

The cancellation of the tour resulted from the South African Government's latest apartheid law which prohibits public entertainment to mixed audiences. The penalty for infringement is R400 or one year's imprisonment.

The tour was arranged months before the promulgation of the new law but when the law came into effect it was obvious that the Government would not issue permits to the tour sponsors (Union Artists) allowing the group to play to mixed-race audiences.

The Dollar Brand trio was left facing the alternatives. They were: to play to whites only; to play to non-whites only; to play to separate audiences at separate shows; not to play at all but to come for a visit home.

THE BAN, COUPLED with the tour's cancellation, focuses attention on the South African jazzmen's tendency to brush off politics with the curt comments, "We are musicians, not politicians. We are not

interested in politics, we are interested in jazz."

This attitude, and it is an attitude that is especially dominant among white South African musicians, that jazzmen, because they are jazzmen, should have nothing to do with politics, has always amazed me. All their talk about "the truth, man, the truth, that's the thing" is never uttered in honesty otherwise they would face the truth that jazz has its roots in politics—the mournful hymns of the slave cotton-pickers of America's deep south and before that in the chants of the Black people who were kidnapped from the West Coast of Africa and taken to America to be sold as slaves.

And if those inaugural facts of jazz are too ancient for them to consider, then nearer home, in every session, concert or private blow and rehearsal, there is the anger, defiance, aggressiveness, scorn, curses of the Black musicians. Obviously their expression, like that of any artist, no matter his medium, if it is at all art, is influenced by his environment. And the

sword of Damocles over their heads.

It would be difficult to draw the line demarcating sincere cultural aspiration and rabid extreme nationalism, if one were unaware of Mr. Mphahlele's contribution in the liberatory struggle of the oppressed people of South Africa, which is no mean one. On the other hand many will feel as I do that cultural differences are not in the least an insurmountable obstacle in the way of a peaceful multi-racial coexistence. They are surely no reason for an assault on the culture of minority racial groups, nor is such an assault a prerequisite for the acquisition of a nonracial society. If I understand what Mr. Mphahlele means by the terms nonracial and multiracial, it does not necessarily mean that the existing ethnic groups which comprise part of the population of all

environment of the South African artist, no matter, again, the medium, including jazz, is explosively political. Perhaps it is because White South African musicians tend to evade commitment to finding a solution to this explosive situation, that they lack the depth and the fire that marks the music of the Black South African musician. Perhaps if they faced the fact that they are committed, as human beings, to play a role, they will find depth.

I HOPE THAT THEY WILL face these facts now that white and nonwhite musicians are prevented by politics from playing to jazz fans of all races. I hope they realise that the "truth" they talk about is commitment to one's conscience and that the real artists, though seldom flag-wavers or platform screamers, nevertheless play their part, and can only do this by facing the facts.

In South Africa the main fact is that no one can stand aside from politics and still claim to be honest. ●

Africa must become integrated culturally into what he describes as an "African way of life".

A contribution to and participation in indigenous African culture is desirable for those who so wish, but let us not be dictatorial about it. After all, the whole world has for some time now partaken of our culture in the musical sphere, without our having to ram it down their throats.

I hope that Mr. Mphahlele's warning was more a friendly intimation than a veiled threat for it would be tragic indeed if a man of his calibre and stature would seek to predetermine the course and fate of minority cultures. After all, we do not fight one tyranny in order to substitute for it another which is just as vicious if not more so.

London

JESOO RAMO

To the Editors

SIR.—It is somewhat difficult to follow Mr. Mphahlele's argument (*The New African*, March, 1965), especially since he admits that he does not himself know the answers to the questions he poses, yet proceeds to issue an ultimatum (unless I have misread him) to the minority groups which are an integral part of cosmopolitan Africa.

The warning to people of Indian and European descent who have as yet not assimilated anything from African culture because they have turned their faces either to the east or the west for cultural inspiration is held like the

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