OXFORD

SAUL DUBOW

Apartheid
1948–1994

OXFORD HISTORIES

APARTHEID, 1948–1994

SERIES ADVISORS
Geoff Eley, University of Michigan
Lyndal Roper, University of Oxford

Saul Dubow previously taught at the University of Sussex and is now based at Queen Mary, University of London. Born and brought up in Cape Town, he has degrees from the universities of Cape Town and Oxford. He has published widely on the development of racial segregation and apartheid in all its aspects: political, ideological, and intellectual. He has special interests in the history of race, ethnicity, and national identity, as well as imperialism, colonial science, and global circuits of knowledge. He is on the editorial board of the *Journal of Southern African Studies*.

Apartheid, 1948–1994

SAUL DUBOW

OXFORD

UNIVERSITY PRESS

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

PREFACE

As I complete this book on a sunny winter's day in Cape Town, with Robben Island visible in the near distance, Nelson Mandela survives on life support in hospital. The world waits for the inevitable, pausing to reflect on his immortality. The presidency acts to control the political aspects of Mandela's legacy, while members of his family are involved in an unseemly spat over the site of his burial. As the shadows of Mandela's afterlife lengthen, the politics of memory and memorialization are everywhere in full display. Mandela will surely be remembered as the single most important figure in the transition to the 'new' South Africa. What of the system he dedicated his life to overthrowing and which in his own person he so magnificently transcended?

A generation after its formal abolition in 1994 apartheid recedes from immediate memory. The word retains such powerful valency that its meanings have slipped their original bonds to be universalized and applied to other contexts. Apartheid is, and will surely always remain, primarily associated with racism, exploitation, and colonialism. But these are general concepts whose precise meanings are themselves deeply contested. For all its familiarity, apartheid resists easy definition. It is difficult enough to capture the nature of the system at any one moment in time, even more elusive when attempting to comprehend it as a totality. The problem is made even more intractable by the fact that the recent past is not yet properly historical. Apartheid is significantly constituted by the slipperiness of collective memory; impulses to remember and to forget exist in tension with each other.

Whites have every reason to forget the odious system that they had actively supported for so many years. Indeed, by the time the 'new' South Africa came into being, it was already quite difficult to find anyone who admitted to having actually supported apartheid. Government supporters, including President F. W. de Klerk, were well practised in versions of denial before 1994: they claimed that apartheid was misunderstood; that it was originally well intentioned but somehow became malign; that its outrages were perpetrated by others; that the cruelties and crimes were kept from them. Even as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission confirmed some of apartheid's worst atrocities, a miasma or collective amnesia began to spread. Most ordinary white people wanted to 'move on' without remaining trapped by the past. A collective embrace of Madiba (Mandela) would expiate all sins.

For some young politicized blacks, such as those in the ANC Youth League, there remains every reason to remind audiences constantly about the evils of apartheid and the heroism of those who opposed it. Hopes of restitution and personal advancement depend on this. Yet by no means all young blacks see politics as the way of the future. Many are alienated from, or disillusioned by, the political classes. The educated and the ambitious find other options more attractive. Whereas the past continues to be a usable instrument for some, others find it an almost unspeakable burden.

By the time of Mandela's presidential inauguration there was anecdotal evidence that many black youngsters were beginning to lose touch with the system they and their parents had fought to overthrow. This is not altogether surprising. For one thing, several of the key institutions and legislative underpinnings of apartheid had begun to fall into abeyance from the mid-1980s. Students and teenagers in 1994 would have known more about the civil political strife of the transition period than the system that gave rise to it. In societies emerging from extreme forms of repression, 'born-frees' (as the post-1994 generation are sometimes referred to in South Africa) are often disinclined to dwell too deeply on the pain and indignities suffered by their elders. Parents were often concerned to protect children from the trauma and routine humiliation associated with the pass laws, segregated facilities, and other reminders of

social inferiority. Who would wish to blight children's futures with such memories of the past?

Academic history may not be the only way to comprehend the past but it remains indispensable. Fortunately, there are no lack of outstanding guides for students seeking concise, interpretative histories of modern South Africa. The best of these, including those by William Beinart, Nigel Worden, and Leonard Thompson, were all conceived around the time of political transition.[1] Apartheid figures strongly in these works though their scope is chronologically and thematically broader, including the history of the country as a whole. A number of texts seek to understand apartheid more closely. Several of them have titles incorporating the phrase 'rise and fall'.[2] Each targets specific markets and has particular strengths. Worger and Clark address college students; Guelke highlights the international dimensions of apartheid; Welsh's empirically detailed and insightful account is particularly strong on the politics of apartheid's demise. While none of these histories could be said to be teleological, their titles suggest a narrative arc where the end of apartheid is coded into its origins.

This book seeks to do something slightly different. In 2007 Christopher Wheeler of Oxford University Press invited me to contribute to a new historical series designed to address subjects that would revisit major events and problems in European and world history. The working brief for contributors to the series was to reappraise 'turning points' which, for this or that circumstance, might so easily have turned other ways. Wheeler had in mind Philip Roth's whimsical parody of history, 'where everything unexpected in its own time is chronicled on the page as inevitable'.[3]

---

[1] W. Beinart, *Twentieth-Century South Africa* (Oxford, 1994); N. Worden, *The Making of South Africa: Conquest, Segregation and Apartheid* (Oxford, 1994); L. Thompson, *A History of South Africa* (New Haven, 1990); also R. Ross, *A Concise History of South Africa* (Cambridge, 1999).

[2] N. L. Clark and W. H. Worger, *South Africa: The Rise and Fall of Apartheid* (New York, 2004); A. Guelke, *Rethinking the Rise and Fall of Apartheid* (London, 2005); David Welsh, *The Rise and Fall of Apartheid* (Johannesburg, 2009); also P. Eric Louw. *The Rise, Fall, and Legacy of Apartheid* (Westport, Conn., 2004).

[3] Philip Roth, *The Plot Against America* (London, 2004), 114.

Roth's observation about historical inevitability has particular salience in the South African present because the end of apartheid, and the victory of the ANC, led by Nelson Mandela, is frequently told in terms of a narrative of resistance and redemption. This book is intended to challenge such assumptions. I neither assume that racial segregation was bound to transmute into the yet harsher version of apartheid, nor take for granted that the African National Congress, led by Nelson Mandela, would eventually overthrow white supremacy. I am sceptical of 'turning points' and alert to paths not taken.

In order to understand apartheid as a complex, protean historical phenomenon, we need to engage as well as to stand back. Serious students of the subject have to refamiliarize themselves with events, individuals, and institutions whose importance once seemed self-evident but are now apt to be forgotten or passed over without comment. At the same time we have to *defamiliarize* apartheid. This requires a deliberate process of distancing so as to render aspects that once seemed obvious and self-evident rather more unusual and curious. As a South African living in Britain, I have had to approach my teaching of apartheid as something of an outsider. While this may have some disadvantages, it also opens up fresh possibilities. I am grateful to many of the students I have taught for forcing me to see my own country in new ways. If the historical past is another country, we are all in a sense visitors and explorers.

When I first came to study in Britain as a doctoral student in the early 1980s, I was part of a group of postgraduates who were concerned to elucidate the working of segregation and apartheid in the hope that this would contribute to its demise. South African history was deeply contested and political commitments could easily be read off the page. One line of academic engagement laid emphasis on the need to break down the view of the South African state as monolithic and all-powerful. Another vital area of investigation was devoted to the study of anti-apartheid struggle and resistance, particularly as seen through the labour movement, within communities, and in political organizations. Overall, there was then a broad balance between those who were interested in the workings of power and those who were concerned with understanding

the predicaments and choices of the majority of people excluded from power.

This balance has shifted in recent years. We now know a great deal more about resistance and the liberation movements than we did in the 1980s. There has been enormous growth in studies of political opposition. Synoptic multi-volume histories including those produced by the South African Democracy Education Trust, as well as the long running *From Protest to Challenge* project so ably steered by Tom Karis, Gwendolen Carter, and Gail Gerhart, have transformed the field. Memoirs by anti-apartheid figures, once known to the general public only—if at all—by name and affiliation, have thickened the historical record, adding texture and personal anecdote. Many new doctoral dissertations have been produced since the 1990s about different aspects and forms of resistance. A host of excellent edited collections have emerged out of conferences dedicated to understanding the anti-apartheid struggle. This book has benefited enormously from such prodigious scholarship.

Conversely, concerns with central state power and ideology during the apartheid era have lagged behind. True, senior scholars like Dan O'Meara and Hermann Giliomee have followed up their earlier path-breaking work on Afrikaner nationalism with major new studies. In addition, there have been fresh overviews of South African economic history produced by scholars like Charles Feinstein and Nicoli Nattrass and Jeremy Seekings. But these are exceptions to a more general rule. In South Africa, as elsewhere, new historical studies of state ideology, power, and political economy have not kept pace with the rise of social and cultural history whose purview has expanded imaginatively into realms that once seemed marginal. What was once a corrective to master narratives has become the norm; popular history 'from below' has in many ways surpassed its staid old antagonist, 'history from above'.

These considerable gains have not come without costs, which include fragmentation of the historical experience and loss of analytical connections. This book represents an effort to reintegrate, in a broad interpretative and synoptic manner, histories of state power and of resistance in South Africa. One important question that seems to me to be insufficiently addressed is not why apartheid was defeated, but how it survived so long. This requires a close understanding of the ways in which the

system of apartheid worked, its sophisticated ideology, and its capacity for adaptation and reinvention. Strategies to ensure compliance and invite effective complicity were integral to apartheid's success in sustaining itself.

Of necessity, this involves close attention to structures of state power as well as the ideologies that sustained such power. Yet ideology is too easily seen as a prefabricated package, and sometimes invoked as an explanation without sufficient examination. Ideologies themselves are dependent on ideas that are often more unsettled and less instrumental than when they are seen to cohere in support of political movements. Ideas that gain traction have lives of their own—and these often cannot simply be remade or shut down. They have distorting effects and generate unintended consequences.

Along with institutions and organizations, ideas feature prominently here. One of the contentions in this book is that 'apartheid' was an idea as well as an ideology. Apartheid became politically compelling to its adherents in the 1940s because the word itself condensed a powerful set of fears and hopes; reciprocally, the fact that the system of racial discrimination and exploitation came to be conveniently expressed in a single word helped the *anti*-apartheid movement, in all its many forms, to coalesce. In 1948, when South Africa was still a full member of the British Commonwealth, the 'apartheid' label distinguished it from several other regimes in Africa based on white minority rule. The idea of apartheid was decisive in ushering the 1948 Afrikaner alliance into power. It gave power and purpose to the apartheid state, but also rendered it vulnerable through the very act of highlighting its exceptionality.

Long after the government stopped actively espousing apartheid ideology, the anti-apartheid movement kept the idea of apartheid alive as a means of focusing the energies of a highly diverse and divided opposition movement. The idea of apartheid imposed limits on its reinvention. It became inseparable from the ruling regime. Above all, the transition to a post-apartheid future entailed removing the legatees of 1948 from political office; the legacy of the apartheid state has proved more resistant to transformation.

Leon Wessels, a long-time National Party politician, has commented perceptively on the offensive word 'apartheid' which in his view helped to turn South Africa's domestic policies into an international issue, rendered the country a pariah, and gave it global significance.[4] Wessels is pictured on the front cover of this book (the young man is the figure in the middle of the trio of white equestrians seated on white police horses, part of a guard of honour attending a speech given by Prime Minister Hendrik Verwoerd to mark the 50th anniversary of the ruling National Party in 1964). Wessels's autobiography traces a personal political journey that culminated in his embrace of human rights and his public apology for apartheid in 1990.

It is unlikely that this book could have been completed without substantial research leave and I am deeply grateful for the award of an AHRC fellowship which took me out of all teaching during 2012. This grant also gave me the opportunity to consult primary material at the Mayibuye Centre at the University of the Western Cape, the Institute for Contemporary History at the University of the Orange Free State, and the Historical Papers collection at the University of the Witwatersrand. I thank the librarians and custodians of these collections, Michele Pickover especially. The African Studies department of the University of Cape Town library has always been very welcoming. I owe a special debt of gratitude to Sue Ogterop, senior librarian at Special Collections, Lesley Hart of the Manuscripts and Archives section, and their colleagues, for support, suggestions, and hospitality.

William Beinart, Jeremy Krikler, and Hilary Sapire all read the draft of this book in its entirety. Their suggestions, recommendations, and objections have been invaluable. Paul Betts, Signe Gosmann, Lindie Koorts, Ian Macqueen, Peter Vale, and Richard Wilson read sections of the manuscript. All made sharp as well as generous comments from which I have learned a great deal. The highly professional OUP editorial production team led by Cathryn Steele and Emma Slaughter, and including Jackie Pritchard and Gail Eaton, was exemplary.

---

[4] Leon Wessels, *Vereeniging: Die Onvoltooide Vrede* (Cape Town, 2010), 65. My father, Neville Dubow, discussed this iconic image by David Goldblatt in the *Vrye Weekblad*, 26 October 1990.

PREFACE

I feel honoured to be able to use images produced by four of South Africa's finest photographers who have together documented apartheid from its very beginnings to its end: Ernest Cole, David Goldblatt, Jürgen Schadeberg, and Paul Weinberg. Without their cameras, apartheid might have looked quite different.

Cape Town, July 2013

CONTENTS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Cover Photo: The commando of National Party stalwarts which escorted prime minister and National Party leader Hendrik Verwoerd and his wife Betsie to the party's 50th anniversary celebrations at de Wildt, Transvaal. October 1964. Photograph by David Goldblatt.

ABBREVIATIONS AND GLOSSARY

AAM	Anti-Apartheid Movement
ANC	African National Congress
APLA	Azanian People's Liberation Army
ARM	African Resistance Movement
AWB	*Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweeging* (resistance movement)
AZACTU	Azanian Confederation of Trade Unions
baaskap	outright domination (boss-ship)
BC	Black Consciousness
BCP	Black Community Programmes
BPC	Black People's Convention
Charterists	supporters of the Freedom Charter
CODESA	Convention for a Democratic South Africa
COSAS	Congress of South African Students
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
CUSA	Council of Unions of South Africa
Dompas	pass-book
DRC	Dutch Reformed Church
FOSATU	Federation of South African Trade Unions
highveld	the elevated interior plateau of the country
MK	*Umkhonto we Sizwe* (Spear of the Nation)

NACTU	National Council of Trade Unions
NUM	National Union of Mineworkers
NUSAS	National Union of South African Students
OAU	Organization of African Unity
oorstrooming	engulfment
PAC	Pan-Africanist Congress
Poqo	armed wing of the Pan-Africanist Congress
SABRA	South African Bureau of Racial Affairs
SACP	South African Communist Party
SAN-ROC	South African Non-Racial Olympic Committee
SASO	South African Students' Organisation
SAYCO	South African Youth Congress
sjambok	animal hide whip
Spro-cas	Study Project on Christianity in Apartheid Society
SWAPO	South West Africa People's Organization
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
tsotsi	hoodlum
TUCSA	Trade Union Council of South Africa
UDF	United Democratic Front
UWUSA	United Workers' Union of South Africa
verkrampte	narrow-minded, hardline
verligte	enlightened or pragmatic
volk	people/nation
ZIPRA	Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army

ZIMBABWE

Beitbridge

BOTSWANA

NAMIBIA

Pietersburg

MOZAMBIQUE

Transvaal

Zeerust

Pretoria

Mafikeng

Soweto

Johannesburg

Potchefstroom

Mbabane

SWAZILAND

Atlantic

Ocean

Orange Free State

Welkom

Upington

Natal

Ulundi

Orange

Kimberley

Bloemfontein

Maseru

Botshabelo

Pietermaritzburg

LESOTHO

Durban

Indian

Ocean

Cape Province

Queenstown

Umtata

Graaff-Reinet

Bisho

Robben Island

Stellenbosch

East London

Mdantsane

Cape Town

Khayelitsha

Grahamstown

Port Elizabeth

▦	Bophutatswana
∷	Ciskei
▨	Gazankulu
▨	KwaZulu
◿	Lebowa
▦	KwaNdebele
░	Qwaqwa
░	Kangwane
✕	Transkei
▤	Venda

0   200km

South Africa, showing black homelands, *c.*1980

Southern African Region, *c.*1980

CHAPTER 1
THE APARTHEID ELECTION, 1948

An Electoral Shock?

'Apartheid' was the electoral slogan which brought radical Afrikaner nationalism to power in South Africa in May 1948. The stunning victory of the *Herenigde Nasionale Party* was almost entirely unanticipated by journalists, politicians, and the public, prompting the question whether the election was lost by the government or won by the opposition.

On the eve of the election Prime Minister Jan Smuts's deputy, J. H. Hofmeyr, recorded privately that his party would maintain or even improve its position.[1] Nationalist leader D. F. Malan was almost as surprised by his victory as his old opponent, Smuts, who suffered the additional humiliation of losing his own seat in the rural heartland of Standerton. In the previous election of 1943, the governing United Party had emerged with double the number of seats of the Nationalists and in 1948 it seemed to be comfortably set to defend its overall parliamentary majority of 25.

How black South Africans viewed the impending change of government is not easy to establish. A mixture of fear and indifference would be a reasonable guess. In his memoir, Albert Luthuli, later president of the ANC, reflected that it was doubtful 'whether anybody realized how significant the election was to be'. 'For most of us Africans, bandied about on the field while the game was in progress and then kicked to one side when the game was won, the election seemed largely irrelevant.'[2] Walking to his Johannesburg lawyers' office on the day the result of the 1948 election was announced, the young ANC leader Oliver Tambo was

confronted by a youth who spat in his face. Tambo interpreted this hostility as a clear statement of the new racial order, noting to himself that it would help to clarify the nature of the enemy.[3]

The surprise of Malan's victory was magnified by the widespread view that Smuts, who towered over South African politics, was unassailable. Though past his political peak and visibly ageing, Smuts still bestrode the political stage. His leadership in the Second World War had proved valuable to the allies, capping a remarkable career as a statesman that stretched back to the First World War and before this to his romantic role commanding guerrilla forces in the South African War of 1899–1902. The crowning moment in Smuts's political life came in 1947 when he hosted the British royal family on their South African tour. This much publicized event was a mark of the personal esteem in which Smuts was held within the Commonwealth. The man of war was also an apostle of international peace. Smuts was the only signatory to the Charter of the new United Nations organization who had also participated in the League of Nations. He helped to draft the inspiring preamble to the United Nations Charter and was largely responsible for the inclusion there of the phrase 'human rights'.

As much as he was revered, the old Boer war hero was also reviled. Afrikaner nationalists charged Smuts with having sold out to capitalist imperialism by siding with Britain in two world wars and for supporting the mining industry against white workers in two bloody strikes. Charismatic, but remote and aloof, Smuts was out of touch with domestic politics. He had made a mistake in assuming that his own people would never turn against him. Hubris proved his undoing.

Although Malan's parliamentary lead over Smuts was just five seats in 1948, a pact secured with the splinter Afrikaner Party led by N. C. Havenga proved sufficient to form a government. In the Senate their majority was just one. The Nationalists' hold on power was tenuous and many considered their victory to be merely a temporary aberration. It was only by virtue of an electoral system favourably biased towards white rural constituencies, where Afrikaner farmers predominated, that the nationalist alliance was in a position to form a government at all: significantly fewer votes were cast for Malan and Havenga (41.2 per

cent) in 1948 than for the opposition United and Labour parties (50.93 per cent).[4]

South Africa's new prime minister, Daniel François Malan, was a stalwart of Cape nationalist politics, a dogged rather than dynamic leader who steered a prudent path between the party's constitutional and authoritarian tendencies. Many Nationalist leaders were known to have been Nazi sympathizers during the war. Those who had fought Hitler's armies in North Africa and the Mediterranean dubbed them the 'Malanazis'.

Aged 74 at his accession to the premiership, Malan at first seemed fazed by his success. He had been a minister in several rural parishes of the Dutch Reformed Church in the Cape before giving this up in 1915 to pursue a political career, initially as founding editor of the Cape's Afrikaans newspaper *Die Burger*. Malan's religious outlook was orthodox and his political views were conservative rather than radical. He was relatively unaffected by the dogmatic neo-Calvinist abstractions that had taken root in centres like Potchefstroom. He disapproved of the young, rigidly ideological extremists based in the Transvaal and viewed their political leader, J. G. Strijdom, with great suspicion.

Malan saw the 1948 election as the providential outcome of a long and bitter political struggle to secure Afrikaner power and to redress the wrongs of British imperialism. Announcing victory, he is said to have proclaimed: 'Today South Africa belongs to us once more. For the first time since Union, South Africa is our own, may God grant that it will always remain our own.'[5] Here Malan was echoing the National Party's campaign 'psalm' which began with the chant: 'Love for what is your own: | Your own nation | Your own citizenship | Your own South Africa.'[6] These sentiments played on the emotional chords which had dominated Afrikaner nationalist political movement for a generation: unity of and pride in the *volk*, Christian-Nationalism, anti-imperialism, and republicanism.

Malan's victory was as much as anything a victory over his own Afrikaner nationalist constituency. It was only since the 1943 election that he had managed to establish himself as Afrikanerdom's unchallenged leader. A recent biographical study portrays Malan as an ageing, reticent politician, who was never in full control of his cabinet and who

was primarily concerned to consolidate Afrikanerdom's historic victory in a rapidly changing world that he scarcely understood.[7] Steeped in the Cape's traditions of coexistence between English- and Afrikaans-speakers, Malan was disinclined to force the divisive issue of republicanism. He understood that a substantial proportion of white South Africans, Afrikaans- as well as English-speaking, continued to value the Commonwealth connection and were suspicious of ultra-nationalism.

Malan's victory exposed the lethargy of the governing United Party and showed that the wartime achievements of Smuts were less substantial than they seemed. Smuts's government could claim some credit for having engineered a successful war economy. The most vigorous economic growth was in secondary industry where the gross value of output (at constant prices) in 1948/9 was twice what it had been in 1938/9. Manufacturing now exceeded agriculture as well as mining as a percentage of GDP.[8] But economic expansion also highlighted long-term imbalances and exacerbated social tensions that the government seemed poorly equipped, even reluctant, to tackle.

Rapid economic growth had done much to erode white poverty—an issue of central importance to the Nationalists—but Smuts's government was ill positioned to profit from this. Rather than assuaging opposition voters, the relatively benign economic and political situation of the post-war era encouraged festering grievances. There was widespread resentment over the unavailability of basic commodities, adequate housing, and delays in finding employment for ex-servicemen. Price inflation stretched the household budgets of many ordinary voters. Consumers complained about the lack of availability of white bread and temporary shortages of meat.

Amongst whites, it was Afrikaners who were most acutely affected by urban poverty, a long-festering problem that the 1932 Carnegie Commission into Poor Whiteism had brought to widespread public notice. Afrikaners constituted around 29 per cent of the urban population in 1910 and 50 per cent in 1936, though they were still heavily outnumbered by English-speakers in cities like Cape Town and Johannesburg. Feelings of inferiority and insecurity pervaded the new Afrikaner arrivals in the cities. A conference organized by the Dutch Reformed Church in 1947 to consider the problems of urban life concluded that as many as

three-quarters of Afrikaners in the cities were working class. A high proportion of this group was poorly educated and insecure.[9] Crucial to the National Party's victory were its electoral breakthroughs in the urban areas of the Witwatersrand. By 1948 there were for the first time as many or more Afrikaners resident in urban than in rural areas.

Ordinary working-class Afrikaners felt doubly vulnerable. On the one hand, they suffered from a deep sense of inferiority as regards English-speakers. On the other, they felt deeply alarmed by the rapidly growing urban African population. Between 1936 and 1951 the proportion of Africans living in cities grew from 17.3 per cent to 27.2 per cent, while in Johannesburg the African population grew by nearly 60 per cent between 1936 and 1946, outnumbering white residents for the first time. Perhaps 100,000 people lived in informal settlements on the city's periphery, with few amenities or services. In East London, in 1950, of 66,000 African residents, 85 per cent were recent migrants from the countryside. A striking feature of this pattern of urbanization was the rising number of African women living in towns and cities.[10] Many of the new African migrants succeeded in 'eluding capture' by the state, in Philip Bonner's striking phrase. Unclear lines of responsibility meant that the jurisdiction of municipalities overlapped uncertainly with the police, the Central Housing Board, and the departments of Justice and Social Welfare.[11] Administrative chaos heightened worries that blacks were living beyond official control.

This sense of lack of order made the authoritarian solution of apartheid highly attractive. It also fed into deep racial anxieties. Fear of the *swart gevaar* (black peril) and of *oorstrooming* (swamping) were well-rehearsed tropes, especially for those whites living a precarious existence in towns and cities. A substantial proportion of the electorate was persuaded that Smuts's deputy and heir apparent, Jan Hofmeyr, was a closet liberal whose actions posed a threat to white supremacy. The wartime government had indeed given strong indications that it would countenance a permanent African presence in the cities—unlike the National Party which insisted on turning back the tide of African urbanization.

During the war years tentative moves had been made by the Smuts government to legalize black trade unions, ease the onerous pass law

system, and improve social welfare and educational provision for Africans. The Nationalists were quick to seize on these reforming measures, half-hearted and inadequate as they were, as dangerous threats to white supremacy. White farmers complained of their inability to compete for labour against the mines and secondary industry. They also resented the continued low price of maize which had been imposed by the government as a war measure.

Key to the success of the Nationalist electoral campaign was its capacity to place the United Party on the defensive. It also managed to deflect attention from the fratricidal politics that had so divided Afrikanerdom during the war years. South Africa's entry into the war in 1939 had split the government, triggering a constitutional crisis that eventuated in the resignation of General Hertzog as prime minister and his replacement by Smuts at the invitation of the Governor-General. Out of office, the Nationalists reconstituted themselves as a reunited *Volksparty* under Malan's leadership.

The pre-eminence of the remodelled National Party was challenged by a number of right-wing paramilitary organizations, the *Ossewabrandwag* in particular, which was overtly sympathetic to the Nazis, rejecting parliamentary politics in favour of a republican *volk* state. In parliament the Nationalists were sniped at by the Nazi-supporting *Nuwe Orde* which briefly existed 1940–3. Holding the ring, or attempting to do so, was the *Afrikaner Broederbond*, a self-selected secretive body composed of the Afrikaner elite. It had started as a cultural organization in 1918 but soon expanded its interests to take a lead in political and social matters too.

By the mid-1940s the *Broederbond* (now numbering around 2,800 members grouped in 180 cells) presided over a dense network of overlapping civic and cultural affiliates centred on the economically powerful northern regions of the country. The *Broederbond* proved highly influential in developing strategies and propaganda to support the achievement of a Christian-National republic under Afrikaner rule. In 1934 the *Broederbond* issued a statement proclaiming the need for Afrikaner domination under its own leadership. Its practical initiatives focused on the need for the *volk* to 'uplift itself': well-executed plans of social mobilization entailed sponsorship of business and insurance organizations, the formation of Afrikaans trade unions, and support for institutions advocating the

principle of self-help. With extensive interests in culture, welfare, educa-
tion, news, sports, and politics, the *Broederbond* created a large number of
front organizations to secure its objectives. Elsewhere, its members were
deputed to influence or establish control of organizations and societies on
which they had representation.

One of the *Broederbond*'s signal successes was to broker an accord in
1942 between the warring *Ossewabrandwag* and the National Party in the
form of a Draft Constitution. This document envisaged a future South
Africa as a Christian-National, Afrikaner-dominated sovereign *volk* state
existing outside of the British empire. Notably, this statement of shared
principle made no mention of 'apartheid', though a commitment to
strict racial segregation, subject to continued availability of African
labour, was tacked on at the end.[12] By 1944 republicanism was no longer
such a divisive factor within Afrikanerdom. With Germany's defeat,
fascism was much less alluring. The *Ossewabrandwag* began to disinte-
grate as a mass organization and therefore diminished as a rival to the
National Party. The relaxation of internecine strife allowed the *Broeder-
bond* to turn its attention more fully to the colour question.

This shift in focus was reflected more broadly in the 1948 election
campaign. The Nationalists deliberately chose to play down their core
republican ambitions, reassured war veterans that they would be cared
for, and desisted from attacks on Jews and English-speakers.[13] Malan's
decision to downplay threats against English as an official language
helped to make the National Party more electable. Its well-organized
and highly motivated party machine concentrated more broadly on the
need to guarantee white supremacy and Christian civilization.

The Nationalists scored heavily as they played up the dangers of black
domination while attacking Smuts's temporizing equivocation and per-
ceived weakness on the colour question. This was a tried and tested
tactic: in the 1929 'black peril' election General Hertzog had secured a
notable victory over Smuts, allowing him to take forward his plans for
racial segregation. In the 1934 election, Malan campaigned on the issue of
'mixed marriages', asserting that ever more rigid boundaries were needed
to protect the virtue and purity of working-class white Afrikaner women.
Racial populism, highlighting fears of miscegenation or *bloedvermenging*,
was a proven vote-winner. The slogan of 'apartheid' was a clever means

of condensing such anxieties since it played both to the fears of ordinary voters and to the ambitions of opinion-forming intellectuals.

The 1948 election campaign was replete with allegations that Smuts and Hofmeyr wanted to 'plough the Afrikaner under', that blacks would take jobs from whites, perhaps even act in supervisory roles over whites.[14] Personalizing such vague threats proved highly effective. As the historian Keith Hancock observes, the Nationalists displayed considerable propaganda flair in producing 'a slogan and two bogeymen'. The first bogey was personified by Smuts's deputy, Jan Hofmeyr, who was vilified as a 'kaffirboetie' or 'friend of the native'; the other bogey embodied a more abstract fear, that of godless Communism. In response to these twin dangers the slogan of 'apartheid' was offered as a panacea.[15]

Nelson Mandela is one of many who cite the ugly electoral slogan 'The Kaffir in his place, the Coolies out the country'.[16] Oddly, no evidence of this slogan has been found in the official record or in newspapers, though it is perfectly possible such sentiments were aired on the hustings. Everyday lived traditions of racism and habits of mind remain to be analysed alongside approved official discourse. Each reinforced the other in South Africa's complex racial order, albeit in ways that require further research and conceptualization.[17] It is difficult to assess whether vernacular fears about the rising tide of colour were expressed with greater intensity or ugliness than had been the case in previous election campaigns. On the one hand, crude outbursts of racial hatred may have been relatively subdued during the election campaign because the promise of apartheid reassured supporters that a solution to the problem of race was at hand. On the other, racial fears may have been heightened at this time as a reaction against the calls for racial equality that were then being expressed externally at the United Nations and domestically by the reinvigorated African National Congress and the Natal and Transvaal Indian Congresses.

During the war years, the ANC became far more vocal in its demands for universal citizen rights for all. A major strike by African mineworkers in 1946, which was brutally put down by the police with the loss of twelve lives, served as a clear indication that blacks' industrial power and demands were increasing. In addition, over 50,000 Africans took part in strike action in the period 1940–5.

The wartime government was concerned by black industrial action and inclined to ascribe much of this to Communist agitation rather than to legitimate grievances.

Most whites did not yet regard black political activity as a direct threat and were not attuned to its significance. Ordinary white voters remained far more absorbed by intra-white ethnic contestation. A parallel wave of strikes in the mines by white workers in 1946 and 1947 seemingly took place in a different moral and political universe from that of the African Mineworkers' Union. The context in which white worker militancy found expression was significantly conditioned by long-standing fears that whites' statutorily protected positions in skilled work-categories were under threat from competition by cheap black labour. Yet the industrial conflict which absorbed white mineworkers did not focus on black workers. Rather, it took the form of an internal struggle for control of the white Mineworkers' Union, which duly fell under the control of radical Afrikaner nationalists in 1948. The takeover was part of a coordinated Afrikaner nationalist effort to organize Afrikaner workers within an ethnically based class alliance. This helped to secure victory for the National Party in 1948 and to sustain it thereafter.[18]

The National Party's official election campaign offered the country a choice between 'integration and national suicide' on the one hand, and apartheid and the 'protection of the pure white race' on the other.[19] Race formed part of the sediment of daily life and was subconsciously present in the fears and anxieties of whites. But neither race nor apartheid was the only issue confronting voters in 1948. According to Giliomee, apartheid policy was a 'relatively minor' aspect of the Nationalists' electoral campaign. Afrikaans newspaper editorials may have highlighted the issue of race, but this concern was not reflected in newspaper letter columns. At least as important was the perception that Afrikaners had been discriminated against by the Smuts administration.[20] Bread-and-butter issues, government incompetence, anti-communism, and a sense that the world was turning against white South Africa, were prominent themes as well.

The use of 'apartheid' in Malan's 1948 campaign certainly proved effective as a means to discomfit the government and unite the opposition. To this extent apartheid was more tactical ploy than coherent

policy. That the Nationalists were unable to define precisely what they meant by apartheid, when challenged to do so, did not detract from the utility of the word. In some ways it made the idea even more effective by allowing many different constituencies to overlook policy contradictions and unite around a vague cure-all. Most significant, as far as the government's supporters were concerned, was the fact that apartheid connoted Afrikaner strength and resolve.

This discussion of the 1948 election modifies several reigning assumptions: first, the Afrikaner nationalist view that Malan's victory marked the natural fulfilment of its political destiny; second, the opposing African nationalist view (supported by much left-wing analysis) that shifts in white politics did not matter all that much given the overall reality of white supremacy; and, third, the notion that the 1948 election was entirely about apartheid.

Apartheid

A neologism coined in a newly minted language, 'apartheid' translates as 'apartness' or 'separateness'. In addition to denoting spheres of physical and social demarcation it carries with it a sense of moral or spiritual imperative. The apartheid concept first emerged in the context of discussions by Dutch Reformed Church missionaries in the 1930s, only gaining wider political currency in the 1940s. In 1943 the authoritative Cape Afrikaner newspaper *Die Burger* referred to apartheid as 'the accepted Afrikaner viewpoint'. The following year, Malan, as leader of the opposition, deployed it for the first time in the South African parliament. Later in 1944, Malan explained that apartheid was not the same as the existing policy of segregation which denoted separation in the sense of 'fencing off'. Instead, he characterized apartheid in more positive, totalizing terms, as a policy designed to 'give the various races the opportunity of uplifting themselves on the basis of what is their own'.[21]

It was only around the 1948 election campaign that apartheid moved beyond the arcane discussion groups of the policy-making intelligentsia and came under sustained public scrutiny. At the start of the campaign the *Cape Argus* dismissed apartheid as a vote-catching device

which, if implemented, would 'involve all South Africa in economic ruin'.[22] In similar vein, Harry Lawrence, a leading government minister, dismissed Malan's policy as a damp squib, predicting that at a time of full employment (for whites) voters would have no truck with apartheid's abstruse and impracticable proposals.[23] The historian Arthur Keppel-Jones opined that the substitution of apartheid for segregation was a psychological curiosity since they amounted to the same thing. It was akin to changing an old trade name for a new one in order 'to take the fancy of the consumer. Same firm, same product, new label.'[24] This, it turned out, was an underestimation.

Despite urgent calls for clarification, the new government was cautious about explaining precisely what apartheid entailed or how theory would be translated into action. It was apparent to all that apartheid would be far more systematic and stringent than the existing policy of segregation. But how, and to what extent?

Institutional racial segregation had been government policy since the creation of the Union of South Africa in 1910. Its roots went back to the mid-nineteenth century and for many historians well before that time. The landmark segregationist package of 1936 effectively ended any hopes that blacks in South Africa might gain franchise rights and removed the vote from those Africans in the Cape who had previously qualified (10,628, 2.5 per cent of the Cape electorate). The 1936 legislation restricted black landownership to specified 'native reserves' which were held in trust by the government. These were envisaged in 1936 to be expanded to around 13 per cent of the country from a little less than 8 per cent at the time of the 1913 Natives Land Act.

It has often been claimed that, as a result of colonial conquest and racial segregation, 87 per cent of South Africa's land came to be owned by whites, who only constituted around 15 per cent of the population. This 'narrative of dispossession' is misleading. In the first place, neither landownership nor demography was ever fixed in time. Secondly, the figure of land in white ownership includes urban areas as well as national parks and takes no account of unproductive agricultural areas of the country or of regional variations.[25] Nevertheless, the stark inequality of land ownership and wealth along racial lines is undeniable. At the time of the 1936 Native Trust and Land Act it was broadly accepted that

environmentally depleted communal reserves were already wholly inadequate to support rurally based Africans. Part of the promise of the 1936 legislation was to maintain existing land 'in trust' for Africans and, gradually, to expand it.

Another important dimension of racial segregation was to consolidate racial hierarchies in the urban areas. Prior to 1948, Africans were subject to many laws restricting their occupational rights in an effort to ensure that skilled work was restricted to whites. Blacks' spatial mobility was governed by a range of onerous pass laws, which proceeded from the assumption that Africans should not be allowed to live in 'white' towns and cities unless in paid employment. In the rural reserves, where Africans were supposed to live under 'tribal' conditions, they were ruled by proclamations issued by the Native Affairs Department. The Governor-General was deemed to be 'supreme chief' of all natives. Blacks were seriously disadvantaged in respect of social amenities, such as education, health, and welfare.

The continuities between the age of racial segregation and the age of apartheid are so clear that, in the view of many analysts, apartheid was not so much a departure as the entrenchment of an existing racial order. This view does not take into account the extent to which the segregationist compact of 1936 was under pressure a decade later. The war effort and the war economy had made all too plain that segregation was a ramshackle system, full of inconsistencies, and in many cases in retreat. Segregation was plainly unable to cope with the social needs and political demands of Africans whose presence in the cities could no longer easily be controlled.

Smuts had himself suggested in 1942 that segregation had 'fallen upon evil days', a comment that was widely interpreted to mean support for liberal reforms (but which he proved disinclined to act upon in practice). The urgent question in 1948 was whether apartheid was something wholly new or whether it was merely a new term for segregation. Did apartheid mean an attempt to remodel segregation along new, stricter lines? Did it imply an end to, or a modification of, the system of African migrant labour upon which white industry was by now wholly dependent?

Speaking in the Senate in 1948, Dr Verwoerd denied that apartheid was a policy of 'total' segregation or that it had been fraudulently sold to the electorate: apartheid was an ideal but the government accepted that it was not practicable.[26] In an open letter to an American churchman in 1954, Dr Malan reprised the views he had articulated since 1948. Apartheid, he explained, was in essence the traditional racial policy practised since the beginnings of European settlement over 300 years. It expressed 'the deep-rooted colour consciousness of the white South Africans'. This consciousness was itself the 'physical manifestation of the contrast between two irreconcilable ways of life, between barbarism and civilization, between heathenism and Christianity'. It was conditioned by the overwhelming demographic imbalance between blacks and whites.

Malan also insisted that apartheid was 'a positive and non-repressive policy' based on the Afrikaner's divine calling and his privilege to convert the heathen to Christianity without obliterating his national identity. In theory apartheid could only be achieved by dividing the country into two states with whites in one and blacks in the other. But Malan acknowledged that full implementation of the policy would take 'very many years'. It was an 'experiment which is as yet only in its initial stages'.[27]

This, then, was the way in which apartheid was publicly presented by the first Nationalist parliament: as a more rigorous, methodical, and fair application of age-old principles of racial segregation; as the most effective manner of guaranteeing the security of white, Christian civilization; and as an ideal to be worked towards with benefits accruing to blacks as well as whites. The message to ordinary white voters was clear: white supremacy and established racial boundaries would be maintained at all costs.

Beyond the public gaze much speculative work had already been done in respect of the idea of apartheid—though it was by no means clear that the opportunity would arise to put such nostrums into practice. In the decade leading up to 1948 a number of important interventions were made on the theory of apartheid. An influential series of books written by the Pretoria University sociologist Geoff Cronjé (two of which feature 'apartheid' in the title) were conceived as a comprehensive solution of South Africa's racial problems. The South African Bureau of Racial Affairs (SABRA), a dedicated study group composed mainly of Stellenbosch

University intellectuals, was formed in 1948 with the backing of the *Afrikaner Broederbond.* A year earlier, Dr Malan appointed a commission, chaired by the senior politician Paul Sauer, to formulate apartheid policies suitable for adoption by a Nationalist government.

The Sauer Commission was in part intended to forestall the Native Laws Commission on African urbanization, appointed by Smuts in 1946 and chaired by Judge Henry Fagan. These rival reports shaped the respective platforms of the government and the opposition in the ensuing election. They provide a useful way into understanding the political alternatives entertained by the two leading white political parties of the day. The Fagan Commission accepted African urbanization as a fact and recommended adapting the pass laws and migrant labour system to recognize the reality of racial interdependence in the economy (in 1948 the proportion of white employees employed in industry was 34 per cent and in decline).[28] By contrast, the Sauer Commission looked to a more comprehensive solution to the native question along the lines of 'total segregation'. For this reason, the Sauer Commission has often been viewed as a blueprint for the apartheid system.

In fact, the differences between the two Commissions were more a matter of emphasis than underlying intent. Both assumed the need to maintain white supremacy. The Fagan Commission sought to reform the existing segregationist system by making it more flexible. Sauer sought to buttress and extend segregation wherever possible in order to render racial policy more consistent and uncompromising. On the crucial issue of labour, neither report envisaged a rapid end to the system of oscillating African migrancy from the countryside: Fagan sought to reduce dependence on temporary migrants by allowing African families to settle permanently in white cities and to ease influx control; Sauer opted to maintain the migrant labour system so as to prevent this outcome, insisting that Africans could only be temporarily resident in urban areas and that their real homes should remain in the rural 'reserves'.

The Sauer Report is better seen as a reflection of many different voices and interest groups within Afrikaner nationalism than as a coherent statement. It should thus be understood as part of the process of creating an Afrikaner discourse about race and as part of a more general effort to

mobilize and unify the *volk* around an agreed agenda. Sauer's Report emerged through careful soliciting of Afrikaner views: 5,000 circulars were sent out to opinion-formers—academics, politicians, and knowledgeable experts—generating 500 responses. These were then distilled into policies.[29]

Deborah Posel has argued that the Sauer Report was internally contradictory and fundamentally ambiguous. It gave voice both to purists who envisaged apartheid as a form of total segregation, and to pragmatists who considered that full apartheid was not feasible, or whose direct material interests would be compromised by the loss of access to African labour.[30] This interpretation presupposes that the Sauer Report was *intended* to offer a clear and unambiguous statement. An alternative reading would see its real purpose as bringing together different ideological strands within Nationalist thinking—secular as well as religious, racist, and ethno-culturalist—into mutual dialogue. Viewed in this way, the Sauer Report was an important step towards creating an Afrikaner consensus around apartheid; it was by no means a clear or unambiguous formula intended for implementation.

Two modestly sized files in the possession of the new Minister of Native Affairs, E. G. Jansen, are perhaps a better guide to government thinking in 1948. These comprise views either solicited or selected by the incoming government. They include advice on a range of topics, including those from old administrative hands with experience of segregation such as E. N. Braadvedt, ruminating on his Natal days, and E. G. Stubbs, author of the 1924 segregationist pamphlet *Tightening Coils*.[31] There are also submissions from younger men seeking preferment like S. J. van der Walt, who boasted a doctorate on the topic of segregation, and C. M. Hulley from Ixopo.[32] In response to an official request, A. M. Lewin-Robinson of the South African Public Library recommended a number of key texts relevant to apartheid, including writings by Geoff Cronjé, A. C. Cilliers, Margaret Ballinger, and Alfred Hoernlé. The overall picture is of a department rapidly having to formulate and condense policy, albeit without much clear direction and with limited expertise.

Of greater importance, given the authors and the scope of their submissions, are the detailed memoranda from men of current influence.

Dominee J. G. Strydom of the Dutch Reformed mission church (see below) argued for a practical, Christian solution based on three or four extensive 'black provinces' in which Africans would acquire full citizenship rights. N. J. van Warmelo, the ethnologist based within the Native Affairs Department, proposed an enhanced form of self-government founded on the existing 'tribal system'. W. W. M. Eiselen, the Stellenbosch anthropology professor who was soon to become Verwoerd's key adviser as secretary of the Native Affairs Department, sent a detailed eleven-page policy document grounded in the promotion of 'Bantu culture'. As Eiselen would continue to maintain throughout his career, the overlap of intellectual abilities across racial groups meant that putative genetic capacity was not a reliable basis for constructing a policy of apartheid. The only 'sane, unbiased and honest policy' was one that aimed at separation and 'self-realisation' as the 'ultimate goal'. This entailed an urgent programme to rehabilitate the existing reserves, though it would be premature to 'seek a final formula' at this stage.[33]

The submissions by Strydom, Eiselen, and Van Warmelo are commensurate with the view that apartheid, in 1948, was being presented as an ambitious and idealistic plan, one that was based above all on Afrikaner traditions and experience. Yet, there is little hint of the detailed, doctrinaire policies that would emerge a decade later. A strong sense of caution and pragmatism is evident, not least in the short four-point internal memorandum on policies set out by D. F. Malan on 2 September 1948. Here it was argued that, given the inadequacy of the 1936 segregationist legislation as a 'solution', separation in social, residential, and political and industrial spheres was desirable. But total territorial separation was not yet judged to be practical. A small number of whites would have to remain in African areas, just as the requisite number of Africans would continue to be present in white areas.[34]

Afrikaner Nationalism

Although apartheid was a theory about how to treat blacks, it was in the first instance a theory that emerged out of discussions about the special nature and God-given tasks of Afrikaners. Its key policies were almost entirely foreshadowed by racial segregation in pre-1948 South Africa, and

indeed, in much of British settler Africa. To this extent it was more than just a reworked solution to the age-old problem of how to reconcile the competing needs and desires of whites and blacks. What was novel was its presentation as the distinctive product of Afrikaner thought.

By 1948 several convergent strands of thought around the apartheid idea were evident. Underpinning them was a much mythologized argument from history. According to this interpretation apartheid was the logical and inescapable outcome of 300 years of ongoing struggle in South Africa. During this time Afrikaners had constantly to defend their physical and cultural integrity in order to prevent themselves from being 'ploughed under'. Their resistance to British domination had led them to *trek* beyond the colonial boundaries of the Cape colony in the mid-nineteenth century. Heroic Afrikaner pioneers established themselves in the interior which, it was fallaciously claimed, was largely empty and devoid of indigenous inhabitants.

The very term 'Afrikaner' signalled a desire on the part of Nationalists to identify as white Africans, torchbearers of Christian civilization drawn together by a unique culture and calling. The African tribes encountered by the Boers were often hostile and it was only through feats of stubborn fortitude and by the grace of God that they overcame constant threats to their existence—as the defeat of the vastly more numerous Zulu warriors at Blood River in 1838 so vividly showed. As farmers or 'boers', they were productive workers of the land who possessed an instinctive understanding of the country's land and its peoples.

According to nationalist history, by then widely taught in Afrikaans schools and universities, the combined forces of British imperialism and capitalism in the nineteenth century subjected Boers to a range of injustices which threatened their traditional way of life and imposed foreign forms of rule. Greed and rapacity, evidenced by the desire to gain control of the country's mineral wealth, caused heightened conflict and the catastrophe of the South African War. Farm burnings laid waste the country and thousands of women and children died in military concentration camps. From the start of the twentieth century, enforced Anglicization threatened to overwhelm Afrikaners' distinct culture and language. Industrialization and urbanization were a further blight. In the alien environment of the cities, ordinary Afrikaners were mired in

poverty and vulnerable to competition in the labour market from cheap African labour. In these conditions, spiritual and bodily degradation was represented as a constant threat.

This narrative of national suffering and redemptive resistance to oppression suffused Afrikaner nationalist historiography at the time. It was given new force from the start of the twentieth century as the experience of urban poverty, social fragmentation, and spiritual confusion, gave rise to a generalized sense of alienation and loss. During the depression years of the 1930s the Dutch Reformed Church became increasingly closely involved with the amelioration of Afrikaner urban and rural poverty. The landmark Carnegie Commission into Poor Whiteism, which reported in 1932, had close links to the Dutch Reformed Church.

M. E. Rothmann, organizing secretary of the ACVV (Afrikaans Christian Women's Society), contributed the section of the Carnegie Report on impoverished mothers and daughters within the family. Philanthropy and social work, often closely tied to localized church activity, provided an important avenue for women activists to help define the concept of the *volksmoeder* in public discourse.[35] As the Afrikaner nationalist movement began to mobilize politically around the issue of poverty, and sought to resolve these socio-economic problems at the level of state action, so members of the Dutch Reformed Church and organizations like the ACVV became more closely politically aligned with the broader nationalist movement.

As well as socially engaged action, the Afrikaans churches provided fertile ground for new theological ideas linked to the need to maintain racial and ethnic boundaries. Consensus was difficult to achieve. When a national policy of racial segregation was presented to the electorate in the 1920s, the Dutch Reformed Church, although temperamentally supportive of segregation in practice, was disinclined to lend unequivocal endorsement to segregation at the level of national politics. Its hesitancy was conditioned by ideological schisms between hardline clergymen who wanted to entrench segregation and moderates who favoured partial differentiation, protection, and gradual 'upliftment' of blacks.[36] Differences of opinion on the relationship between church and state were also in evidence. Unanimity was in any case difficult to achieve because the