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EDITORIALS

1. NKOMATI

However questionable the actions which lead up to it, the signing of the Nkomati Accord has transformed the situation in Southern Africa. It is a triumph for the hard facts of life over rhetoric and ideology. Nothing suggests that either Pretoria or Maputo has changed its views on the policies of the other, but both had reached the point where they faced a conflict without end and the slow draining away of their economic lifeblood. No doubt Mozambique was suffering greater damage than South Africa, but South Africa was suffering all the same. Peace became more important than principle, as it usually does at the end of most 'no win' conflicts.

As our last issue suggested was bound to be the case, the most important part of the Accord relates to security matters. We raised the question then whether the campaign of destabilisation which it is generally accepted South Africa has been engaged upon since the collapse of the Portuguese Empire, was aimed primarily at eliminating ANC bases or at toppling unfriendly regimes. Nkomati suggests that while there may well have been a stage when toppling unfriendly governments was at the top of its agenda, by the time President Machel and Prime Minister Botha met under the marula tree, it was armed incursions that South Africa was concerned to bring to an end. Pretoria seems to have accepted, for the present at least, that it can put up with unfriendly neighbours – even, from recent events on the Namibian front, the prospect

of a SWAPO government there – but it is fast cutting off the ANC from bases within striking distance of the Republic. This is something which could force the Congress to reassess its whole armed struggle strategy and redirect its efforts either to the difficult business of trying to build up a really effective political bargaining force within the country, or to isolated acts of indiscriminate terror, of which we sincerely hope the Durban Embankment bomb is not a portent.

While the Nkomati Accord has been almost universally welcomed, the welcome has as universally been joined to a warning that unless things really start to change inside South Africa, it won't last. After this, of course, almost anything seems possible, but **will** there be that kind of change? Nobody expects it to happen overnight but to know whether it is even starting to happen requires that, from now on, we disregard all government rhetoric and concentrate our attention on government action.

Rhetoric tells us that the new constitution is a vehicle for reform. Professor Barry Dean's cool appraisal of its provisions elsewhere in this journal, six months after the excitement of the Referendum, shows that it is hardly that. Signs of at least one step forward seemed to come from the proposal to open Central Business Districts to people other than whites – until it turned out that blacks would be excluded. And even when an outcry persuaded the Government to extend the concession to

blacks it transpired later that they, and they alone, as a group, would specifically be precluded from owning the premises from which they conducted their business. Thus was emphasised once more the temporary status, in Nationalist Government eyes, of all blacks living in 'white' South Africa.

It is this Government obsession with the temporary nature of the presence of all black South Africans in 87% of the country which is the real threat to the future of the Nkomati Accord, for it is the myth which provides the rationale for refusing permanent rights to most of our people in most of our country. This is something that Africa will never be able to accept. Real change, then, means the abandoning of this myth, and the most reliable indicator of whether real change is contemplated or not will we suggest, from now on be provided by the energy with which the Government pursues its programme of removing black people from 'white' South Africa and resettling them in the homelands. So far there is no sign that its enthusiasm for it is waning.

World-wide protests did not stop the people of Magopa being moved. In the Eastern Cape the long-established, church-based, freehold community of Mgwali is fighting desperately to avoid a fate that could be worse than death, incorporation into the Ciskeian pocket-dictatorship. In Ladysmith, Natal, an umbrella organisation has recently been formed to fight the threatened removal of 100,000 black people living on freehold land in that magistracy alone. And this is only part of the story. In March the South African Council of Churches and the South African Catholic Bishop's Conference jointly issued a report on forced removals that estimated that over three-and-a-quarter million people had already been moved and nearly one-and-three-quarter million remained to be moved in terms of known government plans. They called upon the Government to 'cancel immediately any further plans for removals and relocation'.

We do too.

For otherwise the Nkomati Accord will have been built on sand. □

2. HONORARY WHITES

One of the more nauseating qualifications to rigid apartheid is surely the one which permits foreign visitors and diplomats (unless they are unlucky, like Colin Croft) to be treated, on trains and in other places, like South African whites, while South African blacks continue to be treated, on trains and in all other places, like South African blacks.

Now we see that this special status may be accorded to

the new Coloured and Indian members of the tri-cameral Parliament. Like members of the President's Council (we hadn't known about this), they will be given a special 'pass' which will enable them to 'pass' for white.

We wonder what kind of a representative it would be who would be prepared to so distance himself from the daily experience of his electors as to accept this insult? □

A MOMENT OF SELF-CRITICISM

(on learning that a friend has been charged with high treason)

You have tasted the fruits of status,
while enjoying the privilege of denouncing them.
You have experienced the full joy of marriage,
while your sisters and brothers have been forced into
celibacy and solitude.
You have allowed yourself the luxury of psychic balance,
while many of those around you have lapsed into
frustration and despair.
You have found it possible to live, and to live with a
certain confidence,
in a society which produces evil and madness.
You have stood firmly (though anxiously) beside the hard
wall against which brave men and women have beaten
out their brains.

Now you chew the cud.
You are spattered with blood.

Vortex