

Southern Africa

SHULA MARKS

For much of the twentieth century British policies in southern Africa have been dominated by calculations about South Africa. The Union, later Republic, of South Africa has occupied a unique position in British Imperial strategy and imagination. Undergirding this status materially was South Africa's gold, while sustaining it ideologically were the labours of Sir Alfred Milner's 'kindergarten', that group of bright young men from Oxford who were brought to the Transvaal to reshape its institutions after the South African War (1899–1902), and who were themselves reshaped by the experience. As Lionel Curtis, ideologist of Imperial Federation, put it in a letter in 1907: 'South Africa is a microcosm and much that we thought peculiar to it is equally true of the Empire itself . . . When we have done all we can do and should do for South Africa it may be we shall have the time and training to begin some work of the same kind in respect of Imperial Relations.'¹

Interconnected networks of City, Empire, and academe gave South Africa its importance to the advocates of Commonwealth at least until 1945. The role played by the 'kindergarten' in the unification of South Africa provided its members with a model for their wider vision of Imperial Federation, propounded in their Round Table movement and their journal of the same name; the fortunes made by mine magnates such as Rhodes, Beit, and Bailey were devoted to furthering the schemes of the Round Tablers, whether through scholarships, chairs of Imperial history, or the Royal Institute of International Affairs at Chatham House; their friendships

For the purposes of this chapter, southern Africa has been defined as the Union of South Africa, the High Commission Territories (Basutoland, Bechuanaland, and Swaziland), Zimbabwe, Zambia, and Malawi. The position of Namibia (South-West Africa) is anomalous, as German colony until 1917, then South African Mandate, and now, as independent Namibia, a member of the Commonwealth. Its history, like that of Mozambique, and to a lesser extent in this period Angola, has been intimately connected with that of South Africa, and it has been mentioned in this respect. I am grateful to Dr Stanley Trapido for many years of discussion on the history of southern Africa which have undoubtedly shaped this chapter.

¹ Curtis to Selborne, 18 Oct. 1907, Selborne MSS 71, cited in Deborah Lavin, 'Lionel Curtis and the Idea of Commonwealth', in Frederick Madden and D. K. Fieldhouse, eds., *Oxford and the Idea of Commonwealth* (London, 1982), p. 99.

with leading South African politicians such as General (later Field Marshal) J. C. Smuts ensured their continued sympathetic support for white South Africa to the mid-century.

The Round Table view was never uncontested. As in the nineteenth century, settler 'native policy' was the object of humanitarian criticism. Before 1945 this voice was muted; and, like the Round Table, the humanitarian lobby called predominantly for a more paternalist form of trusteeship. After the electoral victory in 1948 of the Afrikaner National Party and its implementation of racial policies, which were seen increasingly to diverge from international norms, a more radical liberal-humanitarian opposition arose, fuelled by the hostility of the newly independent states of Asia and Africa, and culminating in the demand for economic sanctions against South Africa to bring about majority rule. By the 1980s this demand was creating serious conflict between Britain and most of the members of the Commonwealth.

For successive British governments, neither trusteeship nor the demands for majority rule were of the essence. Here more hard-headed considerations applied. In central and southern Africa Britain pursued her 'national interest'—and unremarkably so.² A continued belief in the strategic importance of the naval base at Simonstown;³ substantial trade between the two countries; the fate of what were known as the British High Commission territories Lesotho, Botswana, and Swaziland; and, at a later date, the need for co-operation over Rhodesia, were all of some significance. Far more vital to Britain's pre-eminence in the world, however, was the unimpeded flow of South African gold to the City of London, as was starkly revealed during both world wars. This made stability in the region of critical concern to Britain, and explains British support for South Africa despite international opprobrium and later intense conflict between Britain and other members of the Commonwealth.

Although the Union had achieved independent Dominion Status since 1910, it remained economically dependent on the Imperial connection, as the crisis following Britain's departure from the gold standard in 1931 revealed. Even after 1948, when an ostensibly anti-imperialist, Afrikaner Nationalist government came into power, it found, like all previous South African governments, that its interests and those of its farming constituents were best served by remaining within the sterling area. Despite the dramatic decline in British power after the Second World War, Britain and South Africa remained economically interdepend-

² Martin Chanock, *Unconsummated Union: Britain, Rhodesia and South Africa, 1900–1945* (London, 1977), p. 1.

³ The Union government gained access to the base in 1922 and took it over from Britain in 1955; see above, p. 295.

ent so that neither was prepared to undermine their economic ties for purely political purposes.⁴

Southern Africa to 1939

If gold linked South Africa to the British Empire, it also subordinated the rest of the region to South Africa and, ultimately, linked the humblest African hut in the countryside to the palatial Witwatersrand residences of the mine magnates in a hierarchy of unequal exchanges. For most of the inhabitants of the African subcontinent, European colonization was recent, a nineteenth-century, even a late-nineteenth-century, experience. However, south of the Limpopo, colonial penetration was far older and more pervasive, going back in the coastal Cape colony to the mid-seventeenth century. By 1910, when the two nineteenth-century Afrikaner republics of the Transvaal and Orange Free State, recently conquered by Britain in the South African War, were joined to the two British coastal colonies of the Cape and Natal to form the new Union of South Africa, the whole of southern Africa was under alien rule.

Mineral discoveries and the consequent demographic and urban growth in the last third of the century transformed the subcontinent economically, socially, and politically. In 1911 over half the Union's 1.25 million whites and nearly a quarter of its 5 million black population lived in towns.⁵ Nevertheless, South Africa's independence and power in the first half-century should not be exaggerated. For much of this period it was poor, dependent on international capital, and politically unstable, with a divided white population heavily outnumbered by a black population which was for the most part denied citizenship; its regional dominance was a reflection of the weakness of its neighbours rather than its intrinsic strength.⁶

Beyond the boundaries of the Union, three Imperial powers and a chartered company had each carved out territories in the late-nineteenth-century 'scramble' for Africa. Portugal was ensconced on the east and west coasts, in Mozambique and Angola; Germany had annexed the vast, arid, and sparsely populated territory of South-West Africa (later Namibia); and north of the Limpopo the British had granted the chartered British South Africa Company (hereafter the Company) wide powers over the African peoples in the region to be known for much of the

⁴ Peter J. Henshaw, 'Britain, South Africa and the Sterling Area: Gold Production, Capital Investment and Agricultural Markets, 1931–1961', *Historical Journal*, XXXIX, 1 (1996), pp. 197–223, esp. 217.

⁵ South African terminology is fraught with difficulty. I use the term 'black' to refer collectively to the indigenous peoples of southern Africa, to those who had intermarried with incoming whites and slaves who are known in the literature as Coloured, and to Indians who were brought as indentured labourers to nineteenth-century Natal.

⁶ Chanock, *Unconsummated Union*, p. 2.

twentieth century as Northern and Southern Rhodesia (Zambia and Zimbabwe), after the Company's founder, Cecil John Rhodes. More by accident than design, the British Colonial Office had acquired control over what was originally the British Central African Protectorate and later became—with modified borders—Nyasaland (Malawi). South of the Limpopo, three African enclaves of Bechuanaland, Basutoland, and Swaziland had managed to remain outside colonial boundaries as British Protectorates in the nineteenth century, and were known collectively as the High Commission Territories.

By the first decade of the century, it was widely accepted in British ruling circles that the Zambezi River was to be the frontier between the settler south and the 'tropical dependencies' of eastern and central Africa. As Milner, who was British High Commissioner for Southern Africa, 1895–1905, and who, more than any other single individual, shaped its early-twentieth-century destiny, remarked in 1899: 'One thing is quite evident. The *ultimate* end is a self-governing white Community, supported by *well-treated* and *justly governed* black labour from Cape Town to Zambesi.'⁷ In the event, there was to be argument both about the frontiers of the 'self-governing white community' and the justice of its treatment of black labour.

Milner's notion of a 'self-governing white community' extending to the Zambezi was shared also in South Africa, most notably by General J. C. Smuts, former Afrikaner general turned Imperial statesman, joint-architect of Union, and its Prime Minister in the years 1919–24 and 1939–48, who long dreamt of a 'Greater South Africa'. Nevertheless, with one exception the Union's expansionist ambitions were blocked both by the resistance of Africans who hoped Imperial overrule would afford some protection against colonial rapacity, and by British determination to maintain their regional dominance and their distrust of Afrikaner nationalism.

The most obvious candidates for incorporation in the Union were the geographically contiguous and economically dependent High Commission Territories. Until the mid-century this destiny was assumed by the British government and South Africa's white politicians alike. The threat of transfer and their loathing for the Union's 'native policy' spurred African political consciousness in these territories until their independence in the 1960s—and beyond.

Nor were the Rhodesias absorbed by the Union when the Company's charter finally expired in 1923,⁸ despite the wishes of the Company, some at least in the

⁷ Milner to Percy Fitzpatrick, 28 Nov. 1899, in Cecil Headlam, ed., *The Milner Papers (South Africa), 1899–1905*, 2 vols. (London, 1933), II, pp. 35–36.

⁸ The charter was originally for twenty-five years, but was renewed for an additional period in 1915 because of the war.

British Colonial Office, and Smuts's South African Party government. In an all-white referendum, a small majority of the 33,000 predominantly British settlers, alarmed by the gathering pace of Afrikaner nationalism and escalating class conflict to their south, opted for self-government rather than incorporation. Any incorporation of Northern Rhodesia with the south was also barred. In 1924 the British government took over the administration of the whole of Northern Rhodesia as a 'tropical dependency', although the Company retained extensive mineral and land rights in both Southern and Northern Rhodesia and the new Crown Colony, as well as 86 per cent of the shares in Rhodesia Railways.⁹

The Union was more successful in the case of South-West Africa, which it conquered from the Germans during the First World War and governed thereafter under a League of Nations 'C' Mandate.¹⁰ Despite the Mandate, by the Second World War South-West Africa was effectively a fifth province of the Union, governed in the interests of its white settlers, many of them poor Afrikaners, although the German population numbered some 10,000 by 1937. When in 1946 Smuts tried to incorporate the territory even more directly, he was rebuffed by the United Nations, the preamble to whose Charter he had authored. It took nearly forty-five more years before Namibians shook off South African control, despite international appeals to the International Court of Justice at The Hague and prolonged guerrilla struggle.

With the formation of the Union in 1910, and the redrawing of the frontiers between the Chartered Company's domain in Northern Rhodesia and neighbouring Angola on the west and Nyasaland on its east in 1911, the boundaries of the southern Africa state system were established until the creation of the short-lived Central African Federation (which brought together the Rhodesias and Nyasaland) in 1953. Yet these frontiers remained extremely porous, at least until the Second World War. Despite the imposition of Draconian immigration, trading, and veterinary restrictions, even the South African state, by far the most powerful in the region, was hard put either to control the illegal movement across boundaries of people who were linked by kinship or driven by poverty, or to prevent the smuggling of cattle across inadequately policed marchlands. If, in the phrase of the day, disease, whether in animal or man, knew no colour bar, it also paid little heed to border restrictions. Political ideas, too, criss-crossed frontiers, as white settlers everywhere drew on South African modes of governing 'natives', and Africans learnt their politics in the mine compounds and mission schools of the Union.

Economic frontiers failed to follow the contours of colonial jurisdiction. Neither capital nor labour was confined by state boundaries, for by the turn of

⁹ Chanock, *Unconsummated Union*, pp. 168–72.

¹⁰ See above, p. 118.

the century the disparate societies of the region were being drawn ineluctably into a single political economy, directed, although unevenly, by British and South African capital, driven by mining, and increasingly connected by road, rail, and by the 1920s, air. The exploitation of diamonds, coal, and especially gold in the interior of South Africa from the last third of the nineteenth century, of gold and coal in Southern Rhodesia from the 1890s and 1900s, and of copper in Northern Rhodesia from the late 1920s had momentous consequences for them all, regardless of the national identity of their new colonial masters. The history of twentieth-century southern Africa is to a very large extent dominated by the history of mining.

It was Witwatersrand gold that moulded the history of the region. The hope that Rhodesia would prove a 'Second Rand' was soon disappointed: its dispersed and relatively superficial gold deposits could never compete with the far more extensive mines of South Africa, even if gold was its economic mainstay until the Second World War. In Rhodesia's undercapitalized gold-mines, wages were lower and food and accommodation poorer than on the Rand. Where possible, black workers from Northern Rhodesia, Nyasaland, and Mozambique bypassed Southern Rhodesia and made their way further south. While copper claims were staked in Northern Rhodesia in the 1900s, it was not until the late 1920s that, in response to the increasing world demand for copper, the major companies—the South African-dominated Anglo-American Corporation of Rhodesia and the American-dominated Rhodesian Selection Trust—established themselves on the Copper Belt; Imperial fears of the United States's competition in the mining industry prompted British and South African finance to come forward. By that time patterns of labour control were based on recruited black migrant labour housed in compounds, and a highly paid white supervisory class. A nexus of laws controlling worker mobility and organization had been firmly established on the Witwatersrand and formed the template for developments further north.

At the beginning of the twentieth century South Africa produced between a fifth and a quarter of the world's supply of gold; by 1914 this had risen to about one-third, by the 1920s one-half. No South African government could ignore the imperatives of the gold-mining industry; it shaped the country's social and economic structure and that of its neighbours, provided its state revenues and foreign exchange, and conferred influence in the wider world. Capital initially accumulated on the gold-mines of South Africa was the largest single source of investment in the mines in the Rhodesias, whether of gold, copper, or coal.

Yet the richest mining industry in the world was built on the paradox of colossal wealth and monumental parsimony.¹¹ Most of South Africa's gold ore was low

¹¹ C. W. de Kiewiet, *A History of South Africa: Social and Economic* (Oxford, 1941), p. 134.

grade and deep level; the costs of development and extraction were high and the international ceiling on price meant they could not be passed on to the consumer. Enfranchised, unionized white workers were able to protect their wages and to extract health-and-safety measures from the state to compensate for a high cost of living and the shortness of their working lives; rightless African workers, prised out of the pre-industrial societies of the subcontinent, could not. Thus it was that the industry came to be built on huge disparities between black and white wages. In 1920 some 21,500 white workers on the gold-mines earned about twice as much as the total earnings of 180,000 black workers, while in 1961 white gold-miners on the Rand earned on average almost seventeen times more than black.¹²

By the turn of the century some 100,000 African men were annually making their way to the Witwatersrand from the entire subcontinent in search of money to pay tax, to purchase cattle, ploughs, and seed, even to acquire bicycles and sewing machines; tens of thousands more were seeking work in the white towns and farms and mines elsewhere in South Africa, Southern Rhodesia, and the Shire Highlands. Many never returned, settling and often dying at their place of work: in the early days of mining the death toll from accidents and respiratory diseases was formidably high. Although conditions gradually improved in the mines themselves, returning migrants transferred the burden of ill-health to increasingly impoverished rural areas, creating reservoirs of tuberculosis and venereal disease.

By the end of the First World War the South African Chamber of Mines, founded in 1889 to contain costs, had a monopoly over the purchase of black labour. By 1939 its recruiting organization, the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association, successfully sought workers on the northern fringes of central Africa, thus ensuring that the wages of black miners were lower in real terms until the 1970s than they had been in the 1890s. The development of South Africa as the richest, most powerful, and most industrialized country in twentieth century Africa was made possible by the labour of this subcontinental workforce. Yet 'cheap' labour had a high cost for worker and capitalist alike.

Jagged-edged, dependent on the chronology of conquest, the configuration of local markets, and the exigencies of environment, for many Africans proletarianization remained uneven, uncertain, and incomplete. Initially, Africans were able to resist full proletarianization through migrant labour, and urbanization was an often-reversible response to misfortune. Nevertheless, as the century progressed African families became increasingly dependent on wage-labour for their basic needs and large numbers of Africans settled permanently in towns. Despite the proscriptions of white authorities who believed that they were there solely to serve

¹² Merle Lipton, *Capitalism and Apartheid South Africa, 1910–1984* (Aldershot, Hants, 1985), pp. 113 and 388, Table 11.

the needs of the white economy, they created a vibrant urban culture in the shanty-towns that grew up around all the region's major cities.

In the new dispensation, white men controlled private property and the means of production—although not all white men equally. As one historian has remarked, 'it was basic to the political rhetoric of southern Africa that it was a "white man's country"'.¹³ In the settler states, white men also dominated representative institutions. Whether in South Africa, where their numbers were substantial, or in both Rhodesias and even in the Shire Highlands, where they were not, for the first half-century white, preferably English-speaking (male) settlers were Britain's 'ideal prefabricated collaborators'.¹⁴

Under the Act of Union of 1910, passed into law by the British government, existing colonial franchise arrangements were maintained: effectively this meant that in the former republics and Natal all white adult males were enfranchised; in the Cape, property and educational qualifications also enfranchised Coloured and African men. While the failure of the Union constitution to provide for a uniform franchise based on Cape notions of 'equal rights for all civilized men' met with heated debate and protest, the failure to enfranchise women was apparently less controversial. When in 1930 white women received the vote it was as part of an onslaught against the qualified African male franchise in the Cape, which was removed in 1936. Twenty years later, in 1956, Coloured voters in the Cape were placed on a separate electoral roll. Effectively, then, whites, especially white men, were given statutory control over the majority of blacks, who were excluded from citizenship until the first democratic, non-racial election in South Africa in April 1994.

In Southern Rhodesia, white settlers—never more than 5 per cent of the total population—who first arrived in 1890, had an elected minority in the Legislative Council within eight years. When in 1923 the territory acquired self-government, only those, including women, with an income over £200 were enfranchised. Most of the 750,000 Africans were excluded from the vote. Self-government notwithstanding, the Chartered Company continued to control the railways (the largest employer in the territory) and mining royalties, while the Imperial government retained authority over foreign affairs and currency and a veto over discriminatory legislation. This veto was rarely used, although it did act as a brake on legislation likely to provoke British intervention and did prevent the removal of Africans

¹³ Chanock, *Unconsummated Union*, p. 13.

¹⁴ Ronald Robinson, 'Non-European Foundations of European Imperialism: Sketch for a Theory of Collaboration', in Roger Owen and Bob Sutcliffe, eds., *Studies in the Theory of Imperialism* (London, 1972), p. 124.

from the voters' roll in 1934. In general, however, in the early years of responsible government, legislation affecting mining royalties or railway finances received more scrutiny than that affecting Africans. African administration in Southern Africa was considered 'enlightened' by the Dominions Office.¹⁵

At first the Company did not encourage settlers in Northern Rhodesia, although a few settled along the line of rail. Despite limited representation on the territory's Legislative Council, self-government was clearly impossible in a colony with under 4,000 colonists in the midst of almost a million Africans. With the exploitation of the copper-mines, white numbers increased. The importance of Northern Rhodesia as the major producer of copper in the Empire before the Second World War, and the strategic importance of copper for the Allies during the war, undoubtedly gave white mineworkers considerable political and economic leverage. Nevertheless, the small number of colonists in Northern Rhodesia never achieved the political dominance of the settlers further south. On the eve of war in 1939 there were 13,000 whites in the territory, under 2 per cent of the total population.

In early colonial Nyasaland, white and Indian settlement was encouraged in the belief that it would bring economic development. In 1907 whites were given some representation on the Legislative Council. Economic backwardness constrained white immigration. Under 1,500 in 1920, no more than 2,000 in 1940, colonists never rose above 0.2 per cent of the population. In both Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland, racially discriminatory policies in agriculture and industry protected the interests of whites over those of blacks. Nevertheless, sparse settler numbers and Colonial Office proclamations of African paramountcy, however limited in practice, differentiated these territories from those further south.¹⁶ By the mid-1930s disgruntled settlers in the northern colonies began to look to amalgamation with their southern compatriots.

Throughout the region white domination was facilitated by racist ideology, which was infused by fears of miscegenation and a concern with the sexuality of Africans.¹⁷ Discriminatory policies were prompted by settler demands for protection from African competition and official anxiety at the growth of African class consciousness. 'Separate development' was lent respectability until the Second World War by eugenic and evolutionist thought espoused by anthropologists and paternalist administrators anxious to protect African societies from rapid social change.

The policies of segregation were adopted by most whites regardless of political persuasion in the inter-war years. Initially developed into an ideology by Milner's

¹⁵ Claire Palley, *The Constitutional History and Law of Southern Rhodesia, 1888–1965, with Special Reference to Imperial Control* (Oxford, 1966), pp. 242, 239.

¹⁶ See chap. 11 by Ronald Hyam.

¹⁷ See chap. by Rosalind O'Hanlon, esp. pp. 391, 393–94.

kindergarten and liberal-minded intellectuals in South Africa, segregation served to unify diverse and contradictory white interests under a single political banner. It cemented the white South African 'nation'. Intended to buttress white power at a time of rapid urbanization and social change by defusing black militancy, it was also shaped by African capacity to resist total cultural and political domination.

Segregation was equally the orthodoxy in the rest of southern Africa. Even in those territories under direct Colonial Office control, the differences were of degree rather than in kind. There too, Africans were excluded from central political institutions. Industrial colour bars defined jobs, wages, and employment opportunities. In exchange Africans were granted limited reserves within which chiefly authority was recognized and ethnic identity assumed. This social order was bolstered by a battery of laws in South Africa and Southern Rhodesia; in Northern Rhodesia, in the face of Colonial Office opposition to *de jure* discrimination, it was secured by custom and social practice. What the political and social exclusions obscured was the extent to which economic forces, and the spread of Christianity, literacy, and urbanization, were drawing southern Africans inexorably into a common, if grossly unequal and racially stratified, interdependence.

If white settlers throughout the region were united in their determination to assert their supremacy over Africans, they frequently differed on how best to achieve this because of their own class and ethnic divisions. Where their numbers were small, as in Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland, these differences were contained by a wider need for unity against the black majority. In South Africa and Southern Rhodesia, however, inter-white political struggles were often as fierce as, if not fiercer than, those between black and white.

These political struggles were most complex in South Africa, where whites were most bitterly divided by class and ethnicity. For all the centrality of the relationship between black and white, the contest over who was to control the state was conceived of as being between white opponents, who differed more fundamentally over the economy, language, and their relationship to the British Empire than over the governance of Africans. The issue was never simply one between English-speakers and Afrikaners, as the civil war which erupted over South Africa's participation in the First World War had revealed: while large numbers of South Africans, largely English-speaking but including Afrikaners, fought in East Africa and in Europe, in South Africa itself Botha and Smuts had to mobilize Afrikaner commandos to put down an Afrikaner rebellion prompted by the invasion of South-West Africa and the still-lingering hope of regaining independence. For much of the period, governments included members of both language groups.

During the 1920s many nationalist goals were achieved. With the 1926 Balfour Report (and its later enactment in the 1931 Statute of Westminster), South

Africa's sovereign status under the British monarchy was recognized, as the nationalist Prime Minister, General G. B. M. Hertzog, himself acknowledged on his return from the 1926 Imperial Conference. In 1934 the South Africa Status Acts embodied the doctrine of the divisibility of the Crown, which made it possible for South Africa to refrain from assisting Britain in war if she so wished: a matter of some moment in 1939 when Smuts carried a motion in favour of joining the Allies by a mere thirteen votes.¹⁸

Hertzog's renunciation of republicanism made the coalition of the National Party with Smuts's South African Party a credible goal. In the wake of the economic crisis in 1931, when South Africa left the gold standard, the two parties united to form a new United Party, once more under the premiership of Hertzog. Nevertheless, many Afrikaners remained unreconciled to the British connection and aimed to re-establish a Republic. In South Africa's cities landless Afrikaners formed a volatile constituency for the anti-Imperial and racially charged nationalism led by Dr D. F. Malan, who split with Hertzog and formed the 'Purified' National Party. Unskilled and barely literate, poor white Afrikaners could compete neither with highly paid, skilled English-speaking workers nor with low-paid black workers who still had some access to rural resources.

The all-white nature of parliamentary politics and their demographic advantage meant that nationalists who could persuade individuals to identify—and vote—as Afrikaners rather than as 'whites' or 'workers' or 'women' could win power. The victory of Malan's 'Purified' National Party in 1948 thus owed much to the ideological labours of cultural nationalists who had, since the South African War, set about transforming a world dominated by British culture and the English language into one in which Afrikaner sensibilities and the Afrikaans language predominated. Women were particularly important as 'mothers of the *volk*' and as active agents in their own right. Yet ironically, when they eventually captured the state in 1948, Afrikaner nationalists found themselves confronted by a new, potentially more dangerous contender for the state: African nationalism.

Until the Second World War, white politics in the settler states was for the most part dominated by shifting alliances of either the more prosperous farmers and mine magnates, responsive to the needs of British capital, or—as between 1924 and 1933 in South Africa and in 1933–34 in Southern Rhodesia—coalitions of local entrepreneurs, poorer white farmers, and workers. Yet the interests of capitalist farmers and mine-owners were often in conflict. Not only did they compete for cheap black labour, they were also divided on tariff policy and their attitudes to white workers.

¹⁸ See above, p. 84.

The attempt of the mine-owners to cheapen white labour costs by substituting cheaper black workers led to the eruption of intense class warfare in Southern Rhodesia and, more seriously, on the Rand. White strikes had occurred on the Rand in 1907, in 1913, and most dramatically in 1922, when newly proletarianized and largely unskilled Afrikaner workers joined hands with the skilled English-speaking trade unionists, some of them inspired by the newly formed Communist Party of South Africa. White workers did not unite with black workers, as Communists hoped, but demanded and ultimately achieved a statutory colour bar to reserve certain jobs for whites only. At the same time industrial legislation in 1924 tempered the capacity of white workers to strike but excluded 'pass-bearing natives' from wage-bargaining machinery.

White workers suffering the insecurities of the Depression were protected by similar legislation in Southern Rhodesia in 1934. Thereafter, as in the Union, enfranchised white workers were relatively easily incorporated into the 'white nation'.¹⁹ On the Northern Rhodesian Copper Belt, skilled white workers, many of them from South Africa, never secured similar protection: there the liberal impulse of Imperial government was stronger, especially when confronted with black worker militancy and the desire of the mining companies to replace white labour with black. By mid-century a skilled and unionized African work-force had emerged to play a key role over the next decade and a half in the struggle for independence.

In the settler states, mine-owners and farmers were also divided over the policy of African reserves. Throughout the subcontinent, access to land determined the supply and cost of African labour. Where shortage of land did not suffice to push Africans into the labour market, taxation frequently did. At the beginning of the century the vast majority of Africans lived by farming, even if in many areas they were now rightless 'squatters' on land claimed by settlers, syndicates, or speculators. South of the Limpopo a century-long battle over land had been largely won by settlers, although increasingly crowded and eroded pockets of land had been reserved for Africans.

While the mining industry came to recognize the importance of these reserves in subsidizing migrants' dependents, white farmers resented them as sources of competition from African producers, and they also wished to reduce various forms of African tenancy to labour service. These objectives were reconciled in the Union's land legislation in 1913 and 1936 which scheduled about 13 per cent of the land for the African population, reserving the rest for the white minority, and reducing Africans on white-owned land to labour tenancy.

¹⁹ Ian Phimister, *An Economic and Social History of Zimbabwe, 1890–1948: Capital Accumulation and Class Struggle* (London, 1988), p. 192.

In Southern Rhodesia too, where the British South Africa Company had encouraged commercial farming to attract immigrants and raise revenue, settlers attacked the African reserves set aside at Imperial insistence after the 1896–97 Shona–Ndebele uprisings. Fears of further disturbances ensured protection of the reserves, and until the 1920s Shona peasants successfully produced for the market. Nevertheless, by then the territory's best land was settler-owned and the expropriation of the peasantry was confirmed by the Land Apportionment Act of 1930. At the time this was regarded as an act of trusteeship. It was the joint responsibility of both the Imperial and the Southern Rhodesian governments; any amendment to the Act was subject to British scrutiny.²⁰ Yet it was modelled in part on South Africa's legislation; in terms of the Act, African ownership was barred outside the reserves, except in a special small freehold purchase area—much of it isolated and tsetse-infested—set aside for 'progressive farmers'. Half the land was now allocated to whites, 30 per cent to Africans; 20 per cent remained unassigned. From 1937 Africans not required as labour on white-owned lands were removed to increasingly congested reserves.

The Land Acts in the Union and Southern Rhodesia were designed to foster settler agriculture. Yet white capitalist agriculture was only possible with massive state intervention. Black farmers, by contrast, only attracted state assistance when cattle disease threatened to spread from black areas to white, or soil erosion roused concern, as in the late 1930s. The Great Depression strengthened measures favouring small white farmers at the expense of African peasant production, and by the 1940s many rural Africans were dependent on migrant remittances. Even in those areas where peasant production continued, deteriorating health statistics suggest it was through intensified self exploitation, although African sharecroppers and labour tenants only finally lost all access to land outside the reserves with the accelerated capitalization of agriculture from the mid-century.

Initially, similar land policies were pursued north of the Zambezi, where white settlers were seen as the engine of economic growth. Thus, in 1924 the Colonial Office, hoping to increase settler numbers, threw open nearly 12 million acres of the best lands in Northern Rhodesia for white farming. Although extensive reserves were demarcated, like the reserves further south they were generally far from the line of rail and on poor soils; for the most part African lands rapidly became overcrowded and eroded. With the development of the Copper Belt, some Africans were able to produce for the new market, but it was only after the Second World War that white land-ownership was limited in Northern Rhodesia and the problems of rural poverty at least minimally addressed.

²⁰ Palley, *Constitutional History*, pp. 253–58.

In the Shire Highlands too, millions of acres devoted to experiments in coffee, cotton, and tobacco were owned by the African Lakes Corporation and a handful of settlers. With their low pay, forced labour practices, and squalid working conditions, the plantations were unable to compete with the mines in neighbouring territories. They remained poor and inefficient until the 1920s, when tobacco and then tea replaced the unsuccessful coffee and cotton crops; even then planters remained dependent on the labour of tenants and sharecroppers, many of them refugees from Mozambique, and from the 1930s the amount of land in expatriate hands fell. In 1948 only some 5.2 per cent of the total was planter-owned, so that there were always considerable pockets of Africans producing cash crops such as cotton, rice, and tobacco in southern and central Nyasaland: the north was little more than a labour reserve for the Rhodesias and South Africa.

In Basutoland and Bechuanaland too, settler expropriation was limited by the Colonial Office. Yet unlike the situation in Nyasaland, the possibilities there for peasant enterprise diminished rather than expanded in the course of the century as Africans became increasingly dependent on migrancy to South Africa. Drought and Depression in the 1930s transformed Basutoland, once South Africa's 'granary', into a food importer, and large numbers of its women as well as men settled permanently on the Rand. Bechuanaland's fortunes also declined through this period as transport networks shifted and South Africa, often under the guise of veterinary restrictions, embargoed the importation and sale of cattle, the mainstay of its economy. Increasingly, the Tswana too sought work in South Africa's mines and on farms.

In Swaziland, where vast amounts of land had been granted to concessionaires in the late nineteenth century, the process was somewhat different. There, a series of British government commissions reserved about one-third of the land for African occupation, although a Swazi National Fund managed to repurchase some of the alienated lands, bringing it to about 45 per cent of the total by independence. Although most Swazi men had experience of migrant labour in South Africa, mostly on the Witwatersrand, Swazi society was less radically affected by this experience than were its neighbours.

African peoples, who were so painfully drawn into the capitalist-dominated economy of southern Africa and subjected to ever-increasing administrative, economic, and political control, did not acquiesce in their subordination without resistance. Nevertheless, by contrast with the sharp brutalities of late-nineteenth-century wars of conquest, the era from 1914 to 1939 was one of colonial consolidation, in which African and Afrikaner societies were transformed by the slower processes of proletarianization. The last armed uprising of Africans south of the

Limpopo was a poll-tax rebellion in Natal in 1906. Although both South-West Africa and Mozambique saw armed conflict into the second decade of the century, in British-ruled southern Africa the Chilembwe uprising of 1915 in Nyasaland was the only major challenge to colonial or settler rule until after the Second World War. This does not mean that Africans passively accepted the new order, but that armed resistance gave way to complex politics of protest and accommodation. Africans devised myriad daily strategies to survive and resist the degradations of colonial exploitation.

Not all Africans experienced their subjection in the same way, for racial, gender, ethnic, and class divisions were ambiguously interwoven, thus weakening their capacity to resist settler expansion. All over southern Africa the century witnessed the rise of new classes, with the emergence of an African petty bourgeoisie and working class in the towns. Migrant labour both undermined and strengthened the authority of the chiefs, especially in areas where the colonial state was anxious to retain traditional structures for purposes of social control. Large numbers of people were still politically and ideologically encapsulated in the pre-colonial polities now termed 'tribes', which were given new definitions by the design of the colonizers, the ambitions of chiefs, and the imaginings of culture brokers, especially missionaries and their converts. Everywhere women experienced these processes differently from men. Thus, side by side with the growth of nationalist movements among the new élite and trade-union organization among workers, chiefly politics were redefined, ethnic and gender identifications restructured, and varieties of religion explored.

In the absence of white settlers, African rulers were sometimes able to compromise with the new authorities—as in Barotseland in Northern Rhodesia, or in the High Commission Territories. As new fears of 'detrribalization' and the potential radicalization of African workers confronted colonial governments, they moved to bolster intermediate chiefs and headmen, granting them increased authority over their subjects while subordinating them to the colonial state. This refurbishing of chiefly authority gave institutional backing and material rewards to ethnic identification. State recognition also altered the relationship between chiefs and their subjects, as the former became more responsive to the demands of the white administration than to the popular will.

The extension of the market economy further intensified divisions between chiefs and commoners, especially where chiefs identified with unpopular colonial policies, had insufficient land, or exploited the labour of their followers. These tensions were probably most acute in Basutoland, where the outcry over the corruption and ineptitude of chiefs descended from Moshoeshe, Basutoland's great nineteenth-century king, led to reforms in 1938 which greatly reduced both the numbers of the chiefs and their powers. Elsewhere, industrialization and

westernization rendered chiefly rule increasingly inappropriate, especially to Christian converts.

By the beginning of the twentieth century parts of South Africa had experienced almost a century of Christian endeavour. The scope of mission work, already entrenched in the Shire Highlands and south of the Limpopo, was now vastly extended as new societies appeared on the scene and became largely responsible for African education and health. In the nineteenth century Christianity had attracted the disaffected and dispossessed, especially women, and they remained its most important constituency. Although men held the important offices in the church, by the beginning of the twentieth century women were organizing a variety of prayer meetings and self-help groups in order to address the problems they experienced as mothers and wives.

The missionary heritage, however, was multifaceted. If, in a general sense, missionaries can be seen as the midwives of colonialism, encouraging individualism, wage labour, and commodity production, they also fostered the growth of a class of literate and educated Christian Africans who were, paradoxically, to become colonialism's most effective critics. By the late nineteenth century many churches practised a colour bar. African independent churches emerged, often characterized by syncretic religious practices and a millenarianism which disturbed settlers, missionaries, and administrators alike.

As the experience of colonialism and mission education had been longest and most intense south of the Limpopo, so the earliest Western-type political organizations also appeared there. By the early twentieth century a number of local associations and vigilance societies gave expression to the demands of educated Africans for the extension of civil rights, and especially the franchise. These political organizations first came together to protest against the discriminatory Act of Union and formed the South African Native National Congress, the later African National Congress, in 1912. It was joined by chiefs and educated Africans from the High Commission Territories who were apprehensive of Union designs. Congress aimed to overcome ethnic divisions, gain acceptance from whites through self-help, education, and the accumulation of property, and represent African grievances through patient petition and peaceful protest. Well into the century, proclaimed loyalty to Empire was a self-conscious counter to settler despotism.

The existence of substantial Coloured and Indian minorities in South Africa gave an extra dimension to these struggles. It was there that M. K. Gandhi pioneered his philosophy of *satyagraha* between 1906 and 1913, and led the first large-scale non-violent resistance against anti-Indian legislation, with limited success.²¹ Nevertheless, restrictions remained on Indian movement in and immi-

²¹ See above, p. 433.

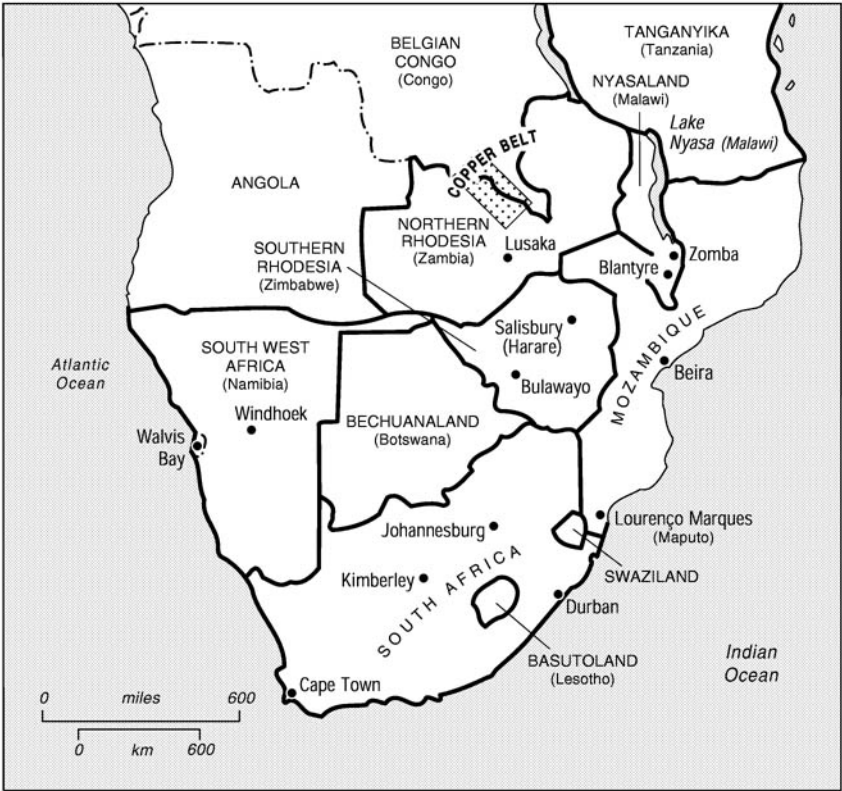
gration to South Africa, and the militancy of the South African Indian Congress which he formed was lost until after the Second World War, when younger, more radical leaders began to collaborate with African nationalists for the first time in the wake of violent communal riots in Durban in 1949.

The Coloureds of the Cape and Transvaal were never as successfully mobilized. Though the African Political (later African People's) Organization, founded in 1902, was the first black nationwide political organization, it was soon eclipsed by more vigorous African nationalist movements. For the most part Coloureds were divided and relatively voiceless. Some were drawn into predominantly African movements in the 1920s and 1930s, others were co-opted by white politicians through their access to the franchise. Opposition to the creation of a separate 'Coloured Affairs' department was, however, intense and helped establish the Non-European Unity Movement which came to influence black political thought and action more widely.

Basutoland, with its high literacy rates, had an African Progressive Association as early as 1907, while the more radical Commoners' League or *Lekhotla la Bafo* was founded in 1919. These associations had their counterpart rather later in Central Africa and the other High Commission Territories, where the advent of missionaries and colonialism had occurred later. Many early nationalists had experience of working or studying in the Union, and established 'native associations' and 'welfare associations' which gave birth in turn to the African National Congresses in Southern Rhodesia in 1934, Nyasaland in 1944, and Northern Rhodesia in 1948, all forerunners of later independence political parties. Despite regional differences, the class composition and methods of struggle of these organizations were all broadly similar until the 1950s.

Despite the greatly increased numbers of Africans in South African industry by the end of the First World War, African trade unions were hampered by pass laws, lack of recognition, and police harassment. Strikes were illegal and often put down with violence. Nevertheless, black working-class militancy mounted between 1918 and 1922, and in the 1920s the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union, initially founded among dockworkers in Cape Town, spread rapidly throughout the region. At its height the Union claimed 100,000 members and had branches as far afield as Southern Rhodesia and South-West Africa. A variety of internal factors led to its disintegration by the end of the decade, however, and it was not until the eve of the Second World War that black workers recovered their militancy.

From the early 1920s, to pre-empt African radicalization, the South African government established local consultative councils for the expression of African grievances. In 1937 a Union-wide Native Representative Council was set up. In Southern Rhodesia and the British-controlled territories, similar consultative



MAP 24.1. Southern Africa in the Mid-Twentieth Century

councils were established slightly later and signalled increasing African politicization. Despite their purely advisory capacity, at least until the end of the Second World War, educated Africans participated in these bodies in the hope, often frustrated, of gaining concessions from the state.

Southern Africa, 1939–1960s

If in the first four decades of the century South Africa dominated British decision-making over southern Africa, over the next twenty years their paths diverged increasingly. Segregation fell on 'evil days' and British colonies in Africa moved towards independence.²² Nevertheless, despite the victory of South Africa's National Party, economic ties between Britain and South Africa were strengthened, and Britain's dependence on South African gold, and later uranium, became of even greater moment at a time of sterling crisis and British decline.²³

In much of southern Africa, as in many other parts of Africa, the Second World War accelerated economic development, intensified the pressures on African peasants and workers, and radicalized African political organizations. Thousands of Africans soldiers came back home with widened horizons and heightened nationalist sentiment. In Northern Rhodesia the wartime demand for copper greatly expanded production and dramatically changed labour relations on the Copper Belt; by the end of the war the territory was one of the world's major producers of an increasingly strategic mineral. In Southern Rhodesia white farmers at last found their El Dorado in tobacco production, while base metals and secondary industry replaced gold as key sectors of the economy. Although manufacturing industry in the Union overtook mining and agriculture in its contribution to gross national product in 1942, gold continued to drive the South African economy. As local Africans moved into the better-paid work in factories, so the mining industry drew in cheaper migrants from ever further northwards.

These economic shifts were underpinned by demographic changes. The 1930s and 1940s saw large numbers of Africans settling permanently in the major cities for the first time: in South Africa nearly 2.5 million Africans were classified as urbanized by the mid-century. In Southern Rhodesia the wartime industrial boom was sustained by the doubling of the African urban population to about 200,000 over the next decade, while the Copper Belt attracted not only large numbers of migrants, but also an increasingly 'stabilized' urban African population.

²² The quotation is from Smuts's speech before the South African Institute of Race Relations, Cape Town, Feb. 1942, cited in W. K. Hancock, *Smuts: The Fields of Force, 1919–1950* (Cambridge, 1968), p. 475. The quotation reads: 'Isolation has gone and segregation has fallen on evil days too'.

²³ See Geoff Berridge, *Economic Power in Anglo-South African Diplomacy: Simonstown, Sharpeville and After* (London, 1981); Henshaw, 'Britain, South Africa and the Sterling Area'.

The post-war years also saw a stream of new white immigrants making their way to central Africa, most of them to Southern Rhodesia, where the white population had grown to about 25,000 by 1953, but also to the Copper Belt, where the number of white employees trebled between 1939 and 1964. Everywhere urbanization and the development of manufacturing led to fears about its political consequences and a prolonged debate over the black presence, especially the black woman's presence, in the urban areas. In South Africa the answer was 'apartheid'; in the Rhodesias, during the years of Federation, 'partnership'.

Economic growth brought little additional wealth to the black majority in the region. In South Africa the 'poor white' question was solved, to be replaced by an even more intractable—because largely neglected—'poor black' problem. In Southern Rhodesia African wages, welfare, and working conditions remained wretched. Despite the importance of copper to the British, especially during and immediately after the war, Northern Rhodesian Africans saw scant returns. Until mid-century the British South Africa Company received the royalties while the taxation on mining profits was paid to the British government until 1953, and then largely to the Federal government in Salisbury. Little of this revenue was returned to Northern Rhodesia, although in the 1950s the Company's royalties from the Copper Belt helped finance mining development in Australia, South Africa, and the United States.²⁴ Northern Rhodesia remained as much an appendage of the settler south as ever.

In the Rhodesias and South Africa the war years and their immediate aftermath saw widespread black disaffection, working-class mobilization, and militant action, which were triggered by poverty wages, squalid living conditions, and high levels of youth unemployment. In Northern Rhodesia African workers, especially the mineworkers, were protected by colour-blind legislation in 1948 and an African mineworkers' union was formed in 1949 with the assistance of the British Trades Union Congress. In the settler south black workers were seriously bruised by this period of insurgency. In South Africa the 1946 strike of over 70,000 gold-miners was harshly suppressed and wartime legislation banning strikes by Africans remained unrepealed until 1978. In Southern Rhodesia an unprecedented general strike of over 100,000 workers spread from Bulawayo to towns, mines, and even farms in the rest of the country, and was soon subsumed in more general nationalist, populist, and rural struggles.

The economic expansion of the 1930s and 1940s also affected rural southern Africa, though in different ways. The benefits of urban development did not trickle down to improve rural conditions but often contributed to the further impover-

²⁴ A. D. Roberts, 'Notes Towards a Financial History of Copper Mining in Northern Rhodesia,' *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, XVI, 2 (1982), pp. 347–59.

ishment of the African reserves. The able-bodied were drawn to urban labour markets and subsistence agriculture suffered. By the late 1930s and 1940s government authorities, mining companies, and African chiefs as well as educated leaders were voicing fears of social disintegration, economic decline, and soil erosion in the reserves.

In South Africa the response was rural 'betterment' schemes which involved the relocation of people, contour ploughing, attempts to centralize landholdings, and, most unpopular of all, the culling of cattle. Introduced in faltering fashion from the mid-1930s, the policies were bitterly opposed in the reserves which, by the 1950s, as their implementation intensified, were simmering with discontent.

In Southern Rhodesia similar schemes introduced from as early as 1928 also met with peasant resistance. After the war, when white farmers switched to tobacco cultivation and industrialists demanded cheap provisions, African food production was promoted more energetically. This led to the Native Land Husbandry Act of 1951. Intended to stabilize a proportion of the African population in the urban areas, and encourage African farmers to produce for the market, the Act roused the opposition of chiefs, migrants, and the new class of entrepreneurs. Rural discontent inflamed anti-colonial struggles over the next three decades.

The Colonial Development and Welfare Acts of 1940 and 1945 brought some measure of investment to territories under direct British rule at a time when Britain was increasingly concerned about rural conditions and anxious to exploit the economic possibilities of Empire. Agricultural research stations and extension programmes were developed to increase agricultural production in Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia. Yet the new demand for agricultural production both for Imperial and the new urban markets benefited white capitalist farmers rather than the African peasantry, while heightened intervention in rural production proved deeply unpopular.

Paradoxically, the war and the rise of more radical African political movements led initially to the consolidation of colonial and white settler rule in southern Africa. The victory of the Afrikaner National Party in South Africa led in turn to Britain's creation of the Central African Federation as a counterpoise and to the renewed encouragement of white settlement. As in other parts of colonial Africa, the advance of African nationalism was met by a more interventionist and authoritarian state. The response was most elaborate and most stringent in South Africa, and was to provide a major test for the ties of the Empire-Commonwealth.

The Union continued to dominate the region, although the discrediting of racist ideas in Europe after the Second World War and the beginnings of decolonization in Asia brought swelling international opprobrium. The explicitly

racialized agenda of South Africa was increasingly seen as an outrage to the new moral order. Even before Smuts lost power, the Union's treatment of its Indian minority and its attempts to incorporate South-West Africa were censured by the United Nations. While the British government deplored South Africa's racial policies it refrained from action, mindful of gold and anxious not to jeopardize Smuts's electoral chances.

Dissatisfaction with the wartime Cabinet and fears of urban African militancy lay behind the victory of the National Party under the leadership of Dr D. F. Malan in South Africa's elections of 1948, fought under the new slogan of 'apartheid' (separateness). The word had different and contradictory meanings appealing to different interests in the party. Contrary to conventional wisdom, initially the government was too weak to implement a monolithic blueprint. Inevitably, at first many apartheid policies were *ad hoc* responses to the multiple crises that confronted the state in the indebted and labour-hungry white farming sector, crumbling reserves, and volatile urban locations.

At first the National Party was concerned to increase its hold over Parliament, promote Afrikaner economic interests, and tighten up the segregationist policies of their predecessors. A cluster of laws defining ethnic boundaries more rigidly in the interests of 'racial purity' were directed against the Coloured and Indian minorities, dividing them from whites, from each other, and from the African majority, in a finely calculated hierarchy of discrimination. Under Hendrik Verwoerd as Minister of Native Affairs (1953–57) and Prime Minister (1958–65), apartheid was more stringently applied, though fierce division remained over its direction. From the late 1950s influx-control laws preventing rural Africans coming into the city were streamlined. Labour bureaux were created in the rural areas to direct labour to white mines, factories, and farms in an attempt to prevent competition between them; and the job colour bar was extended. From 1953 the government also gave increased powers of social control to 'tribal authorities' in the rural reserves, in an attempt to shore up reserve economies and halt the decline of chiefly authority. The reserves were now divided on ethno-linguistic lines into nine—later ten—'Bantu homelands' and were granted limited local self-government in 1959. Beginning with the Transkei in 1976, four poverty-stricken 'independent nation states' emerged out of this 'homeland policy'. Modelled ostensibly on decolonization elsewhere, their 'independence' remained unrecognized by the international community.

By the early 1960s the National Party had firmly entrenched itself in power, had greatly improved Afrikaner economic standing, and notwithstanding the emergence of a small liberal voice in parliamentary politics, had persuaded many English-speaking South Africans that only it could protect white supremacy. So confident was Verwoerd that he put long-desired nationalist republican ambitions

to a referendum in 1960. A small majority voted in favour, despite British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan's 'wind of change' speech in Cape Town warning South Africans of the speed of decolonization in the rest of Africa. In 1961 the hostility to apartheid of African and Asian member-states forced South Africa to withdraw from the Commonwealth; nevertheless, it lost none of the economic advantages of membership and South Africa remained within the sterling area until sterling's crisis of 1972–73. The National Party now engaged in far more systematic social engineering, using increasing force to put down any sign of resistance. The result was a massive expansion of the state and brutal interference in peoples' daily lives.

Black resistance to apartheid consisted of formal political opposition and innumerable individual acts of defiance. In the 1950s protest reached unprecedented levels and in turn reshaped the nature of the apartheid state. Like African organizations elsewhere, the African National Congress was transformed by the war and its aftermath. Black Communists and new Youth and Women's Leagues played a major role in this revitalization. Under the National Party onslaught, Congress allied with white radicals (many of whom had been members of the Communist Party, banned in 1950), Coloureds, and Indians in countrywide non-violent resistance to apartheid legislation; in 1955 this Congress Alliance drew up a non-racial, social-democratic Freedom Charter. Distrust of non-racialism and alleged Communist domination led the Pan-African Congress to secede in 1959. By this time largely peaceful demonstrations had given way to spiralling violence against new rural authorities and the increasingly rigorous implementation of the pass laws. In March 1960 national anti-pass demonstrations called by the Pan-Africanists left sixty-nine dead and 180 injured at Sharpeville in the Transvaal; thousands were imprisoned or went into exile as the Congress and Pan-African Congress were banned. Forced underground, these organizations turned to sabotage and formed military wings. Sharpeville also marked a major shift in the international perception of South Africa and the beginning of a thirty-year armed struggle against apartheid.

The victory of the overtly republican Nationalists in South Africa in 1948 and their consolidation in power also posed a series of challenges for wider British interests in the subcontinent. Not only did their economic policies appear to threaten British investments in South Africa; the Nationalists also continued to defy the United Nations over South Africa and to demand full incorporation of the High Commission Territories.

The extent of South Africa's continued hold over the latter was seen in 1949 when the heir to the largest kingdom in the Bechuanaland Protectorate, the Ngwato prince, Seretse Khama, returned home with an English bride. Largely in

response to public and government feeling in South Africa, the British banished Seretse Khama (as well as his uncle, the regent Tshekedi Khama). The matter was only resolved in 1956 when Seretse renounced claims to the chieftaincy, and he and Tshekedi were allowed to return to their people as private citizens.²⁵

By 1956 it was clear that if the High Commission Territories were not to be incorporated politically by South Africa they would have to be prepared for independence. Limited development funds were now made available, and plans drawn up for the provision of social services, education, soil conservation, roads, and water. This did little to end the migration of large numbers of Sotho and Tswana seeking work in South Africa. Swaziland remained far less reliant on migrant labour. Asbestos as well as coal-mining, sugar and timber plantations, and cattle-ranching had all begun to generate more local jobs after the war. Nevertheless, about 28 per cent of its population was in South Africa, mainly on the mines, on the eve of Swazi independence.

None of the High Commission Territories had powerful liberation movements: their agenda was set by events in the rest of British Africa. In 1952 the Basutoland Congress Party was formed. Advocating self-government and the modernization of chieftainship, it was modelled on South Africa's African National Congress. The organization soon split into the Basutoland Congress Party, the Maremoutlou Party, and the Basutoland National Party; all three contested the pre-independence elections of 1961. In the event the Basutoland National Party under Chief Leabua Jonathan, supported by the South African government, the powerful Roman Catholic Church, and the queen regent formed the first post-independence government in 1965.

In Botswana and Swaziland modern nationalist movements emerged somewhat later and were dominated by members of the royal families. In Botswana, which achieved independence in 1966, Seretse Khama emerged as the first President, while in Swaziland King Sobhuza II emerged as head of state in 1968 through the overwhelming electoral majority of his Imbokodvo National Movement in the rural areas. Despite initial alarm, South Africa soon learnt to live with her newly independent neighbours, who remained economically and politically far too weak to challenge her hegemony.

The National Party victory also spurred Britain into supporting the closer union of its Central African territories. Even before the war, Northern Rhodesian whites had turned southward in response to growing African assertiveness and their own impatience with perceived Colonial Office interference in their affairs, and this

²⁵ Neil Parsons, Willie Henderson and Thomas Tlou, *Seretse Khama, 1921–1980* (Gaborone, 1995), chap. 4. For British motives, see pp. 86–88.

intensified after the war. With the growing importance of the copper industry in Northern Rhodesia, Southern Rhodesia's settlers also began to see advantages in closer association. At the same time, many colonial officials saw the inclusion of Nyasaland in such an association as a tidy solution to its problems of economic backwardness, although it was never a prominent part of settler ambitions. Wartime collaboration between the three territories in the Central African Council further promoted the new political alignment. However, while colonial officials favoured 'the creation of a solid British bloc of territories in Central Africa' as a counterpoise to the Union of South Africa, for its supposed strategic, economic, and political advantages, the post-war Labour government remained reluctant to impose federation in the face of the manifest hostility of the region's African majority.²⁶

The Conservative government which came to power in 1951 did not share these scruples. Despite the incompatibility between the white supremacist ideals which drove the settler demand for federation and Britain's proclaimed belief in the 'paramountcy of African interests', the Conservatives swept aside African fears that federation would entrench segregation on the Southern Rhodesian model and pave the way to white self-government. For the Conservatives, 'multi-racial power sharing' was the answer not only to apartheid and South African regional domination, but also to African demands for majority rule: according to a memorandum prepared for the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Alan Lennox-Boyd, in 1955, 'power sharing' would save the European and Asian communities from being 'swamped' by Africans, and 'offered the best hope... of maintaining European influence'. At the same time, European demands for untrammelled minority rule were to be resisted.²⁷ As Lord Alport, the British High Commissioner in Salisbury, put it, federation 'would help curb the excesses of both black man and white man'.²⁸

The new federal state, the Central African Federation, was inaugurated in October 1953. Its constitution provided some safeguard for African interests in the continued protectorate status of Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland, and a possible Imperial veto over racially discriminatory legislation. In addition, each territory was to elect two African members and to nominate one European to

²⁶ See e.g. D[ominions] O[ffice] 35/3588, no. 36, 'Relations of the two Rhodesias and Nyasaland': Memorandum by A. B. Cohen, 15 March 1950, in Ronald Hyam, ed., *The Labour Government and the End of Empire, 1945–1951*, British Documents on the End of Empire Project (BDEEP), Series A, Vol III (London, 1992), doc. 425.

²⁷ David Goldsworthy, ed., *The Conservative Government and the End of Empire, 1951–57*, BDEEP (London, 1994), Part I, pp. xlviii–xlix; Part II, Document 296, CO 822/929, no. 26, pp. 257–60. 'The Franchise in East and Central Africa': Draft of Memorandum by W. L. Gorell Barnes, intended by Mr Lennox Boyd for Cabinet Colonial Policy Committee, 15 Oct. 1955.

²⁸ *Sudden Assignment* (London, 1965), p. 20, cited in Chanock, *Unconsummated Union*, p. 260.

represent African interests in the Federal Assembly; a standing committee of the Assembly was also established with the power to scrutinize and even veto legislation affecting Africans. The constitution was to be reviewed within seven to nine years of its inception. These provisions did little to allay African opposition.

Initially, it is true, economic growth seems to have blunted protest against federation in Southern Rhodesia, although dissatisfaction mounted in the reserves, prompted by growing landlessness and land congestion, and unprecedented state intervention in African agriculture. Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland Africans always suspected that Federation would prevent their political advance and extend racist legislation. Whatever the rhetoric of 'partnership', its economic advantages appeared to accrue to whites and the modest moves towards more liberal racial policies seemed woefully inadequate. Sophisticated constitutional manoeuvring and limited attempts to extend the franchise to suitably 'civilized and responsible' Africans did little to assuage their demand for an unqualified democratic vote. By the late 1950s more radical nationalist movements had emerged in all three territories, mobilizing urban workers and disaffected peasantry alike.

The rise of mass movements alarmed the Federal authorities. Sporadic disturbances in Nyasaland in 1959 led to a state of emergency, while in all three territories nationalist leaders were arrested and their organizations banned, to be replaced by new parties under new names. The bannings set off further disorder, and in the northern territories this convinced the British government, already rethinking its African commitments in the context of profoundly changed international and regional priorities, to bring decolonization in Central Africa in line with that in the rest of the continent.

By 1961–62 nationalists in Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia were released and new 'non-racial' constitutions drawn up, based on majority rule; in 1963 the Federation was formally dissolved. Within a year the Malawi Congress Party under Dr Hastings Banda, who had been recalled from abroad to head the independence movement in Nyasaland, and the United National Independence Party under Kenneth Kaunda in Northern Rhodesia had won elections based on universal suffrage and led their countries into independence.

Epilogue

With the independence of Zambia, Malawi, and the High Commission Territories, the first phase of African decolonization in southern Africa was complete. By the late 1960s all non-independent African countries were in settler-dominated southern Africa, and the following decade saw escalating wars of liberation in Mozambique and Angola, followed by Namibia and Zimbabwe. The independence of the

Lusophone colonies in the mid-1970s was a crucial moment in shifting the balance of power against the remaining white minority states in the subcontinent and increasing international involvement in the region.

In Southern Rhodesia, the imminent collapse of the Federation had led, in 1961, to the formation of the right-wing Rhodesian Front Party and its electoral victory on a platform of immediate independence under white control. This Britain was unwilling to concede, and white Rhodesians, who for so long had identified with Empire, now became convinced that continued ties with Britain threatened white survival. In 1965, under the leadership of Ian Smith, the Rhodesia Front unilaterally and illegally declared Rhodesia independent; it became a republic in 1969.²⁹ Despite international economic sanctions, the regime lasted another ten years before Africans won their independence after a bitter guerrilla struggle which, like the battle against apartheid further south, involved all its neighbours in a destructive, if largely, clandestine war. By 1978 it was clear that neither side could win, and after many failed efforts negotiations were held at Lancaster House in 1979. The Commonwealth played a significant role in establishing the peace settlement that followed. In 1980 Robert Mugabe won a landslide electoral victory, and became the first post-independence Prime Minister. By 1980 only the Republic of South Africa and South-West Africa remained under white rule.

Despite their political independence, the new southern African states remained embedded in a regional economy consisting of enclaves of high capital investment and rural areas of increasing impoverishment. The nationalists inherited authoritarian and often quite rudimentary colonial states and had little experience of government. For most of the newly independent states, the problem was how to create a nation out of nationalism: the anti-colonial movements had been led by a small middle-class élite, mobilizing a largely peasant populace. With the transfer of power, the unity of the anti-colonial struggle proved short-lived. Ethnic and regional cleavages emerged, frequently arising more from competition over resources than from ethnic tensions *per se*.

Independence was also severely constrained by the continuation of white supremacy in Rhodesia until 1980 and South Africa until the 1990s; there the more complex economies and powerful settler-controlled states greatly complicated the transition to majority rule. The final stages of the wars of liberation in South-West Africa and South Africa took a formidable toll of lives and resources, and left much of the subcontinent dangerously debilitated.

Between Sharpeville in 1960 and the independence of Angola and Mozambique, South Africa had a breathing-space. Thereafter, black resistance, the result of internal economic change and inspired by the successful liberation of their

²⁹ For the links and parallels with Northern Ireland, see above, p. 155.

neighbours, and the invigorated external armed struggle which this liberation made possible, mounted from the mid-1970s to reach its crescendo by the mid-1980s. By then, despite the reluctance of the British and American governments to lend support, international economic sanctions also began to bite, and the government was forced to surrender many central features of apartheid. But concessions simply led to fresh confrontations with a now wholly alienated black population, insistent on majority rule. In 1990 the South African President, F. W. de Klerk, was forced to legalize the opposition movements and release the Congress leader, Nelson Mandela, from twenty-five years' imprisonment on Robben Island. South Africa's first non-racial, democratic elections were held in April 1994, bringing the African National Congress to power as the dominant partner in a national coalition government. It had been, in the words of the new President, Nelson Mandela, a 'long walk to freedom'.

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