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RAND

Daily Mail

He's still wrong

IN THE past fortnight we have been under heavy attack from Nationalists because we upbraided Mr Pik Botha, South African ambassador to the United Nations, for misleading American audiences about South Africa.

During that time we repeatedly approached the Government Department of Information in Pretoria for a transcript of Mr Botha's television broadcast. Strangely, it has not arrived.

Mr Botha himself denounced our criticism as "smears" and "extremely damaging". Which makes it even stranger that the Government let slip the opportunity to set the record straight.

Mr Botha has not challenged the accuracy of the news reports on which our comment was based. Our censure stands: his picture of life in South Africa was grossly misleading.

● "Multiracial development" (that's apartheid-style multinationalism) is a voluntary way of life, he said.

● Viewed in the right way, the Whites really have only 50 per cent of the land, and the least fertile at that, he said.

● The Government forever tries to improve Black wages and living conditions but cannot tell foreign investors how much to pay, he said.

● Black education is not compulsory because "we cannot enforce it", he said.

Mr Botha's later explanations and elaborations of these points in a Nationalist newspaper simply confirm our view that this was an incorrect and fanciful picture.

Wednesday's break between the Government and the Coloureds gives the lie to Mr Botha's version of "multiracial development" as a chosen way of life for all. All the important leaders in South Africa did *not* opt for apartheid.

We remain unconvinced, too, by the ambassador's further elaboration of why there is no compulsory education for Africans. And we are by no means the only ones to have taken issue with his "facts". This week the New York Times published a lengthy letter from the Afrikaans author, Dr Andre Brink, repudiating Mr Botha's sleight-of-fact even more strongly than we did.

Which brings us to the strange argument that loyal South Africans should not question whether statements used by their ambassador in defence of their country are the truth.

Ambassadors have a duty to project the best possible image of their countries abroad, playing up positive aspects, playing down faults. But that does not give them a licence to deal in inaccuracies, misinterpretations and half-truths.

Such tactics do more harm than good. The way to counter criticism is to eliminate those injustices that lay us open to attack.

Improvements are being made, but many more are needed. In the end, a society that has to be defended by mutilating the truth is not worth defending at all.

Brink slams Pik's US broadcast

By RICHARD WALKER

NEW YORK. — South African Ambassador, Mr Pik Botha's "assumption" that he should defend South Africa in the United States "through lies and distortions" has been challenged by Afrikaans poet Andre Brink in a letter published yesterday in the New York Times.

"I do not question the Ambassador's right to defend his country. But I do challenge his obvious assumption that this should be done through lies and distortions", writes Mr Brink, and he backs his argument with lengthy quotes from reports of a recent American radio interview with the Ambassador.

APARTHEID

Writing from Grahamstown, Mr Brink quotes Mr Botha's protest to the interview that "you are all the time referring to apartheid, apartheid, apartheid Multinational development is not apartheid in the sense that the Government is bent upon keeping people from one another — people who want to join are free to join".

"Perhaps his excellency should have somewhat qualified his assertions", suggests the letter. "As far as individuals are concerned, people of different colours in South Africa are indeed allowed to communicate or 'join', provided they do not worship in the same churches; provided they do not attend the same schools or universities; provided they do not use the same public toilets or public transport.

SPORT

"Also provided they do not enjoy cultural, recreational or sports activities together (except with special permission or permit); provided they do not build their houses in the same areas; provided they do not share Government bodies, trade unions or scientific and arts institutions; provided they do not fall in love or wish to get married.

"It should of course, be added that this wholly voluntary way of life is rigidly enforced by probably the most formidable framework of racialistic legislation in the world," Mr Brink adds.