

REPORT OF MEETING WITH HM.

HM was in Zambia on the 11th/12th April, 1987 and he gave a Report to the NEC on the following lines;

Internal Political Situation.

The political situation has changed significantly over the last ten years in South Africa. The ANC has been popular with the people over the years, but it has never had the image that it has now more than twenty years after its banning. Both inside and outside, it is becoming increasingly common for people who want to do something in the country to ask what the "people in Lusaka" are going to say. In such a situation, this charisma tends to rub off even on people who are known to have had previous association with the Organisation and the Movement in general and they are often consulted for guidance. It is a tribute to the work that has been done by the external mission of the organisation over the years.

The Townships have been under occupation by the Security Forces of the racist state ever since 12th June 1986. The occupation has been characterised by violence and brutality. The Police who were first in occupation were brutal and indisciplined, but the army has proved even more brutal and indisciplined. They roam the streets in platoons particularly at night time beating up people. They often go into houses, turning them upside down, and these things do not get reported and people do not know about them.

An uneasy calm has settled over the Townships streets. Suddenly they have become deserted of young people. There are probably concentration camps into which young people have disappeared since South African prisons have always been overpopulated and they could not therefore have been detained. Young people in the age range 15 to 22 years are fair game for the regime.

As far as overt political activity is concerned the government appears to have effectively contained it. There has been wide scale arrests and detentions of the Youth leadership. Torture and illtreatment of detainees is widespread. When they were rounded up initially, it was feared that they would be detained and beaten up on account of the rent strikes, but it appears that the main concern of the authorities is centred on the street committees.

The Street Committees were originally conceived as a mechanism for people's defence and protection because the police were entering homes and killing off people. And also, people were often summarily evicted from their homes. The government has built "warehouses" to which the house furnitures of people who had been evicted is taken, and non payment of rent results in the auctioning off ^{of} the property to pay off rent arrears and to defray costs of storage.

Political Organisations of the people have been beheaded. Civic leaders are in detention and behind bars, political activity at a sustainable level has been stopped except at Street Committee level. Executive officials of the Street Committees meet at block level. The UDF wanted to extend the organisation to establish Area Committees, but this idea was opposed and instead people opted for branch organisation. There are strong Street and Branch Committees in the Eastern Cape, Grahamstown, East London Fort Elizabeth Etc.

The Inkatha Organisation remains a serious thorn in the flesh. Its members have raided meetings of the NECC resulting in violence, and it is common for Inkatha gangs to be bussed from one area to the other to spread violence.

In the Cape Town area, the regime is building up and arming groups of "Wit doeke". They were responsible for razing Crossroads to the ground in a particularly savage manner. The AZAPO and BC Organisations are on the decline and the ANC (referred to as Inkgatlo) enjoys widespread popularity and commands great loyalty.

"Kapasas" are criminal elements used by the police against the people to commit murders in the Townships.

Black Journalists on the whole take an anti popular line and are a nuisance, and something needs to be done to counteract their attitudes which are most probably a reflection of PAC and BC influences.

The UDF has leadership problems. Its meetings are difficult to organise. As an organisation which has brought under its umbrella numerous organisations, it suffers particularly from problems of co ordination.

A sullen peace prevails over the Townships which makes the government boast that it has contained the situation, but it remains an uneasy peace because everyone is aware that none of the underlying problems have been solved.

The Trade Unions are flexing their muscles and the government is watching the situation with unease since they observe signs that the Struggle is now moving out of the classrooms into the field of labour.

The Rent Boycott started in 1978 as a protest against the steep rise in rent which local authorities were demanding. In Orlando Township, for instance, rents rose from R17 to R50. People were called upon by Civic Organisations not to pay the increase; there was massive support and the campaign spread; and the hands of the Civic leaders were forced to call for a total boycott of rents. It reached a stage where the authorities were losing in the vicinity of R9 million a month in income and the strike reached a peak in the Vaal Triangle. It embraces over 50 Townships.

The boycott has raised problems and the question is already being asked how long can be it sustained and how can it be ended in such a way that it is seen as a victory for the People?.

The rent boycott has had the effect of boosting the purchasing power of most people and the retailers have never had it so good. The youth are basking in the euphoria and they appear to have convinced themselves that they will not pay. Certainly the arrears which have accumulated give a stimulus to this feeling that they have embarked on a road of no return.

but there are splits on the issue. The majority of the people do not want to pay the rents. Some would pay rates and electricity and water charges.

The Civic Associations have made proposals demanding the abandonment of the rent principle in housing and demanding that the people should be given the houses since the rents they have paid over the years amount to having paid the value of the houses many times over. They also demand a lowering of the rates.

Education.

HM is of the view that the harm done by Verwoed "antu Education is incalculable. It has sent learning among Africans plummeting to scandalous levels.

Teachers are by and large negative in their attitudes and are demotivated and demoralised.

Crisis Committees have formed Parents organisations and they were instrumental in sending children back to school all over the country. How long there will continue to be organised schooling is anybody's guess because students and everybody is aware that the fundamental issues have not been resolved.

The movement for a "Peoples' Education" has been clamped down by the government which regards it as enemy number one., and its foremost exponents have been detained.

In the short term, it would appear that a way out should be sought in encouraging non racial approaches and initiatives in education. Many schools in urban areas have in fact opened their doors to African students for example the "edhill High School - a white private school.

This can be seen as part of the general upward mobility of blacks which has resulted in the massive breaches of the Group Areas Act. This mobility is not without its problems and it has brought to the surface questions such as "should a Black child go to a white school?" which are causing conflict in the black communities giving the impression that the "Ghetto mentality" still persists.

The fact of the matter is that many hitherto White educational institutions are facing a crisis. This is in part illustrated by the fact that the big Johannesburg College of Education for instance can only boast 35% occupancy.

HM recalled a statement attributed to the late Joe Qqabi in 1976 that "it is not the policy of the ANC that children should stay out of school". The 75th Anniversary statement is read as following this general line and it has helped in the present situation but it does need reinforcement.

The questions which have arisen in the present education crisis have an important bearing on the future. At a meeting that was held at the Funda Centre in Diepkloof on 9th November 1986 by Cosco and the Civics the advice that students should go back to school was greeted with the retort "Shaka could not read or write". It gives evidence of what appears to be a growing feeling that Education is not essential.

HM explained his associations with projects that are putting money in Education in South Africa such as the South Africa Education Programme in the USA, the EOC chaired by Bishop Tutu. The aim is to utilise the large amounts of monies from the USA to take bright students to the USA. The South African Advanced Education Project based in London also serves the same purpose.

There is a move in these bodies to use the funds for internal training rather than sending students abroad as this is seen to be more cost effective.

Economy

HM suggests that there is regret in South Africa over what is regarded as the failure of post independent Africa to appreciate the importance of the economic factor.

He recalled that over 50 years ago, he experienced the humility of the African having to beg cap in hand and contends that the position still remains basically unchanged today. In as far as money power is concerned, Africans were nowhere.

What was the position of the Organisation, he asked in regard to economic power? He understood that the ANC stood in favour of a business sector in post apartheid structures. But in the same way as there had developed a negative feeling about those who had achieved professionally, there was a negative attitude towards those who had achieved economically. The alienation of professionally educated people was incorrect and in his view there was need to encourage an African bourgeoisie.

He conceded that a business sector would have to be sensitive to peoples' needs, and he quoted with approval what he understood to be the Algerian experience which recognised the importance of the diplomatic option in the struggle, while not rejecting violence.

Intellectuals at the University of Wits appeared to preach and favour "workerism", and the young blacks appear to be caught up in the dilemma when "they believed that making money was evil".

HM discussed the disinvestment campaign and the pulling out of large corporations from South Africa. He thought that this was a cleverly manipulated sham, Even Kodak which had been widely acclaimed was doing exactly what the others Coca Cola, General Motors, IBM etc had done. It was a sure bet that many other corporations would want to follow the strategem and many leading Blacks, including Tutu and Boesak had been enmeshed. He was involved in ventures such as the "GET UP FOUNDATION" and the "GET AHEAD FOUNDATION" and the "KHOTSO TRUST". The latter's main aim and purpose was to put money into black business.

Questions which had arisen and needed a response were;
 Should blacks buy equity in big business?
 Should blacks buy equity of corporation pulling out?
 How should they respond in principle to the pulling out?
 What is the strategy in regard to sanctions?

Culture:

Jabu Ngwenya who was involved in the SA Music Alliance and was a big name in the cultural boycott movement had been dismayed by the reaction to the "Amampondo Tour" and claims the "Amampondo" are a UDF affiliate. He post the following questions;

1. Why 'did the Movement torpedo the tour?
2. Who can go on tour? And who can not?
3. What conditions are acceptable?
4. What is the attitude to Paul Simon?
5. Ray Phiri and the attack on Graceland?

A certain Victor Ntoni claiming to have been associated with Amandla is currently working for SABC claiming to have been frustrated.

The Liberal Universities, including the Senates of Wits and UCT were in a tight corner because the black students are asserting themselves more and more and they are under pressure to live up to the precepts of university education. The cultural and academic boycott. How far does it go?.

Are all academics banned from attending overseas meetings etc?

Are there any identified as "untouchable"? What exceptions can be made?

Academics like P. Tobias are genuinely terrified of the effects and implications of an academic boycott and would appeal for a selective boycott.

Henry G. Makgothi

12.04.87.

Lusaka.