

With all its wish to remain neutral between political parties, the Institute could not agree to the policy of apartheid and as the Government proceeded with its very dubious legislative programme the Institute came out more and more in opposition. Long before the Schibusch Commission it had ceased to be merely a Ministry of Munitions and was to some extent at any rate a Ministry of War.

It must be clear to all honest thinkers that this process cannot be carried much further without some damage to the Institute. One thinks of the withdrawal of financial support from individuals and Trusts and although this cannot be a main factor, it cannot be left entirely out of account. It is important that the Institute's scrupulously

impartial research should continue to receive respect and too militant a policy may discount the value of this research. On the other hand neither the Institute nor any other public body can afford to antagonise the mass of its younger members. Nor must the Institute ever part company with black intellectual leadership. Care will be needed for many years to come to preserve the Institute on an even keel, but after the statesmanlike attitude of the recent Special Council Meeting, there is every reason for hope that the Institute will not remain merely neutral, but at the same time will not come to be regarded as a body for organising political opposition to the Government. That at least is the hope of many of the Institute's members, young and old.□

THE THREAT TO ALICE SEMINARY

by Alan Paton

In the late nineteen-fifties representatives of seven South African Churches planned a bold forward move. This was to give up training their candidates for the ministry in separate schools, and to set up the Federal Theological Seminary of Southern Africa. There would be four separate colleges, Methodist, Congregational, Presbyterian and Anglican, but the hope was strong that union would become closer.

The need to find a new site was increased by other factors. The London Missionary Society property of Tiger Kloof was declared white. So was St. Peter's, Rosettenville.

Although these Churches planned a common seminary, they had to take regard of the laws of the country and therefore white students were to be excluded. But it was hoped that the Government would agree to the admission of Coloured and Indian students. Further, many of the staff-members would be white.

The Rev. W. R. Booth, then principal of Adams United

Theological School, was given six months leave and commissioned to find a site. After much travel he recommended a site of 220 acres close to the town of Alice. The ground was offered as a gift by the Church of Scotland Mission.

It was felt to be imperative to get the approval of the Government, especially as Coloured and Indian students would require permits. Mr. W. Maree, Minister of Bantu Education, at a meeting with representatives of the Churches, promised to help in this matter, which fell in the province of his colleague, the Minister of Internal Affairs. The representatives naturally asked whether the Seminary would have security of tenure. They were told in open meeting by Mr. C. B. Young, Secretary of Bantu Administration and Development, that the Government would not wish to exercise rights of expropriation even if it had the legal right to do so.

The course seemed to be set fair. In 1962 buildings worth over R600 000 were begun. Water, electricity, tarred roads

and sewerage were provided. The Seminary opened in February 1963 with a staff of 13 and 83 students. The permit for Coloured students, first for two years, was extended to four. A few Indian students were given permits to be renewed annually. Staff houses, a library, a large sports field, and a language laboratory were built. Plans were laid last year to draw Roman Catholics into the programme.

A qualification known as the Associateship of the Federal Theological Seminary, the equal of a degree but without its status, could now be obtained. The introduction of this certificate displeased the University College of Fort Hare, which had hoped that the Seminary would send its ablest students to study theology at the College. The Secretary for Bantu Education accused the Seminary of being unco-operative, even hostile. In another of his letters the Seminary discerned a threat to the permit system. The presence of branches of NUSAS and the University Christian Movement on the Seminary campus did not improve relations, and when troubles occurred at Fort Hare, the Security Police accused Seminary students of incitement. It was afterwards shown conclusively that there was no truth in the allegations and the accusations were quietly dropped.

What was in fact developing was a phenomenon well-known to South Africa. It was an incipient confrontation between the Seminary and Fort Hare, and that was in effect a confrontation between the English Churches and the State. The Seminary was within the limits of the law, a multi-racial and non-racial community. Fort Hare was an institution dedicated to the policies of apartheid and separate development. There developed a strong incompatibility between the policy makers of the two institutions. This incompatibility was not lessened by the belief at Fort Hare that the Seminary was an undesirable neighbour, and an exaggerated estimate of the power of the Seminary to do ideological harm.

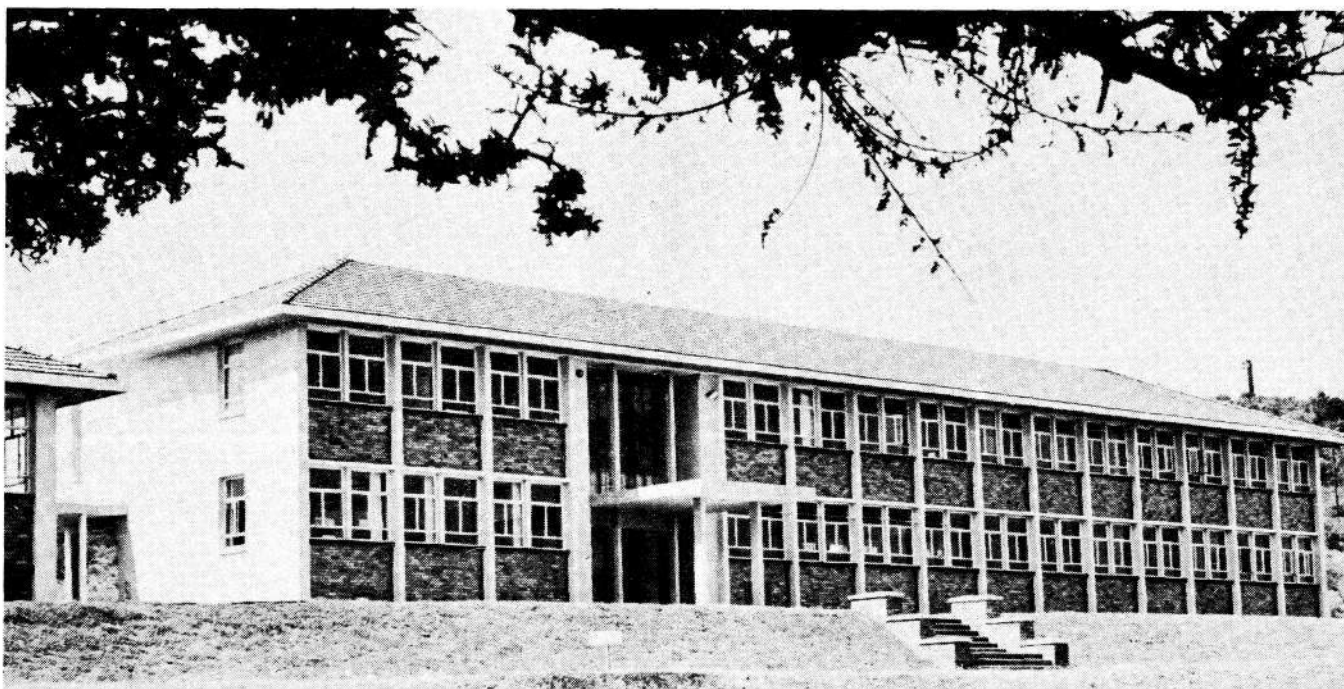
Nevertheless, in spite of this incompatibility, the Seminary was shocked to receive in March 1971, an OFFER BY FORT HARE to purchase the 220 acres belonging to the Seminary. The positive reason given was that in 1961 "there could quite easily be" 3 000 to 5 000 students at Fort Hare. The negative reason was that in 1971 only two seminary students attended lectures at Fort Hare, and that therefore there was no need for the Seminary to be adjacent to the College. A third reason overrode both, namely that such a purchase would be "in the best interests of the Xhosa people."

The Seminary Council conveyed its sense of shock to the Rector of Fort Hare, and asked for a meeting with the College authorities. It asked to see the plan for development and to hear how it would not be possible to find an alternative solution. The Rector agreed to the meeting, but declined to "re-open the matter" of the alternative solution. The Seminary replied that it could not understand the phrase "re-open the matter" when it had not even been discussed. The future looked ominous indeed.

The meeting was very unsatisfactory for the Seminary. Its president, Dr. R. J. McKelvey, thought it valuable for seminary students to meet "educated persons". The Rector of Fort Hare, Prof. J. M. de Wet, felt it was not essential for the Seminary to be where it was. The Vice-Rector, Prof. A. Coetze, declared flatly that purchase of the Seminary property was the only satisfactory solution. With heavy hearts the Seminary representatives promised to refer the whole question to the constituent Churches.

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The most disturbing feature of this affair must now be mentioned. The Fort Hare campus is approximately 180 hectares, and the College owned Honeydale Farm of 582 hectares. Fort Hare would with certainty be able to pur-



Main Seminary Block

chase 184 hectares from the Bantu Presbyterian Church, and 158 hectares of Lovedale Mission Land. This would make 1104 hectares (over 2700 acres), a handsome area. Why must the Seminary sacrifice its 94 hectares of land, with its buildings and the corporate spirit already built up?

And might not the next move be wherever the Seminary was situated to exclude Coloured and Indian students, to order separate seminaries for Xhosa, Zulus, Setho, and others, and to forbid white teachers to teach in black seminaries? The bold ecumenical venture could be broken on the rock of apartheid.

On December 7th, 1971 the seminary representatives and the Rector of Fort Hare met under the chairmanship of Mr M. C. Botha, the Minister of Bantu Administration and Development and Bantu Education. It was another unsatisfactory meeting. It seemed clear that the Government had made up its mind. The Minister said he did not think there was any need for Fort Hare to prove that it needed the Seminary land and buildings. The Secretary for Bantu Education, Dr. H. J. van Zyl, said there was no intention to destroy the Seminary. The Minister said there were other ways of acquiring the Seminary property than by agreement. He felt that his predecessor (Mr W. Maree) had made a mistake when he approved the site.

The Minister pressed the Seminary representatives to say where they would like a new site. It was clear by this time that the Minister had decided that the Seminary would have to move. On behalf of its representatives, Mr A. Chubb the Seminary lawyer said they would study the matter and submit a list of their requirements. So the meeting ended.

Five months later both Minister and Rector were pressing for a reply. Surely the Seminary had by now consulted its constituent Churches. Dr. D. W. Bandey, the Seminary President, asked for help from the Minister to explain to the constituent Churches why the assurance of permanency given in 1961 had fallen away. This attempt to defer the evil day was not successful. Instead the Seminary land, which had hitherto been classified as white, was proclaimed a "released area". This meant that the rights of occupation could be drastically changed. It was not only

the Seminary but also its multi-racial nature that was threatened.

The Council and Staff of the Seminary issued a grave statement on August 4th 1972, declaring that the request of Fort Hare to purchase was "both unreasonable and unjustified". They pointed out that a considerable area of land was already available to Fort Hare adjacent to Bantu Trust territory, the opportunity for expansion being thus practically unlimited. When security of tenure had been promised, the Seminary had confidently gone ahead with developments, and a new and vigorous community had come into being. It had to be remembered that the Seminary land was part of an area granted by the Xhosa Chief Tyhali to the Church of Scotland in the previous century.

The Council and Staff said they might be excused for suspecting that the real reason for the Minister's decision was that the non-racial character of their community was an embarrassment to Fort Hare. They deplored the veiled hints that "other means" were available if they did not agree to sell. "Abandonment of the request would be to the ultimate benefit of all concerned."

Let those who read this account judge for themselves. Is it a matter of urgency that Fort Hare, with so much other land at its disposal should get the 94 hectares (220 acres) belonging to the Seminary? Or is it an example of the use of the overwhelming power of the State to harm, or at the least to remove from sight, an institution belonging to the English Churches, holding the belief that Apartheid is an unChristian doctrine?

The Seminary Council has recommended to the participating churches that they should not accept the offer of Fort Hare to purchase, and the churches have firmly endorsed the recommendation. The proposal is not condemned only by them. Many of the staff members of Fort Hare strongly disapprove of the proposal, and the student body there is strong in opposition. The Seminary and the Churches are determined to oppose the move by all means within their power. They and their friends now await the outcome, confident that they are doing what they believe to be right, and confident that this is God's work and no matter what happens it will go on.□