

Alexandra saved - for whom?



HAS ALEXANDRA BEEN SAVED?

What is Alexandra, and what will it be like in the future? It is quite hard to visualise its future character. Some things can be predicted, but the full picture will only emerge slowly.

So-called illegals are being evicted. But even so there are probably too many people in the township for houses that will be built. Quite a large number of people who now qualify to be here, will also be driven out in one way or another. Perhaps it will be through high rents. Those who cannot afford to pay high rents, will have to find accommodation elsewhere. Though we cannot as yet predict what rents will be, it is a rule that all locations must support themselves. And as it is expensive to redevelop Alexandra, sooner or later the money is going to be taken from the residents, probably in rising rents. It must ultimately become a thoroughly middle class suburb, for traders, business men, supervisors, advertising executives, and the best paid workers. Other low paid workers will most likely no survive in Alexandra for long. This is, however, speculation. It cannot be proved.

Many people are in doubt about how to think about what is going on at present in the township. Should they be glad about the 'reprieve' or should they be suspicious?

Here are two reactions, from prominent people. On the one hand Rev. Buti has said that "Dr Koornhof has not only saved Alexandra, but has also saved the people of the Republic of South Africa." (The Star) On the other hand the Rev. Thema said, "Dr Koornhof and the Department of Cooperation and Development are emblems of oppression to the black man. Black people cannot afford privileges and favours. We thirst for reality and our rights" (The Star) The position taken by the editors of IZWI is that Alexandra is a creation of Group Areas policy, it is consequently a ghetto, and cannot be justified in any way. Whether it is 'uplifted' or not, it remains a segregated location, and we are opposed to segregation in any of its forms. Secondly, the problem of housing is mainly a problem of wages, employment and political rights. There is no solution except liberation of the workers, full employment and a living wage.

In the short term, it is correct to resist eviction and removals, to demand proper housing, to protect free-hold rights - in other words to obtain maximum concessions from the state. But we must not be blinded into accepting anything short of democratic equality and freedom, the right to self government.

