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‘MACMILLAN, VERWOERD, AND THE 1960 ‘WIND OF CHANGE’ SPEECH*

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ABSTRACT. *Just over fifty years ago, Prime Minister Macmillan made an extensive tour of Africa, culminating in his ‘wind of change’ speech in Cape Town, 1960. This article traces Macmillan’s progress through Africa with particular emphasis on his intervention in South African politics. It offers a novel reading of the ‘wind of change’ speech, arguing that the message was far more conciliatory with respect to white South African interests than is usually assumed. Pragmatism rather than principle was always the prime consideration. Far from being cowed by Macmillan’s oratory or his message, Verwoerd stood up to Macmillan and, at least in the eyes of his supporters, gave as good as he got. The shock of the ‘wind of change’ speech was more evident in Britain and in British settler regions of Africa than in South Africa. Macmillan’s advisers had an inflated view of the import of the speech and in many ways misread Verwoerd’s brand of Afrikaner nationalism. One of the consequences of the speech was to embolden Verwoerd politically, and to prepare him for the declaration of republican status in 1961 and departure from the commonwealth.*

Harold Macmillan’s ‘wind of change’ address has gone down in history as one of the great visionary speeches in post-war history, and perhaps the finest of Macmillan’s career. As well as signalling a major policy change in respect of African decolonization, it declared that South Africa was now so far out of step with the trajectory of world events that Britain could no longer be counted upon to lend support to apartheid in the international arena. Macmillan’s speech demonstrated a sweeping grasp of historical circumstance. It was timely in its assessment of contemporary realities. Its staging was dramatic, and its formal construction and delivery magnificent. Yet the power of the address was vitiated

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* This paper was written for a conference organized by Sarah Stockwell and Larry Butler on the fiftieth anniversary of the ‘wind of change’ address, held at the University of East Anglia, March 2010. Papers presented by Simon Ball, Stephen Howe, Joanna Lewis, Roger Louis, and Stuart Ward were especially illuminating for my purposes. I have since had very helpful comments from Hermann Giliomee, Alex Mouton, Rob Skinner, Andrew Thompson, Richard Whiting, and the anonymous reviewers for the *Historical Journal*.

by the broad realization that Britain was a declining force in Africa. The speech amounted to concession dressed up as an act of statesmanship, an attempt to regain some sense of domestic control and direction in respect of external events that were no longer subject to Britain's mastery.

The significance of Macmillan's speech had more to do with its recognition of already existing forces than its originality or its grasp of the future. Indeed, the central message about the force of African nationalism was already a truism when Macmillan delivered it – and an understatement at that.¹ Neither the 'wind of change' metaphor, nor the sentiments it described, were novel. Stanley Baldwin had used a similar phrase to describe the growing forces of nationalism round the world in 1934.² In 1957, Macmillan had himself observed that the growing nationalisms of Asia and Africa, which had been 'but a ripple', was now 'almost a tidal wave' that had to be guided into 'broad and safe channels' lest it turned into communism.³ His message in 1960 was an elaboration of this idea in the specifically African context.

In South African historiography, the 'wind of change' speech is seldom discussed, though routinely noted in passing. One reason is that Macmillan's visit is compacted into a dramatic series of events. The year 1960 began with Prime Minister Hendrik Verwoerd's surprise announcement that a referendum would be held later in the year to decide whether South Africa should become a republic.⁴ Macmillan's 'wind of change' speech on 3 February was soon occluded by the Sharpeville massacre and Langa uprisings in March; by the UN Security Council condemnation of apartheid which followed; the attempted assassination of Verwoerd on 9 April; the state of emergency and banning of the African National Congress (ANC) and Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC); the strongly contested republican referendum in October; and, in December, the controversial World Council of Churches Conference at Cottesloe. South Africa's pressured withdrawal from the commonwealth in May 1961 was the culminating episode in eighteen months of feverish social tumult, of which Macmillan's address was merely one event.

The success of the speech has to be judged against its objectives. To the extent that it laid a more or less clear exit strategy for Britain as an African colonial power – part of Macmillan's larger attempt to reconfigure British attachments to the United States, on the one hand, and Europe, on the other – it largely achieved its purpose. But if part of Macmillan's intent was to persuade white South Africans to see reason and to abandon the logic of

¹ A. Sampson, *Mandela: the authorised biography* (London, 2000), p. 129.

² Stanley Baldwin, in 1934, spoke of 'a wind of nationalism and freedom blowing round the world' and Nehru, in 1947, referred to 'strong winds' 'blowing all over Asia'. *Safer's political dictionary* (Oxford, 2008), p. 814.

³ *Cape Times*, 23 Oct. 1957.

⁴ Hendrik Verwoerd, academic, newspaper editor, and politician (1901–66), became prime minister of South Africa in 1958, having previously served as minister of native affairs. He elevated apartheid into a full-fledged philosophy in 1959 as he laid out a strategy for giving 'self-government' to newly created ethnic 'homelands'.

Verwoerdian apartheid dogma, it must be judged a failure. The argument put by Macmillan's most recent biographer, D. R. Thorpe, that the 'wind of change' speech marked a 'key moment in the struggle for black nationalism in South Africa', and that it was a harbinger of the eventual ending of apartheid, oversimplifies and exaggerates. It perpetuates a myth that can be traced back to the contemporaneous boast by British High Commissioner John Maud that Macmillan's visit was 'probably the most important event in South Africa since the Nationalist Government came to power in 1948' and that it would likely disadvantage the South African government and bolster the opposition.⁵

The unintended effect of the speech was to help empower Verwoerd by reinforcing his dominance over domestic politics and by assisting him make two hitherto separate strands of his political career seem mutually reinforcing: republican nationalism on the one hand and apartheid ideology on the other. The speech also helped to precipitate the crisis over South Africa's membership of the commonwealth – which was avowedly not Macmillan's intention. Yet, the consequence for the commonwealth was inadvertently beneficial for it allowed the 'new' multi-racial commonwealth to be born in the context of a great moral cause. (The paradox here is that since South Africa's re-entry, the commonwealth has never seemed more lacking in direction.)

I

Macmillan's decision to visit sub-Saharan Africa, the first time for a serving British prime minister, was arrived at towards the end of 1959. It was a good time to go. Following his convincing general electoral victory in October, Macmillan was at last in full control of his cabinet and party. Albeit bruised by his close involvement in Suez, Macmillan had managed to extricate himself from direct responsibility for that debacle. Having endured and now adopted the persona of 'Supermac', he considered that he now had a free hand to exercise decisive leadership elsewhere. Following the success of his 1958 visit to commonwealth countries in Asia and Australasia, which greatly improved his standing at home and abroad, Africa offered an opportunity for Macmillan to secure his position as an international statesman and even to launch him as a 'prophet of the multi-racial Commonwealth'.⁶

Adoption of a coherent African policy was judged vital in a context where colonial influence was dissipating and where the ensuing power vacuum invited African nationalists to seek the support of communists. The fact that Macmillan had shown only sporadic interest in the continent up till then proved an advantage for he was relatively unburdened by past association. Africa was rising

⁵ D. R. Thorpe, *Supermac: the life of Harold Macmillan* (London, 2010), pp. 453, 457–8; The National Archives (TNA), CAB 129/101, dispatch by John Maud, 18 Feb. 1960, in 'Prime minister's African tour January–February', p. 159.

⁶ A. Sampson, *Macmillan: a study in ambiguity* (London, 1967), p. 139.

conspicuously up the domestic British agenda, the future of Central Africa in particular. The Labour party was making independence a campaigning issue, in part because it offered alternative possibilities for the renewal of British moral and political influence in the world. The Conservative party was divided between those, like the 'Bow Group', who welcomed or accepted the emergence of independent African nations, and a band of die-hard imperialist traditionalists, the 'Rhodesia lobby', who were determined to stand by kith and kin within the settler colonies.⁷ At issue was the future of the 'greater Britain' idea which had been a defining aspect of British identity for nearly a century. Enoch Powell's reminder in July 1959 of the need to accept moral and political responsibility in respect of African colonial governance was a powerful challenge to Macmillan. Operating from rather different assumptions, Kwame Nkrumah likewise urged the desirability of a consistent statement of British intentions.⁸

In Iain Macleod, Macmillan had just selected an able and ambitious reform-minded young colonial secretary of state who was keen to force the pace of change.⁹ Macleod's views were reinforced by ministrations from the mercurial David Stirling, war hero and founder of the SAS, now leader of the central African-based Capricorn Africa Society, who urged the necessity of endorsing non-racial common citizenship in Africa as a whole.¹⁰ Macleod was keenly aware of the deteriorating political situation in British colonial Africa. The Nyasaland (Malawi) emergency, and the intractable problem of how to hold the Central African Federation together, was a major concern. In Kenya, the Mau Mau conflict and the revelations of the Hola camp killings exposed British duplicity and continuing complicity with settler racism. In Ghana, independence had already been achieved, while in Nigeria it was about to be attained. Seen in this context – and leaving aside other colonial conflagrations beyond British responsibility, like Algeria, and the developing crisis in the Belgian Congo – Macmillan underestimated the pace of change. To refer to the 'wind of change' in the singular rather than the plural was to oversimplify the many different varieties of nationalism already in full display.

On 1 November 1959, Macmillan wrote to his powerful and personally loyal cabinet secretary, Norman Brook. He identified a need 'to lift Africa onto a more national plane as a problem to the solution of which we must all

⁷ Ibid., p. 181; D. Goldsworthy, 'Conservatives and decolonization: a note on the interpretation by Dan Horowitz', *African Affairs*, 69 (1970), pp. 278–81, at p. 280; S.J. Ball, 'Banquo's ghost: Lord Salisbury, Harold Macmillan, and the high politics of decolonization, 1957–1963', *Twentieth-Century British History*, 16 (2005), pp. 74–102.

⁸ R. Owendale, 'Macmillan and the wind of change in Africa, 1957–1960', *Historical Journal*, 38 (1995), pp. 455–77, at pp. 457, 471; Goldsworthy, 'Conservatives and decolonization', p. 279.

⁹ A. Horne, *Macmillan, 1957–1986* (Basingstoke, 1989), pp. 184–5.
¹⁰ Owendale, 'Macmillan and the wind of change in Africa', p. 472. See also B. Phiri, 'The Capricorn Africa Society revisited: the impact of liberalism in Zambia's colonial history, 1949–1963', *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 24 (1991), pp. 65–83.

contribute... by some really imaginative effort'. Macmillan had in mind an extended visit analogous to his 1958 trip to Asia.¹¹ His initial idea was to arrange his visit according to the length of time that particular states had been members of the commonwealth, starting with South Africa, proceeding directly to Ghana, and somehow working in near and potential commonwealth members like Nigeria, Kenya, and the Central African Federation. This unworkable plan was soon revised, partly for practical reasons, but also because Verwoerd favoured the end of January on the grounds that this suited the parliamentary calendar (and, conceivably, because the visit fitted in with his as yet unannounced plan, to announce a referendum on turning South Africa into a republic). South Africa was now to become the final destination of a journey that began in Ghana and Nigeria, proceeded to the two Rhodesias and Nyasaland, and ended up in South Africa by way of the Protectorates.¹²

The idea of an African 'tour', with its nostalgic associations of a ceremonial royal progress, is revealing of the late colonial assumptions that infused the pageant. But this was not a leisurely aristocratic excursion undertaken by an Edwardian gentleman and his wife. It was a forward-looking performance of political theatre designed to seize the political initiative and to mask growing colonial enfeeblement with strength of resolve. The plot-line was broadly the following: in 1960, proclaimed 'Africa Year' by the Labour party as part of an effort to rebuild the organization following its electoral defeat,¹³ a modern Tory leader troops the colours of multi-racialism and demonstrates how Britain can exit Africa stage right as an old-style colonial power; he then re-enters stage left as first amongst equals in the new commonwealth of nations. Securing post-colonial goodwill through a reformed commonwealth constituted part of Macmillan's nascent 'Grand Design' whereby the 'free world' could combine (with Britain acting as the key intermediary between the United States, and Europe) to withstand the threat of global communism.¹⁴

Accounts of the tour, including photographic records, show a mostly relaxed Macmillan meeting political and civic dignitaries, visiting development projects such as the Volta River dam site and the Tema harbour in Ghana, while personally greeting African politicians variously attired in suits and traditional dress. The welcoming crowds were rather smaller than anticipated. In time-honoured proconsular manner, Macmillan professed delight at West Africa's 'colourful scene' and the glorious welcomes extended by Accra market's

¹¹ C. Baker, 'Macmillan's "wind of change" tour, 1960', *South African Historical Journal*, 38 (1988), pp. 171–82, at p. 172; R. Hyam, *Britain's declining empire: the road to decolonisation, 1918–1968* (Cambridge, 2006), p. 257.

¹² Baker, 'Macmillan's "Wind of Change" tour', p. 175.

¹³ C. Gurney, '“A great cause”: the origins of the anti-apartheid movement, June 1959–March 1960', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 26 (2000), pp. 123–44, at p. 136.

¹⁴ Thorpe, *Supremacy*, pp. 490–1; J. G. Giauque, *Grand designs and visions of unity: the Atlantic powers and the reorganization of Western Europe, 1955–1963* (Charlotte, NC, 2002), p. 111.

'famous "mammies"'. Lady Dorothy meanwhile busied herself with visits to schools and clinics.¹⁵ Macmillan was charmed by a genial Kwame Nkrumah, notwithstanding the Ghanaian leader's public denunciation of colonialism as an 'anachronism' which should 'cease'. At a state banquet in Accra, Macmillan acknowledged the 'strong tide of feeling among Africans that this is a time of destiny'. He also spoke of 'the wind of change [blowing] right through Africa'. Yet, the phrase was not picked up by journalists, perhaps because it seemed to be little more than 'a statement of the obvious'.¹⁶

At the University of Ibadan, Nigeria, Macmillan was surprised – without being unduly discomfited – when students displayed placards such as 'Macbutcher Go Home'. In Blantyre, where the government state of emergency was in full force, Macmillan encountered demonstrations against Federation. Protestors bore placards demanding the release from detention of Dr Banda, whose continued imprisonment was a major point of contention.¹⁷ In Livingstone, Macmillan also encountered crowd anger; he was undeterred when a crude gelignite bomb was found in the Savoy Hotel, Ndola, shortly before he was due to address an audience.¹⁸ The political tensions of Central Africa were expressed even more volubly in Salisbury. Here, Macmillan was forced to deny a statement he had made in Lagos that was taken as casting doubt on the future of Federation. Lengthy meetings with forceful characters like Roy Welensky, prime minister of the Federation, did not make Macmillan's visit any easier.¹⁹

That Macmillan should find himself involved in difficult bouts of mediation in Central Africa was unavoidable given that the future of the Federation was now Britain's most pressing and intractable African problem. In South Africa, by contrast, Macmillan was the guest of a sovereign state, a fact that his hosts made emphatically clear. As Norman Brook's record of Macmillan's report to cabinet makes clear, Britain bore responsibility for the central African region, though it possessed 'no power – only influence'. In South Africa, by contrast, Britain's task was to 'concentrate on our agreements', 'to keep them with us', and to hold the commonwealth together.²⁰ The language of friendship, hospitality, and mutuality was one that the British and the South Africans both employed in recognition of the fact that the awkward discussions between Macmillan and Verwoerd were being conducted between the leaders of independent states.

¹⁵ H. Macmillan, *Pointing the way, 1959–1961* (London, 1972), p. 124.

¹⁶ D. Hunt, *On the spot: an ambassador remembers* (London, 1975), p. 102; TNA, CAB 129/101, 'Prime minister's African tour', p. 29.

¹⁷ Macmillan, *Pointing the way*, p. 124; *Illustrated London News*, 20 Feb. 1960; Sampson, *Macmillan*, pp. 183–4; Horne, *Macmillan*, p. 189; *Guardian*, 15 Jan. 1960.

¹⁸ *Guardian*, 23 Jan. 1960.

¹⁹ *Illustrated London News*, 6 Feb. 1960 and 20 Feb. 1960; *Die Transvaler*, 21 Jan. 1960.

²⁰ TNA, CAB 195/18, cabinet secretary notebooks, extract from cabinet meeting, 16 Feb. 1960. My thanks to Tessa Stirling for extracts from cabinet minutes and other material in TNA.

II

Macmillan chose Cape Town as the place to claim the moral high ground by renouncing racial rule and distancing the British government from apartheid. South African whites were ostensibly the primary audience, yet the speech was geared to a much wider set of constituencies. It was intended to signal a major policy shift on Africa to Macmillan's political constituency at home and to an international audience (the United States especially) that was increasingly impatient with Britain's continuing involvement as a colonial power. Equally importantly, the message was directed to whites in central and eastern Africa, and also to newly independent Africa where apartheid was increasingly regarded as a symbol of colonial subjection.²¹ Macmillan's initiative was a bold and clever attempt to address multiple audiences and the speech was written and delivered with consummate skill. Whether it worked out as intended – or as claimed – is another matter.

There were few intimations at the start of Macmillan's South African visit that he would raise controversy. Arriving in Johannesburg on 27 January 1960, he was met by the debonair British high commissioner, Sir John Maud, and accompanied throughout his visit by South Africa's dour minister of external/foreign affairs and representative to the United Nations, Eric Louw, whose presence was a constant source of tension.²² An aggressive nationalist who had exhibited strong fascist sympathies during the war and excelled in rabble-rousing anti-Semitism, Louw was happy to act as Prime Minister Hendrik Verwoerd's 'chief hatchet man'. Louw was a pugnacious defender of South Africa's interests and, unusually for a senior diplomat, did not seem to think that charm was a necessary part of the profession's weaponry.²³

Macmillan's visit was carefully managed by his hosts. Ever keen to portray the apartheid dystopia to best effect, the South African prime minister arranged for his guests to visit the new model African township of Meadowlands where he was entertained in the police station. It was to this (misleadingly named) 'Bantu location' that many victims of the Sophiatown urban clearances had recently been removed. A group of protesters paraded banners: 'Please visit our leaders'; 'Apartheid is dead, not even Mac can save it'. At the new homeland university of Turfloop in the northern Transvaal, an uncomfortable-looking Macmillan had a leopard skin kaross pinned to his suit while being invested with the authority of a Bantu chief. The Sekukuni paramount chief (more likely a junior functionary pretending to be the paramount) addressed him: 'Now you see for yourself – we do not live in chains!' The discordant artificiality of this staged exercise in Verwoerdian tribalism was heightened by a performance of Purcell's

²¹ F. Myers, 'Harold Macmillan's "winds of change" speech: a case study in the rhetoric of policy change', *Rhetoric and Public Affairs*, 3 (2000), pp. 555–75, at pp. 562–3.

²² Sampson, *Macmillan*, p. 185.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 185; D. Eisenberg, 'The Commonwealth Conference', *Africa South*, 4 (1960), p. 58.

'Nymphs and sheperds' put on by a Sotho girl choir.²⁴ Macmillan also visited the sacralized Voortrekker Monument and he was taken down a mineshaft at West Driefontein. In his autobiography, Macmillan records that he was able to meet 'many representatives of different points of view' on the Rand, but this does not appear to have extended beyond English-speaking opinion formers like the industrialist Harry Oppenheimer and the editor of the evening Johannesburg newspaper, *The Star*. Macmillan complained of excessive security arrangements.²⁵

Macmillan arrived in Cape Town on 1 February. He was met at the airport by Verwoerd and applauded by a crowd of 4,000, some of whom waved Union Jacks. A small group of welcoming Africans were stationed in the airport's 'non-European' enclosure. Cordial words were exchanged on the tarmac between the two leaders: Macmillan spoke about the commonwealth connection while Verwoerd welcomed his counterpart as the prime minister of a 'friendly nation' and as someone who might become a personal friend.²⁶ Macmillan stayed with Verwoerd at the prime minister's official residence at Groote Schuur, an estate set in large grounds below Table Mountain, which had been designed by Herbert Baker in vernacular Cape Dutch style for Cecil Rhodes. Whereas Rhodes's predilections led him to employ an all-male staff, Verwoerd made a point of having no blacks in the house: the Macmillans were duly assigned an 'old and incompetent Dutch butler'. Macmillan found the house 'strangely grim'.²⁷

At Groote Schuur, Macmillan had extended private discussions with Verwoerd, along with Eric Louw, Norman Brook, and the ex-Oxford politician, now British high commissioner, John Maud. Macmillan reported that Verwoerd spoke in a quiet voice, suggesting reasonableness, but that he was entirely unyielding. To Macmillan, the high-church Anglican, Verwoerd was unpleasantly reminiscent of the Scottish Presbyterian, John Knox. The South African prime minister's overbearing self-confidence, coupled with his slight insecurity as a Hollander-turned-Afrikaner, frequently manifested itself in an insistent willingness to explain his policies at great length and with the pedantry of an academic who was accustomed to being listened to. Perhaps he was applying the lessons of his 1924 doctoral thesis in experimental psychology titled the 'Blunting of the emotions'. Its key point was that emotional responses could be manipulated by means of incessant repetition of particular stimuli – which in the case of Verwoerd's academic experiments entailed subjecting individuals to various colour combinations, and punishing or rewarding them appropriately.²⁸

²⁴ Hunt, *On the spot*, p. 113; *Guardian*, 31 Jan. 1960; TNA, CAB 129/101, 'Prime minister's African tour', p. 132.

²⁵ Macmillan, *Pointing the way*, pp. 150–1.

²⁶ *Cape Times*, 2 Feb. 1960.

²⁷ Macmillan, *Pointing the way*, p. 153.

²⁸ H.F. Verwoerd, 'A method for the experimental production of emotions', *American Journal of Psychology*, 37 (1926), pp. 357–71.

At a garden party hosted on 2 February by John Maud, Macmillan was able to speak to white liberal opponents of apartheid like the Anglican archbishop, Joost de Blank, Patrick Duncan, and Margaret Ballinger.²⁹ The *Illustrated London News* printed a picture of the occasion revealing a tense high table with an empty seat for Macmillan – who had meanwhile slipped away to confer with Ballinger on an outdoor sofa. The *Daily Telegraph* commented that 'that this strikingly ostentatious display of interest in Liberal opinion was designed as a consolation prize for the failure to see representatives of African opinion'.³⁰ The *Guardian* quoted sources suggesting that Macmillan was virtually a prisoner of Verwoerd's and that he was 'irritated' at not being given the opportunity to consult with genuine African leaders.³¹ David Hunt, who accompanied Macmillan throughout his Africa tour, made a similar point, emphasizing Louw's opposition to Macmillan meeting African nationalists. In seeking a meeting with the prime minister, the ANC expressed anxiety that the South African government would use the occasion to 'quell the mounting worldwide condemnation of their racialistic and oppressive policies'. The non-racial Liberal party likewise sought an interview with Macmillan. Hunt recorded that the prime minister was himself willing to see 'these people' if the government did not object.³² Macmillan had indeed met a range of African nationalists elsewhere on the continent but there is no compelling evidence to suggest that he or the British high commission had tried hard to effect similar meetings in South Africa; the official record displays a measure of defensiveness on this count, not least because it was anticipated that the issue would be taken up by the press and in the British parliament. Macmillan's attempts to get Verwoerd to take public responsibility for preventing him seeing the ANC and the Liberal party were rebuffed by Louw. The (tacitly) agreed formula was that Macmillan would meet only with the parliamentary opposition and it was on these grounds that the British prime minister declined to meet a deputation from the ANC.³³

Fear of offending their hosts was the major reason, but consular insularity was perhaps just as significant. Patrick Duncan reportedly found the prime minister 'suddenly deaf' when he urged Macmillan to seek out black leaders at Maud's whites-only garden party. Anthony Sampson added, pertinently, that the high

²⁹ *Cape Times*, 3 Feb. 1960.

³⁰ Cited in *Cape Times*, 3 Feb. 1960; also Sampson, *Macmillan*, p. 185.

³¹ *Guardian*, 3 Feb. 1960.

³² Hunt, *On the spot*, p. 112; 'Letter from DWS Hunt (CRO) to Sir A. Clutterbuck giving his personal impressions' of Macmillan's Cape Town speech, 8 Feb. 1960, doc. 444, in R. Hyam and W. R. Louis, eds., *The Conservative government and the end of empire, 1957–1964, Part II Series A Vol. 4* (London, 2000), p. 397; TNA, PREM 11/3071, D. Nokwe (ANC secretary-general) to Macmillan, 25 Jan. 1960, and Peter Brown (chair Liberal party) to Macmillan, 26 Jan. 1960.

³³ TNA, CAB 129/101, 'Prime minister's Africa tour', pp. 129, 150–2; TNA, PREM 11/3071, J. B. Johnston to high commissioner, 23 Jan. 1960, Macmillan to D. Nokwe, 4 Feb. 1960; Maud to Bligh, 31 Jan. 1960.

commission knew little about the African leadership.³⁴ Notwithstanding the heavily publicized treason trial of anti-apartheid activists and the Defiance Campaign which preceded it, all indications are that British diplomats had little appreciation of the importance or depth of extra-parliamentary political opposition, and little inclination to find out. John Maud's confidential post-speech report in which he remarked that 'the slogan-bearing campaign announced by the African National Congress' proved 'a flop', does not suggest undue disappointment. In assessing the views of the 'general public', his confidential comments on South African reactions to the visit made no mention of black opinion. Conscious of Macmillan's vulnerability to criticism for not having met with leading figures in the anti-apartheid opposition, Hunt loftily suggested that the content of the speech might serve as consolation for the ANC's failure to make direct contact with the British prime minister. On the final day of Macmillan's visit, a hastily arranged meeting (at the government's behest) took place with the newly formed Council for Coloured Affairs—a compromised advisory body with a majority of government-nominated representatives that was subject to a boycott by leading coloured political organizations. Having already accepted not to meet the ANC or Liberals, it is unclear why Macmillan acceded to the government's late request.³⁵

III

The climax of the Africa tour was Macmillan's speech to both Houses of the South African parliament on 3 February. The speech had been carefully written over two months and was polished and revised almost up to the point of its delivery. Its origins were in a draft thematic outline put together by Macmillan's principal private secretary, Tim Bligh. John Maud travelled to London for consultations in December and did much to fill out the structure of the speech.³⁶ As the man-on-the-spot, Maud was considered by his own side to have 'mastered the knack of speaking forcefully to Afrikaners without mortally offending them'—an assessment that seems not to have been shared by leading Afrikaner nationalist politicians.³⁷ Notes of discussions with Macmillan in mid-December reveal Maud cautioning against making direct criticisms of apartheid

³⁴ Sampson, *Mandela*, p. 129.

³⁵ TNA, PREM 11/3073, 'South Africa fortnightly summary, 27th January to 9th February, 1960', confidential savingram no. 26 from UK high commission, South Africa, to Commonwealth Relations Office, 11 Feb. 1960, and telegram no. 89, 'Reactions to prime minister's visit' (confidential) 16 Feb. 1960; 'Letter from DWS Hunt Clutterbuck', doc. 444, in Hyam and Louis, eds., *The Conservative government*, pp. 397–8.

³⁶ *Times*, 'Lord Redcliffe-Maud' (obituary), 5 Feb. 1982.

³⁷ Hyam, *Britain's declining empire*, p. 258. The senior nationalist leader Paul Sauer regarded Maud as a constant source of tension during his time as British high commissioner and found him antagonistic towards Afrikaners. See Dirk en Johanna de Villiers, *Paul Sauer* (Cape Town, 1977), pp. 128–9. Also W. A. Bellwood, *South African backdrop* (Cape Town, 1969), p. 162. I am grateful to Alex Mouton and David Scher for these sources.

(which is not to deny that he personally found it repugnant) in contrast to Macmillan's wish to include a clear note of censure.³⁸ A South African commentator put a different spin on his supreme diplomatic skills: with Maud 'you have to take the smooth with the smooth'.³⁹

Either David Hunt, of the Commonwealth Relations Office, or James Robertson in the Colonial Office, were responsible for introducing the 'wind of change' phrase. There were contributions by several others too, including John (Jack) Johnston, Maud's deputy in South Africa, and Evelyn Baring, Maud's immediate predecessor as South African high commissioner and thereafter governor of Kenya during the period of Mau Mau. Baring (who was said by Alec Douglas-Home to know the South Africans 'inside out') provided background points which bore on the history and psychology of Afrikaner nationalism.⁴⁰ Julian Amery and Foreign Secretary Home made suggestions. Cabinet Secretary Norman Brook also made a substantial contribution to the speech. Macmillan took an active interest throughout.

In striking respects – their Oxbridge education, patrician ways, and cautious reform-minded outlook – the interlocking careers and shared outlook of high-calibre officials like Maud, and Baring, as well as the more junior Hunt and Johnston, recalls those of the influential 'Milner Kindergarten' a generation earlier. All except Brook (who nonetheless took a very close interest in commonwealth affairs) had direct experience of South Africa and they shared in common a disapproval of apartheid. Whereas Milner's men had been concerned to contain dominion nationalism within the commonwealth, Macmillan's paladins were striving to maintain a degree of British influence over the newly emerging multi-racial commonwealth. In seeking to achieve this objective they expended a considerable amount of cultural and political capital. Ronald Hyam nicely characterizes the patrician administrators who superintended the decolonization of Africa as 'rather like plants which put on their finest display as a herald of death'.⁴¹

Anthony Sampson, who attended the speech as the London *Observer's* correspondent, records that it was widely expected to be congratulatory since the occasion coincided with the fiftieth anniversary of Union. The streets of Cape Town were full of celebratory flags. Macmillan addressed the joint houses of parliament in the Old Assembly dining room, which served as the chamber of the Cape parliament until 1910.⁴² He was seated in front of a large oil painting depicting Lord de Villiers, one of the architects of reconciliation between

³⁸ TNA, PREM 11/3073, 'Note for the record', by Tim Bligh, 15 Dec. 1959.

³⁹ Sampson, *Mandela*, p. 128.

⁴⁰ Sampson, *Macmillan*, p. 186; Baker, 'Macmillan's "wind of change" tour', pp. 177–9; Hunt, *On the spot*, p. 116; *Oxford dictionary of national biography*, entries on Brook, Hunt, Maud; TNA, PREM 11/3073, Home to Macmillan, 9 Dec. 1959.

⁴¹ Hyam, *Britain's declining empire*, p. 249.

⁴² www.info.gov.za/events/2010/sona_background.htm.

Boers and British, making the case for Union to the Cape parliament.⁴³ The penumbra of Union, one of the great moments of British constitutional achievement, remained visible around the dark shadow of Afrikaner nationalism. Macmillan duly began with fulsome acknowledgment of the fiftieth anniversary of Union. He paid tribute to the fruits of South African nationhood, in particular its immense material and scientific progress. While recognizing South Africa's independence, he laid stress on its mutual interdependence with Britain in trade, investment, and in times of war.

All this was a lengthy prelude to Macmillan's pragmatic recognition of the unstoppable forces of African nationalism that were making themselves felt in Africa. Slyly, he reminded his hosts that they 'understand this better than anyone':

You are sprung from Europe, the home of nationalism, and here in Africa you have yourselves created a new nation. Indeed, in the history of our times yours will be recorded as the first of the African nationalisms, and this tide of national consciousness which is now rising in Africa is a fact for which you and we and the other nations of the Western World are ultimately responsible.

Addressing Afrikaners as well as English-speakers, Macmillan referred to the significant Scottish influence on the Dutch Reformed Church, thereby allowing him, a fellow Scot, to speak to South Africans as a friend and a relation.⁴⁴

Macmillan was softening up his hosts through flattery, yet by recalling the long period of co-operation and friendship between Britain and South Africa since Union, he was clearly gesturing towards the still vocal pro-imperial and pro-settler constituency within the Tory party at home, whose loyalties were to the first British commonwealth rather than the multi-racial version that was just now emerging. For men like Macmillan's son-in-law, Julian Amery, as well as Macmillan's bitter rival, Lord Salisbury, support for settlers in Rhodesia and the retention of historic imperial ties in South Africa was a matter of faith. One did not renounce white civilization for reasons of expedience even if the 'irresistible impulse of 1900 [had] become the impossibilist lost cause of 1960'.⁴⁵

The passage in which Macmillan recognized the 'wind of change blowing through this continent' as a 'political fact' highlighted the pragmatism that marked him out from empire loyalists like Amery and, indeed, Churchill (who subsequently expressed his disapproval of the speech in private conversation with Brook, saying of the Afrikaners: 'Why go and pick a quarrel with those

⁴³ *Illustrated London News*, 2 Feb. 1960.

⁴⁴ Macmillan's use of his own family ancestry had another purpose: while counting himself as a Scot, he noted that his mother was American, and he likened the puritan influence on the United States to South Africa. He was evidently sending out a message, to an American audience, that he was personally keen to cultivate the 'special relationship'.

⁴⁵ Edward Pearce, 'Last echo of empire' obituary, Julian Amery, *Guardian*, 4 Sept. 1996; Ball, 'Banquo's ghost'.

chaps'?⁴⁶). In Macmillan's view, political realism rather than moral conviction determined that African nationalism had to be recognized. 'We must all accept it as a fact, and our national policies must take account of it.' This use of the collective personal pronoun is worth consideration. 'Our' national policies clearly referred to Britain's strategic interests. But was Macmillan including South Africans in this more capacious sense of 'we'; did his repeated use of 'you' refer mostly to Afrikaners? When Macmillan divided the world into three different groups, he was certainly including South Africa with Britain: 'You in South Africa and we in Britain' belong to the Western powers and the 'Free World' (surely an odd formulation given that he was referring to the apartheid state). South Africa was manifestly not part of his second main group, namely communists. Nor were they part of the third group, 'those parts of the world whose people are at present uncommitted either to Communism or to our Western ideas', namely the non-aligned countries of Asia and Africa.

By including South Africa in the first and not in the third group, Macmillan revealed as clearly as he could that he was talking to white South Africa, a key anti-communist ally. He expressed unambiguous disapproval of racism, citing Selwyn Lloyd's recent rejection at the United Nations of 'the inherent superiority of one race over another'.⁴⁷ Yet, Macmillan's disapproval of apartheid had more to do with the difficulties this posed for Britain's position in the rest of Africa, the Central African Federation in particular, than its effects on black South Africans. As Brook noted when defending the speech to Churchill, 'it was wise to make our position clear, because of our responsibilities elsewhere in Africa'.⁴⁸ Strikingly, Macmillan's recognition of nationalism in Africa did not extend to African nationalism in South Africa, other than by implication. He certainly made no reference to African nationalist movements such as the ANC or the newly formed PAC, nor did he seem to conceive of their struggle as one for freedom. With Britain's interests always foremost in his mind, Macmillan was trying to save white South Africa from itself.

Even when Macmillan delicately referred to 'the peculiar nature of the problems with which you are faced here in the Union of South Africa' – the word 'apartheid' was not directly mentioned in the speech – Macmillan acknowledged the differences between 'your situation and that of most of the other states in Africa'. This softened the key message that 'there are some aspects of your policies which make it impossible' for us in Britain to support South Africa as a fellow member of the commonwealth 'without being false to our own deep convictions about the political destinies of free men'. Macmillan took enormous care not to offend white South African sensibilities by offering

⁴⁶ TNA, PREM 11/3073, Brook to Macmillan, 3 Mar. 1960. Lady Churchill disagreed with Winston but thought it 'impolitic' to support Brook because 'Winston always thinks of me as a crypto-Socialist.'

⁴⁷ This did not prevent Selwyn Lloyd calling his black Labrador 'Sambo'. See Thorpe, *Supernac*, p. 525. ⁴⁸ TNA, PREM 11/3073, Brook to Macmillan, 3 Mar. 1960.

no direct support to black South Africans. He hinted at the potential fragility of white supremacy with plangent references to politicians and statesmen as 'fleeting transient phantoms on the great stage of history' – remarks which suggested parallels with the dissolving British empire. Such airy philosophical musing would have been lost on Verwoerd who once declared that he was never troubled by any doubts that he might be wrong. Far more reassuring to Verwoerd was Macmillan's clear renunciation of economic sanctions: 'Boycotts will never get you anywhere, and may I say in parenthesis that I deprecate the attempts that are being made today in Britain to organize the consumer boycott of South African goods.' This was one of the few passages in Macmillan's speech to be applauded.

There is thus nothing to suggest that Macmillan was concerned to align himself with those who opposed white ascendancy, a cause that the Labour party and the churches were increasingly taking up. In recognizing the force of African nationalism as a historical 'fact', he did not either endorse or welcome its emergence. Macmillan's opposition to race-based discrimination was prompted by the new context of post-war anti-colonialism which entailed guilt by association for any country offering support for white South Africa. The moral principles were, for him, less of an issue. Even at the time of his African tour, Macmillan was not above referring in private to Africans as childish barbarians. His view of white settlers in Africa was also tainted with racial condescension and snobbery.⁴⁹ Simon Ball's comment that Macmillan evinced a lack of sympathy and understanding for rulers as well as ruled is amply borne out in his Africa tour.⁵⁰

There is plenty of evidence that Macmillan found extreme Afrikaner nationalism thoroughly distasteful and Verwoerd, in particular, trying. In Brook's words, the Afrikaners were 'very different from the Boers' who Churchill 'knew and liked'.⁵¹ Macmillan accepted the prevailing, often complacent and self-serving, anglophone stereotype, which portrayed Afrikaner nationalism as something of an aberration, the 'obscurantist' product of an odious form of old testament Calvinism, a modern hangover of old frontier mentalities. Yet, he seems to have been vexed more by apartheid fanaticism than he was by the prospect of continuing white rule. Harold Evans, press secretary, recorded a private comment made by Macmillan while in Pretoria regarding the folly of elevating segregation into a doctrine: 'If they didn't make an ideology of it they would almost certainly succeed in getting the results they seek with a minimum of concession. Economic differences would alone be sufficient to achieve practical separation.'⁵² Macmillan's realism is

⁴⁹ Ball, 'Banquo's ghost', pp. 84, 85.

⁵⁰ S. J. Ball, 'Macmillan, the second world war and the empire', in R. Aldous and S. Lee, eds., *Harold Macmillan: aspects of a political life* (Basingstoke, 1999), p. 174.

⁵¹ TNA, PREM 11/3073, Brook to Macmillan, 3 Mar. 1960.

⁵² H. Evans, *Downing Street diary: the Macmillan years, 1957–1963* (London, 1981), p. 102. Macmillan added: 'Of course, they would have to accept the really talented African',

pithily expressed in his report to cabinet on 16 February, as recorded by Norman Brook:

Having said what had to be said on racial ques, we must now concentrate on our agreements and hold this in Commonwealth. They have played the game with us, in many troubles – we shld. Recognize that. And a flourishing country with gt. Future (?). Must keep them with us. Much thinking among younger people. Pity Afrikaners don't travel more abroad.⁵³

IV

Macmillan's speech was endured for the most part in silence, yet the story that he received almost no applause at the conclusion of his speech is not borne out by the radio broadcast. Immediately after Macmillan concluded, Verwoerd stood up to reply. Several accounts claim that the South African prime minister was visibly shocked. This is not entirely surprising: although Macmillan had discussed the broad outlines of his speech with Verwoerd, he chose not to supply him with an advance copy, a decision that was seen by Verwoerd's advisers as a serious breach of protocol.⁵⁴ The *Cape Times's* parliamentary columnist reported that Verwoerd was so angered that 'he began to stumble through his impromptu opening sentences, groping for some sort of sketchy control over his churning thoughts. Never once did he establish anything like his old fluency'.⁵⁵ But a letter from a radio listener, who claimed to be vehemently opposed to apartheid, took strong exception to this interpretation, detecting no sign of stumbling in Verwoerd's opening sentences within the broadcast and acknowledging that the South African prime minister had acquitted himself well.⁵⁶ The Afrikaans newspaper, *Die Burger*, reported that congratulatory telegrams began to flood in to Verwoerd's office as soon as the speeches were over.⁵⁷

Afrikaner nationalists, who still smarted from the slights and condescension of British imperiousness, greatly admired Verwoerd's ability to stand up to Macmillan. This was certainly the view of Paul Sauer, a long-time rival of the prime minister, who praised Verwoerd's response as an intellectual tour de force.⁵⁸ Verwoerd may not have known that Macmillan had vomited just before delivering his speech, but he evidently took pleasure in telling the seasoned

leaving Evans to wonder how the demand for political rights by the 'talented African' would be met.

⁵³ TNA, CAB 195/18, extract from cabinet secretary notebooks from cabinet meeting on 16 Feb. 1960.

⁵⁴ Verwoerd's ultra-loyal private secretary, Fred Barnard, was enraged by Macmillan's failure to supply his boss with an advance copy and regarded the speech as an insult. 'The speech occupied nearly ten pages; ten pages of silken, smooth-tongued, cold and calculated insults of courteously phrased, remorseless condemnation of the country whose guest he was.' F. Barnard, *Thirteen years with Verwoerd* (Johannesburg, 1967), pp. 62, 63.

⁵⁵ *Cape Times*, 4 Feb. 1960.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, letter to the editor.

⁵⁷ *Die Burger*, 4 Feb. 1960.

⁵⁸ De Villiers, *Paul Sauer*, p. 128.

diplomat, Brand Fourie, that the British prime minister was so nervous that he had difficulty in turning the pages of his speech. For men in the South African prime minister's inner circle, Verwoerd's calm and reasoned response to Macmillan was what really counted.⁵⁹

Verwoerd's message was simple and direct, though by no means 'lame and ungracious' – as the British high commission reported.⁶⁰ While accepting that there were honest differences of opinion, he thanked the British prime minister for his forthright remarks and drew attention to their respective countries' shared ideals and interests. In language that was coolly instructional rather than defiant, Verwoerd insisted that the 'there must not only be justice to the Black man in Africa, but also to the White man': white South Africa was a bulwark against communism; its mission in Africa was grounded in the values of Christian civilization. Besides, there was no other place for whites to go because although whites called themselves 'European' they were themselves African and had established themselves in their motherland before the advent of the 'Bantu'. He suggested that Britain's policies might prove counter-productive to its very objects.

Whether Verwoerd's response was 'his finest hour' or the 'most brilliant of his career', as some historians have claimed, depends on the bar we wish to set. There are nevertheless good reasons to believe that his impromptu reply greatly heartened his supporters and helped persuade conservative English-speakers to endorse the republican cause.⁶¹ The Liberal party journal, *Contact*, acknowledged that Verwoerd had shown 'tremendous ability' – adding that this 'may be an understatement'. Apartheid, it reasoned, was a doctrinally driven 'diabolical regime' and Verwoerd fully understood that he could not afford to lose the battle of ideas. He had succeeded in replying to the British prime minister's carefully engineered 'atom bomb', in a language not his own, with a speech that showed 'a sense of timing and of history'.⁶²

The English-speaking press was full of praise for Macmillan's address. There was consensus that it was fair-minded and frank, as well as courteous and tactful. The *Cape Times* considered that 'as an essay in statecraft' it was 'the work of a virtuoso'. 'Adderley', the parliamentary columnist who so delighted in Verwoerd's discomfort, gushed that there had probably never been

⁵⁹ Brand Fourie, 'Buitelandse sake onder Dr Verwoerd', in W.J. Verwoerd, ed., *Verwoerd: Só onthou ons hom* (Pretoria, 2001), p. 130; also C. Boshoff, 'Mentor', in *ibid.*, p. 201.

⁶⁰ TNA, PREM 11/3073, 'South Africa fortnightly summary, 27th January to 9th February, 1960', confidential savingram no. 26 from UK high commission, South Africa, to Commonwealth Relations Office, 11 Feb. 1960, p. 2.

⁶¹ D.M. Scher, '1948–1966', in B.J. Liebenberg and S.B. Spies, eds., *South Africa in the twentieth century* (Pretoria, 1993), pp. 367–8; H. Kenney, *Architect of apartheid: H.F. Verwoerd – an appraisal* (Johannesburg, 1980), p. 179; De Villiers, *Sauer*, p. 128.

⁶² *Contact*, 20 Feb. 1960. The editor of *Contact* sent a telegram to Macmillan immediately after the delivery of his speech, calling it 'historic' and congratulating him for speaking 'for the human race and for all the best in British and South African traditions and history'.

'so polished, so adroit a speech' made in the Union parliament.⁶³ For the *Rand Daily Mail* it was 'a stylish combination of candour and diplomacy'.⁶⁴ A cartoon in the liberal journal *Contact* by the usually perceptive David Marais showed Verwoerd with an injured arm in a sling after shaking hands with Macmillan.⁶⁵ Yet, the Liberal party chairman, Peter Brown, wisely cautioned that those English-speakers who delighted in Verwoerd's discomfiture ought to be aware that it was white supremacy, not only 'baaskap apartheid' (crude racial domination), that was under attack. In the face of overseas criticism, he observed, the views of the official opposition were converging with the government.⁶⁶ This troubling reality was indeed the case and Verwoerd was doing everything he could to encourage such convergence.

The reaction of African nationalists is more difficult to judge. In Johannesburg and Cape Town, small groups of ANC supporters, standing in silence, held placards urging Macmillan to talk with Congress leaders, while in Cape Town, ANC women managed to evade police attempts to disperse them outside parliament and proceeded to unfurl banners with slogans, including one which read: 'Mac, Verwoerd is not our leader.'⁶⁷ Mandela is said to have thought Macmillan's speech 'terrific' and he clearly had Macmillan's sense of historic sweep in mind when, in 1996, he reciprocated with a speech to both houses of the British parliament in Westminster Hall that specifically recalled the 'wind of change' address. ANC leader Luthuli was pleasantly surprised, noting that Macmillan had given the African people 'some inspiration and hope'.⁶⁸ Scepticism was the prevailing sentiment in advance of the speech and expectations on the part of the ANC were low. More interested in the British government's actions than its words, ANC Secretary-General Duma Nokwe was especially concerned with Britain's voting intentions at the United Nations. The circular he co-signed with Alfred Nzo to instruct prospective ANC protesters stated bluntly that the purpose of Macmillan's visit 'is part of a campaign to whitewash the reputation of the Nationalists at a time when the world's criticism

⁶³ *Cape Times*, 4 Feb. 1960; see also *Star*, 3 Feb. 1960.

⁶⁴ *Rand Daily Mail*, 4 Feb. 1960.

⁶⁵ *Contact*, 20 Feb. 1960, 'Justus'.

⁶⁶ Peter Brown, 'Apartheid isolated', *Contact*, 5 Mar. 1960. TNA, CAB 134/1555, confidential telegram no. 89 from Commonwealth Relations Office to the Prime Minister's Office, 16 Feb. 1960, made the point that the United Party line was 'to welcome speech warmly as rebuff for nationalists while ignoring its implications for themselves'.

⁶⁷ *Guardian*, 29 Jan. 1960; *Star*, 3 Feb. 1960. ANC leaders Duma Nokwe and Alfred Nzo issued a circular instructing supporters to organize ten-strong groups of women protesters bearing placards at events where Macmillan was likely to appear. Suggested slogans included 'We have never had it so bad' and 'Meet our leaders too and hear our side.' Circular signed by Duma Nokwe and Alfred Nzo in TNA, PREM, 11/3071.

⁶⁸ Sampson, *Mandela*, p. 129; At Westminster Hall on 11 July 1996, Mandela said: 'We are in the Houses in which Harold Macmillan worked—he who spoke in our own Houses of Parliament in Cape Town in 1960, shortly before the infamous Sharpeville Massacre, and warned a stubborn and race-blinded white oligarchy in our country that "the wind of change is blowing through this continent".' www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/mandela/1996/spg60711.html.

has been sharpened against Apartheid'.⁶⁹ Whether Nokwe and Nzo revised their opinions after the speech is unclear.

What is clear, however, is that Macmillan's advisers in South Africa were concerned only with the impact of the speech on whites. John Maud wrote to Macmillan immediately after the speech and, with a touch of self-serving obsequiousness, declared it 'a triumph: I have absolutely no doubt about that.' Opposition parliamentarians, he reported, were so jubilant that they elected 'to conceal their full feelings & speak only out of the corner of their mouths'; three cabinet ministers spoke with 'full understanding of what you felt about apartheid & without a flicker of criticism of the speech or of you. Dr V's effort, after yours, was all that was needed to make the effect of your triumph certain. The whole thing will have done untold good, out here.'⁷⁰

A British official who spoke to lobby journalists immediately after the speech, reported to the British high commission that the National party rank and file were 'taken aback and a little resentful' at Macmillan's outspoken criticism, adding that Nationalist parliamentarians had been instructed not to complain in public and were therefore not commenting to the press. The opposition United party was said to be 'uneasy' and uncertain what their response should be. Only the small Progressive party was 'jubilant'. An alternative reading of these internal reports is that the National party, while somewhat shocked by Macmillan's criticisms, was not awed. It is questionable whether the nationalist papers were 'plunged into the deepest gloom', as David Hunt, undersecretary in the Commonwealth Relations Office, claimed.⁷¹ The Johannesburg *Star* was more accurate when it characterized the response of the Afrikaans press as 'guarded'.⁷²

Wishful thinking on the part of Macmillan's entourage and a small band of liberal anglophile South Africans encouraged them to exaggerate the sensational import and impact of the speech and its likely positive impact on (white) anti-government opinion. Peregrine Worsthorne, a sceptical member of the British press corps, thought the speech 'something of an anti-climax' because the underlying message was 'so wrapped up with polite waffle that few in the audience got it'. He was especially scathing towards his British journalist colleagues for their collective failure to engage with Afrikaner opinion-makers – and also for wrongly assuming that Nationalist MPs were outraged by the speech, when in fact they were expecting rather worse.⁷³

⁶⁹ *Contact*, 20 Feb. 1960; Mary Benson, *South Africa: the struggle for a birthright* (Harmondsworth, 1966), p. 220; TNA, PREM 11/3071, circular signed by Nokwe and Nzo.

⁷⁰ TNA, PREM 11/3073, Maud to Macmillan, 3 Feb. 1960.

⁷¹ Hunt, *On the spot*, pp. 117–18; cf. 'Letter from DWS Hunt (CRO) to Sir A Clutterbuck', in Hyam and Louis, eds., *The Conservative government*, p. 396.

⁷² *Star*, 4 Feb. 1960.

⁷³ P. Worsthorne, *Tricks of memory: an autobiography* (London, 1993), p. 195. Worsthorne – life-long conservative and empire sympathizer – was appalled at the professional irresponsibility of his colleagues for failing to engage with Afrikaner journalists. He was left with 'egg on my face' as the only foreign reporter to have underplayed the sensational character of the

The day following the speech, the *Cape Times*'s headline led on a more earth-shattering event: the Coalbrook mining disaster where a massive rockfall had left over 400 miners entombed.⁷⁴ *Die Burger*, the Cape's leading Afrikaans newspaper, observed coolly that it was 'good' that Macmillan had explained Britain's policy on Africa because this allowed South Africa to appreciate where it stood. Britain, it continued, was conceding to black nationalism out of a fear that black Africa would be lost to the Western camp. Britain had to do its duty as it saw it, but this was equally true for South Africa, whose white nation would not 'abdicate' in order to make it easier for the West to win its struggle. A second editorial comment, titled 'Thank you, Mr Macmillan', opined that South Africa owed the British prime minister unqualified thanks on account of his clear opposition to trade boycotts.⁷⁵ The right-wing newspaper *Die Transvaler*, which owed more loyalty to Verwoerd (he had previously served as its editor) than *Die Burger*, sounded a philosophical note which British officials in Cape Town admitted betrayed little 'air of crisis'.⁷⁶ In the view of *Die Transvaler*, it was understandable that Macmillan 'would look at Africa in a different way from someone to whom Africa is a fatherland'.⁷⁷ The underlying message, that South Africa was a sovereign country with its own interests to defend, was emphatically clear. This message was reiterated the following week when *Die Transvaler* ran a lengthy interview with Eric Louw, who attacked Macmillan for criticizing the country's domestic policy while present as a guest. Louw wondered acidly whether Macmillan assumed this right because of Britain's position in the commonwealth.

Like the *Cape Times*, *Die Burger*'s front page of 4 February was dominated by the mining tragedy. A small article on the right headed 'British Labour exults at Macmillan's address' was the only front page reference. *Die Burger* noted sarcastically that the speech had been greeted in Britain as a 'great political sensation', an unprecedented rebuke, and a powerful repudiation of South Africa's race policies. But domestic reaction was more sober as it came to terms with the sombre implications for the white man in Africa.⁷⁸ Extensive coverage

speech. In a personal interview with a 'serene' Verwoerd the day after the speech, he was advised to inform Macmillan that the wind of change was blowing through Britain rather than Africa.

⁷⁴ *Cape Times*, 4 Feb. 1960.

⁷⁵ *Die Burger*, 4 Feb. 1960. Neither Piet Cillé, editor of *Die Burger*, nor Schalk Pienaar, its parliamentary correspondent, were favourably disposed to Verwoerd and both showed a considerable measure of journalistic independence. The political events of 1960 increased their doubts about the direction of Verwoerdian apartheid. See e.g. Alex Mouton, *Voorlooper: die lewe van Schalk Pienaar* (Cape Town, 2002), pp. 37–9, 40–1.

⁷⁶ TNA, PREM 11/3073, confidential telegram 89, 'Reactions to prime minister's visit', 16 Feb. 1960. The interpretation was that *Die Transvaler* might have been instructed by Verwoerd to remain non-committal until he had more time to gauge reaction to Macmillan's speech, whereas *Die Burger* was taking the lead in 'kite flying'.

⁷⁷ *Die Transvaler*, 4 Feb. 1960 (editorial); *Cape Times*, 4 Feb. 1960.

⁷⁸ *Die Burger*, 4 Feb. 1960; 'Letter from DWS Hunt (CRO) to Sir A. Clutterbuck', 8 Feb. 1960, in Hyam and Louis, eds., *The Conservative government*, pp. 397–8.

of the speeches was relegated to *Die Burger's* inside pages. Here the addresses of Macmillan and Verwoerd were printed alongside one another, suggesting parity between the two premiers. The British prime minister's speech was headed 'Mr Macmillan disapproves of foreign boycott' while Verwoerd's response bore the strapline 'South Africa and its friends strive for the same objects in Africa', namely to secure the African continent for the West.⁷⁹

A more defiant tone was struck in *Die Burger's* editorial the following day. Now it was argued that self-interest and fear of communism were leading to frantic abdication in Africa. The white man in Africa, including Algeria and Rhodesia, was friendless. South Africa's duty was to remain a bastion of civilization in a continent where large parts were in the process of being surrendered to backward black control and chaos.⁸⁰ Yet, the predominant nationalist reaction was rueful rather than outraged: we now know where we stand; you are capitulating to the British Labour party; we are being sacrificed for reasons of your pragmatism; at least Britain is not supporting the boycott. Underlying the Afrikaner nationalist response was a determination to demonstrate that South Africa was an independent country whose course of action would not be changed by the opinions or actions of foreigners. Rather than panic, muted anger and disdain for British hypocrisy were evident.

Having delivered his speech, Macmillan spent the afternoon touring the Stellenbosch and Boland winelands, puffing his pipe, apparently in relaxed fashion. His hosts, Cabinet Minister Paul Sauer and his wife, found their company hard-going.⁸¹ There was a further meeting with Verwoerd and Louw in the evening. On 5 February, Macmillan was accompanied to the Cape Town docks by Verwoerd. He sported a Boer War-style slouch hat presented to him by Piet Beukes, editor of the United party-supporting Afrikaans newspaper, *Die Landstem*. A band played 'Auld lang syne'. As the *Capetown Castle* left port, cheering well-wishers shouted 'God save the Queen' and 'Long Live the Commonwealth'.⁸²

V

Several accounts suggest that the South African public did not fully appreciate the enormity of Macmillan's message and that it was only when overseas reactions were reported that its full significance began to be appreciated. The speech was indeed widely reported internationally, including in the United States, France, and the Soviet bloc – which 'unjammed' airwaves for the first time since 1956 to report the address.⁸³ Yet, the view that South Africans did

⁷⁹ *Die Burger*, 4 Feb. 1960. Similarly, *Die Transvaler*, 4 Feb. 1960, reported the two speeches alongside one another in the inside pages.

⁸⁰ *Die Burger* (editorial), 5 Feb. 1960.

⁸¹ Conversation between Sauer and Macmillan was strained. Mrs Sauer was irritated by Mrs Macmillan for waving at coloured pedestrians as their car sped by.

⁸² *Illustrated London News*, 20 Feb. 1960.

⁸³ *Star*, 4 Feb. 1960.

not comprehend the enormity of Macmillan's speech is simplistic and verges on condescension.

Like other colonized peoples, South Africans of all political persuasions knew at least as much about Britain as the British public knew about them, probably more. South African press commentary bears this out. *Die Burger* certainly had a keen appreciation of Britain's weakened status as a colonial power and was quick to point out the political considerations that it believed lay behind Macmillan's lofty prose. The editor of the *Cape Argus* was bemused as to why Macmillan had come to South Africa to make this speech: impressive as it was, it would have no effect whatsoever on nationalist opinion and the prime minister might just as well have delivered it in his own constituency. The main surprise, as far as the *Argus* was concerned, was to see 'modern conservatism' in action: 'There was nothing of the Colonel Blimp or of the imperialist to be seen anywhere nor any boast or pride of dominion.'⁸⁴ In the days after his speech, *Die Transvaler* gave vent to barbed cartoons and comments about Macmillan which harped on the theme of Britain's decline as a colonial power, while castigating it for abandoning whites in Africa. An editorial published the day after the Sharpeville massacre maintained that the British prime minister was joining a list of illustrious imperial statesmen who had lost their reputations in South Africa.⁸⁵

Macmillan's personal diary is revealing of his own priorities in making the 'wind of change' speech: 'I had to comfort those of British descent; inspire the Liberals; satisfy Home Opinion; and yet keep on good terms—at least outwardly—with the strange caucus of Afrikaner politicians who now control this vast country.'⁸⁶ To his credit, Macmillan did not subsequently see his speech as having been prophetic (as regards Sharpeville) but nor did he learn very much about Africans or Afrikaners from his tour. His views reflected an orthodox liberal-conservative outlook on South Africa which counterposed the dynamism and enterprise of anglophone commerce and industry to the insular bigotry of rural Afrikaners, whose minds were filled with misguided Calvinist convictions (though he seldom missed an opportunity to praise the old-world courtesy and hospitality which he experienced). Macmillan's view of Verwoerd as a man driven by religious fanaticism ('Apartheid to him was more than a political philosophy, it was a religion; a religion based on the Old Testament rather than on the New')⁸⁷ misses the more important (and still underestimated) reality that Verwoerd was a radical modernizer with a totalizing vision of the future that owed little to Afrikaner tradition. Although brought up in a religious environment, apartheid's principal engineer was influenced more

⁸⁴ *Cape Argus*, 4 Feb. 1960.

⁸⁵ *Die Transvaler*, 22 Mar. 1960.

⁸⁶ H. Macmillan, *The Macmillan diaries: premiership, 1957–1966*, II: *Prime minister and after, 1957–1966*, ed. P. Catterall (Basingstoke, 2011), 2 Feb. 1960, p. 268.

⁸⁷ Macmillan, *Pointing the way*, p. 152.

by his training as an academic sociologist than he was by neo-Calvinist theology.⁸⁸

Macmillan's approach to Afrikaners closely mirrored Evelyn Baring's 'atmosphere' setting sketch of South Africa (prepared early on in the process of drafting the 'wind of change' speech), which linked the 'laager mentality' mindset of contemporary Afrikaner nationalists to that of the indomitable Boer War leader, Paul Kruger.⁸⁹ The 'wind of change' speech was also significantly influenced by John Maud, whose own views had been profoundly shaped by his experience of the country as a Rhodes Trust fellow in 1932 when he undertook a major study of Johannesburg's system of local government. (Maud's notable 1938 monograph on Johannesburg shows high regard for the contribution to its municipal life made by Milner Kindergarten members like Lionel Curtis, Richard Feetham, John Dove, and Lionel Hitchins).⁹⁰ Indeed, Maud's general outlook might have been taken directly from the pages of the interwar *Round Table* and the writings of liberal historians like C. W. de Kiewiet or Eric Walker. Maud's final ambassadorial dispatch from South Africa in 1963 is a case in point as he dwelt on the Calvinist influences on Afrikaner nationalism and remarked in sniffy tones that Verwoerd's views 'owe more to the 17th than to the 20th century – though there is an ominous Hitlerian smell about it'.⁹¹

As much as to Verwoerd, perhaps even more, Macmillan's message was addressed to settler opinion in Kenya and Southern Rhodesia and, crucially, their supporters on the Tory benches at home. One of the truisms of major speeches made in foreign countries is that their primary target is the speaker's domestic audience. In Britain, the speech was immediately recognized as signalling a clear break with vestigial empire loyalism, a willingness to countenance more rapid withdrawal from Africa, and a readiness to abandon support of South Africa at the United Nations. This was probably the most effective message of the speech. An article titled 'Mr Macmillan dispels the apartheid taboo' by the London *Times's* political correspondent referred to Macmillan's incisive contribution as an issue that had been hedged about with inhibitions and falsity for too long within British government circles. A fresh wind of change was at last blowing through the corridors of Whitehall and the Commons. As for conservative reactionaries, there was no sign of any Tory back-bench revolt, nor was there any individual within the Tory party able to

⁸⁸ R. B. Miller, 'Science and society in the early career of H. F. Verwoerd', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 19 (1993), pp. 634–61. The account given by Verwoerd's son, Wilhelm, of his father's religious persona, is ambiguous. See W. J. Verwoerd, ed., *Verwoerd só Onthou Ons Hom* (Pretoria, 2001), pp. 93–4.

⁸⁹ TNA, PREM 11/3073, Home to Macmillan, 9 Dec. 1959, containing Baring's views.

⁹⁰ J. P. R. Maud, *City government: the Johannesburg experiment* (Oxford, 1938), p. 224. This wide-ranging – but not much used – text is a landmark local history. Maud tutored on the Oxford Colonial Administrative Services course from 1937 to 1939.

⁹¹ Extracts from Maud's valedictory dispatch to Lord Home as high commissioner and ambassador in Hyam and Louis, eds., *The Conservative government*, doc. 462, 'Review of the problems of South Africa and British policy', 14 May 1963, p. 455.

challenge Macmillan's record as 'a practical man of affairs'.⁹² The right-wing conservatives who formed the Monday Club in direct opposition to Macmillan's address now occupied a fringe position in the Conservative party.

The effect of the 'wind of change' speech in South Africa, already overshadowed by the Coalbrook mining tragedy, was soon occluded by another disaster at nearby Sharpeville. In Afrikaner nationalist mythology, Verwoerd's response to Macmillan, his steadfast refusal to panic after the Sharpeville shootings, and his extraordinary recovery from an assassination attempt in April, all contributed to his growing reputation as a man of indomitable power who had been 'preserved by Providence to lead South Africa to safety'.⁹³ It is worth remembering that, prior to Macmillan's visit, Verwoerd's hold on his cabinet was by no means entirely secure. Indeed, some in the opposition believed that Verwoerd's decision to hold a referendum on the republic was an attempt to deflect attention from ructions within the National party over his unyielding implementation of apartheid. By the end of that most eventful year Verwoerd exerted a mesmerizing hold on the Nationalist caucus – and large swathes of the electorate – which now made his position unassailable.⁹⁴

VI

South Africa's exit from the commonwealth in 1961 consolidated Verwoerd's reputation as a 'man of granite'. In calling for the republican referendum in January 1960, the prime minister had taken a calculated risk: he could not be certain of winning the vote. Although Verwoerd had long regarded republican status for South Africa as a prime political objective, he was by no means sure whether this necessitated actual leaving of the commonwealth. Macmillan demurred when asked about this in private conversations in Cape Town. Verwoerd argued that republican status, far from threatening relations between English- and Afrikaans-speakers, would in fact help to draw whites together and thereby entrench white supremacy. His decision to announce a referendum on the eve of Macmillan's visit was probably influenced by his calculation that the British premier's presence in South Africa might help to swing English-speakers in favour of a republic.⁹⁵ 'Nation-building' was therefore a leading theme in the Nationalists' referendum campaign and the date chosen for the inauguration of the republic – 31 May – was the anniversary of the 1902 Treaty of Vereeniging which brought the South African War to a conclusion.⁹⁶ In his assessment of white English-speaking South Africans' willingness to grant the government

⁹² *Times*, 8 Feb. 1960.

⁹³ 'South Africa: from Sharpeville to the Congo', *Round Table*, 50 (1960), pp. 425–30, at p. 429.

⁹⁴ Kenney, *Verwoerd*, p. 148; A.N. Pelzer, ed., *Verwoerd speaks: speeches, 1948–1966* (Johannesburg, 1966), pp. xx–xxi; 'South Africa: from Sharpeville to the Congo', p. 427.

⁹⁵ See e.g. Eisenberg, 'The Commonwealth Conference', p. 59; *Guardian*, 21 Jan. 1960.

⁹⁶ *Cape Argus*, 23 Nov. 1960 (editorial), 16 Jan. 1961 (editorial).

tacit if not active support, Verwoerd was vindicated: events such as the 'wind of change' speech, Sharpeville, and the implosion of the Congo brought whites together as never before and considerably strengthened his hand in domestic politics. In the general election of 1961 the government increased its parliamentary majority as well as its overall share of the vote, gaining votes from Afrikaner moderates and English-speakers alike.⁹⁷

Verwoerd was also proved correct in his view that South Africa's links with Britain would not be materially affected one way or another by commonwealth membership.⁹⁸ As Lord Home made clear in a minute to Macmillan in December 1959, relations with South Africa might be a political liability, yet this was offset by crucial economic and strategic interests.⁹⁹ The continuing supply of uranium from South Africa was an important case in point. Britain's responsibility for the High Commission Territories depended on maintaining friendly relations with South Africa. The 1955 Simonstown agreement, which allowed the British navy continued access to the Cape – while reaffirming South African sovereignty – proved mutually advantageous to both countries. South Africa's contribution to the future of the Sterling area as well as its critical importance as source of gold to markets managed by the Bank of England (and to the stability of exchange rates) were considerable. Moreover, South Africa remained one of Britain's most important export markets, amounting to around 30 per cent of South African imports. The fact that this market was diminishing was a matter of serious concern to British exporters. British capital investments in South Africa increased steadily in the post-war era and at 7–10 per cent of total British capital investment was comparable to British holdings in the United States, Australia, and in Canada. Moreover, the rate of return on British direct investments in South Africa in 1960 was, at 10.3 per cent, considerably above the norm. Official notes dealing with preparations for the 'wind of change' speech advised emphasis on the fact that South Africa was Britain's 'third best customer and that we were easily their best customer'.¹⁰⁰ Macmillan was highly attentive to matters of trade and the balance of payments. Before leaving for Africa he remarked on the Labour party's plan for a boycott of South African goods as 'absurd', with potentially 'grave results on employment at home'. Immediately after Sharpeville, he comforted himself by noting that the American State Department's condemnation of the South African

⁹⁷ N. M. Stultz and J. Butler, 'The South African general election of 1961', *Political Science Quarterly*, 78 (1963), pp. 107–8. ⁹⁸ A. Hepple, *Verwoerd* (Harmondsworth, 1967), p. 181.

⁹⁹ "Policy towards South Africa: the United Nations items": minute by Lord Home to Mr Macmillan, 17 Dec. 1959, doc. 439, in Hyam and Louis, eds., *The Conservative government*, pp. 384–7.

¹⁰⁰ G. Berridge, *Economic power in Anglo-South African diplomacy: Simonstown, Sharpeville and after* (London, 1981), pp. 33 and ff, 104–7, 137 and ff. For a contemporary statement of the potential economic pitfalls for South Africa in its loss of commonwealth membership, see e.g. 'The commonwealth: a South African view', *Round Table*, 50 (1960), pp. 365–70; TNA, PREM 11/3073, 'Note for the record' by Tim Bligh, 14 Dec. 1959.

government would 'at least not encourage S. A. to sell gold in New York rather than in London'.¹⁰¹

Verwoerd knew that Britain was not going to risk these binding attachments. Historic ties and appeals to 'kith and kin', to which Macmillan was closely attentive, were an important factor in retaining connections, notwithstanding the growing calls for boycotts. International outrage at the Sharpeville massacre considerably increased pressure on Britain to condemn South Africa. Yet, although the Labour and Liberal parties were quick to react by raising questions and putting motions in parliament, the government demurred. Only under severe pressure from an outraged public and after a lengthy cabinet meeting did the British government emerge from its 'shell of reserve' three days after Sharpeville to express its 'deep sympathy with all the people of South Africa' – by way of an amendment to a Labour motion deploring the shootings.¹⁰²

Mindful of the need to avoid antagonizing South Africa and threatening the future of the commonwealth, Macmillan's cabinet advised abstaining on a 1960 Security Council resolution which called for action against South Africa.¹⁰³ Macmillan admitted that this decision was 'not very noble, but very sensible'.¹⁰⁴ Only in 1961, following South Africa's exit from the commonwealth, did Britain endorse a UN vote declaring South Africa's racial policies to be in flagrant violation of the Charter.¹⁰⁵ Such reticence provides strong support for Berridge's argument that although the 'wind of change' speech came as something of a shock to the South African government, the soothing passages of his speech in which he emphasized the points of difference were outweighed by his assurance about 'the many practical interests which we share in common'.¹⁰⁶

The acute discomfort experienced by Macmillan's government in reconciling the high moral tone of some of its pronouncements about decolonization and multi-racialism, with its effective appeasement of South Africa, had much to do with Macmillan's strenuous efforts to hold the new commonwealth together. Macmillan suffered excruciatingly in his efforts to manage differences during the commonwealth meeting of 1960 and, even more, in 1961 when the issue of South Africa's membership came to a head. Verwoerd was not present at the 1960 meeting because of the attempt on his life. But he took full control of the situation in 1961. Without displaying the truculent bad temper that Louw had given vent to at the 1960 Commonwealth Conference, Verwoerd remained

¹⁰¹ Macmillan, *Macmillan diaries*, II, 1 Jan. 1960 and 23 Mar. 1960, pp. 267, 281.

¹⁰² *Times*, 25 Mar. 1960.

¹⁰³ 'Cabinet conclusions', doc. 448, in Hyam and Louis, eds., *The Conservative government*, pp. 404–6.

¹⁰⁴ Macmillan, *Pointing the way*, p. 169.

¹⁰⁵ Berridge, *Economic power*, p. 112; R. Hyam and P. Henshaw, *The lion and the springbok: Britain and South Africa since the Boer War* (Cambridge, 2003), p. 165.

¹⁰⁶ Berridge, *Economic power*, p. 114.

entirely uncompromising in the face of attempts to persuade him to make concessions.¹⁰⁷

The upshot of the extended negotiations, which absorbed a great deal of Macmillan's energies and resulted in the depletion of much of the political capital he built up during his Africa tour, was that Verwoerd decided not to reapply for commonwealth membership in the face of South Africa's likely expulsion. Whether Verwoerd's behaviour was in some sense payback for the 'wind of change' speech is difficult to prove, but it is impossible to discount. What is clear is that Macmillan was anxious to avoid South Africa's expulsion, fearing the commonwealth's disintegration. It should be noted that Verwoerd (who could be pragmatic as well as doctrinaire) was by no means committed to leaving the commonwealth, preferring to leave his options open. This much was apparent in the tetchy private deliberations between the two leaders in Cape Town.¹⁰⁸ It was largely because Verwoerd overplayed his hand and refused to entertain any concessions at all that South Africa parted company with the commonwealth.

Nevertheless, Verwoerd proved able to turn an effective defeat into personal triumph. Macmillan spent the week of the Commonwealth Conference suffering from nervous strain and appeared grief-stricken and tearful on account of his failure to achieve a compromise or 'find a formula'.¹⁰⁹ By contrast, Verwoerd arrived back in Johannesburg on 20 March 1961 to a twenty-one-gun salute, a fly-past of Sabre jets, and as many as 50,000 exultant, cheering supporters, many of whom were singing the national anthem, *Die Stem*.¹¹⁰ Delusional it may have been, but this defiant moment was a victory unlike any other. Verwoerd spoke of South Africa's exclusion as a 'miracle'. His wife, Betsie, described the achievement of the republic as the high point of his career.¹¹¹

VII

The encounter between Macmillan and Verwoerd involved a crossing of paths by two politicians who could not have been more different. So, too, were their subsequent trajectories. The 'wind of change' speech was a splendid valedictory address for Britain in Africa; it also turned out to mark the high point of Macmillan's career.¹¹² Within two years, the Conservatives were beset by

¹⁰⁷ Sampson, *Macmillan*, p. 192.

¹⁰⁸ "Note of a discussion between the prime minister and Dr Verwoerd" in Cape Town: minute by Macmillan', doc. 443, in Hyam and Louis, eds., *The Conservative government*, pp. 292-4. See also Bellwood, *South African backdrop*, p. 160.

¹⁰⁹ A. Horne, *Macmillan, 1957-1986*, p. 393; Sampson, *Macmillan*, p. 192; Boyce Richardson, 'The Commonwealth Conference', *Africa South*, 5 (1961), p. 7.

¹¹⁰ *Cape Argus*, 20 Mar. 1961; *Die Transvaler*, 21 Mar. 1960.

¹¹¹ Kenney, *Verwoerd*, p. 206; 'South Africa departs', *Round Table*, 51 (1961), pp. 237-42, at p. 238.

¹¹² Sampson, *Macmillan*, ch. 11; Thorpe, *Supremacy*, p. 463.

economic crisis and internal political turmoil. By contrast, Verwoerd was able to benefit from the much more serious set of crises that beset South Africa throughout 1960. From 1961, he enjoyed supreme political power, his government buoyed by a resurgent economy that was entering into a decade-long boom. This was the era of Verwoerdian high apartheid.

It is probable that Macmillan regarded his Africa tour as a preparation for the great diplomatic ventures that lay ahead – with Britain 'at the centre of the interlocking circles of America, the Commonwealth and Europe' in the context of global cold war politics.¹¹³ In his autobiography, *Pointing the way*, Macmillan's account of his Africa journey appears sandwiched between two exercises in international summitry. But, although he did not think of it as such, there may be reasons to think of his confrontation with Verwoerd as an undeclared or inadvertent summit, if we employ David Reynolds's broad definition of summitry as a form of diplomacy or dialogue between states conducted at the highest level of leadership.¹¹⁴

It would never have occurred to the British government to have seen it as such, for to concede as much would be to overstate Africa's importance. But the South African government, fixated as it was on matters of sovereignty, was certainly inclined to see the Macmillan–Verwoerd encounter as a matter of inter-state deliberations at the most senior levels. Records of the private discussions between Macmillan and Verwoerd reveal that substantive matters like the continued supply of uranium, commonwealth relations, the United Nations, the status of South West Africa, and the future of the High Commission Territories were all extensively covered. Louw had the temerity to press his country's candidature for the commonwealth seat on the UN Security Council in 1961, and insisted on being consulted directly by the foreign secretary on all African matters.¹¹⁵ The tone of the private discussions between Macmillan and Verwoerd was rather more hard-edged than was the case in Ghana or Nigeria where Macmillan naturally fell into a more avuncular – or paternalistic – mode as he proffered advice on matters such as the workings of Westminster-style democracy. South Africa, it should be remembered, was fully into its post-colonial moment whereas other African states visited by Macmillan were only achieving their statehood.

The South African government's keen understanding of its place in the world no longer depended on Britain's view, though it was certainly disappointed that it could no longer count on Britain as a diplomatic ally in the councils of the United Nations, as Macmillan had privately warned in Cape Town.¹¹⁶ Nor was South Africa as surprised by Britain's change of tack – which it understood as

¹¹³ Sampson, *Macmillan*, p. 210.

¹¹⁴ D. Reynolds, *Summits: six meetings that shaped the twentieth century* (London, 2008), p. 7.

¹¹⁵ TNA, CAB 129/101, 'Prime minister's African tour', pp. 137 and ff.

¹¹⁶ TNA, PREM 11/3072, summary of discussions on 2 Feb. 1960, between Macmillan and Verwoerd on United Nations: 'Prime Minister warned Union that we might not be able to continue to support them on this [apartheid] but might have to abstain.'

fitting into a long history of hypocrisy and cynicism – as the white settler islands to the north who now felt betrayed. Perhaps this is why Macmillan's iconoclastic speech outraged opinion more in loyalist white Salisbury and in parts of Westminster than in Cape Town or Pretoria.

Verwoerd was a fantasist insofar as he thought apartheid could really be made to work. Yet, he had a fairly astute take on South Africa's ongoing relations with the outside world, Britain in particular. He may have gambled wrongly on the issue of making no concessions to the commonwealth, but he proved correct in reasoning that self-interest would constrain British actions against South Africa. Most white South Africans were unimpressed by windy statements of condemnation, whether these issued from Britain or from the United Nations. And, in the medium term, they felt themselves vindicated. The year 1960 marked the end of the special post-colonial affinities which characterized relations between Britain and South Africa for fifty years. The loss was mourned alike by anglophone South Africans and imperial-minded Britons who feared the country's growing international isolation. But it did not substantially alter underlying structural relationships which remained intact through the Wilson government and beyond. Faced with the 'wind of change', the British ship of state did not fundamentally alter course; it merely trimmed its sails.