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EDITORIAL

GIVE US ANOTHER SIX MONTHS

We would not be ungenerous towards Mr Vorster. He is certainly determined to do something, and it is a matter for rejoicing that the leader of the Party pledged to apartheid has come to realise that its monolithic creed is no longer sacrosanct. If we had all the time in the world and no enemies, we could regard Mr Vorster's appeal as one more step in the long journey towards a liberal constitution.

But what in fact will Mr Vorster be able to show the world in 1975? The majority block in the United Nations will take a lot of satisfying. Nothing short of universal suffrage and a black majority will make them agree to restore South Africa to its full rights in the General Assembly.

Who then does the Prime Minister seek to please? In the context of his speech, it would seem that he desires to show moderate opinion in America, France and Britain that he is not unworthy of their chivalrous veto.

Any substantial improvement might be welcomed by them but only if it is clear that it is the beginning of a continued process of reform. But radical opinion even in the three Western Powers is so strong that a few surface improvements within the framework of apartheid would not be sufficient to ensure a second veto.

Let us consider the points which might make a real impression.

One is the release of the political prisoners on Robben Island, living in misery and hopelessness. And with this should go a general amnesty for all political prisoners, a lifting of all bans and a restoration of all forfeited passports. Such an action would make a deep impression, would encourage courageous youth all over the country and would go a long way to destroy the prestige and power of the Security Police. Will Mr Vorster do it? Dare he do it?

Again, if he would frankly face the issue of the Coloured people and their rights, if he would go back to the Coloured franchise as it was, better still if he would extend it, there would be joy not only in heaven but in London, Paris and Washington too.

We cannot imagine in our wildest moments of hopefulness that Mr Vorster will consent to abandon the conception of the "homelands". But if he would agree to replace the scattered fragments of Kwa Zulu into a single State, and to place the white sugar farmers and wattle farmers, who are the cause of the fragmentation, under a Kwa Zulu government, that would undoubtedly improve his image abroad.

Many of us would like to see much more done than has been indicated above, but the actions advocated here would at least be an earnest of good faith, and a ground for hope.

Will Mr Vorster, can Mr Vorster, do as much as this in six months? It would be nothing short of a bloodless revolution.

Would his Party follow him? Would the United Party rise above its past record, and refuse to make political capital out of these reforms among conservative white voters? Would not the Herstigte Nasional Party return from the banks of the political River Styx and stage a joyless resurrection in the South African world? These are all possibilities which Mr Vorster will have to take into account. Will he be big enough to face them? South Africa will be with him if he is.

There is one last possibility which might still, for a time, even the voice of independent Africa. That would be the calling of a National Convention adequately representative of all the races to deliberate freely and frankly as to the future of South Africa. It would be useless for Mr Vorster to do this unless he could promise that some at any rate of the major recommendations of such a National Convention would become law. This is perhaps the most striking action which Mr Vorster could take before May, 1975, and it would be wholly good in itself. If it were taken, 1975 might even see a South African Rugby Team playing overseas without hostile demonstrations, and University students cheering for a Nationalist Prime Minister.□

ONS VIR JOU SUID-AFRIKA



Dr. Anthony Barker

The Natal Witness

by Anthony Barker

'You will love me when I am dead', say the Zulus. Or, when I've gone you will at least find excuses for me. So the moment of leaving is proper for reflection; a time to realise how much we have loved, and to remember how much love has been extended to us. Yet this can be a dangerous exercise. None of us knows if his departure is final. None of us can be quite sure he is not making his ultimate bow one moment before stalking off the stage through the wrong door, whence he must reappear in shame, his exit-line botched and ridiculous. There is a danger, too that, freed from the necessity of coping with tomorrow, we see tomorrow's problems as insurmountable. I think none of us gets through the last week before the holidays with any great credit. So, as I sit down to write my farewells, I give due notice that we may well be seen again, haunting the old, familiar and loved places, if only on holiday. Those who drink the waters of Africa, return to drink them again.