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## **EDITORIALS**

### 1. **FIDDLING**

It is well over a year since Mr Pik Botha told the UN and Mr Vorster told the world that South Africa was setting out on a course which would lead to the end of discrimination based on race. Suddenly there was new hope that peaceful change to a just society might still be possible. This hope, coupled with the obvious pressure being put on Rhodesia to come to terms with its Black Nationalists, persuaded a number of African states to give South Africa a chance to show that it was seriously setting about dismantling the vast apparatus of discrimination which it has been erecting at an accelerating rate for 300 years. They must wonder how long they must wait. Worse than that, two events of early 1976 must be making them wonder if the whole thing wasn't just a gigantic confidence trick.

In the first instance the Nationalist Administrator of the Cape Province cut off the annual grant of R175,000 which his administration had been giving to the East London City Council to help it finance its public library. The reason was that the East London City Council had decided to eliminate discrimination from its library and throw it open to all

racess. In the second instance Mr Vorster himself announced that the Deputy Minister of Bantu Administration and Education, Mr Punt Janson, was to be replaced by Dr Andries Treurnicht. The Deputy Minister rules the lives of urban Africans. Mr Janson had made at least some attempt to make those lives more bearable for this group of people, which, more than any other Black group, is likely to decide the future shape of South African society. Mr Janson wasn't completely ruled by doctrine and to those urban Africans who gained some relief from their problems through his pragmatic approach he must sometimes have seemed almost human. Not so, Dr Treurnicht, He is the Nationalist Party's leading parliamentary reactionary and, from all the evidence, dogmatic to a degree. It would need a very perceptive Black man to see any humanity in him.

Speculation has it that Mr Vorster decided that the safest place to have Dr Treurnicht was under his eye in the Cabinet—and to buy off some of the Afrikaner backlash against the dismantling of apartheid by having him there. One could believe this if he had been given any other job,

but why the most sensitive race relations post of all? This step of Mr Vorster's, suggests that he is quite indifferent to the feelings of the African people. That he should act in this way at this time is quite incredible, if only in the light of two factors which must surely weigh very heavily with anyone making a ministerial appointment affecting urban African people in January 1976.

The first factor is Angola. In South Africa we are not allowed to know what has happened in Angola. We just don't know how deep our involvement has been. What we do know is that the suggestion that we were involved at all was quite enough to frighten off possible support for the opponents of the MPLA. Not a single leader of an African state was prepared to defend in public a South African role in Angola. And why? The reason is—apartheid! The policy is anathema to the whole continent. If it has done nothing else the Angolan affair has shown how hollow have been Mr Vorster's recent claims that we are now accepted by Africans as Africans. We are not and will not be for as long as we have the albatross of apartheid round our necks. Why, then, in heavens' name, when he should be doing everything he can to make it easy for his detente friends in Africa to stay friendly, does Mr Vorster appoint an arch-apartheid like Dr Treurnicht to the vital post he has given him? It is incomprehensible.

The second factor is the role of Black South Africans in the economy. Figures released by the Department of Statistics in January show that, in the six main employment categories of our industrialised society, in the past ten years, 6 times as many new Black workers have been taken on as White. There are now 3 times as many African workers as there are White, and Indian and Coloured workers now

amount to two-thirds of the White work-force. Yet none of these three groups has any effective control over the political system and Africans have no political rights at all in the places in which they work. Nor, with Dr Treurnicht as their boss, are they likely to get them.

What more potent recipe for disaster could there be than one with these three ingredients;

A policy with which no Black African leader is prepared to be publicly associated;

An economy which is increasingly passing into the hands of a labour force which has no say in the system which employs it;

A Government which has made grand claims about its intentions to phase out discrimination, and then done nothing of any importance about it?

If Mr Vorster, when he first announced his detente policy, had seriously started phasing out apartheid, no doubt he would have suffered a White backlash, but he would have begun to build up a credit balance of good will in the two places where he really needs it—Black Africa and his own Black ghettos. His failure to deliver the goods which Mr Pik Botha promised and his extraordinary appointment of a reactionary to administer the affairs of the African people on whose economic involvement his whole industrialised state depends, fill one with despair. Like Nero, he is fiddling, when he should be putting the fires of discontent out, not by banking them down with a vast security and defence machine, but by giving Black people hope of a full and unfettered life soon. □

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## MORE DETENTIONS

At the end of last November the Security Police began a new series of detentions. The people detained seem mainly to have been ex-members of the African National Congress. Many of them have previously served terms of imprisonment on Robben Island.

The pattern of the detentions has been familiar, and chilling. Days passed before there was any public knowledge that they had happened. Then some names appeared in the press, not because they had been announced by the Security Police, but because word got out through friends and relatives. Since those friends and relatives saw them vanish with the Security Police most of the detainees have not been seen or heard of. Nobody knows for certain where they are and certainly nobody knows what is happening to them. Nor does anyone outside the Security Police know how many of them there are or what they are supposed to

have done. It is a safe guess, however, that there are more people involved than the newspapers have been able to report, if only because some friends and relatives are terrified into silence when these things happen.

Detention for interrogation in solitary confinement is a now familiar part of the South African 'way of life', and familiarity is in danger of breeding acceptance. But REALITY does not accept it. On the contrary, we still believe in the old-fashioned idea of habeas corpus. We still hold the view, now widely discarded by many governments, not least our own, that an arrested person should be arraigned in open court within the shortest possible time of his arrest. Any diminution of this vital right puts the arrested person at the mercy of the state, and reflects a contempt for individual worth which must soon permeate the whole of society. □