

APARTHEID HAS FALLEN

No-it hasn't. At least, white rule hasn't yet come to an end in reality. However, it has come to an end in fiction on several occasions.

The first of these, "When Smuts Goes", written by South African Professor Arthur Keppel-Jones in 1947, was one of a genre - the Awful Warning novel. It can be termed a work of political prophecy with a touch of satire-the latter coming in giving characters names like F.O. Wallah (a diplomat), Rodwield (ex-schoolmaster), Mampara (Zulu for fool), Knowall (a Professor), Nietskenner (Afrikaans for nothing-knower), and Cringe (a-how shall I put it? - flexible politician). A history of South Africa from 1952 to 2020, it featured a Nationalist Government under General Jukskei (an Afrikaner game) coming to power in 1952-followed by the consequences, basically apartheid* only a lot worse. Racism plus anti-Semitism, rigid job reservation, a crackdown on British immigration, banning of opposition parties starting with the Communists, the end of non-white representation, deliberate electoral gerrymandering, the unions crippled, release of men jailed for treason during World War Two, wartime detainees coming to power, mass emigration by the Government's opponents, segregated and state-dominated white education, the United Party too divided to offer any effective opposition-most of this sounds only too familiar. This culminates in a split in the Nationalist Party, with an extreme Right-wing breakaway group, the Christian National Republican Party, sweeping to power and imposing Press censorship, subordinating the Courts, and instituting a totalitarian Afrikaner Republic. The world's attention to South Africa grows, sanctions make things worse, a native revolt is brutally suppressed-although the Zulus succeed in breaking away with British and US support. South Africa is eventually goaded into solemnly declaring war on Britain in 1977 & crushed after heavy fighting. A succession of Black rulers follow-the moderate Mfundisi (meaning teacher), the corrupt Funamali (want-money), and the military dictator Bulalazonke (kill-all), culminating in a plague sweeping South Africa-a South Africa in an awful state, with no "work ethic", plagued by inefficiency and illiteracy in contrast to its well-governed neighbours. The Afrikaners are blamed for degrading and keeping down the non-Whites and dragging themselves down with them.

The book has become a legend in South African progressive circles; the writer was indeed a friend of Smuts' liberal deputy Hofmeyr. One might say that it might have come true but was averted-one hopes! There is, incidentally, an interesting vignette at the end, with some exiled Afrikaners in Argentina urging its President to invade the Falklands!

"The Day Natal Took Off", written in 1960 by Anthony Delius, was a highly relevant satire-there was much talk of Natal declaring UDI if South Africa became a Republic. Set in the mid-seventies, it deals humorously with Natal's secession and the aftermath-how to

* *Interpretingly, the word isn't used!*

control the pace of change and maintain order, especially with serious shortages of civil servants, police, and armed forces. First the Zulus, then the Afrikaners of Northern Natal, then Durban declare their own UDIs-then South Africa breaks up into a "White Congo", with an independent "Transvaal National Socialist Republic" allied with Russia and ruled by Prime Minister "Granite" and a projected South African Federation, including the Orange Free State as an "Afrikaner Israel", Black states the Sotho-South Nguni Republic, Zululand-Swaziland, Bechuana-Ovambo, and the multi-racial Good Hope and East Cape Republics, Outer Natal, Southern Rhodesia, and Mozambique. Something like this could still happen, if not on these precise lines; personally, I'd regard it as a good idea.

"Verwoerd-The End", by ex-Labour MP Gary Allighan late in 1961 (it refers to the "Republic referendum" of May that year.), could be termed the one in which sanctions worked; covering the years from 1962 to 1987, a trade boycott of South Africa, met by an attempted counter-boycott, results in economic catastrophe and Verwoerd's replacement by Johannes Van Wyk, an independent economist and "authoritarian democrat", a kind of civilian de Gaulle, whose Coalition Government partitions South Africa, forming a Federal Government with separate White and Black states, a system best summarised as "apartheid with justice". The "Bantu state" (sanctions hadn't been accompanied by any Black uprising), described as a "rough horseshoe shape" running from Northern Natal through Transvaal into the Orange Free State to the frontiers of South West Africa, intriguingly rejects one-man one vote for a qualified franchise and takes some 15 years to "get going" in a gradual transition; the ANC and PAC are only mentioned as Communist-backed infiltrators being fought off.

White South Africa, on the other hand pursues policies of compulsory bilingualism, permanent consensus Government, mass white immigration, and full voting rights for Coloureds and, it seems, Asians. Van Wyk sweeps aside apartheid laws, concludes a permanent electora pact between the two main parties, and rules until 1987, presiding over a Golden age for a South Africa devoid of racial problems, with a non-socialist Labour Party as the main Opposition, an overwhelming white majority in 1987, and it, the Bantu State, and South-West Africa formed into the United South African Republics(USAR).

It's obviously a case of wish-fulfilment on the part of the author-hence the over-optimistic tone of the book, e.g. sanctions not being accompanied by any black uprising. As for the proposals-then, they might have worked; Vorster or Botha might have succeeded with them - de Klerk would probably find that it was now too late. Ironically, Dr. Treurnicht would probably now endorse these proposals, which he'd have fought up hill and down dale at the time.

The fourth, "The Azanian Assignment" by Iain Findlay in 1978, is essentially a political/action thriller (undoubtedly written with Hollywood in mind) with politics in the "background"; set in 1981, it features a South Africa under President Botha, who'd succeeded in 1979 rather than 1978. The loss of Namibia and generally deteriorating situation had polarised South Africa; the HNP had won 45 seats, the Nats only 68, the United and Progressive parties 72 between them forcing the Nats into a coalition with the HNP. The Black revolution in 1981 - trained commandos springing Mandele (sic) and Sobukwe from Robben Island, a Black General Strike, attacks from outside by an Azanian People's Revolutionary Army accompanied by armies from all South Africa's neighbours - is preceded by a series of spectacular commando raids and followed by an HNP takeover; the novel ends with the new Government, unable to both expel all Blacks to the homelands and fight off the invasion, opting for withdrawal to the Cape and holding it as a "White homeland".

It's a well-written novel, described by R.W.Johnson as "bloodcurdling" but unrealistic; I would concur. The idea of South Africa collapsing in the space of a few days - or even standing back while revolutionary armies prepared to invade - can best be described as a revolutionary's fantasy; ironically, the revolutionaries seem to reject the ANC as too moderate. It would make a good film and Findlay should have written a sequel; in practice, many White South Africans do favour withdrawing to a kind of "laager-state" but seem to have the old Boer Republics in mind. Incidentally - Findlay's depiction of members of BOSS and the HNP doesn't seem to ring true; the former are shown as psychotic racists rather than the calm analytical types a secret service would surely prefer, the latter has certainly not been funded by millionaire womanisers.

So, to sum up - Keppel-Jones was partly right - fortunately, the Nats came to a semblance of their senses; Allighan's proposals would probably have worked if they'd been applied at the time; Delius'idea of a Southern African Federation can't be dismissed out of hand; Findlay seems to have been a thriller-writer with no political axe to grind.

I wonder - how many Nationalist politicians read any of the books? Did Keppel-Jones perhaps indirectly influence Vorster and/or Botha?