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REPORT ON VISIT TO NIGERIA - 10th to 15th September 1978

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL

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FROM : Lars-Gunnar

TO : Craig, Peter, Piers, Hassim

cc : Pauline, Alison for information

DATE : October 19th 1978 (dated Rio de Janeiro, September 24th)

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1 Meeting with IUEF Students

Following the usual reception at Lagos airport, we had a first session with Evelyn from which it transpired that Dick Mackie would unfortunately not be in town. As I am very anxious to have his opinion on the financial situation, I hope that Peter will contact him in writing as a follow-up of his letter to us of sometime in July.

On 11th September we had a meeting with the IUEF students at the Ibadan summer camp, which was also attended by some of the UNHCR students, so all in all, we met some 80 scholarship holders. The meeting was also attended by Mr. Otunla of the Cabinet office and was also used by Evelyn to pay the students their travel allowances, etc. for their return to school. I made an introductory speech, thereafter, it was free-for-all for students to raise problems, criticism, etc. The whole affair - which was intended to last a couple of hours - in fact lasted some 7 hours and apart from anything else, was a useful illustration of many of the problems pertaining to the programme in Nigeria.

To say that the students were dissatisfied is in itself an under-statement as they had very severe criticisms of the allowances, to start with. All the students who spoke severely criticised the size of the allowances, the variations between different types of schools, etc. The second lot of criticism pertained to the food situation and the medical problems and thereafter, followed assorted criticisms of the educational system, of certain principals

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who are not cooperative, of the federal government, of Nigeria, and of Nigerians in general. A particular problem that was raised by several students relates to the question of what would happen to a student if he were "stolen". As we are aware, one of our Zimbabwean students disappeared sometime ago and it is generally feared that he was apprehended to be used in some tribal ritual. As a matter of fact, people disappear quite frequently in Nigeria for such reasons and the students are particularly concerned about this aspect.

At this juncture, Mr. Otunla, who had gradually been looking more and more like an awakening Etna rose to his feet and said that he had by then been listening for several hours to the students and could no longer contain himself. He made an inflamed speech basically criticising the students for their lack of revolutionary perspective and zeal, and their concern only with bread-and-butter problems, and generally took them to task in a statement that was very strong indeed. It is notable that the students stood their ground, and a number of them took a very strong line in response to Mr. Otunla, which, as can be appreciated, did not make his mood any better. At this point, I explained to the students that it was difficult for us to have any precise view on questions pertaining to allowances, as during a short stay, it was difficult to assess such matters, that further, it was certainly in our interest to provide allowances that were adequate for the students to study on, at the same time as it was essential that the students - the refugee students - did not become a privileged class in Nigerian society, and also bearing in mind that the more we pay to individual students, the fewer scholarships we can in fact provide. I proposed, however, that the best way of dealing with this matter would have been for the students to form a committee which could discuss and draw up a concrete proposal which could then be presented to us, and of course, it must be clear that we could in no way commit ourselves to implement whatever they propose, but that we could certainly give it due consideration and discuss it with all other agencies concerned.

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Strangely enough, this idea was readily acceptable to the students and as a result of this, a committee was formed and I agreed that I would meet with the committee in Lagos a few days later when it had drawn up a proposal. Following this, the meeting as such broke up, but then individual students were given the opportunity to meet Evelyn, Hassim and/or myself. Very early on, Mr. Otunla was again insulted by some of the students and therefore, took hasty leave of the scene. During the course of the preceeding hours, I met with most, if not all, the students present and two consistent problems were raised by virtually all students, the first one related to the inadequate size of the travel allowance when coming to and leaving camp, particularly for the students coming from far away; and the second problem pertained to Evelyn, where it was asserted by virtually all the students, they felt that she had not enough time and did not show enough interest in their problems.

In regard to the first problem, action was in fact taken during our visit and it was agreed to increase the travel allowance for those students coming from far away. In regard to the other, and more serious problem, I have discussed this matter with Hassim, with some of the other people concerned in Lagos, including the chairman of our committee, as well as having seen Evelyn deal with a few individual cases. On the basis of this, it is my definite opinion that the students do have a basis for criticism, resulting from two related factors, the first one being the sheer over-burden on Evelyn which prevents her from spending sufficient time on counselling and the second being the often aggressive, offensive, and sometimes outright unpleasant attitude that she has in dealing with some of the students, which I think is to a large extent the result of overwork, subsequent irritation and a feeling of inadequacy rather than serious flaws. However, whatever the reasons may be, it is of indisputable importance that this matter be resolved. This matter is also dealt with further on in this report.

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## II University Students

No specific meeting had been organised with the IUEF university students, which was a mistake, and I think therefore that on my return we should send a letter to all the IUEF university students explaining how this happened, and also dealing with one or two of the problems I am raising here.

The principal problem facing university students is that for reasons unknown to me, Peter and Evelyn have decided that the university students and their problems do not fall within Evelyn's terms of reference. Whilst it is clear that the administration can be better done from Geneva, it seems, to say the least, peculiar that if university students are facing general problems, they should be able to see the IUEF counsellor in order to channel their views etc. through her. This matter has been discussed with Evelyn and it has been agreed that from now on she will also be open for the university students' problems and I think that a statement to this effect should be included in the letter that we have to send.

Another general problem is that apparently we do not inform the university students when we send their allowances, which means that sometimes they have an unnecessarily long wait before they get paid and also they have no evidence to show that money has actually been sent. I thought that it was normal procedure that when any funds are transferred to anybody, the person is notified in writing, but if this is not done in regard to scholarship allowances, I would like it to be instituted as a standard procedure from now on.

The other general problem raised by the university students pertains to the cost of typing, printing and binding of their "theses", where I have informed them that if there are such additional costs, they will of course be met by the IUEF.

We have also finally agreed that all the students that get university places, which is now being arranged by the cabinet office, will also be given IUEF scholarships, i.e. the students

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who come out of IUEF-financed secondary school scholarships.

### III Student Committee

Attached to this is the proposal presented to us by the 3 persons constituting the interim student committee. In my view, the proposals are reasonable, mature, and the meeting with the committee was a very positive experience. We agreed immediately with the suggestion that the student committee become <sup>a</sup>permanent body to be the link between the IUEF and the students and all the students will now be informed of this whereafter a final and permanent committee will be established, but in the meantime we will deal with the 3 persons presently constituting the committee.

As far as the other proposals are concerned, I have explained that these will now have to be the subject of IUEF's evaluation as well as for discussion with other donors later on, as we could not take bi-lateral action. The next step will be that the IUEF committee in Nigeria will consider these proposals and make recommendations to IUEF Geneva, and also start discussion with the <sup>govt. the</sup> UN and the AEI. It is Hassim's and my definite opinion that increases in the allowances are necessary and we also feel that minimum action would be to cease having a difference in the size of scholarships between those in secondary schools, trade schools and technical schools, as in fact they belong largely to the same age group. We have explained to students that whatever we do can obviously not have immediate effects but that we will try to take decisions as soon as possible. I would like the scholarship department's reaction to the detailed proposals and will be looking forward to discussing this in some detail on my return.

On my return I should also write a letter to the members of the present committee and send them some material on the IUEF etc. and I would like Peter's views as to whether we should also, from our end, send a letter to the secretarial school students explaining to



them what the present procedure is.

#### IV Meeting with the Cabinet Office

We had a meeting with Mr. Otunla and his assistant, Mr. Oguni. The meeting was extremely friendly and Mr. Otunla emphasised the importance of the programme, their willingness to continue cooperation with the IUEF and their gratitude to Evelyn. After some more introductory statements from our side we proceeded to discuss a number of specific matters.

On the question of the IUEF's status in Nigeria, Mr. Otunla agreed that it would indeed be timely to deal with this matter, and that as far as the Cabinet Office was concerned, they would be very happy to recommend this to the appropriate authorities, but that the matter should be handled formally through the departments of African Affairs and International Organisations of the Ministry of External Affairs. This will be the subject of another section.

On the question of fee increases at the University, Mr. Otunla informed us that the question is still open, but that the government of course feels an obligation to implement whatever they have agreed within the OAU and that they will advise the University Council accordingly and he feels sure that there will be positive results.

In regard to new students, the government have constraints due to the population explosion and the demand for schools and therefore there will be just over 100 students allowed this time. Also this time they will be very strict regarding the question of age, and there will be no over-age students allowed in secondary schools.

As to who should finance the scholarships, he felt that this was a matter for IUEF and UNHCR



to settle between themselves and consequently inform the Cabinet Office, and as a result of this, we agreed on the formula that the IUEF would assume responsibility for students already on our list.

He also felt that they would want to have more information about the IUEF programme in Nigeria and it was agreed that Evelyn would prepare a report. ..

He also felt that there were serious problems because of the lack of representation locally, thus creating communication difficulties between the students and the IUEF, long delays and many problems left unsolved, and that the government was thinking that one could use the military governor's office or some state agency to have some funds to deal with special problems that might crop up and to really act as our representative.

In regard to the ANC students to be withdrawn, we agreed that as soon as we had had the confirmation from ANC Lusaka, the students would be allowed to leave, and that, in the meantime, they should be kept in Lagos as there was no point in forcing them to go to school.

More in principle, he stated that they would no longer accept students on a Party basis within this programme but if ANC or PAC want to bring students to Nigeria, that should be handled directly with the government. What, if anything, this means in practice remains to be seen.

On the question of the school authorities sometimes lacking in cooperation and understanding of the problem, he recognised that although there is no way that they can get all the principals to cooperate positively, they will try their best to provide further information and try to make

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the principals in all the state schools more positive.

All in all, it was a constructive and friendly meeting and I generally feel that there is now a better understanding of what we are and what we are doing. I think that, as will be seen in further sections, with the progress at the External Affairs and the actions proposed by the IUEF committee, things are moving reasonably well.

#### V Meeting with UNDP-UNHCR

The meeting was chaired by Mr. Hauzer, the UNDP resident representative and was attended by the UNEPTSA man responsible for scholarships and Mr. Wiltshire (?). It became quickly clear that Mr. Wiltshire wanted the whole programme to be an UNHCR programme, but he was forced to accept the formula proposed by us, i.e. that the IUEF would assume responsibility for those students who already appeared on our list for placement. It was agreed that as soon as the minister for education finalised its work, the UN representatives and Evelyn would get together to conclude this matter.

We emphasised the need for proper orientation of the students to be done jointly by the organisations concerned and the government and although Mr. Wiltshire seemed to be of the opinion that he and Mr. Oguni when travelling on their mission had already oriented the students sufficiently, it was nevertheless agreed that such orientation would be arranged for them on arrival in Lagos. I informed them about the allowances and about the committee that has been formed and was met by scepticism and a negative attitude from Mr. Wiltshire and his UNEPTSA colleague, whilst Mr. Hauzer seemed to have a more enlightened approach.

For the rest of the meeting, it was mainly taken up by Mr. Wiltshire complaining about how the South Africans in Nigeria live in luxury compared to the Zimbabweans in camps in Botswana and complaining about the locking into her own office the previous day of

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one of his social counsellors by two enraged South African refugees. The lady, I am sorry to say, found her way out through a window and did not have to spend the night in the office.

#### VI Meeting with the Ministry of Education

The person responsible at the Ministry of Education has again changed and it is now a Mr. Okoro who is in charge of coordinating the placing of refugee students with all the different departments and who is also in charge of problems generally pertaining to foreign students as well as of Nigerians studying abroad. At the time of our meeting the placement in secondary schools and technical schools was virtually completed, and he hoped that by the following week the whole exercise would be through and he confirmed that the figure would be somewhere between 104 and 107 students in total.

Mr. Okoro has a positive attitude, but is clearly very new to the programme and the problems and will have a lot to learn. He agreed on the importance of an orientation course as well as on informing the principals better, was also of the opinion that the timing of the arrival of the new students did not present a problem, as they could easily pick up, even if they were a few weeks late.

#### VII Meeting at the Ministry of External Affairs

The ambassador in Geneva, Mr. Adeniji, had informed the Director of the Africa department, Ambassador Osobase, about our coming, but unfortunately Mr. Osobase was away on mission. However, we did meet the director of the department of international organisations who was an old acquaintance of Hassim's and who basically took a positive attitude to the question of establishing a proper status for the IUEF in Lagos. It was agreed that a submission should be made through the Nigerian High Commission in Lusaka, with copy to Amb. Adeniji in Geneva, explaining what we are doing and what status we have



in Lusaka. This matter has already been dealt with and Hassim is despatching the necessary letter. I will follow-up with Adeniji on my return.

### VIII Meeting with the ANC

We had a meeting with Hintsa Tshume and some side-kick of his which turned out to be a most unpleasant experience. They were both very drunk and very aggressive taking the line that we should issue the requested tickets immediately and not try to undermine Hintsa Tshume's authority. Through exercising a lot of patience, however, the tone of the meeting eventually changed somewhat (perhaps the influence of the beer) and it was finally agreed that both Hintsa and I would contact Lusaka by telex in the hope that the matter would be sorted out. We also agreed to reimburse the ticket for Dombo who had left Dar-es-Salaam, and to pay for one of the two tickets of the people who went to Dar for the passport renewal. It is perhaps worth noting that Hintsa came to see us off at the airport the morning we left and brought some posters and an ANC flag as a special present in return for his 9 am. whisky

### IX Acid Incident

I met with both the boys that were burnt in the acid incident. As far as the South African, Russell, is concerned, I must confess that he is extremely badly burnt and although I am not medical person, I take his point that the treatment provided in Nigeria has done nothing for him and I also saw for myself that as far as the burns on his back are concerned, they are completely raw. I must confess that I think the IUEF has mis-handled this case as we should have pushed much harder to get him out earlier. I have, however, promised that the maximum effort will be made to bring him to London, and I hope that by now he is already there. I have written a special letter to Mr. Otunla and got Mr. Oguni whom I met later on to promise that no obstacles would be made.

As far as the Zimbabwean boy (whose name escapes me) is concerned, his burns are minor,

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although his face is disfigured in a number of places. We agreed with him that he will continue his studies for the coming year, with a view to completing his examinations next year, and that following that, we will arrange for him to get treatment abroad - either in Zambia or in Europe. He accepted this, and the matter should now be implemented. I have also asked Evelyn to confirm our agreement with him in writing as for him, this is obviously a very serious problem which also strongly affects him psychologically..

#### X Meeting with the IUEF Committee

As already reported, Dick Mackie was not in town, but a meeting of the committee took place with Julius Adeluyi and Dr. Adisana (?). The committee undertook to work on making the IUEF better known in Nigeria, an evaluation of the present programme and the problems took place, from which it became clear that something must be done about our local representation, at least in places where there are large numbers of students, and that the committee will look at that, also that the committee should evaluate and recommend whether or not we need to increase the staff at the Lagos office. The committee also felt that in terms of funds bank drafts from Geneva should now be drawn on the Standard Bank, and I have already issued instructions concerning this, and generally, the committee will be looking into the whole question of distribution of cash in order to try and alleviate this problem. It was also felt that more regular visits from the scholarships officer would be necessary, including visits to the students on the site, and this is a matter that I would like to discuss on my return, pertaining, as a matter of fact, not only to Lagos and Nigeria.

Mr. Adisana felt that through his good contacts with Mr. Wiltshire, the IUEF/UNHCR local cooperation could continue in a positive way.

It was agreed that Mark Shope of ANC should be invited to come and meet the committee when he arrives to ensure a positive start to the ANC/IUEF relationship. The committee

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welcomed the forming of a student committee and it was agreed that at Christmas the two committees should try to have a joint meeting and that in due course, action should be taken regarding student representation on the IUEF committee. The committee also agreed to evaluate the proposals of the student committee when they are received, and to make recommendations to the IUEF.

They also felt the need for more contact with the Regional Office and finally it was agreed that through their contacts, they would take up the question of university fees.

Generally speaking, I think one can say that the committee functions well, that they are positively interested in assisting with the programme and should therefore be utilised to the maximum.

#### XI Other Meetings

Courtesy calls were paid to the SWAPO representative, Mr. Kampala, and the chargé d'affaires at the Swedish embassy, Mr. Åsberg.

#### XII Conclusion

I think it is fair to say that the programme has improved but it is clear that there are still quite a number of problems, for some of which we have to assume responsibility. I think that urgent strengthening of the staff in Lagos - coupled with insistence that Evelyn spends more time in dealing with the students and their problems - is a first step. Secondly, as from now on, Evelyn must not be allowed to take her holidays during the time that students are on holiday. This has been discussed with her, and basically she agreed, but I think it must be stated that a lot of criticism was made, not only by the students but also by

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the government and the other agencies, that when the students are on holiday one can have access to them and time for proper discussions, the IUEF representative goes off leaving the country. Furthermore, I think that the matter of local representation at some of the other centres has to be dealt with, and that in future, if problem cases such as that of the acid incident occur, more resolute handling from our side would be required.

I also think that the question of more regular visits to the more important centres for our scholarship programmes by the scholarship department is a matter that requires our urgent attention, as well as the question of counselling by correspondence, which we have discussed on previous occasions.