



Chapter 2

History

The early inhabitants

Humankind had its earliest origins in Africa. South Africa is rich in fossil evidence of the evolutionary history of the human family, going back several million years. From the discovery of the Taung child in 1924 to the latest discoveries of hominid fossils at Sterkfontein caves, recently declared a World Heritage Site, South Africa has been at the forefront of palaeontological research into the origins of humanity.

Modern humans have lived in the region for over 100 000 years. The small, mobile bands of Stone Age hunter-gatherers, who created a wealth of rock art, were the ancestors of the Khoekhoe and San of historical times.

The Khoekhoe and San (the 'Hottentots' and 'Bushmen' of early European terminology), although collectively known as the Khoisan, are often thought of as distinct peoples.

The former were those who, some 2 000 years ago, adopted a pastoralist lifestyle herding sheep and, later, cattle. Whereas the hunter-gatherers adapted to local environments and were scattered across the subcontinent, the herders sought out the pasturelands between modern Namibia and the Eastern Cape, which, generally, are near the coast.

At around the same time, Bantu-speaking agro-pastoralists began arriving in southern Africa, bringing with them an Iron Age culture and domesticated crops.

After establishing themselves in the well-watered eastern coastal region of South Africa, these farmers spread out across the interior plateau, or 'highveld', where they adopted a more extensive cattle culture. Chiefdoms arose, based on control over cattle, which gave rise to systems of patronage and hence hierarchies of authority within communities.

Cattle exchanges formed the basis of polygamous marriage arrangements, facilitating the accumulation of social power through control over the labour of kin groups and dependants.

Metallurgical skills, developed in the mining and processing of iron, copper, tin and gold, promoted regional trade and craft specialisation.

At several archaeological sites, such as Mapungubwe and Thulamela in the Limpopo Valley, there is evidence of sophisticated political and material cultures, based in part on contact with the East African trading economy.

These cultures, which were part of a broader African civilization, predate European encroachment by several centuries. Settlement patterns varied from the dispersed homesteads of the fertile coastal regions in the east to the concentrated towns of the desert fringes to the west.

The African farmers did not, however, extend their settlement into the western desert or the winter rainfall region to the south-west. These regions remained the preserve of the Khoisan until Europeans put

down roots at the Cape of Good Hope. This meant that the African farmers were little affected by the white presence for the first century during which European settlement expanded from the Western Cape.

Today, aided by modern science and contributing to the recovery of the continent's past that is part of the African Renaissance, South Africa is gaining an understanding of its rich pre-colonial past and of the African achievements that were to be disrupted and all but hidden from sight in the period that followed.

The early colonial period

European seafarers, who pioneered the sea route to India in the late 15th century, were regular visitors to the South African coast during the 1500s.

In 1652, the Dutch East India Company (VOC) set up a station in Table Bay (Cape Town) to provision passing ships. Trade with the Khoekhoe for slaughter stock soon degenerated into raiding and warfare. Beginning in 1657, European settlers were allotted farms by the colonial authorities in the arable regions around Cape Town, where wine and wheat became the major products. In response to the colonists' demand for labour, the VOC imported slaves from East Africa, Madagascar and its possessions in the East Indies.

By the early 1700s, the colonists had begun to spread into the hinterland beyond the nearest mountain ranges. These relatively independent and mobile farmers (*trekboers*), who lived as pastoralists and hunters, were largely free from supervision by the Dutch authorities.

As they intruded further upon the land and water sources, and stepped up their demands for livestock and labour, more and more of the indigenous inhabitants were dispossessed and incorporated into the colonial economy as servants.

Diseases such as smallpox, which were introduced by the Europeans, decimated the Khoisan, contributing to the decline of their

cultures. Unions across the colour line took place, and a new multiracial social order evolved, based on the supremacy of European colonists. The slave population steadily increased.

By the mid-1700s there were more slaves in the Cape than there were 'free burghers' (European colonists). The Asian slaves were concentrated in the towns, where they formed an artisan class. They brought with them the Islam religion, which gained adherents and significantly shaped the working-class culture of the Western Cape. Slaves of African descent were found more often on the farms of outlying districts.

In the late 1700s, Khoisan bands offered far more determined resistance to colonial encroachment across the length of the colonial frontier.

From the 1770s, colonists also came into contact and conflict with Bantu-speaking chiefdoms some 700 km east of Cape Town. A century of intermittent warfare ensued during which the colonists gained ascendancy first over the Khoisan and then over the black chiefdoms to the east.

It was only in the late 1800s that the subjugation of these settled African societies became feasible. Their relatively sophisticated social structure and economic systems for long fended off decisive disruption by incoming colonists, who lacked the necessary military superiority.

At the same time, a process of cultural change was set in motion, not least by commercial and missionary activity. In contrast to the Khoisan, the black farmers were by and large immune to European diseases. For this and other reasons they were greatly to outnumber the whites in the population of white-ruled South Africa and were able to preserve important features of their culture.

A spate of State-building was launched beyond the frontiers of European settlement. Perhaps because of population pressures, combined with the actions of slave traders in Portuguese territory on the east coast, the old order was upset and the Zulu kingdom emerged as a highly centralised State. In the



1820s, the innovative leader, Shaka, established sway over a considerable area of south-east Africa, and brought many chiefdoms under his dominion.

As splinter groups conquered and absorbed communities in their path, the disruption was felt as far north as central Africa. Substantial states, such as Moshoeshoe's Lesotho and other Sotho-Tswana chiefdoms, were established, partly for reasons of defence. The *mfecane* or *difaqane*, as this period of disruption and State formation became known, remains the subject of much speculative debate.

But the temporary disruption of life on the highveld served to facilitate Boer expansion northwards from the 1830s, and provided a myth of the 'empty land' which whites employed to justify their domination over the subcontinent in the 20th century.

The British colonial era

In 1795, the British occupied the Cape as a strategic base, controlling the sea route to the East.

After a brief reversion to the Dutch in the course of the Napoleonic wars, it was retaken in 1806 and kept by Britain in the post-war settlement of territorial claims. The closed and regulated economic system of the Dutch period was swept away as the Cape Colony was integrated into the dynamic international trading empire of industrialising Britain.

A crucial new element was evangelicalism, brought to the Cape by Protestant missionaries. The evangelicals believed in the liberating effect of 'free' labour and in the 'civilizing mission' of British imperialism. They were convinced that indigenous people could be fully assimilated into European Christian culture, once the shackles of oppression had been removed.

The most important representative of the mission movement in South Africa was Dr John Philip, who arrived as superintendent of the London Missionary Society in 1819. His campaign on behalf of the oppressed

Khoisan coincided with a high point in official sympathy for philanthropic concerns.

One result was Ordinance 50 of 1828, which guaranteed equal civil rights for 'people of colour' within the colony and freed them from legal discrimination.

At the same time, a powerful anti-slavery movement in Britain promoted a series of ameliorative measures, imposed on the colonies in the 1820s, and the proclamation of emancipation, which came into force in 1834. The slaves were subjected to a four-year period of 'apprenticeship' with their former owners on the grounds that they must be prepared for freedom, which came on 1 December 1838.

Although slavery had become less profitable because of a depression in the wine industry, Cape slave-owners rallied to oppose emancipation.

The compensation money which the British treasury paid out to sweeten the pill injected unprecedented liquidity into the stagnant local economy.

This brought a spurt of company formation, such as banks and insurance companies, as well as a surge of investment in land and wool sheep in the drier regions of the colony in the late 1830s. Wool became a staple export on which the Cape economy depended for its further development in the middle decades of the century.

For the ex-slaves, as for the Khoisan servants, the reality of freedom was very different from the promise. As the wage-based economy developed, they remained a dispossessed and exploited element in the population, with little opportunity to escape their servile lot.

Increasingly, they were lumped together as the 'coloured' people, a group which included the descendants of mixed unions, and a substantial Muslim minority who became known as the 'Cape Malays' (misleadingly, as they mostly came from the Indonesian archipelago).

The coloured people were discriminated against, on account of their working-class status as well as their racial identity. Among

the poor, especially in and around Cape Town, there continued to be a great deal of racial mixing and intermarriage throughout the 1800s. In 1820, several thousand British settlers, who were swept up by a scheme to relieve Britain of its unemployed, were placed in the eastern Cape frontier zone as a buffer against the Xhosa chiefdoms.

The vision of a dense settlement of small farmers was, however, ill-conceived and many of the settlers became artisans and traders. The more successful became an entrepreneurial class of merchants, large-scale sheep farmers and speculators with an insatiable demand for land.

Some became fierce war-mongers, who pressed for the military dispossession of the chiefdoms. They coveted Xhosa land and welcomed the prospect of war involving large-scale military expenditure by the imperial authorities.

The Xhosa engaged in raiding as a means of asserting their prior claims to the land. Racial paranoia became integral to white frontier politics. The result was that frontier warfare became endemic through much of the 19th century, during which Xhosa war leaders such as Chief Maqoma became heroic figures to their people.

By the mid-1800s, British settlers of similar persuasion were to be found in Natal. They too called for imperial expansion in support of their land claims and trading enterprises.

Meanwhile large numbers of the original colonists, the Boers, were greatly extending white settlement beyond the Cape's borders to the north in the movement that became known as the Great Trek.

Alienated by British liberalism, and with their economic enterprise usurped by British settlers, several thousand Boers from the interior districts, accompanied by a number of Khoisan servants, began a series of migrations northwards in the mid-1830s. They moved to the highveld and Natal, skirting the great concentrations of black farmers on the way by taking advantage of the areas disrupted during the *mfecane*.

When the British, who were concerned about controlling the traffic through Port Natal (Durban), annexed the territory of Natal in 1843, those emigrant Boers who had hoped to settle there returned inland.

The Voortrekkers (as they were later called) coalesced in two landlocked republics, the South African Republic (Transvaal) and the Orange Free State. There, the principles of racially exclusive citizenship were absolute, despite the trekkers' reliance on black labour. With limited coercive power, the Boer communities had to establish relations and develop alliances with some black chiefdoms to neutralise those who obstructed their intrusion or who posed a threat to their security.

Only after the mineral discoveries of the late 1800s did the balance of power swing decisively towards the colonists. The Boer republics then took on the trappings of real statehood and imposed their authority within the territorial borders that they had notionally claimed for themselves.

The Colony of Natal, situated to the south of the mighty Zulu State, developed along very different lines from the original colony of settlement, the Cape.

The size of the black population left no room for the assimilationist vision of race domination embraced in the Cape. Chiefdoms consisting mainly of refugee groups were persuaded to accept colonial protection in return for reserved land and the freedom to govern themselves in accordance with their own customs. These chiefdoms were established in the heart of the colonial territory.

Natal developed a system of political and legal dualism, whereby chiefly rule was entrenched and customary law was codified. Although exemptions from customary law could be granted to the educated products of the missions, in practice they were rare. Urban residence was strictly controlled and political rights outside the reserves were effectively limited to whites. Natal's system is widely regarded as having provided a model for the segregationism of the 20th century.

Natal's economy was boosted by the development of sugar plantations in the subtrop-



ical coastal lowlands. Indian-indentured labourers were imported from 1860 to work the plantations, and many Indian traders and market gardeners followed.

These Indians, who were segregated and discriminated against from the start, became a further important element in South Africa's population. It was in South Africa that Mohandas Gandhi refined the techniques of passive resistance which he practised later in India. Although Indians gradually moved into the Transvaal and elsewhere, they remain concentrated mainly in Natal.

In 1853, the Cape Colony was granted a representative legislature in keeping with British policy, followed in 1872 by self-government. The franchise was formally non-racial but also based on income and property qualifications. The result was that Africans and 'coloured' people formed a minority – although in places a substantial one – of voters.

What became known as the 'liberal tradition' at the Cape depended on the fact that the great mass of Bantu-speaking farmers remained outside the colonial borders until late in the 19th century.

Non-racialism could thus be embraced without posing a threat to white supremacy. Numbers of Africans within the colony had had sufficient formal education or owned enough property to qualify for the franchise. Political alliances across racial lines were common in the eastern Cape constituencies. It is not surprising that the eastern Cape became a seedbed of African nationalism, once the ideal and promise of inclusion in the common society was so starkly violated by later racial policies.

The mineral revolution

By the late 19th century, the limitations of the Cape's liberal tradition were becoming apparent. The hardening of racial attitudes that accompanied the rise of a more militant imperialist spirit coincided locally with the watershed discovery of mineral riches in the interior of southern Africa. In a developing

economy, cheap labour was at a premium, and the claims of educated Africans for equality met with increasingly fierce resistance.

At the same time, the large numbers of Africans in the chiefdoms beyond the Kei River and north of the Orange, then being incorporated into the Cape Colony, posed new threats to racial supremacy and white security, increasing segregationist pressures.

Alluvial diamonds were discovered on the Vaal River in the late 1860s. The subsequent discovery of dry deposits at what became the city of Kimberley drew tens of thousands of people, black and white, to the first great industrial hub in Africa, and the largest diamond deposit in the world. In 1871, the diamond fields, which fell in sparsely populated territory to the west of the main corridors of northward migration, were annexed by the British, who ousted several rival claimants.

The Colony of Griqualand West thus created was incorporated into the Cape Colony in 1880. By 1888, the consolidation of diamond claims had led to the creation of the huge De Beers monopoly under the control of Cecil Rhodes. He used his power and wealth to become Prime Minister of the Cape Colony (1890-1896) and, through his chartered British South Africa Company, conqueror and ruler of modern-day Zambia and Zimbabwe.

The mineral discoveries had a major impact on the subcontinent as a whole. A railway network linking the interior to the coastal ports revolutionised transportation and energised agriculture. Coastal cities such as Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, East London and Durban experienced an economic boom as port facilities were upgraded.

The fact that the mineral discoveries coincided with a new era of imperialism and the scramble for Africa brought imperial power and influence to bear in southern Africa as never before.

Independent African chiefdoms were systematically subjugated and incorporated by their white-ruled neighbours. The most dramatic example was the Zulu War of 1879, which saw the Zulu State brought under

imperial control, during which King Cetshwayo's impis inflicted a celebrated defeat on British forces at Isandlwana.

In 1897, Zululand was incorporated into Natal. The South African Republic was annexed by Britain in 1877. Boer resistance led to British withdrawal in 1881, but not before the Pedi (northern Sotho) State which fell within the Republic's borders had been subjugated. The indications were that, having once been asserted, British hegemony was likely to be reasserted.

The southern Sotho and Swazi states were also brought under British rule but maintained their status as imperial dependencies, so that both the current Lesotho and Swaziland escaped the rule of local white regimes.

The discovery of the Witwatersrand gold-fields in 1886 was a turning point in the history of South Africa. It presaged the emergence of the modern South African industrial State.

Once the extent of the reefs had been established, and deep-level mining had proved to be a viable investment, it was only a matter of time before Britain and its local representatives again found a pretext for war against the Boer republics.

The demand for franchise rights for English-speaking immigrants on the gold-fields (the *uitlanders*) provided a lever for applying pressure on the Government of President Paul Kruger.

Egged on by the deep-level mining magnates, to whom the Boer Government seemed obstructive and inefficient, and by the expectation of an *uitlander* uprising, Rhodes launched a raid into the Transvaal in December 1895.

The raid's failure saw the end of Rhodes's political career, but Sir Alfred Milner, Britain's High Commissioner in South Africa from 1897, was determined to overthrow Kruger's government and establish British rule throughout the subcontinent. The Boer Government was eventually forced into a declaration of war in October 1899.

The mineral discoveries had a radical

impact on every sphere of society. Labour was required on a massive scale and could only be provided by Africans, who had to be drawn away from the land.

Many Africans did respond with alacrity to the opportunities presented by wage labour, travelling long distances to earn money to supplement rural enterprise in the homestead economy.

In response to the expansion of internal markets, Africans exploited their farming skills and family labour to good effect in order to increase production for sale. A substantial black peasantry arose, often by means of share-cropping or labour tenantry on white-owned farms.

For the white authorities, however, the chief consideration was ensuring a labour supply and undermining black competition on the land. Conquest, land dispossession, taxation and pass laws were designed to force black men off the land and channel them into labour markets, especially to meet the needs of the mines.

Gradually, the alternatives available to them were closed, and the decline of the homestead economy made wage labour increasingly essential for survival. The integration of Africans into the emerging urban and industrial society of South Africa should have followed these developments, but short-term, recurrent labour migrancy suited employers and the authorities, which sought to entrench the system.

The closed compounds pioneered on the diamond fields, as a means of migrant labour control, were replicated at the gold mines. The preservation of communal areas from which migrants could be drawn had the effect of lowering wages by denying Africans rights within the urban areas and keeping their families and dependants on subsistence plots in the reserves.

Africans could be denied basic rights if the fiction could be maintained that they did not belong in 'white South Africa' but to 'tribal societies' from which they came to service the 'white man's needs'.

Where black families secured a toehold in



the urban areas, local authorities confined them to segregated 'locations'. This set of assumptions and policies informed the development of segregationist ideology and, later (from 1948), apartheid.

The Anglo-Boer/South African War (October 1899 – May 1902) and its aftermath

The Boer forces took the initiative, besieging the frontier towns of Mafeking (Mafikeng) and Kimberley in the northern Cape and Ladysmith in northern Natal. Some colonial Boers rebelled, in sympathy with the republics. But after a large expeditionary force under Lords Roberts and Kitchener arrived, the British advance was rapid. Kruger fled the Transvaal shortly before Pretoria fell in June 1900.

The formal conquest of the two Boer republics was followed by a prolonged guerilla campaign. Small, mobile groups of Boers denied the imperial forces their victory by disrupting rail links and supply lines.

Commandos swept deep into colonial territory, rousing rebellion wherever they went. The British were at a disadvantage owing to their lack of familiarity with the terrain and the Boers' superior skills as horsemen and sharpshooters.

The British responded with a scorched-earth policy of farm burnings and looting and the setting up of concentration camps for non-combatants, in which some 26 000 Boer women and children died from disease. The incarceration of black (including coloured) people in the path of the War in racially segregated camps has been forgotten in conventional accounts of the War.

They too suffered from appalling conditions and some 14 000 (perhaps many more) are estimated to have died.

At the same time, many black farmers who were in a position to meet the demand for produce created by the military, or avail themselves of employment opportunities at good wages, benefited from the War. Some 10 000

black servants accompanied the Boer commandos and the British used Africans as labourers, scouts, dispatch riders, drivers and guards.

The War also taught many Africans that the forces of dispossession could be rolled back if the circumstances were right.

It also gave black communities the opportunity to recolonise land lost in conquest, which enabled them to withhold their labour after the War. Most supported the British in the belief that Britain was committed to extending civil and political rights to black people.

In this they were to be disappointed, as in the Treaty of Vereeniging that ended the War, the British agreed to leave the issue of rights for Africans to be decided by a future self-governing (white) authority.

All in all, the Anglo-Boer/South African War was a radicalising experience for Africans.

Britain's reconstruction regime set about creating a white-ruled dominion by uniting the former Boer republics (both by then British colonies) with Natal and the Cape.

The most important priority was to re-establish white control over the land and force the Africans back to wage labour. The labour-recruiting system was improved, both internally and externally. Recruiting agreements were reached with the Portuguese authorities in Mozambique, from where much mine labour came.

When, by 1904, African sources still proved inadequate to get the mines working at pre-War levels, over 60 000 indentured Chinese were brought in. This precipitated a vociferous outcry from proponents of white supremacy inside South Africa and liberals in Britain.

By 1910, all had been repatriated, a step made easier when a surge of Africans came forward from areas such as the Transkeian territories and the northern Transvaal which had not been large-scale suppliers of migrants before.

This was the heyday of the private recruiters, who exploited families' indebtedness to procure young men to labour in the

mines. The Africans' post-war ability to withhold their labour had been undercut by government action, abetted by drought and stock disease.

The impact of the Anglo-Boer/South African War as a seminal influence in the development of Afrikaner nationalist politics became apparent in subsequent years.

The Boer leaders – most notably Louis Botha, Jan Smuts and JBM Hertzog – played a dominant role in the country's politics for the next half century.

After initial plans for anglicisation of the defeated Afrikaners through the education system, and numerical swamping through British immigration, were abandoned as impractical, the British looked to the Afrikaners as collaborators in securing imperial political and economic interests.

During 1907 and 1908, the former Boer republics were granted self-government but, crucially, with a whites-only franchise. Despite promises to the contrary, black interests were sacrificed in the interest of white nation-building across the language divide. The National Convention drew up a constitution and the four colonies became an independent dominion called the Union of South Africa on 31 May 1910.

The 19th-century formally non-racial franchise was retained in the Cape but was not extended elsewhere, where rights of citizenship were confined to whites alone.

It was clear from the start that segregation was the conventional wisdom of the new rulers. Black people were defined as outsiders, without rights or claims on the common society that their labour had helped to create.

Segregation

Government policy in the Union of South Africa did not develop in isolation, but against the backdrop of black political initiatives. Segregation and apartheid assumed their shape, in part, as a response to Africans' increasing participation in the country's economic life and their assertion of political rights.

Despite the Government's efforts to shore up traditionalism and to retribalise them, black people became more fully integrated into the urban and industrial society of 20th-century South Africa than happened elsewhere on the continent. An educated élite of clerics, teachers, business people, journalists and professionals grew to be a major force in black politics.

Mission Christianity and its associated educational institutions exerted a profound influence on African political life, and separatist churches were early vehicles for African political assertion. The experiences of studying abroad and in particular interaction with black people struggling for their rights elsewhere in Africa, in the United States and the Caribbean, also played an important part. A vigorous black press, associated in its early years with such pioneer editors as JT Jabavu, PKI Seme, A Abdurahman, Sol Plaatje and John Dube, served the black reading public.

At the same time, African communal struggles to maintain access to the land in rural areas posed a powerful challenge to the white State.

Traditional authorities often led popular struggles against intrusive and manipulative policies. Government attempts to control and co-opt the chiefs often failed.

Steps towards the formation of a national political organisation of Africans began around the turn of the century.

The African National Congress (ANC), founded in 1912, became the most important organisation drawing together traditional authorities and the educated élite in common causes.

In its early years, the ANC was concerned mainly with constitutional protest. Worker militancy emerged in the wake of the First World War, and continued through the 1920s.

It included strikes and an anti-pass campaign given impetus by women, in particular in the Free State, resisting extension of the pass laws to themselves. The Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union, under the leadership of Clements Kadalie, was (despite its



name) the first populist, nation-wide organisation representing blacks in rural as well as urban areas. But it was short-lived.

The Communist Party, which from 1921 became a force for both non-racialism and worker organisation, was to prove far longer-lasting.

In other sections of the black population too, the turn of the century saw organised opposition emerging. Gandhi's leadership of protest against discriminatory laws gave impetus to the formation of provincial Indian congresses, while coloured resistance found organised expression, amongst others, in the African (later People's) Organisation.

The principles of segregationist thinking were laid down in a 1905 report by the South African Native Affairs Commission, and continued to evolve in response to these economic, social and political pressures. In keeping with its recommendations, the first Union Government enacted the seminal Natives Land Act in 1913.

This defined the remnants of their ancestral lands after conquest for African occupation, and declared illegal all land purchases or rent tenancy outside these reserves.

The reserves ('homelands' as they were subsequently called) eventually comprised about 13% of South Africa's land surface. Administrative and legal dualism reinforced

the division between white citizen and black non-citizen, a dispensation personified by the Governor-General who, as 'Supreme Chief' over the country's African majority, was empowered to rule them by administrative fiat and decree.

The Government also regularised the job colour bar, reserving skilled work for whites and denying African workers the right to organise.

Legislation, which was consolidated in the Natives (Urban Areas) Act, 1923, entrenched urban segregation and controlled African mobility by means of pass laws. The pass laws were intended to enmesh Africans in a web of coercion designed to force them into labour and to keep them there under conditions and at wage levels that suited white employers, and to deny them any bargaining power.

In these and other ways, the foundations of apartheid were laid by successive governments representing the compromises hammered out by the National Convention of 1908–1909 to effect the union of English and Afrikaans-speaking whites.

Divisions within the white community remained significant, however. Afrikaner nationalism grew as a factor in the years after Union.

It was given impetus in 1914 both by the formation of the National Party (NP), in a breakaway from the ruling South African Party, and by a rebellion of Afrikaners who could not reconcile themselves with the decision to join the First World War against Germany in 1914. In part the NP spoke for Afrikaners impoverished by the Anglo-Boer/South African War and dislodged from the land by the development of capitalist farming.

An Afrikaner underclass was emerging in the towns, which found itself uncompetitive in the labour market as white workers demanded higher wages than those paid to blacks.

Soon, labour issues came to the fore. In 1920, some 71 000 black mineworkers went on strike in protest against the spiralling cost

Information

On 27 August 2001, the Minister of Education, Prof Kader Asmal, launched the South African History Project at the Old Fort in Johannesburg. It aims to promote and enhance the conditions and status of the learning and teaching of history in the South African schooling system, with the goal of restoring its material position and intellectual purchase in the classroom.

The Project will pursue this through the creation of collective strategy fora for teachers, scholars, and training specialists to devise means of improving and strengthening history teaching. It will engage with processes of curriculum development to raise the standing of history. The Project will also address the review, revision and rewriting of history textbooks in co-operation with other bodies in the history field. It will also aim to institute activities to resurrect general interest in the study of history by younger people.

Some US\$500 000 has been donated by the Carnegie Corporation of New York to set up the Project. Local funding sources will be approached as the Project develops.

of living, but the strike was quickly put down by isolating the compounds where the migrant workers were housed.

Another threat to government came from the white workers. Much of the skilled and semi-skilled work on the mines was performed by immigrant white workers with mining experience abroad. As mine-owners tried to cut costs by using lower-wage black labour in semi-skilled jobs, white labour became increasingly militant. These tensions culminated in a bloody and dramatic rebellion on the goldfields in 1922, which the Smuts Government put down with military force. In 1924, a Pact Government under Hertzog, comprising Afrikaner nationalists and representatives of immigrant labour, ousted the Smuts regime.

The Pact was based on a common suspicion of the dominance of mining capital, and a determination to protect the interests of white labour by intensifying discrimination against blacks. The commitment to white-labour policies in government employment such as the railways and postal service was intensified, and the job colour bar was reinforced.

In 1934, the main white parties fused to combat the local effects of a world-wide depression.

This was followed by a new Afrikaner nationalist breakaway under Dr DF Malan. In 1936, white supremacy was further entrenched by the removal of the Cape Africans who qualified from the common voters' roll. Malan's NP was greatly augmented by anti-war sentiment from 1939.

Apartheid

In 1948, the NP with its ideology of apartheid that brought an even more rigorous and authoritarian approach than the segregationist policies of previous governments, won the general election.

It did so against the background of a revival of mass militancy during the 1940s, after a period of quiescence in the 1930s.

The change was marked by the formation

of the ANC Youth League in 1943, fostering the leadership of figures such as Nelson Mandela, Oliver Tambo and Walter Sisulu, who were to inspire the struggle for decades to come. In the 1940s, squatter movements in peri-urban areas brought mass politics back to the urban centres.

The 1946 mineworkers' strike was a turning point in the emergence of a politics of mass mobilisation.

As was the case with the First World War, the experience of the Second World War and post-war economic difficulties enhanced discontent.

For those who supported the NP, its primary appeal lay in its determination to maintain white domination in the face of rising mass resistance, to uplift poor Afrikaners, to challenge the pre-eminence of English-speaking whites in public life, the professions and business, and to abolish the remaining imperial ties.

The State became an engine of patronage for Afrikaner employment. The secret society, the *Afrikaner Broederbond*, coordinated the Party's programme, ensuring that Afrikaner nationalist interests and policies attained ascendancy throughout civil society.

In 1961, the NP Government under Prime Minister HF Verwoerd declared South Africa a republic, after winning a whites-only referendum on the issue. It also withdrew from the British Commonwealth, and a figurehead president replaced the Queen (represented locally by the Governor-General) as Head of State.

In most respects, apartheid was a continuation, in more systematic and brutal form, of the segregationist policies of previous governments.

A new concern with racial purity was apparent in laws prohibiting interracial sex and in provisions for population registration requiring that every South African be assigned to one discrete racial category or another.

For the first time the coloured people, who had always been subject to informal discrimination, were brought within the ambit of discriminatory laws.



In the mid-1950s, the Government took the drastic step of overriding an entrenched clause in the 1910 Constitution so as to be able to remove coloured voters from the common voters' roll. It also enforced residential segregation, expropriating homes where necessary and policing massive forced removals into coloured 'group areas'.

Until the 1940s, South Africa's race policies had not been entirely out of step with those to be found in the colonial world. But by the 1950s, which saw decolonisation and a global backlash against racism gather pace, the country was dramatically opposed to world opinion on questions of human rights.

The architects of apartheid, among whom Dr Verwoerd was pre-eminent, responded by elaborating a theory of multinationalism. Their policy, which they termed 'separate development', divided the African population into artificial ethnic 'nations', each with its own 'homeland' and the prospect of 'independence', supposedly in keeping with trends elsewhere on the continent.

This divide-and-rule strategy was designed to disguise the racial basis of official policy-making by the substitution of the language of ethnicity.

This was accompanied by much ethnographic engineering as efforts were made to resurrect tribal structures. In the process, the Government created a considerable collaborating class.

The truth was that the rural reserves were by this time thoroughly degraded by overpopulation and soil erosion.

This did not prevent four of the 'homeland' structures (Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda and Ciskei) being declared 'independent', a status which the international community declined to recognise. In each case, the process involved the repression of opposition and the use by the Government of the power to nominate and thereby pad elected assemblies with a quota of compliant figures.

Forced removals from 'white' areas affected some 3,5 million people, and vast rural slums were created in the homelands, which were used as dumping grounds.

The pass laws and influx control were extended and harshly enforced, and labour bureaux were set up to channel labour to where it was needed.

Industrial decentralisation to growth points on the borders of (but not inside) the homelands was promoted as a means of keeping blacks out of 'white' South Africa.

In virtually every sphere, from housing to education to health care, central government took control over black people's lives with a view to reinforcing their allotted role as 'temporary sojourners', welcome in 'white' South Africa solely to serve the needs of the employers of labour.

The ending of apartheid

The introduction of apartheid policies coincided with the adoption by the ANC in 1949 of the Programme of Action, expressing the renewed militancy of the 1940s.

The Programme embodied a rejection of white domination and a call for action in the form of protests, strikes and demonstrations. There followed a decade of turbulent mass action in resistance to the imposition of still more harsh forms of segregation and oppression.

The Defiance Campaign of the early 1950s carried mass mobilisation to new heights under the banner of non-violent resistance to the pass laws.

A critical step in the emergence of non-racialism was the formation of the Congress Alliance, including the Indian Congress, the Coloured People's Congress, a small white congress organisation (the Congress of Democrats) and the South African Congress of Trade Unions.

The Alliance gave formal expression to an emerging unity across racial and class lines that was manifested in the Defiance Campaign and other mass protests of this period, which also saw women's resistance take a more organised character with the formation of the Federation of South African Women.

In 1955, a Freedom Charter was drawn up at the Congress of the People in Soweto.

The Charter enunciated the principles of the struggle, binding the movement to a culture of human rights and non-racialism.

The Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC), founded by Robert Sobukwe and based on the philosophy of Africanism and anti-communism, broke away from the Congress Alliance in 1959.

The State's initial response, harsh as it was, was not as draconian as it was to become. Its

attempt to prosecute more than 150 anti-apartheid leaders for treason, in a trial that started in 1956, ended in acquittals in 1961. But by that time, mass organised opposition had been banned.

Matters came to a head at Sharpeville in March 1960 when 69 PAC anti-pass demonstrators were killed. A state of emergency was imposed, and detention without trial was introduced.

The black political organisations were banned, and their leaders went into exile or were arrested. In this climate, the ANC and PAC abandoned their long-standing commitment to non-violent resistance and turned to armed struggle, waged from the independent countries to the north.

Top leaders still inside the country, including members of the newly formed military wing *Umkhonto we Sizwe* (Spear of the Nation), were arrested in 1963. At the 'Rivonia trial', Mandela, Sisulu, Ahmed Kathrada and others convicted of sabotage (in place of treason, the original charge) were sentenced to life imprisonment.

The 1960s was a decade of overwhelming repression and of relative political disarray among blacks inside the country. Armed action from beyond the borders was effectively contained by the State.

The resurgence of resistance politics in the 1970s was dramatic. The Black Consciousness Movement, led by Steve Biko (who was killed in detention in 1977), reawakened a sense of pride and self-esteem in black people.

As capitalist economies sputtered with the oil crisis of 1973, black trade unions revived. A wave of strikes reflected a new militancy that involved better organisation and was drawing new sectors, in particular intellectuals and the student movement, into mass struggle and into debate over the principles informing it.

The year 1976 marked the beginning of a sustained anti-apartheid revolt. In June, the pupils of Soweto rose up against apartheid education. Youth activism became the single most effective arm of the politics of resistance in the 1980s.

Information

In the second half of 2001, three South Africans, who each made an invaluable contribution to South Africa, passed away.

On 16 August, Donald Woods (67) died in London after losing the battle against cancer.

A former editor of East London's *Daily Dispatch*, he was also a noted anti-apartheid campaigner who was honoured by Queen Elizabeth II in 2000 with the Commander of the British Empire for his contribution to promoting human rights.

Woods was editor of the *Daily Dispatch* from 1965 to 1977, when he was banned for five years by the NP Government. He escaped from South Africa with his family at the end of 1977, and became known throughout the world with the release of the Richard Attenborough film *Cry Freedom*, about his friendship with Black Consciousness leader Steve Biko, his constant campaigning for a democratic South Africa, his books, lectures and journalism.

On 30 August, Govan Mbeki (91), a veteran of the ANC's liberation struggle and father of President Thabo Mbeki, died at his home in Port Elizabeth. He became a political activist when he was very young, periodically being detained by the apartheid authorities until he went underground and joined the ANC's armed wing, *Umkhonto we Sizwe*.

In 1964, Mbeki and other ANC leaders, including Nelson Mandela, were sentenced to life in jail for sabotage and conspiring to overthrow the Government, and sent to Robben Island.

He was released in 1987 at the age of 77 and immediately resumed his work for the ANC and the South African Communist Party. Known as 'Oom Gov', he carved a place in history as a political leader and intellectual in his own right.

On 2 September, the heart transplant pioneer, Dr Chris Barnard (78), died of an asthma attack while on holiday in Cyprus.

After studying advanced surgery at the University of Minnesota in the United States, he moved back to Groote Schuur to introduce open-heart surgery to South Africa. He designed an artificial heart valve and conducted heart transplant experiments on animals.

On 3 December 1967, Barnard, assisted by a team of University of Cape Town surgeons, in the company of theatre sisters and technicians, transplanted the heart of a 25-year-old motor accident victim, Denise Darvall, into Louis Washkansky (53). Medical history was made.



The United Democratic Front and the informal umbrella, the Mass Democratic Movement, emerged as legal vehicles of democratic forces struggling for liberation.

The involvement of workers in resistance took on a new dimension with the formation of the Congress of South African Trade Unions and the National Council of Trade Unions.

Popular anger was directed against all those who were deemed to be collaborating with the Government in the pursuit of its objectives, and the black townships became virtually ungovernable. From the mid-1980s, regional and national states of emergency were enforced.

The Inkatha movement, which from 1979 became increasingly oppositional to the externally-based liberation movement, played a straddling role in the 1980s. Stressing Zulu ethnicity and traditionalism, Inkatha claimed a mass following in the rural areas of the KwaZulu homeland.

Its leader, Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi, carved a distinctive niche for himself, refusing 'independence' for KwaZulu but squeezing patronage from the apartheid State by casting Inkatha in the role of loyal opposition. The State sought to use Inkatha structures as surrogates in its war against the liberation movement.

Battles for turf between Inkatha and the ANC became a very destructive accompaniment to South Africa's transition to democracy. Developments in neighbouring states in the face of mass resistance to white-minority and colonial rule, notably Portuguese decolonisation in the mid-1970s and the abdication of Zimbabwe's minority regime in 1980, left South Africa exposed as the last bastion of white supremacy.

The Government embarked on a series of reforms, an early example being the recognition of black trade unions to stabilise labour. In 1983, the Constitution was reformed to allow the coloured and Indian minorities limited participation in separate and subordinate Houses of Parliament.

PW Botha further modified the Westminster

constitutional model by instituting an executive presidency and doing away with the job of Prime Minister.

In 1986, the pass laws were scrapped.

These initiatives went hand-in-hand with the militarisation of society and the ascendancy of the State Security Council, which usurped the role of the executive in crucial respects.

Under the states of emergency, a comprehensive counter-insurgency strategy was implemented to combat what, by the mid-1980s, was an endemic insurrectionary spirit in the land.

At the same time, the international community strengthened its support for the anti-apartheid cause. A range of sanctions and boycotts was instituted, both unilaterally and through the United Nations.

FW de Klerk, who had replaced Botha as State President in 1989, surprised Parliament and the country at large by unbanning the liberation movements and releasing political prisoners, notably Nelson Mandela, in February 1990.

A number of factors led to this step. International financial and trade sanctions were clearly biting, even if South Africa was nowhere near collapse, either militarily or economically.

Mass resistance continued and it was obvious that Botha's strategy of reform initiatives combined with repression had failed to stabilise the internal situation.

To outside observers, and also in the eyes of growing numbers of white South Africans, apartheid stood exposed as morally bankrupt, indefensible and impervious to reforms. The collapse of global communism, the withdrawal of Soviet and Cuban support for the MPLA regime in Angola, and the negotiated independence of Namibia – formerly South-West Africa, administered by South Africa as a League of Nations mandate since 1919 – did much to change the mindset of whites. No longer could whites demonise the ANC and PAC as fronts for international communism.

White South Africa had also changed in deeper ways. Afrikaner nationalism had lost

much of its *raison d'être*. Many Afrikaners had become urban, middle class and relatively prosperous. Their ethnic grievances, and attachment to ethnic causes and symbols, had largely waned.

A large part of the NP's core constituency was ready to explore larger national identities, even across racial divides, and yearned for international respectability.

Apartheid increasingly seemed more like a straitjacket than a safeguard. In 1982, disenfranchised hardliners had split from the NP to form the Conservative Party, leaving the NP open to more flexible and modernising influences.

Birth of a democratic South Africa

After a long, bumpy negotiation process, marked by much opportunistic violence from the right wing and its surrogates and in some instances sanctioned by elements of the State, South Africa held its first democratic election in April 1994 under an Interim Constitution.

The ANC emerged with a 62% majority. Its main opposition came from the NP, which gained 20% of the vote nationally, and a majority in the Western Cape where it was strongly supported by coloured voters. The Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) received 10% of the vote, mainly in its KwaZulu-Natal base.

South Africa was divided into nine new provinces in place of the four provinces and 10 'homelands' that existed previously. In terms of the Interim Constitution, the NP and IFP participated in a Government of National Unity until 1996, when the NP withdrew.

The ANC-led Government embarked on a programme to promote the reconstruction and development of the country and its institutions.

This called for the simultaneous pursuit of democratisation and socio-economic change, as well as reconciliation and the building of a consensus founded on the commitment to improving the lives of all South Africans, in particular the poor.

Converting democratic ideals into practice required, among other things, initiating a radical overhaul of the machinery of government at every level, towards service delivery, openness and a culture of human rights.

A significant milestone of democratisation during the five-year period of the Mandela presidency was the exemplary constitution-making process which delivered a document that is the envy of the democratic world.

So too were the local government elections that gave the country its first democratically-elected municipal authorities.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission, under the leadership of Archbishop Desmond Tutu, helped inculcate a commitment to accountability and transparency into South Africa's public life, at the same time helping to heal wounds inflicted by inhumanities of the apartheid era.

The ethos of partnership was reflected in the establishment of the National Economic Development and Labour Council and in the Presidential Jobs Summit.

These brought government, business, organised labour and non-governmental development organisations together to confront the challenges of achieving growth and development for South Africa in a turbulent and globalising international economy. From the start, emphasis was placed by the Government on the meeting of basic needs, through various programmes for socio-economic upliftment such as provision of housing, piped water, electricity and rural health care.

Also a priority was the safety and security of citizens, requiring both transforming the police into a service working with the community, and overcoming grave problems of criminality and a culture of violence posed by the social dislocations inherited from the past.

The second democratic election, held on 2 June 1999, saw the ANC increase its majority to a point just short of two-thirds of the total vote. South Africa was launched into the post-Mandela era under the presidency of Thabo Mbeki.



The 1999 election also saw the sharp decline of the NP, which had ruled South Africa from 1948 to 1994, and its replacement by the Democratic Party, under the leadership of Tony Leon, as the official opposition in the South African Parliament. The two parties merged in 2000 to form the Democratic Alliance. However, in October 2001, the NP suspended its membership of

the Alliance pending a final decision, changing the face of politics in the Western Cape.

President Mbeki promised a tough, hands-on managerial style, geared to efficiency and delivery. In particular, the Mbeki administration is committed to the African Renaissance based on democracy and development, and a co-operative approach to resolving the emerging political challenges across the continent.

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