

world than does the Soviet Union. The Prime Ministers were acutely conscious of these uncertainties and dangers. We dealt at some length with the current international situation, and I will deal with that on another occasion.

"What I intend to do today is mainly to emphasize the momentous change that took place in the future relationship of the Union of South Africa with the Commonwealth. Some may say this is being emotional, but my mind goes back to February 1917, when for the first time I had an idea of what this Commonwealth might be. The expression was not in general use at that time, although it had been originally used some 25 years prior to that date. I saw the King going to open Parliament in the darkest days of the War escorted by three or four troops of Boer cavalry, all of whom had served against Britain only a matter of 14 or 15 years before. All of us saw, too, the contribution made by the Union of South Africa in two World Wars.

"Even before the meeting, it was very clear that this would be the focus of general attention. I do not think it is an overstatement to say that in the long history of these Commonwealth or Empire meetings—we have had ten since the War—no issue so severely strained or tested the flexible bonds of the Commonwealth association as did the one which faced this Conference.

#### SOUTH AFRICA AND THE COMMONWEALTH

"You will recall that South Africa first raised the question of its future relationship with the Commonwealth at the meeting of the Prime Ministers in May 1960. The Foreign Minister of that Union gave notice of the intention of his country to hold a referendum on the question of whether South Africa should adopt a republican form of government. At the same time he asked for advance approval of its continuance of membership or readmission to the Commonwealth. At that time we gave to this problem a twofold reaction; the Prime Ministers affirmed that the choice between a monarchy and a republic was entirely a matter for South Africa to decide, but they also agreed unanimously, and I intend to read this because it represented a change in the Commonwealth relationship which had previously existed—

"In the event of South Africa deciding to become a republic and if the desire was subsequently expressed to remain a member of the Commonwealth, the meeting suggested that the South African Government should then ask for the consent of the other Commonwealth governments, either at a meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers or, if this were not practicable, by correspondence."

"On October 5, 1960, South Africa's choice was made by a referendum which resulted in a majority favouring the adoption of a republic. Subsequently the Government of that country announced that a republican constitution would

be proclaimed on May 31. I felt and still feel that we had made it clear last May that there was no automaticity about the application of a country which was a member of the Commonwealth and which changed its form of government to that of a republic; and that until the legislative processes had been completed the decision had not finally been made.

"That view did not command general support. I should point out here that the first reading of the bill to set up a republic was given in the South African House of Representatives on January 23, that second reading was given on February 9, and that then the bill was referred to a select joint committee of both Houses, the committee to report to Parliament on March 24. Hence the matter is still before the Parliament of South Africa.

#### WHAT SOUTH AFRICA SOUGHT

"What in effect was being asked was advance approval prior to the final legislative decision being made, something that was denied last May. The wording of the communiqué in May 1960 reflected the general view of the Prime Ministers that a positive act of concurrence was required on the part of each of the other member governments if South Africa's request for consent to remain a member of the Commonwealth was to be granted. It was agreed by the Foreign Minister of South Africa that all governments would have to consent; at least that was the statement he made in May last. It was argued that, even in the face of the wording of the communiqué last May, it was still a virtual formality for countries applying for continuance of membership to remain as members. I think it was the consensus of a majority, if not all of the Prime Ministers, that more than a formality was involved....

"Dr. Verwoerd, the Prime Minister, relied throughout on the argument that the constitutional issue should be dealt with separately, and that on the basis of the precedents there should be no question of South Africa's right to continuing membership. The discussion took a long time. All agreed that South Africa's constitutional change was not in itself an obstacle to continuing membership, but the view was strongly held that the question of membership could not be divorced from the international implications of the Union Government's racial policies. *Apartheid* has become the world's symbol of discrimination; and in the eyes of the Prime Ministers present, other than Dr. Verwoerd, to give unqualified consent to South Africa's application would be to condone the policies of *apartheid*.

"That was the core of the issue which engaged our attention for three days. It was, I have been told, a discussion without parallel in the annals of the Commonwealth association. It is a great organization where men—and a woman this time, the Prime Minister of Ceylon—with strong convictions, can sit down together and yet not speak to one another at

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