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Vignettes on pages 8, 9, 10 by Louelle Ritz (Classic)

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EDITORIALS

1.

THE PATH TO SECURITY

In recent months the Brigadier in charge of Natal Command of the South African Defence Force has been addressing meetings, calling on people to join the Commandos, South Africa's equivalent of the Home Guard. The meetings have been all-White affairs, and the Brigadier has been telling his audience that it is not enough just to join the Commandos. They must also become alive to what he calls the "basic needs and grievances" of Black people who, he says, are ideal targets for "terrorists who would call upon the Blacks to help them liberate South Africa."

We do not know what the White response to the Brigadier's recruiting calls has been, but, even if it has exceeded his wildest expectations, we doubt if the long-term results are going to be important. For, if he dare not have Black people at his meetings now, what hope is there in the future for the security he is trying to provide?

There seem to be three possible reasons why Black people aren't being asked to these meetings. The first is that it isn't "traditionally South African" to have them in on the ground floor where important issues are being discussed and decided; the second is that there is some doubt in the official mind

as to whether they can be "relied upon"; the third is that everyone knows that no thinking Black person is going to go an inch out of his way to defend the kind of life he is expected to live in South Africa today. Interestingly enough, in the same week that the Brigadier was addressing one of his recruiting meetings in Pietermaritzburg, the Johannesburg African newspaper, *The World*, published the results of a survey it had run in which it asked its readers just one question—Would you fight for South Africa if it was invaded from Angola? Over 80% of the replies received said "No!" This overwhelming disenchantment with the way things are was endorsed by two distinguished African leaders within the same fortnight. Mr. Selby Msimang, a founding member of both the African National Congress and the Liberal Party of S.A., told a Rotary luncheon in Durban that young Blacks, where he came from, backed the MPLA in Angola because they hoped that what was happening there would force White South Africans to come to terms with their Black fellows. And Mr Obed Kunene, Editor of the Zulu newspaper, *Ilanga*, wrote that the Angolan war, tragic as it was, was regarded by many Black people as "the sort of cataclysm to be welcomed".

It is all very fine to appeal to White South Africans to wake up to the basic needs and grievances of Black South Africans, but it is pointless to do so unless you tell them what those are. Admittedly it is not easy to do this if you are a soldier and are supposed to eschew politics, for the basic grievance of Black people is the policy of the present government, and their basic need is to change it. If White South Africans want to get their Black fellows to share in the defence of South Africa they will have to agree to work out a shared future with them, and change their political direction entirely. Is there any sign that they are ready to do it?

During March Chief Gatsha Buthelezi made a now-famous speech to a predominantly Black audience of 16,000 people at Soweto. In it he appealed to White South Africans to accept the idea of majority rule. He said that, for his part, he hoped "the operative majority in this country will be a multi-racial majority". The response of the Deputy Minister of Bantu Administration, Dr. Andries Treurnicht, to this statesmanlike appeal, was predictably depressing. Chief Buthelezi, he said, was **preaching revolution**. What is more, he went on, the Chief's statement would be opposed by all

White people "with all their power", and it would also be opposed by South Africa's Black people. Dr. Treurnicht's ignorance of the aspirations of Black people was one of the reasons his appointment to his Bantu Administration post was received with such dismay. Nor does he seem to have learnt anything since he took it up. For we have not the slightest doubt that, were a freely-constructed referendum to be held on the question of Black support for non-racial majority rule, Dr. Treurnicht would find that the Chief's support was quite overwhelming. And he would have White support, too.

If White South Africa were to accept the Buthelezi call, no doubt some people would have unhappy experiences and uncomfortable moments during the transition to majority rule, but think of the benefits. Overnight almost the entire African continent would change from enmity to friendship, the teeth of Communist subversion would be drawn, and the Brigadier could spend his nights quietly at home with his family, instead of stumping the country gathering recruits from draughty halls for what is, inevitably, a lost cause—the defence of a system of government with not a friend in the world worth having. □

2.

WHICH WAY

DO THEY GO FROM HERE ?

The South African Government must be reminded on every possible occasion that its representative at the United Nations pledged it, over a year ago, to move away from discrimination based on race—and that it has done precious little about it since then. Now it has been given a chance to show if it meant what it said. And it need do nothing, just not interfere.

The Roman Catholic Bishops' Conference has announced its intention to open its White private schools to all races, and the Anglicans and Methodists have come out in support. High time, one might say, for although there have been periodic attempts in recent years to admit Black students to White church schools, how it ever came about that past church authorities allowed these schools to develop on racial lines is something that no Christian will ever be able to explain adequately or justify at all. However, that is another point. The point of the moment is that the Minister of Bantu Administration's immediate—one might almost say, reflex—reaction to the Catholic Bishops' announcement

was to say sternly that the Government would not consider changing its policy with regard to apartheid in schools. Will he think again? Because, if he won't, the whole Nationalist claim to be moving away from discrimination will be shown to be the sham that many people already suspect it to be.

Although it was certainly coincidence, within a few days of the meeting of the Catholic Bishops' Conference a new Reservation of Separate Amenities Bill was announced, giving the Government sweeping powers to control the admission of individuals and organisations to certain amenities and places. First reaction to the Bill was that it was clearing the ground for a new clampdown on the activities of the few integrated sporting and other bodies which still exist. Now, the view of some people is that the Government is taking these new powers in order to make it possible to **remove** discrimination from particular places and certain areas of public and private activity, in a **controlled** manner, and without appearing to depart from official policy.