

## **Apartheid: A Complex Heritage**

(Paper presented to Workshop on the Economics of Apartheid, UCT, 20 March 2013)

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*Apartheid has within it the basis for re-education and a new recognition of the realities of South African life ...It is easy to criticize the racial laws of South Africa on humanitarian or historical grounds... [but] it is not difficult to show that those whose advocacy is truly high-minded have simply abolished the real world about them, and have created a paradise without history and in defiance of economics.*

CW de Kiewiet, *The Anatomy of South Africa Misery* ( 1956), p.45

### **Introduction**

I would like to preface the paper with a confession. I never took a course on economics, but my greatest admiration is for scholars working on the interface of economics, demography and politics, among whom the late Lawrence Schlemmer was an outstanding example. The paper starts with a case study on Bantu education (BE), which is probably the most controversial policy of the apartheid system and the one that scholars generally believe did the greatest harm to the economy. Most of the charges made against BE are not grounded in fact. It proceeds to a section which draws on the alternative models of development suggested by Samuel Huntington and Joan Nelson. It ends with an attempt to assess the political and economic impact of apartheid with special emphasis on the period between 1948 and 1974.

### **A case study: Bantu education**

In 1954 the government took over coloured and black education, which previously had been provided largely by missions and churches and it introduced what became known as Bantu Education (BE). Among commentators there have been two different responses. On the one hand there were those who regard BE as a policy conceived in bad faith and as a destructive intervention, leaving the education of blacks in a worse state than before. They also assert that Hendrik Verwoerd, its political architect, deliberately starved black education of funds to make certain that black children remained poorly educated.

Opposed to these critics are those who point out that despite the unequal racial spending, BE's effects were not universally negative, and that some of the policy's aspects could be considered as part-reform. They also argue that BE succeeded in drawing the youth into a mass system of primary education that provided a better quality labour force..<sup>1</sup>

The following section does not attempt a comprehensive investigation of BE, but only seeks to examine the main charges against the policy made by those who regard the policy as a destructive form of intervention. They are:

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<sup>1</sup> J Hyslop, "A destruction coming in": Bantu education as a response to social crisis"; P Bonner et al. (eds.) *Apartheid's Genesis, 1935-1962* (Johannesburg, Ravan, 1993), pp. 393-410.

\*BE closed down a functioning system of black education that included some good mission schools such as Lovedale and Healdtown;

\* It stunted black development by insisting on mother-tongue education;

\* It was based on “the assumption of an inferior potential of African minds” and was “explicitly designed to prepare blacks for a subordinate place in society”;<sup>2</sup>

\*It discouraged the teaching of Mathematics and Science;

\*It deliberately starved black education of funds;

\*It did not train enough black teachers, giving rise to large classes, which negatively affected the quality of teaching.

These charges are discussed below:

*“Bantu Education closed down a functioning system”*

The facts are rather different. In 1939 the Minister of Education admitted that two thirds of black children were without any school experience whatsoever.<sup>3</sup> There was some improvement in the war years, but by 1950 less than half of black children between the ages of 7 and 16 were attending school, and only 2.6% of black pupils were enrolled in post-primary standards. The average black child spent only four years at school.

Among the mission schools there were a few well-performing high schools but, as Hyslop commented, the renowned reputation of these schools “should not obscure the fact that most mission schools were poor primary schools with large dropout rates” and that the “mission system was breaking down at all levels.”<sup>4</sup> With the demand for education growing rapidly, schools had to take in far more children than they could teach effectively. School buildings were dilapidated and classes overcrowded. Most schools were understaffed and there was a severe shortage of competent teachers.

But the white electorate rejected any substantial state spending on black education. In 1939 RFA Hoernlé, a leading liberal, observed that while a large number of the white voters did not mind “native education” as such, it would be suicide in most constituencies for a Member of Parliament “to advocate, let alone vote for, the proposal that whites should be taxed in order that natives could be educated.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> R Davenport and C Saunders, *South Africa: A modern history*, (London: Macmillan, 2000), p. 674.

<sup>3</sup> *Cape Times*, 18 May 1939.

<sup>4</sup> J Hyslop, *The class room struggle: Policy and resistance in South Africa* (Pietermaritzburg, UN Press, 1993), pp. 8-11.

<sup>5</sup> RFA Hoernlé, *South African native policy and the liberal spirit* (Johannesburg, Witwatersrand University Press, 1939), p. 18.

There was a strong white belief that white supremacy would be undermined by the progressive improvement of black education. In 1946 JG Strijdom, Transvaal NP leader, warned NP leader DF Malan that it would be impossible to maintain racial discrimination if the level of black education was steadily improved. “Our church ministers,” he added, “were far too eager to compete with other missionary societies in trying to provide the most education to blacks.” It would lead to demands for equal rights from educated people, which, if refused, would lead to “bloody clashes and revolutions.”<sup>6</sup>

An opinion survey conducted years later in 1981 (See Table 1) indeed showed that black children’s rejection of segregation indeed progressively increased with higher education levels. About half of the children with only 4 years of schooling said whites could keep their own housing areas and schools, against only a third of those in Standards 7 to 9, and only one tenth of those in Std. 10 and higher<sup>7</sup> (See table 1)

**Table 1: Black political responses (%) according to education (1981 survey)**

Level of Education
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<sup>6</sup> HB Thom, *DF Malan* (Cape Town, Tafelberg, 1980), p. 279.

<sup>7</sup> H Giliomee and L Schlemmer, *From apartheid to nation-building* (Cape Town, Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 119.

	Std. 2 or below [Grades 4 and below]	Std. 3 to 6 [Grades 5-8]	Std. 7 to 9 [Grades 9-11]	Std. 10 [Grade 12]
<i>Whites can have their own</i>				
Laws against mixed marriages	70	65	45	18
Own housing areas	62	52	32	15
Own schools	53	34	26	13
Farmlands	47	38	29	11
Recreation facilities	41	26	18	2
Transport and buses	36	26	18	2

Note: Only percentages accepting segregation are given.

Source: H Giliomee and L Schlemmer, *From apartheid to nation-building*, p. 119

Yet to deny blacks a proper education would undermine the key claim of the apartheid ideology that it was committed to the upliftment of the subordinate population. Verwoerd's response was to expand black education greatly, but to qualify it with the insistence that the more advanced jobs for blacks would be restricted to the homelands. Verwoerd did not consider well-educated blacks a threat as long as the aspirations of the better educated were directed to jobs where they could serve the different black "communities". Questioned about the wisdom of establishing university colleges for blacks, he replied:<sup>8</sup>

We shall have to negotiate frequently with [blacks] in the future over many issues, including education and politics. It would be better to negotiate with people who are well informed and educated.

Responding to BE in 1958, Gwendolen Carter, a well-regarded Africanist from the USA, wrote: "There was much that made sense in the Nationalist arguments. It is obvious that the lack of opportunities in the South African context for Africans with advanced training [in the so-called white part of the country] makes them frustrated and bitter." She then refers without criticism to Verwoerd's vision of the homelands as areas where job opportunities

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<sup>8</sup> G van de Wall, "Verwoerd, die hervormer", WJ Verwoerd (compiler), *Verwoerd: So onthou ons hom*, p. 166.

would arise to which blacks could not aspire elsewhere. She also pointed out that it was “hard to deny the importance of basing education on the culture of the particular group”<sup>9</sup>

Verwoerd’s formulation affirmed the situation on the ground. The UP government saw little need for training large numbers of black artisans for employment in the common area. Blacks could only expect to do skilled work in the reserves. In 1947 the secretary of the Department of Native Affairs told the De Villiers Commission on Technical and Vocational Training in 1947 that “the unfolding of extensive government development schemes” in the reserves would produce a large number of skilled posts.<sup>10</sup>

What was new, as Carter pointed out, was the creation of new opportunities for blacks in the homelands and what was called blacks “serving their own people”.<sup>11</sup> But Carter was not affected by the bitter political rivalries between the two white communities and between whites and blacks during the 1950s.

Writing in the 1990s, Hyslop that noted BE succeeded in drawing the youth into a mass system of primary education that provided a better quality labour force. It was, he emphasises, “grossly inegalitarian and racist”, but “parents supported it and the attempts to boycott it failed for nearly two decades.”<sup>12</sup>

*“BE was based on racist assumptions”*

Those who charge Verwoerd with implementing a policy with racist assumptions usually base it on a reading of his speech in parliament in 1953, when he introduced the legislation. He attacked the existing policy, which, in his words, showed the black man “the green pastures of the European but still did not allow him to graze there.” He said:

Education should have its roots entirely in the Native areas and in the Native environment and the Native community... The Bantu must be guided to serve his own community in all respects. There is no place for him in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour. Within his own community, however, all doors are open.

This comment is often distorted by quoting only the first part – “There is no place for him in the European community above certain forms of labour” – and omitting the rest of the sentence: “Within his own community, however, all doors are open.”<sup>13</sup> The first part of the

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<sup>9</sup> G Carter, *The politics of inequality: South Africa since 1948* (London, Thames and Hudson, 1958), pp. 104-105.

<sup>10</sup> Hyslop, *The Class room struggle*, pp. 4-5.

<sup>11</sup> G Carter, *The politics of inequality*, pp. 102-103.

<sup>12</sup> J Hyslop, “‘A destruction coming in’: Bantu education as a response to social crisis”; P Bonner et al. (eds.) *Apartheid’s Genesis, 1935-1962* (Johannesburg, Ravan, 1993), pp. 393-410.

<sup>13</sup> AN Pelzer (ed.), *Verwoerd speaks* (Johannesburg, APB, 1968), p. 83.

quote sounds very harsh, but it was not out of line with the policy that the UP government followed up to 1948.

Was it racist? The most widely-read general history of South Africa in its fifth edition, published in 2000, argued that both the Eiselen report and the Act were based on the “assumption of an inferior potential in African minds” and was “explicitly designed to prepare blacks for an inferior place in society.”<sup>14</sup> In a previous edition, published in 1987, there is no reference to such assumptions or designs. The 2000 edition reflects the fact that a new government preoccupied with white racism had come to power. Apartheid was no longer seen as a wrong or misguided policy but as racist and evil. The latter view is absent in most of the writings before 1994.<sup>15</sup>

As a lecturer Verwoerd rejected biological racism.<sup>16</sup> In his lecture notes at Stellenbosch University he dismissed the idea of biological or genetic difference. The differences that did exist “were not really a factor in the development of a higher civilization by the Caucasian race.” He also observed that what appeared to be differences in skills in the case of Europeans and Africans were simply differences in culture as a result of historical experience.<sup>17</sup>

In his speech of 1953 announcing BE Verwoerd did not argue that the barrier to blacks rising to higher posts was a supposed racial inferiority. What he did was to say that they could not expect to perform skilled, clerical or professional jobs outside the homelands. Elsewhere Verwoerd stated that while there was no limit to the educational heights that the pick of black pupils might attain, teachers should not tell the rank and file that they were all destined to go as far as Standard VI.<sup>18</sup>

During the 1950s there was little demand among employers for black workers who had completed the more advanced standards. A study states:<sup>19</sup> “The overwhelming demand among urban employers was for workers with basic literacy, who could be employed as unskilled labour. In most cases ‘tribal labour’ was preferred.” Reviewing the high growth of

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<sup>14</sup> Rodney Davenport and Christopher Saunders, *South Africa: A Modern History* (London: Macmillan, 2000), p.674. Compare T.R.H. Davenport, *South Africa: A Modern History*9Johannesburg: Macmillan, 1987, p.375

<sup>15</sup> See for instance Monica Wilson, “The Growth of Peasant Communities” Leonard Thompson and Monica Wilson, (eds.), *Oxford History of South Africa*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), pp.78-79.

<sup>16</sup> Christopher Marx, who is working on a biography, argues that Verwoerd’s thinking could in today’s terms be considered racist for conflating race and culture.

<sup>17</sup> R Millar, “Science and society in the early career of HF Verwoerd”, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 19, 4, 1993, pp. 636-646.

<sup>18</sup> E Walker, *A history of Southern Africa* (London, Longmans Green, 1975), p. 900.

<sup>19</sup> D Posel, *The making of apartheid* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1997), p. 186.

the 1960s, the *Financial Mail* reported that in the previous decades “non-white” workers took over only 36 000 “white” jobs.<sup>20</sup>

In the first few weeks of his term as Minister of Native Affairs Verwoerd made an astounding proposal, which historians have surprisingly ignored. It shows that he initially did not intend to limit opportunities for blacks to do advanced jobs to the homelands. On 5 December 1950, six weeks after he had become a minister, a meeting took place at his request with the members of the Native Representative Council (NRC). Among whom there were several leading ANC figures.

Stating that he expected large numbers of blacks to remain in the big cities for many years, Verwoerd announced that the government planned to give blacks “the greatest possible measure of self-government” in these urban areas. All the work in these townships would have to be done by their own people, enabling blacks to pursue “a full life of work and service.” Blacks had to be educated to be sufficiently competent in many spheres, the only qualification being that they would have to place their knowledge exclusively at the service of black people. Verwoerd invited the NRC members to meet him after the session for a “comprehensive interview” about these matters and to put forward proposals, offering a prompt reply from government to their representations.<sup>21</sup>

The NRC did not take up the offer and it is easy to see why. The urban black elite demanded representation on all levels of government in common with whites. Verwoerd’s proposal fell far short of that. It was made in the context of complete segregation and Verwoerd spoke as a representative of a government that they viewed with grave suspicion.

This moment signalled a fateful turning point in South African politics. A new field for black politics could have been opened up if Verwoerd’s offer had been accepted, particularly if it set in motion a political process that led to talks between the government and the urban black leadership on the election of black urban councils, the formula for the allocation of revenue, the staffing of the local councils’ bureaucracy, property ownership and opportunities for black business. It would have opened up a whole new area for the development of black managerial and administrative capacity, something that the country would sorely lack when whites handed over power in 1994.<sup>22</sup>

Only after his meeting with the NRC members did Verwoerd embark on his policy that singled out the homelands as the only places where blacks could fulfil their political and professional aspirations. He tied the education system closely to the political system. Black high schools would not be built in urban areas, and the training of black teachers should preferably take place in the homelands.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> *Financial Mail*, 14 July 1967, Supplement, p. 43.

<sup>21</sup> AN Pelzer (ed.), *Verwoerd speaks*, pp. 28-30.

<sup>22</sup> H Giliomee and B Mbenga (eds.), *New History of South Africa* (Cape Town, Tafelberg, 2007), pp. 420-432.

<sup>23</sup> A Paton, *Apartheid and the archbishop* (Cape Town, David Philip, 1973), p. 232.

*“Deliberately starving Bantu education of funds”*

Strong criticism has been directed at the insufficient and discriminatory funding of black education. The common assumption is that the blame lies squarely with the policy as announced by Verwoerd. He stated in 1953 that the state’s allocation to black education would be pegged at R13 million and that any additional money had to come from direct taxes that blacks paid (R2 million). As a result the gap in the ratio of white to black per capita spending widened from 7 to 1 in 1953 to 18 to 1 in 1969.

But pegging funding for black education was not implemented as announced by Verwoerd. From the table below it can be inferred that the policy was adhered to only between 1957 and 1962, when there was an increase of only 2% on spending. In the next five years, between 1962 to 1967, spending increased by nearly 50%. The government had accepted that the great increases in the enrolment of black pupils made the policy quite unrealistic. According to Joubert Rousseau, later a Director General of Bantu Education, Verwoerd secured approval for the amount allocated to black education to be supplement from the loan account. The loans were never paid back.<sup>24</sup>

Spending on school buildings for blacks, along with other capital spending, was not brought onto the budget of the education department, as was the case in white education, but on that of the Department of Public Works. Especially during the first fifteen to twenty years of Bantu education, a large part of state spending consisted of expenses related to the construction of school buildings.<sup>25</sup> Without taking this into account, no proper comparison of per capita spending on white and black education can be made. The increases in spending are given in Table 2 below

**Table 2: State spending on education 1952 to 1987 in real 1987 rands (‘000s)\***

<i>Year</i>	<b>White</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Coloured</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Indian</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Black</b>	<b>%</b>
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<sup>24</sup> J Rousseau, “Iets oor Bantoe-Onderwys” W.J Verwoerd (samesteller), *Verwoerd: So onthou ons hom* ((Pretorria, Praag, 2001),, p. 172.

<sup>25</sup> Interview by author of Dirk Meiring, Director-general of Education and Training during the early 1990s, 16 December 2012.



		change		change		change		change
<b>1952</b>	874 582	n/a	99 706	n/a	27 319	n/a	144 385	n/a
<b>1957</b>	969 553	10.9%	122 561	22.9%	38 213	39.9%	165 776	14.8%
<b>1962</b>	1 280 105	32.0%	146 742	19.7%	49 960	30.7%	169 532	2.3%
<b>1967</b>	1 747 764	36.5%	289 399	97.2%	97 031	94.2%	254 344	50.0%
<b>1972</b>	2 719 104	55.6%	357 346	23.5%	152 092	56.7%	476 671	87.4%
<b>1977</b>	3 181 656	17.0%	523 088	46.4%	220 598	45.0%	640 922	34.5%
<b>1982</b>	4 098 822	28.8%	807 884	54.4%	390 698	77.1%	1 959 922	205.8%
<b>1987</b>	3 320 700	-19.0%	1 007 569	24.7%	404 647	3.6%	3 400 250	73.5%

Note: Black figures include TBVC states.

Source: H Giliomee and L Schlemmer, *From Apartheid to Nation-building*, p. 106.

\*Researched and compiled by Monica Bot.

What should also be taken into account was the major increase in the number of black pupils. The number of blacks in schools increased from 800 000 in 1953 to 2, 750 000 in 1970. This drastically affected the per capita spending on blacks.

It was difficult to narrow the large gap in the per capita spending on white and black education. There was firstly a large demographic disparity between whites and blacks. In the 1950s and 1960s the average childbearing black woman had 6,3 children compared to 3,3 in the case of white woman.<sup>26</sup> Second white teachers received much higher salaries not only because of racial discrimination but also because they were generally much better qualified.

*“BE provided insufficient teachers”*

A serious problem affecting the implementation of the policy was the inability to attract a sufficient number of black teachers to meet the growing demand for education. A recent study passes this judgement on the system:<sup>27</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Communication to author by Prof Flip Smit, ex- Vice Chancellor, University of Pretoria, and demographer, 25 June 2012.

<sup>27</sup> JW Fedderke, R de Kadt and J Lutz “Uneducating South Africa: The failure to address the need for human capital”, *International Review of Education*, 46, 3, 2000, pp. 257-258.

“The experience of black schooling during the 1950-70 period was one of partial modernization, generating a higher enrolment of black pupils, without providing additional teaching resources at a comparable rate.”

The study found that with respect to the latter issue, “white educational opportunity ... was consistently and considerably better than black educational opportunity.”

Other major problems were the very large classes and a very unfavourable pupil teacher ratio. The pupil teacher ratio in white government schools never rose above the mid-20 level; by contrast, the pupil teacher ratio in black schools remained in the range 50:1 to 70:1 for a protracted period from 1957 to 1993.<sup>28</sup> White teachers were consistently better qualified than their black counterparts. An interesting finding is that black matric pass rates did not respond positively to higher teacher qualifications.<sup>29</sup>

*“BE discouraged the teaching of mathematics and science”*

In his 1953 speech Verwoerd also remarked that it made little sense to teach mathematics to a black child if he or she could not use it in a career. Probably taking its cue from these words, a recent study alleges that as a result mathematics was no longer taught as “a core subject in black schools”.<sup>30</sup> In fact, the policy did not change and mathematics continued to be a school subject.<sup>31</sup>

From 1958 to 1965 a total of only 431 black matriculants passed mathematics.<sup>32</sup> The number of blacks who matriculated with a school-leaving certificate remained steady. The main problem was a lack of qualified teachers in key subjects, not only in mathematics but also the natural sciences.

Liberal scholars writing in the 1960s and 1970 criticised some aspects of the Bantu education but also noted the improvement in the provision of mass education and the general standard of literacy. A 1968 study by Muriel Horrell, of the SA Institute of Race Relations, was critical of Bantu Education, especially its use of mother-tongue instruction, but wrote approvingly of the syllabi. Those for primary classes were “educationally sound” and an improvement on the previous syllabi, while those for the junior and the senior certificate were

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<sup>28</sup> JW Fedderke et al., “Uneducating South Africa...”, *International Review of Education*, 46, 3, 2000, p. 259.

<sup>29</sup> JW Fedderke et al., “Uneducating South Africa”, *International Review of Education*, 46,3, 2000 p. 262.

<sup>30</sup> F Wilson, *Dinosaurs, diamonds and democracy* (Cape Town, Umuzi, 2009), p. 88.

<sup>31</sup> J Rousseau, “Iets oor Bantoe Onderwys”, WJ Verwoerd, (samesteller) *Verwoerd: so onthou ons hom* (Pretoria, Praag, 2001), p. 172.

<sup>32</sup> M Horrell, *Bantu Education to 1968* (Johannesburg, SAIRR, 1968), p. 72; J Rousseau, “Iets oor Bantoe-onderwys”, W Verwoerd (compiler), *Verwoerd: So onthou ons hom* (Pretoria, Protea, 2001), p. 177.

the same as those used for white children.<sup>33</sup> Ken Hartshorne also states that the syllabi of some subjects were “very much the same as those used in white provincial schools and were an improvement on those in use previously”.<sup>34</sup>

*“BE stunted black development through mother-tongue education”*

Another major point of conflict between the government and the urbanised black elite was over the extent to which traditional black culture had to be made part of the school syllabus. ZK Matthews argued for the “preservation of the African heritage and for using the powers of the vernacular languages to effect social rejuvenation”.<sup>35</sup> Other ANC leaders, however, rejected any “Bantuization of native education”: Blacks had to be educated “to live side by side with Europeans”.<sup>36</sup>

Both Verwoerd and Werner Eiselen, who headed the commission that laid the groundwork for BE, believed in mother-tongue education as the best form of education. A Professor of Anthropology before he became a chief inspector of native education in the Transvaal, Eiselen had a great respect for the particular culture of blacks and genuine concern about the preservation of the Bantu languages.<sup>37</sup> His commission dismissed the idea that there were inherent differences between whites and blacks in intellectual ability. The commission report strongly argued that the education for blacks had to be tied to “a Bantu culture and a Bantu society”.<sup>38</sup>

BE, as introduced by Verwoerd in 1954, entailed the provision of eight years of mother-tongue education (MTE). In addition, English and Afrikaans were taught as second languages. In the ninth year of school, students were expected to switch to learning through Afrikaans and English, the official languages.

The department laid down the principle that it would not use African languages as medium of instruction in the two highest school standards until the black community requested it. An education advisory council, which was established in terms of the policy, polled the boards of

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<sup>33</sup> M Horrell, *Bantu Education to 1968*, pp. 58-59, 71.

<sup>34</sup> K Hartshorne, *Crisis and challenge: Black Education, 1910 –1960* (Cape Town, Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 41.

<sup>35</sup> C Kros, “Deep rumblings: ZK Matthews and African education before 1955”, *Perspectives in Education*, 12, 1 (1990), p. 35.

<sup>36</sup> P Walshe, *The rise of African Nationalism in South Africa* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1971), pp. 150-152.

<sup>37</sup> TD Moodie, *The Rise of Afrikanerdom* (Berkeley, University of California Press), 1975, p. 272.

<sup>38</sup> JD Shingler, “Education and political order in South Africa, 1902-1960”, doctoral diss., Yale University, 1973, pp. 279-280.

control of black school all over the country to assess their support for different options. It provided the following result:<sup>39</sup>

Afrikaans and English 64%

Only Afrikaans 5%

Only English 31%

Mother tongue 1%.

The scant support for MTE on an advanced level is a significant indication that blacks – unlike Afrikaner nationalists – were not convinced of the merits of mother-tongue instruction.

Given the electoral and budget constraints, the Department of Bantu Education went far in realising its policy objectives in the first fifteen years. Syllabi, textbooks and other study material were prepared in nine indigenous languages. Incentives were given to teachers to improve their generally low qualifications. Afrikaans and English, the two official languages, were made compulsory subjects for the first time,<sup>40</sup>

MTE was not out of line with what many Western scholars regarded as the best educational practice. Kathleen Heugh, an acknowledged authority on language use in education, remarks that developed countries teach their children in the mother tongue because they are convinced that such a policy is pedagogically much sounder. They also believe that it helps people to make a greater contribution to the economy than those taught in a second or third language. Developing countries, by contrast, tend to use the colonial language of instruction because they believe, incorrectly as it happens, that it is a short cut to a good education and job opportunities.<sup>41</sup>

Heugh comments on the results of BE between the mid-1950s and mid-1970: <sup>42</sup>

Between 1955 and 1975, there was a steady improvement in the achievement in literacy and numeracy... Eight years of MTE resourced with terminological development, text-book production, competent teacher education and competent

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<sup>39</sup> J Rousseau, "Iets oor Bantoe Onderwys", WJ Verwoerd (samesteller) *Verwoerd: So onthou ons hom* (Pretoria, Praag, 2001), p. 175.

<sup>40</sup> J Rousseau, "Iets oor Bantoe-Onderwys", WJ Verwoerd (samesteller) *Verwoerd: So onthou ons hom* (Pretoria: Praag, 2001) pp. 172-173.

<sup>41</sup> K Heugh, "Languages, development and reconstructing education in South Africa", *International Journal of Educational Development*, 19, 1999, pp. 301-302.

<sup>42</sup> K Heugh, "Multilingual education policy in South Africa constrained by theoretical and historical disconnections", paper due to be published in *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, Vol. 33, 2012.

teaching of English, resulted in a school-leaving pass rate of 83.7% for African students in 1976. This is the highest pass rate to date.<sup>43</sup>

In 1974 the Department of Bantu Education instructed schools in Soweto and other townships in the southern Transvaal to teach mathematics and social studies in the medium of Afrikaans in Standard Five and upwards. This had to start in 1975. In the cabinet minutes there is no reference to any discussion of the issue, which conforms the impression that was the work of the responsible ministers (MC Botha and MC Treurnicht) and a few top officials. The Department's disastrous action triggered the youth uprising in Soweto in 1976.<sup>44</sup> It now became easy for the black resistance movement to rally against not only Afrikaans as medium of instruction but also against mother tongue instruction after the very first years in school.

Heugh believes that the second part of BE, from 1976 on, worked to the pupils disadvantage, with mother-tongue education limited to three or four years.<sup>45</sup> In 1983 the NP government accepted the principle equal opportunities for education, including equal standards, regardless of colour or race. The amount spent on a white pupil was still seven times more than the amount spent on each black pupil.<sup>46</sup> By 1990 the gap had narrowed to 5:1.<sup>47</sup>

It was only after the mid-1970s, when the struggle for state control entered a new phase, that the education of blacks became a major issue. It was then that NP cabinet ministers dealing with black education for the first time realised how deeply black activists, from one generation to the other, resented Verwoerd's fateful words, expressed in 1953, that blacks could not rise above a lowly station in jobs they held outside the homelands.<sup>48</sup> The activists aspired to a unified system of education and a common citizenship – in their eyes the very opposite of the thrust of Bantu education.

### **Segregation and the UP government**

The background against which apartheid has to be viewed is the growing anticipation of freedom for Third World peoples in the not too distant future. During the Second World War the black leadership in South Africa had also become much more assertive. In 1946 the

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<sup>43</sup> K Heugh, "Multilingual education policy in South Africa constrained by theoretical and historical disconnections", paper due to be published in *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*.

<sup>44</sup> J Kane-Berman, *Soweto: Black revolt, white reaction* (Johannesburg, Ravan, 1978), pp. 12-16.

<sup>45</sup> K Heugh, "Languages, development and reconstructing education", pp. 301-313.

<sup>46</sup> CH Feinstein, *Economic history of South Africa* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 243.

<sup>47</sup> K Hartshorne, *Crisis and challenge: Bantu Education, 1910 to 1990*, p. 42.

<sup>48</sup> This was communicated several times to the author by Dr Gerrit Viljoen, who became minister responsible for black education in 1980.

Natives Representative Council declared that the Smuts government had made no attempt to deal with the pass laws, the colour bar in industry, and political rights, and that it did not recognize the African Mineworkers' Union. The Council demanded direct representation on all levels, from the municipal council to Parliament.

For Jan Smuts, Prime Minister, effective political power for Africans was unthinkable. In 1947 he tentatively proposed to the Council the establishment of "an all-Native elective body" which would be given increasing "executive authority in the development of the Native Reserves". The Council rejected it, demanding black representation at all levels of government from municipal councils to Parliament.<sup>49</sup> Smuts told the liberal Edgar Brooks that "our native policy would have to be liberalized at modest pace but public opinion has to be carried with us." Until this was secured, his approach was "practical social policy away from politics" carried out as finance permits.<sup>50</sup>

In its 1948 election manifesto the UP made no reference to the reserves as part of the political system. It pledged the extension of the rights and functions of the Natives Representative Council and "other native bodies" and "their general equipment with powers to run their own affairs." It also committed itself to provide proper housing for urbanised blacks and participation in councils that would be established in the townships.<sup>51</sup> But the party's policies were far from liberal. After the 1948 election the party issued a statement under Smuts's name declaring that it stands for the principle of "Christian trusteeship" and rejected a policy of "equality and assimilation".<sup>52</sup>

It is sometimes asked whether the UP policies would have become steadily more liberal after Smuts's death, and a recent volume edited by Saul Dubow and Alan Jeeves seems to suggest this. My view is that there simply was no constituency for thorough liberal reform in the white electorate.

### **Alternative models of development**

The key question is this: What does the comparative evidence suggest were the alternative options for South Africa after the Second World War. The authors that wrote most persuasively on the subject are Samuel Huntington, Joan Nelson, Donald Horowitz and Amy Chua. In 1968 Huntington published his path-breaking work *Political Order in Changing*

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<sup>49</sup> Gwendolen Carter, *The Politics of Inequality: South Africa since 1948* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1958), p.358.

<sup>50</sup> Rodney Davenport, *South Africa: A Modern History* (Johannesburg: Macmillan, 1987), p.343.

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<sup>51</sup> WA Kleyhans, *SA Algemene Verkiezingsmanifeste*, p. 314.

<sup>52</sup> Alexander Hepple, *Verwoerd* (Penguin Books, 1967), p.113.

*Societies* (1968) in which he pointed out that universally political institutions lag well behind social and economic change. Huntington followed this up with *No Easy Choice: Political Participation in Developing Countries* (1976), co-authored with the development economist Joan Nelson. Donald Horowitz was a student of Huntington at Harvard. His *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* appeared in 1985 and he followed this with *A Democratic South Africa?* (1992) He demonstrated that in deeply divided societies ethnic conflicts actually escalate after the introduction of democracy. The reason is that ethnic conflicts take the form of groups rather than individuals competing for power, material rewards and prestige.<sup>53</sup>

Amy Chua's article "Democracy and Ethnicity" (1998) was followed by her book *World on Fire: How Exporting Free Market Democracy Breeds Ethnic Hatred and Global Instability*. Her work showed how, for a time, the minorities in Asia and Africa flourished and often also the economy. The indigenous impoverished majorities in Asia and Africa had to wait for the day they come to power.<sup>54</sup> Once in power legislation was introduced to constrain and penalise the minorities. Industries were nationalised and minorities expropriated. In some cases there were mass population shifts.

All this has happened in one country after the other over the past 75 years and, as Chua observes, people hardly noticed the common pattern: far from reinforcing each other, liberal democracy and liberal capitalism repeatedly clashed.<sup>55</sup> The tension between free markets and democracy could produce catastrophic effects, including nationalization and the expulsion of minorities, violence and endemic instability.

The alternative models presented in *No Easy Choice* by Huntington and Nelson to some extent anticipate these developments. I am offering them as variants of counter-factual history. Defending the use of counter-factuals as a heuristic device, Niall Ferguson, in his preface to a collection of "alternative histories" called *Virtual History* writes that we constantly ask counter-factual questions in our daily lives and then adds:

Of course we know perfectly well that we cannot travel back in time and do things differently, But the business of imagining such counterfactuals is a vital part of the way we learn, Because decisions about the future are—usually—based on weighing up the potential consequences of alternative courses of action, it makes sense to compare the actual outcomes of what we did in the past with the conceivable outcomes of what we might have done.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Samuel Huntington and Joan Nelson, *No Easy Choice: Political Participation in Developing Countries* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), pp. 19-25; Donald Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), and Amy Chua, *World on fire* (London: Heineman, 2003).

<sup>54</sup> I am drawing here on Amy L Chua, 'Democracy and Ethnicity', *The Yale Law Journal*, 81 (1998), pp. 1-97.

<sup>55</sup> Chua, "Democracy and Ethnicity", pp.1-97

<sup>56</sup> Niall Ferguson, *Virtual History: Alternatives and Counter-factuals* (London: Picador, 1997), p.2.

The first model of Huntington and Nelson is what they call the ‘vicious circle of the technocratic model. It suggests the following sequel of events’:

- less political participation (i.e. curtailment of the vote)
- leading to more socio-economic development as a result of the suppression of the working class
- less socio-economic equality,
- less political stability
- and ending with a participation explosion.

This was the route South Africa by and large followed between 1948 and 1990, except for the fact that after 1960 there was a slow narrowing of the white-black gap. The apartheid period can be divided into two: the harsh and rigid first phase, lasting until the early 1970s, and the reformist phase from 1972-1994. By the early 1990s South Africa was spending more, as a percentage of GDP, on social assistance in the form of non-contributory schemes than some developed countries and more than almost any country in the developing South. In 1993 interracial parity was achieved in old-age pensions.<sup>57</sup>

The second model of Huntington and Nelson is called the ‘vicious circle of the populist model’

- more political participation (i.e extension of the vote)
- leading to more socio-economic equality,
- less socio-economic development.,
- less political stability and the flight of capital
- and a participation implosion (i.e. suspension of democracy).

The populist model presupposes a rapid extension of the franchise from the qualified vote to universal franchise in the 1950s, leading to the implementation of the Freedom Charter and the nationalisation of several industries. In terms of the Huntington-Nelson model there would be a flight of investment, less socio-economic development, followed by less political stability (white resistance and urban riots) ending in a ‘participation implosion’ (suspension of Parliament and the rule of law).

It is not difficult to imagine the major turmoil that would follow the coming to power of an ANC government with a strong communist presence. The liberal Alan Paton had a warm affection for the communist leader Bram Fischer and testified in his defence when he stood trial in 1966. However, he had no doubt that communists with their hands on the levers

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<sup>57</sup> Jeremy Seekings, ‘Providing for the Poor: Welfare and Redistribution in South Africa,’ Inaugural lecture, University of Cape Town, 23 April 2003.



of power would spell great danger.<sup>58</sup> He disagreed with a fellow-liberal who told him that he would be the first to be killed if Bram Fischer's party in alliance with the ANC seized power, but, in his own words, 'was ready to believe that if his friend Bram came to power an emissary would be sent to me with a one-way ticket, and with a message "Get out of here as fast as possible".'<sup>59</sup>

It was recently revealed that Nelson Mandela was a member of the executive of the South African Communists Party in the late 1950s and early 1960s and that he was instrumental in aligning the ANC behind the armed struggle, although the official party line and the personal view of the leader, Albert Luthuli, was to insist on non-violence.<sup>60</sup> In 1962 the SACP produced its main theoretical document, *The Road to South African Freedom*, in which it located the NDR within its theory of colonialism of a special kind. According to this theory, the 'oppressing white nation' in South Africa occupied the same territory as the oppressed black nation and enjoyed the wealth the latter produced. The NDR's objective was to overthrow the 'colonial state' and introduce popular control over all institutions and the economy. As Andrew Kenny noted: 'The crucial achievement of apartheid [under Verwoerd] was to ensure white rule in South Africa during the postwar period of communism.'<sup>61</sup>

Huntington and Nelson also introduce a third model, which they call the 'benign liberal model.' This assumes that broad-based socio-economic development would lead to greater socio-economic equality, producing both political stability and democratic political participation. This assumes the following sequence: the more people regardless of their colour or descent after 1945 were brought into the market and schools on the basis of equality

- the more the economy would open up and the more the labour market would be liberalised
- the more the economy would expand
- the more political freedoms would increase
- the more stable the political system would become
- the more racial and ethnic tensions would dissolve
- the more prosperity and happiness would ensue

Huntington and Nelson pointed out that with the exception of the United States very few countries approximated the liberal model of development. What usually has happened is that the middle classes initially benefit more than the rest while the lower classes are left behind and become more mobilized. At some points the society experience a crisis of conflicting

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<sup>58</sup> Alexander, *Paton*, p. 291.

<sup>59</sup> Paton, *Journey Continued*, p. 69.

<sup>60</sup> Stephen Ellis, *External Mission: The ANC in Exile* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball, 2012), pp.18-27.

<sup>61</sup> Andrew Kenny, 'How apartheid saved South Africa', *The Spectator*, 27 November 1999, p. 26.

demands. A choice usually has to be made between an autocracy on technocratic lines or a form of socialist dictatorship.<sup>62</sup>

But things work out in this way in any of the deeply-divided societies in the developing world. As Chua pointed out, liberal democracy and liberal capitalism do not go hand in hand in Africa and Asia. In South Africa, Michael O'Dowd often predicted that more inclusive political institutions would be introduced only after the economy had reached a relatively high stage of development -- when the dominant white community was able to survive economically without state support or state employment, when a sizable black middle class had formed, when all workers had received the right to be trained and when many had become members of unions. As those who opposed sanctions correctly observed apartheid would be fatally eroded by high economic growth.

## **Apartheid: A complex heritage**

### ***Bantu education***

Let us first look at Bantu education. Between 1950 and 1970 there was an impressive growth of black pupils from 800 000 to 2,75 million.<sup>63</sup> The target set in the Eiselen report of doubling secondary school enrolment ten years after the introduction of Bantu education was achieved in 1959, the numbers rising from 20 000 to 43 496. Between 1960 and 1966 black children in secondary school increased from 54 598 to 66,568 and the number in Matric grew from 717 to 1608.<sup>64</sup> The most important shortcoming in policy implementation was the lack of teachers, giving rise to large classes, which negatively affected the quality of teaching.

It is sometimes said that by delaying the large scale expansion of secondary education to blacks until the early 1970s the government contributed to the severe skills shortage that hampered growth in final two decades of apartheid. However, in passing judgement one should take into account that if large numbers of black children had been exposed to secondary education from the inception of BE in 1954 youth protests of the kind that erupted in 1976 may well have broken out in the 1960's, pouring cold water on the feverish economic growth of that decade.

When the ANC came to power in 1994 South Africa suddenly found itself in a situation where blacks as members of the new dominant political group had to compete with better educated whites, who seemed destined to remain economically dominant for quite some time. Although per capita spending and the class numbers were quickly equalised, black education remained in the doldrums.

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<sup>62</sup> Huntington and Nelson, *No easy choice*, pp.22=25.

<sup>63</sup> JW Fedderke et al., "Uneducating South Africa...", *International Review of Education* , 46, 3, 2000, p. p. 262.

<sup>64</sup> Giliomee and Schlemmer, *From Apartheid to nation-building*, p. 118.

At the end of a conference, held on 5 September 2012 in Cape Town, to launch the third Carnegie inquiry into poverty Deputy President of the ANC, Kgalema Motlanthe, argued that the legacy of Bantu Education hampered progress in the battle against poverty and inequality. There was a dramatic moment when a young black student asked a question: “How come the government constantly talks about Bantu Education, Bantu Education, Bantu Education? I didn’t grow up under Bantu Education and I’m not sure what it has to do with me - I feel it cannot be blamed for my problems.”<sup>65</sup>

### *The entire system*

Turning to the apartheid system in its entirety, one can note the judgement passed in 1994 by Howard Preece, a financial journalist based in Johannesburg. First, the ‘South African economy failed to achieve near its growth potential.’<sup>66</sup> Second, ‘the growth and resulting increases accrued almost entirely to the white minority. In other words, the economy did nothing for the great masses of the people even if it was prospering at the macro level.’<sup>67</sup>

To assess apartheid, and Verwoerd’s heritage in particular, it is necessary to look more closely at the connection between growth and politics. Just after the Second World War South Africa was positioned exceptionally well for high economic growth. It enjoyed abundant natural resources, good foreign exchange earnings, a relatively sophisticated financial system, a good technological base, a competent civil administration and an established place in the world’s trading system. But it had liabilities as well: a deficient system of education for children who were not white, and poor black labour productivity. It also had a manufacturing sector that had failed to build up a substantial export capacity.

In the first twenty-three years of apartheid, between 1948 and 1971, the South African economy grew at a rate of 4.5 per cent.<sup>68</sup> This was about average for a group of twenty comparable middle-size developing countries.<sup>69</sup> Preece believes that apartheid prevented South Africa from growing faster and doing more for the poorest section of the population. He is probably right in believing that South Africa could have grown faster. But it also could have fared much worse. Between the early 1930s and the late 1990s Argentina, severely handicapped by the lack of a stable, non-corrupt political order, fell from the ranks of the top

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<sup>65</sup> Comment by conference participant to author, 29 August 2012.

<sup>66</sup> Howard Preece, ‘The Economics of Apartheid’, J Harker (ed.) *The Legacy of Apartheid* (London: Guardian Newspapers, 1994), p. 28.

<sup>67</sup> Preece, ‘The Economics of Apartheid’, p. 28.

<sup>68</sup> South African Reserve Bank 1999, *Supplement to the June Quarterly Bulletin*, B-28.

<sup>69</sup> In a study Terence Moll took 1960 GDP per caput for his comparison. On a descending scale South Africa was the 8<sup>th</sup> biggest economy in the group of middle-size developing countries after Austria, Venezuela, Italy, Argentina, Spain, Japan, and Chile. See his, ‘Did the apartheid economy fail?’ *Journal of South African Studies*, 17, 2 (1991).

ten countries in the world, measured by gross domestic product per head, to forty-eighth.<sup>70</sup> The same could have happened to South Africa. In the case of both South Africa and Argentina there was a missing ingredient: a system that promised continuous political and economic stability.

What South Africa of course did get was apartheid. The NP government's conservative macro-economic policy during the 1950s laid the foundations for steady growth. Budget surpluses were used to repay debt. When Verwoerd came to power the Nationalists had already made it clear that they had no plan to nationalize the mines. Excessive wage demands from white workers had been resisted. Although the new educational system for blacks was strongly criticized, it greatly improved basic literacy.

The republic that was proclaimed in 1961 represented only a symbolic change that did not affect the ties of trade and investment with Britain. In the mid-1960s, when Verwoerd was at the height of his power, South Africa had a growth rate of six per cent and an inflation rate of only two per cent. In August 1966 *Time* magazine, in an otherwise highly critical assessment, called Verwoerd 'one of the ablest white leaders Africa has ever produced.' Attracted by cheap labor, a gold-backed currency and high profits, investors from all over the world had ploughed money into the country. 'Production, consumption and the demand for labor [are] soaring.'<sup>71</sup> 'South Africa', *Time* wrote, 'is in the middle of a massive boom.' On 31 July 1966 the *Rand Daily Mail*, the liberal daily most critical of the government, wrote: 'Dr Verwoerd has reached the peak of a remarkable career ... The nation is suffering from a surfeit of prosperity.'

In a subsequent article the paper paid a handsome tribute to Verwoerd as the man who had refined the crude ideology of white supremacy 'into a sophisticated and rationalized philosophy of separate development.'<sup>72</sup> The *Financial Mail*, the premier financial magazine of South Africa at the time, celebrated the period 1961 to 1966 as the 'Fabulous Years' when South Africa's gross national product rose by 30 per cent in real terms. It approvingly quoted a leading London stockbroker who remarked: 'South Africa is one of the last genuinely capitalist countries in the world.'<sup>73</sup>

It was Verwoerd, with his intransigence on racial policy and his suppression of black dissent in the early 1960s, who paved the way for the surge of strong growth from 1961. The unproductive labor force and the large turnover of black workers, the result of Verwoerd's intensification of apartheid, had not yet imposed high costs on the relatively closed South African economy with its poorly developed manufacturing sector. These and other economic costs of apartheid would only become clear a decade or so after his death.

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<sup>70</sup> *The Economist Pocket World in Figures* (London: Profile Books, 2001), p. 26.

<sup>71</sup> *Time*, 26 August 1966, pp. 20-25.

<sup>72</sup> *Rand Daily Mail*, 7 September 1966.

<sup>73</sup> *Financial Mail*, 14 July 1967, Supplement, p.59.

As we have seen, Preece not only believes that South Africa could have grown faster, but also thinks that economic growth under apartheid did nothing for blacks. This is not correct. While it is true that the gap between whites and blacks remained enormous and that a maze of restrictions blocked black progress, the fact is that on average in the two decades after Verwoerd gained power the disposable personal income of all the politically subordinate groups improved (albeit from a very low base) at a rate higher than that of whites. (See Table 3).

**Table 3: Disposable Personal Income (at 1990 prices)**

	<b>1960 Rand</b>	<b>1970 Rand</b>	<b>1980 Rand</b>
Whites	12 114	17 260	17 878
Asians	2 171	3 674	5 655
Coloreds	2 000	3 033	3 933
Blacks	1 033	1 439	1 903

- Source: J.L. Sadie, 'The Economic Demography of South Africa', doctoral diss., US, 2000, p. 310.

These trends were recognized even when Verwoerd was in power. In 1964 Harry Oppenheimer, head of the Anglo American Corporation, by far the largest conglomerate in the country, remarked that in the previous five years the average wages of 'non-white' workers in secondary industry had risen by 5.4 per cent (against those of whites at 3.7 per cent) per year. To him this explained why the country was 'so much more stable than many people are inclined to suppose.'<sup>74</sup> This was of little comfort to those blacks living on a pittance in the reserves. But for them the glimmer of hope was the prospect of a job, albeit one with a very low wage. In 1965, 73.6 per cent of new entrants to the labour market were absorbed in the formal sector, a rate never achieved before. It would rise to 76.6 per cent in 1970, but would drop to 43.4 per cent by 1998.<sup>75</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Academics have the duty, as a president of Yale University once declared "to think the unthinkable." What questions would trigger thinking the unthinkable about apartheid? Let me try a few.

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<sup>74</sup> Anglo American Corporation, Chairman's Statement in 1964 Annual Report, p. 2.

<sup>75</sup> Personal communication from Jan Sadie, 23 July 2002.

- In the immediate aftermath of the Second World War South Africa could have become a liberal democracy, or it could have had annual economic growth of nearly five per cent a year for 25 years ( 1948 to 1974), but it could not have both
- it could have rapid racial integration or it could have fair degree of stability for most of the 25 years but it could not have both
- it could have continued to exploit the low-grade gold mines on the basis of ultra-cheap black labour after 1945 or it could have allowed black trade unions but it could not do both
- it could come to terms with the forces of African nationalism or it could attract large scale Western investment but it could not do both
- Hendrik Verwoerd prevented South Africa from becoming a democracy too soon in that socialism, until the 1980s, was a competitive alternative and that most whites until the 1970s lacked the professional skills to live under a black government (They do now—the white-black gap has widened after 1994 and white unemployment is still in single figures)