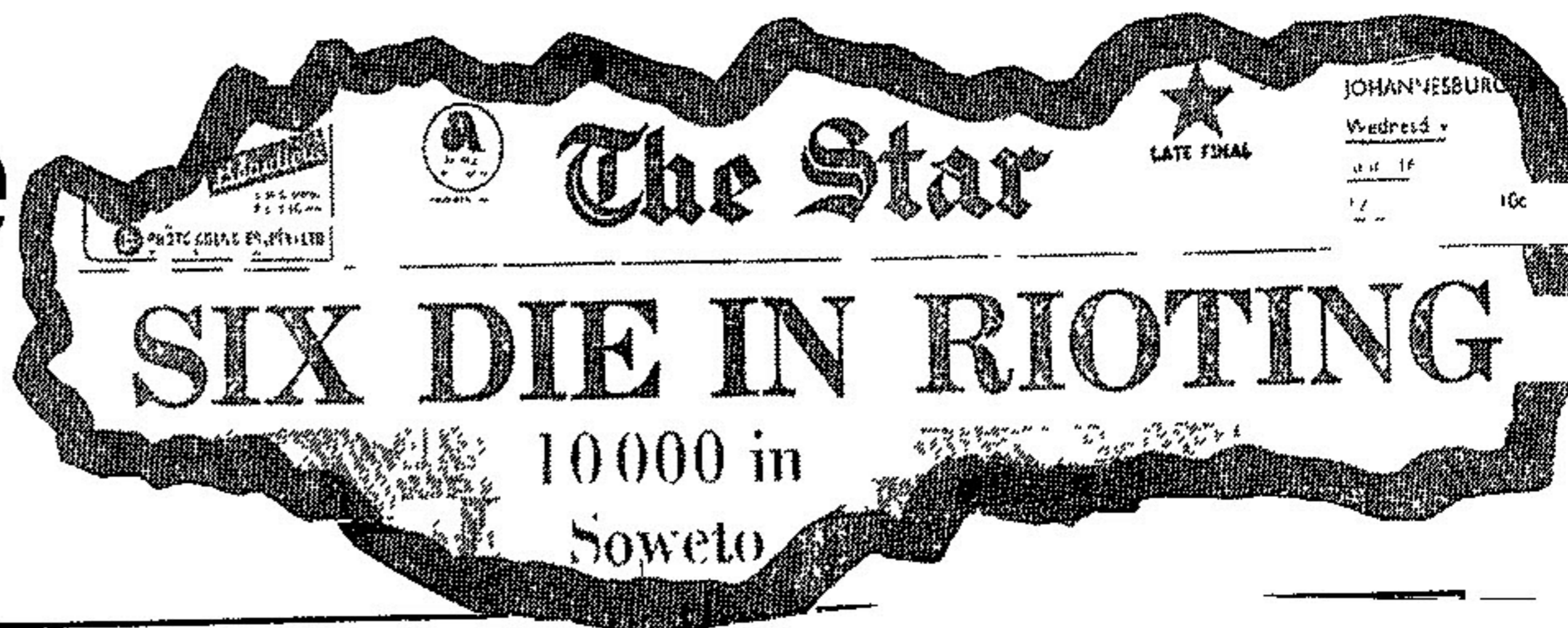


F.M. 18/6/76 (323)



Picture The Star

Reaping the whirlwind



Did it have to come to this? The gunfire and stones, the bloodshed in Soweto are a horrible testimony to the folly of officialdom forcing an unwanted language down the throats of Black children to the point that they took to the streets in protest.

Let there be no mistake. Whatever talk will come of "subversion" and "agitation", the roots of the chaos lie fully in the fateful decision of the Southern Transvaal branch of the Bantu Education Department in 1974 to enforce schooling in English and Afrikaans on a 50-50 basis *irrespective of the desires of the pupils, teachers and headmasters concerned and even of the schools' capability to make the change.*

Why the decision at all? Was it because of the near-rejection of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction by the schools? Secretary for Bantu Education Gideon Rousseau has stated that the choice of language is "not prescribed from head office. It is left to the inspectors, the regional director and the school principals concerned". But for some time there have been allegations of coercion, sackings and resignations over the issue. And BED has indicated in the latest wave of pupil unrest that it has no intention of bending.

Beyond the language issue is the fact that "Bantu education" is third-rate, an education whose philosophy goes back to Verwoerd's dogma that "there is no place

for the Bantu in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour".

So since inception "Bantu Education" has been a form of cultural colonisation unseen since the days of Lord Milner.

Now the consequences. For the Black man the truth is that all too often Afrikaans is the language of the policeman and the pass official, the language of *Waar's jou pas?*

The Black parent must pay bitterly for his child's education, including school-books and uniforms. On top of this there are the strains on often ill-educated staff who must cope with double sessions, giant classes, and the crippling knowledge that gifted children can receive only cursory encouragement. For some time the system has been coming apart at the seams.

As Dean Desmond Tutu put it: "We Black leaders have been warning the government about something like this happening for a long time if they do not stop and listen, and now both sides have resorted to violence."

Government must move at the highest level to defuse the situation. The only way to do that is to allow the children the basic human right to study in English if they wish.