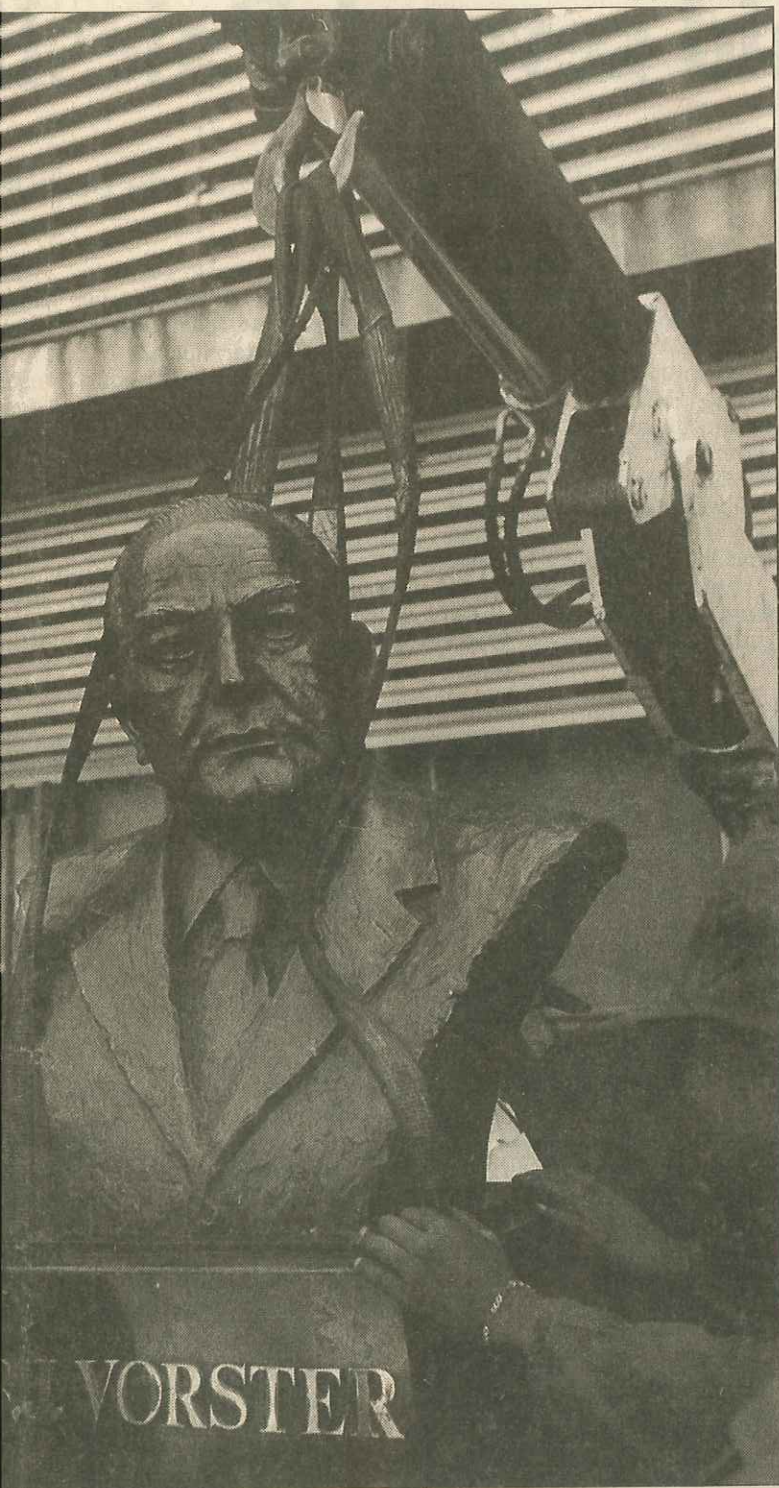


GARY BERNARD



Marble bust of former prime minister John Vorster is removed yesterday from the notorious city-centre police station named after him in 1968. The station has been changed to Johannesburg Central police station.

## Vorster bust removed from police station at start of major revamp

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By GILL GIFFORD

The bronze bust of former prime minister John Vorster was wrapped in blankets and removed from John Vorster Square's entrance yesterday, two days before the station is officially renamed Johannesburg Central police station.

Vorster was prime minister from 1966 to 1978, after which he served briefly as state president. He conducted the official opening of John Vorster Square on August 23 1968.

The bronze-and-marble structure, said to weigh more than a ton, was lifted on to a trolley, rolled outside and hoisted by crane on to a waiting truck. It was then transported to the police museum in Pretoria.

Paul O'Sullivan of the station's community policing forum said news of the bust's removal had generated a large amount of media interest last week, prompting the forum to lift the 40kg bronze head off its plinth and store it in a vault at the station for the weekend.

"The name John Vorster Square strikes terror in the hearts of many people. The old security branch used to operate from the 7th, 9th and 10th floors, where Ahmed Timol and other anti-apartheid activists 'fell' out the window or 'slipped' on a bar of soap in the showers' or were said to have committed suicide when left unattended," O'Sullivan said.

The 10th floor now houses the Johannesburg SAPS communications department.

The removal of the bust was watched by about 15 policemen, with mixed reactions.

Inspector Johan Scheepers of police logistics, who has been a serving policeman for 10 years, watched the procedure in silence.

"It's gone now and I cannot say I'm happy. But I suppose this is part of the new South Africa," he commented.

Constable Ray Lieserig of the adopt-a-cop unit was glad to see the end of the station's "John Vorster era".

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"This place has been seen as a house of apartheid, but now things are changing. The only thing left to change now is people's minds," he said.

O'Sullivan said the removal of the bronze letters at the station entrance marked the start of a three-year, R30-million restructuring of the station.

■ The General Johan Coetzee police station in Newlands will be renamed Sophiatown police station, and the Adriaan Vlok station in Pretoria is to be renamed Lyttelton police station.