

Neil Aggett Inquest

From the Court record:

MR SCHABORT — Mr van Heerden, clearly, clearly, your decision to tell him (Major Cronwright) was on the supposition that he would do something positive about the deceased?

AURET VAN HEERDEN — No it was not Mr Schabort. If I can just — I was intent on doing everything I could to try and avert a possibility of Neil committing suicide but I cannot say that I had confidence in Major Cronwright or any other member of the police to act on my information and if I could just illustrate that with an example; at one stage after my own treatment when I had my wrist manacled to my ankles for two days, I could not walk and a Major from the Uniform Branch came into my cell and took — and noted in his book that my health was good despite the fact that I could barely walk.

MR SCHABORT — Yes you see it is now all very well, you can start telling us about things that happened to you which you know would not be taken up with you in these proceedings because of a rule of His Worship and because we are not going to spend time on that. So you may introduce these things. I am not asking you about them and I am just leaving them there but let us come back to my question . . .

AURET VAN HEERDEN — Your Worship if I could just explain? I am simply trying to describe the state of mind that I was in.

BY THE COURT — Mr van Heerden just a minute. As a matter of interest, you were advised — I am sorry to interrupt Mr Schabort — you were advised that your information as far as your treatment is concerned is not regarded as admissible in these proceedings, is that correct?

AURET VAN HEERDEN — That is correct.

BY THE COURT — When?

AURET VAN HEERDEN — Yesterday after—

BY THE COURT — Before you were called to the witness stand?

AURET VAN HEERDEN — That is correct.

BY THE COURT — Okay, you may proceed Mr Schabort.



Major Arthur Cronwright, the Security Police Officer in charge of Dr Neil Aggett's detention.
— by courtesy of RDM

From the Judgment:

Mr Van Heerden said that he realised on the 4th February, 1982, at about 7.30 pm while he was listening to the radio that Dr Aggett was a suicidal risk. Yet he raised no alarm, for instance shouting or shaking the grill to draw attention. He did not wait for Sergeant Agenbag to tell him. When Sergeant Agen-

bag arrived at the cell he did not tell him of his fears. Is it really possible that a man with honest and honourable motives would behave like this if he really cared? He explained that he intended to tell Major Cronwright the next morning. Well if he decided to do that the delay was fatal. Let us accept for the

moment that Mr van Heerden did realise on the 4th February 1982 at 7.30 pm that Dr Aggett was a suicidal risk, did he as a friend not have the responsibility to raise alarm? He had no reason to believe that Sergeant Agenbag would not act and was his failure to act, his omission not contra boni mores?