again offered to raise the matter with Mr. Botha.

The Prime Minister asked Dr. Van Zyl Slabbert's views on the prospects in Namibia. Dr. Van Zyl Slabbert expected little movement, given the linkage which the Americans had established with Cuban withdrawal from Angola. The Prime Minister said that the linkage was justified. She thought that the economic pressures on the South African Government, notably from the current low price of gold and diamonds, would give them a considerable incentive to reach a settlement.

(C.D. POWELL)

C.R. Budd, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

B.P.
PRIME MINISTER

Call by South African Opposition Leader

You are seeing Dr. Van Zyl Slabbert at
Mr. ver der Post's request. You last saw him
in 1980.

The meeting will not be announced and there
will be no photographers. I suggest the White
Drawing Room.

I attach a card.

E.D.P.

5 November 1984

MEETING WITH DR VAN ZYL SLABBERT

1. Durban Consulate. Want the remaining three to leave. What prospect of South African Government lifting detention orders?
2. His view of how new constitutional arrangements are working.
3. The K'wangema
4. Longer-term prospects in South Africa

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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

2 November 1984

Dear Charles,

Call on the Prime Minister by Dr Van Zyl Slabbert:
7 November

Thank you for your letter of 30 October. I enclose a brief for the Prime Minister's meeting with Dr Van Zyl Slabbert, the leader of the main white opposition party in South Africa, the Progressive Federal Party.

Dr Van Zyl Slabbert called on the Prime Minister in 1980. On that occasion, as this, the meeting was arranged through private channels. He also met Mr Rifkind in 1983. The South African Government have in the past shown some sensitivity when they have felt that members of the main opposition party in South Africa have had readier access to our Ministers than visiting South African Government Ministers. This is, of course, particularly true where the Prime Minister is concerned. We hope that on this occasion no such difficulty will arise given the Prime Minister's meeting on 2 June with P W Botha. But South African anger that the Prime Minister was unable to see their Ambassador to receive a message from Mr Botha over the Durban Consulate affair in September is a reminder that we should present Dr Van Zyl Slabbert's call carefully. I have already suggested that publicity should be kept to a minimum. We recommend that you take the line that this is a courtesy call, and that your Press Office should remind journalists of the Prime Minister's substantive meeting with Mr Botha in the summer.

Yours ever,

Colin Budd

(C R Budd)
Private Secretary

C D Powell Esq
10 Downing Street

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CALL ON THE PRIME MINISTER BY DR VAN ZYL SLABBERT,

7 NOVEMBER 1984

SOUTH AFRICA

POINTS TO MAKE

DURBAN

1. Very difficult situation and hard to see how it will end.

Had to put an end to political activity in the Consulate.
But forcible eviction unacceptable here. We cannot intervene
with South African Government.

2. (Legal Position) Do not accept that by our attitude to
SA request that we surrender the 6/3 or permit the
authorities access to arrest them we have obstructed SA
process of law enforcement. Have sought to persuade 6/3 to
leave voluntarily, without recourse to force. Could not be a
party to that. Forcible eviction would cause fierce
public reaction here.

3. Naturally concerned at effect on bilateral relations:
But we have sought to contain issue, avoid public row.
Remains our intention.

4. Situation is inhibiting our ability to communicate with



South African Government on wider issues, including detention without trial, which are at core of the Durban incident.

What prospect of SAG lifting detention orders now that apparent original reasons for them (the constitutional elections) have passed?

COVENTRY FOUR

5. Have strongly condemned the breach of faith by the South African Government over the Coventry Four. But despite Parliamentary pressure have ~~been~~ deliberately refrained from tough response. A round of reprisals in no-one's interest. We wish to avoid exacerbating the Durban problem.

6. Noted strong critical reaction in many circles in South Africa including your own statement, to the South African Government's decision. What is the feeling now?

NEW SA CONSTITUTION AND INTERNAL SITUATION

7. Recent violence, arrests etc very bad advert for South Africa abroad.

8. New Constitution seriously flawed by absence of any provision for black majority. Credibility of new arrangements further dented by elections (low turn-out, violence, etc). But we still believe new arrangements should



be given test of time. What is your view now? How effective will Indian and Coloured chambers be? Will you be able to work with Indian and Coloured parties to obtain significant changes?

9. Recent unrest in townships worrying. Symptomatic of growing black alienation, especially now Indian and Coloureds have been given political rights. How about your own relations with Black leaders (eg Buthelezi)? Is there any prospect of the Cabinet Committee on Urban Blacks coming up with radical recommendations which would win Black support?



BACKGROUND

DR FREDERICK VAN ZYL SLABBERT

1. 44 years of age with a solid Afrikaaner background. After an early academic career, (in sociology), he entered the South African Parliament in 1974 as the Progressive Federal Party (PFP) member for Rondebosch. He became leader of the PFP in 1979 and has been an effective leader of the main white Opposition party. The PFP gained seats in the 1981 General Election but lost support among English speaking whites during the campaign for the referendum on the constitutional proposals. The PFP has still to recover lost ground but there is no challenge to Dr Van Zyl Slabbert's leadership of the party.

2. Dr Van Zyl Slabbert saw the Prime Minister in 1980. He called on Mr Rifkind when he was in London in December 1983.

DURBAN/COVENTRY

3. Three of the six South African opposition leaders who entered our Consulate in Durban on 13 September are still there. From the outset our policy was based on (i) no forcible eviction, (ii) no intervention or negotiation with the South African Government; (iii) attempts to persuade the men to leave voluntarily.

4. Following a clandestine TV interview on 7 October we



sought assurances from the men that there would be no further political activity. This assurance was not forthcoming and a statement issued by the men on 18 October indicated that they would continue to use the Consulate for political purposes. We therefore announced on 21 October the termination of all visits and a considerable reduction in the Consulate's work. At present we plan no further moves to increase pressure on the three to leave, though closure of the Consulate remains one option.

5. The South African Government has accused us, because of our attitude to their request of 20 September that we surrender the men or permit the authorities access to arrest them, of obstructing the enforcement of South African law (we have rejected this) and stated that therefore they consider themselves absolved from their commitment to return the four South Africans facing charges of violating Customs and Excise legislation in connection with the UN Arms Embargo. The four did not appear in the Coventry Court on 22 October. The Court ordered all bail monies (a total of £400,000) to be surrendered and issued warrants for the arrest of the four. The Court held the South African Government responsible for their non-appearance. We have strongly condemned the action of the South African Government and said that we now expect the South African Government not to impede the appearance of the four in Court.



6. The PFP has not taken a position on the Durban incident but following the decision not to return the Four, Dr Van Zyl Slabbert condemned the South African Government for breaking its word and suggested that the South African Foreign Minister, Pik Botha, should resign because he had 'brought dishonour to our country'.

NEW SOUTH AFRICAN CONSTITUTION

7. The PFP campaigned vigorously for the rejection of the new constitutional proposals which involved the establishment of Indian and Coloured Chambers in a tri-cameral Parliament, in the November 1983 referendum of whites. They opposed the constitution on the grounds that it entrenched apartheid and excluded blacks. But the Government won a two-thirds 'Yes' vote including many traditional PFP supporters^{who} supported the proposals on the grounds that they represented a 'step in the right direction'. The PFP subsequently decided to participate fully in the new Constitutional arrangements.

8. The turn-out in the August elections to the Coloured and Indian Chambers was low (below 20%) and reflected deep scepticism among Coloureds and Indians. The elections were marked by violence and the arrest and detention of leaders of the United Democratic Front (multi-racial political federation opposed to the new Constitution) engaged in organising a boycott of the elections. The new arrangements



have now been implemented but apart from a brief formal session in September, the new Parliament has still to meet (the session opens in January). The PFP intends to make common cause where it can with Coloured and Indian MPs but the inexperience of the new members will be an inhibiting factor.

9. The new constitution has been condemned by the UNGA and the Security Council. UK and US abstained on both resolutions. We continue to reserve judgement on the new arrangements.

INTERNAL SITUATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

10. There has been considerable tension and unrest in black townships in South Africa in last three months. Some, though by no means all associated with the implementation of the new Constitution. (Other causes were rent rises, dissatisfaction with the new black local authorities, longstanding complaints over education were also significant). Estimates put the number of dead at up to 130. Black schools boycotts, mainly in Transvaal have continued for many months. Detentions without trial increased sharply (119 in August at the time of the Coloured and Indian elections). We made representations to the South African Government on 27 August about the arrests and detentions and were party to the statement by Foreign Ministers of the Ten on 11 September which expressed

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concern about the unrest in the townships and the reaction by
the authorities.

Southern African Department

2 November 1984

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