

BRITAIN, SOUTH AFRICA AND THE COMMONWEALTH IN 1960. THE "WINDS OF CHANGE" RE-ASSESSED

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Brittanje, Suid-Afrika en die Statebond in 1960. 'n Herwaardering van die "winde van verandering"-toespraak

Hierdie artikel ondersoek die belangrikheid van Harold Macmillan se besoek aan Suid Afrika in Februarie 1960, asook sy "winde van verandering"-toespraak, in die lig van Suid Afrika se lidmaatskap van die Statebond. Dit verduidelik die konteks en agtergrond van Britse beleid ten opsigte van Suid Afrika in die jare 1958-1961, asook sommige van die politieke en diplomatieke faktore wat die Britse reaksie ten opsigte van Hendrik Verwoerd se republikeinse veldtog bepaal het. Dit word beklemtoon dat Macmillan se poging om Suid Afrika in die Statebond te hou beteken het dat hy versigtig moes optree as dit sou kom by faktore soos Verwoerd se republikeinse veldtog en die swart Suid Afrikaanse afwesigheid in so 'n veldtog. Die "winde van verandering"-toespraak was eerder 'n vriendelike waarskuwing as 'n Britse dreigement van moontlike weerhouding van steun vir wit Suid Afrika.

This article discusses the significance, in terms of South Africa's membership of the Commonwealth, of Harold Macmillan's visit to South Africa and his "Winds of Change" speech to the South African Parliament in February 1960. It explains the context and background of British policy towards South Africa in the years 1958-1961 in the light of Verwoerd's republican campaign and notes some of the political and diplomatic factors which determined the British response to the republican campaign. It is noted that Macmillan's determination to keep South Africa in the Commonwealth meant that he had to tread softly when it came to issues such as Verwoerd's republican campaign and the issue of black South African non-participation in such a campaign. The "Winds of Change" speech was more of a gentle warning to Verwoerd than a British threat of possible withdrawal of support for white South Africa.

Introduction

South Africa's last four years in the Commonwealth, before withdrawal in 1961, were marked by increasing racial violence inside the country and externally by increasing isolation and an unprecedented degree of international opprobrium. Under the leadership of H.F. Verwoerd, the ideologue of apartheid chosen to replace Strijdom in 1958, the Union moved inexorably

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towards the racial explosion of 1960 and the consequent political and economic uncertainties which formed the background to the withdrawal from the Commonwealth in 1961.

A study of the files of the British high commissioner in South Africa for the period 1958 to 1961 reveals how important for British policy-makers the implications of South Africa's republican campaign and possible withdrawal from the Commonwealth were. It seems that much of the British response to Verwoerd's republican policy was informed by the hope that, by accommodating Verwoerd as much as possible, it would be easier to "cushion the effects" of withdrawal from the Commonwealth, if withdrawal became necessary. However, this approach resulted in something of a dilemma for Britain. If British policy makers gave the impression that nothing would really change in the relationship between Britain and South Africa after the introduction of a republic, it would undermine the anti-republican campaign of the mainly English speaking United Party opposition and would make Verwoerd's task easier.

On the other hand, it was of great importance to Britain to keep South Africa in the sterling area and to safeguard investments and trade. Balancing these two policy considerations proved a difficult task for British policy-makers and led to accusations from within South Africa and from anti-apartheid forces in Britain and elsewhere that Macmillan was arranging a "sell-out" in order to satisfy financial interests.¹

The realisation was growing among black opinion-makers in South Africa that British conservative leadership of the Commonwealth meant the continued flouting of the sentiments of the Afro-Asians. This could only lead to a further erosion of sympathy by the black majority for the Commonwealth in its then existing form. (It was, perhaps, timely for the future of South African black support of the Commonwealth ideal that the Tories were defeated only three years after South Africa left the Club and that a more expressly pro-African British Labour government came to power at a time when the Commonwealth non-racial ideal seemed to be fast fading in theory and practice.)

2. Verwoerd's republican campaign and the British response

The attitude of the British Conservative government under Harold Macmillan to Verwoerd's republican aims had been to maintain a position of careful neutrality in order to avoid accusations of influencing the republican debate inside South Africa. There was no talk of insisting that the wishes of the black majority should be taken into account. It was mentioned by Macmillan himself only in passing, during the 1960 Commonwealth conference, as a justification for the view that automatic support for South Africa's Commonwealth membership application could not be expected.²

However, the difficulties involved in trying to maintain an appearance of neutrality when most British officials privately opposed the idea of a republic soon became clear. A "Guidance Memorandum" drawn up by the British high commission in November 1958

Indian Opinion of 3 March 1961, for example, expressed this view on the eve of the 1961 Commonwealth conference, and noted that the South African public would rather be told that it was "out of concern for the profits of British and other investors" in South Africa rather than "concern for the non-whites" that motivated the British efforts to keep South Africa in the Commonwealth.

2. Public Record Office (PRO), Dominion Office Series (DO) 119, File 1206 (The Republic and South Africa: Membership of the Commonwealth, 1958-60), No. 41B, Extract from the final communique, Prime Ministers' Meeting, PMM (60) 13th Meeting, 13 May 1960.

referred to this situation and said that since the question of the republic was "now...being so actively debated between political parties, we are in serious danger of 'interfering', or appearing to interfere, in internal politics by what we say in answer to the subject".³

The memorandum referred in particular to "certain United Party complaints" that local British representatives were saying that there would be no change in trading and economic relations between Britain and South Africa if a republic were to be introduced. These statements had "sabotaged" the UP's anti-republican campaign. This, said the memorandum, was a "very damaging and dangerous impression" for United Kingdom representatives to give and it was advised "at all costs" to "avoid giving any cause for such impressions of interference being sustained — by *either* Party".

Guidelines were then suggested for high commission staff and others to use in answering questions: for example, on the general political question of whether the republic would make any difference to South Africa's position in the Commonwealth, the "right" answer was to say "that membership of the Commonwealth in such circumstances would be a matter for all the members to decide and no one can possibly say now what the decision would be".⁴

On the question of possible economic and trading relations the memorandum noted that they would "probably" remain unchanged depending on the public confidence at the time. It would depend also on whether there were "strong nationalist economic demands" or whether there was an "authoritarian-type constitution". So the right answer was therefore to say that

if one assumes that the change will come about in circumstances which involve no shock to confidence then there will be no significant effect on general economic and trading relations but if one assumes that there will be a shock to confidence then these relations will naturally be affected.

Staff were advised not to go out of their way to say there were "grave doubts" (which would suit the UP), nor to give the impression that all would be "plain sailing" (and so please the Nationalists). This was a "South African decision" and Britain was to give "no opinion" because the consequences could "not be foreseen". It was also pointed out that this note was not concerned with the question of a republic "outside the Commonwealth" — a possibility "not being seriously canvassed at present", so there was "no objection" to staff making general statements "pointing out the advantage of the Commonwealth and its institutions". This could be done "on all suitable occasions", but even here "we should not do so in a manner which too directly suggests the Union context" — i.e., the statements were to be of general, not particular reference.

British worries about how to respond to the republican campaign received fresh impetus at the beginning of the following year. In January 1960 Verwoerd made the announcement of an imminent move towards a republic to a shocked and surprised opposition and stated that a referendum would be held within a year.⁵ It was desirable and necessary that the two issues of a republic and Commonwealth membership should be treated separately,

3. PRO, DO 119, File 1206, No. 1, Guidance Memo by the Acting High Commissioner, R.H. Belcher, 24 November 1958.

4. *Ibid.*

5. D.W. Krüger, *The making of a nation. A history of the Union of South Africa, 1910-1961* (Johannesburg, 1969) p. 322.

he stated.⁶ An ordinary majority of voters would decide, the republic would be "democratic and Christian" and the equality of the official languages would be maintained as well as the parliamentary form of government.⁷ The state president would be a constitutional head of state and not the prime minister at the same time. He would not be elected by the electorate. This would mean he would be "above politics" and so no drastic change from the monarchical form of government would occur. The republic would maintain friendly relations with all states including Britain and the Commonwealth. If, however, a Labour Party were to come to power in Britain Verwoerd would "seriously consider" taking South Africa out of the Commonwealth.⁸

The British high commission reacted to the announcement with some surprise. A telegram of 23 January 1960 to the Commonwealth Relations Office (CRO) expressed "surprise" that Verwoerd had announced the republic "so early in the session" and after the governor-general had said there would be no contentious legislation in the first five months because of the Union celebrations.⁹ However, it was noted that the republic would not be authoritarian but "moderate", suggesting that extremists were "not as strong" as was thought. The Cape moderates like Dönges would support this (as *Die Burger's* approval of the announcement indicated) and although Natal would "fight" it, the moderate nature of the republic would help "woo" the UP and PP support. Verwoerd had realised that it was important not to "alienate financial interests".

Possible reasons why Verwoerd had announced the referendum were then postulated: that he needed popularity after public "disenchantment with the Bantustans"; to heighten nationalism before Union celebrations; the hope that British statesmen would say a republic (especially a moderate one) would mean no difference to relations with South Africa; a desire not to alienate all English speakers by leaving the Commonwealth and a feeling that his position would be strengthened by speaking to other prime ministers first; this approach could "spike the guns" of the opposition who predicted South Africa would be kicked out of the Commonwealth.

It was pointed out, furthermore, that the UP had attacked the republican announcement for excluding "black voters" and for not giving convincing reasons for a republic. Others had spoken of Verwoerd breaking his vow of a "broad will of the people" in favour of a one vote majority.¹⁰

Verwoerd, in his referendum announcement, had undertaken to discuss the whole matter of the republic with Macmillan during the latter's forthcoming visit to South Africa.¹¹ However, the UP opposition was not mollified and De Villiers Graaff in reply stated that his party would oppose the referendum and the republic and stated that he was convinced the introduction of a republic would take place at the expense of the Commonwealth connection.¹²

From the the point of view of the extra-parliamentary majority, however, the prospects

6. O. Geyser, *Watershed for South Africa, London 1961* (Pretoria, 1983), p. 51.

7. D.W. Krüger, *Making of a nation*, p. 322.

Quoted in N. Mansergh (ed), *Documents and speeches on British Commonwealth affairs, Vol. II, 1952-1962* (London, 1963), p. 361.

9. DO 119, File 1206, No. 19, High Commissioner, Pretoria — Secretary of State CRO, 23 January 1960.

10. *Ibid.*

11. O. Geyser, *Watershed*, p. 52.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 52.

for South Africa as a republic, whether in or out of the Commonwealth, aroused only the deepest gloom. A press statement by the ANC on 23 January 1960 responded to Verwoerd's announcement of an impending republican referendum with suspicion and foreboding. It noted that "Consistent with the practice and policies of the Nationalists", the Europeans alone would decide by simple majority whether South Africa would become a republic — the non-Europeans being wholly excluded from these "far-reaching changes".¹³ The statement noted the "shrewdness" of the Nationalists in making this announcement a few days before the British prime minister's visit and on the eve of the 50th anniversary of the Union celebrations.

The reaction of the Pan-Africanist Congress under its national secretary, Potlako Leballo, was much more dismissive of the whole affair. "Our view is that the African people have never been a party to the Union of South Africa, for, at its formation they were not consulted", he said.¹⁴ The constitution of the Union was "not of our choice" so the republican question was "purely white politics". The aim of the republic was to entrench white domination and to perpetuate "herrenvolk policies". The PAC programme of national liberation remained to be fulfilled: "Republic or no republic we are concerned with a massive drive towards a free, independent democratic United States of Africa".

3. Macmillan's 1960 visit to South Africa — setting the stage

In November 1959, before the republican referendum announcement, Verwoerd had made it known that he intended to ask the British prime minister, Harold Macmillan, to visit South Africa on the last leg of his African tour scheduled for January and February of 1960. Among other things, Verwoerd intended to broach the subject of a republic and Commonwealth membership during the visit.¹⁵

According to Geldenhuys, this was to be Verwoerd's first great "test" in terms of his own brand of personal diplomacy.¹⁶ Macmillan's visit was to afford him his first opportunity for direct talks with a "distinguished counterpart" and for measuring his "political convictions" and "diplomatic skills" against those of a foreign leader. It also proved to be a severe test of nerves and patience for Macmillan, as the British prime minister recalled in his memoirs.¹⁷

For Britain the 1960's promised to be a decade of turbulence in the Commonwealth and Empire. It had already opened with an unprecedented onslaught in the UNO against colonialism and imperialism, sponsored largely by the Soviet Union. Macmillan was highly conscious of the need to retain the newly-independent states of Africa in the western sphere of influence and thus of the crucial importance of his 1960 visit to the continent. Ghana and Nigeria had indicated their desire to join the Commonwealth and Macmillan was determined

13. William Cullen Library (WCL), Historical papers, AD 2186 (ANC Collection), Box E (Press statements), No. 21 "Announcement on a republic", 23 January 1960.

14. Quoted in *The World*, 6 February 1960.

15. Institute for Contemporary History (INCH), PV93 (Verwoerd collection), File 1/42/1/1 1951-1960 (Protectorates-General), Editorial in *South Africa Magazine* (London), entitled "Dr Verwoerd at the Summit", 28 November, 1959.

Deon Geldenhuys, *The diplomacy of isolation. South Africa's foreign policy making* (Johannesburg, SAIIA, 1984), p. 23.

Harold Macmillan, *Pointing the way* (London, 1972), pp. 150-161.

to ensure a smooth entry for them to the "Club" despite increasing evidence in the case of Ghana of internal dissensions and signs of political oppression. He was also hoping to smooth the way for a visit of the queen to Ghana later in the year, a visit which, as it turned out, was almost cancelled as a result of the dangerous political situation in that country.

It was, however, the white-ruled south that was to occasion the most anxiety for Macmillan during his African tour.¹⁸ The second-last leg, before his arrival in the Union, was spent in the increasingly unstable Central African Federation where Macmillan encountered considerable hostility from a section of white opinion suspicious of a possible British "sell-out". The appointment of a commission of inquiry into the political affairs of the Federation (the Monckton commission) had become necessary as a result of the growing feeling among the black population that only a break-up of the territory into its constituent parts would provide a way out of the strangle-hold on political power maintained by the white settlers of Southern Rhodesia. For Macmillan, caught between the "Scylla" of the powerful right-wing bloc in his own party (over which the Federation prime minister, Roy Welensky, seemed to have considerable influence) and the "Charib" of African opinion, the Federation proved to be his main source of worry in Africa and seemed to occasion him an undue amount of time and effort at a period when the superpower tensions of the Cold War were at their height.¹⁹ At times the South African problem seemed, in comparison, to be a "welcome distraction" from these worries.²⁰

The Commonwealth Relations Office in London had been preparing briefs for Macmillan's visit to the Union since November of the previous year and these briefings, based largely on the advice given by the British high commissioner in South Africa, Sir John Maud, indicated Macmillan's line of strategy to be adopted in his talks with Verwoerd. A briefing of 4 December suggested that Verwoerd would try to tell Macmillan a republic was essential for unity in South Africa and would ask for Macmillan's co-operation in bringing it about.²¹ It stated that Verwoerd would be "greatly encouraged" if the prime minister gave the assurance that the republic would make no difference to British-South African relations but that "passionate anti-republicans" among the English speakers would regard such a statement as a "sell-out to the Nationalists":

In handling this question we cannot ignore the large body of English-speaking South Africans whose sentiment for the monarchy is strong and who genuinely fear that Dr Verwoerd intends to set up an authoritarian republic outside the Commonwealth.

It was noted that English-speakers were moving towards a position of "resigned acquiescence" and that the government would probably get a numerical majority in the referendum, but not in Natal. "Non-Europeans would, of course, not be consulted".

This latter point, however, did not seem to be the main factor against the republic in the eyes of British officialdom. Throughout this period of intense policy debate on the republic and Commonwealth membership it was clear that the British government was most

See H. Macmillan, *Pointing the way*, pp. 131-161.

Alistair Horne, *Macmillan 1957-1986. The official biography*, Vol. 2 (London, 1989), pp. 191-193, 200-202, 205-211.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 204.

21. PRO, DO 119, File 1206, No. 10, Brief on forthcoming visit of Prime Minister to South Africa in February 1960, from High Commissioner's office, Pretoria, 4 December 1959

concerned with the opinions of the white electorate in South Africa, not of the voteless black majority. The wording of memoranda and telegrams makes it clear that when phrases such as "the majority of South Africans" were used, British officials were referring to "white" South Africans only. This approach meant tacit acceptance of the rules of the game devised by Verwoerd for the referendum and it meant that any sort of direct appeal by Britain to the loyalties of the black majority was out of the question.

The briefing of 4 December was very much a reflection of this type of thinking. It suggested that Macmillan should, firstly, assure Verwoerd that only the "people of South Africa" (by which was meant "white people") could decide on a republic, and, secondly, that it was impossible to forecast the effects of such a change on British-South African relations; that this would depend on the circumstances and that it would probably only be accepted by Britain if the "great majority of the population" supported it. Then "other Commonwealth precedents would apply and unimpaired relations would follow". But if it were brought about in circumstances of "bitter controversy" without a clear expression of "national will" it would be "unrealistic" to think this might not have repercussions on sentiment in the United Kingdom towards South Africa.

Macmillan should express the hope that South Africa would wish to stay in the Commonwealth, and that "this would certainly be an important factor influencing British reaction to the change". The briefing seemed to be quite sanguine about South Africa's prospects of remaining in the Commonwealth. (This was still some time before Sharpeville). If Verwoerd were to raise the procedural question, Macmillan would have to say there was an agreed procedure of (1) first informing fellow prime ministers of the intention and (2) that others would have to signify agreement. Macmillan could add that the Indian, Pakistani and Ghanaian precedents "created an expectation that Members would accord the same treatment...to South Africa". As far as Britain was concerned, "we would not want to exclude any country from Commonwealth membership because of a change in its constitution".

It was also surmised that Verwoerd was interested in the Irish option of "external association" with the Commonwealth in a manner which would give South Africa some of the "benefits" but none of the "obligations" of membership and without recognising the queen as head of the Commonwealth. This was to be "discouraged", as Eire (and Cyprus) were "special cases" which for reasons of geography or affiliation had been granted external association and the same could not be said of South Africa.

Macmillan would "be pressed" by Verwoerd to issue some sort of agreed communique at the end of the talks and here "special care" was needed when referring to the republic. The communique should aim to say that the republican question was a domestic issue (thus avoiding giving the "sell-out impression"). Verwoerd should be persuaded to agree to say that he wanted South Africa to remain in the Commonwealth, although it was "not likely" he would want to be committed on this. The communique should also say that it was for *all* members of the Commonwealth to decide whether South Africa remained a member and that Britain would not want to exclude any member because of a change to its constitution.

In the meantime the British high commission in Ghana informed South Africa and other Commonwealth high commissions that Nkrumah had sent personal letters to all prime ministers including Verwoerd announcing his intention of introducing a republic before the May conference.²² It was then suggested by the British high commission in Cape Town that

22. File 1206, No. 16, High Commission (Ghana) to CRO and all High Commissions, 25 December 1959.

an addition to Macmillan's briefing be made pointing out that, in the light of Ghana's application, Verwoerd "might be tempted to ask permission" for South Africa at the same time.²³ It would "be difficult" for the assembled prime ministers to disagree if both requests were presented. On the other hand it was unlikely that the republican referendum in South Africa would have been held by that time and so Verwoerd might not want to alienate the anti-republican opposition even more by making a premature application in May. It was surmised that he would try to make South African approval for Ghana's application contingent on approval for South Africa's later. It could "be pointed out" that "other South Africans in the past", including C.R. Swart, had "put themselves on record against any such advance commitments".

The ANC and the SA Indian Congress sent letters to Macmillan asking him to make his stand against South Africa's apartheid policy clear and to meet their leaders while he was in South Africa.²⁴ Soon after Macmillan had arrived in the Union, Duma Nokwe, the secretary-general of the ANC, wrote to him to say:

We regret that you, Sir, as Prime Minister of the United Kingdom have visited our country at the invitation of the Nationalist Government because we are convinced that the Nationalists will attempt to use your visit to quell the mounting world-wide condemnation of their racialistic and oppressive policies. It would indeed be most unfortunate and regrettable if the Nationalist Party should be given an opportunity to claim that their policies have the sympathies of the head of the Government of the United Kingdom. Already the fact that the British delegation at the United Nations Organisation supported the tenuous contention of the Nationalist Government that its racialistic policy and ruthless oppression of the Non-European people is a domestic issue had aroused serious doubts about the attitude of the British Government towards racialism.²⁵

The letter went on to describe the "Chamber of Horrors" which South Africa had become for Africans under apartheid and ended with a request to Macmillan to meet the leaders of the ANC at a "time and place which would be most convenient" to him.

With expressions of regret Macmillan declined this request saying that "arrangements" had not enabled him to receive any deputations from organisations "not represented in Parliament".²⁶ This was in fact a polite way of saying that the Nationalists frowned upon the idea of him visiting such organisations and that he did not want to strain the patience of his hosts too much. In *Pointing the way* Macmillan said that although the South African government had refused to allow him to see leaders of the ANC he had been able to meet "individuals" such as Margaret Ballinger, Dr Joost de Blank, Archbishop of Cape Town and the Liberal Party leader, Patrick Duncan.²⁷

In a private note, Verwoerd's reaction to the criticism of his refusal to allow Macmillan to visit extra-parliamentary leaders was peevish. He asked how Macmillan would have reacted if visiting politicians to Britain asked to speak to leaders of political groups

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23. File 1206, No. 17, H.C.'s office, Pretoria - Secretary of State, CRO, 30 December 1959.
 24. AD 2186, (ANC), Box E, No. 23, Press Statement by SAIC (by Dr G.M. Naicker, President) and the ANC (by Duma Nokwe, Secretary-General) on Mr Macmillan's visit to Africa.
 25. *Ibid.*, Nokwe - Macmillan, 25 January 1960.
 26. AD 2186, Box E, 24, Macmillan - Nokwe, February 1960.
 27. H. Macmillan, *Pointing the way*, p. 151.

outside parliament, "even those looked down upon", like Moseley (the fascist leader) and his junior.²⁸

By now fully briefed for his talks with Verwoerd and expressing some anxiety and foreboding, Macmillan arrived in Cape Town on 2 February. Preliminary talks began almost immediately between Eric Louw and Verwoerd on the one side, Macmillan, John Maud, the British high commissioner and Sir Norman Brook, the cabinet secretary, on the other.²⁹ The talks continued the day after the formal delivery of Macmillan's "Winds of Change" speech on 3 February. It was during these conferences, Macmillan wrote, that he began to realise to the full extent "the degree of obstinacy, amounting really to fanaticism, which Dr Verwoerd brought to the consideration of his policies".³⁰ On only one point, said Macmillan, was there some gain for Britain: the question of the high commission territories had been raised and Verwoerd made it clear he would not pursue the matter of transfer for the present.³¹ (However, in the talks with Verwoerd and Louw on 4 February, the high commission territories had been brought up again and then it seemed to Macmillan that both South Africans had been "affronted" by the constitutional changes which Britain was introducing "without prior consultation" with the Union in those territories. Macmillan, however, "refused to do more than take note" of these protests).³²

On the question of a republic, Macmillan found that Verwoerd tried to extract some "impression or view" from him that he could use to his advantage during the referendum campaign:

I refused to lend myself to this and said nothing to suggest that public opinion in the United Kingdom was indifferent as to whether the monarchical system would be abandoned. Indeed it was clear from my reception, especially in Cape Town and Durban, that there was a strong minority determined to do everything possible to remain both under the Throne and within the Commonwealth.³³

As for the position of the queen as head of the Commonwealth, Macmillan found Verwoerd's attitude "not merely illiberal but definitely shabby".³⁴ Verwoerd had said there was still "strong feeling" in South Africa against recognising the queen as head of the Commonwealth and Macmillan replied he was "amazed" at this. Was it not "ungenerous" to the forty-five percent of the population who were of British descent to deny the queen as head of the Commonwealth, he asked. Would it not contradict the reconciliation policy Verwoerd himself espoused? Verwoerd "hummed and ha'ed" at this saying there was still great feeling against the monarchy in South Africa and that it would help future relations if

28. INCH, PV 93 (Verwoerd Collection), File 1/55/2/2 (1960-61: the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conferences), Memo: "Meeting With ANC, Liberal or other Extra-Parliamentary Leaders", by H.F. Verwoerd, n.d.

29. H. Macmillan, *Pointing the way*, pp. 152-155.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 152.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 153.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 160.

33. *Ibid.*

34. *Ibid.*, p. 154.

this could be removed.³⁵

Verwoerd had then brought up the subject of Ireland and Macmillan told him it was "not relevant". De Valera had accepted the British monarch as head of the Commonwealth and Ireland had later left the Commonwealth "for different reasons".³⁶ Verwoerd talked about Cyprus and Macmillan had to tell him he thought Cyprus was another matter. The question there was whether a country "whose policy was more or less under the protection of two foreign powers" could be regarded as fully independent and qualified for Commonwealth membership. Verwoerd "acquiesced in this" and said no more, but expressed his pleasure in getting Macmillan's views "frankly".

On 4 February Macmillan reconsidered the question of what he said about procedural questions relating to the Union's remaining in the Commonwealth as a republic.³⁷ In a note to Verwoerd he said he wanted to put in writing what he had said on that morning regarding procedural questions. He now stated that the precedent of other countries was that they could remain in the Commonwealth after becoming republics and that since the question was likely to arise within "the next two years" it would be in accord with precedence if it were raised as a hypothetical question in May. Macmillan now felt it was better to raise it verbally in May than leaving it to correspondence later. He hoped Verwoerd would attend the May meeting and that the membership question would be an added reason for him to attend. It was also important because it was a "pre-Summit" meeting (USA, USSR and UK) and because Ghana's continued membership of the Commonwealth would be discussed as well as that of Nigeria. He added:

Moreover, as I told you, I would feel it would be a great advantage if at such a meeting you and I and say, Menzies [of Australia] and Diefenbaker [of Canada] and Nash [of New Zealand] could have informal talks together about all these problems. I am sure we could all gain.

In conclusion, Macmillan asked Verwoerd to regard the letter as private and confidential as it would cause "great inconvenience if known directly or indirectly".

4. The "Winds of Change" speech

The "Winds of Change" speech had been delivered on 3 February, in between the private conferences with Louw and Verwoerd. There is no indication in Macmillan's memoirs nor in the official summary of the talks whether the speech, which came as a shock to Verwoerd by all accounts, affected the talks to any extent or changed Verwoerd's views about retaining Commonwealth membership at those talks. One could surmise, however, that the deep

35. PRO, DO 119, File 1206, No. 24B, Extract from a provisional note of a discussion between the Prime Minister and Dr Verwoerd at Groote Schuur, Cape Town, 4 February, 1960.

36. *Ibid.*

37. File 1206, No. 25, Note handed to Verwoerd by D.W.S. Hunt, Groote Schuur, Cape Town, 5 February 1960.

resentment he felt at the way Macmillan handled the speech³⁸ hardened Verwoerd's determination to achieve his primary aim of establishing the self-sufficient "white" republic, with or without Britain's support. D.W. Krüger refers to Macmillan's speech as an "explosion"³⁹ and a "surprise" because, "contrary to custom", Macmillan omitted to divulge its contents to his hosts. Piet Meiring, the head of the department of information, noted that nobody was prepared for anything but complimentary platitudes from Macmillan in his speech to the two houses of parliament.⁴⁰

Macmillan recalled that the address to both houses of parliament had caused him some "trepidation" beforehand and he had prepared his speech carefully.⁴¹ He acknowledged that it had caused some "surprise" and "shock" to Verwoerd although he claimed to have given the latter "some indication" of what he was going to say.⁴²

The shock had not been confined to Verwoerd only. As *Die Burger* said in commentary on Macmillan's speech:

South Africa has been formally served notice in the British Prime Minister's speech of a state of emergency in our relations with the West and our situation in Africa. And let us have no illusions, this British policy is also the general western attitude.⁴³

Round Table's comments on the Macmillan speech were:

There has never been a speech to which so much attention has been paid in South Africa. The sudden demonstration that South Africa was so far out of step that even friendly Britain was forced to disown us, in the polite but unmistakable terms used by Mr Macmillan, came as a shock.⁴⁴

Krüger notes that Macmillan began by condemning the anti-South African boycott movement in Britain. This was applauded by the assembled parliamentarians, but when he went on to discuss race politics he was listened to in "cold but polite silence". He informed his audience of his most striking impression of his recent African tour, that is the strength of growing "African national consciousness" and then delivered his much-quoted phrase which gave the speech its famous description:

The wind of change is blowing throughout the continent. Whether we like it or not, this growth of national consciousness is a political fact. We must

38. J.R.T. Wood, "The roles of Diefenbaker, Macmillan and Verwoerd in South Africa's withdrawal from the Commonwealth", *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 1/2, April-October 1987, p. 155. Here he refers to Fred Barnard, Verwoerd's private secretary, who wrote *Thirteen years with Dr H.F. Verwoerd* (Johannesburg, 1967), p. 62.

39. D.W. Krüger, *Making of a nation*, p. 323.

40. Piet Meiring, *Inside information* (Cape Town, 1973), p. 160.

41. H. Macmillan, *Pointing the way*, p. 155.

42. *Ibid.*

43. Quoted in the *South African Digest*, Vol. 7, No. 4, 19 February 1960, p. 5.

44. "South Africa in turmoil. From boycott to assassination", *Round Table*, Vol. 51, December 1960 - December 1961, p. 245.

accept it as a fact. Our national policies must take account of it.⁴⁵

He went on to compare African nationalism with Afrikaner nationalism in terms of what one contemporary admirer, the journalist and writer, Anthony Sampson, claimed to be "a wide sweep of history ... and with superb deftness".⁴⁶

The words "Winds of Change" were, according to Macmillan's biographer, Alistair Horne, derived from the speech of a previous conservative prime minister, Stanley Baldwin, in 1934: "There is a wind of nationalism and freedom blowing around the world".⁴⁷ Macmillan had, as he went on, softened the impact of these words, however, dwelling meaningfully on the words "nationalism" and "nation" to appeal to his audience's pride in creating a new nation, the first of the African nationalisms.

Macmillan went on to claim that although it was a basic principle of the Commonwealth to respect each other's sovereignty as nations, in the "shrinking world of today" the effects of one nation's policies were felt in nations outside it. Britain was committed to equal opportunity and shared political power in her dependencies. Macmillan felt, frankly, that British people were unable to support some aspects of South Africa's policies without being false to their own deep convictions about the destinies of free men.

Verwoerd's off-the-cuff reply, described by Krüger as "brief and courteous", thanked Macmillan for his frankness but stated plainly a difference of opinion.⁴⁸ Verwoerd claimed that what South Africa was doing was in full accord with what was happening in Africa. Although South Africa would never presume to criticise what Britain was doing in Africa, South Africans frankly differed with Britain. The whites also needed justice and had nowhere else to go. White South Africa was a nation in its own right in Africa. The blacks would have a full but separate future.

Krüger claims that South Africans received the news of the speech "calmly" and that there was "nothing ... new" in it besides the veiled threat that Britain might oppose South Africa when necessary.⁴⁹ It was, however, the jubilant response of the "liberal press" overseas that caused an angry reaction in South Africa and "indirectly ... added to the estrangement between South Africa and Britain". Macmillan himself wrote that the local press reaction was "much less hostile than I expected" and it was only when the news of its reception in Britain and else where came through that "criticism combined with a good deal of self-pity and resentment began to develop".⁵⁰

The reaction of many whites to the speech could be summarised in the words of Douglas Mitchell, the United Party MP for South Coast, Natal. "This one thing is certain", he said, "Britain is getting out of Africa ... [but] ... The white people are here to stay".⁵¹ These words were later repudiated by the MP for Salt River, Harry Lawrence, who claimed that Britain was facing her responsibilities bravely in Africa and that Britain could not be expected to "wash her hands of" her responsibilities in areas such as the high commission territories because she was concerned to win over "the hearts and minds" of the blacks.⁵²

45. D.W. Krüger, *Making of a nation*, p. 323.

46. Quoted in A. Horne, *Macmillan*, p. 195.

47. A. Horne, *Macmillan*, p. 195.

48. D.W. Krüger, *Making of a nation*, p. 324.

49. *Ibid.*

50. H. Macmillan, *Pointing the way*, p. 159.

51. Quoted in O. Geyser, *Watershed*, pp. 63-64.

52. *Cape Times*, 19 February 1960.

Gerhardt Jooste, the secretary of South Africa's external affairs department, lamented that Macmillan's speech had had such wide publicity overseas while the spontaneous reply of Verwoerd had been largely ignored.⁵³ He also felt that the fact that Macmillan had criticized South Africa publicly in her own parliament made the "impact" of the speech ("trefkrag") even greater and gave encouragement to South Africa's opponents to make unprecedented attacks on her at Commonwealth conferences.

The white press was largely divided on ethnic lines in its reaction with leading English newspapers giving Macmillan guarded praise while Afrikaner papers rejected him. *Indian Opinion* gave what could be regarded as the most cogent indication of non-European reactions by praising Macmillan for his support of African nationalism but criticising him for not taking harsher measures against South Africa.

Even before Macmillan's visit *Indian Opinion* had been speculating about the possible political effects and reactions. Jordan Ngubane's column noted on 11 December 1959⁵⁴ that Macmillan's forthcoming visit aroused the "suspicion" among Africans that it was intended to "boost up apartheid" and to be a "pat on the back" for Britain's support of South Africa in the UNO.

On 19 February 1960, reporting on the aftermath of the Macmillan visit, *Indian Opinion* expressed the comments of Dr G. Naicker, president of the SAIC, at a meeting in Durban:

We naturally were all anxious to hear what political message the British Prime Minister had for all South Africans. His speech must have a tonic effect for all political groups in South Africa. In the last few years the Afro-Asian Powers have made their influence keenly felt in international affairs and it is indeed heart-warming that Macmillan recognises this trend and the important role it was to play in the future of world history. Only one aspect of the Prime Minister's speech jarred as far as we are concerned. He did not meet Congress leaders in South Africa to know and understand their point of view and the Congress struggle for full democratic rights in South Africa.⁵⁵

Naicker also felt it was "unjustified" of Macmillan to criticise the economic boycott movement in Britain because if he was aware of the "plight of the non-white peoples" he would realise it was a "weapon ... in support of the struggle for freedom".⁵⁶ It was the Labour Party in Britain which supported the boycott and the SAIC was not "unmindful" of this. Macmillan would have thought twice about speaking about the boycott in parliament if he had met members of the Congress alliance. If he was "sincere" about his opposition to apartheid he would support the Afro-Asians at UNO against racialism, Naicker concluded.

A press summary of the overseas reactions to Macmillan's visit issued by the South African Information Service⁵⁷ shows the extent to which foreign commentary was in general favourable to Macmillan and hostile to the South African government. This was especially

53. G. Jooste, *Diensherinneringe* (Johannesburg, 1977), p. 190.

54. *Indian Opinion*, 11 December 1959.

55. *Indian Opinion*, 19 February 1960.

56. *Ibid.*

57. INCH, PV 93 (Verwoerd Collection), File 1/9/3/5 (Foreign Affairs, Britain, 1959-60) S.A. Information Service, Summary of Press Comments on Macmillan's Tour, in the USA, Canada, Switzerland, Rhodesia, Kenya, Australia, Portugal and the UK, n.d.

so in the United States where the *New York Times* of 4 February captioned its front page report with the heading "Macmillan in South Africa censures Apartheid Policy".⁵⁸ The *New York Herald Tribune* described Macmillan's speech as both "polite and courageous", courageous especially because "South Africa is looking for an excuse to leave the Commonwealth".⁵⁹

The conservative Canadian paper, *The Toronto Globe and Mail*, however, claimed Macmillan had broken the rules by criticising a Commonwealth member's internal policies.⁶⁰ It reported how the Canadian prime minister, Diefenbaker, had rejected a Canadian Labour congress demand for the expulsion of South Africa from the Commonwealth only a week before and had defended South Africa's right to deal with her internal problems as she saw fit. The newspaper went on to suggest that Macmillan's words "might well push" Verwoerd into holding a plebiscite to determine if South African voters favour a withdrawal from the Commonwealth.

British newspapers were divided in their attitude with the *Daily Express* leading the conservative viewpoint: "After hearing him [Macmillan], South Africans will realise that the ridiculous proposal for the boycott of their goods is not representative of British action."⁶¹ The *Daily Herald*, on the other hand, claimed Verwoerd was "desperate" for someone like Macmillan to come out in support of apartheid, and if he were to condemn it he would earn the support of millions of Africans.⁶² The *Times*, *Telegraph*, *Mirror* and other leading dailies adopted cautiously approving viewpoints in favour of their prime minister and his warnings to South Africa.⁶³

Miller claims that Macmillan's words on South Africa's race policies "effectively disengaged Britain from public support for South Africa" which meant in effect that South Africa could no longer count on British support at UNO "and it raised doubt whether Britain might withdraw support in other spheres too."⁶⁴ It induced, says Miller, "something of a note of uncertainty" in South Africa and gave Macmillan some room for manoeuvre in his future negotiations with other Commonwealth countries in Africa. He rejects the views of those like Lord Kilmuir, the lord chancellor in Britain, who claimed that the speech directly caused South Africa's secession from the Commonwealth and encouraged other Commonwealth nations to pose as champions of human rights.⁶⁵

Miller claims that Macmillan's statements had to be seen in the context of Verwoerd's previous announcements in parliament (20 January) about the republican referendum. In particular, he says, Macmillan "did not want to bind himself to accept in advance" Verwoerd's views on a Labour party government coming to power and its effects on South Africa's Commonwealth membership. (Verwoerd had threatened in January that if a Labour government came to power he would consider taking South Africa out of the Commonwealth. If Macmillan had been seen to acquiesce in this by mollifying Verwoerd he would have been sharply criticised at home). At the same time he did not want to accept Verwoerd's views

58. *Ibid.*, p. 2.

59. *Ibid.*

60. *Ibid.*, p. 5.

61. *Ibid.*, p. 18.

62. *Ibid.*

63. *Ibid.*, pp. 18-20.

64. J.D.B. Miller, *Survey of Commonwealth affairs. Problems of expansion and attrition 1953-1969* (London, 1974), p. 140.

65. *Ibid.*, n. 1, p. 141.

on membership "being dependent on how other members treated South Africa". So, in other words, the "Winds of Change" speech represented Macmillan's refusal to "acquiesce in all that South Africa might do".⁶⁶

But at best it could be argued that this was only a qualified refusal to acquiesce because, as Macmillan's actions later indicated, Britain appeared more concerned about the danger of losing her close relationship with South Africa than with the danger of alienating the African majority. On his return to Britain Macmillan adopted a much more conciliatory attitude to South Africa in a speech in which he reported back on his African tour. He said that 1960 was a jubilee year for South Africa and that the Union of 1910, had been an act of "unparalleled generosity".⁶⁷ He said that good faith in self-government for South Africa then had been seen as "far-sighted" and had "drowned out voices to the contrary". He went on to say that whites in South Africa and Rhodesia should have a sense of security about their continued stay in Africa and that "the rights of minorities should be guaranteed".

In reference to his Cape Town speech he said he had made clear the differences between the policies of the British and South Africans concerning race partnership and that "South Africa was wrong". But he had also pointed out the areas of co-operation in the Commonwealth and the world between South Africa and Britain. He stressed that it was impossible in the modern world to "send any country to Coventry" and his efforts to thaw relations with the USSR illustrated this. The British Empire was different to that of the Roman or Ottoman in that it "encourages independence", he said. This had been the lesson of the American revolution.

What was being said here summed up the basics of Macmillan's approach to the South African "problem". He was demonstrating a determination to push ahead with decolonisation in Africa but was at the same time willing to continue talking to South Africa and treating South Africa for all intents and purposes as a valuable Commonwealth ally and trading partner. His thoughts on the merits of Union in 1910 did change somewhat in the aftermath of the Sharpeville incident (and by the time he wrote his memoirs)⁶⁸ but in *Pointing the way* Macmillan made clear that he had been determined to keep South Africa in the Commonwealth and he stated his belief that "the pressure not merely of public opinion in the world but the actual necessities of living alongside their African neighbours, would lead to a gradual change in the philosophy which lay behind this rigid Calvinism".⁶⁹

This "gradualist" approach, or what later came to be called by the Americans, "Constructive Engagement", informed the whole British approach to the South African situation and was adopted to varying degrees by both Labour and Conservative governments before and after Macmillan. Underlying it were the entirely practical imperatives of trade, economics and cultural connections that have been the main factors in the British-South African relationship since 1945.

66. J.D.B. Miller, *Survey*, p. 140.

67. *Journal of the Royal Commonwealth Society*, "The Prime Minister on Africa", Vol. 3., No. 3, May-June 1960, p. 77.

68. H. Macmillan, *Pointing the way*, p. 292.

69. *Ibid.*, p. 293.