

criticize strongly and deplore the racial policy of the Union Government and the anxiety which we felt it was arousing in the hearts and minds of millions of people throughout the world. We expressed our deep concern about its impact on the relations among the member countries of the Commonwealth and on the cohesion of the Commonwealth itself as a multiracial association. I took the stand then, and I have taken it before, that the United Nations answers to these principles, and that the Commonwealth cannot do less.

The Prime Minister of South Africa stressed strongly the positive aspect of the Union Government's policy. He deplored the accusations of racial discrimination and contended that the other Prime Ministers did not understand the situation as they should. As I have already said, there was a patient and exhaustive search for a formula which would encompass frank criticism of apartheid. Somebody said: "We do not want compromise". Well, the countries which feel discrimination most strongly, and which were the most outspoken critics, showed a desire and readiness at all times to come to agreement without sacrifice of principle, and I say in no bitter sense that there was no corresponding readiness on the part of Prime Minister Verwoerd. When I say that, I do not want Hon. Members to conclude that he was lacking in forbearance. He is a wonderful personality; he is a kindly burgher. In the face of strong and sometimes provocative criticism he maintained throughout an impressive courtesy and calm.

### Gulf Unbridgeable

Was there ever a prospect of a constructive outcome? There might have been. There was a time when discussions seemed to give promise of a mutually acceptable solution. Dr. Verwoerd seemed ready then to acquiesce in a formula which would have been coupled with a declaration of principle by the cumulative conscience of the other Prime Ministers. That formula might have been accepted. But as discussion proceeded the basis of the compromise dissolved and it was impossible to find language capable of bridging the gulf. Again I say this; it is a lesson to those in this House who sometimes speak about what they would do if they were there. Those who belonged to non-white races showed an attitude of endeavouring to bring about some compromise.

When that hope ended, criticism continued. With some evident regret and without any advance notice -- although he read from a document which I observed was somewhat dog-eared -- Dr. Verwoerd formally withdrew South Africa's request to continue membership. In the tense drama of that moment little remained to be said. The true depth of the cleavage between him and the things he represented and the other members of the Commonwealth was revealed, stretching to the breaking point the will to bridge it.