

## Report on the President's Visit to Paris

June 15th to June 20th, 1986

The organisation of this visit was disasterous to say the least although I had two comrades to assist me; Comrade Johnny who came here two weeks before the Conference and Comrade Thami, who came from Brussels to assist with the organisation of the aborted concert. Together the three of us managed to foul up everything.

### Public Relations Officers

Comrade Thami made it quite clear to me that he was responsible for seeing to public relations and that he would be going to a certain embassy about this matter. This he did but did not meet with the person with whom he had the appointment because I suspect that he was hopelessly late.

After this incident he said that he would discuss the matter with Comrade Johnny to see what they could sort out. On the Friday before the arrival of the delegation, I discussed the matter with somebody who assured me that he would look into the matter and that he would phone me during the day. I discussed the matter with Thami and asked him to see the person in question. When the person phoned, Thami refused to go and see him and rushed out of the office because he had an appointment. I subsequently found out that he had gone to a reception with Comrade Dan Cindi.

I then made an appointment with the person concerned for the following morning. As Comrade Johnny was with me, he came along to make the necessary arrangement. The PRO that Thami spoke about never materialised.

### Transport

If at this late stage I had known that we still had no transportation, I would have appealed to the same source for a car. But as late as Saturday afternoon before going to the airport, I was told by Comrade Johnny that all he had to do was phone and remind his contact. If somebody had made vague promises or had not promised at all that transportation was going to be provided, nothing should have been left to chance or as the Chief Representative, I should not have placed my trust in others to carry out their part of the work delegated to them. Fortunately, there were two ambassadors at the airport who so kindly brought us back to Paris.

On Sunday we had a full programme but not transportation and had to do the unforgivable and take taxis.

By Monday morning, I had found somebody who had the necessary documents which enabled him to hire a car for us. This eased the transportation problem.

Looking back over this transportation fiasco I realise that we cannot use the excuse that cars had been promised and that these promises had not been kept. The crux of the matter is that we should seriously look at our methods of work; the fact that we do no co-ordinate, that we get involved in matters which in my opinion are of less importance, eg. going to the airport a few hours before the president's delegation arrived to welcome the General instead of using those precious hours to see that we

have no hitches.

There were many more problems, for example, the accomodation : Comrade Thami was sent to book a suite which turned out to be a room. More than one person became involved in the arranging of Chief's programme without consulting with me who was actually responsible for arranging his programme.

#### Concert

Then there was the concert which also turned out to be a fiasco and had to be cancelled. Here too, I think that Comrade Johnny had big ideas which could not be put into practice. We, (Thami and I), could go ahead with the technical arrangements but he had the key to the big artists. We kept on sending telexes to HQ, reporting on our progress and requesting information on the artists but only managed to get a reply after appealing to the President's secretariat. By that time very precious time had been wasted.

When the concert was eventually cancelled, a certain person was involved in this decision-making who had never cared about the ANC. SWAPO, who was co-organiser of the event was not involved in this final consultation, nor were the representatives of the co-ordinating committee who were present at the conference where the decision was taken. I was just informed that a decision had been taken. I too was not in the final discussions.

The cancellation of the concert is having serious political repercussions for the ANC. People feel let-down, and are complaining about the manner in which the whole matter was handled. Comrade Jonnny said that he was at the hall to make explanations, but many people came after he had left, including ambassadors, conseil generals and other personalities among whom, some had already made donations.

The long and the short of this fiasco is that ANC and SWAPO France are being held responsible. We are asked to give explanations. I enclose a translated copy of a letter which should give a good idea of what is being said. AFASPA, MRAP and MAA are getting their share of complaints as well.

We have a very important lesson to learn from this fiasco. The lesson being that we should not let big ideas get the better of us. This concert was organised on the understanding that we were going to have famous artists to perform. But at the eleventh hour nothing materialised.

The local artists who are responsible for the development of the anti-apartheid music in this country and who are very popular were given very little consideration. If things had been properly organised - groups approached in time and firm bookings made - we would have had artists for the evening. Incidentally, a group that we had approached to perform actually turned up at the hall, some of its members having come from outside Paris. But again, they could not be contacted about the cancellation because they were at work.

I feel very strongly, and so do representatives of MRAP, AFASPA and MAA who formed the co-ordination committee, and SWAPO, that we should not have cancelled the evening and that we should have taken the opportunity to address the people as they were very serious about it being Soweto Day. There were about 3,000 demonstrators in front of the South African embassy that night, many of whom intended making their way to the concert afterwards. On my way back to the hotel (from the demonstration), we met with many people who were coming to the concert. When we told them that the

event had been cancelled, they demanded to know why we could not have then held a meeting on Soweto Day.

The other problem that we face is that ANC will not be able to organise a fund-raising event here soon as we won't be taken seriously.

Besides the about problems, a number of things have happend that place the ANC in a bad position. For example, at the press conference where Lang (at our invitation) and Harry Belafonte appeared to launch Artists Against Apartheid, Breytenbach made an appearance and took the platform (although Comrade Johnny had requested that he does not attend). Breytenbach, who just a few weeks previously in an interview with Le Monde had said, among other anti-ANC things, that the ANC was a mystery in South Africa, spoke on South Africa. What we should be very clear on is that wen Lang is invited, it is like inviting Breytenbach.

Questions that are being raised here are, why was nobody from the ANC at the press conference and for that matter, on the platform and why did Comrade Johnny leave the room just after the conference had started.

Now about the launching of the Artists Against Apartheid : such a committee already exists, having been launched by the Young communists before the Nelson Mandela Festival. ANC knew about this. A very impressive list of artists against apartheid in France has already been drawn up. We can ask whether it was necessary to launch a second committee. I had thought that we had forgotten about this idea after it had been mentioned at a co-ordinating meeting that such a committee had already been set up. The problem that we now face is how these two AAA's are going to be reconciled. On this question the Young communists feel very let-down by the ANC as they know that we were involved in the launching of the second committee. I think that they are rightfully disappointed as they have worked very hard generally on the question of apartheid and particularly on apartheid sports.

As far as the ANC and the co-ordinating committee for the concert is concerned, we have wasted time, energy and money. Invitations and letters were printed and posted.

This office had Thami here since after the Brussels conference. A lot of money went into his keep, indiscriminate private use of the telephone and postage not to mention the language that was used when he was having altercations with a woman, or when this same woman come to this office on two occasion and was responsible for kicking up such a noise. When I spoke to Thami about this he thought that I was treating him like a child.

Besides this, he offended a person who give almost all her spare time to assist the ANC voluntarily. Th obscene remarks have resulted in her not wanting to come to this office. The question that is being posed is : is ANC not used to working with women as equals. Again one is saddled with a problem that must be sorted out at all costs. I have already reported this matter to Comrade Johnny.

After having brought myself to write this report I ask myself where does one go from here? To answer this question I can only say that we must seriously examine our atrocious methods of work and our attitude towards people. And in the final analysis, it is I who shall have to try to undo what has been done here.