



APDUSA VIEWS

MARCH 1986

Dr VAN ZYL SLABBERT CAUGHT RED-HANDED!

INTRODUCTION

On 7 February 1986, Dr van Zyl Slabbert, leader of the "whites only" official opposition, the Progressive Federal Party (PFP) announced his resignation from Parliament. This event captured the headlines of the ruling class press (English and Afrikaans). The resignation was presented as an act of high drama and of tremendous symbolic value. It was the case of the LEADER of the white parliamentary opposition, a *were Afrikaner* and a doctor on top of it all, turning his back on PARLIAMENT, the most hallowed of the Herrenvolk (master race) institutions.

WHO IS Dr SLABBERT?

At the time of his walk-out from Parliament, Dr Slabbert enjoyed a high reputation in many quarters. He is the "blue-eyed boy" of the Imperialists – US, Britain, etc. He was the guru (esteemed spiritual teacher) of the white liberal youth on the university campuses, the young white business executives and the white members of the various professions. He, together with Chief Buthelezi formed the National Convention Movement. He even won the respect of a section of the liberatory movement who regarded Dr Slabbert as "a person you can talk to". The PFP squeezed out as much political mileage as was humanly possible from Dr Slabbert, including the use of his reputation to set up the "VAN ZYL SLABBERT TRUST FUND" of some ten million rands.

BACKGROUND

Prior to his entry into Parliament, Dr Slabbert was a Professor of Sociology and a product of the Stellenbosch University, the hatchery of the Cape Nationalist intellectuals. His entry into

parliamentary politics was almost accidental. His election victory in Rondebosch on 24 April 1974 came as surprise, not only to political observers, but also to himself. Hence it is reported that at the moment of victory the thought foremost in his mind was: *"Sweet, suffering grace, what am I going to do now?"*

In a short space of 5 years Dr Slabbert was catapulted from a novice to leader of the PFP.

REASONS FOR METEORIC RISE OF Dr SLABBERT

The English-speaking white political parties have always endeavoured to place at their head an AFRIKANER. This was so because of the hostility between the English-speaking and Afrikaans-speaking whites. The wounds of the Anglo-Boer War lay open for many decades. The suffering of the Afrikaners at the hands of British Imperialism made them hate anything English with bitter intensity.

The English voters have always been a minority and political power would have evaded them for as long as they could not win Afrikaner support. The wily English employed a simple strategy. To capture Afrikaner voters, a charismatic Afrikaner leader was needed. At first it was General Botha, followed by General Smuts, the forgotten J N G Straus, Sir De Villiers-Graaf and Dr Jan Steytler. Colin Eglin's spell as a leader of the Progressive Party was the exception which proves the general pattern.

When, therefore, Colin Eglin blundered by making an indiscreet telephone call to Don McHenry, the United States representative to the United Nations Organisation, the PFP leadership was only too happy to remove Colin Eglin as leader because Dr Slabbert was waiting in the wings.

As one newspaper columnist put it:

"He (Dr Slabbert) gave an aura of respectability to the PFP among the Afrikaner intellectuals which it had not enjoyed before, and on the Afrikaans campuses, the cause of progressive opposition to the government waxed stronger. He was an easily saleable product . . ."
(Brian Pottinger, *The Sunday Times*, 09.02.86).

Within days of his assuming the mantle of leadership of the PFP the English press got busy with its favourite trade – LEADER MAKING. Dr Slabbert was launched as the LEADER who would lead the white opposition from the desert to political power. The cult of VAN (as Dr Slabbert was called by his devotees) grew by leaps and bounds.

REACTION TO Dr SLABBERT'S RESIGNATION

Since the resignation of Dr Slabbert was a spectacular event, reaction came in fast and furious.

1. ENGLISH PRESS

Initially the English press was jubilant. It considered the act of resignation as a heavy body blow to the reform strategy of the government because it *"was in effect an act of no confidence in the very existence of Parliament as it is now constituted . . . Dr Slabbert has decided to leave Parliament to deprive the government any possible credibility his presence may lend to its reform powers . . ."*

However, in a matter of days, if not hours, the English press changed its tune. We can only assume that the top brass of the PFP had a chat with the newspaper policymakers. The Press now had to engage in the process of LEADER-UNMAKING. Rapidly, Dr Slabbert's image began to tarnish. There were insinuations that Dr Slabbert had lost the *"iron in his soul"* and took the easy way out. There were accusations of betrayal and desertion. Harry Oppenheimer, the godfather of the PFP, in a press statement criticised Dr Slabbert.

2. Young white liberals who had been straining at the leash imposed on them by the conservative PFP leadership saw in Dr Slabbert's resignation a signal for dramatic action to follow.

3. The ANC, which met a delegation of the PFP headed by Dr Slabbert, described his act as *"very courageous"*. It even hinted that Dr Slabbert's decision to resign was influenced by the discussions between the ANC and Dr Slabbert.
4. A prominent UDF official stated that Dr Slabbert had *"proven qualities of leadership which should not be wasted"* and, therefore, Dr Slabbert could *"possibly find a home in the United Democratic Front"* (Post, 12-15 February 1986).
5. Bishop Tutu congratulated Dr Slabbert and described him as a *"great politician"*.

Dr SLABBERT'S INTERVIEW WITH P W BOTHA — NOVEMBER 1985

While Dr Slabbert was occupied with interviews to the press, the radio and TV, his moment of glory was fouled-up by the publication of a transcript of an interview between P W Botha and Dr Slabbert. The contents of the interview appeared in various newspapers. We urge our readers to study the interview very carefully and to keep newspaper cuttings of it.

It is a rare opportunity for members of the public to catch a glimpse of really what goes on behind closed doors between ruling class politicians belonging to "different" parties. The safety of privacy and being away from the public eye makes these politicians feel free to express their REAL VIEWS. More so, if they are unaware of the fact that their words are being recorded by a tape recorder.

We can do no more than to select a few highlights from that interview.

1. Dr Slabbert was at pains to assure P W Botha that *"the ANC can be beaten"* and that he, P W Botha, could extract the teeth of the whole ANC story" (The Daily News, 19.02.86 and City Press, 21.02.86).
2. Dr Slabbert then warned that *"the ANC should not be built up as an organisation which is so powerful that it can control all unrest"* (City Press, 21.02.86).
3. When P W Botha stressed that there was no question of abolishing the Bantustan system, Dr Slabbert's reply was that he had no problem in drawing these States into the negotiation process (The Daily News, 19.02.86). In other words, Dr Slabbert was quite prepared to recognise the various breeds of Bantustans as legitimate bodies with whom he was prepared to negotiate.
4. P W Botha insisted that the *"self-determination of the whites should not be impaired. According to P W Botha, 'self-determination' meant the Group Areas Act, the separate and superior system of education provided for the whites and the life of luxury and wealth enjoyed by the whites.*
To all that Dr Slabbert's reply was: *"I have no problem."*
5. Dr Slabbert then accused the ANC and Buthelezi of each wanting to be *"the only bull in the kraal"* i.e. to have a monopoly of power to the exclusion of all other organisations.

WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THE INTERVIEW

What strikes one immediately is the vast difference between Dr Slabbert's version of the interview and the transcript of the tape recording. Most observers and commentators are agreed that Dr Slabbert's version was far from the truth.

Then one gets the unmistakable impression from reading the interview that there you had two political leaders discussing the problems of the South African ruling class as **CONCERNED MEMBERS OF THAT RULING CLASS.**

Throughout the interview, Dr Slabbert appeared to be on the defensive, fumbling and respectful towards the aggressive P W Botha. As one newspaper reporter put it: *"It was a conversation between nephew and favourite uncle."*

Dr Slabbert's public image is that of a LIBERAL — one who makes out that he is opposed to oppression, that he is the *"friend of the people"*. Politically speaking, he is the descendant of a long line of Liberals — Dr John Phillip, Rose-Innes, Sauer, Merriman, Mr and Mrs Ballinger, Hofmeyer, Alan Paton, etc — all of whom had adopted a similar political stance in public. Yet, in truth, all of them used the art of deception to mislead the oppressed into believing that they were the champions of the oppressed.

We, of the Unity Movement and APDUSA, have consistently exposed these liberals as agents of Imperialism. We have exposed their forked tongues and their two faces. Dr Slabbert has conducted himself in the *"best traditions"* of his political forbears. As can be seen from the reaction to his resignation, he was able to deceive a section of the Liberatory Movement.

Unfortunately for Dr Slabbert, he has been CAUGHT RED-HANDED.

PUBLICLY, Dr Slabbert holds out that he is opposed to this entire rotten system of oppression. IN PRIVATE, he identifies himself with the ruling class. PUBLICLY, his stance on the ANC is: *"a war against the ANC is a war against South Africa"*. IN PRIVATE, he is planning how to defeat the ANC. PUBLICLY, he condemns apartheid. IN PRIVATE, he has *"no problems"* with the preservation of the vast privileges of the whites. PUBLICLY, he resigns from Parliament but in the next breath he urges the PFP to continue with its work in Parliament.

He did not stop there. He went on to encourage the Indian and coloured sell-outs in the Tri-cameral parliament to use it as a *"forum for protest and opposition"*. (The Daily News, 13.3.86). He says this notwithstanding the fact that close to 90% of the Indian and coloured people have rejected these sell-outs and the Tri-cameral Parliament. Such is Dr Slabbert's contempt for the oppressed people.

Dr Slabbert stands thoroughly exposed. In exposing himself, he has also revealed the TRUE NATURE OF LIBERALISM.

WHO IS THE OPPRESSOR?

We have always considered it to be of the utmost importance to identify and present to the people WHO THE OPPRESSOR IS. Not just a section of the oppressors but the whole gang of them. If people are called upon to struggle against oppression, the first task is to identify the oppressor. Then the people will know against whom they are to struggle.

Our view is: The oppressor is the official ruling class and its pack of henchmen — the Bantustan *"leaders"*, the sell-outs in the Houses of ill-fame called Delegates and Representatives. The oppressor is the racism-ridden white worker and petty bourgeoisie born with golden spoons in their mouths. The oppressor is Imperialism — those powerful and rich groups in countries like America, Britain, France, West Germany, Canada, Japan, etc. The oppressor is the big factory owner, bankers, mine owners and the land barons (Capitalism).

The political representatives of Imperialism and Capitalism are the LIBERALS, one section of which is the Progressive Federal Party.

All this is very elementary and easy to grasp. What is important is that we APPLY this simple truth in our day-to-day activities. If we do this, not only will we be rendering the oppressed people a great service but we will also ensure that we do not fall prey to the antics of the modern-day Dr Jekylls and Mr Hydes.