

# LIBERAL OPINION



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## THE SECOND QUINQUENNium

By ALAN PATON

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THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA which came into being by a slender majority in a plebiscite of white voters, has completed its first five years, and if a second plebiscite were now to be taken, I imagine that the majority would be overwhelming.

These five years have been notable for several things. One is the steady growth of white nationalism and the consequent slow disappearing of the English-speaking people as a group, though this is not accompanied by any weakening of Afrikaner cohesion. The process of Anglicisation, once so feared by Afrikaner Nationalism, if it operates at all, operates very superficially. Its place has been taken by a process of Afrikanerisation, operating ideologically rather than linguistically, and the English-speaking people, except those who oppose this ideology fundamentally, are virtually the prisoners of Afrikanerdom. Most of them are half-willing, half-wry prisoners, moved by self-interest and the desire for security rather than by that quaint old relic known as British fair play. When the Minister of Justice says with a manly tremor in his voice, "I love justice, but I love South Africa more", most of these ex-Britishers would agree with him. Say to them "Fiat justitia, ruat caelum", and most of them wouldn't know what you were talking about. Those that did would avert their eyes so as not to see this skeleton at the quinquennial feast.

### CONFRONTATION

Will this process of the ideological conversion of the English-speaking people be stepped up in the second quinquennium? Undoubtedly it will. But that doesn't really matter politically. If there is to be a cataclysmic confrontation, it will be between Afrikanerdom and the

African people. And that at present can only be initiated from without, not within. This places on Britain and the United States an almost intolerable responsibility, for these two countries, both heavily involved already, dare not risk a conflagration in Southern Africa.

Is such a conflagration possible? I think the chances are even. A year ago I did not think so at all. We were in a kind of log-jam then, with a powerful government, a decimated opposition, and an ineffectual clamour from outside. But Mr. Smith loosened a log by his UDI, and though the movements are yet small, the rigidity has been broken, and the results are yet to be seen.

Is it true that our own African people are contented, looking forward to being separately developed, pre-occupied with the business of living? I myself do not believe it. I believe they would rise to their feet the moment they thought there was a chance to stay on them. And amongst them, and amongst the Afrikaners, too, there would be an agonising struggle between those who wanted to fight and those who wanted to sit down and talk it out.

### ECONOMIC EXPANSION

Another feature of the first quinquennium has been the astonishing economic recovery after Sharpeville, and the further astonishing expansion, at a pace so hot that it had to be cooled down. The continuation of this expansion is certain if the outside world leaves us alone, or confines itself to clamour.

The increasing industrialisation of South Africa and the consequent increase in the national income raise what in my view is the greatest political challenge of them all. We are told ad nauseam that the African people in the Republic earn better money than the African people anywhere else. To my mind this argument is irrelevant, and is only put forward by people with feelings of guilt. The African here cannot see the African up north, and compare their respective standards of living. What is more he is placed in a society much more complicated, and therefore much more expensive to live in, than any society up north. What strikes him with inescapable force is the shocking disparity between white incomes and black incomes.

### CONTRAST

I am always astonished when visitors to this country, having driven round white Durban and black Kwa Mashu, are not dumbfounded by the contrast between the two standards of living. Furthermore I believe that because the contrast is visible and stark, it creates the bitter African resentment that hides behind the facade of smiles and contentment. If Dr. Verwoerd would during the next quinquennium devote a little less energy to separate development, and a little more to narrowing the income gap, this would do more than separate development can ever do to prevent that cataclysmic confrontation. (And that of course is what

the Nationalists tell us that separate development is intended to do.)

Just as I believe that the narrowing of the income gap is essential for our peace, so do I think it is essential for the peace of the world. It is not Russia or China or Communism that is the great threat, it is the poverty of the liberated nations. The greater their economic development, the less will be their hostility towards the West.

Will this happen in South Africa during the second quinquennium? I see little hope that it will. I don't think Dr. Verwoerd regards it as a priority. I think he sees security largely as a matter of effecting racial separation by drastic measures and of ruthlessly crushing opposition rather than as a matter of meeting needs and aspirations. I grant that Bantustans are intended to meet needs and aspirations, but the possibility of their achieving economic independence, or even a healthy interdependence is to my mind unrealisable. And that is the need that matters.

### OFFICIAL CRUELTY

A third feature of the first quinquennium has been the increase in official cruelty, the destruction of the rule of law, the bannings and the banishments for no known offence, the 90-day and 180-day detentions of persons without charge, the damage to human personality, and just as bad as any of these, the public acquiescence. What more lamentable proof than Principal Duminy's defence of Ian Robertson's banning, and his claim that the men who banned him were responsible men? All that Dr. Duminy had to do was to be as sensible as his students, and call for Robertson to be released or charged. But he couldn't bring himself to do even this. And this at the University which produced those great judges, De Villiers, Solomon, Wessels, Centlivres, Greenberg, Schreiner! Not to mention Dr. Duminy's great friend, the late J. H. Hofmeyr, who would have been shocked by such a surrender.

This ruthlessness will continue. Mr. Vorster has left us in no doubt about that. He threatened NUSAS a year ago, and the first autumn leaf has fallen, to use the picturesque language of his security chief. Whom will Mr. Vorster warn this next session? Will it be the English-language Press? Then total eclipse of free speech will be near.

This use of inordinate power to crush the relatively powerless is one of the incomprehensibilities of Afrikaner Nationalism, until one grasps the fact that a white baasskap South Africa is not preparing for war, she is at war. And I predict here and now that a white baasskap South Africa will always be at war. Only when she begins to think in other terms will there be any hope for her peace.

Not a very cheerful look into the future, I'm afraid. So I shall end up with a thought borrowed from Professor Mark Prestwich of the University of Natal, that the more one learns of history, the more one learns that the future is unpredictable.