

# MOTHER REFUSES TO BELIEVE ISME BENNIE FLED

SUNDAY TIMES REPORTER

**I**SME BENNIE, 25, a former writer-research worker for a South African news magazine, is reported to have said in an interview in New York that she had fled from South Africa in fear of possible Government reprisals for her share in the filming of the Peter Jefferies TV "documentary" expected to be critical of apartheid.

"I just don't believe she could have said these things—I'm absolutely stunned," Mrs. M. Bennie, Isme's mother, told me yesterday at her Vereeniging home. Then I showed her a copy of her daughter's New York statement, sent by the SUNDAY TIMES correspondent there.

Isme's sister, Pauline, a Johannesburg photographic model,



PAULINE BENNIE . . . finds statements "unbelievable."

also told me that she found the statement "unbelievable." She said: "Isme loves South Africa."

The SUNDAY TIMES New York correspondent had reported that Isme Bennie, interviewed at the headquarters of National Educational Television, producer of the forthcoming TV report on South Africa, said she was told that she was probably being watched by the Security Police because she was with the American TV producers during interviews in South Africa.

The film is expected to be televised during the next fortnight.

## "A good thing"

The New York cable added that Isme Bennie is reported to have said that she knew the real intent of the television film and helped the producers because she thought "it was a good thing."

In Vereeniging Mrs. Bennie showed me two recent letters from her daughter in which Isme said she was upset to discover the real nature of the film she had helped to produce.

In the first, written on June 10, Isme told her mother: "It has been disconcerting to find out that the TV programme is going to be anti-South African."

"Additional material from all sorts of other sources has been included. As far as I'm concerned, the show was fair—and please reiterate this."

In the second letter, dated June 13, she wrote: "I understand that the TV programme is attracting a great deal of publicity. Most of it is quite untrue and misrepresented, and was given out by the TV network as publicity. I am very annoyed about it all."

## Catspaw

Mrs. Bennie said she believed that her daughter had been used as a "catspaw" by the TV unit.

"As far as I know she had absolutely nothing to do with politics. She always used to say that it was the one thing she wanted to steer clear of," Mrs. Bennie told me.

Isme had never referred to South Africa as a "police state," or talked of Government policies as "oppressive."

She was shocked when I told her that Isme was reported to have said she hoped to remain in America permanently.

Her preparations for her departure from South Africa had been leisurely, said her mother. This would have



ISME BENNIE . . . her mother "stunned" by her statements.

Terence Filgate, the Canadian cameraman with the TV unit. She had never mentioned him.

"I'm worried sick about all this," said Mrs. Bennie. "The most terrible part about it is that my husband is very ill, and this worry is making him worse."

Miss Pauline Bennie emphasised that she knew nothing at all about the nature of the film, in which she had appeared as an "extra."

She told me that Terence Filgate had asked her if she would take part in a scene which would portray "the high standard of living enjoyed by most Whites in South Africa."

She consented, under the impression that the film was "an educational sequence about South Africa for America."

The SUNDAY TIMES New York correspondent reports that Peter Jefferies, the producer of the TV film on South Africa, says he has asked a Congressman to help Isme Bennie get permission to work in the United States.

Jefferies said that she was "being kept under wraps in New York."

He added: "She acted as our Girl Friday in South Africa. She helped arrange interviews, carried equipment, and was on the payroll. She did nothing underhand, unless you regard it a crime to find Alan Paton's address in a phone book."

**FOOTNOTE:** Miss Isme Bennie received a B.A. degree and a Diploma in Librarianship from the University of the Witwatersrand about four years ago. She worked as a librarian in the