

NO GOD. NO HOME.

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ON the 26th of June there was a break in the daily life of the Durban Indian community. All the Indian schools in the city and district closed for the day. At 1 p.m., every Indian business and shop put up its shutters, and the streets of the Indian quarter were left silent and deserted.

The meeting at Curries Fountain Sports Ground started at 2.30. The tall new buildings of Durban shimmered distantly in the afternoon haze. Business was "as usual" in the shops and offices in West Street. Tourists, down for the season, sunned themselves on the beaches. On the racecourse opposite Curries Fountain, horses were being put through their paces in preparation for the "July". When the meeting ended at 5.30, the lights were coming on in the White homes on the Berea. A new night club was having its "Gala Opening" later that evening, on the sea front.

More than ten thousand Indians were present at the meeting. (No Africans could attend. The Government's "election period" proclamation banning gatherings of more than ten Africans still operates in Durban.) There were factory workers and clerks and shop assistants and professional men. There were housewives and school children. There were the solid figures of merchants and the smooth, easy faces of playboys. For these people had come from many districts of Durban. They had come from the Beach and the Berea, from Woodlands and Montclear, from Merebank, from the Bluff, from Rossburgh and Sea View and Bellair. They had come from Hillary, from Briardene, from Prospect Hall and from Cato Manor. In many of these places, their communities had been established for generations. They had built temples and mosques, halls and schools. They had opened shops, they had cultivated gardens, and they had made homes. In Riverside, to take one example, they began their settlement 95 years ago—decades before Whites started to occupy nearby areas. But from all of these places they were going to be uprooted and, sooner or later, moved to remote undeveloped areas. That was why they had come to Curries Fountain—a diversity of persons united as a people.

For non-European peoples, June 26th is a day of very special

significance. It has been marked, during the past eight years, by a series of dedicated efforts. On the 26th June, in 1950, a nation-wide protest was made against the growing burden of apartheid laws. It was on June 26th, in 1952, that the Indian and African Congresses launched the Defiance Campaign. On the same date, in 1953, the Congresses made their final formulation of the Freedom Charter, and in 1957 the day was dedicated to a general protest against the Government's racial policies.

On one level, this whole series of demonstrations might seem to have been futile. The Government moves forward remorselessly on its course of oppression. But anyone who was present at Curries Fountain could feel that these people were joined together by a bond of infinite strength. Together they had suffered and feared and talked and prayed—and it was this unity that saved them from complete despair. To-day they had come together for a single day of "prayer and protest". In the presence of their quietness, their dignity, their pride and their grief, the expressionless policemen round the edges of the crowd looked more than usually absurd. And their guns were a reminder that the Indian people, in the land of its origin, had forged, in passive resistance, a weapon that had defeated a great imperial power.

To-day, however, the occasion of the meeting was one which seemed to offer a greater opportunity for despair, perhaps, than any other. The present Durban City Council, realizing the injustice of a previous Council's 'ghetto plans', wishes to change them. But the Government has accepted the proposals made in 1953. The proclamations still stand and must be faced as they stand—the pledge not only of displacement, but of ruin. 60,000 Indians and 80,000 Africans in Durban will lose properties and businesses valued at over £30 million. And, in the words of one speaker at the meeting, "they would be unable to occupy their homes, yet completely unable to sell at a price that would enable them to become home owners in another area". These were the simple figures, the simple facts behind the Durban Group Areas Proclamations.

Only a scattering of Whites was present at the meeting. Alan Paton, in a brief but moving speech, remarked on the fact that he could not say he was representing Europeans. "If I were," he said, "there would be no meeting here to-day." Those White sympathizers who were present felt an overwhelm-

ing shame at the apathy of their people. And, at certain moments during the meeting, the word "apathy" was revealed, with a terrible clarity, as wholly inadequate. Mr. J. N. Singh, who chaired the meeting, reminded the audience that the Development Board created by the Development Act, and given the right of pre-emption at its own price, could economically ruin those affected by "buying off their properties for a song". Dr. G. M. Naicker (who is prohibited from attending gatherings and whose speech was read by Mrs. S. M. Mayet) quoted Dr. Theo Gerdner, a prominent Natal Nationalist. Dr. Gerdner, at a public meeting, stated that with the implementation of the Group Areas Act, 90 per cent. of the Indians engaged in commerce would "have to find other occupation". These instances, among others, gave what was perhaps the most terrible and haunting reminder of all—that easy profits and financial *coups* would be made from the dispossession of a people and the destruction of their livelihood. This was something that touched the roots of our shame—as Europeans and as human beings. Into one mind at least came the memory of a description of the first performance of "The Diary of Anne Frank" in Berlin, soon after the war. When it ended, there was no talking amongst the German audience, and no applause. They left the theatre without looking at one another—and in utter silence.

Certainly the implicit comparison did not seem too strong when Professor Pollak spoke of her experience in post-war Germany—among "9½ million survivors of German concentration camps and slave labour camps." "I emphasize," she said, "the human loss—the corroding of spirit and mind—and the inner turmoil, confusion and despair." The human loss. Looking around that gathering, how inevitable, and how true, it was to link these people with all persecuted peoples. Paraphrasing Dostoyevsky, spokesman of the tortured and anguished, the insulted and injured, it was right to say: "Kneeling to you, we kneel to all suffering humanity". For in front of our very eyes was a ragged Indian child, carrying a placard. On it was written, in straggling capitals, "No God. No Home. No People. No World."