

LUM/059/0033/05

Report from the ANC mission in the GDR - by Anthony Mongalo

Presently the ANC membership in the GDR is 130. These are located in several towns, the majority being in Leipzig. To facilitate political work and to ensure more or less regular meetings amongst our students, the system of sub-units is used. In the respective areas where our students are, sub-units have been set up with a chairman and secretary at the head. The sub-units are in direct contact with the main Students' Committee in which Nelson Miya is an ex-officio member.

On the sub-unit level, the students hold regular political meetings, carry out propaganda work, engage in subotniks where and when possible, and hold bazaars to raise money for the fighting fund.

Since the opening of our Mission, we have been able to hold quarterly general meetings in which the overwhelming majority of our students participate. There are problems in getting all to attend, particularly those doing VT as they are sometimes engaged with their educational programme during weekends.

ACTIVITIES DURING THE 1ST QUARTER 1982

On 9th January, a public meeting was held at a factory site in Potsdam to mark the 70th anniversary of the ANC and the 20th anniversary of MK. This meeting was jointly organised by our Students' committee and the FDJ. Other foreign students attended making the meeting a great success. This further revealed the good relations that exist between our students, FDJ, and other foreign students. A cultural programme in which a group from CSSR and our own took part.

On 10th January a general meeting for ANC members was held in the same factory premises. The overall activities of our unit in the previous year were reviewed and evaluated. To meet the demands of our area and to improve on methods of administration, it was decided that members of the Committee should remain in office for two years but any member can be re-elected (formerly elections for the entire Committee took place every year).

Also important in this meeting was the adoption of statutes which are, however, still subject to improvement. Some questions regarding travel to Western Countries were raised mainly because the students hold that the travel regulations seem to apply only to them in the GDR whereas students in the USSR travel to Southern Africa, FRG and to West Berlin.

The meeting also appointed a 70th anniversary committee. This will co-ordinate the solidarity and cultural activities of our unit and will centre its actions around the observance of the 70th anniversary. Indeed, the 70th ann. com. has already organised two meetings followed by cultural events on 19.2.82 at Karl Marx University in Leipzig and on 13.2.82 at the University of Greiswald with the participation of the teaching staff and the local FDJ.

The second general meeting was held in Jena on 20-21st March. Present were members of the International Dept. of the University of Jena, a member of the SWAPO mission in the GDR, students from Ethiopia, Guinea-Bissau, and the PLO.

On 21st March, a symposium to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Racism was held in Jena. We were honoured here by the presence of the SG who delivered a speech on the internal and international situation. This was a great moral booster for our students and was very informative to our guests from the GDR, SWAPO, PLO, Guinea-Bissau, and the USA who all delivered papers together with the GDR representative of the Committee for the Decade against apartheid. At the end, it was suggested that we should organise more of such symposia.

OFFICE LEVEL

Our office staff of four now holds office meetings fortnightly to review work done and to plan for the coming weeks. Comrade Alex has been assigned the task of Administrative Secretary for the Mission. So far we have held four office meetings where methods of marking our national days were discussed and also how best to raise the standards of discipline among our members.

All the members of our Mission are engaged in various activities aimed at strengthening the relations between our organisation and the mass organisation of the GDR. We continue to take part as guest speakers in schools, factories, at trade-union meetings. Invitations continue to come in for such meetings, an indication that the ANC and our Mission are known and are supported by the people of the GDR.

On the diplomatic level, we maintain good relations with most of the embassies in the GDR as clearly indicated by the report in the March issue of Sechaba.

Our mission is also responsible for CSSR, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Poland. Contact with these countries has been mainly by phone besides the one visit per year. Arrangements have now been made for more frequent visits. I have lately been to CSSR for a week and there I attended a series of meetings in three towns and also visited factories. The meetings were mainly connected with the observance of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and also for marking the 70th anniversary. In October, other activities for the 70th anniversary are planned in all these countries.

PROBLEMS

We do experience some problems which are sometimes embarrassing. These are connected with lack of information. We therefore request that HQ sends us all ANC statements, OAU resolutions, important statements by leaders of frontline states, our publications like Mayibuye, Dawn, Vow, Forward, and we hear there is another publication at SOMAFECO and the 70th ann. bulletin.

There is another problem of new students. Application forms or even just names arrive very late though offers of places are made as early as October of the previous year.. As it is, we have passed the dateline for students who are to come in September, but we have not received a single application. In CSSR, they request that for VT we do not send cadres older than 18 years and this is true for all the socialist countries as there are problems of

adjustment to new conditions and those of having to study with 16 year-olds, live with them under the same hostel regulations.

The question of ANC official delegations has also been raised, the last ANC official delegation to socialist countries, I believe, was in 1979. Of late we are not sending lists of request for material assistance but then every other week we receive notes or telexes urgently requesting for this or that material. We have to consider that the people here work on plans.

Students

VOCATIONAL TRAINING

This does not include manual labour but also include theoretic instruction as well. The students with literacy problems therefore do cope up very well with the progress of the group. On the other hand, students who might be otherwise admitted at Technical Colleges should not be sent for vocational training unless they fully understand what the course is all about and are willing to take it.

The incidence of poor health among our new students seems to be increasing. Among the vocational students who came last year, a sizeable number of them had to be hospitalised for some time. This affect the learning of the language and therefore one's progress later in class. Among those from East Africa, TB has been the main cause for hospitalisation. The comrades from Angola had other type of complaints -physical - which to a certain extent necessitated changes in the planned courses for some of them. Illeteracy has been uncovered among some of the comrades from Angola and this raised the necessity of trying to fit the concerned individuals in a different category as they could not keep pace with the others.

HIGHER INSTITUTIONS

The general impression one gets is that the category of higher institutions seems to be interpreted to mean only Universities by our students. Admittedly a student applies or is applied for a place at University, but this in fact means that the student is admitted to a higher institution which may be indeed a University,

or a Technical College. The final word therefore comes from the Screening Committee which assess a student on the basis of qualifications and results that he/she has furnished. If this were to be thoroughly understood by our students at SOMAFCO and elsewhere, the inevitable queries that we get at the beginning of every academic year would vanish. This issue was explained at length by Nelson Miya to the Scholarship Secretariat at SOMAFCO last year. It is now up to the Scholarship Secretariat not only to explain this to the comrades, but also to inform them of the outcome of their applications so that those who have no desire to attend a Technical College may then decide what then they would prefer because this is not solved by raising the matter with the office after accepting the offer whilst still in Africa. We have experienced two cases of students who could not cope at the university and therefore asked for some adjustments.

PROPOSALS

1. Despite the fact that Nelson did his briefing, it is necessary for our comrades to discuss these issues with many of our students who studied in the GDR and can therefore give guidance to the prospective students.
2. We earnestly recommend an annual promotion of some of the students who are about to finish their vocational courses to Technical/University level. The built-in advantage here is that a student has become familiar with the equipment he was working with at vocational level, we know him/her and he/she has already the knowledge of the language especially the technical terms. We are putting this as a suggestion because if implemented, then this mean cutting down the number of students who would otherwise have come from Africa for University/Technical training.

Concerning the above mentioned state of affairs, we believe that with the little trained manpower we have, it should be possible to detect cases of TB long before students are sent. The duration of their stay in East Africa and in the hospitals here reinforces this contention. Some ofcourse had already been undergoing treatment in East Africa.

We have 2 students who are in prison for having assaulted an Arab whose only crime was to mix happily with our female comrades. They were sentenced to one year around October last year. The third student who is in prison used a knife against a local citizen. During this past year 7 students left without having completed their studies. Two of these felt the level at which they had been placed was unacceptable. We have since learnt that they have left the movement. The third one was a former student in the FRG who did what no other ANC student has in the GDR ever done, viz. to write to the Ministry of Higher Education insulting his teacher. The fourth one tried to cross illegally to the FRG and was arrested in the process. The other two complained of illiteracy problems alleging they were not catching up in class. The 7th one pitifully had social problems of adjustments. He is the only case we can claim to have emanated from this area and thus accept as our 'own'. With the development of the struggle at home, we hope that these problems will be drastically reduced at least on the part of those who are genuine to the cause.