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EDITORIALS

1 WHITHER WHITE SOUTH AFRICA?

During January Mr Vorster spent three consecutive days in his Cape Town office talking separately to three groups of African, Coloured and Indian leaders about their people's future in the 87% of the country where they represent the vast majority but where government policy insists that white power and interests will prevail for ever.

The African leaders Mr Vorster saw were from the homelands. Although they are supposed to confine themselves to homeland affairs, they had come to talk about urban African rights. The Coloured and Indian leaders came respectively from the liaison committee of the Coloured Representative Council and the executive committee of the South African Indian Council. They could scarcely be called representative. The Labour Party, which dominates elected representation in the CRC, refused to join the delegation to see Mr Vorster because it regarded the meeting as pointless. The SAIC executive can hardly claim

to have been democratically elected. Nevertheless, and in spite of the fact that cosy statements were issued after both the CRC and SAIC meetings, saying how well things had gone and how much had been achieved, it is significant that even these two conservative groups insisted that what they really wanted was not a greater say in the administration of their own day-to-day affairs, but direct representation in Parliament.

Mr Vorster's meeting with homeland leaders was clearly a much more tense affair than either of the other meetings. The principal demands for an improvement in urban African conditions made at the meeting were for freehold home ownership for permanent residents, the phasing out of influx control, removal of restrictions on African businessmen and professionals in the cities and the granting of trade union rights to Africans. On the wider front an appeal was made for an

amnesty for political prisoners and exiles. To no one of these demands did Mr Vorster give a clear answer. Instead of freehold title for urban Africans he will look into the possibility of giving leasehold; a committee will be set up to see if the hardships of influx control can be eased; it may be possible to do something about traders' rights in towns; a meeting should be arranged with the Minister of Labour to talk about trade unions; he might consider allowing some exiles to return if they had committed no crime and their particular homeland leaders guaranteed their good conduct.

We are halfway through Mr Vorster's 'give-us-six-months' period. What sign is there, judging by these three meetings, that the Prime Minister is coming to grips in any sense of urgency with the problem of producing a response to the changing circumstances of Southern Africa which is going to satisfy the aspirations of people here and give African leaders like Dr Kaunda something to show for their willingness to talk to us again after all these years? Precious little. And the reaction of Black leaders to the talks? Is the Labour Party not right to regard the new powers promised to the CRC as mere window-dressing? Is Chief Buthelezi not justified in his angry frustration at the ox-like pace at which things are moving? Was he not right to say to Mr Vorster "We think it would be a betrayal of our people's cause to come here and not ascertain . . . whether we can go back to our people and tell them that Blacks are now

going to share power and decision-making with their White countrymen in a new and meaningful way . . . If this road (separate development) is leading to a cul-de-sac then our only alternative is to seek fulfilment—not in the unreal separate freedoms—but in one South Africa and in the only seat of power—Parliament"?

The truth of the matter is that rights in urban areas—freehold, leasehold, trading, trade union, whatever you like—are meaningless unless those who have them have also the political power to prevent them being taken away from them. Anyone who used to live in Sophiatown or Cato Manor or District Six knows that. Mr Vorster's main problem remains that of devising a system for real power-sharing between all South Africans, and particularly those living in **White** South Africa. He cannot do this alone. Nor will he ever do it on the basis of the kind of talks he had in Cape Town—where a few concessions are graciously given. What are needed are talks on a basis of complete equality at which the future realities of Black and White power are recognised and in which plans are worked out to get both pulling together in one society. This means a new National Convention. No doubt Mr Vorster is neither willing nor ready to call such a thing yet, and his Party even less so. But that such a Convention will be called one day, who can doubt? The trouble is that the longer it is put off the more intractable become the problems with which it will have to deal.□

2 A MEAN ACT

The decision of the Government to expropriate the land and buildings of the Federal Seminary at Alice, is a mean act. It compares with the same Government's decision to abolish School feeding for African children, and its present decision not to allow Mr Bram Fischer to end his days outside the prison walls. In all three cases the meanness of the decision is accompanied by that mercilessness of which the Government is readily capable. Perhaps mercilessness is too strong a word. It would be more correct to say that the Government's understanding of mercy is minimal. It is not in fact a governmental word.

Does the University of Fort Hare need the 94 hectares of land on which the Seminary is built? It has 180 hectares of its own, it owns the Honeydale Farm of 582 hectares, and it would certainly be able to purchase 184 hectares from the Bantu Presbyterian Church and 158 hectares of Lovedale Mission land. The answer to this question is that Fort Hare does not need the land.

Why then has the land been expropriated? The real reasons are these.

1. The Seminary stands for an alien religious culture. Its culture is ecumenical and not Calvinist. This is a further example of the apparently total incompatibility between South African Calvinism and the rest of the Churches.
2. The Seminary stands for an alien racial culture. Its culture is non-racial and anti-apartheid. It is therefore offensive, not to the students of Fort Hare, and not to many of the faculty, but to the rulers of Fort Hare and of South Africa.
3. The Seminary stands for an alien academic culture. It allows freedom of discussion. It permits the organisation on campus of student bodies which are anathema to the rulers of Fort Hare and of South Africa. Its influence on Fort Hare students must be destroyed.

Let us ask a last question. If this had been a Dutch Reformed Seminary, would Fort Hare have needed the land? The answer to this question is that it would not have needed the land.

We are witnessing detente in Southern Africa. But of detente in South Africa itself there are as yet few signs. Indeed this