

SOUTH AFRICANS CAMP

'I WAS BORN IN SOWETO and grew up there. I come from a revolutionary family, with some in exile,' said Tshepiso Mashinini, speaking at a camp for young people held near Stellenbosch, outside Cape Town, South Africa, last month. He went on, 'I used to believe violence is the only way. But we cannot build a society free from hatred, fear and oppression if we are part of these things ourselves.' A new society could not be built by those who exploited their families or friends. 'I cannot communicate with an Afrikaner if I do not communicate with my neighbour next door.' He said that his vision was to see a South Africa where leaders asked, 'What does God want us to do for South Africa and for the world; not my rights but that God's will be done.'

The camp took place at the end of a year of nationwide disturbances. These sprang from change in the country's political constitution, on the one hand, and black mistrust and frustration reaching boiling point, on the other. The 23 who met for the seven-day camp, conscious of all this, looked at such questions as: 'South Africa in 10 years?'; 'Communicating with others'; 'Living in a revolutionary situation'; 'Family life'; and 'Commitment and faith'.

Searching

Heike, an Afrikaans student, said, 'Before I came to this camp I thought I knew everything. I never even tried to think how other people felt. I was searching for something to hold on to, to make me feel I belong.' She spoke of hearing the black students tell of what happens in their townships, and commented, 'The way they cared for their people struck me. I began to think about how *they* felt, and how my family felt. I have been too busy thinking about myself to care.' She said that she had now given her life to 'a Boss' and was ready for whatever He wanted. Being honest about herself had made the weight of the world fall off her shoulders, she said. 'God asks of me to put right my



A musical presentation by some of those at the camp

relationship with my parents, sisters and friends, and with other races in the country.'

Others had also had difficulty within their families. They had fruitful discussions and soon concluded that family arguments were often due to lack of communication. Many who had problems found new hope and were determined to make a new start when they got home. Also, some decided to put things right in school and with friends. Two classmates wrote a letter to their teacher about having cheated in class tests.

They talked openly about the pressure of wanting the approval of friends and of your own race. They saw the need to choose between popularity and the respect of others.

A black university student, who has lost family members in university riots, said, 'Communication means change in your people and in mine so that we do not have to bribe to keep peace, so that universities do not have to shut down, schools close and people die. We have to answer violence and cheating. We—black, white, coloured and Indian—need moral standards to teach us to share and be equal. My decision in this camp is to give my life to God and to have my personal interests come after.'