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American Embassy
Pretoria

December 11, 1964

TO: The Ambassador *J*
FROM: A.J. Treslender *AST*
SUBJECT: CONVERSATION WITH ADRIAN LEFTWICH

Leftwich made an appointment to see me in my office on Wednesday (and came in without an appointment on Friday). He obviously felt the need to talk about his experiences and try to justify his decision to turn State's evidence in the recent sabotage trials, with an outsider. I had known Leftwich when he was president of NUSAS and had several times discussed the problems of that organization with him. At no time had I ever had the slightest suspicion that he was involved in a protest organization dedicated to acts of sabotage.

He admitted his stupidity (the word is his own) in ever joining the resistance group and becoming involved in futile violent gestures of protest against the suppression of freedom in South Africa.

His decision to turn State's evidence, he told me, was harder than to take the punishment. He said that Keller and Kemp, who received long sentences, would have had equally long ones whether or not he testified against them, that Keller had been offered the same privileges but had foolishly tried to escape and was no longer acceptable as a witness. Leftwich's testimony was mainly used to support the conviction of two others who got sentences of two years each. I asked him why, if the case against him was so strong, the State gave him the opportunity to go free, especially when they needed no further evidence against the principal defendants. He said he has been surprised at the number of State's witnesses, especially in the Transvaal and has reasoned that the State needed detailed background.

To my question about Communist influence, he said that he was unaware of any active agents at the time, but is now convinced that Berman who escaped to England, was a Communist who pretended to have left the party. The Cape Town group was urged to blow up more pylons by letters from Berman and John Lang.

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He himself spent 5 months in solitary confinement, subjected to strong pressures. He was beaten when he first entered prison.

He feels that he was never evil or weak but misguided and stupid. Now in an effort to regain his self-respect and come to terms with the world he has made for himself, he plans to spend some time with his sister in Israel, then to go to study in the U.S. I gave him the names of heads of schools of African Studies to whom he should apply.

I warned him of the danger of being recruited by the refugees who might persuade him to become a speaker and writer against his country rejoining the revolutionaries. He said he wanted to avoid them, that he has learned his lesson.

Van den Bergh, head of the Security Police, who lectured him on his release, wanted to know why so many Jews were in the resistance groups. "The fact is," said the policeman, "that Jews are all capitalists, and the highest form of Capitalism is Communism."

One of his warders in prison, who had had a tour of duty on Robben Island, told Leftwich, "Ag man, there is two great men in South Africa today: Dr. Verwoerd and Robert Subukwe."

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