

sanctions, and a month later New Zealand Prime Minister, David Lange, further tightened sanctions. Understandably, perhaps, with less economic interest at stake in South Africa and with less of an eye on a global adversary, small countries could afford to cut and run.

But actions by foreign governments were one thing, unknown was the reaction of ordinary citizens throughout the world who witnessed South Africa's domestic trauma nightly in their own homes. It was the decision of the Botha government to place restrictions on television and other media coverage of the turmoil which confirmed local suspicions that Apartheid was the number one news story of 1985 throughout the world.

Seemingly, the government in Pretoria believed that it could withstand this pressure, that the "unrest" which they argued was essentially the work of outside agitators would go away or that, miraculously, another international story would capture the imagination of the international media.

That was not to be.

All this foreign pressure was, however, to be dwarfed by

the run on South Africa's currency which occurred after the "Rubicon" Speech in August 1985. Overnight, the Republic's lines of credit were down. With international bankers no longer wanting to roll over the country's loans, the currency plunged, and no amount of official hype was able to stem the tide of failing confidence in Mr Botha and his colleagues.

This was the international situation which faced South Africa at the beginning of 1986; the backdrop of foreign pressure against which P.W. Botha made his Opening Speech to Parliament on January 31st. There are many indications in the speech, and the manner of its delivery, to suggest that its message was aimed essentially for foreign consumption: to roll back the force of those who seek to further isolate this country, to restore faith in the currency. If this was the intention, and the speech is not the harbinger of serious change, it will clearly not succeed.

In the end, South Africa's international crisis remains only a pale reflection of its domestic crisis. Most South Africans know it, so do most in the outside world. The question for 1986 is: Do the State President and his colleagues know it? □

2. THE SLABBERT RESIGNATION

There are two views about Dr. Slabbert's resignation as leader of the Opposition and from Parliament. One is that he has done the PFP and its cause irreparable harm, dealt it a blow from which it will never recover, and that the dramatic manner of his going will be a nine days wonder, soon forgotten, while his own prospects for influencing our future fade to nothing. The other view is that he may have opened the way for a reconciliation of extra-parliamentary forces which could lead to the birth of a body with sufficient support, credibility and responsibility of action and purpose to be able one day to negotiate the end of apartheid with the Nationalists. The PFP has certainly suffered a heavy blow, but it seems to us highly unlikely that it will be fatal or even, for that matter, particularly damaging. This is not because the loss of Dr. Slabbert and Dr. Boraine is a small matter but because of the way in which the Party has reacted to it. There have been few recriminations and Mr. Colin Eglin's tribute to his former leader was a marvellous example of generous appreciation of all Dr. Slabbert had done for the Party and of sensitive understanding of the reasons for his going. That reaction can only have done the PFP good, something which we hope will be reflected in the coming

by-elections, because it is as important as ever that the party should continue to provide the nucleus in Parliament to which verligte Nationalists will one day have to turn if a new society is to come about without revolution.

Can Dr. Slabbert provide the catalyst to set in motion the building of the extra-parliamentary power which could negotiate the end of apartheid? We have no doubt that his action was designed, amongst other things, to shock verligte Nationalists into facing up to the disastrous course we are on as long as they refuse to commit themselves publicly to ending apartheid. For the moment there has been no reaction from them to his challenge, but the continuing barrenness of their Party's reactions to black rejection of its policies must mean growing disillusionment and desperation amongst them.

If Dr. Slabbert can reconcile this element of Nationalist Afrikanerdom and the many other conflicting forces which really want to end apartheid — his former PFP colleagues, the ANC, Inkatha, the UDF, and some elements in the other houses of the tricameral Parliament — then we may all one day have good cause to be thankful to him for doing what he did. □