

economic expansion. The Tomlinson Commission in fact predicts that even if its plans for developing the tribal areas are put into effect, four million Africans will be working in the White urban areas at the end of the century.

Government intends them to be migrant workers, without a permanent stake in the towns. It persists in rejecting the perspective, now accepted as inevitable in Rhodesia, Belgian Congo and Kenya, of a permanent, stable society of Africans in the towns, for it sees in this a threat to the traditional master-servant relationship between White and Black.

In the Union, therefore, integration and segregation are two sides of the same coin, and the pass laws serve to maintain caste-like differences within a common society. This too is recognised by Africans, whose children sing as they play in the locations:

Jongani e police station;
Kukhona amapolisa.
Sesona sifo sikhulu
Kuyo le ndawo.

Vukani ebuthongweni
Niyeke ukuthandaza!
Sesona sifo sikhulu
Kuyo le ndawo.¹

THE WHITE OPPOSITION IN SOUTH AFRICA

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FOR the Nationalist Government, with its aim of permanent white supremacy, and the non-white "liberatory movement", with its slogan of "freedom in our lifetime", the political issues in South Africa are relatively straightforward. Squeezed between

¹ Look at the police station;
There are policemen there.
That is the greatest disease
In this place.

Arise from your sleep
And leave off praying!
That is the greatest disease
In this place.

these two forces are no fewer than nine different Opposition groups, all seeking to overthrow the Nationalist Government, but hopelessly divided over how to achieve it. With only two exceptions—the once-powerful United Party of the late General Smuts and the old-established Labour Party—these groups all came into existence after the collapse of the United Democratic Front in the 1953 General Election. Each new group was launched in the belief that only *its* special method would defeat a Government which had scrapped the normal rules of political warfare and was legislating to stay in power for ever.

The seven new groups are:

1. The Liberal Party, concentrating on race relations.
2. The Federal Party, drawing its strength mainly from the English-speaking province of Natal.
3. The Anti-Republican League, appealing for a non-party front against a Nationalist republic, although catering specially for English-speaking South Africans.
4. The spectacular Black Sash women, with their silent public vigils, trying to stir the nation into defence of its Constitution.
5. The Covenanters, arguing the case for a new National Convention to reaffirm the Constitution.
6. Ex-members of the United Party who have quarrelled with their party over racial issues.
7. The South African Bond, a new right-wing party proposing a coalition of men of goodwill.

There is even a tenth group, the National Conservative Party, consisting of six M.P.s who broke away from the United Party but refused to resign their Parliamentary seats. They are more an adjunct of the Nationalist Party than part of the Opposition. One of their members has already crossed the floor to join the Government.

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To a lesser or greater degree, the nine Opposition groups listed above share the view that South Africa under Strydom is heading for a one-party State. They have heard Strydom's repeated claims that his Government has a special mission to fulfil in Africa, the maintenance of white civilisation, and they have detected with alarm the undertone of authoritarianism. This alarm was present right from the time of the Nationalist victory in May 1948. It manifested itself in the formation of the United Democratic Front, which mobilised anti-Nationalist whites of all shades of political opinion. For the first five years of Nationalist rule, from 1948 to

the General Election of 1953, the bulk of the white Opposition was united in a common front.

But, whereas the United Democratic Front brought 770,000 Opposition voters to the polls in 1953 and won 62 seats in the House of Assembly, the Nationalist Government, with only 660,000 votes, won 94 seats: the fruits of a "loaded" franchise and of an exceptionally favourable redelimitation of constituency boundaries.

That put an end to the United Democratic Front. The United Party, which had been swept along, with mounting reluctance, at the head of the Front, viewed the break-up with satisfaction. In one week-end, two new parties were formed, Liberal and Federal. Soon afterwards, the United Party served notice on its former wartime election ally, the Labour Party, that it intended contesting the five Labour Parliamentary seats at the 1958 General Election.

The splintering-off of the National Conservative Party occurred about that time, too, and before long the other new groups were making their appearance.

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The United Party's argument against continuing the anti-Nationalist alliance was that, however impressive the mobilisation of 770,000 Opposition voters by the United Democratic Front had been, it had won no victories. There was thus only one possible course: to get Nationalist supporters to switch their vote. This involved getting rid of the United Party's embarrassing left-wing allies. It also involved swallowing larger doses of Nationalism and apartheid.

This attitude of mind in United Party leadership circles had revealed itself even before the 1953 election. Opposition to apartheid had become increasingly erratic, and during the Parliamentary session which immediately preceded the 1953 election the United Party caucus was persuaded to vote for two notorious Nationalist laws, the Public Safety Act and the Criminal Law Amendment Act.

The 1953 election set the seal on this type of thinking. Formally and solemnly, the United Party resolved to "go it alone" for the 1958 election. Particularly vicious apartheid laws were to continue producing explosions in the House of Assembly, but on the whole the United Party managed to find more points of agreement on racial affairs. By deft manoeuvring, it began concentrating the struggle against Strijdom on "popular" issues, like the sanctity of the Courts, the inviolability of the Constitution (a loose term), economic issues and the worries of farmers.

Some United Party supporters, noticing that their vote was being taken for granted while the wooing was directed at Nationalists, objected to the new line. There were audible mutterings in several branches, and then two Johannesburg City Councillors, Mr. Richard Harvey and Mr. Jack Lewsen, resigned their United Party seats and stood again successfully as Independents. The revolt, however, went no further.

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The United Party Parliamentary caucus had still to give its decision. It contained half a dozen new backbenchers who, due to political unsophistication, were inclined to speak their minds freely, and were therefore promptly dubbed "liberals" by the Nationalist tacticians; it also contained a more experienced liberal, Dr. Bernard Friedman. Throughout the 1954 Parliamentary session, the caucus members snapped and snarled at each other, and the quarrel spilled over into the 1955 session. Then the testing time came.

It came on the Coloured vote, which the Nationalist Government had vowed to abolish and which the United Party was committed to defend. Observing a certain cooling in ardour in the upper ranks of the United Party over the coloured vote, one of the backbench "liberals" asked the party for a statement that, if it were returned to power, it would restore the coloured vote. The request threw the leadership into confusion. It had given a similar assurance a few years previously, but to repeat the assurance would simply defeat the whole strategy of winning over Nationalist voters, for whom the abolition of the coloured vote had become a matter of make-or-break. The leadership prepared a statement which, after many gyrations, failed to produce the requested promise. The six backbenchers and Dr. Friedman then tendered their resignations.

This crisis in the United Party occurred at a time of general discontent in the party's ranks. The resignation of seven M.P.s, who enjoyed the backing of influential urban members of the United Party, might easily have been a mortal blow to the ailing organisation. Emissaries sped between the leadership and the rebels, pleading, cajoling, promising. It was not a pretty scene. Dr. Friedman, his mind made up, stood firm throughout the whispered, urgent discussions, but his six comrades-in-arms showed signs of wilting. A second statement was prepared hurriedly for these six M.P.s, which they accepted glumly. The revolt was over. Dr. Friedman was out.

The period which ensued is an important one, because it set in train events which might yet lead to the consolidation of liberal forces. Dr. Friedman returned to his Hillbrow (Johannesburg) constituency to find that he had become a Cause. Other United Party supporters, some of them office-bearers, had resigned in sympathy with him. They formed a fervent reception committee, flanked by members of the Liberal and Labour parties. But a number of other United Party members, who had veered instinctively towards Dr. Friedman when the trouble began, waited for the backbench "liberals" to return from Cape Town before acting. The backbenchers then dealt thier second blow at Dr. Friedman: to exonerate themselves, they argued against his stand—argued so eloquently that once again a revolt fizzled out.

The liberal-minded citizens who had clustered around Dr. Friedman viewed the events with dismay. They had been certain that, if all seven M.P.s had resigned together, the United Party probably would not have dared to challenge them in by-elections; or if this guess proved wrong, at the very least the liberal movement in South Africa would have been given an invaluable boost. But they had to look on helplessly while the decision whether to strike out on a new course or not fell on six undecided backbenchers, who could not see clearly the road ahead.

Dr. Frieman, for all these misfortunes, plus a muddled election campaign, polled a significant number of votes. But the rot had set in. In Port Elizabeth, where Mr. Alf Every had resigned his United Party seat in the Cape Provincial Council on the same issue, the United Party's ranks were closing in again, and Mr. Every was defeated by a big majority.

Many observers in South Africa to-day declare that the coloured vote crisis which occurred at the time of Strydom's introduction of the Senate Act—designed to pack the Senate and give him the two-thirds majority required to abolish the coloured vote—was the point of no return for the United Party, that since then Strijdom has not looked back. The dividing line between the Nationalist Government and the United Party on apartheid has become ever more blurred, and at least one official United Party journal is now trouncing the Nationalist Government regularly for the undue amount of money it spends on the Africans, instead of looking after the whites.

To-day, white anti-Nationalists in South Africa remain largely confused and disunited. One complaint commonly heard is that

the United Party, far from opposing the Nationalist Government, is acting as a shock-absorber between the Nationalists and the anti-Nationalists and blocking the emergence of a new Opposition.

The charge is levelled against the United Party that, by seeking to eliminate the Labour Party from Parliament and trying to crush where possible other minority groups, it is establishing a two-party system; and that, in view of the United Party's diminishing opposition to Nationalism, coupled with the authoritarian nature of the Strijdom regime, this must lead inevitably to a one-party State.

Here, through concentrating too much on what is happening inside the United Party, some liberals have been guilty of directing too much of their fury against the United Party leadership and praying for its demise. They have calculated that the United Party's cunning plan to woo Nationalist support will collapse soon, causing the party to disintegrate and opening up the way for an expansion of the liberal movement. (By "liberal" is meant Liberal, Labour, "dissident" United Party, and possibly even Federal.)

Other liberals, rejecting this "waiting for the crash" line of thought, take the more realistic view that the liberal movement in South Africa must organise itself now, regardless of probematal developments within the United Party. They say that the liberal movement has not solved its own dilemma yet of the extent to which it should participate in the non-white "liberatory movement".

Increasingly, since the application of apartheid laws, the white and non-white political movements in South Africa have drifted apart. Non-whites were excluded from the United Democratic Front; they are also excluded, either expressly or in practice, from the general political activity of the nine different Opposition groups. The only regular contact between white and non-white political organisations is maintained through the "Congress movement", with progressive whites working through the South African Congress of Democrats.

However, a significant move is now being made to establish closer links between the non-white organisations and progressive whites. It is in the nature of a determined effort to prevent the Nationalist Government from sealing off whites and non-whites into separate compartments, with the inevitable fatal consequences.

Through banning notices and the rigid enforcement of apartheid laws, the Nationalist Government has tried to reduce contact between white and non-white politicians to the minimum. A

decision at this stage by white liberals to form a closer alliance with the non-white Congress movement would have far-reaching effects.

Yet another move is afoot within the liberal movement: to consolidate some of the groups into one political party.

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If one goes through the list of Opposition groups one finds that, with the possible exception of the South African Bond, which is an old-style party somewhat ill at ease in the modern revolutionary setting, they are all openly or covertly sceptical of the United Party's chances of recapturing power at the ballot box by the traditional methods of political struggle, however shrewd these methods might be.

Methodically, since 1948, the Nationalist Party has entrenched itself in power. The next move is to reduce the voting age from 21 to 18. For the majority of the Opposition parties, this is a special situation—requiring special handling. The Black Sash women stage their unique vigils; the liberal groups grope for a formula; the Covenanters want to enact 1910 and the foundation of Union all over again; the Anti-Republican League declares that “unless some unforeseen development occurs all that stands between the Nationalists and their dream of perpetual domination is the will of their opponents to resist—if needs be beyond the limits of constitutional convention”.

Common to all these groups is that extra note of urgency. They look on dubiously while the United Party continues loyally to fulfil the role of Her Majesty's Opposition, while Strijdom daily changes the rules of the Parliamentary game.

Will the United Party pull it off? Will the liberals succeed in getting together? Will the Black Sash stir Nationalist consciences? Will the special appeal to English-speaking South Africa evoke a response? Will a greater number of progressive whites ally themselves with the Congress movement?

These questions all hang in the air as the General Election of 1958 approaches. Meanwhile, the Nationalist Government and the non-white “liberatory movement” grind inexorably closer towards each other.