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**City of London Anti-Apartheid Group (CLAAG) – Activities/ Non-stop Picket of
South African Embassy, London 1985 – 1991**

DIGEST

The relevant part of ... a minute (FCO internal memo) from ____ (Protocol Department) to ____ (Security Co-ordination Department) dated 23 August 1985

Subject: Demonstrations

City of London Anti-Apartheid Group (CLAAG) march from Jubilee Gardens to South Africa House. Assembling at 1am; march to begin at 1215, culminating with demonstration outside the Embassy; Police will control.

The relevant part of ... a Note Verbale from South African Embassy dated 4 November 1985

The Embassy wishes to reiterate its concern at the increasingly disruptive and abusive nature of demonstrations staged on a regular basis before South Africa House, and more recently, the Ambassador's official residence "Highveld".

The relevant part of ... a minute from ____ (FCO official) to ____ (FCO official) dated 22 April 1986

In the meantime, the current demonstration (a "vigil" by Mandela supporters taking eight-hourly shifts outside South Africa House) is being policed constantly. It has been made clear to the demonstrators that they will not be allowed to step outside the law.

The relevant part of ... a minute from ____ (FCO official) to Private Secretary dated 28 April 1986

____ (FCO official) held a meeting this afternoon with ____ (South African Embassy official) at the South African Embassy, a Counsellor colleague and a Legal Adviser. The Police were present as were ____ (FCO official) and ____ (FCO official).

____ (South African Embassy official) said that the demonstration was an impairment of the dignity of the Mission; the noise from the loud hailer prevented the Embassy staff from properly conducting their business. ____ (FCO official) stressed the Secretary of State's personal interest in the matter and our determination to enforce arrangements which, while protecting the demonstrators' freedom of speech and assembly, met our obligations under the Vienna Convention.

The relevant part of ... a letter from Charge D'Affaires, South African Embassy to Permanent Under-Secretary of State dated 12 May 1986

The Ambassador has requested that I draw your attention to the fact that the demonstration outside South Africa House continues to cause disturbance to the normal functioning of the Embassy.

On the evening of Saturday 10 May 1986, a reception was held at South Africa House attended by over 100 guests. The Metropolitan Police were informed of the arrangements and were requested to ensure that guests had free and untroubled access to the building. In the event many guests were verbally abused and cursed by the demonstrators who were allowed to continue their demonstration directly in front of the main entrance to South Africa House.

The relevant part of ... a letter from ____ (FCO official) to ____ (Home Office official) dated 7 August 1986

Subject: Demonstration Outside South Africa House

As you know, the City of London Anti-Apartheid Group (CLAAG) has been mounting a "vigil" since late April outside the South African Embassy in Trafalgar Square. The CLAAG has said that it will maintain the demonstration until Nelson Mandela is released. The group involved is small (normally less than a dozen people) but makes frequent and vociferous use of a loud-hailer.

The South African Ambassador has complained many times since April to the Foreign Office about the noise (the demonstrators are on the pavement beneath the Ambassador's window. ____ has also complained about the abusive slogans chanted by demonstrators and about their banners.

The relevant part of ... a minute from ____ (FCO official) to Private Secretary dated 2 July 1987

Subject: Brief for the Secretary of State's Meeting with the South African Ambassador on 3 July 1987

The demonstration began on 19 April 1986. The City of London Anti-Apartheid Group (CLAAG) say they will continue until Nelson Mandela is released. The demonstrators use loud hailers and from time to time a brass band to publicise their cause. There have been over 300 arrests since the demonstration started. Charges have included threatening behaviour, highway obstruction, obstructing police in the course of their duties and criminal damage (paint-throwing). Following the paint-throwing incident on 6 May (election day in South Africa) police confined the demonstrators to the north side of Duncannon Street. Commissioner's directions under the Metropolitan Police Act as well as the Public Order Act 1986 were invoked by the police to empower them to move the demonstrators. CLAAG have held discussions

with Cannon Row to persuade them to relax their ruling with regard to the position of the demonstration.

The relevant part of ... a letter from ____ (South African Embassy official) to ____ (FCO official) dated 10 December 1987

I regret having to write once more about the CLAAG demonstration, particularly at this time of reconciliation and goodwill.

You may have heard that the normal intimidation and verbal abuse were featured outside South Africa House during a cocktail given on Tuesday evening. I learned yesterday morning that one of the female guests was, in her own words, "pursued down Trafalgar Square by demonstrators shouting obscenities".

The relevant part of ... a letter from the South African Ambassador to ____ (FCO official) dated 10 December 1987

I am writing to you about the intention of the Anti-Apartheid Movement to mount a picket at my residence from 6pm to 8pm on Saturday 19 December.

You are well aware of the numerous fruitless attempts to terminate or contain the City of London Anti-Apartheid Group picket outside South Africa House which to our mind constitutes harassment and impairment of the dignity of the Embassy. I see the projected demonstration at my residence as being aimed at carrying harassment a step further by protesting in a residential area and attempting to inconvenience the household of a resident ambassador.

The relevant part of ... a letter from ____ (FCO official) to the South African Ambassador dated 15 December 1987

Thank you for your letter of 10 December about the proposed demonstration outside Highveld on the evening of 19 December.

I fully appreciate your desire not to see a repetition of the demonstration that took place in 1985 and your concern at the continuing picket outside your Embassy by the City of London Anti-Apartheid Group. I should, however, stress that under British law permission is not required for demonstrations to be held. It follows that it is not possible to prevent a demonstration taking place whether in a residential area or elsewhere. Action against demonstrators can only be taken in cases where, in the opinion of the senior police officers on duty, an offence has been committed as set out in Sections 4,5 and 14 of the Public Order Act.

The relevant part of ... a letter from ____ (South African Embassy official) to ____ (FCO official) dated 14 June 1988

I have no doubt that the planned "encirclement" of the Embassy on 16 June by CLAAG, as proposed in the enclosed leaflet, has already been brought to your notice.

The relevant part of ... a minute from ____ (FCO official) to ____ (FCO official) dated 17 June 1988

Subject: "Hands Around South Africa House": Demonstration on 16 June

I have been told by the police this morning that 300 participated in this demonstration from 6.00pm to 12.15am. They did not encircle South Africa House but the demonstrators walked around and around continuously.

At one point, they tried to block the front door but were cleared away by the police. There were two paint-throwing incidents; in one case, paint was thrown at the front of the Embassy causing a certain amount of damage.

So far I understand that there were four arrests and one person has been charged with assaulting police.

The relevant part of ... a letter from ____ (South African Embassy official) to ____ (FCO official) dated 14 June 1988

Subject: Damage to South Africa House

I write to advise of the following incidents of criminal damage against the chancellery and of the steps taken by my office to effect repairs:-

3 March 1988

Cannon Row Police reported at 01h 40 that three panes had been broke in the window of room G5 facing Duncannon Street. I understand that the Police were successful in making an arrest on this occasion. My maintenance staff made good the damage.

6 June 1988

On this morning the walls of the Duncannon Street elevation of South Africa House were found to be sprayed in black paint with graffiti and political slogans. The total area covered was about twenty square feet. Also two swastika symbols and graffiti were found drawn on the walls by the Strand corner entrance covering about eight square feet. The specialist firm of Graffit-off Ltd were called in and they successfully removed the offending material at midday on the same day.

11 June 1988

The Police reported at 18h 24 that they had arrested a person responsible for breaking five panes in the window of room G5 facing Duncannon Street. An estimate has been obtained from Baywater Glass works to repair the damage. The Police made a special request to be advised of the cost as soon as possible to assist them in their case.

The relevant part of ... a minute from ____ (FCO official) to ____ (FCO official) dated 14 July 1988

Subject: Demonstrations

Monday 18 July: Increased picket by CLAAG at South Africa House for Mandela's birthday. Petitions will be handed in.

The relevant part of ... a letter from ___ (MP) to Metropolitan Police Commissioner dated 29 July 1988

On Wednesday evening, 27 July, in my capacity as a duly elected officer of the All-Party British South Africa Parliamentary Group, I attended a reception at the South African Embassy to welcome a new senior member of their staff.

As a law-abiding citizen I find it extraordinary and unacceptable that I was unable to proceed about my normal duties because I was obstructed by individuals, banners and other paraphernalia obstructing the public pavement and footpath and that on legally entering the Embassy of a legitimate and friendly country I should be subjected to personal insults, intimidation and threats.

The relevant parts of ... a minute from ___ (FCO official) to ___ (FCO official) dated 5 and 18 January 1989

Subject: Rally Outside South Africa House: Saturday 14 January

CLAAG are organising a mass rally outside South Africa House on 14 January to celebrate 1,000 days of picketing (5 January 1989)

A maximum of 350 demonstrators participated in the rally outside South Africa House on 14 January. According to the police, they were noisy but there was no disorder. (18 January 1989)

The relevant part of ... a letter from ___ (FCO official) to ___ (South African Embassy official) dated 20 February 1990

Thank you for your letters of 26 January and 1 February. They have been overtaken to some extent by the news from the police that the CLAAG picket will cease its non-stop activities with effect from 24 February. After that we understand that there will be a weekend picket from 1200 on Saturday until 1800 on Sunday. There will also be a rally each Friday evening between 1730 and 1900.

The relevant part of ... Pretoria teletype NFR to FCO dated 11 December 1990

Subject: South Africa: City of London Anti-Apartheid Group

At the PAC conference I had the opportunity of meeting members of the City of London Anti-Apartheid Group, including ___ and ___, both members of the Revolutionary Communist Group (RCG).

I met this group yesterday in the margins of the conference for a friendly chat about anti-apartheid circles in the UK. ___ described how the City of London Group had been expelled from the mainstream AAM because its local anti-apartheid activities had been too successful for the bureaucratic, pro-Soviet parent body. The Group's

main claim to fame, of course, had been the prolonged picket outside the South African Embassy in Trafalgar Square, a protest not supported by the AAM.

The relevant part of ... a letter from ____ (FCO official) to ____ (FCO official, British Embassy, Pretoria) dated 12 December 1990

The principal reason is that the permanent picket no longer exists: since April this year it has been reduced to a half-dozen protestors (displaying PLO and Sinn Fein flags as well as ANC colours) from Friday to Sunday. Their main campaign in recent months has been on behalf of the Uppington 14.

Incidentally, CLAG's "million-signature campaign", in which they spent four years collecting signatures for a petition on behalf of Mandela, ended with a whimper rather than a bang, when the completed petition was unceremoniously dumped in a cardboard box at the door of No 10. Since it contained no covering letter or indication of the sponsor's address, it received no reply. (Many of the signatures are of the "Mickey Mouse" variety).