

Review Article:

War and the formation of Afrikaner nationalism

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DF Malan and the rise of Afrikaner Nationalism

Lindie Koorts

(Tafelberg, Cape Town, 2014, ISBN: 978-0-62405-587-7, 466 pp.)

Jan Smuts: Unafraid of greatness

Richard Steyn

(Jonathan Ball, Jeppestown, 2015, ISBN: 978-1-86842-694-2, 278 pp.)

Verwoerd: Architect of Apartheid

Henry Kenney

(Jonathan Ball, Jeppestown, 2016, ISBN: 978-1-86842-716-1, 320 pp.)

Abstract

There is a tendency in writing histories of South Africa's past to concentrate on the colour issue. However, doing so often leads to myths and polarisation as sources are not interrogated beyond the superficial. The publication of three books within a short space of time on Malan, Smuts and Verwoerd respectively, men influential in determining white South Africa's identity provides an opportunity to explore the formation of Afrikaner nationalism and the impact it had on the development of South Africa as a nation. In the ninety years under discussion, South Africa was caught up in four major wars, all acting as a catalyst for change, uniting and dividing the people.

Keywords: DF Malan; Jan Smuts; HF Verwoerd; Afrikaner; Nationalism.

Introduction

During the last century, three wars were instrumental in defining South African society and establishing the ideal of Afrikaner nationalism. The Second Anglo-Boer (South African) War 1899-1902, the Great War 1914-1918 and the Second World War 1939-1945. One man, Jan Christian Smuts,

was to play a major part in all three, another, Daniel Francois (DF) Malan, although initially on the side-line became more prominent with the end of each, whilst a third, Hendrik Frensch (HF) Verwoerd was a child of the first, came to prominence after the third war and saw the start of the fourth. He was a foreigner, not South African born. A fourth man, not the focus of this paper but one who cannot be excluded, JBM Hertzog¹ was Smuts' contemporary, taking an active part in the 1899 war and opposing South African involvement in the First World War. He died in 1942 during the Second World War, aged 76.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, Afrikaner nationalism as a concept and political ideology gained momentum as the two Boer republics of the Free State and the Transvaal felt more threatened by the encroachment of British imperialism. Yet, it was only after the Second Boer War of 1899-1902 that a coherent Afrikaner nationalism was really identifiable.² The physical manifestation of it was the formation of the National Party in February 1914 by James Barry Munich Hertzog after he had been left out of Louis Botha's reconstituted Union cabinet in 1912.

An event preceding the 1899 war, the Jameson Raid of December 1895, was instrumental in Jan Smuts' journey as a nationalist – in this case, recognising his Afrikaans identity as a significant factor in his politics. Horrified at the implications of the Jameson Raid and Cecil Rhodes' involvement, Smuts moved north to the Zuid Afrikaansche Republiek (South African Republic), known as the Transvaal. Here, as Paul Kruger's Attorney General, Smuts participated in the Second Anglo-Boer War (South African or 1899-1902 War) initially assisting the administration but later, when the fighting became more mobile, leading a commando into the Cape Colony to rally support from the Cape Afrikaners, of whom DF Malan was one. Malan, however, was not in South Africa. A few years younger than Smuts, he had taken the opportunity to travel to Holland to undertake theological studies.³ Hertzog had returned from his studies in Holland and settled in the Free State as a lawyer. Verwoerd's family moved to South Africa from the Netherlands in the post Second Anglo-Boer War period when the young HF was two years old. The family relocated it is said because of an affinity with the Boers and so that

1 The most recent biography on JBM Hertzog appears to be that of Oswald Pirow, *JBM Hertzog* (London, George Allen & Unwin, 1958). The most authoritative work being that of CM van den Heever, *JBM Hertzog* (Johannesburg, ARB Bookstore 1946 (Afrikaans version 1943)).

2 L Koorts, *DF Malan and the rise of Afrikaner Nationalism* (Tafelberg, Cape Town, 2014), p. 40.

3 L Koorts, *DF Malan and the rise of Afrikaner Nationalism...*, p. 22.

Verwoerd senior could follow his desire to work as a missionary. The family initially resided in the English-dominant Cape where being in a minority, Afrikaner identity developed.⁴

In the year World War 1 broke out, the Verwoerd family moved to Southern Rhodesia where HF attended secondary school until 1917 when the family returned to the Union. Kenney marks the Verwoerd years in Rhodesia as a grounding for HF's Afrikaner nationalism.⁵ Here again, being a minority and marked as different due to language and beliefs, young HF achieved accidentally against all odds – not unlike the young Jan Smuts in Stellenbosch and DF Malan and Hertzog in Europe. All four were educated in languages not their home tongue, languages including English, Dutch, French and German. All four experienced education systems outside of their home countries, adopted or otherwise. They knew what it was like to be a minority in an alien environment.

The Verwoerd family's return to South Africa in 1917 saw them settle in Brandfort in the Free State, later to be the "prison" of Winnie Mandela in the 1960s once Nelson had been incarcerated on Robben Island (Mandela). From Brandfort, HF went to Stellenbosch where he, like Smuts, Hertzog and Malan before him, planned to study theology. Verwoerd's path took him into the fields of psychology and sociology, Smuts and Hertzog into law while only Malan ended up following his path to a religious qualification and calling. All four men were deeply influenced by their religious beliefs which consciously or not impacted on their policies as politicians and prime ministers. Of the four, the only one to regularly attend church was Malan, invariably because he was in the pulpit.

Education: The impact of Stellenbosch

The four men were all graduates of Stellenbosch Victoria College, proximity being the main reason for their studying there. Hertzog graduated in 1889 with a BA, Smuts received a BA in Literature and Science in 1891, Malan obtained a BA in Music and Science in 1895, whilst Verwoerd enrolled in 1919 obtaining an MA in 1922 and completing his doctoral dissertation in 1924.⁶ Verwoerd remained in Stellenbosch becoming an academic initially,

4 H Kenney, *Verwoerd: Architect of Apartheid* (Jonathan Ball, Jeppestown, 2016), pp. 10, 59.

5 H Kenney, *Verwoerd: Architect of Apartheid...*, pp. 10, 61.

6 H Kenney, *Verwoerd: Architect of Apartheid...*, p. 10.

in the field of psychology but later, in 1932 he became the first professor of Sociology when that subject was introduced. After their initial stint at Stellenbosch, Smuts went on to study law at Cambridge in Britain where he became the first person to complete the Tripos in one year and Malan went to Holland to study theology at Utrecht. Only Verwoerd completed his post-degree studies within South Africa following which he spent a year in Germany at Hamburg, Leipzig and Berlin, having rejected a substantial bursary funded by the Imperialist Abe Bailey to study in Oxford.⁷ Hertzog had gone abroad to Holland to study Law.

The main language of instruction in Stellenbosch was English, even in the Dutch Reformed Church according to Oswald Pirow.⁸ Despite, or in spite of, this Stellenbosch was to become the intellectual stronghold for Afrikaner nationalism. But before that, it had been one of the principal nurseries of the *taal* or language movement.⁹ The two main white languages in southern Africa were English and Dutch, although a local derivative of the latter was to develop called Afrikaans. By 1906, moves were afoot to replace Dutch with Afrikaans as an official language, setting the Afrikaners as an independent cultural group, severing ties with the European continent and directly associating with Africa, in effect becoming a micro-nation.¹⁰ Malan was strongly involved in this movement, together with others forming the *Afrikaanse Taal Vereniging* in Stellenbosch during 1906. He was also to deliver various speeches encouraging the acceptance of Afrikaans, albeit that some were delivered in Dutch.¹¹ Eventually, with Hertzog as Prime Minister, Afrikaans was accepted as one of South Africa's two official languages through Act 8 of 1925. Of the four men, the only one not to engage with supporting Afrikaans as a recognised language whilst at Stellenbosch was Hertzog.

Whilst also at Stellenbosch, both Smuts and Malan were active in the Student Union Debating Society, Smuts being instrumental in easing Malan's entry into the society in 1889.¹² Verwoerd joined the Student Representative Council becoming chairman in 1923. He also participated in the various debating societies with the Debating Society being the nursery of Afrikaner nationalist ideology.¹³ In 1888, Smuts responded to an address by Cecil John

7 H Kenney, *Verwoerd: Architect of Apartheid...*, p. 61.

8 O Pirow, *JBM Hertzog...*, p. 15.

9 H Kenney, *Verwoerd: Architect of Apartheid...*, p. 62; C vd Heever. 1953. *JBM Hertzog*. p. 28.

10 W Maathai, *The challenge for Africa* (UK, Heinemann, 2009), p. 185.

11 L Koorts, *DF Malan and the rise of Afrikaner Nationalism...*, p. 62.

12 R Steyn, *Jan Smuts: Unafraid of greatness* (Jonathan Ball, Jeppestown, 2015), p. 11.

13 H Kenney, *Verwoerd: Architect of Apartheid...*, p. 64.

Rhodes, Prime Minister of the Cape Colony, echoing the need for a United South Africa following an earlier debate calling for Afrikaans to be given equal status to English.¹⁴ Malan's first debate concerned the purchase of Cape farms by foreign syndicates and the impact this would have on the colony. It was anti-capitalist and against the importation of outside labour, which for Malan was the natural consequence of foreign ownership of the farms.¹⁵

The language issue and economic security came to the fore. For Malan and Verwoerd, the language issue was linked to Afrikaner nationalism; they were inseparable. However, for Hertzog, and indirectly Smuts, the two issues were separate. Hertzog was ambivalent towards the "patriot *taalbeweging*" (language movement) but eventually saw the Afrikaans language developing alongside a united South African nationalism in what he called a dual-stream policy – initially outside the British Empire. Smuts saw something similar – although within the British Empire. All were comfortable in both the Dutch and English languages, Smuts writing to his wife Issie and other friends in Dutch whilst all other correspondence, including government business, was in English. Hertzog's fiancé wrote to him in English despite both being Boer.¹⁶ Economic security was considered on two levels: remaining within the British Empire and more locally safeguarding the white Afrikaner from the "black fear" (*swart gevaar*) in all its forms.

A hardening of views

On 26 December 1895, the Jameson Raid took place. Smuts, who had left for Cambridge University, soon after completing his Stellenbosch studies, arrived back in time for this event. During his time in England, he had promoted South African Union, visualising an "Afrikaner led empire in Southern Africa stretching from Table Bay to the Zambezi" and believed the divide between Englishmen and Afrikaners to be religion.¹⁷ On his return to the Cape, he joined the Afrikaner Bond which stood for Afrikaner-English unity and gave an address on the topic supporting Cecil Rhodes at the request of *Onze* Jan Hofmeyer in Kimberley in October. Despite having been warned by Olive Schreiner not to trust Rhodes,¹⁸ Smuts saw the latter's involvement in the

14 R Steyn, *Jan Smuts: Unafraid of greatness...*, p. 11

15 L Koorts, *DF Malan and the rise of Afrikaner Nationalism...*, p. 12.

16 O Pirow, *JBM Hertzog...*, pp. 15-16.

17 R Steyn, *Jan Smuts: Unafraid of greatness...*, p. 14.

18 R Steyn, *Jan Smuts: Unafraid of greatness...*, p. 17.

raid as such a betrayal that Smuts renounced his British citizenship, and left the Cape for the Transvaal soon becoming Attorney General in the Kruger Government where he worked to stamp out corruption.

Malan was just finishing at Stellenbosch in 1895. In his debate earlier that year, his “characterisation of the Afrikaners was ambiguous”. He appealed to the members of his audience as members of the same nation “whether this country be our adopted country, or our native land”.¹⁹ However, the raid moved Malan to a more pro-Afrikaner position, sympathising with the Transvaal. He had always distrusted Rhodes and this betrayal of the “settled white population” was far-reaching. It led to divides between the English and Afrikaans/Dutch speaking peoples, who until that time had seen very little difference between themselves. After completing his studies in Stellenbosch where his debating contributions tended to have an economic focus, Malan moved to Europe in September 1900 to continue his theological studies in Utrecht as the Second Anglo-Boer War raged on. Smuts, at this time, was finding his way into the military to lead a raid into the Cape Colony. Hertzog too, assumed a military role in the 1899 war, siding with the Boers in the Free State. Although not supporting the Afrikaans language specifically, being more comfortable with Dutch, he was a strong supporter of Afrikaners whom he felt should not be swamped by the English. He had arrived at his position from a more scientific legalistic approach which was closer to Malan’s economic arguments than Smuts’.²⁰

The 1899-1902 war brought Smuts and General Louis Botha together, a relationship which became a friendship and political partnership which lasted until Botha’s death in August 1919. In 1904 the two men formed the Het Volk Party which stood for an end to restrictions on the Dutch language, the advancement of self-government, a halt to Chinese labour and to improve relations with the English.²¹ The formation of the party and its manifesto was in direct response to British High Commissioner Lord Milner’s attempts to anglicise the old Transvaal Republic. Smuts’ concern at the “growing power of foreign capital” in the region eventually led him to push for union between the four colonies. This was finally achieved in 1909 when the Act of Union was passed authorising the Union to come into being on 31 May 1910.

19 As in DFM 1/1/108, DF Malan, *Eerste debat*, quoted by Koorts, p. 12.

20 CM van den Heever, *JBM Hertzog...*, pp. 27, 32.

21 R Steyn, *Jan Smuts: Unafraid of greatness...*, p. 45.

The years of the Union and its involvement in the two World Wars was to see a defining of Afrikaner nationalisms and a struggle between them which continued to evolve after the introduction of the Apartheid policy in 1948. Initially the struggle was between the ideas epitomised by Smuts and Hertzog, soon followed by a clash between Hertzog and Malan and then between Malan and Verwoerd. Whilst Smuts (Botha) and Hertzog tended to regard South Africa as a whole, the ideological struggle between the nationalist leaders was initially regional, in the main Cape vs Transvaal or Free State. It was Verwoerd's move from the Cape to the Transvaal in support of JG Strijdom's Afrikaner nationalism which wrought a change and hardening of attitudes.²² The impact of the two World Wars and South Africa's involvement, supporting the British Empire, exacerbated and emphasised the differences in ideologies often causing ructions in areas where reconciliation had been progressed. The situations Smuts, Hertzog, Malan and Verwoerd found themselves in during these years determined their individual responses to the issue of Afrikaner nationalism and in their leadership capacities influenced the stand their respective political parties took on the matter.

Protectionism

One of the significant factors which led to a clarification of what Afrikaner nationalism meant for each of the four men concerned protectionism. For Smuts, as noted earlier, the formation of Het Volk in 1904 was to prevent the influence of foreign investment and settlement on the peoples of South Africa. In particular, this was the protection of the white communities although he was to argue that allowing other cultural groups into the area would increase the challenge of finding solutions to the already complex colour issues South Africa was facing. Malan's protectionism focused on economics and protection of the poor white specifically, whilst Verwoerd strove to protect the position of the white Afrikaner in a world which was becoming more complex and integrated.

The challenge in protecting the white communities within southern Africa and later the Union in effect became one of finding common ground between English- and Afrikaans-speakers. The unity between the language groups had been eroded in the years before the Jameson Raid and destroyed by the 1899 war. Finding common ground and ways to reconcile the two groups drove Smuts and Botha in their endeavours. Economics and the subsequent

²² H Kenney, *Verwoerd: Architect of Apartheid...*, pp. 12-13.

inequalities suffered by the white Afrikaner as a minority group which was struggling to preserve its identity proved the greatest challenge and resulted in the two Het Volk leaders amending many of their plans so that they could remain in power, particularly once the party renamed itself the South Africa Party (SAP) and won the 1907 general election. For Malan, not being in power, defending the rights and fighting to improve the position of the poor white Afrikaner was easier and more straightforward; evidenced in the nature of the newspaper articles he contributed and the later editorials he wrote as head of *De Burger*. He believed that in uncertain times, economic and cultural protections were necessary. He saw “the *uitlanders* (foreigners) in the Transvaal as an ominous warning of things to come”.²³ This had been reinforced following his ordination as a Dutch Reformed Minister on 29 July 1905. The role brought him into contact with the poor Afrikaner in the Cape and strengthened his position on Afrikaner nationalism and protectionism.²⁴

Malan’s nationalism around protecting the poor white Afrikaner was closely linked with language. In 1896, he wrote in the Union Debating Society Journal that “No tie binds a nation so firmly to its own traditions as the study of its history ... The other and equally important factor in the preservation of the nationality is the preservation of the language”. This statement divided him from the SA League which although it stood for the promotion of the Afrikaans language was pro-Britain.²⁵ In line with this thinking around “cultural pluralism”, his preference had been for a federation of the colonies where each would be separate but together as opposed to union where everything was brought together.²⁶ Malan further saw a clear link between patriotism and religion, a philosophy which was strong in Utrecht in the late 19th century.²⁷ This did not mean that he believed religion should influence politics. Despite being linked, they had their own remits.²⁸

Due to Malan’s emphasis on the poor white Afrikaner, Smuts and Botha were forced to reconsider some of their policies. This became a political divide when Malan joined the National Party formed by Hertzog in February 1914. Hertzog’s formation of the National Party resulted from his split with Botha in 1912 when the latter left him, Hertzog, out of a reshuffled cabinet

23 L Koorts, *DF Malan and the rise of Afrikaner Nationalism...*, p. 13.

24 L Koorts, *DF Malan and the rise of Afrikaner Nationalism...*, p. 53.

25 L Koorts, *DF Malan and the rise of Afrikaner Nationalism...*, p. 18.

26 L Koorts, *DF Malan and the rise of Afrikaner Nationalism...*, p. 45.

27 L Koorts, *DF Malan and the rise of Afrikaner Nationalism...*, p. 15.

28 L Koorts, *DF Malan and the rise of Afrikaner Nationalism...*, pp. 38-40.

due to his outspokenness against SAP policies and the SAP's support of the British Empire. Although Hertzog formed the National Party, he was not an Afrikaner nationalist in the same way Malan and Verwoerd were. This was noticeable in Hertzog's decision to form the Pact or Fusion Government with Smuts' South African Party in 1934 to deal with the economic crisis brought about by the Great Depression and remaining on the Gold Standard. Hertzog conceded forcing a republic outside the British empire and commonwealth, as obtaining the Empire's recognition of the Balfour Declaration of 1926 which acknowledged that each of the dominions was autonomous in its own right and could determine its future involvement if Britain went to war.²⁹ For Hertzog, South Africa had consolidated its position in the world, reinforced in 1931 with the Statute of Westminster which allowed the dominions authority over their own legislation. Smuts was satisfied as the Union remained within the British Empire.

A year before the Balfour Declaration, in 1925 Afrikaans replaced Dutch and was finally recognised as one of the two official languages in South Africa. This was achieved with Hertzog as Prime Minister. For Hertzog recognition of Afrikaans as an official language was more for political expediency than a belief in the importance of the language. Pressure by his 'Young Turks' – Malan et al – had led to changes in the constitution to bring about the language change.³⁰ Hertzog's alliance with Smuts' South Africa Party (SAP) in 1932 to deal with the impact of the Great Depression led Malan to demonstrate his adherence to Afrikaner nationalism and support of the Afrikaner and poor white by redefining the National Party.³¹

A year after the Balfour Declaration, 1927, the flag issue helped cement the divide between Empire and non-Empire supporters. Malan preached unity between English and Afrikaans in order to achieve his purpose: to rid the country of the Union Jack which excluded Afrikaners. He wanted a flag which was "not connected with the past so that the two sections of the [white] people are united in a common nationhood, a common national feeling ...".³² A flag was important, "it is not a mere cloth ... it is the repository of national sentiment ... For a flag a nation can live ...".³³ Smuts opposed the Bill until the Governor General was called in to mediate with the result that the Union

29 L Koorts, *DF Malan and the rise of Afrikaner Nationalism...*, pp. 240-241.

30 L Koorts, *DF Malan and the rise of Afrikaner Nationalism...*, p. 214.

31 L Koorts, *DF Malan and the rise of Afrikaner Nationalism...*, pp. 247-302.

32 L Koorts, *DF Malan and the rise of Afrikaner Nationalism...*, p. 224.

33 L Koorts, *DF Malan and the rise of Afrikaner Nationalism...*, p. 212.

Jack was superimposed with along with the two Boer Republic flags on the orange, white and blue of Jan van Riebeeck's tricolour flag.³⁴

The split in the National Party and Hertzog's eventual side-lining by his previous supporters, led to open power struggled amongst the Afrikaner nationalists especially once Verwoerd decided in 1936 to leave the security of a university post for an uncertain life in politics.³⁵ This was reinforced by his move to the Transvaal where he contributed to the power balance of the National Party eventually moving away from the more liberal Cape. In 1936, Verwoerd became editor of *Die Transvaler*, an Afrikaner nationalist paper set up to counteract *De Burger* which Malan had edited for six years since its founding on 26 July 1915.³⁶ Smuts, Malan and Verwoerd started their political careers as newspaper correspondents, the latter two editing newspapers. Writing articles allowed the authors an opportunity to clarify their thinking around issues, whilst putting their broad views across to the public. Verwoerd had his platform: "If someone has to be unemployed, a white man or a native, it is best in the current circumstances and with the existing differences and in living standards more economical for the nation that the native should be unemployed".³⁷ Verwoerd, as Malan a generation before,³⁸ had been horrified to discover that poor whites were living amongst coloureds in the same house. The subsequent 1932 Carnegie report into the poor white provided the opportunity for him to launch politically which he did in 1934 at the *NGK-Volkskongres* where he was the main speaker and pressured the United Party (Hertzog's NP and Smuts' SAP) to form the Department of Social Welfare to address the issue.³⁹ Three years later, on 1 October 1937, in the first editorial for the new *Transvaler* he wrote: "*Die Transvaler* comes with a calling. It comes to serve the *volk* [nation], to make the sound of true and exalted [*verhewe*] nationalism reverberate as far as the voice can reach. Its inspiration will flow from this calling, the struggle will determine its character (translation)".⁴⁰ Verwoerd had set his course while the split in the ranks of Afrikaner nationalism marked the arrival of the third phase which was more inward looking and less conciliatory to other groups.

34 R Steyn, *Jan Smuts: Unafraid of greatness...*, p. 113.

35 H Kenney, *Verwoerd: Architect of Apartheid...*, p. 73.

36 H Kenney, *Verwoerd: Architect of Apartheid...*, p. 85.

37 Giliomee in H Kenney, *Verwoerd: Architect of Apartheid...*, p. 11.

38 L Koorts, *DF Malan and the rise of Afrikaner Nationalism...*, p. 101.

39 H Kenney, *Verwoerd: Architect of Apartheid...*, p. 8.

40 H Kenney, *Verwoerd: Architect of Apartheid...*, p. 13.

Defining the Afrikaner

Smuts and Hertzog had started the process of forming a South African identity by defining the global position: South Africa as a nation. Malan consolidated South Africa's independence and identity as a state within the British Empire with the policy of Apartheid, while Verwoerd focused on the national, ensuring the protection of the white Afrikaans community through segregation and job preservation. The last could not effectively be achieved until the other two aspects had been dealt with. The first took until the 1930s to achieve, the second by default after the Second World War, not least because the majority of the United Party took their eye off the election ball. The third dominated from the 1950s notably after Malan's replacement by Hans Strijdom as leader of the National Party.

The reconfiguration of the National Party in the 1930s in response to Hertzog joining with Smuts resulted in moves which openly promoted the Afrikaner over other resident groups, such as the Jews, coloureds and Indians. Until the 1929 election, the National Party had been reliant on Frederic Hugh Page Creswell's Labour Party to boost its anti-black labour policies. However, when Smuts backed a confederation of Africa, "a great African Dominion stretching unbroken throughout Africa", he played into the "black fear" or *swart gevaar* feeling within the white voting population allowing Hertzog to win a majority no longer reliant on the English-dominant Labour Party.⁴¹ The next step was the 1931 Quota Bill to restrict the number of Jews entering the Union. Whilst Smuts was touring outside of South Africa most of his SAP supported the NP, but on his return in time for the third division, the SAP stood unanimously against it. This was to play out in the years following Hitler's rise to power in Germany. By the outbreak of World War 2, the National Party was firmly anti-Jewish in its stance.

With the recognition of dominion autonomy through the Statute of Westminster in 1931 and the South Africa Status Act in 1934, the path was laid for the removal of black votes from the common voters' role. Blacks were allowed to elect three representatives to the House of Assembly. This was sanctioned in 1936; Smuts sacrificing internal policy to ensure South Africa remained in the Empire.⁴² This move was a reversal of the party position in the 1920s when the Nationalists had appealed for the coloured vote. Hertzog

41 R Steyn, *Jan Smuts: Unafraid of greatness...*, p. 117.

42 R Steyn, *Jan Smuts: Unafraid of greatness...*, p. 128.

justified the move by nothing that in the field of economics and politics, “coloureds had reached a level of civilisation that placed them on an equal footing with whites”. The social sphere was different.⁴³ The first steps towards complete segregation had been taken.

World War Two ostensibly saw a truce between the parties although Smuts had announced to British Prime Minister Winston Spencer Churchill that he was prepared to go to war within the Union if the Nationalists persisted in their attempt to pull South Africa out of the Empire. However, by the end of the war, swords were drawn, particularly as Hertzog was no longer in the picture. In 1946 following pressure to alleviate the poor white problem, the government was forced to conduct an enquiry which led to the Fagan Report recommending a relaxation of influx control of black Africans to urban areas. In response, the National Party initiated the Sauer Commission in 1947 which suggested the opposite. These two positions became the basis on which the 1948 election was fought, the Nationalists naming their policy *Apartheid*.

The policy of Apartheid was built on the “black fear” which Hertzog had brought to the fore in 1929. Economic conditions in South Africa kept black wages low and conditions in the townships insufficient to cope with the ever-increasing numbers who moved to the towns in search of a better life than on the farms. Poor conditions led to strikes such as that by the mineworkers in 1946/7 which was suppressed by the police. Incidents such as this reinforced the “black fear” and the need for whites to stand together. For Verwoerd, playing a more prominent political role, it meant protecting the Afrikaner by implementing more restrictive measures to safeguard the poorer Afrikaner from social degradation (Kenney p. 108). However, the fact that South Africa had a majority black population could not be ignored. Verwoerd’s response was one of trusteeship. “A people had institutions peculiarly suited to itself, not readily transferable to others. Just as Nazism may well have suited the Germans, and Voortrekker democracy definitely suited the Afrikaners so the black man’s destiny was a tribal one”.⁴⁴ Kenney continues “that if he (the black man) rejected the tribe” he could never be anything but an “imitation Englishman”. By implication, if the Afrikaner rejected the democracy of the Voortrekker, he became an imitation Englishman. The white Afrikaner therefore had to retain an element of difference to the white Englishman.

⁴³ L Koorts, *DF Malan and the rise of Afrikaner Nationalism...*, p. 188.

⁴⁴ H Kenney, *Verwoerd: Architect of Apartheid...*, p. 109.

Reality politics

The issue of granting women the vote was an example of reality politics. From his early days as a Dutch Reformed Minister, Malan recognised the role women played in supporting the him to “ease the poverty of his poorest congregants” and had been made aware of the schools in Graaff Reinet not teaching in the home language of their majority student body. At this stage, “language, nationalism and religion were inseparable”.⁴⁵ Despite this, Nationalists remained motivated by their fear of the traditional perception of women, with the result that Malan in 1923 voted against granting women a political say. A year after the Bill’s defeat, however, Malan was calling for “women to become politically organised and to join women’s parties in order to strengthen the National Party as a whole”.⁴⁶ His change of stance had been influenced by the women in his immediate family – his step-mother having been involved in establishing women’s parties in the early 1920s following the Transvaal’s lead post the 1914 rebellion.⁴⁷ Hertzog had refused to support women getting the vote in 1922 doubting their voice “would benefit the broader community and he bemoaned the loosening of family bonds”. Giving women the vote “did not accord with a woman’s calling as a mother and with her position in the family”.⁴⁸ Despite this stance, Hertzog supported the advancement and equality of women. For him, granting women the vote would lead to universal suffrage, which would result in blacks and coloureds, male and female, being allowed a political say.⁴⁹ The slippery slope had to be avoided.

Smuts, in contrast, had supported female suffrage “emphasising that women were more cautious than men”. Few women had entered the political arena and when they did, it was “to backroom party-work in a supportive role rather than a leadership one”.⁵⁰ This was despite the three leaders under discussion being supported by strong, independent women. Malan was initially supported by his step-mother, then both his wives, Mattie and Maria.⁵¹ Smuts and Verwoerd had met their future wives, Issie and Bettie respectively, in Stellenbosch. For Smuts and Verwoerd, home provided a “refuge from the vigorous and often strenuous activities of family life”.⁵² “Women performed

45 L Koorts, *DF Malan and the rise of Afrikaner Nationalism...*, p. 98.

46 L Koorts, *DF Malan and the rise of Afrikaner Nationalism...*, p. 190.

47 L Koorts, *DF Malan and the rise of Afrikaner Nationalism...*, p. 190.

48 L Koorts, *DF Malan and the rise of Afrikaner Nationalism...*, p. 189.

49 L Koorts, *DF Malan and the rise of Afrikaner Nationalism...*, p. 189.

50 C Walker, *Women and resistance in southern Africa to 1945* (Cape Town, New Africa Books, 1990), p. 340.

51 L Koorts, *DF Malan and the rise of Afrikaner Nationalism...*, pp. 314-315.

52 H Kenney, *Verwoerd: Architect of Apartheid...*, p. 64.

their humane and domestic tasks with warmth and cheerfulness and were ever ready to listen with intelligent solicitude to the problems which men faced in the great battle of life”.⁵³ Both men had large families and, of the wives, the only one to be politically active was Maria.

By the mid-1920s the National Party leadership had changed its mind: “We need the help of the national-minded woman. There is no one better than she to build our young and growing nation on the firm foundations of honesty, justice, loyalty and true patriotism, and to protect it from the dangers that threaten us”.⁵⁴ Political expediency drove National Party support of women getting the franchise in 1930.

Giving women the vote helped with achieving other nationalist aims. If South Africa was to become a republic, within or outside the Empire, the English speakers and Hertzog’s more moderate followers had to support the National Party. This meant politicians had to adapt their positions. From initially only seeking to protect Afrikaner nationalism, Verwoerd had moved to a position closer to that of Hertzog. The English had to be included, but as a junior partner.⁵⁵ Verwoerd’s opportunity came as a result of decisions taken by Malan, who appeared to follow in the footsteps of Smuts and Hertzog, after visits to England.⁵⁶ Attending the Imperial meetings in 1949, where India was allowed to remain in the Commonwealth, as the Empire was now called, and be a republic, Malan thought it would be in South Africa’s interests to remain in the Commonwealth when it became a republic. It would help with containing the threat of communism which he feared and which, in 1948, he had said South Africa would fight even if it came to war. The 1948 election had brought English and Afrikaans together on Afrikaner terms, but some Afrikaner nationalists were not satisfied with South Africa remaining a republic within the Commonwealth. They wanted a complete break from Britain. This would take another twelve years to achieve.

While Malan was struggling with Strijdom over the leadership of the party, Verwoerd remained in the background having been left out of the 1948 cabinet. In 1951, a member of the cabinet, he ostensibly set up a “Republiekeïnse Strewesbond” (RSB, Republican Quest Group) to ensure that the idea of a

53 R Steyn, *Jan Smuts: Unafraid of greatness...*, p. 185.

54 L Koorts, *DF Malan and the rise of Afrikaner Nationalism...*, p. 191

55 H Kenney, *Verwoerd: Architect of Apartheid...*, p. 111.

56 L Koorts, *DF Malan and the rise of Afrikaner Nationalism...*, p. 382.

republic outside the British Commonwealth was not lost.⁵⁷ He had to wait a little longer until Strijdom retired in 1958 and he became Prime Minister. The same year the voting age was reduced from 21 to 18. Although this was an international trend, it would work in favour of the Nationalist Party as the younger Afrikaans population was larger than the English. Again, Afrikaner nationalist ideals were determining political moves. With an increased support base, and in the driving seat from 1958, Verwoerd worked to bring about a republic outside of the British Commonwealth. He was motivated to do so by the thought that South Africa would be able to work more closely with the British Commonwealth from the outside as its policies would not cause dissent within the Commonwealth. He was convinced that by declaring a republic sooner rather than later, it would further unite the white English and Afrikaans communities.⁵⁸ In 1961 Verwoerd achieved his goal when South Africa became a republic outside the Commonwealth on 31 May, only to fall victim to an assassin's knife on 29 July that same year. In the 1966 election, Afrikaner nationalism reached its zenith when the National Party won 126 seats against the United Party's 39, the more liberal minded English speakers having broken away in 1959 to form the Progressive Party. Despite this, it is estimated that 25 per cent of the English vote went to the Nationalists.⁵⁹

Conclusion

Neither Smuts nor Malan lived to see the formation of the Republic of South Africa. Smuts had retired from politics after losing the 1948 election and died two years later on 11 September 1950 aged 80. Malan left politics in 1953, aged 79, and died on 7 February 1959. It had taken nearly a century for a people who had made South Africa their home to have their identity consolidated by a man who had made South Africa his home and the Afrikaner his people. By forcing Afrikaner nationalism as Malan and Verwoerd did, other South African nationalisms were by default given definition and purpose, especially when racial divides became more forcefully demarcated after the 1948 election. This was a continuation of policies started in the 1920s and 1930s when labour, black, coloured and Jew were all used as political pawns. And it was a fourth war, that against Communism (the Cold War), which formed the backdrop for a clash between these newly-defined nationalist groups.

57 L Koorts, *DF Malan and the rise of Afrikaner Nationalism...*, p. 380.

58 H Kenney, *Verwoerd: Architect of Apartheid...*, p. 40.

59 H Kenney, *Verwoerd: Architect of Apartheid...*, p. 41.