

national union of south african students
nasionale unie van suid-afrikaanse studente

NUSAS

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TO: OVERSEAS NATIONAL UNIONS
INTERNATIONAL STUDENT ORGANISATIONS
OVERSEAS REPRESENTATIVES

FOR INFORMATION: NATIONAL EXECUTIVE
SRC PRESIDENTS
ADVISORY PANEL
HONORARY OFFICERS

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Greetings

Recently there have been various developments regarding NUSAS and it is the purpose of this circular to outline these for your information.

(1) REACTION AND FOLLOWUP TO THE KUMASI STATEMENT

Background

The full text of the statement made by NUSAS to the Commonwealth Students Conference held in Kumasi, Ghana, in January earlier this year. (A limited number of copies are still available on request) Briefly, the statement called for a termination of the sale of arms to South Africa, action to stop the economic exploitation of Black South African Workers by foreign investors and the termination of sporting and other ties which support and entrench racism in South Africa.

Reaction

Public reaction in South Africa was immediate and on the whole condemnatory. This was especially true of the English language newspapers, who had hitherto been mildly sympathetic to our cause. There were also threats from Government supporting sources and pressure was put on students affiliated to NUSAS. None of these threats materialised and in fact all the student councils of the affiliated centres have expressed some form of support for the statement.

Follow Up

(a) Arms The subsequent sale of Wasp Helicopters by the British Government to South Africa, was hailed by the South African Government and opposition alike as "a major breakthrough in foreign diplomatic relations" and it was undoubtedly a great boost to those who wish to perpetuate the status quo in this country.

(b) Foreign Investment The question of foreign investment remains a problem requiring urgent attention and even the mild action taken by the American Polaroid Company has not received significant support as yet among other foreign investors. NUSAS has set up economic research units at various centres as well as action committees to pressure for higher wages for Blacks. NUSAS stands firm in its call for action which will end economic exploitation of black workers in South Africa.

(c) Sport NUSAS continues to oppose white sporting tours abroad and to combat segregation in sport within South Africa. A cricket tour of Australia by an all-white team is to take place towards the end of the year. The governments of two Australian states as well as a powerful Trade Union organisation there, have stated their intention of boycotting the tour and NUSAS has issued a statement supporting their stand. We have also called for non-racial sport in South Africa and we are actively working towards this end. Affiliated campuses are at present taking action against the traditional form of Inter university sport which has hitherto been segregated. The formation of a non-racial sporting body under the auspices of NUSAS is at present under way.

It remains the policy of the South African Government to perpetuate racism through the medium of sport. It is their declared policy not to allow blacks to participate in International sport as representatives of South Africa. It is also their declared policy to prevent any form of multi racial sport on South Africa on a free and equal basis. The recent so-called "concessions" announced by the South African Prime Minister Mr Vorster in Parliament are no more than a weak attempt to maintain South Africa's position in International sport on her own terms. There has been no meaningful official change in the South African Government's policy as regards sport.

NUSAS POLICY AND GENERAL TRENDS

NUSAS and SASO

Since the reassessment of NUSAS in 1970 and since the emergence of a growing Black consciousness, embodied in the formation of the black South African Students Organisation (SASO), NUSAS has initiated several shifts in its general policy and approach.

At its annual congress in 1970, NUSAS welcomed the formation of SASO as a "positive step in the realisation of the aspirations of Black students towards an objective common to South African students irrespective of race". NUSAS believes that the building up of a Black consciousness is a source of power inextricably bound up with the struggle for freedom in South Africa.

The active practice of non-racialism in this racial society will continue side by side with an emerging black consciousness as they were towards a common goal. SASO has during the past year been gaining strength on black campuses which had hitherto been banned by governmental and educational authorities from participation in NUSAS activities. Where Black campuses have not yet affiliated to SASO, NUSAS leaders have encouraged them to do so.

In March this year NUSAS and SASO held a joint executive meeting. At this meeting SASO stated that it was not expedient for them to co-operate with any body that was wholly white or which included white membership. NUSAS which has both black and white membership was included in the latter category. Nevertheless it was decided by both organisations that contact on an exchange of information basis would be entered into, with each organisation recognising the role of the other. It was agreed that the two organisations would not "malig." each other.

GENERAL

In the NUSAS Newsletter (No 14 Vol 2) Neville Curtis, NUSAS President commented as follows:

Policy formulation advancing

"The new ideas which emerged in reassessment are being carried further. There is growing concern with the total transformation of society and its values. The implications of the new society are being evaluated in economic, moral, cultural and social as well as political terms. An emphasis on youth and the effective power of youth as a force for change is being felt, and the old liberal position is giving way to a radical awareness, which takes greater cognisance of society as a whole, and the effects of racism in all spheres. National Seminar in April and Congress in July should see significant strides in policy formation as these new ideas have provided a barometer to change in the broader society and the new directions have far more than only student application.

New ideas - fundamental applications

"The fundamental applications of the new ideas are being expressed by the affiliate organisations. AQUARIUS is increasingly rejecting the moribund materialism and consumer culture of the older generation and seeking to reflect and express more humane moral beliefs in different cultural media. Media which run through the whole gamut of contemporary "pop culture" and which also draw on African culture and give expression in song, drama and poetry to the new aspirations. NUSED wants to see the authoritarian principles in education discarded and the tyranny of examinations systems, and of outmoded rules of dress behaviour and thought, broken and replaced by an education which liberates rather than oppresses, and which opens the way for new thinking rather than providing trite formulas. NUSWEL is concerned with combatting the hypocrisy that allows people to see a social evil and ignore it, and seeks to bring students into a meaningful relationship with people in the broader community, to tackle problems at their roots, and not just their symptoms.

Expansion of influence - 'outwards movement'

"The three affiliate organisations and the parent body - NUSAS - are all concerned with effectiveness and an expansion of their ideas and influence into the greater society. Youth is seen as a common denominator and the expansion of existing organisations in this direction, is a fact already. Crossing the State imposed racial and language barriers, all three movements are rejecting racism to a greater degree. The 'outwards movement' seeks to drag the campuses out of the isolation into which they have fallen and place them in the forefront of new directions and change in society."

ATTACKS ON NUSAS

The attacks on NUSAS and general intimidation of students has increased alarmingly over the past few months. This has been a direct result of the recent upsurge in student action focussing mainly on the month long protests held in opposition to the celebrations commemorating the tenth anniversary of the Republic of South Africa. A detailed press digest of these protests will be distributed within a few weeks. The protests were extremely successful. Students at all NUSAS affiliated centres, black and white, have stayed away from all celebrations, and have distributed approximately 1/2 million pamphlets in every major city - to draw attention to the presence of racism and exploitation in South Africa.

(1) Police Raids

On February 25, 1971, the security police conducted nationwide raids on anti-apartheid organisations and individuals. On that day 1 054 documents and files were removed from the NUSAS Head Offices in Cape Town. NUSAS proceeded to challenge the validity of the security police's search warrant and the court ordered the return of the documents. Despite this, the police removed the documents again immediately after returning them, this time using another search warrant and have held them ever since. The raid on NUSAS was one of several made simultaneously on a number of organisations and individuals.

(2) Deportation of Rex Heinke

Rex Heinke, a United States citizen, was deported by the Government without official reason in January this year. Rex was President of the Students Representative Council at the University of the Witwatersrand and was Deputy Vice-President of NUSAS. Following this victimisation of Heinke, mass protests were held at the larger NUSAS centres.

(3) Passport Refusal and banning warning - Paula Ensor

Paula Ensor, a member of the NUSAS executive and Vice-President of the University of Natal, Students Representative Council was refused a passport earlier this year to travel to Southern African countries. No reasons were given for the refusal. Paula had intended to establish contact with students in Botswana, Lesotho and Malawi. In April this year, Paula was called before a magistrate to receive a warning from the Minister of Justice to the effect that if she did not cease her "communistic activities", she would be banned in terms of the Suppression of Communism Act. She was not informed which supposed activities the Minister was referring to, and he has refused to give reasons for his action.

(4) Transkei literacy project

In November last year the chief minister of the Transkei, Kaiser Matanzima ordered the Transkei Council of Churches to end immediately the adult literacy campaign it had been conducting in conjunction with students from University Christian Movement (UCM) and South African Students Organisation (SASO), and NUSAS. It is a fact that the South African Government was not in favour of the project and that it also exercises much influence over the Transkei so-called government. The organisers of the campaign were warned that the South African Police would take action against anyone continuing with it.

In May this year, Dental students of the University of Pretoria (an Afrikaans language pro-apartheid university) were given permission to work in the Transkei during their vacation.

(5) Attacks by individuals, members of the government and police force

- (a) Mr Harry Schwarz, United Party (official opposition to the Nationalist Government), leader in the Transvaal Provincial council attacked NUSAS and the Students Representative Council of the University of the Witwatersrand for refusing to participate in the Republic Festival. He also referred to the NUSAS Arms statement. He dissociated himself and his party from the "un-South African approach of NUSAS".
- (b) In April this year Lieutenant Colonel Meyer of the Security Police made a statement labelling "NUSAS, UCM and drugs as the three most corrupting influences on South African youth". In the same speech he made several other wild and unfounded allegations. NUSAS has issued summons against Colonel Meyer and is to sue him for defamation. In an interview with the SUNDAY TIMES, Brigadier P.J. Venter, Head of the Security Police announced the discovery of a "new internal subversion front subbed 'sensitivity training'" and attacked the distribution of pamphlets informing students of their legal rights when questioned by the Security Police.
- (c) During the Defence Vote in Parliament, Mr P.W. Botha, Minister of Defence, warned Neville Curtis, NUSAS President, "that he must be careful not to burn his fingers". He was referring to the NUSAS Arms statement. This matter was originally brought up during the vote by a member of the opposition party, the United Party, who labelled the Arms statement "despicable" and referred to NUSAS officials as agitators.

- (d) During his vote in Parliament in April this year, the Prime Minister Mr BJ Vorster had the following to say "I want to issue this warning to a few of the present leaders of NUSAS. Remember Adrian Leftwich and others. I have summed you up. You cannot hold a candle to him and others. Do not try to play that same game. You are going to run into very great trouble Particularly as far as this question of subversion is concerned, there are young people who are playing with fire at the moment. It is in this connection that I want to issue a serious warning"

The Prime Minister also made an attack on the students who had participated in the anti-Republic Day protests during his speech at the celebrations in Cape Town on May 31.

- (e) In both the senate and the House of Assembly, during the week after the end of the Republic celebrations, NUSAS came under heavy attack from several sources, including the Prime Minister, Mr Vorster, the Minister of Police, Mr S.J. Muller, and several government and opposition senators. The tone of the attacks ranged from expressions of contempt and disgust to threatening warning. In a letter to Neville Curtis, Mr Vorster said "Your attentions is drawn to the fact that the nation is taking more and more offence at the actions of the pink liberalists in your organisation, and it will be well if you will take notice of this fact".

A Nationalist Senator, Professor OPF Horwood, a former principal of the University of Natal called for the withholding of government subsidies to universities that failed to curb the actions of dissident students and student organisations, such as NUSAS. Dr GR Bozzoli, Principal of University of Witwatersrand defended the rights of students to protest against what students felt were wrong. Professor F Stock, Principal of the University of Natal, endorsed the statement made by Senator Horwood.

(6) Intimidation during Republic Day Protests

During the protests which arose from the Republic Day celebrations more than 50 students were : assaulted by members of the public while distributing pamphlets; held by the police; or questioned by the security police. In Cape Town a student was allegedly assaulted by the Police.

In Durban the offices of the Students Representative Council was raided, pamphlets were stolen and an inflammable mixture of grease and paraffin was spread over the floor, walls and furniture.

At the time of writing, a number of similar incidents have been reported and await confirmation.

(7) Special Branch Activities

- (a) NUSAS leadership training seminars have become in recent years a focus of special attention of the Security Police. Seminars have been raided, and direct approaches have been made to caretakers of seminar sites. A major in the security police has stated that special branch informers are present at every seminar held under the auspices of NUSAS "as a matter of course".
- (b) In the first month of the 1971 academic year, over 12 documented cases of Special Branch approaches to students had been reported. In Johannesburg two SRC members at the University of the Witwatersrand were approached to inform and two other students threatened with reprisals if they did not disengage themselves from student activity. In Grahamstown two students were approached to spy on their fellows - and in Natal at least two students were approached during that first month of the academic year.

Two cases have been reported of non-students being approached and offered money to attend University if they would join student clubs and report on the activities of students.

Security Police have been investigating the publication of a magazine on the Durban campus, the painting of slogans on the Witwatersrand campus, rumours of Republic Day action on a number of Black campuses, the Publication of a fact sheet on "Fuzz and Freaks" in Cap. Town and the activities of NUSAS, UCM and SASO officials on a number of campuses,

(c) NUSAS mail is continually tampered with. Letters often arrive opened or taped up. Many letters sent from NUSAS affiliated centres never arrive at the NUSAS Head Office, International mail is never certain of reaching its destination. We have had several reports of mail being sent from overseas which has never reached the NUSAS Head Offices. It is a well known fact that the Special Branch has, and uses, the most up to date "bugging" devices, whenever a NUSAS telephone is used it is automatically assumed that the telephone is being "tapped". Recent proposals by the Government will make telephone tapping and opening of mail "legal".

(d) Special Branch members make a point of attending every student protest in forces. They also attend student mass meetings and other campus activities regularly.

(8) General Intimidation

Intimidation of student activists is not confined to official state bodies only, as some of the above examples will show. At several parties attended by students car windscreens have been smashed. In November last year Neville Curtis, NUSAS President had his car damaged when a bomb was exploded inside it. Despite continual appeals to the police over this and similar incidents, none of these right wing thugs have been apprehended.

The NUSAS Head Office regularly receives threatening telephone calls.

It is common practice for student protests, marches and pickets and even Pop festivals to be forcibly disrupted by supporters of the Government policies. It is believed also that young Government supporters undergoing military training have been used to "unofficially" disrupt peaceful protest. Police have regularly turned a blind eye to such occurrences.

(9) Comment

The intimidation mentioned above is not an exhaustive account but merely serves to illustrate the type of pressure that an organisation such as NUSAS has to work under in the struggle towards its ideals. Furthermore this intimidation takes place against a general background of repression against all left wing bodies and the mass of the people in South Africa. Individuals too, who are actively opposed to White Domination in South Africa suffer the same intimidation. This is especially true of Black opponents of the Vorster regime of whom many are still political prisoners. The alarming increase of attacks on NUSAS during the past few months, especially on a government level does not make it unlikely that NUSAS or its leaders will come under more direct and more severe attack from the Government in the near future.

Such action may severely damage the organisation and the cause for which it is working - peace, justice and freedom for all South African students and people. If you are concerned about human rights then we have a common cause and your solidarity in the struggle against racism should be demonstrated.

Yours sincerely

NEVILLE CURTIS
PRESIDENT

PAUL PRETORIUS
DEPUTY PRESIDENT