

REQUIESCAT

THE Grand Guignol of the General Election is over, and the Nationalists have been returned to power with a larger number of Parliamentary seats—just under two-thirds of the total—and a substantial increase in their share of the popular White vote. The extravagantly favourable redelimitation of constituencies was hardly required. The results reveal a clear swing towards the Government, even in the cities, and the Nationalists would undoubtedly have won in any case.

The United Party Opposition never stood a chance from the beginning. Assiduously avoiding any real alternative to apartheid, the party salesmen peddled the shoddy underwear of Nationalist policy up and down the country, shouting or whispering its attractions according to the character of the audiences they addressed. In the event, the voters quite clearly preferred the original to the second-hand, the established to the equivocal. And who can blame them? If one believes in White supremacy at all, one must trust inevitably to the truncheon and the gun to uphold it. And the Nationalists can never be outbid at brutality.

Where the United Party managed to gain seats, it did so at the expense of Labour, whose representatives were eliminated from Parliament for the first time since Union. Nothing else, of course, should have been expected. The Labour Party has fought against apartheid during the last ten years with courage and consistency, and this was hardly an accomplishment likely to commend itself to a White electorate encouraged in its colour frenzy by Nationalist and United Party candidates alike. There should be little rejoicing in the United Party at its successes, however, for it has only speeded its own moral and political disintegration as a result. It has shown that the electorate will not support a party opposed to the colour bar. But its own spectacular defeat at the hands of the Nationalists has established the barrenness of opposition by mimicry. It has succeeded in proving profitless any loyalty to a progressive principle, while itself suffering rout for its expediency. Its dilemma is complete. No doubt it will continue to make a noise for a while—even dried old bones clatter when they're kicked—but the United Party as we know it is dead and will soon enough lie down.

The election results are unambiguous, the electorate believes in White supremacy and means to maintain it whole at any cost.

No Parliamentary party can afford to ignore this. It must either surrender the possibility of power to a progressive policy and so enter the wilderness of the extra-Parliamentary struggle, or attach itself to the Nationalists in a coalition of terror. There are already shifty references in the English-language press to an *entente* between the less lunatic Nationalists and the United Party. And though much of the gossip is of the sounding-out sort, it is probably true that the Government is not as solid as it seems. Like all things over-blown, there is corruption under its taut skin. And the existence of a large Parliamentary Opposition in search of a home provides temptation enough for any of Strijdom's disaffected aides. The problem of power is that it only decreases by sharing, and there will always be those who enjoy less of it because others enjoy more. Now, with supreme power so securely entrenched, it would be strange indeed if the Nationalists did not fall out with one another over a proper division of the spoils.

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Undoubtedly, the Parliamentary scene will, sooner or later, change. But the change will be personal and not political. For whoever constitutes the Cabinet or heads the Republic, the policy of the administration will have to be the same—to maintain White rule for as long as force can maintain it. Mr. Ben Schoeman, the Nationalist Minister of Transport, proclaimed at an election meeting in Bellville on March 24, 1958, "Supremacy means that you have the political power in your hands and that you can be overthrown only by a revolution." More arrogantly than anyone else has Mr. Schoeman portrayed the rigidity of the Parliamentary pattern. The White electorate did more in the General Election than vote for apartheid. It voted, ultimately, for revolution.

By whatever name apartheid is called, it remains the reason why non-Whites are plundered of their land, their liberty and, finally, their lives; why Africans must carry documents on their person wherever they go, in order that their movements may be restricted and their employment controlled; why fathers are separated from their children and husbands from their wives, lest a migratory Black labour force found families and homes in the towns. What the United Party christens 'leadership' and the Nationalists 'supremacy' is the education of non-White children for kitchen and field, the drink-dazed Coloured labourers in the vineyards of the Western Cape, the

private farm jails of the Transvaal with their whippings to work. Apartheid is a policeman beating up an African for being 'cheeky', and apartheid is the tens of thousands of children who sicken and die when the winter comes to the cold, black corners of the shanty-towns. Apartheid is fourteen million people, of whom eleven million are Coloured and Black, and a Parliament of one hundred and sixty-three members, every one of whom is White.

Can the non-Whites be expected to endure such oppression forever? For as long as they believe in the possibility of relief through the law, so long will they canvass their case by plea and by protest. But their trust is expendable. And when they no longer believe they will ever achieve their rights through the peaceful procedure of government, will they not rise up, in the courage of their despair, against the authors of their agony? The Whites, indeed, are allowing them no other choice. They have marked their ballot-papers with the promise that their rule will last as long as repression can protect it. Can they hold any but themselves to blame if their challenge is accepted?

It will go hardly from now onwards, if the threats of Mr. Schoeman and his colleagues are to be believed; the taps will be turned on full. Every demonstration of non-White opposition to apartheid will be clutched by the Government as an opportunity to tighten the terror. The African National Congress has already been banned by the Minister of Native Affairs in three of the areas under his jurisdiction. Doubtless, it will not be long before the whole Congress movement is proscribed. And what will that change? A movement that images the aspirations of a people can grow as well in a cellar as under the sky, it only sends its roots down deeper in the dark. Doubtless, whatever the armed might of a modern State can accomplish, the Government will attempt. And yet, what will that change? For violence achieves nothing but violence, till in the end it destroys only itself. Indeed, it will go hardly from now on. The Whites have put their crosses to intransigence. But they have not changed, and they cannot change, the end.