

Bmk/p12/0099/19

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Attention Riet van Laer - SANAM

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Dear Riet

13.02.1990

I'm sorry for the long delay - but we had a number of technical problems on top of the lack of time.

I made the deal with Nadia, that she should take care of the EAP and the bench-test-artikles, while I wrote an interview with Thron. We have pictures of him as well if you are interested. Nadia will fax her artikles over by the end of this week - if its not too late.

I hope you can use the one I fax here - and you are of course free to cut it - if its too long.

Many regards

Cathrine  
WUS

No Schools for seven  
million black children  
in South Africa

Only half of South Africa's 14 million black children have any possibility of obtaining a formal education. 7 million have no access to the school-system. The rest are taught in overcrowded rooms with inadequate material, racist textbooks and by teachers, who have often only passed an 8th grade themselves.

- I have visited classes, where the teacher had to teach from the doorstep. He was unable to enter the room, because there were up to 90 pupils waiting for him inside. This is the reality of the apartheid school-system in South Africa today, says Mr. Ihron Rensburg, general-secretary of the NECC (National Educational Co-ordinating Committee) - an umbrella-organization for parents, students and teachers. NECC, that has been banned for four years, can again operate freely after President de Klerk's speech in the South African Parliament the 2nd of February.

- But that has by no means solved the severe crisis in South African black education. The government has simply given up. It's my impression that they look to us for solutions - but without any intentions of giving us the money and equipment required, says Mr. Rensburg, who visited Copenhagen and London in February, as the guest of WUS-DK and WUS-UK, to meet with politicians and teachers organizations.

- If black students are to have the same possibilities as white students it will be necessary to triple the educational budgets and to train another 450.000 teachers. At least 40 percent of the 150.000 teachers presently working in black schools will furthermore need some kind of service training. If all our demands were met the educational budget would cost the state as much as it now uses on police-army and security - about 21 bio. rands. It will take a long time before we come this far - even though much could be done to improve the situation here and now. A meeting shortly before Christmas between NECC and the minister for black children's education, Mr. Stoffel van der Merwe, didn't bring any solutions to the problems.

- We faced Stoffel van der Merwe and the government with some demands that overnight could improve the situation just a little - if the will was there to make changes. But so far we have not had much success in convincing the government, says Mr. Ihron Rensburg and reels off a number of the most preposterous absurdities in the present-day school-system. While millions of black children are not able to go to school, the government is closing down hundreds of schools for white children - due to a decline in the white birth-rate. Almost 200.000 places in schools have been left vacant in this way. In the white Teachers Colleges 4000 seats stand empty - and the government now closes down white Training Colleges as well.

The crisis in black schools is becoming more and more apparent as the NECC-launched campaign "Back to School" is gaining ground.

- For three years - 1983-85 - almost 80 percent of all black students between 12-20 boycotted schools in protest against



the so-called "bantu-education". An education that aims at keeping the black child in a humble and inferior position. Textbooks in history as well as literature paints a picture of a superior white race bringing civilization to ignorant, black savages. No wonder the children spontaneously decided to boycott schools. But in the long run we all got too worried about the bleak perspectives of a new generation of almost illiterate black kids, says Mr. Rensburg whose organization, NECC, in 1986 called for a crisis-conference which produced a strong appeal from parents, student-leaders, anti-apartheid-organizations and teachers to make the pupils return to school.

- We could foresee a situation where the walls of apartheid had fallen - and left millions of illiterate blacks to live and work in a democratic South Africa. So many blacks without the ability to read and write? What kind of democracy would that be? That is ~~the~~ the severe questions we are still faced with today.

- It has taken some time to convince the students that they have to go back to school - but since the beginning of 1989 the pupils have streamed back in still greater numbers. But the "Back to School"-campaign has only made it more clear, that the white government has no solutions in mind - even though the classrooms get more and more crowded by each day. The campaign has just made the school-crisis even more obvious, confirms Ixron Rensburg and underlines that new government-regulations directly have undermined the aims of the campaign.

- The Government has, totally arbitrarily, decided that pupils over 20 years of age are not allowed to go to school. This has created huge problems for the students that were for example 17 years old when the boycotts started. They are now unable to complete their exams. Many other students have been expelled for political reasons. The only solutions left for them are private schools or "street academies" - but most of them cost too much money.

- Of course our campaign also contains demands of changes in the content of the education and the school-equipment. But the children that have started to go back to school are still unmotivated - since nothing really has changed in the class-rooms. This lack of motivation was mirrored in the terribly bad pass-rates for black students in 1989. Over half of the students failed in their final exams after secondary school - the exams that makes it possible to apply for University and other higher educations. While at the same time the pass-rate among whites is almost a 100 - 96 percent to be precise, says Mr. Rensburg and continues the long list of problems with black childrens education in South Africa.

School-attendance is not compulsory for black children - only for white, coloured and asians. That means that many poor families in the country-side prefer to keep children home from school to work on the farms.

On top of all these problems is the existence of a totally neglected group - the squatter-town-children.

- About 10 million people live in squatter-camps around the big cities in South Africa. The government feels no responsibility for these people. Since their parents live

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illegally outside their proper homeland these squatter-children are not even recognized as existing - and consequently not entitled to any form of school-education, says Ihron Rensburg, who despite of all has a small hope - now things are moving in the right direction and NECC has obtained a legal status.

- There is no doubt that the time has come to enforce our efforts to press the government for concessions. Both internally and hopefully externally. The pressure from the international community has never been more important than it is today - if we shall have any hope of ending apartheid proper.

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