

A P A R T H E I D -- O N L Y A P O L I C Y ?

It was the late Mr. Strijdom, former South African prime minister, who summed up the policy of his government as "obtaining the greatest possible degree of separation between the races".

If Deputy-minister M.C. Botha, in a recent speech in Pretoria, said that "total apartheid is not at this stage practicable", there would seem to be a contradiction.

There is not. No nation can afford to cut off an integral part of its own population. Mr. Botha said so in Pretoria: "For a foreseeable time, South Africa's economic structure and its material welfare will be very dependent upon non-white labour." Mr. Strijdom, in referring to the greatest possible degree of separation, must have realized this. He, too, never mentioned total separation.

What the Nationalist leaders are in fact telling us, is that "White South Africa" will remain multi-racial. And that it is in this multi-racial society that they are trying to bring about the "greatest possible degree of separation".

Apartheid Possible?

How well have they succeeded in this task since their advent in 1948? To what extent does apartheid dominate our society? Is complete segregation in a multi-racial society at all possible? And what can be done to ensure that it will not be possible?

A certain tradition does exist in

South Africa for race groups to form their own communities. Whether this is a result of race or colour only, or of the class differences that for long coincided with the colour-groupings, it can be said that these colour groupings are being turned into a veritable colour-bar, which is being enforced by one section, in order to entrench for that section the privileges that it obtained when race was still largely synonymous with class.

The ruling party in this country musters the necessary (white) electoral support by playing on the feeling of racial superiority that is a natural offspring of the contact between groups of people with different levels of development, and by instilling a fear for anything not belonging to the own group, or in short for the "black bogey".

Vicious Circle

These feelings of fear and superiority, in their turn, can only be kept alive by preventing any opportunity to "disprove the pudding by eating", by means of social contact between the whites and the other sections, thus completing the vicious circle that makes this government so difficult to get a grip on.

At the same time it is in this sphere of social contact that this vicious circle can be broken by people to whom the idea of artificial separation of and discrimination between people that have to share the same country and the

same towns is repulsive.

In this connection along and well-illustrated article about "shocking race fraternization", in the Afrikaners weekly Die Huisgenoot of 17.11.61, makes heartening reading. I quote:

"Un-South African"

"Although South Africa is undoubtedly the country where most care is taken against fraternization between white and non-white, . . . social intermingling is increasing alarmingly. . . . When liquor will soon be freely available to non-whites, the Police can no longer use this loophole (sic) to prevent this un-South-African fraternization. . . . White ladies employed by a catering firm served the black men and women. . . . After the failure (sic) of the treason trial several multi-racial parties were held. One can imagine the way in which the interests of the fatherland were tampered with."

Die Huisgenoot concluded: "If this tendency is to continue, it is possible that generations to come will inherit a situation where thousands of white South Africans practise integration in their private lives, although the official policy of the country will be segregation."

There we have it. Thirteen years of attempts to bring about the "greatest possible degree of separation" have resulted in more conscious ignoring the colour-bar than ever.

Although the Government has succeeded in closing several channels of contact, those that remain open

are numerous and will be much harder to close.

Remaining Channels

Our "open" universities, in spite of much unnecessary discrimination, still present opportunities for inter-racial contact, and those fortunate enough to be there, should be determined to make the best of these last opportunities, and to build up friendships that will last after leaving the campus.

In spite of difficulties presented by group areas legislation, dozens of non-racial restaurants and night-clubs have sprung up in the big cities, nearly all of them since the advent of the Nats. In Cape Town alone there are said to be seven -- in fact hardly any "non-white" establishment does not welcome all sections -- and there is no need for any opponent of apartheid to patronize racially exclusive restaurants.

Friendly Sport

In sport only a beginning has been made in breaking down the colour bar between white and non-white, although divisions between the non-white sections in sport are on their way out. Organized sport, particularly, has been too dependent on Government support and that of the subs.-paying public for any large-scale attempts to be made to break the colour bar, with the possible exception of boxing, which in order to retain international recognition, has organized inter-racial tournaments just outside our borders.

It is, however, improbable that

exclusion from international sports bodies will make white South African sport abandon its racialism. But much can be done from within, particularly in friendly sport. Here the lead has been taken by cricket; friendly matches between white and non-white teams are frequently being held and have, without exception, proved successful. Better still would be not to play against but with each other, as is done by a Pietermaritzburg multi-racial professional soccer team.

Apartheid-conditioned

It must be stressed here that, contrary to what apartheid-conditioned South Africans may think, there is little to prevent contact between sections in friendly sport. If most white clubs are closed to non-white people, nearly all "non-white" clubs are in fact open to all races, including whites, and often welcome their joining and taking part in their games.

As yet no law has been invented to make social contact in private homes an offence as such, and according to Die Huisgenoot, "loopholes" have had but little success

Most leaders of the English and several of the Dutch Reformed Churches (the latter in spite of their official church policies) have pronounced themselves against church apartheid and often against apartheid in general, although certainly more could be done to implement these pronouncements.

It is only in the field of the arts that apartheid never got a foothold, in spite of bodies like the Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuurverenigings

(which banned "King Kong" ... in the "interests of Western culture") and the Alliance Francaise (which closed its ranks to non-white people).

It is particularly among jazz-musicians and their serious-minded entourage that colour is strictly taboo. Although on the whole non-political, this group probably does more than any other to sabotage the attempts to impose apartheid.

Only a Policy

As things stand at present, apartheid is still very much only a policy and not a state of affairs. South Africans of all sections, even those not deliberately ignoring the colour bar, are in daily contact with one another in kitchens, shops, buses, factories and streets.

So long as this every-day incidental contact lasts (and Mr. Botha assures us it will be very long), there will be the possibility, and indeed the probability, of intentional social contact.

We agree with Die Huisgenoot that future generations may see thousands of South Africans practise integration in their daily lives, in spite of the official policy of segregation.

If all those who are opposed to that policy, would do their best to make Die Huisgenoot's nightmare come true (the majority of South Africans are, and would suffer little or no ill effects if they would do more about it), apartheid as a way of life will die a natural death. That official policy will be taken care of in time.