

BLACKS...

MOST of the time in South Africa, Bremer and Agnes Hofmeyr break the law.

They don't make a big thing about it, even when visiting Australia, and nor do the secret police who regularly check their illegal activities.

The law the Hofmeyrs will not accept is the one which says, very clearly, that black people may not be resident in white people's homes for more than 72 hours.

In their ordinary domestic residence in Johannesburg, the Hofmeyrs play hosts to black friends most of the year round, and they stay weeks at a time.

Probably the Hofmeyrs would not have got away with it under the hard-line apartheid Prime Ministers, Vorster and Verwoerd. They are getting away with it under the mildly reformist present Prime Minister, Mr Botha, because they are not deemed to be subversives. Yet their avowed aim, frankly admitted to their secret police callers, is to destroy apartheid.

Bremer Hofmeyr is 71, as Boer as any Boer could be. He is descended from Dutch settlers.

As a young man, Bremer Hofmeyr went to Britain as a Rhodes Scholar, but he was an Afrikaaner first and he was well into adulthood before he shook the hand of a black man.



Solving the problems of a white minority power . . . blacks being used against blacks.

The apartheid lawbreakers

By BOB DUFFIELD

Agnes Hofmeyr was born in Kenya in 1917, the British daughter of a British coffee planter. The key part of her story can only be told as she told it, in Perth this week.

"My mother died when I was eight. I was sent to England for schooling and felt like a caged bird, but something happened which made me realise the real cause of my unhappiness: I hated my father. I hated him because he had married again.

"At last I plucked up courage to write and tell him so. I thought it would be the end of us, but instead it led to a true father-daughter relationship over the years.

"Then, in the 1950s, came the Mau Mau revolt in Kenya. A Mau Mau priestess told a meeting of Kikuyu tribesmen that in every area a good white man must die — only thus could the sins of bad white men be expunged.

"They chose my father.

...AND WHITES

One night 60 Kikuyu swept through the homestead, chopped down my stepmother, and carried my father up Mt Kenya, which was sacred to them.

"On the slopes of that mountain, they buried my father alive."

There is still a catch in the throat of Agnes Hofmeyr, nee Leakey, when she recounts that story.

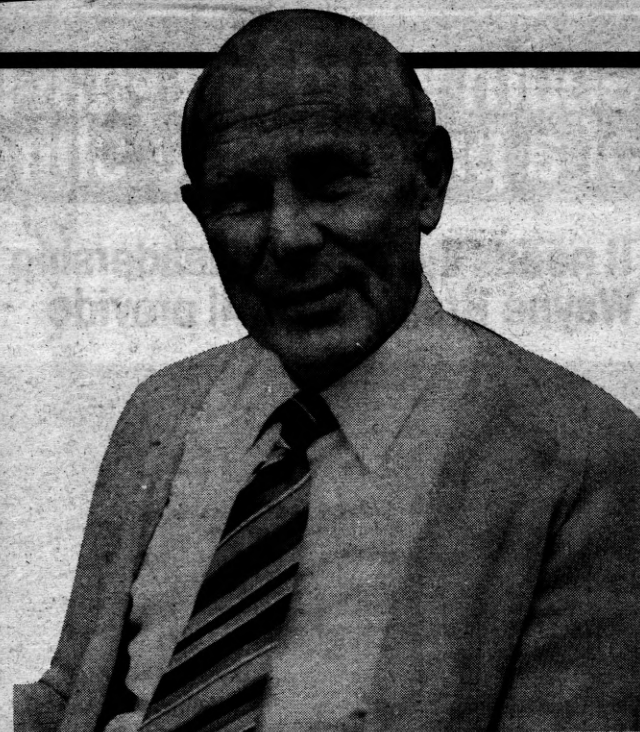
So obviously something must have happened to bring the traumatised Agnes and the Afrikaaner Bremer to the point of making and embracing black friends in defiance of the apartheid laws.

It did, and it is called Moral Re-Armament, or MRA. MRA is a system of Christian ethics which invites its adherents to change the world by first testing their own lives against the ultimate values of honesty, purity, unselfishness and, above all, love.

The writer is not in MRA.

Bremer, brought up to believe that the Bible justified dominance by one race, went out amongst the blacks of Johannesburg and said: "I am sorry. I thought I was your superior. I was wrong. Will you join me in being equals?"

Agnes, who had thought she would reject God and hate black people



Bremer Hofmeyr... 'People do change'.

for ever more, was persuaded to go back to Kenya.

There she met a young black whose father, a tribal chief, had been killed by the Mau Mau. And on a memorable night, she stood up, on a hillside similar to that in which her father had been buried alive, and addressed 9000 Kikuyu tribesmen.

"I want you to know," she said, "that I forgive you for killing my father. I want to say to you that I am sorry for the bad things that members of my race have done to members of your race..."

A murmur ran through the crowd as each of the 9000 muttered exclaima-

tion marks to his or her neighbour. And all hate left Agnes Hofmeyr.

Despite this heady MRA stuff, the Hofmeyrs are quite hard-headed about the political realities of South Africa. Says Bremer:

"In some ways the easing of apartheid over the past 10 years has been spectacular. But we Afrikaaners have not come to grips with the real problem — the actual sharing of power. As things stand, I have no doubt that urban terrorism will come to our cities, and blood will flow in our streets. People do change, but it is very hard to change the Afrikaaner."