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Book Reviews

Understanding the Impact of Germany's Uncivilised 'Civilising Mission'

Henning Melber, *The Long Shadow of German Colonialism: Amnesia, Denialism and Revisionism*
Hurst & Company, London, 2024
332 pp
ISBN: 9781805260455 (Paperback)

The Long Shadow of German Colonialism is a comprehensive, insightful, and timely analysis of German colonialism and its impact on the colonised people in Africa and elsewhere. It is an examination of the complex and painful relationship between colonisers and the colonised and the lasting traumas that continue to haunt the victims long after formal colonisation ended. It also interrogates why there has been a long-standing case of amnesia in Germany regarding its genocidal colonial violence and a general reluctance to pay reparations to the descendants of the victims of its colonial policies, particularly to those of Namibia (South West Africa).

The book traces the roots of violent European colonialism in Africa and elsewhere back to the beginnings of the Enlightenment and its stress on rationality which gradually led Europeans to regard themselves as members of the most rational and therefore most advanced civilisation and, consequently, the most equipped to rule over those they considered to be lesser breeds around the world. Various pseudo-sciences, such as Eugenics and social Darwinism undergirded the doctrine of white supremacy that became dominant at the time, giving birth to the 'White Man's Burden', the idea that the superior race had a God-given duty to civilise the rest. Yet, as Melber argues, this self-proclaimed civilising mission was itself not civilised. Those targeted to be civilised were given no choice in deciding whether they wanted to be beneficiaries of this 'kindness' or not; those who resisted European civilisation, read colonialism, were subjected to violent military attacks and genocide, as evident in the cases of Namibia and Tanzania (then Tanganyika). This was in the first decade of the twentieth century during the period characterised by European military conquest, wars that were referred to, euphemistically, as 'wars of pacification'. Blood-thirsty colonial military leaders, such as Lothar von Trotha in Namibia and Karl Peters in Tanganyika, unleashed untold violence on local populations, resulting in the extermination of thousands of indigenous people. This gratuitous violence by the colonisers was, however, not unique to Germany. As Melber points out, violence or 'crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing bordering on genocidal practices, [and]

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colonial warfare [were] a trans-imperial phenomenon' and not unique to Germany (p. 23). He thus questions the notion of a 'special German trajectory', namely, the notion that Germans had a unique predilection for perpetuating colonial violence as compared to the other European nations.

The book shows that Germans had an interest in colonial ventures long before Bismarck undertook measures to ensure that his country also had its place in the sun by belatedly joining the race to acquire colonies in Africa and elsewhere. In a short space of time, which lasted only until the end of the First World War when Germany was stripped of its colonies because it was held responsible for starting the war, it had acquired quite substantial real estate in West, South West and Eastern Africa and the Pacific Islands. It also registered its presence in China by participating in the brutal suppression of the Boxer Rebellion. It thus had a substantial footprint in the colonial world by the time of the Treaty of Versailles. The book then traces the colonial idea in German society through the Weimar Republic and shows how the earlier notion of white supremacy was transformed into the concept of the 'master race' that was to inspire the Nazi atrocities of the 1930s.

Memories of the overseas colonial empire faded in the immediate post-Second World War period because the German nation was preoccupied with understanding the horrors of the holocaust. Interest in Africa's past was subsequently revived due to the intellectual efforts of black people in the country who worked tirelessly to raise Africa's profile in German national consciousness. However, a general reluctance to engage fully with German colonial activities in Africa persisted for a long time thereafter. Eventually, German authorities moved towards acknowledging the atrocities of colonial conquest until, in 2015, the German Government finally apologised for the colonial massacres of the Nama and Ovaherero people at the beginning of the twentieth century. This was then followed by negotiations with the Namibian Government that resulted in the Joint Declaration of 2021, although this stopped short of Germany accepting full liability for the Namibian colonial genocide. Instead of labelling the atrocities of the colonial period as outright genocide, in the Joint Declaration the Nama-Ovaherero atrocities were described as 'abominable atrocities committed during the periods of the colonial war' which 'culminated in events that, from today's perspective, would be called genocide' (pp. 161-162), as if to suggest that the atrocities only became genocide when it was so defined in the United Nations' anti-genocide resolution of 1948 that represents 'today's perspective' and which Melber also discusses at length.

Germany's reluctance to take full responsibility for its colonial crimes was further evident in its treating compensation to Namibia more as a development assistance issue rather than the payment of reparations to the descendants of the victims of German atrocities and also in allocating measly sums of money for the purpose. The Germans did not even address the structural damage caused by

colonialism that persists to this day. For instance, the lands that were pillaged from the indigenous people remain in the hands of the white descendants of the colonial perpetrators, while the majority of indigenous Namibians continue to eke out a living in marginalised areas. Melber is also critical of the Namibian Government for their apparent willingness to accept the tokenism of German initiatives and for sidelining the direct descendants of the victims of colonial violence in negotiations with the former colonial power. While acknowledging that some progress has been made on this matter, he maintains that a great deal more needs to be done to address the historical injustices of the past.

The Long Shadow is organised in six chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the book, while Chapter 2, entitled 'Enlightenment, Racism, Colonialism and Genocide' traces the roots of the ideology of racial superiority and the violence it engendered during the years of colonial conquest to the Enlightenment. Chapter 3, entitled 'The German Colonial Brand', discusses the history and nature of the country's colonial enterprise and its impact on German society and attitudes. '(Post) Colonial (West) Germany' is Chapter 4. It discusses West German Africa, the remnants of colonialism in post-World War II united Germany, black Germans in the country's history, and the rise of reactionary revisionism in national discourse. Chapter 5 focuses specifically on 'Germany and Namibia' from the conquest wars at the beginning of the twentieth century, the long period of denialism in Germany, through the decision and process of returning human remains and looted artefacts, and the negotiations between the governments of Germany and Namibia over colonial genocide. The chapter then examines the nature and implications of the Joint Declaration of 2021 and the controversial question of reparations, as well as the role and character of the Namibian Government's interactions with Germany, among other issues. Lastly, Chapter 6, headed 'Challenging Colonial Asymmetries and Blind Spots' summarises the progress made by Germany hitherto in addressing its colonial past as well as why, despite this, 'public memory is still characterised by deficiencies, contradictions, denialism and an attempt by some gatekeepers to distract from or downplay the need for serious memory work as domestic policy'. The chapter ends with some considerations and proposals for facing the 'colonial shadows' (p. 185).

Despite the rather dark and painful history it tells, somewhat surprisingly, the book ends on an optimistic note that hints of better things to come on the redress of past injustices in Namibia (p. 198). Melber is encouraged by ongoing efforts by various individuals and groups to address Germany's colonial injustices.

The Long Shadow is a well-researched book that is presented in a pleasing style and easily accessible language that are the hallmarks of Melber's scholarship in his many publications on the political economy of southern Africa to date. It is a 'must read' for anyone wanting to understand the place and role of Germany in global colonial history and its long-lasting impact on former colonial subjects, especially on

the people of Namibia. Melber is uniquely positioned to write such an insightful book, given that he is a Namibian citizen with a long history of fighting in defence of human rights. He is empathetic to the Namibian population who suffered the colonial abuses this book explores. To his credit, he does not claim to speak on their behalf as this, in his own words, would be a form of appropriation of their history and experience. At the same time, he is also a descendant of German colonialists and seeks to understand what motivated Germany's colonial policies and actions, why it has taken so long to address colonial injustices, and what more needs to be done to right the wrongs of the past. The result is a very informed, sensitive, intimate and thoughtful book that enriches our understanding of the forces that shaped both German and Namibian history. Melber's study is a major contribution to the scholarship on European colonialism and its past and present impact.

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A Powerful Reminder of the Sacrifices of Hard-won Freedom

Marion Sparg, *Guilty and Proud: An MK Soldier's Memoir of Exile, Prison and Freedom*
Cape Town, Tafelberg, 2024
288 pp
ISBN: 978-0-624-09469-2

On 7 March 1986, Marion Sparg was arrested at a flat in Hillbrow after successfully planting a bomb at John Vorster Square in Johannesburg, the notorious headquarters of the South African Police and Security Branch, where the torture of political detainees was routine practice (and linked to the death of at least eight political activists since its opening in 1968). The explosion shattered windows and walls, injuring two policemen and two civilians, but there were no fatalities. Sparg, who had been acting as a lone MK soldier, was later sentenced to 25 years in prison. The judge who delivered the sentence described her as a 'dedicated and unrepentant member' of MK and regarded her decision to join the liberation struggle as a white South African as an aggravating factor (p. 189). In her memoir, published more than three decades later, Sparg explains why she remains 'guilty and proud' of her actions, as the book's title states. These words are taken from a poem by Annemarie Hendrikz that Sparg received after she went to prison (p. 194).

What then, made Sparg, who had been brought up in a 'typical middle-class, English-speaking white South African' (p. 18) family in the Eastern Cape, embrace the cause of the oppressed black majority? She matriculated from high school in the year of the June 1976 uprising, and remembers her Afrikaans teacher informing the class that children were being shot in Soweto. The same teacher also introduced her to dissident Afrikaner writers of the 1960s and to the poetry of Ingrid Jonker, but by

and large, she and her friends remained 'comfortably numb' (p. 22) to what was happening in Soweto and other black townships across the country. It was the horror of Steve Biko's death the following year, and the callous response of many of her fellow students at Rhodes University, where she had gone to study journalism, which 'changed my life', Sparg writes (p. 29). After her arrest ten years later, she thought of Biko as the police drove her around the country to identify the border posts between Lesotho and South Africa that she had been using, stopping at various police stations:

> It was in police stations like these where I, a self-confessed trained 'terrorist', was being offered tea and coffee, that so many met the same brutal fate that Biko had in 1977. I was being offered tea because of the colour of my skin (p. 160).

Biko's death prompted Sparg to read widely and find out more about him. Not only did her 'respect and admiration' for Biko grow (p. 30), but also, as she later explained in her trial:

> I felt very keenly the challenge which I felt Black Consciousness posed to whites in this country [...]. You were either part of the problem, as they put it, or part of the solution and if one felt one was part of the solution it was necessary to make a stand and to make that obvious (pp. 30-31).

After working as a sub-editor at the *Daily Dispatch*, Sparg became a reporter for the *Sunday Times*. These were turbulent times, and she was deeply impressed by the courage and conviction of the MK cadres like Solomon Mahlangu, who was executed by the regime in 1979, those involved in the Silverton Siege of January 1980, the trials of the 'Pietermaritzburg 12' and the 'Soekmekaar Three,' and the attacks on Sasol 1 and 2. These events strengthened her resolve that, 'as a young white South African, I wanted to be part of the solution' (p. 38). Sparg soon became disillusioned with South African 'liberal' newsrooms, where she found apartheid to be 'alive and well' (p. 44). After meeting like-minded journalists Damian de Lange and Arnold Geyer, they decided to petrol bomb the offices of the Progressive Federal Party for not joining the anti-Republic Day campaign of 1981, calling themselves the South African Liberation Support Cadres (p. 55). After the attack, Geyer unexpectedly left the country and, 'caught off balance' (p. 56), De Lange and Sparg also crossed into Botswana with the assistance of Beyers Naude, with the intention of joining MK.

After some months with the ANC in Botswana and Zambia, Sparg, under her new *nom de guerre* Michelle, made her way to Angola in January 1982. She trained at Caxito, a smaller camp about 60 km north of Luanda, in the art of war and politics, which was taken very seriously by the ANC/MK. During her time in Caxito, Sparg became so comfortable carrying her AK-47 and ammunition around the camp that her comrades teased her, saying it looked as if she was carrying a handbag. Little did

she know that a few years later, it was in a woman's handbag that she would smuggle the limpet mines for the attack on John Vorster Square (p. 76).

In late 1982, Sparg returned to Lusaka, where she was assigned to the ANC's Women's Section, working on its journal, *Voice of Women*. During this period, she worked with and formed close bonds with figures such as Thabo Mbeki, Ronnie Kasrils, Janet Love, Ilva MacKay and Joe Slovo, 'everybody's favourite uncle', to whom Sparg dedicates a chapter. Slovo cautioned her about the challenges of getting 'used to being a white South African again' upon her eventual return (p. 105). While many in exile yearned for 'home', when she was deployed to the home front, Sparg found that South Africa no longer felt like home, and that she 'longed for exile because that was where friends and my new "family" were' (p. 128). In Lusaka she also met the 'maverick academic' Jack Simons, who became her mentor. Together they started working on a book based on his lectures in Novo Catengue, where he had served as a political instructor. In the end, the book was posthumously published, and remains one of the most important records about life in MK camps and the development of MK's political education programme, which Simons played a pivotal role in shaping.[1]

Greatly affected by the Maseru massacre of December 1982, in which 42 people were killed, Sparg asked to return to MK, and arrangements were made for her to join its Special Operations unit. In preparation for this she underwent further training at Pango, arriving in the aftermath of the May 1984 mutiny. For this reviewer, the chapters about the author's experiences in MK are among the most compelling, offering valuable insights into everyday life in the camps and a woman's perspective. While an increasing number of memoirs by MK veterans have been published in recent years, almost all of them have been written by men, leaving the stories of MK women soldiers largely untold.[2] Moreover, their experiences are often portrayed in terms of abuse, a narrative that many women have rejected.[3] As Sparg acknowledges, her whiteness may explain why she 'was shielded, treated carefully', and many women were 'vulnerable and undoubtedly subjected to harassment, and worse', in MK camps and elsewhere. Yet, that was not Sparg's experience; she writes that she 'never felt more safe' (p. 117) than in an MK camp, even as the only woman there.

1. M. Sparg, J. Schreiner and G. Ansell, *Comrade Jack: The Political Lectures and Diary of Jack Simons, Novo Catengue* (Johannesburg: STE Publishers, 2001).
2. An exception is R. Mantile, *I Survived: Evolved against All the Odds* (Centurion: Kwartz Publishers, 2019). S. Magadla's *Guerrillas and Combative Mothers: Women and the Armed Struggle in South Africa* (Pietermaritzburg: UKZN Press, 2023) analyses the experiences of former women combatants based on new oral histories.
3. Thenjiwe Mtintso and Judy Seidman, 'Gender Struggle Was Intrinsic to SA's Liberation', *Mail & Guardian*, 3 November 2017, https://mg.co.za/article/2017-11-03-00-gender-struggle-was-intrinsic-to-sas-liberation/.

She was also at some stages the only white person, and she cherished the moment she realised she 'had forgotten I was white' (p. 84).

Sparg was in Lesotho at the time of the second Maseru massacre of December 1985, from where she had been undertaking reconnaissance trips into South Africa. In February 1986, she carried out an attack at the Cambridge police station in East London, which served as the regional headquarters of the security police, before moving to Johannesburg where she planned and executed the bombings of John Vorster Square and Hillbrow police stations (the second bomb did not go off), resulting in her capture. As she made her way to John Vorster Square on the morning of 4 March 1986, Sparg explains she did not have feelings of vengeance, but thought of comrades like Jacqui Quinn and Leon Meyer (p. 139), a young couple who had been murdered in front of their one-year-old daughter in the Maseru raid.

The later chapters in the book deal with her initial imprisonment – which she spent in isolation – her trial, and years in jail. Following a long tradition of trials of political activists, Sparg's trial became a political platform that she consciously chose to use to 'show that white South Africans, too, were prepared to take up arms and fight' (p. 175), fully aware that she could face the death sentence for treason. In her testimony, she stated: 'I believe that my actions amount to patriotism and not treason' (p. 185).

After her sentencing, Sparg was taken to Pretoria Central, where other white women political prisoners were held, but she had to endure additional isolation as part of an 'observation' period before she could join them. While she was not allowed books other than the Bible, which she had already read and reread, she spent her time applying and removing nail polish, a personal obsession her comrades knew her for and something the authorities had agreed to provide (p. 195). The wardresses were all white, and black women political prisoners were kept in other prisons – which meant that white prisoners could not see or interact with any black persons. Political prisoners were also kept separate from the general prisoners. The prison authorities then decided to separate the women political prisoners, so Sparg and Helene Passtoors were kept together, and Barbara Hogan, Jansie Lourens, Trish Hanekom and Ruth Gerhardt were in another group, thus 'exacerbating the sense of isolation and loneliness that any prisoner feels' (p. 197). This was 'indicative of the kind of cruelty these prison authorities were capable of' (p. 196). Eventually the women were all put in the same section.

Thanks to concessions that had been won by prisoners like Hogan in earlier years, the women were allowed to grow vegetables, to study (albeit this was heavily censored), and to engage in craft activities such as knitting – which helped them survive the monotonous prison routine. 'Letters from loved ones, with news from the outside, were a lifeline' (p. 211), although also censored. The women could sometimes

watch movies and also received music from Rob Adam, 'our prison DJ' and one of the political prisoners in the men's section, who 'had built up an impressive music library' over the years. Sparg also remembers 'how the music and words kept me enthralled for days' (p. 205) after receiving a tape of Johnny Clegg's music that included the song 'Asimbonanga'.

Sparg was to meet Mandela shortly after his release from prison, making an 'indelible impression' on her (p. 216). After the unbanning of political organisations and Mandela's release, political developments began to unfold rapidly. However, for those still in prison, 'time seemed to drag as the months passed' (p. 221). One surprise came when Sparg and Susan Wescott (De Lange), who by late 1990 were the only remaining women political prisoners at Pretoria Central, were joined by fellow MK cadre Phumla Williams and Priscilla Mkhonza, when race restrictions in the prisons were finally relaxed. Sparg, Westcott and Williams were released in April 1991, and Sparg went on to work at Shell House after Mandela became ANC president. The book ends with Hani's assassination and the setting of the date for the first democratic elections of 27 April 1994 after the 'thorny, sometimes chaotic, process of securing a transition to a democratic South Africa' (p. 256). Despite some of the disappointments and setbacks of the past 30 years of democracy, Sparg believes that 'there is no going back' and writes: '… we are called upon to continue Madiba's long walk to freedom' (p. 258). Her book serves as a powerful reminder of the long road that she, along with thousands of others – some of whose stories are woven into hers – have travelled before us.

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Unveiling the Complex Legacy of Joe Modise in South Africa's Liberation Struggle

Ronnie Kasrils and Fidelis Hove, *Comrade and Commander: The Life and Times of Joe Modise*
Jacana Media, Johannesburg, 2024
320 pp
ISBN 9781431434510 (Paperback)

The struggle against apartheid in South Africa was not just a physical battle but a deeply ideological one, fought in the media and through strategic misinformation campaigns.[1] For example, between the 1970s and 1990s, the apartheid regime secretly funded a global propaganda campaign to garner support and counter

1. See S.M. Tyali, 'Re-reading the Propaganda and Counter-propaganda History of South Africa on the African National Congress' Anti-apartheid Radio Freedom', *Critical Arts,* 34, 4 (2020), 61-75.

opposition by targeting key opinion leaders in Western capitals.[2] The regime understood that to maintain its grip on power, it needed to control the narrative, both within the country and internationally. This was the context in which figures like Johannes 'Joe' Modise emerged, not just as military leaders, but as symbolic targets in a broader propaganda war. In their book *Comrade & Commander: The Life and Times of Joe Modise*, Ronnie Kasrils and Fidelis Hove delve into the life of this complex figure, unravelling the myths and providing a nuanced portrayal that challenges the disinformation spread by the apartheid regime.

Modise, a founding member of Umkhonto weSizwe (MK), the military wing of the African National Congress (ANC), served as its longest-reigning commander-in-chief. He later became South Africa's first Minister of Defence in the post-apartheid government, that placed him at the centre of the country's transition from apartheid oppression to democracy. Despite his significant contributions, Modise's legacy has been marred by persistent rumours and accusations – many of which can be traced back to the apartheid state's deliberate attempts to discredit him and others like him.

The book opens a window for us to revisit the propaganda machine of the apartheid government, particularly the operations of the Special Branch of the South African Police, which was tasked with executing 'Stratcom' disinformation campaigns. These campaigns aimed to tarnish the reputations of anti-apartheid activists, sow discord within the liberation movement, and undermine the credibility of the ANC.[3] Modise, as a prominent leader, was one of the prime targets of these efforts, and *Comrade & Commander* methodically dismantles the false narratives that were constructed around him.

Kasrils and Hove's work is not merely a defence of Modise, but a comprehensive exploration of his life, offering insights from those who knew him personally. The book is enriched by contributions from Modise's family members, comrades, and other key figures in the liberation struggle, who share their experiences and memories, providing a multi-faceted view of a man who played a crucial role in South Africa's history. For example, Nelson Mandela remarked,

> My association with Joe Modise stretches back over many years… We were comrades in activities that helped shape the future of our country, and I remember him with respect and admiration… his example continues to inspire future generations to build in the way he did.

Similarly, in his eulogy at Modise's funeral, Thabo Mbeki stated, 'The biography we will write in our hearts and minds will tell the story of a man of courage' (p. xxvii).

2. J. Posetti and A. Matthews, 'A Short Guide to the History of "Fake News" and Disinformation', *International Center for Journalists,* 7 (2018).
3. N. Callaghan and R. Foley, 'Capturing the Message', in *Anatomy of State Capture,* eds N. Callaghan, R Foley and M. Swilling (Stellenbosch: African Sun Media 2021), 217.

One of the most poignant contributions comes from Modise's daughter, Pinkie Matlankhomo Modise, in the chapter titled 'My Father the Bus Driver'. She recounts her early years, describing her father as a man deeply committed to the struggle, often absent due to his involvement in the ANC's activities (p. 3). Her reflections add a personal dimension to Modise's public persona, revealing the sacrifices he made as a father and a leader. Pinkie's narrative underscores the human cost of the liberation struggle, not just for those who fought on the frontlines, but also for their families who endured long separations and lived under the constant threat of violence.

The book also features a detailed account from Modise's wife, Refiloe Phelile Florence Jackie Sedibe, who provides insights into their life in exile. Sedibe's narrative sheds light on Modise's experiences in various countries, including the German Democratic Republic (GDR), Angola, and Zambia, where the couple lived during the height of the anti-apartheid struggle. Her reflections offer a rare glimpse into the daily lives of exiled ANC leaders, highlighting the challenges they faced in foreign lands while continuing their fight for South Africa's liberation.

In addition to these personal stories, *Comrade & Commander* delves into Modise's internationalist outlook, notably his collaboration with liberation movements across southern Africa. One of the most significant of these is Modise's partnership with the Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZPRA). The late Dumiso Dabengwa, a prominent figure in Zimbabwe's liberation struggle, recalls Modise's commitment to fostering alliances between the ANC and ZAPU, underscoring his belief in the importance of regional solidarity in the fight against colonialism and apartheid (p. 61). Dabengwa's account highlights Modise's role as a key architect of the alliance between these two liberation movements, illustrating his broader vision for the liberation of southern Africa.

However, the book does not shy away from addressing the controversies that have surrounded Modise, particularly the allegations of corruption related to South Africa's post-apartheid Strategic Arms Acquisition project (known as the 'arms deal'). While these allegations have been widely reported and debated, the interviews presented in Chapter 14, titled 'Defence Review and arms acquisition (1994-1999)', feature key figures who offer deeper insights into the decision-making processes of this period, providing context that challenges the simplistic narratives often portrayed in the media. Despite these efforts, the book might have benefited from a more thorough exploration of the arms deal allegations, perhaps dedicating a chapter to critically analysing the accusations and the evidence – or lack thereof – behind them. For instance, the complex realities of post-apartheid governance, the pressures faced by leaders, and the difficult decisions they had to make in a rapidly changing political landscape, could have been explored more systematically.

Another area where the book excels is in dispelling the myths that have long surrounded Modise's life. For years, apartheid propaganda portrayed him as a 'tsotsi' (gangster) from Alexandra township, falsely associating him with the notorious Msomi gang. *Comrade & Commander* effectively debunks these myths, rather portraying Modise as a disciplined and principled leader who never lived in Alexandra, but rather in Sophiatown and later Dube, Soweto, following the forced removals of black families under the Group Areas Act. The book also addresses accusations that Modise lived a life of luxury in exile, revealing instead that he resided in modest conditions, like many other exiled ANC leaders dedicated to the cause of liberation.

Despite these achievements, the book does face some challenges. The lack of a single, cohesive narrative voice sometimes leaves the reader wanting a stronger editorial hand to weave together the various perspectives and anecdotes. Additionally, while the book effectively counters many of the negative stereotypes about Modise, occasionally it glosses over the more complex or controversial aspects of his legacy, often relying too heavily on the perspectives of close comrades and friends. Internal tensions within the ANC and MK, such as the reported conflicts between Modise and Ambrose Makiwane and the accusations levelled against him in the so-called Hani Memorandum, are not thoroughly addressed.[4] A more balanced approach to these issues could have provided a fuller picture of Modise as both a leader and a human being, navigating the immense pressures of his role.

Nevertheless, *Comrade and Commander* stands as a significant contribution to the historiography of South Africa's liberation struggle. It offers a compelling narrative that not only honours Joe Modise's contributions but also challenges readers to reconsider the simplistic and often misleading portrayals of liberation leaders propagated by apartheid-era disinformation. The book is a valuable resource for anyone interested in the history of the ANC, Umkhonto weSizwe, and the broader liberation movements in southern Africa.

Through meticulous research and the inclusion of diverse voices, the authors succeed in creating a work that is both informative and deeply humanising. *Comrade & Commander* is a testament to the complexity of South Africa's liberation struggle and the individuals who led it. It provides readers with a richer understanding of Joe Modise's life, one that goes beyond the myths and propaganda, and positions him as a central figure in the fight for freedom – a figure whose legacy continues to inspire new generations in the ongoing struggle for justice and equality.

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4. See P.S. Landau, 'Controlled by Communists? (Re)assessing the ANC in its Exilic Decades', *South African Historical Journal*, 67, 2 (2015), 222-241.

Animals as Social Beings and Historical Agents

Sandra Swart, *The Lion's Historian: Africa's Animal Past*
Johannesburg: Jacana Media, 2023
376 pp
ISBN: 9781431433957
R320

Why is Oupoot the elephant living out her days all alone in Knysna forest? By beginning with this story, Sandra Swart aptly demonstrates how history, together with our social and geographical environments, shape who we are and how we relate to others, whether as human or nonhuman animals. Swart's engaging style with witty wordplays, quickly draws her readers in. Oupoot's story is the first of many that readers can identify and empathise with. They illustrate how entangled our lives are with the lives of animals, and the importance of considering animal history and society for both human and nonhuman wellbeing.

Swart's multifaceted historical approach demonstrates that animals are social beings with agency. She hopes that presenting historical accounts that include the animals' perspectives will 'render the past edifyingly unfamiliar' (p. 9), thus providing a more-rounded, holistic history of human and nonhuman kind. By telling a 'multi-species story' (p. 9), Swart furthers our understanding of our joint historical entanglement, helping us to make sense of current environmental and socio-political crises and providing us with insights for the future.

She warns readers that this is 'a book with teeth. It will discomfort as much as offer hope' (p. 8). She believes that to do historical justice to a topic necessitates 'telling the "best truth we can", based on the evidence we can find – however contingent, labile and unpopular that might be. Animal-sensitive history strives for empirical accuracy coupled to historical empathy' (p. 10). Swart then elaborates on how to do this in chapter one, before taking her readers on a multi-species historical journey, primarily through southern Africa, in chapters two to eight. She finishes by explaining how history contributes to current human-animal conversations and decision-making for the future.

Chapter 1 begins by contrasting the historical account of the okapi's discovery – one which begins in 1890 with the explorer, Henry Morton Stanley – along with its long-known existence and shared history with the M'buti people of the Congo, a history which goes back over thousands of years. She thereby demonstrates that Africa's animal history has not always been fairly portrayed. She redresses the balance by elaborating on:

- the necessity of adding African perspectives to global narratives;
- the need to account for the social lives of animals – their ability to learn, share and remember knowledge, customs and social behaviour – and how these affect our multi-species histories; and
- the methodological challenges involved in investigating, authentically representing and testing the equitability of the different animal protagonists' histories she then presents.

The multi-species historical journey begins in earnest with Chapter 2 where we encounter lions. Swart provides an overview of our intertwined history, dating back thousands of years. Over time, lions have come to symbolise power, status and nobility; they have also become horrifying heroes and provide grounds for rebellion against the status quo. She shares examples of learning from each other, negotiating mutually beneficial pacts and living with the consequences when these are not respected. She details this further by exploring the complex nature and truth about man-eating lions, which includes shape-shifting, spirit-sharing and lion-human, human-lion and human-human hunting. She demonstrates that lions are not solely driven by nature and instinct; they are agentive beings with preferences, capable of making informed choices and passing these on to successive generations. By exploring lion-human social dynamics, Swart shows how these provide insight into intra-human social dynamics, power plays and conservation controversies.

Swart delves deeper into social dynamics and power-plays in Chapter 3 by focusing on the Dutch endeavours between 1652 and 1662 to set up a refreshment station and eventually settle at the Cape, the success of which 'pivoted on access to animals' (p. 92). She portrays the intra-human and interspecies misunderstandings, tensions, conflict, appropriation and learning, together with the environmental impact, by exploring the complex interplay between the Khoekhoe, Dutch, Saldanhars, Capemen and other local groups and key individuals. She also discusses cattle, sheep and wildlife; lifestyles and behaviour (hunter-foraging, transhumant, pastoral, sedentary, trading, thieving, enslavement, cultivable); and provides insight into understandings about animals, ownership and meat consumption. She finishes with information on horses, who helped the Dutch to further their settlement.

Chapter 4 provides a detailed account of the 'horseman', the horse-human dyad that makes it the 'ultimate predator' (p. 123). Although horses helped the Dutch to be 'more-than-human conquerors' (p. 124), their task was not as one-sided as presumed because local groups appropriated horses and created a 'supra-human resistance' (p. 124). Swart details the history of the horse's arrival, establishment and the nature of different horseman relationships in southern Africa more generally. She then chronicles the role of horses and guns in Lesotho and discusses the horsemanship of the Basotho that exemplifies the horse-human dyad and emergence of the Basotho pony.

The 1913 Natives Land Act made the 'South African Native… a pariah' (p. 148) in his own land. Although the consequences of this act are well documented for the *people* who suffered under it, little has been written on the cattle, horses, sheep and goats who were also victims of the act. Swart fills this gap in Chapter 5 by drawing primarily on Sol Plaatje's book, *Native Life in South Africa* (1916), where he presents the politics at play through both the people's *and* their animals' plight. For Plaatje, a Tswana, cattle were not only economically significant but were also spiritually and socially meaningful: '… a man without cattle was unmanly – perhaps even a non-person or a non-citizen' (p. 154). Writing with British readers in mind, Plaatje also appeals to their 'abhorrence of animal cruelty' (p. 160), which Swart then unpacks in more detail. She thus provides another sobering example of the intertwined intricacies of intra-human social dynamics and interhuman power play.

In Chapter 6, Swart turns to the social lives of termites and how their behaviour helps humans to reflect on their own societies and identities. The parallels between termite and human societies provide food for metaphorical thought. She examines the life and literary works of Eugène Marais (1871–1936), an Afrikaans intellectual whose research and documentation about termites is a good example of how the 'animal world can be deployed to promote a human socio-political world' (p. 173). Marais did just this for the Afrikaners in his endeavour to help them establish their own identity and language. He promoted their right to be recognised as belonging to the land by drawing parallels between themselves and termites in particular. His writing about termites and other despised animals also fostered understanding and empathy for them. Marais' personal identity was also at stake due to a plagiarism scandal, which some blame for his eventual suicide.

Teeth and trauma come to the fore in Chapter 7, where Swart begins with the 1998 scandal that erupted when six white police officers victimised three Mozambican immigrants by training their dogs to bite them on command. Noting that the South African psyche is troubled by nightmarish dogs (p. 201), Swart details the history of how this came about. The story gets underway in 1913, when the police force started using dogs to help combat crime. What began as a positive initiative to train dogs to track and identify perpetrators by deploying their noses rather than their teeth, evolved into a regime of terror when the police started training dogs to attack and initially used them as weapons against white delinquents and black gangs, and subsequently, to enforce apartheid. Swart finishes by reminding readers of the positive stories, which need to be told to help deal with the lingering trauma.

In Chapter 8 we learn all about quaggas – their extinction, their return (thanks to Reinhold Rau) and exactly what they are. Quaggas serve as a good example of 'transfrontier conservation' – re-traversing death through de-extinction – which Swart calls 'zombie zoology' (p. 235). The return of the quaggas 'from the dead' also help us to be reflexive. She questions how far we should go with de-extinction efforts

and explores what conservation entails, our motivations, how we define animals and their worth to be (re-)preserved and discusses the different ways of bringing them 'back from the dead'. Examples include the Heck brothers' resurrection projects, which were motivated by Aryan ideologies and Nazi ecomythology; their influence on others (such as Rau); and the upshot of their actions. For animals, the consequences of such projects include becoming 'proxies for the politics that invented them' (p. 246) and she raises questions of authenticity and how to uphold their personal identity.

Dealing with questions of conservation calls for a historically-minded interdisciplinary approach that explores 'deep and enduring connections between people and animals' (p. 264). In Chapter 9, Swart turns to baboons to illustrate this through four historical genres:

- ancient or 'deep' history (p. 265);
- dynamic history that re-examines how pre-colonial human-animal interactions have been represented;
- indigenous history that takes local knowledge seriously;
- and animal history that affirms that animals are social beings with their own histories that matter.

All four aspects should be considered for our ongoing understanding and wellbeing.

Swart hopes for an 'omnivorous readership' (p. 13). Historians, anthropologists, sociologists, ethologists, zoologists, ecologists and anyone who is simply interested in learning about human-animal interactions – both past and present – and their future implications, will benefit from reading this book.

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A Substantial Contribution to the Literature on Colonial Zimbabwe's Economic History

Victor Muchineripi Gwande, *Manufacturing in Colonial Zimbabwe, 1890-1979: Interest Group Politics, Protectionism, and the State*
New York: James Currey, 2022
234 pp
ISBN 9781-1-84701-333-0

In his book *Manufacturing in Colonial Zimbabwe*, Victor Muchineripi Gwande examines the relationship between captains in the manufacturing industry, the state, farmers, miners and commerce during the industrialisation of colonial Zimbabwe between 1890 and 1979. The author presents the history of industrialisation in Southern Rhodesia (modern day Zimbabwe) in a distinctive way, setting the

contested integration of the nation's diverse economic group interests against one another. He illustrates the importance of industrialists and private enterprise in the growth of Southern Rhodesia's economy by using primary evidence from the archives of South Africa and Zimbabwe, official records from key stakeholders in the industry's development, and secondary sources. According to Gwande, players in the economy and Rhodesia's conflicting interests influenced the policy that shaped industrial growth during the studied period. Within this framework, Southern Rhodesia's industrialisation has always been a contentious area.

The book accepts the points made by Stoneman and Riddell,[1] as well as other nationalist historians, who place strong emphasis on the role played by politics and the state in Rhodesia's industrialisation. The common narrative claims that a number of factors contributed to Rhodesia's industrialisation including the state's crucial role, the colony's comparative advantage in domestic economic control, and the Great Depression and Second World War, both of which reduced Rhodesia's reliance on European industry and accelerated the country's industrial growth. Although Gwande acknowledges the importance of political factors on the industrial development of Rhodesia, he emphasises the role of astute industrialists and private enterprise in the expansion of industry in Rhodesia. He breaks away from mainstream research on Rhodesia's political economy by emphasising the role of organised industry rather than the state in the growth of the industrial sector. The establishment of a thriving manufacturing sector in the region was made possible in large part by the recommendations and political pressure that industrialists applied to the state through their organisations, such as the Chamber of Industry.

For Gwande, the colony's industrial development, expansion, and diversification was caused, among other things, by the efforts of industrialists who organised and created representative organisations to further their interests by pitting them against the government and other capital blocs like the miners, farmers, and merchants. Protection was at the root of the dispute between the government, business, and other economic interest groups. For this reason, in his introduction, Gwande used the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme to establish the context for the discussion of protectionism and free markets in Zimbabwe's history. Although the book concentrates primarily on Southern Rhodesia, it also discusses the wider implications of the region's economic development, particularly for Zambia and Malawi, which were once in a federation with Zimbabwe.

Gwande's work is easy to read because the events are presented in both a chronological and thematic order. The book has seven chapters, an introduction and

1. R.C. Riddell, 'Zimbabwe', in *Manufacturing Africa: Performance and Prospects of Seven Countries in Sub-Sahara Africa*, ed R.C. Riddell (London: James Currey, 1990); and C. Stoneman, 'Industrialisation in Zimbabwe: Past, Present and Future', *Afrika Focus,* 6, 2/4 (1990), 245-282.

a conclusion. Prior to delving into the body of research on the political economy of Southern Rhodesia, the introduction sets the stage for the entire study by outlining the author's main contention, which emphasises the role played by private sector and organised industry in the industrialisation of the region.

In the first chapter, he focuses on the birth of secondary industry in Southern Rhodesia amid opposition from mining and agriculture interests. Gwande identifies a unique characteristic of Southern Rhodesia, which had a relatively large amount of local capital in the form of medium-size miners and farmers who formed the base of capitalists in the country. This differed from other colonies in the region, that were dominated by international capital. This distinct group inherited the country from the British South Africa Company, which was granted a charter to govern the country up to 1922. The local capitalists and merchants who made their living by importing goods and supplying manufactured goods to mines and farms dominated the first responsible government. This group opposed the growth of local industry since, at the time, it did not serve their commercial interests. Nonetheless, indications emerged from global events like the Great Depression that secondary industry would play a crucial role in the colony's economy.

In addition to providing an insightful history of industrialisation, Gwande's book provides a comprehensive analysis of all facets of Southern Rhodesia's economy in this period. The effects of the Second World War in 1938 on the Rhodesian economy as a whole and the growth of industry in particular are covered in the second chapter. Due to the war's disruption of international trade, the colony, which had previously relied mostly on imports of manufactured goods, turned to domestic goods. Interest groups, including the state and the business community, began to see the value of a developed secondary industry. Ultimately, the state decided to support and encourage private businesses to carry out the intended growth. To provide recommendations on local industrial development policy, the government formed a series of committees. Nevertheless, most of these failed to recognise the benefit of growing the local economy. Despite the lack of support from other economic groupings, as demonstrated in chapter three, industrialists continued to push for favourable conditions for industrialisation. In this section, the writer describes how organised industry came together to form the Federation of Rhodesian Industries (FRI), a nationwide organisation, in 1949. Even with the growing significance of secondary industry in the nation and the multiple appeals and recommendations from the FRI, the state persisted in being an unwilling collaborator in the industrialisation process.

It is interesting to see how Gwande employed tables with data that shed light on the expansion of secondary industry during the time, despite the fact that his qualitative approach was grounded in historical approaches. His work has a strong empirical orientation as a result. Gwande covers the development of organised

industry and the founding of the Association of Rhodesia and Nyasaland Industries (ARNI) in 1957— during the federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland — in the fourth chapter. He expands the discussion to include Zambia and Malawi, two members of the federation. He writes of how ARNI positioned itself in a fast-evolving economic environment characterised by African nationalism, protests, and elections in Southern Rhodesia that resulted in the installation of a new right-wing administration and the breakdown of the federation, opening the door for Zambia and Malawi to become independent. Due to their loss of unrestricted access to the northern regions' domestic markets, the 1963 breakdown of the federation made the condition of Southern Rhodesian industrialists worse.

The final major chapter begins with 1966, following British and UN economic sanctions against Southern Rhodesia, which prompted the implementation of new economic policies that supported the growth of regional industry. The right-wing government's 1965 unilateral declaration of independence had negative political and economic effects on Rhodesia, which resulted in economic sanctions. Because of the sanctions, secondary industry and the state had an intricate connection, and the ARNI and the government conferred on how to best handle the situation. At last, a compromise was reached between the government and entrepreneurs to lessen the severe sanctions imposed after political rebellion. Negotiations among interest groups led to the emergence of protectionism of the local industry as one of the most hotly debated concepts. With the help of these interactions among those involved in Southern Rhodesia's economy, Gwande uncovers a fascinating history of the country's industrialisation.

Overall, *Manufacturing in Colonial Zimbabwe* is a well-researched work that makes a substantial addition to the literature on the economic history of colonial Zimbabwe. Students studying political and economic history as well as college and university libraries should definitely have access to this book. Policymakers and industrialists can gain insight from it on the value of structured collective bargaining and dialogue in promoting development in a highly divisive climate. Gwande introduces an intriguing topic on the status of post-colonial industry in closing. He compares the colonial and post-colonial relationships between captains of the manufacturing industry, the state, farmers, miners, and merchants in the context of economic development. However, it would have been a challenge for the author to go beyond 1979. The comparison explains why the industrialists were unable to persevere beyond 1979, which led to Zimbabwe's industrial collapse. Perhaps there is room for more research in this area.

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A Magisterial Synthesis of Autobiography, Family History, Ethnography and Historical Scholarship

Neil Roos, *Ordinary Whites in Apartheid Society: Social Histories of Accommodation*
Wits University Press, Johannesburg, 2024
240 pp
ISBN 978-1-77614-890-5 (paperback)

Ordinary Whites in Apartheid Society originated as a study of the public service that Neil Roos intended to ground on research in the State Archives in Pretoria while he was based in the city. That first phase of research unearthed information on work colonies that the segregationist government established in 1913 as penal settlements for white men deemed idle or deviant. These inmates of the colonies were confined with the aim of incarcerating them rather than handing out criminal records. Instead, the intent was to train them to conduct themselves like 'proper' white men.

The work colonies largely disappeared prior to World War Two, but one of the apartheid government's first pieces of legislation following the 1948 elections involved reinstating these institutions on a stronger basis. In other words, whereas the earlier legislation only provided for referrals on the word of judicial officers, from 1949 the testimony of a social worker sufficed (p. 173). Yet the economy's general buoyancy guaranteed that many inmates defected for better prospects elsewhere and as they secured various niches for themselves within larger society without inordinate difficulty, the work colonies faded into obscurity.

Roos testifies how, in the archives, he found himself increasingly drawn away from the minutiae of the colonies' workings to passing phrases that referred to the referrals as 'blanke tsotsis', or other terms indicating racial hostility. Such finds led the book to morph over time into a broader history of the everyday. In its final form it focuses on the 1950s and early 1960s, a period of ambitious social engineering on the part of the apartheid regime. As the work colonies experiment indicated, this intervention extended to include whites, and Roos cites the sociologist Geoffrey Cronje (the subject of Chapter Four of the book) as an example of a persistent desire among members of the Afrikaner establishment to control and discipline footloose elements within white society.

Ordinary Whites in many ways offers an extension of Roos's earlier *Ordinary Springboks: White Servicemen and Social Justice in South Africa, 1939–1961* (Ashgate, 2005) which offers a social history of South African soldiers during and after the Second World War. That book was inspired partly by his father who enlisted as a 17-year-old volunteer. But in his research for the new book, Roos found his father, Dick and uncle, named Vic, among the men the Durban Men's Home committed to work colonies in the early 1950s (p. 3). These snapshots led Roos to making inquiries within

his family, but few interlocutors would volunteer any detail, a reluctance that he attributes to a certain, lingering degree of social stigma. The institutions are also absent from the secondary literature on apartheid, and hence represent an important gap that this book fills.

The uncovering of the familial details in the archives also led Roos to ask different questions of his sources, and this has influenced the structuring of the book. Each chapter begins with a bit of family narrative, whether anecdote or legend, and this 'borrowing' from the world of his youth gives *Ordinary Whites* a partly autobiographical flavour. Roos's family had comparatively poor, working-class roots: his paternal grandfather was a toilet attendant, while his father struggled to find secure work, leaving his mother as the main breadwinner for long periods.

Yet comparative is the operative word, for though Roos's study is influenced by the work of the Subaltern Studies collective, he repeatedly stresses his acceptance of the fact that his subjects occupied positions of relative privilege by virtue of being white in a racist society. He adds that in South Africa's case, most ordinary whites were tasked with upholding the codes of the racial order in one form or another. Drawing on Hannah Arendt's distinction between decision makers and implementers, Roos locates the median 'ordinary' white under apartheid as existing in the spacious, latter category of enforcers. Roos also cites Arendt's argument that in the Third Reich, 'normal' behaviour could only be expected of those courageous enough to act 'abnormally'. He argues that whites in apartheid South Africa were all too normal (pp. 26-28).

Ordinary Springboks offers examples of such mediocrity. This earlier work portrays veterans of organs such as the Torch Commando opposing the new apartheid regime and calling National Party leaders 'Malanazis', while seeing nothing wrong with the overall shape of segregation, or in positioning themselves as being better able to salvage white civilisation. Among the contradictions that resulted were seeking to protect the (qualified) Coloured franchise but refusing to let Coloured servicemen join their protests. *Ordinary Whites* features numerous similar stories of the self-absorption of everyday white life and how whites were socialised over time into a society that intoxicated them with economic privilege.

Though the book features traces of defiance, and even short lived cross-racial alliances, the whites Roos features seldom confronted the racial order itself. Such acts of quotidian defiance enabled many whites to claim later that they never supported apartheid. Roos concedes that in many such cases this was indeed so, but he adds the qualifier that this occurred in a context in which they simultaneously accommodated and opposed elements of the system. This includes Roos's own mother (to whom the book is dedicated), who he describes as having been both compliant and defiant of apartheid's codes.

Another transgressor was an uncle, 'Derrick Smythe-Jones', a kindly old man who ran a bar, and who forms the subject of the book's final chapter. Derrick came from a company village on Natal's South Coast and committed suicide in 1971 by walking on railway tracks, having fallen in love with a black woman from a nearby location in violation of the Immorality Act. His story emerged during conversations with family members and local residents, again in half-told, hushed fragments (pp. 186-188).

Ordinary Whites offers a magisterial synthesis of autobiography, family history, ethnography and conventional historical scholarship, in a parable of how to write subaltern history in ways that nonetheless respect the agency, power and indeed privilege of those being written into the historical record. Roos accomplishes this by revealing in ways both original and striking, how white South Africans were policed, disciplined, and reformed under apartheid, but also how they transgressed those codes, and within what limitations.

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Jan Christiaan Smuts: Reappraising an Intriguing Historical Character

David Boucher and Bongani Ngqulunga, eds
Reappraising the Life and Legacy of Jan Smuts
Johannesburg, UJ Press, 2024

When compared to his contemporaries such as South Africa's first Prime Minister, Louis Botha, or J.B.M. Herzog as well as apartheid leaders such as D.F. Malan and Hendrik Verwoerd, the life of Jan Smuts has provoked a great deal of literature on the part of historians. The early definitive work on Smuts is Hancock's two-volume biography published more than fifty years ago with many successive works drawing on this work.[2] Of late, there has been a resurgence of biographies of Smuts, with a particular focus on his military career during the First World War. These include works by David Katz (one of the contributors to this volume), Ian van der Waag and Antonio Garcia. Richard Steyn's biography of the statesman is aimed at a general readership and reflects the popularity of the historical figure, while most recently Robert Southall (another contributor) has published a work exploring the lives of two figures essential to the '[making of] South Africa' in the twentieth and twenty-first

2. W.K. Hancock, *Smuts: The Sanguine Years, 1870-1919* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962) and *Smuts: Fields of Force, 1919-1950* (Cambridge University Press, 1968).

centuries: Jan Smuts and Nelson Mandela.[3] The many works on Jan Smuts are testament to a figure that proves impossible to pin down or to essentialise – and there is much still to be done. Katz, for instance, suggests in his comprehensive and critical overview of the existing historiography, that Smuts's role in the First World War has 'not attracted the same level of revision' as other spheres of his life.[4] In the series Foreword, Victoria Graham labels Smuts's work and legacy as 'a mix of paradoxes' and he is further described by the editors as 'enigmatic', rife with 'contradictions, a man 'much celebrated and much maligned'.[5] It is these extraordinarily intricate, multifaceted and ambiguous characteristics of his life that make Jan Smuts an enduringly intriguing historical character – and underpin the essays that appear in this collection.

In the Introduction, Boucher and Ngqulunga provide a biography of Smuts's eventful life contextualised by the defining period in South African history that shaped the country economically, politically and ideologically over the course of the twentieth century. There is too, a consideration of Smuts's ambivalent and fraught perception among Afrikaans-speaking white South Africans; his trajectory from the rising star and integral figure in the ZAR government to hardline leader implementing harsh measures against striking mineworkers on the Rand in 1922.[6] It is, however, the authors' portrayal of Smuts's attitudes towards race that lie at the heart of the discussion and form a core component of the bulk of the essays here.

Dubow takes as his starting point the contextual and changing nature of what constitutes 'racialism', using the two poles of Smuts's thinking that run through this collection: the intellectualism evident in his work on evolution and development; and specific 'racialism' associated with 'white superiority and 'Western civilisation'". Dubow's chapter therefore underpins the discussion on race in this book as evident in the various essays on trusteeship and cultural relativism, for instance. Contending with Shula Marks's view of Smuts's 'almost visceral racial fears', as evident by his glaring omission of race in his various writings that rendered invisible and unacknowledged the black people who were an integral part of his 'daily life', Dubow suggests instead that it was less of an 'immediate' and 'visceral' fear; that Smuts saw no real challenge presented by black leaders and was therefore dismissive of them.[7]

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3. D. Katz, *General Jan Smuts and His First World War in Africa, 1914-1917* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball, 2022); A. Garcia and I. van der Waag, *Botha, Smuts and the First World War* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball, 2024); R. Steyn, *Jan Smuts: Unafraid of Greatness* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball, 2015); R. Southall, *Smuts and Mandela: The Men who Made South Africa* (Johannesburg: Jacana, 2024).
4. D. Katz, 'Discovering General Smuts though the Lens of World War I in Africa: A Bibliographical Exploration, 167.
5. V. Graham, 'Series Foreword', vii and D. Boucher and B. Ngqulunga, 'Introduction: The Enigmatic Smuts', 1.
6. Boucher and Ngqulunga, 'Introduction', 10-11.
7. S. Dubow, 'Jan Smuts and His "Sphinx' Problem"', 219, 222-223, 226-229.

Ngqulunga's essay details this further in his discussion of the increasingly radical Albert Xuma – and the ANC – in the face of Smuts's perpetual prevarication in relation to the 'native question'. He concludes with the view that although Smuts appeared somewhat willing to consider 'political reform' in the immediate post-war period, it was 'a matter of too little, too late'[8] – an assessment of Smuts's attitude towards race (as well as inability to grasp the implications of Afrikaner nationalism) that is all too familiar to the Smuts scholar. Similarly, Roger Southall's essay – which engages with Richard Steyn's *Jan Smuts: Unafraid of Greatness* – demonstrates that despite Smuts being an advocate of 'white unity' with a concomitant fear of being 'swamped' by a black majority from his student days, he vacillated on the question of race – to his eventual detriment. During the Second World War, there seemed to be a more liberal shift in his thinking with an acknowledgement of African urbanisation, yet this remained too conservative for liberals and too 'pragmatic' for Afrikaner nationalists. And it was in terms of both his alienation of the latter and a profound misreading of his electoral base and United Party support, that led to Smuts being ousted from power in 1948. For Southall then, the pivot was the racial question with Smuts 'lacking courage' and 'afraid of failure' – culminating in his ultimate fall from grace.[9]

The significant moment of the Second World War is the subject of Baines's essay on the pass laws. This war marked the relaxation of pass laws and the growth of the welfare state, reflecting both the pragmatic requirements of the war as well as a sense of idealism. In contrast to other chapters, the focus here is on the incipient liberal Secretary for Native Affairs, Douglas Smit, and the ways in which local authorities responded to wartime conditions that contextualised their attitude to – and implementation of – pass laws. Smuts is the overarching but distant figure yet is nevertheless the instigator of these policies with his frequently quoted (and potentially ambiguous): '…segregation has fallen on evil days'.[10] Smuts's reaction to and perception of people of colour however, while contradictory and patronising, nevertheless demonstrates an internal consistency.

As both national and political figure, Smuts upheld the imperial values of the 'civilising mission' along with a liberal belief in not just rights but the responsibilities of the individual with the awarding of rights only if the ideals of 'civilisation' were attained. With a teleological view of progress from 'savagery to barbarism to civilisation', he nevertheless advocated segregation and thus the exclusion of black South Africans from western 'civilisation', while supporting the disenfranchisement

8. B. Ngqulunga, 'Jan Smuts, Albert Xuma, and the Struggle for Racial Equality in South Africa, 1939-1948', 277, 297.
9. R. Southall, 'Smuts: Afraid of Greatness', 304, 321, 323, 324-326, 329.
10. G. Baines, 'Smuts and the Politics of Segregation: The Prosecution of Pass Laws under the United Party Government'.

of those who had achieved this idealised level of development.[11] Smuts's views and policies on race are evident in Allsobrook and Boisen's essay on trusteeship and the League of Nations where Smuts, described as 'Empire's Handyman', promoted a vision of trusteeship that took on a segregationist slant in the South African context, with the espousal of culturally relative 'social rights' rather than 'universal human rights'. As a means of controlling black labour, this related too to the indirect rule model of imperialism. In addition, it was Smuts's view of trusteeship and the advocacy of white 'tutelage' of 'backward' nations that would be implemented in the mandate system adopted by the League of Nations.[12]

Of interest are those essays that unpack the 'mythology' of Jan Smuts such as Jansen van Vuuren and Holt's essay on the film *Verraaiers*, released in 2011. The film reflects a particular mythologising of the figures of Jan Smuts and Koos de la Rey during the Second Anglo Boer War, with the former constructed as 'Slim Jannie', the 'logical…pragmatic' and aloof figure in contrast to the compassionate Afrikaner nationalist hero De la Rey. It is also a reconfiguring of a particular form of Afrikaner identity in the wake of the democratic elections of 1994 where Smuts incurs a sense of ambivalence, if not outright hostility, for his implacability towards Boers deemed as 'traitors' during the war – which is mirrored by his later actions in 1922.[13] The mythology of Smuts's visit to Wales in 1917 is further analysed by David Boucher. Positioned as both a tool of capitalism and a war hero, Smuts was ostensibly opposed to pacifist and militant labour – yet the perception has been that he was able to sway recalcitrant workers due to his stirring rhetoric, drawing upon the defence of 'civilisation' and protection of 'small nations' – and this is challenged by Boucher.[14]

Reflective of the ways in which the essays 'speak' to each other is Hyslop's essay on Smuts' attitude to Bolshevism between 1917 and 1923 and the ways in which his unequivocal ruthless actions against 1922 strikers – that would earn him the enmity of working-class Afrikaners – was informed by his experiences in Eastern Europe – and earlier uncompromising actions in dealing with militant strikers in Johannesburg in 1913-1914. Hyslop draws upon both Smuts's domestic and international roles that were defined by an unequivocal anti-Bolshevism that would also shape his critical attitude towards the Treaty of Versailles and the harsh measures enacted upon a defeated Germany.[15]

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11. Boucher and Ngqulunga, 'Introduction', 5-7.
12. C. Allsobrook and C. Boisen, Illusions of Sovereignty with Postcolonial Governmentality: Jan Smuts, Trusteeship and the League of Nations', 182, 185, 189, 199, 203.
13. A. Jansen van Vuuren and A. Holt, 'Is Freedom Really Worth this Much?': Smuts, De la Rey, and 'Rethinking Grand Narratives in *Verraaiers* (traitors), 25-27, 38.
14. D. Boucher, 'The Making of the Myth: General Smuts and the Miners of South Wales', 92-93.
15. J. Hyslop, 'Jan Smuts and the World Counter-Revolution, 1917-1923'.

The final section of the compilation addresses Smuts as intellectual and scientist. The essays by Sweet and Du Pisani focus on holism with the former providing a useful overview of Smuts's philosophical musings evident in *Holism and Evolution*. Described as a convergence between science and philosophy, Du Pisani goes on to demonstrate the continuing relevance of a philosophy – considered by some of Smuts's own contemporaries as intellectually challenging – as evident in systems theory and particularly when considering climate change, environment and the interconnected nature of separate entities that nonetheless constitute a 'whole'.[16] To conclude the section on intellectualism and science is Van Wyk's essay on the development of the atomic bomb – however this is less about Smuts's scientific interest than it is about his international and diplomatic role in the provision of uranium from South Africa for the United States and Britain.[17] Given the ideological framing of this essay compilation then, it is perhaps revealing that Smuts's actual scientific interest and expertise, particularly that in botany, has been largely omitted.

The strength of this volume is that through their focus on particular and revealing aspects of Smuts' public life, contributors add a sense of nuance and bring to bear an in-depth view that allows for the interrogation of the grand narratives – or the mythology that surrounds Jan Smuts. Yet simultaneously, this can also be a source of frustration, given the brevity of the format where certain aspects may feel insufficiently explored. This is evident for instance in Ndzendze's intriguing look at Smuts's ministerial portfolios and how this wide-ranging exposure to all facets of governance influenced his leadership.[18] Further, given the subject matter, there may be aspects discussed that are already familiar to the reader and there are inevitable overlaps between essays, yet this demonstrates too the strength of the work: the different emphases presented by contributors drawn from a variety of disciplines.

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16. W. Sweet, 'Smuts, Holism and Political Philosophy' and K. du Pisani, 'Father of Holism: The Intellectual Legacy of Jan Smuts', 381, 383.
17. J-A van Wyk, 'Jan Smuts and the Atomic Bomb'.
18. Refer to B. Ndzendze, 'Jan Smuts - Cabinet Government in the Early Union of South Africa'.