

Smit Murders

A) Statement to TRC by Liza Grundlingh and Robert Smit (children of Robert and Jeanne Smit) – August 1997.

Introduction:

1) Liza Grundlingh (Smit daughter) personal experience

15-page reflection on her parents' murder, how she experienced it at the time, her visit to the murder scene, and the funeral of her parents.

She recalls being hugged by Pik Botha at the funeral where after he placed his hands on her shoulders and said "I wish I could help you, but my hands are tied". He then also made the same gesture with his hands. Years later, he denied having said so, he said that he meant that "nothing he could do would bring them back".

It was the last time that she saw him, despite the fact that he was a close personal friend of her parents and would regularly visit their home.

"Was the stabbing really necessary? I don't understand how a person can push a 21cm long knife into another person (and 14 times in the case of my mother) even if they were dead. What type of monsters are walking this land? This brings me to the question; why? This prominent man and his wife, what did they do or rather what did they know that justified such a gruesome murder?"

2) Robert Smit (Smit son) personal experience

Provides similar account to his sister but with far less detail. Recounts that he at one stage asked his father who had just returned from living in the US for four years, a year before his murder, why he spent such a long time working in the USA. He responded by saying "my son, I'm doing this for our country South Africa. I love our people."

3) Latest Allegations

Indicates that she (Liza) had been in touch with Anelia Blackly, a journalist from Rapport who was investigating the murder. "She provided us with an unpublished article by Rapport journalist by JJ van Wyk concerning new allegations by a former member of the 'Taakmag' concerning our parents' murder. Accordingly, our parents were murdered by members of the 'Taakmag'. The article relied on two sources. One is Francois Oosthuizen who accused three 'Taakmag' members of involvement in the murder together with a fourth person – they are Roy Allen, Jack Widdowson and Krullebol Verwey, a confidant of BOSS head Hendrik van den Berg...

"Over the past few months since we started this investigation we have been indirectly threatened. An ex-member of DKI (Directorate Covert Intelligence – NI?) told the journalist Alet van Rensburg that 'the Smit children better be careful otherwise we will hold another funeral, their funeral'." Lisa recounts that her brakes failed three weeks prior to which a motor mechanic discovered a missing bolt from her brakes that could not have simply fallen out, and other peculiar occurrences like suspected sabotage of electrical appliances in her

home (including a heater and electric blanket). Liza also received threatening phone calls at work from an elderly man who told her to cease her investigation saying “this is about much more than just the Smit murders... you don’t understand the extent of this thing.” In a later telephone call he said “this is the last time I tell you... the ice is becoming thinner, be careful that it doesn’t break.”

a. Willem Francois Oosthuizen

Discusses Oosthuizen’s alleged involvement in obtaining her father’s stolen briefcases. Liza does not seem to believe his version of the story after meeting him, however asks the commission to locate the contents of the suitcase which included Robert Smit’s credit cards, Cheque Book and a Texas Instruments Computer. According to ‘Oosie’ there was an official document in Smit’s briefcase directed to John Voster and containing the name of five cabinet ministers alleged to be involved in currency fraud. He alleged that the names include: Pik Botha, Connie Mulder, Nico Diederichs, PW Botha and Chris Heunis.

b. Joop Smit

The second person who made similar accusations to Oosthuizen. Liza describes trying to meet with him and suggests that Joop Smit was threatened at the time they were preparing the TRC submission. What follows is conjecture by Joop Smit about who was involved.

c. Roy Allen

Discusses confronting Roy Allen and details concerning his alleged involvement.

d. Jack Widdowson

She says that she knows the least about Widdowson, has not met him, and according to her sources, he is a ‘lightweight’. He was a confidant of Colonel Dries Verwey who in turn was a confidant of General Hendrik van den Berg of BOSS. According to Oosthuizen, Widdowson’s girlfriend was murdered in 1978 because she knew too much and asked too many questions. The official finding was suicide with a stocking on her bed. Her name was Hilda Kellerman. According to Roy Allen, it was suicide but he was the first person at the scene (interesting) and that it was an overdose, not a stocking.

4) Factors that have come to light

a. The briefcase

“While the matter of the missing briefcase is still a puzzle, we do have one suitcase in our possession, a brown leather suitcase that our father kept in his office. We found it to contain various personal (CV and financial statements etc.) documents. What is interesting is that the suitcase contained the minutes of an NP meeting before the election attended by FW de Klerk and Mr. Martiens Kotze. The minute included a note that Smit had written in pencil; ‘De Jongh – manner in which he withdrew from me. – softly softly dumped shares on exchange and afterwards no longer had control. He went to school with my father in Boshof.’ We don’t know what the note means but have found that De Jongh may refer to ex-Governor of the Reserve Bank, Theo de Jongh or his brother Gerrie de Jongh who also worked at the Reserve Bank. We also found a note taken by someone on my father’s behalf which said ‘Dr. Smit, Mr. Gerrie de Jongh stopped by. He says you now have a clear way forward’. According to our uncle Iaan Smit, our father’s brother, there were three suitcases - one of which went to the Department of Finance, one to the police, and one to our family. The first two suitcases never reappeared.

“Our father regularly met with Prime Minister John Voster. According to family members and friends, our father shortly before his murder said that once he is in parliament he will reveal a big scandal. It has been said that he said ‘this will make Watergate look like a Sunday School picnic’. We believe that locating the second briefcase could answer certain murky questions about the nature of his work for Santam International and the government. We would be grateful if the assertions by Oosthuizen that the briefcase is locked up somewhere in a foreign bank vault could be investigated.

b. RAU TEM

Discusses various theories around the meaning of ‘Rau Tem’ – the message found on the walls of the Smit House.

c. The Z-Squad

Details of the BOSS hit squad and links to the ‘Taakmag’. Mentions people such as Mike Kühn and Hennie Heynecke.

d. SANTAM International

“I am of the opinion that many of the answers concerning the motive for the murder can be found at Santam International – the company where my father worked shortly before his murder. Robert Smit was working at the IMF from 1971 to 1975. In May 1975, he wrote to Gerritt Viljoen (Chairman of the Broederbond) and said that he wanted to return to South Africa and asked about a possible post. He was offered a position in econometrics which he turned down as he was interested in international trade. Shortly after this exchange of letters, Robert flew to New York to meet with Dr. CHJ van Aswegen (Chairman of Santam International and vice-Chairman of Armscor) to discuss a position in the company. Van Aswegen sent a letter of appointment to Smit (there were two letters). Santam International was then restructured. Smit accepted the post in writing (copy of the letter attached – attachment 12) where after he gave notice to the department of finance on 30 September 1975 for the end of January 1976. Robert Smit accepted the job as Managing Director of Santam International where he would manage international lines of credit for South African government institutions, parastatal institutions and private companies. Robert Smit worked from the offices of Merca Bank, a merchant bank of Santam International. Merca Bank’s chairman was Dr. Charles Griffiths Ferreira. Santam International’s shareholding was as follows:

- Dr. CH van Aswegen (15%)
- Santam (24%)
- Merca Bank (24%)
- Santam Pension Funds (22%)
- Robert Smit (15%)
-

According to the letter head, the directors are listed as:

- Dr. CH van Aswegen (Chairman)
- Robert Smit (Managing Director)
- IJ Steyn (Director from Santam/Sanlam)
- DG Ferreira (Merca Bank)
- Gert Z Liebenberg (Boland Bank)

The Directors met once per month and minutes were taken in a cryptic manner (Annexure 14). According to our father’s secretary Ina Barkhuizen, she did not type the minutes but these were done by the secretary to the head of Merca Bank. Robert Smit’s package

included membership of the Rand club, an interest free home loan, a Mercedes-Benz 280SE and life insurance paid of Santam.

“My summary regarding Santam International is that it was a front organization and that Robert Smit was its Managing Director but worked for the government at the same time. The secrecy concerning Santam, Robert Smit, and the fact that almost no information is available, or that nobody will provide it, deepens my suspicion. I find it very strange that nobody from the top management down had a clue concerning Robert Smit’s work or what he was busy with.

A cousin of ours David Murray tried to investigate the motive for the murders three years ago. He also investigated Santam International and spoke to various other people. Wherever he turned he was faced with a brick wall, and that everybody suffered from memory loss, and not one of them are honest people. He specifically referred to Dr. van Aswegen, Dr. Ferreira, Andrew Hofmeyer (Ferreira’s right hand man) and JG van H Louw (Santam International Director and managed Robert Smit’s estate). He also spoke to a number of other people including Dr. Chris Stals (who was with Robert Smit in Washington), Christo Wiese and others. David undertook an in depth investigation but was scared off by break-ins in his office, threats, and probably even assault. He does not like to discuss this.

i. Colleagues

Charles Ferreira – “I made telephonic contact with Charles Ferreira. In response to a question about my Father’s work at Santam International, he said to me that as far as he knew, Robert Smit arranged lines of credit for South Africa: ‘as a result of Robert Smit’s work in the USA, he knew all the top bankers in the world and he was very well equipped for the task... I had no idea what Robert Smit was busy with. I only managed the administrative side of his work at Santam.’ Ferreira claimed that he was only a Director because Smit had asked him to act as one (We find this strange given that Dr. Ferreira was in charge of Merca Bank and Merca Bank controlled 24% of Santam. He also said that Dr. van Aswegen (the chair of Santam) referred everyone to him who had queries regarding Robert Smit. He finds this strange because Dr. Van Aswegen appointed Robert Smit. Ferreira referred me to Jean Sterianos, Merca Bank’s share-trader who knew Smit well and travelled with him on overseas visits. According to Ferreira, none of the police officers ever followed up this matter with Sterianos. “What is also interesting is that Dr. Ferreira approached Iaan Smit, Robert Smit’s brother, to ask if he could act as a pallbearer at the funeral, which was agreed to and took place. This must prove that Ferreira and Robert Smit were not ordinary colleagues. We never heard or saw him after the funeral.”

Dr. CHJ (Carel) van Aswegen – Liza made telephonic contact with van Aswegen. He was very nervous and eventually said that he has a ‘slight’ memory of Robert Smit. He said that he did not really know Robert Smit “he bumped into him on a few occasions in the corridors”. When asked what Robert Smit was doing at Santam International he said “I don’t know, I don’t have the slightest clue about that. It will be impossible for me to help you.” When I said to him that I cannot understand the secrecy around Robert Smit and Santam International I was only met with silence. When I told him that I wanted to meet with him because he flew to New York to discuss Robert Smit’s appointment, he claimed

that that was not the reason that he had been to New York and that he was part of a group of 20 to 30 people who were there for an IMF meeting. I find it strange that he knew nothing about Robert Smit's work at Santam. He was the Chairman that appointed Robert Smit. He was, together with Smit, the co-Director of Credit Guarantee (see attachment 16). In my opinion these two people (Ferreira and van Aswegen) must have had precise knowledge about our father's work and the motive for his murder. Robert Smit must have come across something of a financial nature on one of these overseas visits. Following my discussion with Ina Barkhuizen it became clearer that van Aswegen and Ferreira knew what this was about.

Ina Barkhuizen (nee McGregor) – I met with Ina who said she did not know what my father was working on other than a matter when he attended an arbitration meeting between Alusaf and the ICC Arbitration Panel in Paris in June 1977. Following Smit's return from Paris (with Sterianos) van Aswegen asked to see Smit urgently. Smit travelled to Cape Town for the meeting and returned depressed and upset. He said that van Aswegen asked him to forgo his shares at Santam International as certain members of management were unhappy that Smit and not others had a share in the company. Smit attended a meeting at the Santam office a day before his murder on 21 November 1977 with Swiss bankers and then left for Springs. After his departure (she is not sure if it was Monday or the Tuesday) there was a document on her table concerning his immediate dismissal. He was due to leave Santam International at the end of November 1977. What was the reason for this sudden and drastic decision? It doesn't make sense to me to fire a Managing Director. Ina was just as surprised given that she had the impression that Ferreira and Smit had close ties and much respect for one another. She cannot understand how the two can say they did not know what Robert Smit was doing. She does recall that Dr. Ferreira was very scared after the murder to the extent that he purchased a gun which everybody new about and his anxiety to the extent that they made fun of the fact that he carried the weapon wherever he went. When asked if she knew whether Smit had any meetings with ministers, she can only recall various meetings with Dr. Connie Mulder which was noted in his diary. The police had no interest in the diary and were selective about the information they wanted from Santam. He (Smit) also had a lot of contact with the Department of Finance. It is likely that one of the missing briefcases was in fact found at the Department of Finance which Ina found swarming with police investigators.

Ida Allen – Ida Allen preceded Ina Barkhuizen as Smit's secretary and quit a year before his murder in 1976. She was engaged to Roy Allen when she worked for Robert Smit. Ida Allen married Roy Allen in 1991 and were divorced in 1992. She was very curt with Liza Grundlingh and refused to answer many questions.

e. Initial investigation by police

According to the latest rumours, the entire murder investigation was covered up. Journalist Peet Botha reported on 30 May 1997 that the East Rand murder and robbery unit was involved in the cover up. We have many questions about the initial police investigation. Why is it that in the case of some people such as our parents best friend 'Dawn Lottering' and Robert Smit's broker Jean Sterianos there was only one or even no statement was taken? How can the briefcases be missing if an inventory exists of the items

removed by the police from the briefcases? What happened to the items that were removed and to so much other documentation?

General Hendrik van den Bergh – I met him in December 1992, looked him in the eyes and asked “what are those blue eyes of uncle hiding away?”. He looked me straight back in my eyes and answered “that which I will take with me to my grave”. I went to see van den Bergh following a tip-off from an unnamed person. He denied any involvement in the murder. He said that he had the right people who would have been able to solve the murder within 48 hours but the police did not ask him for any help [OS note: this contradicts information in the police docket]. He felt that the police had not undertaken a very good investigation and apparently only saw the docket two years after the murder. When asked if the murderers were South African or were flown in for the task, he said he had investigated the matter. He contacted the mafia boss overseas and he said to van den Bergh that the assassins were not from abroad; “search for the people in your own country”. He said that the murderers were white and that Jean Smit knew them or at least one of them. One of the things that he said to me which I do not believe is that Robert Smit worked unofficially for BOSS and that he knew Robert Smit well. Robert Smit apparently provided him with intelligence about what he had heard abroad. This is absolute disinformation.

f. Sanctions busting/Weapons/Oil

We have established that our father was involved in the oil sanctions busting operations of South Africa. He had, according to our understanding, good relations with the Shah of Iran. The Shah sold him a very valuable Persian carpet which he wanted to buy back after the murder. According to a friend of our parents Dawn Lottering, our father regularly travelled to Iran via Turkey. She took him to the airport, he apparently personally told Dawn that he was involved in sanctions circumvention projects. We suspect that our father stumbled upon unlawful transactions and commissions while working in the field of sanctions circumvention.

5) Political figures

The names of various politicians have been mentioned in connection with the murder, but particularly one ex-Minister. While we could not find any proof, we would like to share with you [TRC] the untested allegations which we have obtained.

Further material Not Released by DOJ

6) Friends/Acquaintances

Not Released by DOJ

7) Journalists

Not Released by DOJ

8) Other

Not Released by DOJ

9) Conclusion

10) Attachments (18)

B) SAPS Release of Documents – Investigative Diary

Murder Scene (Pg. 1-6): Their driver Daniel Tshabalala saw Cora Smit at 19:10 on 22 November 1977 and discovered the bodies at 7:45am the next morning. Robert Smit is found in the passageway with three bullet wounds and one knife wound. Cora Smit is in a bent kneeling position next to the telephone with two bullet wounds and fourteen knife wounds. The letters RAU TEM are separately spray-painted on the fridge and on the wall. Nothing was stolen, including watches, rings and cash that the deceased had on their person and a firearm radios and other valuables found in the house. It appears that the person or persons spent a lengthy period in the house and that all cupboards and draws were searched and that everything was carefully repacked. The post-mortem revealed that Cora Smit was murdered shortly before her husband. It could have been as little as between 10 and 30 minutes. She is likely to have been stabbed first before being shot, first in the stomach and then in the head. Robert Smit was shot in the neck as he entered the house, he fell forward and the second bullet entered his chest and the third shot was to his head. Thereafter he too was stabbed in the back with the knife. Cora Smit called the National Party office at 19:40 to let her husband know that there are people waiting for him. Police initially suspect a number of different types of killers, including a Charles Manson type.

(Pg.7): Robert Smit's diary indicated that he was to meet someone at 19:30 to 19:45 (name redacted).

(Pg.9): The police received a number of tip-offs regarding the meaning of RAU TEM, including from a senior military intelligence officer who claimed that it represented a parallelogram signifying balance that was returned after the murder of Steve Biko.

(Pg.14): The murder attracted all sorts of crazies, from fortune tellers to anonymous tip-offs that the police should look into the eyes of the deceased to establish whether they reflect a portrait of the killer. **(Pg. 36):** The first contact by a clairvoyant. **(Pg.37):** Second clairvoyant. A magician calls from Kroonstad and said that Smit was killed by a yellow person.

(Pg. 27-28): Following a lead in a diary entry, the police identified a woman who had set up a meeting with Smit and a man involved in Solar Energy in October 1977. After six hours of questioning she stated that she and Smit had a relationship and he frequently visited her at home. She recalled a speech that Smit gave at the Asscom Business Federation meeting conference in Port Elizabeth which he left early to spend a day and a half in her apartment. The detectives focused on what Smit told her. She said that he had a very unhappy childhood.

The largely Calvinist Afrikaans community in Bloemfontein tended to ostracize him as a Seventh Day Adventist. He had sworn revenge and sworn that he would become Prime Minister or President. He wanted to show these people that he could make it and claimed that he had, because of political pressure, left the Seventh Day Adventist Church to join one of the Dutch Reformed Churches. Her links to Smit also assisted her business interests as did it the foreigner she had introduced to him. They had spoken about the use of Solar energy in farming.

(Pg. 34): The police investigated all leads, including the photo-stat of a ballot paper in Alberton in which a second year Wits Medical student had scribbled the words RAU TEM. There is no reason given as to how they found this ballot paper, but it is indicated that the police are content that the student's parents are supporters of the National Party.

(Pg. 35): An **unnamed person** and an unnamed secretary spoke with Smit shortly before his death to congratulate him on his candidature in the elections, to which Smit replied that it is better to be involved in politics given that he was standing on people's toes and had made important enemies in his overseas currency transactions.

(Pg. 38): Smit had lunch together with two other people at 3pm on the day of his murder at the Swiss Tavern. Smit ate a minute steak, baby marrows and rice.

(Pg. 39): Details of a relationship Smit had with a good friend whom he visited regularly and with whom he had a sexual relationship. His visits were always in the morning or the early afternoon before her husband and children returned home. She said that he at one stage commented that he had made many enemies in the financial world.

(Pg. 42): **[Check – this could relate to investigation at Santam International but is heavily redacted]**

(Pg. 43): Mention is made of people arrested in Switzerland by members of the SAP Commercial Branch, one of whom (Brigadier Smith) feels very strongly that Robert Smit was involved in currency matters.

(Pg. 45-46): Mentions meetings between Smit and **an old University friend [Redacted]** of his from Oxford on two occasions in November 1977. During the first visit, Smit said that he had successfully developed plans to circumvent the oil sanctions against South Africa. The person with whom he met had been active in the UK Conservative Party before immigrating to South Africa in 1972. He is between 35 and 40 years old and dyes his hair 'dirty-sandy'. There is something wrong with his left eye.

(Pg. 47): In what was considered a breakthrough, Robert Smit's private secretary at Santam International in Johannesburg, said that when the Smit's were tired and wanted to spend time alone at night they would claim that they were expecting guests. It is likely that they did not expect any guests on the evening and also explains why there was no food or residue of food at the crime scene. She handed various documents to the police, including a copy of a Santam International report.

(Pg. 50): Smit's secretary told police that she had warned him that it was not good for him, as a politician, to have so many girlfriends. His response was "If I see a bunny, I will chase it".

(Pg. 65-66): BOSS are investigating the murder of a member of a foreign Communist Party outside Vereneging by two people acting on the instructions of their Communist Party. The men leave South Africa and return behind the Iron Curtain via West Germany. According to BOSS, it is possible that the organization [redacted] responsible for these murders could be linked to the Smit murders. **(Pg. 67):** The police investigation dismissed any connection between the two murders.

(Pg.73): A confidential source [redacted] provided details of numbered Swiss bank accounts held by South Africans. He was a friend of Robert Smit and said that Smit spoke about Swiss banking methods and was a great supporter of these.

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