

## 2 AGENTS FOR CHANGE

The actions of the South African Police during the period of unrest, which started in April with the school boycott by coloured children in the Western Cape, have been as might have been expected. They have detained a large number of people without charging them, some without access to lawyers or their families. Most of these people were prominent in educational or trade union or political circles; none of them, so far as we know, had embarked upon a course of violence; some of them are reported, at the time of their detention, to have been trying to persuade the boycotting children to go back to school. Far from helping to end the boycotts the detentions have contributed as much as anything to their continuation. For the first reaction of most boycotters to the detention of their leaders and friends has been to say that they won't go back to school (or work, if they are strikers) until their colleagues have been released.

The police have banned other people, notably Mr Curtis Nkondo and, more recently, Mr Fanyana Mazibuko. Mr Mazibuko, was secretary of the Soweto Teachers' Action Committee, a leading figure amongst those teachers who resigned after 1976 and certainly an uncompromising opponent of Nationalist policy in general and Bantu Education in particular. He had come in for some criticism in Soweto shortly before his ban for suggesting that the time was approaching for the Black Consciousness Movement to abandon its exclusiveness, which he felt had served its purpose of establishing black self-confidence, and to start talking to friendly whites.

To ban Mr Mazibuko and to detain people who are reportedly trying to persuade children to go back to school suggests that the security police, who decide such things, are so poorly informed that they haven't the faintest idea of what they are

doing. Or have they, as one suspects they have often done in the past, used the occasion of this latest unrest just to settle a few old scores?

The police have also baton-charged a lot of people, in many cases without provocation. It happened on the Market Square in Pietermaritzburg, at the gates of the Indian university of Durban/Westville, in the grounds of a large number of schools. The batons seem to have thudded down with a total lack of discrimination on anyone black who got in the way, including students at Durban/Westville who had gone there to register to start classes again.

And finally the police have shot a number of people, at least some of whom were remote from and having nothing to do with whatever incident it was that they claimed they were trying to control. All this has added up to one thing—a widespread political awakening of a great many people who probably weren't particularly political previously. This, of course, has happened before. It happened after Soweto in 1976 and it has happened in various other confrontations between the police and the public before and since then. It would indeed be ironic if, when the history of the present time in South Africa comes to be written, it were to be found that one of the more important agents for change here had been the actions of the South African Police. That their bannings and detentions and baton-charges and bullets, far from subduing and taming those they were directed at, instead caused a great many apolitical people to become political, and induced a solidarity amongst their victims that no amount of political exhortation could have done. After all, what quicker way of learning the deficiencies of one's political system than through an unprovoked crack on the head from the baton of one of its agents? □

## 3 LAND REDISTRIBUTION

In the last issue of REALITY we carried a long article on the redistribution of land which we hoped would give rise to a discussion in our columns on this very important subject as it relates to the future of South Africa.

In this issue we publish the first response to Norman Bromberger's article. We hope that there will be more from our readers in future issues and we invite contributions from them.

In Zimbabwe the question of the land and how to secure a fair distribution of it without undermining food production is one of the most daunting the new government faces. In South Africa where over 80% of the land is under white control, and the state of deterioration of the black areas has been brought home to everyone by the present disastrous drought, the problem will be even more urgent and difficult for any new government.

The time to start thinking about how to cope with it is surely now. □