

A Letter from the Publisher

For several reasons, including our coverage of the bloody Sharpeville riots and other South African racial troubles, the Republic of South Africa refused to give visas to TIME correspondents during most of the 1960s. Since 1971, however, we have been able to send reporters there, and late last year we reopened our Johannesburg bureau, closed since 1962. Our new bureau chief, William McWhirter, who had orders from New York to "cover everyone and everything," was somewhat apprehensive. Says he: "No one knew whether this was to be one of the shortest recorded assignments in the magazine's history."

To his surprise, from the moment of his arrival and especially during his reporting for this week's cover story, McWhirter found all classes and races of South Africans willing, even eager, to cooperate. "This country has a surprising effect on everyone today," he says. "Our office is more like a firehouse than a bureau, with some 50 incoming calls daily. The whole country wants to talk. It is as if everyone has been put on a think-tank-a-day alert on South Africa's future." McWhirter interviewed Min-



Bureau Chief McWhirter

ister of Justice James Kruger on the Stephen Biko affair, and has met with Afrikaner students, Boer families, colored leaders and young black militants. "One disheartening thing that has happened in the past few months," he says, "is the growing suspicion in Soweto, the black ghetto outside Johannesburg, toward all whites. When I first arrived, a black friend was enough, then a press card, then an American accent. Today it is difficult to gain their trust."

The story was researched by Senior Researcher Ursula Nadasdy de Gallo and written by Associate Editor William E. Smith, who was Nairobi bureau chief in the 1960s and has written many of our Africa stories during the past eight years. "When I arrived in Africa, there were already hints of this drama," recalls Smith. "The tension has been building there for a long time, and it is heightened by the fact that all the principals involved are so passionately and irrevocably committed." That passion and commitment have made South Africa one of the most important political stories in the world today.

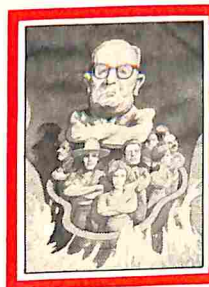


William Smith

Ralph P. Davidson

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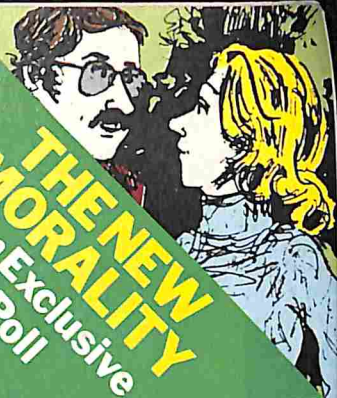
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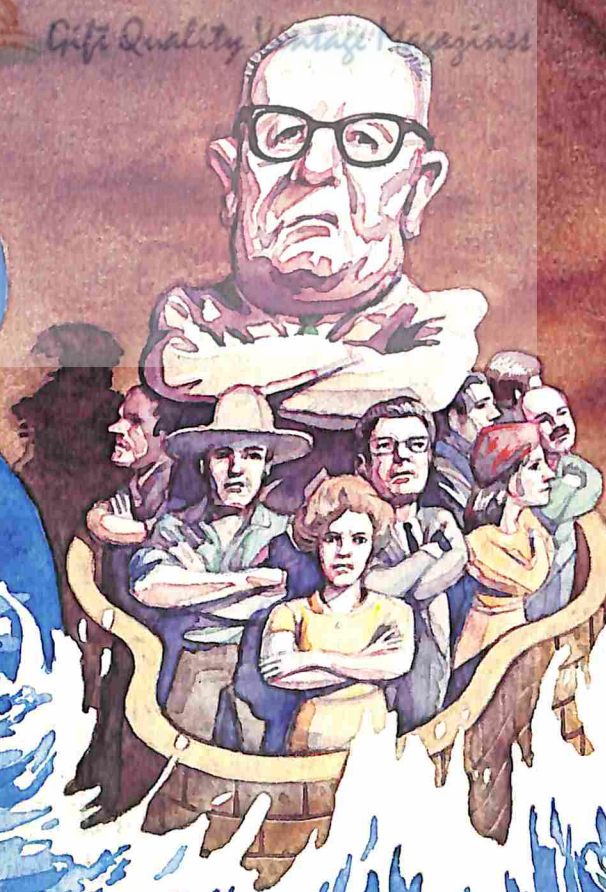
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THE DEFIANT WHITE TRIBE

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