

British ‘State Capture’ of South Africa Must End!

by David Cherry and Ramasimong Phillip Tsokolibane

Aug. 19—South African President Jacob Zuma, facing a many-sided regime-change scheme, narrowly survived a parliamentary vote of no confidence by secret ballot on Aug. 8, in which at least twenty-six MPs of his own party, the African National Congress (ANC), voted against him. This was not merely a constitutionally recognized procedure; it was part of a larger, British directed regime-change mobilization.

Americans and South Africans may not realize that they suffer from the same problem—British neocolonialism—including, at this moment, parallel attempts at regime change. The propaganda war to overthrow President Trump is at full tilt, including public incitements to his assassination. (See Barbara Boyd’s review of *Rogue Spooks: The Intelligence War on Donald Trump*, by Dick Morris and Eileen McGann, in this issue.)

But it is not just the fate of two nations that is at issue. Both America and South Africa are crucial in the larger strategic struggle that will determine the fate of the world—whether it will collapse in economic failure and world war, or whether a new paradigm will take

hold to bring humanity to a higher level of material, moral, and cognitive existence than it has yet known.

For South Africa to pull its weight toward that goal, it must reverse its current de-industrialization and accelerate in the opposite direction. Concretely: Will President Zuma and his faction succeed in their turn to the East, to adopt some approximation of Hamiltonian economics, as China has done, or will the British Empire prevail, ensuring the continuation of the ongoing, twenty-year de-industrialization of South Africa?

Tension was high in South Africa on the day of the vote, and security measures in and around Parliament were in place, while the ANC and the opposition each had many thousands at rallies near Parliament in Cape Town, and around the country.

If eleven more MPs had voted against Zuma, providing a simple majority for the no confidence motion (given some absences and abstentions), he and his cabinet would have had to resign. In a National Assembly of 400 seats, the ANC has 249. The opposition was jubilant for having come so close.

This was the eighth vote of no confidence against



Kopano Tlape/GCIS

The South African National Assembly, the lower house of Parliament, Feb. 16, 2017.



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President Xi Jinping of China and South African President Jacob Zuma shake hands at BRICS summit in Brazil, 2014.

Zuma in one form or another since 2010, when Zuma’s government got serious about joining what was then just the BRIC. The larger, ongoing process is one in which the two main opposition parties (both British-owned) and the mass media carry out total propaganda warfare to vilify Zuma and his ANC faction, punctuated by these no confidence votes to demonstrate and reinforce their progress toward toppling the government. Both sides are looking toward the national elections in December 2019, with the longer term success or failure of the Zuma faction in the balance.

In the debate preceding the vote of no confidence, the ANC took a turn in the right direction. Its MPs acknowledged the process just described for what it is. They accused the opposition of using the combination of mass media warfare and the no confidence vote to achieve what they had not achieved at the ballot box, as seen in these condensed extracts:

Minister of Arts and Culture Nathi Mthethwa:

“A ramification of the unipolar world order is the demand for regime change across the globe ... to remove those who refuse to kow-tow to an oppressive global hegemony. Similarly, the call for regime change in South Africa today is to destabilize and subvert our democratic order. A major fallacy raised by the opposition is that the recession was caused by the cabinet reshuffle [notably, the firing of Finance Minister and London darling, Pravin Gordhan]. The threat of the recession developed in the preceding two quarters. The first S&P downgrade to sub-investment level was decided before the cabinet reshuffle. It is disingenuous to

suggest that the recession was caused by the reshuffle. Thus this motion is based on fake news. The target of this motion is the authority of government; they aim for a coup d’etat to overthrow a legitimate government through destabilization.” Mthethwa is a former minister of police.

Deputy Chief Whip Doris Dlakude:

“This insurrectionist opposition ... has a publicly stated intention of regime change, to manipulate the legislature and the constitution to collapse government and sow the seeds of chaos in society to ultimately grab power.”

Defense Minister Nosisiwe Mapisa-Nqakula and Pule Mabe of the ANC National Executive Committee followed, also using the language of an attempted coup d’etat.

The opposition went crazy, interrupting again and again with purported points of order. (Deputy Speaker of the House: “That is not a point of order, and screaming will not make it so.”) The debate was carried live on national TV and the Internet.

Zuma—who now has a [Finance Minister sympathetic to the spirit of the BRICS, Malusi Gigaba](#)—followed up his victory in the no confidence vote by officially launching the Africa Regional Center of the BRICS’ New Development Bank (NDB) in Johannesburg on Aug. 17.

At that event, Zuma emphasized to the NDB President, K.V. Kamath, members of the diplomatic corps,



Government of South Africa/GCIS

South African Finance Minister Malusi Gigaba.

cabinet ministers, and leaders of industry and finance, that setting up the Africa Regional Center shows the bank is working to expand its membership to other countries beyond the five BRICS members, saying, “We certainly trust that African countries will be among the first to take up membership at the New Development Bank. . . . The biggest challenge is that Africa remains largely unindustrialized, with the result that our economies are overexposed to the whims of commodities markets.”

NDB President Kamath announced that the bank would like to fund \$1.5 billion of projects in South Africa over the next 18 months.

I. The Mighty Wurlitzer

Only days before the no confidence vote, LaRouche South Africa had circulated to MPs and many others, a paper on the same wavelength as the ANC speakers quoted above, stating:

The British-guided, multifarious opposition to the ruling Zuma faction and the ANC more generally—consisting of political parties, NGOs, academic institutes, commentators, and the press—is like the Mighty Wurlitzer, a theatre organ of the days before World War II. It can dominate the airwaves, and the brainwaves, with any melody of its master’s choice. The likeness to the Mighty Wurlitzer was first used by the CIA’s first chief of political warfare, Frank Wisner, to describe his worldwide propaganda machine. And it is also [what the Presidency of Donald Trump is facing](#) in the United States at this moment.

The British and their agents are pulling out all the stops of their Mighty Wurlitzer to push South Africans’ buttons with every conceivable half-truth, lie, and fantasy against the Zuma government and the ANC. Thus, every so often, one of the opposition parties calls for a vote of no confidence as a kind of battering ram, attempting to keep Zuma and the government off balance and diverted from the tasks of government, and with the ultimate goal of toppling him, and splintering his faction and the ANC at large. This is not constitutional democracy; it is regime change. Britain’s new High Commissioner to South Africa, [Nigel Casey](#)—having come straight from 10 Downing Street as an advisor to the prime minister, and with regime change experience—presides over this hideous performance of the music of Hell.

This is happening because South Africa is important

on the world stage, and is a serious threat to the British neocolonial empire.

What Is at Stake

Think of South Africa in relation to the single most important process on foot in the world today—the rise of China as a productive economy and China’s decision to export its success—through the now famous Belt and Road Initiative—to countries who wish for such success themselves. China is offering infrastructure and manufacturing capacity in exchange for whatever an African, Asian, or other country—even potentially the United States—has to offer. In China, *manufacturing as a percentage of gross domestic product (GDP)* is an astounding forty percent. In Sub-Saharan Africa, in which South Africa is the leader, South Africa’s percentage is now only thirteen percent.¹ For China’s initiative to succeed, it needs the cooperation of its partner, South Africa, which has the only full-set economy on the continent and the highest literacy rate, 94%. South Africa is the gateway for the industrialization of Africa!

Opposing China’s initiative is the British Empire, including the U.S. Establishment of the Bushes and Obama. The British will not stand idly by, while its economic model for Africa—once accurately described by the late John Garang of Sudan as “misery management”—is crushed by the bulldozers, caterpillar tractors, rail lines, and steel mills of the new Africa. The Empire believes it can prevent the Chinese initiative—and the closely related BRICS process—from bursting out beyond the Eurasian continent. And perhaps—the British oligarchs believe—the entire Belt and Road initiative can be rolled up.

In August 2016 the oligarchs succeeded in toppling Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff—who brought her country into the BRICS—in a regime-change process similar to the one now underway in South Africa. They overthrew Argentine President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, another enthusiast for the BRICS process, in December 2015, after a campaign of lies and vilification. Both presidents were succeeded by political allies of the vulture capitalists who are now dismantling the state sector in the two countries.

What is at stake, therefore, is not just the success of

1. South Africa’s leadership in industrialization is clearly seen in the size of its workforce in manufacturing, construction, and electricity/water/gas, as a percentage of its total population—5.8% in 2014, compared to Kenya, 1.0%; and Nigeria, less than 1.0%.



President Jacob Zuma's political machine is the only formation in South Africa that the British empire fears. Zuma is prepared to take the country back from the empire.

the Belt and Road Initiative in Africa. It is a question of whether the British empire—by stopping the initiative in South America and Africa—might be able to go so far as to actually strangle the child in its cradle, so that the evil of the British empire may survive. South Africans must see their responsibility to the human race in this light. The world needs the help of South Africa.

State Capture

Britain has owned South Africa for the past two hundred years, since the time of the Napoleonic wars. It has ruled South Africa for the benefit of its empire, first with boots on the ground, and now as a neocolonial empire held together by financial, propaganda, and psychological warfare. Today, President Zuma and his ruling faction of the ANC are challenging British hegemony, and they can and must win: There is no other issue. Corruption is not the issue. The wrongdoing of the Gupta brothers is not the issue. These are very serious problems, but they are being used as surrogates.

The British—having failed to achieve regime change after three years of trying—have finally opted to crown their accusations with the supreme charge, that Jacob Zuma is attempting to “capture the state.” With that lie, they are taking a great risk. It could prompt many South Africans to realize that Zuma is attempting to rescue the state from British state capture. “But he is not proceeding in a democratic manner!” the gremlins howl. There is indeed another level of democracy, which functions outside of *Robert's Rules of Order*.

President Zuma's political machine is the only formation in South Africa that the British empire fears. It is the only one that has the guts to say, as Zuma himself recently told Mmusi Maimane, the leader of the opposition in Parliament, “Don't feed me your English words from London!” The Zuma machine is at present the only one that is actually prepared to take the country back from the empire and adopt an economic model for the development of the country that will actually work.

The proper name for that model is the system of Public Credit, as designed by the American founding father, [Alexander Hamilton](#). Hamilton's approach is best represented today in the economic initiatives of the People's Republic of China. Even China's detractors will tell you that in China, in the past thirty years, 700 million people have risen up out of the direst poverty. And that, above all else in the world, is what the British empire fears.

The British know that they can no longer prevail in South Africa. A government that continues to depend on the economics of London and Wall Street, will bring unending strife. The British objective at this point is not to prevail, but to ensure that the forces represented by the Zuma faction also do not prevail. Strife and chaos are, therefore, the British preference, whatever the government. They will sacrifice their own friends in South Africa, when necessary, to achieve it.

Strategy for Victory

The required strategy—under the current condition of sharpened battle—has at least the following features. The South African people must be mobilized on the basis of a vision for a better future. They must know that *there is a better future*, and they must be made aware of what that future entails. Using surrogate issues in this battle will fail. Such issues have no potential to call forth a fighting people. There must be a bold turning away from the British trans-Atlantic empire and towards the BRICS and the East. This must be done by asserting leadership in the credit-directed development of Africa, and the building up of South Africa's capabilities for that purpose.

South Africans must be told that the enemy is the



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The signing of the agreement for the launch of the African Regional Center of the New Development Bank (the BRICS bank) in Johannesburg, Aug. 17. From left: the bank's President K.V. Kamath, Zuma, Gigaba, and South African Minister of International Relations Maite Nkoana-Mashabane.

South Africa's Imperial Origins

During the long period of white rule, the British Empire attempted to crush the independence of the Dutch and Huguenot-descended Afrikaner people (largely *boere*, farmers) and their institutions, and also destroy and pulverize the Black African kingdoms. The Afrikaners, many of whom had abandoned the Cape Colony to form two republics of their own—the South African Republic and the Orange Free State, north and south of the River Vaal, respectively—were the harder nut to crack of the two, being better armed and more easily unified than the African kingdoms.

British neocolonial empire. They must also understand that British subjects, and South African citizens of British heritage, are not *ipso facto* representatives of the empire. They are largely victims of the empire, like everyone else.

And because there are many weaknesses and failures in the current government, actions are needed to demonstrate immediately the government's resolve to break through to solutions of at least some of these problems, as the initial steps of an ongoing process of renewal. A defensive posture with respect to such problems will guarantee defeat.

For South Africans, and others, to get a proper perspective on the present moment and break out of the controlled environment of the Mighty Wurlitzer, it is necessary to discover the history of the highly political struggle for South Africa's industrialization, little known today.

II. Industrialize or Die!

South Africa presents a case in which the current leadership and government, under majority rule, are the heirs of a long period of rule by Brit and Boer, at the expense of Black Africans. We do not have the power to choose our forerunners, but we may be capable of learning from them.

The British empire provoked the Second Anglo-Boer War, 1899-1902, when it became clear that the South African Republic under President Paul Kruger might succeed in building a railway to the port of Beira on the Indian Ocean. Such a railway was a projection of power that the British saw as a threat.

The British vastly underestimated the Afrikaners' potential for resistance. The commander of the British forces, Field Marshal Frederick Roberts, 1st Earl Roberts, VC, KG, KP, GCB, OM, GCSI, GCIE, KStJ, VD, PC, and after him, Lord Kitchener, were only able to defeat Afrikaner guerrilla operations with a scorched earth policy. Afrikaner farms were burned to the ground and more than 100,000 Afrikaners—largely women and children—were thrown into concentration camps, where, at a minimum, 27,000 died of disease and starvation. (It is less well known that the British also put Blacks in concentration camps during the war, in which at least 13,000 died, and possibly very many more.²)

2. Stowell Kessler, *The Black Concentration Camps of the Anglo-Boer War, 1899-1902*, Bloemfontein: War Museum of the Boer Republics, 2012. While deserving of longer treatment, the imposition of apartheid on South Africa was supported by the same British oligarchs against whom the Anglo-Boer Wars were fought. The British racists realized that this policy was a factor inhibiting South African economic development by barbarously limiting the creative powers of the black work force. But the Afrikaner drive for industrialization—which the British failed to stop—eventually created a paradoxical condition which, under visionary leadership, would force a choice between economic collapse

Through this savagery the British had, in a very important sense, lost the war. Lord Alfred Milner, his successor Lord Selborne, and the Milner Kindergarten were indeed able form the Union of South Africa as a single country under British imperial rule, through the successful negotiation of the Constitution of 1910—bringing together the Cape Colony, Natal, and the two Afrikaner republics. But the Afrikaners and their institutions had not been crushed, and the British were obliged to mollify their smoldering hatred by allowing them a major role in political life.

Black Africans also had their rage. Some had fought on one side and some on the other. They saw that the constitutional settlement of 1910 was the coming together of the whites to exclude them from power. During the war, some British had hinted, and some had promised, that in exchange for support or neutrality, Africans would be rewarded with political rights. It never happened. For the whites, the interests of the blacks did not weigh in the balance.

Industry vs. Empire

Industrialization and protection for infant industries became burning issues for Afrikaners after World War I. It was then that the prices of primary products worldwide slid ever downward for a decade, but South Africa had to live by its export of primary products. The National Party, led by Barry Hertzog, saw the answer in industrialization.

But Hertzog and his party were not in power. Jan Smuts of the South African Party was prime minister from 1919-1924, and Smuts, although an Afrikaner, loved the British, and for the British he was a godsend who could reconcile a large number of Afrikaners to British policy. Smuts took what he thought were expe-

and an end to apartheid. South Africa found that visionary leadership in Nelson Mandela and his Afrikaner partner, F.W. de Klerk, in creating the modern South Africa that the British are still attempting to destroy. This history shows how true policies of Hamiltonian development create paradoxes that can force people to bridge what are thought to be intractable and unbridgeable differences.



Jan Smuts, Prime Minister of South Africa, 1919-1924 and 1939-1948.

dient steps to give his government the appearance of supporting industrialization.

In 1919, he prevailed upon the physicist, Hendrik Johannes van der Bijl (pronounced *fun da bayle*) to return to South Africa from the United States and to establish institutions for scientific research. Van der Bijl was a genius who had taken his doctorate in physics at the University of Leipzig. At the Royal School of Technology in Dresden, he had continued his research, which led to the thermionic vacuum tube that made wireless telephony and telegraphy possible. But van der Bijl was more than a brilliant scientist. In the United States, he had been one of nineteen scientists who had associated themselves as the Society of Plan-

ners and Builders.

Van der Bijl's own agenda called for using the powers of government to greatly increase the production of electricity through a state-owned enterprise, the Electricity Supply Commission (Eskom); to establish another state-owned company to produce iron and steel (Isacor); and to develop the country's rail network. Smuts endorsed van der Bijl's plan for Eskom, which was established by law in 1922, and allowed him to investigate and make recommendations for iron and steel production. Unwittingly, Smuts had played a crucial role in initiating industrialization. He had done what he thought was politically expedient, but he was not wholeheartedly in support of van der Bijl's plans.

Smuts leaned toward a British free trade policy. It came out in the election campaign of 1924. His biographer, Keith Hancock, writes,

"In his election manifesto, Smuts assured the country that he stood for a bold industrial policy; but he did not give the same bold assurance of tariff protection for South African industries. Whereas Hertzog and [the Labour Party's Frederic] Creswell promised Protection with a capital P, the most that Smuts promised was 'discriminating protection for those industries especially suited to the country.'"

Hertzog won the election and formed a National-Labour cabinet. The Hertzog government was strongly

oriented to the projects of van der Bijl's agenda. That did not mean, however, that these projects had smooth sailing. Apart from the obstacles often created by rocky economic conditions, the British free trade ideology—so thoroughly developed by Adam Smith in his attack on the American Revolution of 1776—was everywhere.

The plan for protection of infant industries naturally angered the British. Hertzog appointed a close collaborator of van der Bijl, Andries Johannes Bruwer, as Chairman of the Board of Trade and Industries in 1924. Bruwer drew up what he has called, "South Africa's Industrial Magna Carta" for protection. Hertzog's British-influenced finance minister rejected it. But an emergency cabinet meeting then approved Bruwer's work, and he was asked to draft the necessary legislation. Bruwer later wrote, "This was a memorable day for South Africa, a day when its rulers became practically aware of its colossal industrial potential."³

Eskom was also targeted. Van der Bijl had planned Eskom as a government controlled corporation, insofar as the government appointed the members of the board and could replace them, and it appointed its auditors. It was to plow its earnings back into the corporation to pursue the goal of cheap and abundant energy for the country. Otherwise, Eskom was to operate as a private



Alice Jacobs, *South African Heritage*
H.J. van der Bijl
(1887-1948)

company would. It would have no monopoly.

According to Alice Jacobs, van der Bijl's biographer, writing in 1948, the Eskom plan "raised storms of criticism and opposition. . . . How the skeptical on-lookers smirked. . . . 'How,' they asked, 'could any undertaking deprived of the profit-making incentive of all business, be run efficiently?' However, it did work—so well that it is now held up as an example of how public utility companies should be run."

In 1932, after ten years, van der Bijl saw a need to raise capital for extensions to Eskom's operations, and to repay a loan of £8 million from the government Treasury at the "high" rate of interest of 5%, with which Eskom had begun. "He decided not to

follow the usual precedent of floating all large loans overseas, but to try to raise the money in South Africa." A loan of £500,000 was immediately oversubscribed. The next year, he sought £2,500,000; again it was oversubscribed. The next funding, in 1934, was for £6,750,000 (Jacobs describes it as a loan in one place, but as a stock issue in another). "The banks refused to underwrite the whole amount," but "within forty hours the whole . . . was fully subscribed."

After fourteen years of operation, Eskom had cut the average price of electricity in half.

Iron and Steel

The Iron and Steel Industrial Corporation (Iskor) was created by law in 1928, and as with Eskom, van der Bijl was named chairman. The new creation unleashed the fury of the British-steered press. Smuts objected that Iskor would compete with private enterprise, that is, with companies in Britain, since private iron and steel producing enterprises in South Africa were small affairs. But the issue of competition was a diversion. Smuts was responding to British direction coming from a higher level than British business: Steel means power, the power to produce one's own turbines, rails, and railroad cars. At this very time—the late 1920s—H.G. Wells, the British empire toady, wrote that there was

3. Bruwer's earlier doctoral dissertation at Harvard, *Protection in South Africa*, had been rejected because he insisted on including a chapter on "South Africa and Imperial Preference" that was highly unflattering to the Empire. In it, he refers to Prof. W.J. Ashley as British Prime Minister Joseph Chamberlain's "right-hand man" and quotes from Ashley's *The Tariff Problem* (1903), Chapter 5: "It will be necessary to get a gradually increasing amount of the Colonial trade away from other nations, or the Colonies will drift further and further away from Great Britain and become economically independent." Bruwer's chapter ends with this parting shot: "Would that the labor of economists since the advent of Adam Smith were not in vain, and that the 'enlightened' twentieth century has something better in store for the world than a revival of mercantilism." A.J. Bruwer, *Protection in South Africa* (Stellenbosch: Pro Ecclesia, 1923), pp. 148, 170. Upon rejection, Bruwer packed up and went to the University of Pennsylvania, where his dissertation was approved.

entirely too much steel being produced in the world, as part of his rant against industrialization.

One of the arguments against a steel industry in South Africa was that there was no market for it. That is exactly what is said today against building additional nuclear power plants—that, according to expert projections, the energy will not be needed for thirty years or more. Similarly it is argued today that there is not enough demand to justify building a steel mill in Limpopo province, just when all Africa is gaining a new optimism that a continental network of railroads can be built, and many new dams and hydroelectric plants.

The enemies of rising living standards for the mass of humanity, know very well that it is precisely the steel mill, the power plant, and the railroad that stimulate productive activity. Use the steel to build a transcontinental railroad, and new cities will spring up along the way. Provide cheap and abundant electricity, and new efficiencies emerge to free the worker and the business

Van der Bijl on Industrialization

These quotations, illustrating the tendency of H.J. van der Bijl's thought, are from Alice Jacobs' *South African Heritage: A Biography of H.J. van der Bijl*.

"In matters of science and engineering, as in music, which is the only language of all nations—we move in a sphere far above that which teaches us to recognize lines of demarcation between different members of the great human family."

—*At the First World Power Conference (electric power) in London in 1924*

"This [the city of Vanderbijlpark] must not be just an Iscor preserve; it must be an industrial city providing avenues of employment as the gold mines dwindle. That is the only solution to the poverty of the majority of our people—it is the only sure way of raising the standard of living for all—black and white." He called it his "city of ideas and ideals."

—*Jacobs reports that van der Bijl often said this in 1947-1948*

enterprise to address new challenges, to perform higher tasks.

When a new campaign against Iscor was launched in 1935, just a year after Iscor was fully up and running, van der Bijl hit back in an address to the Association of Certificated Mechanical and Electrical Engineers, in October:

I wish to refer particularly to the recent frantic outburst of criticism in part of our press against Iscor, against me and against our Government. I say part of our press, because not all the newspapers associate themselves with the rubbish that has recently been published about this great undertaking. . . .

When one reads some of the criticisms . . . one is led to believe that the people of South Africa are against the undertaking to establish an iron and steel industry, and the man in the street is led to believe that the undertaking has turned out a fiasco. . . . Every department is producing considerably in excess of the guaranteed capacity of the plant. We are selling all the steel we can make, and since last July we have been making substantial profits. . . . Several important subsidiary industries have been established as a direct result of the advent of Iscor—and this is only a beginning. . . . In the face of all this, one must still breathe this discouraging atmosphere. . . .

But the hostile campaign continued. Academic economists "assailed the 'hopelessly uneconomic' performance of Iscor in its early years." Yet, in 1940, Iscor produced 320,000 tons of steel and met about one-third of the country's requirements; by 1950, this had increased to over 600,000 tons, almost half of the steel used in South Africa.

Whatever the wishes of the British empire, a prodigious number of South Africans of British heritage worked to make Eskom, Iscor, and related enterprises a success.

World War II

Jan Smuts was returned to power just four days after Hitler invaded Poland on September 1, 1939. Smuts was now the head of the United Party, the then dominant, British-steered party that included most South Africans of British heritage and most of those Afrikaners who did not aggressively put Afrikaner nationalism first. He was willing to bring South Africa into the war on the side of the Allies, and was tasked by the British to quickly gear up the South African economy for war production. That economic system so feared and de-

spised by the British in peace time was suddenly in favor, now that Britain was at war.

Smuts called upon van der Bijl to urgently organize the country's industrial production for war, making him Director-General of War Supplies. "His powers were enormous—far greater than those of a Cabinet Minister," according to G.R.D. Harding, the Eskom general manager. What van der Bijl accomplished during the war was a giant step forward in South Africa's industrialization, and he looked forward to maintaining this momentum after the war.

Van der Bijl and Smuts were not operating in a political vacuum. The larger picture was one of tension between British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt, between the imperial idea and the hatred of empire. Each had a plan for the postwar world.

Roosevelt and South Africa

During the war, there were intense fights between Churchill and Roosevelt as to what would be the future postwar order. Roosevelt insisted that the United States was not fighting the war to protect the British, French, and Dutch empires, and that after the war, those empires must be dismantled. Churchill would become furious and insist that he had not been made Prime Minister to preside over the dissolution of the "Empire." These fights were reported by Elliott Roosevelt in his book about his father, *As He Saw It* (1946). As his father's *aide de camp*, he had been a witness.

Roosevelt recognized the importance of South Africa for his postwar vision of dismantling the empires. He corresponded with Smuts, and he was especially interested in the work of van der Bijl. In 1936, while in Washington for the world conference on electric power, van der Bijl was invited to make a presentation to Roosevelt. According to van der Bijl's biographer:

"At the time, he was not unduly impressed with the Roosevelt administration or the 'New Deal.' However, when he actually met the President, he felt to his amazement that he was in the presence of the most powerful personality he had ever encountered. He has never forgotten this experience, and FDR still stands out as quite the most impressive figure in the galaxy of famous people he has met."⁴

4. Alice Jacobs, *South African Heritage: A Biography of H.J. van der Bijl*, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa: Shuter & Shooter, 1948.

Years later, during the war, Roosevelt recommended to Smuts that van der Bijl be made chairman of the Joint Supply Council that Roosevelt wanted formed to decide what U.S. mining machinery was essential for South Africa to import during wartime, to keep the economy going.

Van der Bijl's speech during a tour of munitions factories in October 1940 was in step with Roosevelt's thinking. He spoke of the insight provided by the war experience, insight "into our great industrial potential—a potential which, if suitably guided, can be used as a powerful driving force in the period of economic reconstruction which must follow the war." He said that "South Africa can, with its own brains and materials, embark upon a new era of industrial development that will have a profound effect in increasing the affluence of our people and raising the standard of living of the poorer sections of the community."

Van der Bijl, like Roosevelt, was aware that this was not the outlook of the British Empire. In 1945, we find this sentence—with its scarcely concealed reference to the empire—in the middle of a discourse by van der Bijl on the importance of industrialization for peace and order in the world: "With each nation developing along the lines most suited to it *and with no nation endeavoring to prevent the peaceful industrial development of other nations*, the stable world economy emerging will, in my opinion, be the strongest factor in helping to ensure a peaceful and progressive world . . ." (emphasis added).

III. To Reverse Industrialization

During the war, Black workers were needed as never before—industry required the urbanization and participation of more and more of the Black population. There was a 72% increase in the numbers of Black workers in private manufacturing between 1939 and 1946, as 134,000 African workers entered industrial employment.

These workers sought better pay and better conditions, and there were strikes, especially when the end of the war was on the horizon. When the war ended in 1945, the workers' self-confidence and militance did not just evaporate. Many Blacks had served in the war far from home, and had gained greater self assurance and knowledge of the wider world. There were more strikes. Smuts would not yield on any matter of sub-

stance, and the strikes were put down. But it was clear that relations between black workers and white bosses in the postwar world would never be the same as before.

The British Empire was dead set against the continued industrialization of South Africa, which the empire itself had encouraged during the war. The British policy was that South Africa should scale back its industry.⁵ But the wartime industrial build-up still had momentum and domestic political support after the war. There were also large settler communities in Kenya and Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) that were potentially dangerous to the empire. These white settler communities, largely of British heritage, had political opposition elements of an anti-imperial nature, as in the case of the Afrikaners in South Africa, with thoughts of becoming independent, and they looked to South Africa for leadership. They, too, had industrialization on their minds.

Posing as the Friend of the African

The British oligarchs had already decided that—to stop this industrialization impulse and maintain their imperial mastery—they would now pose as the friend of the Black African throughout Sub-Saharan Africa, against the European colonial settlers, even those of British descent. The decision to pose as “the friend of the African” was already evident, long before World War II, in London’s response to a threatened coup by the colonial settlers in Kenya against the British governor in 1923, over racial policy, which the governor was attempting to soften only slightly. The Kenya White Paper of 1923 warned the settlers:

Primarily Kenya is an African territory, and His Majesty’s Government think it necessary definitely to record their considered opinion that the interests of the African natives must be para-



Outeniqua George Railway Museum

The British royal family tours South Africa, 1947. At left, Jan Smuts and King George VI.

mount, and that if and when those interests and the interests of the immigrant races should conflict, the former should prevail.⁶

That was a statement of how the British government would play the game of empire in Africa, and dealing with South Africa would be the cornerstone. But the implementation of such a momentous change of appearances—from a colonial oppressor into “friend of the African”—was not like crossing the street. Each settler community would have to be dealt with according to its own circumstances.

Putting the National Party in Power

For South Africa, London’s decision was to do the seemingly unthinkable—to throw the 1948 election to the National Party, the country’s strongest party of Afrikaner nationalism. Let the Afrikaner nationalists face the rising anger and determination of the Blacks! Then “we British” can side with the Blacks to crush forever the independent power of Afrikaner nationalism and industrialism.

The evidence that the British threw the 1948 election to the National Party is clear enough, contrary to endless British propaganda.

Smuts and his United Party were the premier instruments of the British empire in South Africa, and South Africa was of strategic importance to the empire in

5. This policy was expressed, for example, in the publication of Lord Milner’s group, *The Round Table Journal: A Quarterly Review of the Politics of the British Empire*, issue of December 1945.

6. Carroll Quigley, *Tragedy and Hope, A History of the World in Our Time*, 1966.

multiple ways. In 1947 the British royal family made its first-ever state visit to South Africa, which began when the royal family disembarked at Cape Town on Feb. 17, fifteen months before the election. They criss-crossed the country, visiting every city and many towns for almost ten weeks, with Smuts almost always at their side. It was implicitly a campaign tour for Smuts' United Party, and King George made every effort to make a show of friendship to the Afrikaners, which was what Smuts needed. But it was also an opportunity for the monarchy to gather intelligence and evaluate the state of the country.

After the departure of the royal visitors, Smuts began to show pessimism about the election for the first time, privately, to just two or three correspondents. He wrote, "All other governments have fallen in this post-war time—why should I not fall too?" In the ensuing months Smuts conducted a non-campaign. The inaction and lack of energy were apparent to his closest associates. He scarcely allowed his party to fight for victory, keeping it in a defensive position. Younger MPs and activists in the party could not understand it.

A key element in Smuts' sabotage of his own party was his refusal to make a justifiable change in the electoral law that many of the party's leaders believed would have guaranteed his victory. The Constitution of 1910—the deal between British and Afrikaners that locked Blacks out—gave a handicap to rural voters. Afrikaners were largely rural, and British settlers were largely urban. The roads were poor in 1910, and rural settlers were at a disadvantage in getting to the polls, so the law weighted rural votes to compensate. But by the end of the war, the network of roads was well developed. A change in the law was justified, and Smuts had a large enough majority in the House of Assembly to make the change.

Smuts did not significantly mobilize his party for the election until the last 30 days before election day, May 26, while the National Party was on a roll for 18 months. He had a weak network of volunteers and few professionals, while the National Party's organizers were on fire, using their noxious *swart gevaar* (black



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An Eskom Talent and Skills representative explains the selection criteria for Eskom bursaries at Amajuna District Career Symposium, KwaZulu-Natal, in August 2017.

threat) propaganda. In the election, if all votes had been counted without weighting, there would have been 80 seats in Parliament for Smuts, and 60 for D.F. Malan of the National Party, with 10 seats going to others who were largely pro-Smuts. But Smuts had lost.

The mighty Smuts—hero of the British empire, member of Churchill's War Cabinet, and an architect of the United Nations—had been discarded like a chewing gum wrapper.

Van der Bijl was a more serious threat. He was diagnosed with rectal cancer in 1948, but his doctors were apparently slow in deciding on the exploratory operation that led to the diagnosis. After the exploratory operation, they wrote that the cancer was inoperable. They didn't tell him that, but allowed him to believe he was recovering, thereby forestalling any initiative on his part for a second opinion. He died in December at the age of 61.

There are decades more to this story, including a setback for the empire when the momentum of van der Bijl's work led to South Africa's decision to build the first nuclear power plant on the African continent. There were further setbacks when Nelson Mandela twice forestalled a bloody race war that the empire would have found more than acceptable.

It was this industrialization process that, contrary to the intentions of its organizers, led to the liberation of Black South Africa. As industrialization proceeded, and [more and more Africans were drawn into the large town-](#)



Eskom

The Koeberg nuclear power plant near Cape Town.

ships around the cities, new levels of education and literacy were required of them for their work roles in industrial society. The Black lawyers, schoolteachers, clerks, and shop stewards were essential to achieving a revolution on the political plane without a bloodbath.

Rethink the Empire's Narrative

For centuries, the British Empire's policy toward Africa was one of overt white "race patriotism," with British cabinet ministers referring routinely to Blacks as "niggers" in their correspondence. By the end of 1948, the empire had jettisoned the public expression of its racial policies while handing power to the National Party, whose racial policies were identical in most respects to those the British had previously enforced, but more systematic and even more cruel. This shift positioned the empire's rulers in London to place the blame for racism exclusively on the white Africans. No longer would the British work through a white government in South Africa.

The empire set up the National Party in power to oppose it and crush it, playing the role of "the friend of the African." The decolonization process was a way of perpetuating colonial rule by other means, and for Africa, the process was led by Andrew Cohen, who became assistant secretary in the Colonial Office in 1943. Decades later, one of Sir Andrew's close associates in the Colonial Office, Ronald Robinson, explained it: "So-called

decolonization was also a question of prolonging the empire. Decolonization was never intended in economic and diplomatic terms. Cohen was the first to realize that an alliance with black nationalism was the key to *prolonging colonial rule.*"

Incredibly, London became the world headquarters of the struggle against apartheid, and South Africans in exile flocked to London. The British let the world know that *they* were the beneficent ones, even while they continued to exercise extensive remote control over the National Party government through control

over the economy and the judiciary. They wanted to put Blacks in power from very un-African motives—from imperial motives—in the belief that Blacks would be more malleable, more easily controlled, than the white settlers, saying in effect, "Let them have political power. We will retain hegemony in the economic and propaganda spheres."

Yes, Black South Africans, the British empire was there to help you. When you or your parents—on your way into exile—crossed into Botswana at night, those nice chaps from MI6 were there to see you safely to town or to an encampment. They helped you—but with a different agenda. When Nelson Mandela was released in 1990 and it became possible to think of a negotiated transition, Her Majesty's High Commissioner, Sir Robin Renwick, had already reached out to you. He is now Lord Renwick, vice chairman of JP Morgan Cazenove, with multiple mining interests. But he reached out on behalf of imperial interests. The British say they have no permanent friends, only permanent interests. For once, the truth! The preservation of empire is the first and foremost of those interests.

Rethink the false narrative that the British have offered to keep you on their side. Do not allow their self-serving fiction to color the decisions you make today.

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