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From Apartheid to Democracy: The Emergence of Ultraconservatives in Ermelo 1960-1994

Carolien Greyling

Thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Masters in History at the University of the Witwatersrand Johannesburg, South Africa 2017



Construction at the Pet Dam in Ermelo. Found in Ermelo Municipal Archives, Ermelo.
White management inspecting black labour busy with construction work at the Pet Dam at the dawn of the industrial and economic development which came to define the region.

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Finally, this thesis is dedicated to Zahn Gower and all other support staff at WITS University, a group of people who are often ignored and seldom appreciated.

DECLARATION:

I declare that this thesis is my unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Master of Arts at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination in any other university.

Carolien Greyling

---------- day of ----------, 2017

Abstract

This dissertation examines and explains the underlying social, ideological and economic reasons why the white population of Ermelo gravitated to a politics of the extreme in the years 1960-1994. In contrast to commonly held views that the growth of ultraconservatism correlates neatly with economic trends this dissertation argues that ultraconservatism in Ermelo emerged due to varying complex and at times contradictory reasons. By examining white society at the time of conquest in the 1860s, it is argued that whites in this area formed racist views from the time of settlement as the commercial success of their newly acquired farmland was dependant on the exploitation of cheap black labour. The focus of this study is however, on the emergence of new ultraconservative political parties from the late 1960s to the early 1990s which formed in reaction to National Party and local political dynamics. It is argued that the bedrock of conservative views was moulded during the time of initial settlement, however, for various reasons throughout the years these views were held and propagated. This study is a local history of ultraconservatism in Ermelo and illuminates particularities in the town's white politics within the context of profound changes in Afrikaner politics nationally. White working-class workers and farmers supported ultraconservatives while white business people supported the NP and their politics of reform. This dissertation made use of public and private archives as well as life history interviews with various long-time residents of the town. It is argued that although capitalism was the main motivator for ultraconservative views and politics in the mid 1800s, it was also capitalism that brought about reform and created a platform for negotiation in the 1990s when ultraconservative political parties threatened the peaceful transition into a democratic South Africa.

Contents

Introduction	1
Aims and Objectives	2
Aim	2
Rationale	2
Literature Review	3
Methodology	22
Primary sources	22
Oral History	23
Interview Guideline Questions	25
Chapter Outline	26
Definition of Key Terms	30
Chapter 1	
Introduction	35
Conquest and White Settlement	36
Early Development of Ermelo	44
Urban Segregation	45
The South African War	47
Post-war and the Rise of Nationalism	52
Indian Population and Limiting of Business Rights	56
Chapter 2	
Emergence of New Political Conservatives: the Verkramptes in Ermelo 1960-1980	63
Emerging Wealth Gap Within Ermelo and the Urbanisation of Ermelo	67
Industrialisation	71
Decline of the DRC and Changing Character of the Town	73
Afrikaner Working Class and the Conservatives	75
Broedertwis	81
Hertzog's Role in the Establishment of the HNP	83
White Workers Support for the HNP	87
NP Policies Limiting Business Rights of Indians	90
Chapter 3	
The Conservative Party Years: 1980-1990	92
Dominance of the Conservative Party and Decline of White Power	92
Farmers and Conservatives	93
The White Working Class	96
The CP and Local Politics	99
"A Vote for the CP is a Vote Against the NP"	105
Town Council Becomes Conservative	106
Informal Councils and Strategy to Keep Segregation	108
Deindustrialisation in the Late 1980s	109
Chapter 4	
1990s: The Suicide Option	113
National Context: Reform	114
The Local: Ermelo and the 'Suicide Option'	117
Utraconservative Governing of Ermelo and White Society's Reactions	118
Resistance from Civics	123

Conservative Reactions to Protest and Democracy 128
Third Force Violence 130
Community Reactions from the 'White Side of Town' 134
A Reluctant Democracy 139
Conclusion 144
Bibliography 149

Introduction

This dissertation explains the underlying causes and trends in the development of ultraconservative politics in the town of Ermelo. In contrast to a commonly-held view[1] that the growth of ultraconservatism may be correlated neatly to economic trends, it is argued that in Ermelo this political phenomenon had deep historical roots and gained traction among particular socio-economic groups in the town at different times. Thus, it is important to understand the politics of the early Trekboer settlements in this part of the country in the 19thcentury, which was characterised by land dispossession, the establishment of a racial hierarchy and the creation of a system of forced black labour on the farms and mines. The Dutch Reform Church played a crucial role in providing biblical justification for the enforcement of a racialized master and servant relationship. This system was augmented during British rule.

The primary focus of this study is rooted in electoral politics and the emergence of new political parties from the late 1960s to the early 1990s, which articulated versions of ultraconservative politics in response to national political developments and local economic and political dynamics. Therefore, this is a local study of ultraconservatism in Ermelo highlights the particularities of the town's white politics in a context of profound changes in Afrikaner politics. In the 1970s, the Herstigte Nasionale Party (HNP) was the dominant party in ultraconservative politics in Ermelo, primarily because its founding leader – Albert Herzog – hailed from the town. From the early 1980s it was eclipsed by the Conservative Party (CP), which also achieved much greater electoral success than its predecessor. White workers and farmers formed a strong support base for ultraconservatives while the business community largely remained loyal to the National Party (NP).

Ermelo was one of several Conservative-controlled towns in the early 1990s that doggedly adhered to apartheid laws, even as the system was clearly in its dying days.

[1] "Trump, Brexit, and the Rise of Populism: Economic Have-Nots and Cultural Backlash" Faculty Research Working Paper Series Harvard Kennedy School, Inglehart, R.F., Norris, P, August 2016, accessed at: file:///C:/Users/Carolien/Downloads/RWP16-026_Norris.pdf on 19/09/2017

In the post 1990 period the conservatives first went on what could be termed a 'suicide mission'. The town council opted to rather exhaust the town's funds and attempt to destroy black leadership in Wesselton, the neighbouring township, but in the end chose to enter the transitional town council. This indicates that the whites of Ermelo chose their economic survival over their cultural privileges.

In short, ultraconservatism in Ermelo in apartheid South Africa occurred for complex reasons and in differing time periods in its history.

Aims and Objectives

Aim

This dissertation explains the reasons many Afrikaners living in the area of Ermelo during the period from the 1960s-1990s gravitated towards ultraconservative politics. The origins, character and evolution of these political movements are subjected to analyses. Links between economic and social changes and shifting political alignment towards ultraconservative political groups and leaders are explored. Patterns of wealth distribution, social status, migration and employment in the white community in Ermelo between 1960 and 1994 are examined to explain the underlying causes of ultraconservatism in Ermelo. This dissertation determines and explains the local issues that contributed to white residents, especially Afrikaners, supporting ultraconservative politics.

Rationale

There is a dearth of research on the evolution of conservative politics in small towns in South Africa. The town was and remains an important centre in the former Eastern Transvaal, now Mpumalanga. It serves as a centre of commerce, transport and industry. Ermelo is representative of the former Eastern Transvaal and illuminates the socio-economic realities as well as the ideology of the region. The town has a conservative political base and the process of integration in this area is slow. Whites in this area had developed a mistrust of the government as early as the late 1960s and

turned to ultraconservative politics. During this time the town was often referred to as the 'spiritual heartland' of the *verkramptes* in newspaper articles. The reasons for the slow pace of integration, distrust of the current democracy, and ultraconservative ideology are lodged in the past realities and grievances.

Literature Review

In the literature on ultraconservative ideology in South Africa there seems to be two broad categories in terms of approach. One tries to explain the motivation for turning to the politics of the ultraconservative within the Afrikaner community in terms of ethnicity, which is rooted in the liberal analysis of apartheid, for example the O'Dowd thesis which is discussed later. This perspective was most popular in the 1960s and early 1970s. It states that Afrikaners became conservative because of their history and culture, and that apartheid was the natural result of Afrikaner and Dutch history in South Africa. This approach assumes that Afrikaners who support ultraconservatism do so in an attempt to preserve their culture and would do so even at the risk of losing their material wealth or being faced with a race war in South Africa. The other broad category of literature is rooted in the radical/revisionist/neo-Marxist school of the 1970s and 1980s[2]. This perspective explains what has been termed Afrikanerdom and ideology in terms of a reaction to social, economic and political developments in South Africa at various moments in time. It assumes that some whites made extreme and racist political decisions in reaction to a fear that they would essentially lose their jobs, homes and money. Dan O'Meara appears to be the most prolific writer of nationalism in these terms. In the late 1980s and 1990s scholars of nationalism and Afrikaner ideology have branched out in many other various perspectives, which mostly, grew from social history. More nuanced and localised approaches have led to historians such as Herman Giliomee[3] embracing both the materialist and ethnic perspectives in his inquires as to the roots of apartheid.

[2] See for example: *Volkskapitalisme, Class Capitol and Ideology in the Development of Afrikaner Nationalism, 1934 – 1948*, O'Meara, D., Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1983
[3] Giliomee, H., *The Afrikaner a Biography of a People*, Tafelberg, 2003

The first publication featuring Afrikaner history is by Rev. S. J. du Toit, who incidentally started the organisation that later become the Broederbond. The publication was called *Die Geskiedenis van Ons Land in die Taal van Ons Volk* (The History of Our Country in the Language of our Nation), and it was published in 1877. This was in stark contrast to the existing history, written by colonial officials from the perspective of colonising imperialism.[4]

Afrikaner nationalist history from the 1930s focuses on the South African War (1899 – 1902) and the great trek (1835 – 1846). This history was written in response to the colonial school of history, which was typically paternalistic and patronising towards Afrikaner people. Nationalist history did not acknowledge black participation and was often narrow with a narrative centred on the victimhood of the Boer.

A leading early historian of Afrikaner nationalist history was Gustav Preller. Preller 're-discovered' the great trek and with a great deal of government support brought the event into the hearts and minds of Afrikaners in the 1930s, 1940s, 1950s and even 1960s. [5] The emotive writing of Preller forms a substantial part of the collective memory that constitutes Afrikaner Nationalism. His work includes: *Piet Retief*, 1906, *Voortrekkermense*, 1918-38, six volumes of documents about the Great Trek, *Oorlogsoormag*, 1923, study of the Anglo-Boer War, *Andries Pretorius*, 1938, *Ons Paro*ol, 1938. Preller wrote that the unconscious will of a collective of people was the main motivator for the Great Trek[6] and the view that Boer migration into the interior of South Africa brought civilisation can be found in Chapter one of the biography of Andries Pretorius.

In the 1960s liberal analysts saw apartheid as an alien imposition on what they perceived as the colour blind logic of the free market. In the 1960s and 1970s analysts understood nationalism in terms of Clifford Geertz's "celebrated claims for the

[4] "Afrikaner Nationalist Historiography and the Policy of Apartheid", L. M. Thompson, The Journal of African History, Vol. 3, No. 1 (1962), pp. 125-141,Cambridge University Press Stable
[5] "Trends in South African historiography and the present state of Historical research", Visser, W., Paper presented at the Nordic Africa Institute, Uppsala, Sweden, 23 September 2004
[6] Prelle, G, Andries Pretorius, (no details of publisher), 1937, pp. 1 – 11.

primacy of what he termed primordial attachments"[7], thus pinning much of the blame of institutionalised racism on what they considered ethnic nationalism. Nationalism was seen as a monolith which developed organically. As the limitations imposed on the market by racist laws grew, they predicted apartheid would fall. This way of understanding apartheid is articulated in the O'Dowd thesis.[8] It is based on Walt Rostow's *Stages of Economic Growth*[9]. It states that if capitalism takes its natural course it would bring about the end of apartheid. Instead capitalism was seen as a solution to apartheid rather than the cause. Apartheid was understood to be the result of the racism of Afrikaner nationalists.

Out of the liberal tradition grew the 'ethnic debate'. Some scholars[10] have argued that apartheid and its racist policies was a product of Afrikaner history. Perhaps certain events such as the great trek, the Battle of Blood River and the South African War created a 'laager mentality' in Afrikaner identity that has led to apartheid. The most influential piece of liberal writing on South African history was the *Oxford History of South Africa* (1969; 1971), edited by Leonard Thompson and Monica Wilson. Much of the later revisionist school was critical of this view of South African history.

In the framework of the liberal school, Merle Lipton (1988) defends capitalism; she argues that there had been a long history of opposition to apartheid by "important sections in capital to some major apartheid policies".[11] She holds that although pressure on government was often limited they were overall in favour of less racist policies. "Wittingly or not, capitalists create political possibilities."[12] According to

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[7] Volkskapitalisme, Class Capital and Ideology in the Development of Afrikaner Nationalism, 1934 – 1948, O'Meara, D., p. 421 Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1983

[8] The O'Dowd thesis and the triumph of democratic capitalism, O'Dowd, M.C., The Free Market Foundation, 1996

[9] Rostow, W. W. "The Five Stages of Growth-A Summary". *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960.

[10] Other authors writing in the Liberal Tradition are: *Apartheid: a socio-economic exposition of the origin and development of the apartheid idea*, by N. J. Rhoodie and H. J. Venter (1959), The origins of the race attitudes of the Afrikaner people are described in I. D. Macrone, *Race Attitudes in South Africa* (London, I937).

[11] "Capitalism and Apartheid", Lipton, M., in South Africa in Question, ed. Lonsdale, J., published by the University of Cambridge African Studies Centre, 1988, p. 62

[12] Ibid, p. 63

Lipton we should see that some capitalists were progressive while others were not, and the latter were in favour of racist policies.[13]

Lipton hypothesises that "The 1948 election secured priority for Afrikaners, the less well off whites. By the mid-1960s their preferential policies, the rapid industrialisation nurtured by Afrikaner Nationalists, generated their own contradictions, leading to the emergence of Afrikaans capitalists who came to share the interests of other employers in eroding apartheid. Their conflict with white labour transformed into a bureaucracy and tore apart the Afrikaner alliance. However, the strength of ethnic ties, the institutionalisation of apartheid, and time lags before changes in interests fed into a political system - as well as deep divisions among the opposition – enabled Afrikaner political establishment to maintain its power base and hegemony"[14] This study shows parallels with the choices of capitalists and business owners in the community of Ermelo. It shows that in the late 1980s and early 1990s some Afrikaner business owners in Ermelo took part in, and actively promoted, an integrated chamber of commerce. This was during the time that civic organisations were campaigning for a boycott of white business. It was vital for white business owners to promote integration in order to secure a black consumer base in the future. At the same time some Afrikaners (also business owners) involved in the CP run local municipality during the early 1990s actively opposed integration, favouring their ethnic survival over material gain.

Du Toit and Van Rooyen present similar arguments:[15] that, broadly speaking, an ultraconservative ideology was constructed in the wake of the devastation of the South African War, which serves as an explanation for its mistrust of liberal whites. Both scholars rationalise support for ultraconservative supporters with an Afrikaner ethnic perspective. However, according to these scholars material gains were placed in a subordinate position for ultraconservative Afrikaners when making political decisions. Van Rooyen, states that the deep divisions that developed between the

[13] "Capitalism and Apartheid", Lipton, M., in South Africa in Question, ed. Lonsdale, J., University of Cambridge African Studies Centre, 1988, p. 63
[14] Ibid 365
[15] "The Far Right in Current South African Politics", Brian M. du Toit, The Journal of Modern African Studies, Vol. 29, No. 4, Dec 1991, pp. 627 - 667

bittereinder[16] and the *henshoppers*[17] over whether or not to continue the South African War was the origin of the right-wing perspective. He states that these divisions exist in the Afrikaner community to this day. "This led to two conflicting conceptions of Afrikaner identity, with the one side in favour of an exclusive definition of Afrikaner nationalism, while the other promoted a broader white, and in recent years, an exclusive territorially based non-racial South African nationalism."[18]

These deep divisions of which Van Rooyen speaks took shape in later years in the *verligte* and *verkrampte* divide within the NP of the late 1960s. *Die Verkrampte Aanslag* by H.N.P. Serfontein serves as an excellent explanation of the *verkrampte* political movement during the early 1970s. Serfontein argues that in the early 1960s it became clear that there was a conservative group of politicians within the NP, who were primarily based in Pretoria, which acted as a separate and more conservative entity within the ruling party. With time, Serfontein goes on to explain, it became clear that this group consisted of a wide range of political, cultural and church leaders who were pushing a 'rightwing'[19] and 'ultra rightwing'[20] agenda. The *verkrampte* group would form the ultraconservative Herstigte Nasionale Party (HNP) in 1969. Serfontein describes the split as "a fight between the outward looking and the isolationist Afrikaner; between the *verligte* and *verkrampte*; between the Afrikaner with belief in himself, who doesn't fear working with, having contact with and confronting the Englishman, other groups and the outside world, and the Afrikaner who is fearful and who withdraws from everything and everyone"[21] It does not, however, provide analyses beyond that time or a social history, a gap which this study fills.[22]

There are parallels in the way in which the *bittereinders* and later *verkramptes* viewed cooperation with English speaking South Africans as a threat to Afrikaans ethnic survival. Similarly there are parallels in ways that *henshoppers* and later *verligtes* saw

[16] A term to describe Boers who fought the South African War until the end.
[17] A term to describe Boers who surrendered to British forces.
[18] *Hard Right, The New White Power in South Africa*, Van Rooyen, J.I.B., I.B. Tauris, London, 1994, p. 8
[19] *Die Verkrampte Aanslag*, J.H.P. Serfontein, Cape Town, Human & Rousseau, 1970, p 7
[20] Ibid 7
[21] Ibid 1970p 15 (Quote translated by Carolien Greyling)
[22] Ibid

cooperation with English speaking South Africans and the international community as a positive step towards Afrikaner ethnic survival. However, the circumstances leading directly to the Ermelo white community's drift towards ultraconservatism are far more localised and immediate.

By the late 1960s a paradigm shift began to occur in the way South African scholars viewed history. A debate around apartheid occurred in reaction to the liberal analysis. Marxists, in opposition to liberals, saw apartheid as a symptom of South African capitalism rather than a system originating from pre-industrial times.[23] The neo-Marxist view was in opposition to the liberal notion that capitalism would eventually lead to the end of institutionalised racial oppression and subordination. The neo-Marxist school saw the central dynamic of apartheid as a system to control and assure a low-cost source of labour to the benefit of mine owners and big business.[24] As this school of thought developed, more attention was paid to how ordinary people influenced their societies and communities.[25]

Du Toit states that most support for the HNP in the early 1970s came from a white mining working-class base. He also attributes the CP's success of the 1980s to its regional focus. This would explain why Ermelo, as a mining centre, displayed considerable support for the HNP in the 1970s and later much support for CP in the 1980s.

In *The Rise of Afrikanerdom, Power Apartheid and the Civil Religion (1975*) T. Dunbar Moodie states that "If Max Weber had shown the importance of Puritanism in the rise of the development of capitalism, why should I not show the importance of Afrikaner Calvinism in the development of apartheid policy and, of course, the outcome of the 1948 election."[26] Moodie uses 'civil religion' to describe how a pan-Afrikaner identity and Afrikaner unity came about. He has constructed an ideal type,

[23] "Roots of Radicalism", Bozzoli B., Delius P., in History from South Africa, ed: Brown, J. Temple University Press, Philadelphia, 1991
[24] "The Shaping of Apartheid: Contradiction, Continuity and Popular Struggle" in Apartheid's Genesis, P. Bonner, Delius, D. Posel, Ravan Press, 1993
[25] History From South Africa, Preface by Brown J., Manning P., Shapiro K., Wiener J., Temple University Press, Philadelphia, 1991
[26] *The Rise of Afrikanerdom, Power Apartheid and the Civil Religion*,T. Dunbar Moodie, University of California Press, 1975 p. 39

which is informed by 'civil religion'. Civil religion is a construction made up of all of the factors that constitute Afrikaner culture. This includes, but is not restricted to, a certain victim-orientated history, fear of the black population, pioneer mentality originating from the great trek, Calvinism, as well as Afrikaner historical heroes such as Paul Kruger. Moodie is careful not to elevate the ideal type to the status of doctrine. Ideal types change and are moulded throughout time. "If the sociologist does not alter his typological concepts in the course of his analysis the concepts are liable to distort the reality which he seeks to understand. The ideal types should not become stereotypes." [27]

Moodie argues that cultural factors were more important than race or class in the rise of Afrikanerdom. He, however, affirms that race and class were not irrelevant "but rather that these as exigencies were mediated through Afrikaner cultural consciousness"[28].

Another view that took off in the 1970s was associated with the theories of Nicos Poulantzas. Apartheid was understood as a tool used by a power bloc.[29] It explained apartheid as an alliance between the Afrikaans working class and the petit bourgeois class. It explained why Afrikaner workers had not identified with black workers but rather with a ruling intelligentsia. The Poulantzian view was particularly useful in the interpretation of Afrikaner nationalism.

Afrikaner ethnicity was emphasised and class consciousness was undermined among the urban poor by the conservative breakaway group the Reunited National Party or Herstigte Nasionale Party under D.F. Malan in the 1948 election. Dan O'Meara states that the NP victory in 1948 has been explained as 'monolithic Afrikanerdom' that

[27] *The Rise of Afrikanerdom, Power Apartheid and the Civil Religion*, T. Dunbar Moodie, University of California Press, 1975 p. x
[28] *Rise of Afrikanerdom as an Immanent Critique of Marx's Theory of Social Class,* T. Dunbar Moodie, University of the Witwatersrand, African Studies Institute, African Studies Seminar Paper, Presented in 1975, accessed at: http://wiredspace.wits.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10539 /10258/ISS-479.pdf?sequence=1 on 16/09/2017
[29] *Volkskapitalisme, Class Capitol and Ideology in the Development of Afrikaner Nationalism, 1934 – 1948*, O'Meara, D., Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1983

came into power.[30] Contrary to Moodie, O'Meara explains that this view is incorrect. He states that an all pervasive, monolithic Afrikaner Nationalism is a myth: "…a mystic cultural unity which allegedly establishes a priori bonds between all members of the volk, welding them into an overriding organic political and ideological unity; whatever their socio-economic position. In this myth, class cleavages are irrelevant for social action as the ideological vision common to all Afrikaners, derived from Calvinist theology, unites them into a much broader social unity"[31]. In his article "The Christian Nationalist assault on white trade unionism" (1978), the Poulantzian view is convincingly presented. O'Meara details how the NP intelligentsia managed to capture the hearts and minds of Afrikaner workers, or in other words, that a class alliance was formed between working class Afrikaners and upper-class Afrikaners.[32] A critically important group was the Afrikaner miners, According to O'Meara the manipulation of the Afrikaans worker, rather than, some 'mystic unity of the *volk*' more adequately manages to explain Christian-national trade unionism.[33]

The ethnic alliance scenario can also be seen in Hyslop's work on the 1922 miners strike. Hyslop states that the most important moment in South African labour history came in the 1922 white miner's strike, "when the strikers (literally) marched under the banner ''Workers of the World, Fight and Unite for a White South Africa".[34] The infamous 1922 miners strike occurred because mine owners wanted to pay white miners a much lower wage, similar to that of their black counterparts. The strike serves as an example of the origins of 'white socialism' in South Africa. The battle started in 1902 when permanent organisation of white mine workers arose in South Africa with the aim of racialised job protectionism. That battle climaxed with the 1922 strikes, which saw white workers form military commandos that fought against the state for wages of white labourers to remain higher than those of their black

[30] *Volkskapitalisme, Class Capitol and Ideology in the Development of Afrikaner Nationalism, 1934 – 1948*, O'Meara, D., Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1983
[31] "White Trade Unionism, Political Power and Afrikaner Nationalism", Dan O'Meara, Essays in South African Labour History, Ravan, 1978, p 178.
[32] "Analysing Afrikaner Nationalism: The Christian-National Assault on White Trade Unionism in South Africa", 1934-1948, Dan O'Meara, African Affairs, Vol. 77, No. 306 (Jan., 1978), pp. 45-72, Published by: Oxford University Press on behalf of The Royal African Society.
[33] Ibid p. 52
[34] "The imperial working class makes itself 'white': White labourism in Britain, Australia, and South Africa before the First World War", Hyslop, J. Journal of Historical Sociology, 12(4), 1999, pp. 402

colleges. “In South Africa labour movements propagated that they were not being treated as sufficiently ‘white’ by the upper classes, and fought to obtain this racial status for themselves”.[35] This reading of the 1922 strike bares similarities of the origins of racism in the Ermelo area. In Ermelo, as in Johannesburg in 1922, white workers enjoyed an elevated lifestyle which was hinged on the subordinate position of black workers.

Alexander, however, argues the institutionalisation of a dual working class, one where whites were paid more than blacks and maintained higher status was a product of British imperialist victory in the South African War. Labour shortages during the war coupled with an increased emphasis on maximising production enabled unions to secure improvements for their members. “White labour had made significant gains on several fronts in the gold-mining industry at this time: their trade unions were officially recognized; their shaft stewards' movement burgeoned; remuneration drifted ever higher. With men joining the army and with the spurt in manufacturing occasioned by wartime conditions, the mine owners found themselves facing a tight labour market and a militant white work-force. At the same time, the owners' imperial patriotism and their need to maintain production during the war made them hesitant to bear down upon their white employees.”[36]

When the war ended, Krikler says, the gold mines were facing a profitability crises. “Their plan was to reduce white wages, terminate certain paid holidays, impose a new flexibility upon labour and, most controversially, replace a few thousand whites in semi-skilled positions with black workers at far lower wages.”[37]

Krikler agrees with Hyslop that 1922 was a turning point in South African History. “It was then that the principal industrial region of the country - the Witwatersrand (or Rand) - was rocked by a strike of 20,000 white workers on the gold mines. Given that

[35] The imperial working class makes itself ‘white’: White labourism in Britain, Australia, and South Africa before the First World War”, Hyslop, J. Journal of Historical Sociology, 12(4), 1999, pp. 402
[36] “The commandos: the army of white labour in South Africa.”, Krikler, J., Past & present, (163), 1999 pp.204
[37] The imperial working class makes itself ‘white’: White labourism in Britain, Australia, and South Africa before the First World War”, Hyslop, J. Journal of Historical Sociology, 12(4), 1999, pp. 402
[37] “The commandos: the army of white labour in South Africa.”, Krikler, J., Past & present, (163), 1999 pp.205

there were 180,000 black mineworkers on the goldmines at this time, the strikers constituted but 10 per cent of the work-force, and yet their militancy and organization were so extraordinary that they were able to offer a revolutionary threat to the government of the day."[38] The events of 1922 meant that white workers particularly were seen to have power, and that their demands to be privileged over black workers was to continue well into the 1970s.

During the early 1970s divisions in Afrikaner voting patterns developed. Some communities (such as Ermelo) were starting to support ultraconservative splinter political organisations (the HNP in the 1970s and later the CP in the late 1980s) that were at odds with the NP's national development plans. O'Meara states that much work has been done to explain the specific working-class conditions of Afrikaners of the 1940s. Their situation as newly urbanised poor and exploitable made them vulnerable to nationalist mobilisation. The votes of white miners were of critical importance, and Ermelo as a centre of coal mining was certainly a miner's constituency. Not much has been done to explain the emergence of ultraconservatism in the 1970s in these terms. As a key town in the emergence of ultraconservatism, Ermelo serves as an important case study. One could surmise towns with a similar social and economic structure such as Carletonville, Klerksdorp as well as West Rand towns would display similar patterns to this study.

O'Meara also states a lack of research conducted in localising nationalism. "Afrikaner nationalism is a historically specific, often surprisingly flexible, always highly fractured, and differentiated response of various identifiable and changing class forces – in alliance – to the contradictions and struggles generated by the development of capitalism in South Africa."[39] My study on Ermelo will attempt to fill the gaps in understanding the flexible nature of nationalism.

Whereas O'Meara explains that the depoliticisation of class interests amongst white workers through the seizure of key unions by a political elite was an essential step to a

[38] "The commandos: the army of white labour in South Africa.", Krikler, J., Past & present, (163), 1999 pp.204 - 205
[39] *Volkskapitalisme, Class Capital and Ideology in the Development of Afrikaner Nationalism, 1934 – 1948*, O'Meara, D. Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1983, p. 16

Nationalist victory[40] Lewis[41] and Mawbey[42] argue that the Garment Workers Union (GMW) was able to foster class consciousness between white Afrikaner, coloured and black workers under the leadership of Solly Sachs at precisely the time when major unions, such as the Mine Workers Union, were being manipulated by a political elite to foster an ethnic alliance between working class white Afrikaners and elite Afrikaners. Both Mawbey and Lewis attribute this to the leadership of Solly Sachs as well as the structure of the Union.

The MWU was corrupt and unresponsive to their members while the GMU had been successful in defending their members. Adding to that Mawbey goes on to explain that where as the MWU's strategy to protect members from salary undercutting was to further entrench the colour bar, whereas the GWU had another approach. "For the Afrikaner women of the Garment Union the threat [of undercutting of wages] was posed in a very different way. The formative years of the thirties were barely passed and they had only just achieved tenable conditions when in the forties the accelerated development of the war period led to an influx of African women into the industry. Being themselves at most only slightly more skilled than the new recruits the threat was particularly acute especially as employers assumed that African women did not qualify as 'employees' under the Industrial Conciliation Act and paid them much lower wages. In this situation the Garment Union's strategy was to enter legal proceedings to procure African women rights under the Act"[43].

Lewis adds that the greatest achievement of Sachs and the GMU was to preserve class alliance among union members during an ideological and political assault on unions by Nationalists. Sachs stressed the primacy of the class based alliance while recognising the importance of the cultural aspirations of his Afrikaans members. For example, the union encouraged its Afrikaans members to take part in the 1938

[40] *White Trade Unionism and Afrikaner Nationalism,* O'Meara, D., Essays in South African Labour History, ed Eddie Webster, Ravan Labour Studies 1, 1978, p164
[41] *Solly Sachs and the Garment Workers Union,* Lewis, J. Essays in South African Labour History, ed Eddie Webster, Ravan Labour Studies 1, 1978, p 181
[42] *Afrikaner Women of the Garment Union During the Thirties and Forties ,*Mawbey, J. Essays in South African Labour History, ed Eddie Webster, Ravan Labour Studies 1, 1978, p 192
[43] Ibid p 192

Voortrekker celebrations. By endorsing cultural dignity of Afrikaners the GWU was able to appeal to both ethnic ties as well as nurture a class alliance[44].

With the dominance of social history in the 1980s a vacuum in theory occurred. Structuralist approaches proved inadequate in answering many questions concerning internal conflicts in classes. An overemphasis in theory over determined historical analysis. The early neo-Marxist debates were criticised for being reductionist and functionalist.[45] Historical materialism developed into more nuanced approaches. Social historians combined revisionist, localist, and Africanist concerns.[46] The adoption of the 'view from below' brought a new, fresh perspective that distanced itself from idealised methodology. Within this tradition history was often used as an intellectual tool for resistance against apartheid. For these reasons discussions on Afrikaner nationalism did not take centre stage during these years. Instead, most writing focused on how liberation and workers' movements affected the state.

Giliomee argues that Marxism and materialism do not offer a sufficiently adequate framework to understand the splits in Afrikaner ethnic identities in the 1970s and 1980s[47]. According to Giliomee the core of the debate in the 1970s was conflicting ideas about how the state should regard Afrikaners. *Verligtes,* or NP supporters, wanted to develop the country while *verkramptes*, or conservatives, wanted the state to develop Afrikaners and Afrikaans culture at the expense of economic development. Giliomee states that there is no evidence to support the claim that working-class white Afrikaners and poor farmers supported the conservatives rather than wealthy businessmen.[48] Giliomee maintains that the support for ultraconservatives in the 1980s, as in the 1970s, was more about concerns of how to maintain Afrikaner power and facilitate Afrikaner survival.[49]

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[44] *Solly Sachs and the Garment Workers Union,* Lewis, J. Essays in South African Labour History, ed Eddie Webster, Ravan Labour Studies 1, 1978, p 185
[45] *Volkskapitalisme, Class Capitol and Ideology in the Development of Afrikaner Nationalism, 1934 – 1948*, O'Meara, D., Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1983
[46] "Roots of Radicalism", Bozzoli B., Delius P., in History from South Africa, ed: Brown, J. Temple University Press, Philadelphia, 1991
[47] "Boeretwis: Intra-Afrikaner Conflicts in the Transition from Apartheid", Giliomee, H., African Affairs, Vol. 91, No. 364, July 1992
[48] Ibid
[49] Ibid

In his later publication *The Afrikaners, Biography of a People,* Giliomee provides a similar explanation. Giliomee also argues that Moodie's approach, maintaining that Dutch Calvinism is a driving force behind apartheid, is not adequate. "The Afrikaner nationalists applied apartheid with a mixture of political zeal and ideological bigotry that went beyond their economic interests. The explanation lies not – at least principally – in their Calvinist beliefs or racial obsessions but in their pre-occupation with ethnic survival."[50]

Literature of the late 1980s and 1990s acknowledged that nationalism was not an organic development but rather a response to historical circumstances. The artificial nature and political agenda behind the way in which Afrikaner history was presented, and how this motivated Afrikaners to vote for nationalist leaders, assumed a focus.

Isabel Hofmeyr (1988) decodes the cultural fabrications of Afrikaner nationalism by looking at the life and work of Gustav Preller. As the man responsible for shaping many of the myths of Afrikaner nationalism, his life and work are analysed to better understand the construction and nature of Afrikaner nationalism. Hofmeyr also explores the ways in which these narratives were formed and produced for mass consumption.[51] Similarly Irma Du Plessis has shown how Afrikaner nationalist identity has been propagated and disseminated in popular children's fiction[52].

Historical writing in the 1980s and 1990s was also influenced by a diversity of scholarship. New literature was addressing social and cultural questions, identity, gender and ethnicity.[53] Ethnicity was thus re-introduced in the debate around Afrikaner nationalism, as a purely class and economic movement debate had been criticised as being reductionist. From this tradition grew a rich body of literature highlighting the role of the *volksmoeder* and Afrikaner women in nationalism.

[50] The Afrikaner a Biography of a People, Tafelberg, Giliomee, H., 2003, p xviii
[51] "Popularizing History: the Case of Gustav Preller", Isabel Hofmeyr (1988), The Journal of African History, 29, pp. 521-535. See also Hofmeyer "Building a Nation from Words" (1984)
[52] "Narrating the" nation": cultural production, political community and young Afrikaans readers" Du Plessis, I. (Doctoral dissertation, University of Pretoria), 2005.
[53] "Does Social History have a Future? The ending of Apartheid and recent trends in South African Historiography", Colbey A., Journal of Southern African Studies , 27:3, pp. 613-625, 2001, Routledge,

Women's role in the construction of nationalism as well as their resistance to it, was being acknowledged.

Marijke du Toit states that "Afrikaans women have been portrayed by historians and in monuments as passive, confined to domestic interiors and as passive receptors of a nationalism constructed by men."[54] Du Toit goes on to explain explicitly, in her study of the *Afrikaanse Christelike Vroue Vereniging* (Afrikaans women's Christian association) (ACVV) how women were actually active participants in the construction of the "*volksmoeder*". However

Much of the radical history of the 1970s and 1980s was written in response to and in protest of the apartheid state. Neo-Marxist scholarship often aligned itself with the anti-Apartheid Movements. After the fall of apartheid, history writing in South Africa lacks a clear academic agenda. [55] According to Leggasick and Minkley, after the fall of apartheid South African history did not experience a sudden 'rupture' or 'explosion' as in de-colonised African states where African history grew tremendously after independence.[56]

Similarly, social history has come under attack by post-modernist scholars. The foundations of knowledge have come under question. "Knowledge of the old dispensation was about transforming the object of its attention (women, classes, the oppressed). The political aim was clear. Knowledge of the new dispensation is seen to reveal the operations of power, and not itself to confer power through access to objective truth. The political aim is now no longer clear."[57] Post-modern thought critiques the founding categories of social history, above all class.[58]

T.M. Renick (1991), for instance, takes a post-structuralist view of the emergence of the ethical beliefs of Afrikaners in South Africa. Renick argues that Dutch Calvinism

[54] "Women, Welfare, and the Nurturing of Afrikaner Nationalism: A Social History of the Afrikaanse Christelike Vroue Vereniging, c 1870-1939", Marijke du Toit, Thesis presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, in the Department of History University of Cape Town, March 1996
[55] Colbey A., 2001; Nuttle & Wright, 1998; Joyce, P. 1995, Visser, W., 2004, Stolten, H.E.J., 2003,
[56] "Current trends in the production of South African history", Legassick, M., & Minkley, G. (1998), Alternation, *5*(1), pp. 98-129.
[57] "The End of Social History?", P. Joyce, Social History, 1 January 1995, vol. 20, no 1, pp. 73–74
[58] Ibid p. 82

provided and continues to provide the moral grounding for Afrikaner beliefs and policies. He also argues that it will provide South Africa with its most viable hope for peaceful change.[59] Renick argues that most of the attempts at understanding the ethical reasoning behind racial segregationist policy have been secular and mostly Marxist. According to him this is problematic. Renick does not dismiss secular attempts at understanding Afrikaner ethics but rather attempts to balance his argument between varying ways of perceiving history. According to Renick, Afrikaner nationalist history is rationalised by selecting historical events and viewing them through the writings of Calvin. This forms the basis of the justification of apartheid.

Jackie Grobler in his articles on the Battle of Blood River (2010) as well as his article on the murder of Piet Retief (2011) successfully investigates historical events that have previously been obscured for the purposes of advancing the Afrikaner nationalist project, in a new light.[60] Grobler analyses the different ways in which people and communities have understood this history, and how these ways of understanding these events have changed over the generations. For example, earlier Afrikaans authors, such as Preller[61], interpreted the battle of Blood River as a triumph of Christianity over barbarism - a perspective that has now mostly vanished from Afrikaans studies. Grobler however, includes a discussion of how the political affiliations of communities affect their history. He provides us with both Afrikaner and Zulu perspectives in search of a better understanding and by doing so takes a empathetic view for the position in which Dingane found himself in.

Although social history has received a lot of criticism in South Africa since the end of apartheid, there have nonetheless been a number of important and interesting projects that have developed from the tradition. In South Africa studies on gender, heritage,

[59] "From Apartheid to Liberation: Calvinism and the Shaping of Ethical Belief in South Africa", Renick T. M., Sociological Focus, Vol. 24, No. 2, Special Issue: The Sociology of Morals (May 1991), pp. 129-143.
[60] See "Afrikaner and Zulu perspectives on the Battle of Blood River, 16 December 1838", Grobler, J, Tydskrif vir Geesteswetenskappe, Jaargang 50 No. 3: September 2010 And "The Retief Massacre of 6 February 1838 revisited" Grobler, J, Historia 56, 2, November 2011, pp. 113–132
[61] *Voortrekkermense VI*., Preller, G.S. , Nas. Pers Bpk., Cape Town. p. 8, (1920–1938)

cultural politics, oral history, post-colonial history, and post-nationalist historiography have produced interesting research.[62]

Local histories have emerged from the social history school. Grand narratives are rejected as they "obscure the complexities of, and specifications of local communities."[63] Historically, local histories have been commissioned by municipal authorities and focused on the history and development of white towns. Many of the local publications available (Such as Ermelo 1880-1980) tend to view development through a particular white nationalistic lens which lacks critical analysis, ignores tensions in society and does not acknowledge black participants in history. Many local histories have focused on restoring black participation in South African history. This dissertation will focus on revisiting white history within a post-apartheid context. It will also challenge the meta-narrative of Afrikaner nationalism by highlighting the alternative way in which Afrikaners in Ermelo viewed themselves in contrast to the dominant national perspective.

Studies on whiteness also emerged in 1990s. Among the work that has moved in this direction is on the construction of Afrikaner nationalism, particularly focussing on women (Although here the emphasis is on 'Afrikanerness' rather than 'whiteness') by Dan O'Meara, Isabel Hofmeyr, Elsabé Brink, Marijke du Toit.[64]

Whiteness studies allow scholars to consider what it means to be white in the new South Africa. Writers such as Steyn,[65] Dolby[66] and Vestergaard[67] argue that the current moment in South Africa presents Afrikanerdom with a crisis similar to the

[62] "Trends in South African historiography and the present state of historical research", Visser, W., Paper presented at the Nordic Africa Institute, Uppsala, Sweden, 23 September 2004.
[63] "The Place of 'The Local' in History Workshop's Local History", Nieftagodien, N., African Studies, Vol. 69, No1, Routledge, April 2010
[64] "Current trends in the production of South African history", Legassick, M., & Minkley, G., (1998) Alternation, International Journal for the study of Southern African Literature and Languages *5*(1), pp. 98-129, p. 21
[65] "Rehabilitating a whiteness disgraced: Afrikaner white talk in post-apartheid South Africa", Melissa E. Steyn (2004): Communication Quarterly, 52:2, pp. 143-169
[66] "White Fright: The politics of white youth identity in South Africa", Nadine Dolby (2001): British Journal of Sociology of Education, 22:1, pp. 5-17
[67] "Who's Got the Map? The Negotiation of Afrikaner Identities in Post-Apartheid South Africa", Mads Vestergaard, Daedalus, Vol. 130, No. 1, "Why South Africa Matters" (Winter, 2001), pp. 19-44, Published by: The MIT Press on behalf of American Academy of Arts & Sciences Stable

time when nationalist identity was conceived. Icons and histories have to be re-defined in order to fit into post-apartheid South Africa. "Democracy has dismantled many of the organisations and values that defined Afrikaners and gave Afrikaners preferential treatment. Conservative Christian values have been replaced with more liberal legislation."[68] This has had a profound impact on the collective Afrikaner identity. Vestergaard states that heterodox Afrikaners are re-defining their symbols in terms of democracy while orthodox Afrikaners cling on the symbols of apartheid.

However, there has been some scholarly criticism of whiteness studies. Andrew Harman puts forward that over the last decade the study of whiteness has grown in both cultural and academic settings and has attracted hostility from left wing scholars as it has failed to take issues of class into account.[69] Frankenberg[70] cautions that engaging with the construct of whiteness critically, may do the opposite of what is expected and can re-centre whiteness rather than destabilise it. West & Schmidt have criticised whiteness studies in South Africa for fuelling identity politics that places whiteness at the forefront and tends to exclude the black perspective[71]. For these reasons is it important for scholars to be wary when engaging with notions of whiteness.

Whiteness studies are, however, important for understanding the political choices of Afrikaners in Ermelo. Vestergaard's position that the advent of Democracy presented Afrikaners with a crises similar to that when nationalist identity was created is useful in understanding political choices that the white community of Ermelo made. Much of this thesis in made up of oral history interviews to understand how Afrikaner whites understood their identity in a rapidly changing South Africa. Literature on Ermelo in this regards is somewhat limited and a social history on the area is, to my knowledge, none existent.

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[68] "Who's Got the Map? The Negotiation of Afrikaner Identities in Post-Apartheid South Africa" Mads Vestergaard, Daedalus , Vol. 130, No. 1, Why South Africa Matters (Winter, 2001), pp. 19-44, The MIT Press on behalf of American Academy of Arts & Sciences Stable

[69] "The rise and fall of whiteness studies", A Hartman, Race & Class, Vol 46, Issue 2, 2016, pp. 22-3

[70] "Displacing whiteness: Essays in social and cultural criticism", Frankenberg, Ruth, ed. Duke University Press, 1997.

[71]. Whiteness studies in South Africa: a South African perspective: preface. West, M. and Schmidt, M.J., 2010 English in Africa, 37(1), pp.9-13.

Ermelo 1880 – 1980[72] offers some background information about the town's economy and some prominent families and political personalities. It fails to provide a detailed social history of the town, and there is little mention of the political battles that occurred here between *verligtes* and *verkramptes*. The *Eeufees-gedenkboek van die Gemeente van Ermelo, 1870-1970*[73] (Centenary commemorative volume of the congregation of Ermelo 1870-1970) is informative about the early history of white settlement, as well as some information regarding the development of the Dutch Reformed Church. Furthermore, "*Die geskiedenis van Ermelo vanaf sy stigting*"[74] (History of Ermelo from its establishment) an MA thesis completed in 1948 by J.D.R. Opperman serves as a good reference and background to the history of the town but, again, no complex insights or theoretical discourse is present. In all of these publications the issues of racism, nationalism, apartheid and ultraconservative political groups are hardly, if at all, mentioned. The thesis covers the period of the early 1800s – 1920s and contains interesting and insightful analyses of the structural developments of the town as well as very interviews with local tribal authorities who were expelled from the land by the first Boer settlers.

Stolten (2003) states that "There is a lot of emphasis being placed by the ANC government on the elimination of white racism, as there should be of course. However, it is hardly possible to eliminate racism without eliminating the material conditions that underpin racism."[75] He goes on to say that in order to address eliminate racism one must understand the economic and social conditions that cause racism. This study does just that by taking an in depth look at the motivation for ultraconservatism.

In his study on the motivation for the Jonathan Hyslop argues that Afrikaner nationalism has been far more focused on short-term and local concerns. When viewing local concerns it is far easier to understand how and why the ultraconservative faction grew. Hyslop focuses his study on Krugersdorp, which,

[72] *Ermelo 1880 – 1980*, Lombard, R.T.J., Municipality of Ermelo, 1980
[73] *Eeufees-gedenkboek van die Gemeente Ermelo, 1870-1970,* Kriel, E. C., Ermelo, Hoëveld Pers, 1970
[74] "Die geskiedenis van Ermelo vanaf sy stigting tot 1902", J.D.R. Opperman, MA Thesis presented to the History Department of the University of Pretoria, 1948
[75] "History writing and history education in post-apartheid South Africa", Stolten H. E., Paper for NETREED Conference, 8-10 December 2003, p. 18

according to him, fostered a large number of CP and Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging (AWB) supporters for particular economic and political reasons[76] and that the white (mainly Afrikaner) community there reacted to acute political and financial pressure. Hyslop argues that the community of Krugersdorp turned to conservative and racist political groups as they represented a South Africa in which whites were guaranteed to be political winners. In the rapidly changing political climate of the 1980s and 1990s, where the economic, social and political pressures of transition in Krugersdorp were particularly harsh, residents made extreme and racially charged political decisions. However, when pushed to the edge and faced with a possible race war, residents made the pragmatic choice to support democracy. Supporting democracy for them meant choosing material benefits (even though at a loss) over their ethnicity and ideology.[77] Hyslop's argument, it will be shown has a particular relevance for understanding developments in Ermelo. Like in Krugersdorp, the residents of Ermelo experienced severe financial stress at the turn of Apartheid. The closure of coal mines (which were the back bone of the town) meant that the economy of the town decreased dramatically. This happened right at the time when segregation laws were repealed. Conservative groups took advantage of the situation and gained much support from the white community by promising to 'keep the tow white' and prioritise the economic interests of working class whites and farmers.

In this thesis political decisions in Ermelo will be considered in conjunction to socio-economic realities of the time, in line with O'Meara's argument in *Volkskapitalisme, Class Capital and Ideology in the Development of Afrikaner Nationalism.*[78] It will pay careful attention to the ways in which working class whites were influenced to support ultraconservatism by a local political elite, much like in the 1948 election. However, the ethnic argument which Moodie propagates in *The Rise of Afrikanerdom,*

[76] According to Hyslop, many of the residents of Krugersdorp had invested their pension funds into purchasing property in the area. When a squatter camp sprang up close to their community property values decreased dramatically and in turn had a profoundly negative effect on their life savings. This motivated the community to turn to groups like the AWB who were advocating for the violent removal of the squatters.

[77] "Problems of Explanation in the Study of Afrikaner Nationalism: A Case Study of the West Rand", Hyslop, J., Journal of Southern African Studies, Volume 22, no. 3, September 1996

[78] Volkskapitalisme, Class Capital and Ideology in the Development of Afrikaner Nationalism, 1934 – 1948, O'Meara, D., p. 421 Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1983

Power Aparthied and the Civil Religion[79] will not be neglected completely; many in Ermelo voted for and supported ultraconservatives, not for material gain and benefits, but out of a deep-seated loyalty towards an Afrikaner cause. Similarly this thesis dissertation draws from Giliomee's hypothesis that ideology and racist beliefs of Apartheid were motivated by Afrikaners' pre-occupation with ethnic survival[80]. Lipton argues that capitalist interests brought about the end of Apartheid as large corporations could no longer make a profit if the restrictive social laws that prohibited the black workforce from occupying skilled positions continued[81]. As will be shown, in Ermelo business owners of all races were on the forefront of integration efforts. This dissertation borrows from Lipton's argument to explain why capitalists were in favour of reform. This research will also draw on whiteness studies in order to better understand the identity of this community. Hyslop's study on Krugersdorp[82] will be considered as it shows that Afrikaner Nationalism is focused on short term local concern, quite contrary to national developments.

Methodology

Hyslop's study focuses on a specific community. It acknowledges the flexibility of nationalism. My study on Ermelo will be similar in this respect. I will also pay great attention to the narratives of individuals. Oral research will inform me on why individuals made problematic political choices. What were the economic factors and situations in their lives that contributed to their ideology and political choices? What has informed them about their culture and how do they negotiate this in a democratic South Africa? Oral history methods will be used as interviews with individuals who lived through these times might offer a fresh perspective.

Primary Sources

[79] The Rise of Afrikanerdom, Power Apartheid and the Civil Religion, T. Dunbar Moodie, University of California Press, 1975
[80] The Afrikaners, H. Giliomee, Tafelberg, 2003
[81] "Capitalism and Apartheid: South Africa, 1910-1986", Lipton, M. David Phillip Publisher, 1985, Cape Town
[82] "Problems of Explanation in the Study of Afrikaner Nationalism: A Case Study of the West Rand", Hyslop, J., Journal of Southern African Studies, Volume 22, no. 3, September 1996

Some public archives provided fundamentally important documents while it was not possible to access others. Local municipal archives in the Ermelo municipality had many very important documents relating to the transition period as well as development of the town. Town council minutes from the period directly after the South African War were particularly illuminating. One challenge was that many of the earlier archival documents were written in Dutch. As an Afrikaans speaker I am able to understand Dutch but coming to grips with the sentence structure and vocabulary was certainly a challenge.

After contacting archivists at Solidarity (the re-branded Mynwerkersunie) I was refused or discouraged from accessing documents that would shed light on the union activities in the area. These archives would have produced more robust research. Accessing HNP and CP archives posed similar problems.

Newspaper archival sources make up a large portion of primary sources. Unfortunately, the editor of the local paper *Die Highvelder* had a specific agenda to not include articles of a political nature in the paper. Newspapers that were available in the former Transvaal were accessed for this. This posed a problem, coming from a more urban and progressive setting articles were written in a progressive light. To fully understand the motives behind ultraconservatism, consequently, it was vital to conduct life history interviews.

Oral History

Oral history is useful in collecting data and narratives from individuals whose stories have been left out of official records. In South Africa this has often been as a result of white domination that has silenced the narrative of the black resistance struggle.[83] In contemporary South Africa, African nationalist discourse has brought to light the plight of the previously ignored. Studies in oral history can be useful in collecting information about previous nationalisms, which have not taken centre stage in recent historical analyses.

[83] "Keynote Address to the 'Life After Thirty' Colloquium", Bonner, P., African Studies, Vol. 69, Number 1, April 2010.p13-27

There is however, a need to revisit white histories. One way is doing this, says Phillip Bonner, "we need to shift at least part of the focus of our attention away from the public and social lives and towards the inner private self. What some call subjectivity".[84] With the radical changes that this country underwent during the transition period many whites have 'retreated' to the private sphere. Their political choices and ideology are no longer under public discussion. Oral history can bring to light these ignored narratives.

It is important to use personal testimony and narrative in conjunction with the written record. This is necessary as personal memory can be selective and flawed.[85] It will be a challenge to weigh up where informants are distorting events in Ermelo through the lens of ultraconservative rhetoric, and where information is historically reliable. Here the use of liberal news media and official municipal archives here used for purposes of comparison. As Blee states, in cases where interviews provide a different account to written records the historian has to be careful and critical.[86]

Oral history also has the tendency to give the historian a 'banal' or 'mundane' view of the past. This may distort the scope of suffering or oppression that was the effect of these particular beliefs.[87] For this reason it is imperative to take into account the views of black residents who frequented the formerly white areas of Ermelo. It might be a challenge to make connections with people who will trust me, given my background as a white Afrikaner woman from Johannesburg.

Bonner states that often individual memory becomes merged with collective memory.[88] Individual memories can often be tainted by collective or group collective memory. This group memory is often 'borrowed' from newspaper, radio or television

[84] "Keynote Address to the 'Life After Thirty' Colloquium", Bonner, P., African Studies, Vol. 69, Number 1, April 2010.p13-27
[85] "The Pursuit of History: Aims, Methods and New Directions in the Study of Modern History", Tosh, J., Longman, 1991
[86] "Evidence, Empathy, and Ethics: Lessons from Oral Histories of the Klan", Kathleen M. Blee: The Journal of American History, Vol. 80, No. 2 (Sep., 1993), pp. 596-606, Published by: Organization of American Historians, p. 597.
[87] Ibid p 601.
[88] "Memory Apartheid and other Occluded Pasts", Bonner, P., unpublished work.

media. For this reason the oral historian requires a large and representative number of interviews to compare and contrast in order to ascertain what is borrowed memory and what is individual memory. Other ways in which individual memory might be affected include painful or shameful events and occurrences that the interviewee might want to forget or a collective past viewed through a nostalgic lens.

As an anglicised Afrikaner from Johannesburg studying at Wits, I was perceived by most as an outsider. Being an Afrikaner did not prove to be an advantage in conducting this research. Although it must be noted that some informants saw me as 'one of them' culturally, most were suspicious as I speak Afrikaans with a slight English accent. Ironically, former NP men were more reluctant to take part in an interview than former conservatives.

Questions were open-ended in order to avoid leading questions that might taint information. Interviews were conducted in Afrikaans when the informant was an Afrikaans speaker and in English when the informant was an English speaker.

Initially I contacted informants who were prominent personalities in news media via Facebook. Once initial contact was made I asked informants if they knew anyone else who would be willing to talk to me.

Oral history's strengths lie in its ability to give a 'human voice' to what could otherwise be banal historical evidence. The stories and experiences of individuals who lived through the times provide an engaging narrative. Oral history can also illuminate unrecorded events. However, personal testimony can also tend to create sympathy for informants who may or may not have committed morally questionable acts. On that note, an informant who may be ashamed of his or her actions might also provide the researcher with ambiguous or even false information. For these reason it is incredibly important to use oral testimony in conjunction with archival evidence and to maintain a critical approach to testimony.

Interview Guideline Questions:

Where are you from?
Tell me about your life?
What was Ermelo like during your time here?
Who were your local leaders?
Did you support them? Explain why?
Where did you socialise in Ermelo and tell me more about what it was like?
How did you feel about the direction in which South Africa was going as a country during the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s?
How has your life in Ermelo changed, if at all?

Chapter Outline

In chapter one the initial conquering and settlement of Trekboers in the Ermelo area is examined. Through the lens of land dispossession, racial segregation and the political economic development of the white settlers the foundation of political conservatisms was laid and deeply tied to large-scale white farmers' ability to make a profit by exploiting cheap black labour. This racialised master servant ideology proliferated, and fuelled ultraconservatism into the 1990s. The seeds of conservative ideology were planted in the ways in which initial white settlers came to take and maintain control of the land by establishing and enforcing legislation that forced blacks into labour, limited businesses of 'non-whites' – particularly Indians – and limited land purchase and restricted movement.

Through this legislation a social and racial hierarchy was firmly established and linked to the growth of agriculture and capitalist enterprise. Thus the structures of social control and economy that came to define apartheid, and later ultraconservative policies were established in the mid to late 1800s. This racial hierarchy which was linked to ways and means of profiting from the land and profiting from commercial activity was then further rooted by British control (spurred by the growth of industrialism and the gold mining industry) after the South African War.

Chapter two argues that the ultraconservative splinter party, the Herstigte Nasionale Party (Reconstituted National Party, HNP) emerged in Ermelo in very different circumstances to the 'pioneer conditions' of the 1800s'. The 1970s were a decade of immense economic prosperity and industrial expansion in Ermelo. While most residents supported the National Party (NP) of John Vorster and local authorities, a minority of white residents came to openly and ardently support the HNP splinter group for a variety of reasons. Thus, ultraconservatism cannot be explained solely in economic terms solely. Support for the HNP emerged, partly, as a result of economic and industrial growth, which attracted white workers to the town, creating a base of working-class white supporters. The ultraconservatism which came to define the town in the 1980s and 1990s can be traced to this period.

While economic and industrial growth resulted in increased wealth and opportunities for many in the town, it also meant that a white working class who was dependant on the colour bar, entered the social landscape of Ermelo. This class of whites would in later years, when their livelihoods were threatened by the lifting of the colour bar, come to support ultraconservatives such as the Conservative Party (CP) who were propagating against reform of the apartheid system. During the 1970s the white working class was growing in prevalence as a group.

Further support for the HNP was coming from residents who were unhappy that they were not benefiting from large-scale industrial investment in the town as they were not favoured Broederbond men. This support can be attributed to internal NP conflicts which led to the HNP splinter group's formation. Albert Hertzog, NP Member of Parliament (MP) for Ermelo established the HNP due to differences with the NP's national policy. His status in the town was a large contributing factor in ultraconservatism gaining a foothold in the already historically conservative town. Local politics and social attitudes did in some ways mirror national processes, but particular local changes in the economy, class structures and infrastructural development (most important of all being the development of Camden Power Station and Usutu Colliery) which occurred in the 1970s, predisposed Ermelo as a centre of ultraconservatism in the 1980s and 1990s.

Chapter three, firstly, highlights national reforms that influenced the local political and social developments in Ermelo. The introduction of the Tricameral Parliament, the outcomes of the Wiehan Commission, which lifted the colour bar, as well as the separation of church and state, were used by conservatives to stimulate a fear and reactionary radicalism amongst some whites in the town. The established conservative support base of the HNP had been normalised in the 1970s. By the end of the 1980s the CP became the main voice of conservatism[89], and became the dominant political party in the town, influencing development and ideology amongst the white section of town.

The economic prosperity of the 1970s declined dramatically by the end of the 1980s. Camden, Usutu Colliery and Ermelo Mines shut their doors and left thousands of white workers jobless. Further, the general decline of rail freight transport resulted in an economic collapse in the town of Breyten and rail workers in Ermelo also became unemployed. At this time the apartheid government drifted away from state sanctioned support for the Afrikaner working class and Afrikaner culture. In addition, the farming community suffered an economic downturn too, farming costs soared and state support for farmers declined. This occurred at the same time when some apartheid bylaws were lifted and the first signs of racial integration were seen in public hotels and restaurants since the inception of the town in the late 1800s. Nationally, as Hyslop argues[90], Afrikaners were becoming more pragmatic and open to reform, in Ermelo, however, particular economic developments resulted in Afrikaners becoming more conservative.

The cogs of history were turning and the confluence of these events, coupled with the established conservative voice in the area (that had predominantly served as a voice of dissonance during the 1970s) led to residents feeling unhappy with their perceived deteriorating surroundings, and an increased fear of an unknown future. These residents found a political home with the CP. By the 1990s the CP had won by-elections and they were in control of the town council.

[89] This shift occurred mainly due to internal political infighting.
[90] "Problems of Explanation in the Study of Afrikaner Nationalism: A Case Study of the West Rand", Hyslop, J., Journal of Southern African Studies, Volume 22, no. 3, September 1996

Chapter four dissects two opposing groups within the white population of the town and illuminates the reasons behind their political choices. It argues that capitalist interests were the main drivers for integration and a reluctant acceptance the end of the apartheid system. The establishment of an integrated Chamber of Commerce in Ermelo, which resulted in negotiation between different race groups was instrumental in different races working together during the transition between apartheid and democracy.

However, the CP controlled town council of the period before 1994 set out on what was dubbed by journalists as a 'suicide option'. Whereas many whites in South Africa were slowly starting to embrace reforms, some CP town councils were formally, and informally, enforcing apartheid style social controls. This chapter argues that CP support came largely, although not exclusively, from benefactors of state sheltered employment and the farming community. Both of these groups would have the most to lose from political reforms. Support from these groups was cemented by connections that the CP, and the HNP before them, had fostered with white unions such as the Mine Workers Union and the White Builders Union.

The splits in the Afrikaner community, that of the '*verkramptes*' and '*verligtes*', which originated in the 1970s, came to a boiling point in the town in 1990-1994. In Ermelo an economic downturn coincided with the dawn of democracy. Ultraconservatives propagated the view that the economic downturn was a result of reforms and blamed black liberation movements that were starting to come out of hiding in the township of Wesselton. After the unbanning of liberation movements it became clear the conservative municipality of Ermelo could not uphold segregation and contain the resistance movements.

After the unbanning of the liberation movements it became clear that in the event of mass action, the police force no longer had control. This led to security police fighting liberation movements 'from within' by supplying gangs linked to the Inkatha Freedom Party with weapons to wage a war internally in Wesselton. At this time there was much 'third force' violence which was supported by local government structures.

In this period there was also much violence against black residents of Wesselton, perpetrated by the ordinary white residents of Ermelo. The 1990s were turbulent and to some it seemed like a civil war was looming. The suicide option scenario meant that whites would rather forgo their lives than integrate and take part in democracy. This did not happen, however. The transitional town council was successful, and in the end the town came to take part in democracy.

Definition of Key Terms

Verlig **-** An Afrikaans term, which directly translated means enlightened. It was a term coined in this context by Willem de Klerk (editor of the Afrikaans newspaper *Die Transvaler*) to categorise Afrikaans people and politicians who sided with a progressive faction of Afrikaner society. In the 1970s the term was largely used to describe a political camp within the NP which was loyal to the then Pres. John Vorster who was pandering support for English-speaking white South Africans. This term came to be understood as a signifier of a more cosmopolitan Afrikaner, who, although still supporting apartheid and separate development, was opening up to Western internationalism**.**

Verkramp **-** An Afrikaans term which means bigoted, ultraconservative, hidebound. The term was also coined by Willem de Klerk to categorise Afrikaans people who had an ultra-conservative outlook. In the 1970s the term was largely understood to signify a political camp both within the NP and the entire HNP who supported the conservative, ethic nationalist and anti-English outlook of Albert Hertzog.

Conservative – A term that is commonly used to describe a political outlook that is adverse to change and promotes traditional social and cultural norms. Conservative is used to describe the NP *verligte* loyalists. This group, although progressive from the outlook of the repressive political landscape of apartheid South Africa, held a conservative ideology on a Western global perspective.

Ultraconservative – In this thesis this term is used to describe a group of people who hold extremely conservative right-wing values. This group is aligned with white supremacist ideals and in the context of this thesis adhere to the political and social ideology which was prevalent and propagated during the presidency of Hendrik Verwoerd. This included the HNP, CP the AWB as well as the right wing faction in

the NP. In his study of the *verligte* and *verkarmpte* split du Pisani states that the *verkrampte* group can rightly be described as ultraconservative or reactionary as they were not concerned with upholding the status quo of the existing order. Instead this group propagated for separate development as was put into practice in the 1950s.[91]

For the sake of clarity it is important to situate ultraconservative parties that were prominent in my area of focus within the political spectrum of the time. The Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging (AWB) was one of South Africa's most extreme rightwing organisations and to explain the position of the HNP and the CP I will use the AWB as the political extreme of the Apartheid era. According to Jaap Marias (leader of the HNP 1977-2000), prior to 1986, the HNP operated within the white democratic system of Aparthied. Marais considered the AWB to be a paramilitary and illegal organisation. For this reason members of the AWB could not also hold membership to the HNP. However, due to their multiple failures to win parliamentary seats the organisation, alone with the HNP aligned with other, more radical, ultra conservative splinter movements in 1986.[92]

The Conservative Party (CP) was formed in 1982 in reaction to the NP's plans for the tricameral parliament. The first leader of the CP was Dr A.P. Treurnicht who was succeeded by Dr. Ferdi Hartzenberg in 1993 after Treurnicht's death.[93]

Whereas the HNP wanted to preserve the Verwoerdian version of Aparthied the CP's focus was to advocate for the establishment of a smaller *volkstaat* in which Afrikaners would have ethnic self-determination. The CP thus applied Verwoerdian ideals to a more contemporary political situation. The CP had ties to international far-right and even neo-nazi movements. In 1991 Treurnicht met with Jean-Marine Le Pen of

[91] Johan Vorster en die Verlig Verkrampstryd, du Pisani, J.A., Universiteitsdrukkery Bloemfontien, 1990, p5
[92] Die Ideologiese Grondslae en Ontwikkeling van die Blanke Fascistiese Bewegings in Suid-Afrika, 1945-1995, M.Visser, Dissertation completed for degree of Master of Arts at the University of Pretoria, 1999, pp 182
[93] Ibid pp 184

France's rightwing Front National (FN) where Le Pen expressed support for Treurnicht's cause and his party.[94]

The CP allowed dual membership with their organisation and the AWB. Some CP MP's were active members of the AWB.[95] For this reason the CP can be considered to be more extreme than the HNP due to their involvement with the paramilitary organisation the AWB.

White –In this thesis the use of the term white is used to refer to individuals with European ancestry who in accordance with racial classifications of the time were legally classified as white.

Nationalist – The term nationalist should not be confused with the term white. The term nationalist, in this thesis particularly, refers to individuals who were loyal to the ideas of the Afrikaner nation.

The term nationalism is understood through the theoretical lens of Benedict Anderson in his influential work Imagined Communities. Anderson deconstructs the concept of the nation and outlines how it can be understood from the viewpoint of culture. He argues that 'Nationality, or, as one might prefer to put it in view of that word's multiple significations, nation-ness, as well as nationalism, are cultural artefacts of a particular kind'.[96] Anderson argues that vernacular language in print media is of particular importance when examining forms of nationalism. However nationalism cannot be understood solely through the invented world of literary texts.

Dan O'Meara elaborates on Afrikaner Nationalism: 'Christian-nationalism' or 'Afrikaner nationalism' was more than a complex intellectual-ideological framework representing certain views of the world. The terms also encompass the mass social and political movement which emerged, comprised of widely disparate groups,

[94] Die Ideologiese Grondslae en Ontwikkeling van die Blanke Fascistiese Bewegings in Suid-Afrika, 1945-1995, M.Visser, Dissertation completed for degree of Master of Arts at the University of Pretoria, 1999, pp 184
[95] Ibid pp 184
[96] "Imagined communities: Reflections on the Emergence of Nationalism"
B Anderson, 1991, New York: Verso, pp 4

mobilised through this ideology. It is not enough simply to trace the 11 literary forms of development of the ideational structure and simply assume its inherent appeal to all Afrikaans-speakers. The actual translation of such literary forms of ideology from intellectual journals and the debates of elite groups into a form of mass consciousness - the process by which the new subject was successfully interpellated - has to be investigated"[97].

Belinda Bozzoli argues that apart from actors who create communities or nations at some point communities become "manifest social entities, with important effects on class and ideological responses"[98]. Adding to this Hyslop[99] asserts that the NP of 1948-1970 constructed a stable social order dependant on a racist modern state. For the success of the project 'a specific kind of subjectivity was required amongst whites, comprising a non-reflexive submission to authority'. The NP achieved this by the 1960s.

Similarly, O'Meara affirms that during the 1930s Afrikaner intellectuals created the ideology of Afrikaner nationalism on a literary level. This ideology had not yet reached the majority of Afrikaners. Intellectual and ideological debate succeeded in building a new concept, a united Afrikaner volk, yet the reality on the ground was one of class, cultural and political divisions[100].

Isabel Hofmeyer[101] explains how this elite idea seeped through to the lower classes through her study on the development of literary production in Afrikaans (which is discusses earlier). She explains the links between language, class and nationalism in her examination of Afrikaans language movement in 1902-1920 timeframe. Lou-

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97 "Volkskapitalisme, Class Capitol and Ideology in the Development of Afrikaner Nationalism, 1934-1948", O'Meara D. 1983, Johannesburg: Ravan Press, pp 74

98 "Class, community, and conflict: South African perspectives" (Vol. 3). Bozzoli, B. ed.1987 Ravan Pr of South Africa pp7-8

99 "Why did Apartheid's supporters capitulate?'Whiteness', class and consumption in urban South Africa, 1985–1995", J Hyslop, Society in transition 31 (1), Taylor & Francis, pp 36-44

100 "Volkskapitalisme, Class Capitol and Ideology in the Development of Afrikaner Nationalism, 1934-1948", O'Meara D. 1983, Johannesburg: Ravan Press, pp 73

101 "Building a Nation from Words: Afrikaans language, literature and 'ethnic identity', 1902-1924." Hofmeyr, Isabel, University of the Witwatersrand, History Workshop, 1984.

Marie Kruger[102] similarly shows how the magazine *De Boervrouw* disseminated the idea of the Afrikaner volk.

[102] "Gender, community and identity: Women and Afrikaner nationalism in the Volksmoeder discourse of Die Boerevrou (1919-1931)" Kruger, L.M., 1991, Doctoral dissertation, University of Cape Town.

Chapter 1

Introduction

In the mid 1800s the area of Ermelo was characterised by a number of conflicts and skirmishes over a changing authority over land and the imposition of a new economic system. As white settlers moved further inland they managed to take control of arable land in Ermelo and later established the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) which was instrumental in the establishment of the town and a new economy linked to emerging capitalism in the country. Industrialization, resulting from the discovery of mineral resources elsewhere in the country, fundamentally reshaped the character of the area.

This chapter explains the broad history of Ermelo through the lens of land dispossession, racial segregation and the political-economic processes of the white population. Secondly, it will establish the roots and depth of some of the underlying social dynamics associated with ultra-conservatism which lingered on well into the 1990s in the town by examining the processes by which settlers came to take control of the land to maintain control over it by imposing laws and legislation that restricted the movement, right to purchase land and limited the businesses of black people and Indian people. The first whites to settle on the land took control of the land and established a racial hierarchy, which influenced the development of the area for the century that followed. The structures of social control and economy in the apartheid years were established during the initial settlement of whites in Ermelo, which was then further entrenched by the establishment of the Dutch Reform Church (DRC). The structures of social control that were put in place during the initial pioneer years were then further entrenched by British control (funded and supported by the gold mining industry) after the South African War.

Conquest and White Settlement

Prior to white settlement the area that is now called Ermelo was controlled by the Nhlapo people[103]. White settlers moved to the area and gained control of land in some instances through force and other instances through alliances. After the boom of diamond mining in Kimberly in the late 1800s the industrialisation of South Africa grew steadily. One of the consequences of this development was that men from various African societies, including from Ermelo, were drawn into migrant labour to different parts of the country. Further, after the devastation of the South African War which was won in 1902 by the British Empire, political power was awarded the Boer settlers rather than black occupants of the land.

There are varying accounts[104] of exactly when the very first white settlers arrived in the area that became known as Ermelo, the earliest being in 1860. These settlers encountered an area under the control of the Mlambo Nhlapo people, who lived from a land rich in wild life and with reliable sources of fresh water. Over the succeeding decades that landscape was transformed by settler hunters and sheep farmers and subsequently by mining and industrialisation.[105] The Nhlapo farmed with cattle, goats, and sheep. They planted beans, sugar cane, pumpkins and corn.[106]

At the time when the Trekboers[107] arrived the Mlambo Nhlapo were under the control of Gama KaMlambo. The political landscape in 1860 was characterised by networks of alliances between the Zulu king Mpande, the Swazi king Mswazi and Chief Gama of the Nhlapo. The Nhlapo had official recognition from both the Swazi and Zulu kingdoms. There is evidence of this official recognition in oral history accounts: the

[103] Petition of Mlambo Nhlapo Tribe to the Union Government, to the Naturelle-comissioner of Ermelo, reprinted in "Die geskiedenis van Ermelo vanaf sy stigting tot 1902", J.D.R Opperman, Ma in History, Faculty of Lettere en Wysbegeerte, University of Pretoria, pp 6
[104] Ibid pp 6
[105] Kleynhans and Coetzee: Dokumente en Herinneringe 1926; Breytenbach, J.C., Son of Wyle Nicolaas Breytenbach of Smutsoog, quoted in "Die geskiedenis van Ermelo vanaf sy stigting tot 1902", J.D.R. Opperman, MA in History, Faculty of Lettere en Wysbegeerte, University of Pretoria, 1948, p. 2
[106] Interview with the Indunas of the Nlhapo tribe, 16 February 1944, J.D.R. Opperman, printed in "Die geskiedenis van Ermelo vanaf sy stigting tot 1902"
[107] A subgroup of Boers were called "trekboers", which basically means "mobile farmer". These Boer families did not actually own permanent farms but simply wandered from place to place looking for fresh pasture for their livestock. They lived a very isolated, nomadic lifestyle.

explanation provided being that if criminals from either of these kingdoms escaped punishment to the Nhlapo controlled area, neither of the other kingdoms would demand from Gama the surrender of the culprit.[108] The practice of accepting each kingdom's right to grant individuals the right to political asylum was thus a way of recognising the sovereignty of each kingdom.

There was a particularly strong alliance between Gama and the Swazi king. When there was a dispute between Gama and his brother Mhlangala the traditional council referred the matter for settlement to the Zulu king Mapande, "who in turn deemed it expedient that the order should be left with the Swazi king for judgement".[109] The Swazi king sent his Inyati braves to subdue Mhlangala, who then fled and took refuge in the land of the Basotho people along with his supporters.[110]

The first white settlers were received as friends by Gama KaMlambo in Maveriestad, a large Nhlapo settlement in the Ermelo area, and were given land by the chief. However, relations between Boers and the Nhlapo became tense when the Boers established very large farms on the land. The land that fell under the jurisdiction of the Nhlapo people included Ermelo, Carolina, Middleburg, Bethal and part of Wakkerstroom.[111]

There are conflicting reports in official Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek records, records of the Dutch Reform Church and oral history accounts of the descendants of the Nhlapo royal house on the way in which the settlers acquired land. According to oral history records of the Nhlapo royal house the Boers were granted permission to *occupy* the land in 1865. However, ZAR records state that the Boers were granted permission and special concession to *own* the land by the royal house in 1860.

DRC records make no mention of the Nhlapo royal house, and state that the very first white settlers in the Ermelo district moved there from the Lydenburg district and were

[108] Petition of Mlambo Nhlapo Tribe to the Union Government, to the Naturelle-comissioner of Ermelo, reprinted in "Die geskiedenis van Ermelo vanaf sy stigting tot 1902", J.D.R Opperman, Ma in History, Faculty of Lettere en Wysbegeerte, University of Pretoria, pp. 189
[109] Ibid p. 189
[110] Ibid p. 189
[111] Ibid p. 190

granted permission to own land by the Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek (ZAR). DRC records explain that after many people died of malaria in the Lydenburg area in the mid 1800s, some Trekboers decided to move to Potchefstroom and other safer areas. However, the ZAR government wanted to keep the Trekboers in the areas around Lydenburg to set up buffer farms. The idea of buffer farms was conceived based on fears that African populations would resettle in these areas. The government thus created a scheme where farmers from the Lydenburg area were offered tax free farms in the Ermelo region. In accordance with the buffer farm policy in 1860, a commission from Lydenburg was sent to the Ermelo area to measure and divide the farm land.[112]

According to official ZAR archives the first white settlers came into the area in 1864 from Lydenburg. They were Kurt and Marthinus Joubert who occupied the farm Uitkoms. Shortly thereafter Commander W.F. Joubert, Hans Grobler, Koos Scheepers and Hendrick Bothma, also settled in the area.[113] A larger group arrived in the area in 1865, consisting of H.T. Bhurmann, Willem Bhurmann, Fredrick van Oudtshoorn, Willem Scheepers, Willem Steenkamp, Lodewyk de Jager, Koos Scheepers, Piet Fourie, Frans Joubert, Tobias Smuts, Martinus Oostehuysen, Jan Jacobsz, Samuel Laffnie and Jacob Breytenbach. H.T. Bhurmann, who occupied the farm known as 'Die Emigratie'[114], was named as the individual who expelled the Gama and royal house of the Nhlapo from the land, forcing them to relocate to the Smutsoog.[115] The Highveld area was named Ekanghala, and the Vaal River was named the Likwa by the Nhlapo during their time of control over the land.

The Trekboers faced great difficulties in establishing their farms because there was an acute shortage of farm labour in this area. The Mlambo Nhlapo people were already established farmers and therefore did not need to work on the farms of the Trekboers. Shortages of wood and other construction resources on the farm lands meant that the settlers struggled greatly to build their first homes, and start their farming operations.

[112] Eeufees Gedenkboek van die Ermelo Gemeente, 1870-1970, Hoëveld Pers, Ermelo, 1970, p. 6
[113] Ibid p. 6
[114] "Die geskiedenis van Ermelo vanaf sy stigting tot 1902:" J.D.R Opperman, MA in History, Faculty of Lettere en Wysbegeerte, University of Pretoria, 1948, pp 47
[115] Interview with the Indunas of the Nlhapo Tribe, 16 Feburary 1944, J D.R. Opperman, printed in "Die geskiedenis van Ermelo vanaf sy stigting tot 1902".

The first homes on the farms were built from stone and thatched roofs. Wood for beams and other essential materials were brought from Pietermaritzburg.[116]

After some time, conditions must have changed favourably for the white farmers. They were described by Frans Lion Cachet (the DRC minister who named the town, after Ermelo in Holland) as well-off. Typically, they were owners of herds of sheep were 2000-3000 strong. They are also described as owners of cattle and horses.[117] The Dutch Reform Church was one of the most important sources of community cohesion for the Boers from when the very first settlers moved into the land. It would be the first and only official body in the area. Initial religious services were held on the farm Kraanspoort owned by Frans Janse van Vuuren.[118]

In the Ermelo district it seems that at first there was a complex set of unstable alliances and conflicts in which the early Ermelo commandos (informal and voluntary military groups) took part in order to secure labour in order to start effective and profitable wool production on their newly acquired farms. It was, according to Bergh[119] the years 1860-1870 that the Transvaal countryside was transformed into a racialised hierarchy.

Morrell's[120] research on the Middleburg district sheds some light on the internal dynamics of the area. The district (which is very close to Ermelo) included Afrikaner farmers of various classes and levels of wealth. From impoverished *bywoners*[121], smallholders as well as wealthier absentee estate owners and businessmen developing intensive farming operations on large land holdings. Ermelo's early settler farmers came from a variety of positions of wealth, as will be discussed below. Some struggled immensely to establish profitable farms due to shortages of labour while

[116] Transvaal se Wolboere, 'n Historiese oorsig van die ontwikkeling van die wolskaap bedryf in Transvaal, Len Joubert, NMB Publishers, Port Elizabeth, 1990, p. 7
[117] Die Worstelstrijd der Transvaalers, Frans Lion Chachet, p. 368, located copies in Municipal archives of Ermelo, 10/3 -10/5, 1973 – 1992, box 370, Ermelo municipality.
[118] Eeufees Gedenkboek van die Ermelo Gemeente, 1870-1970, Hoëveld Pers, Ermelo, 1970, p. 6
[119] "White farmers and African labourers in pre-industrial Transvaal", J.S. Bergh, Historia Vol.55, No.1, Durban, May 2010, p. 4
[120] "Competition and Cooperation in Middelburg, 1900 – 1930", R. Morrell, in Putting a Plough to the Ground Accumulation and Dispossession in Rural South Africa, 1850 -1930, ed W. Bienart, P. Delius and S. Trapido, Ravan Press, 1986 pp 373 -420,
[121] A labourer or farmer working on another person's piece of land.

others were described as wealthy owners of large tracts of land. According to Morrell, a range of interests formed the farming unions which were established in the 1920s. He argues that if the period around the turn of the century can be seen as the time when the groundwork was laid for the racialised hierarchical society of Apartheid then the 1920s and 1930s cemented institutions which allowed farmers to more aggressively establish that hierarchy on the land.

Traipido's[122] research on the history of tenant production on the Vereenigning Estates from 1896-1920 shows that the first decades of white settlement in the Transvaal state was weak and the markets were limited. He outlines a society which with deep social and wealth divisions by illuminating the varieties of processes of accumulation including hunting, trading, office holding and land speculation. He also shows that various white occupants of the land forged differing relationships of exploitation with African labour on land which they occupied. Traipido stresses the importance of *inboekseling*[123] labour before 1877 and shows the varying labour and tenant relationships.

The thirty three articles of 1844, of the ZAR, provided the legal framework in which white farmers were able to acquire African labour on their farms. "In terms of a *Volksraad* decision of 1850, field-cornets were responsible for recruiting labourers for the farmers in their respective wards. Krikler describes the function, and character of field-cornets as follows: "in the pre-war Transvaal, there existed that very personification of pre-capitalist coercion in the figure of the veldkomet, that sinister landowning representative of the farmers in each district who hovered above the tenantry, violently intervening - when necessary - to ensure the rendering of labour-service." [124]

[122] "Putting a plough to the ground: A history of tenant production on the Vereeniging Estates, 1896-1920", Trapido, S. in Putting a Plough to the Ground, Accumulation and Dispossession in Rural South Africa, 1850 - 1930, Ravan Press 1984, pp 336 - 373
[123] Indentured labour.
[124] "The Agrarian class structure of the Transvaal colony." Krikler, J., In Collected Seminar Papers. Institute of Commonwealth Studies (Vol. 40, pp. 166-197). Institute of Commonwealth Studies. 1990, pp 5

When they were not able to secure African labourers for contract periods of at least one year, farmers were allowed to use African labourers for a maximum period of fourteen days without compensation, but with enough food. For a contract period of one year the compensation in 1850 was one heifer. Africans who refused without reason to make their labour available were liable to punishment of a maximum of twenty-five lashes. It was apparently the task of the Military Council to divide the various African communities among the wards of the field-cornets for the purpose of making their labour available to farmers."[125] These labour measures were not always consistently applied to the various regions of the Transvaal during these years. In the areas closer to central governmental, controlling bodies farmers were able to more effectively utilise these laws. In Ermelo white farmers had great difficulty forcing Africans into labour. Commercial farming and the racial hierarchy of white master and black servant took longer to be established, as will be explored in further detail below.

By 1868 the Transvaal *Volksraad* had received numerous petitions from Boers across the Transvaal complaining that Africans were refusing to comply with laws that would effectively place them in servitude. Individuals from various districts gave testimony of the government's inability to enforce these laws. Complaints included three individuals from the Lydenburg district, under which Ermelo fell at the time. In response to these petitions, the *Volksraad* appointed a commission of investigation. In this commission various people gave testimony, including chiefs, landdrosts, field-cornets, and other officials.[126] The commission found that one reason why the Boers were unable to enforce servitude on existing communities at this time was because it was easy for people to escape by moving into Swaziland. P.J. van der Walt spoke at the commission of why there was a failure to enforce laws that made African communities liable for service to white farmers in the Lydenberg district: "I cannot

[125] "White farmers and African labourers in pre-industrial Transvaal", J.S. Bergh, Historia Vol.55, No.1, Durban, May 2010, p. 4

[126] "To Make Them Serve: The 1871 Transvaal Commission on African Labour as a Source for Agrarian History",
Johan S. Bergh, History in Africa, Vol. 29, (2002), pp. 39-61, Published by: African Studies Association, p. 41

maintain the law because the natives outside are free. If the natives outside could be made liable for service the ones on the inside will obey of their own accord."[127]

Following the commission of enquiry the Boers were unable to force Africans into servitude in the two decades that followed. In 1883 two memoranda were sent from the Ermelo district where Boers complained bitterly about their problems of obtaining labour.[128] In the 1880s the Boer's bargaining power worsened still further. The commercialisation of the Transvaal countryside occurred at roughly the same time as the diamond fields were discovered in Kimberly and elsewhere. These mines were able to offer much higher wages and so potential farm hands would much rather offer their labour to the diamond fields.

"In many cases the remuneration was a bone of contention. Wages were paid either in cash or in kind, for example in sheepskins. The level of remuneration may have been one of the reasons why some African labourers were reluctant to conclude such contracts with farmers. In the early 1870s they could have earned £1 per month in hard cash on the diamond fields. Towards the end of the 1870s the same rate of remuneration was being offered in Pretoria."[129]

In response to their inability to attract or force Africans into labour on their farms, Boers in the Eastern Transvaal, and Ermelo particularly, raided neighbouring areas to create a class of indentured labourers.[130] The farmers in the areas that became Ermelo were also personally involved in a number of raids. In 1882-1883 when the 'Mapog War' took place. Ermelo sent a commando of 150 men, under the command of Field-cornet E.P. Pretorius. According to Boers, Naibel, a Mapog captain was harbouring murderers. It is important to note, as mentioned above, that a symbol of power for traditional authorities was the right to house individuals who had been accused of

[127] "To Make Them Serve: The 1871 Transvaal Commission on African Labour as a Source for Agrarian History",
Johan S. Bergh, History in Africa, Vol. 29, (2002), pp. 39-61, Published by: African Studies Association, p. 41
[128] "Die geskiedenis van Ermelo vanaf sy stigting tot 1902", J.D.R. Opperman, MA in History, Faculty of Lettere en Wysbegeerte, University of Pretoria, 1948, p. 9
[129] "White farmers and African labourers in pre-industrial Transvaal", J.S. Bergh, Historia Vol.55, No.1, Durban, May 2010, p. 7
[130] Ibid p. 7

crimes. The act of the settlers in forcing traditional authorities to hand over murderers was a denial of this sovereignty.

Naibel eventually gave himself up and was imprisoned for 15 years, and Naibel's land was divided up and offered to Boer settlers. The result of the war was supposed to provide Ermelo farmers with indentured labourers from Naibel's followers. The Ermelo farmers complained that indentured labourers were not divided fairly. It is unclear from archival sources whether these people were sent to other districts and farms, but it seems the case, as no mention is made of the people fleeing to other areas or staying on the land from which they were removed. Ermelo farmers expressed much anxiety and acted in violent retaliation at random on Africans in the area of Ermelo. It was reported in the *Volkstem* that some farmers randomly battered Africans living in the area in the hope that some official body would take notice of the violent acts and re-divide the labour.[131]

In 1883 a number of memoranda were sent on behalf of the Ermelo farmers in which they complained that according to the proclamation of 24 July 1883 they should have received labourers from the raid. The costs of the conflict was paid for by the Boers themselves, with the understanding that the state would deliver the labourers to their farms, however, this never happened. "Why have we received no k*****s, notwithstanding that the costs were carried by us?"[132]

Another mechanism in which the settlers attempted to force Africans into labour on their farms was squatting laws. However, these laws were also not effective. Farmers in the nearby district of Amsterdam noted, in connection to squatting laws, in the *Volkstem* in 1888 that the laws were not successful in attracting labourers.[133] In January 1889 the Ermelo farmers sent a letter to authorities in which they stated: "Urgent help is requested to help us obtain labourers. …without a labour force the country cannot be developed. The natives have flocked to the gold and diamond fields

[131] "Die geskiedenis van Ermelo vanaf sy stigting tot 1902", J.D.R. Opperman, MA in History, Faculty of Lettere en Wysbegeerte, University of Pretoria, 1948, p. 9
[132] Ibid p.9
[133] Ibid p. 10

and have learned more disrespectful customs."[134] As a response to the shortage of labour the magistrate of Ermelo sent a letter to the *staatsecretaris* that a 'location' for 'natives' and 'coloureds' be measured out. It was approved and nine blocks were measured out for this purpose.

The initial few decades of settlement, or conquering, saw much social and political unrest and upheavals. The settlers were involved in a number of border skirmishes and local wars with various opposing groups trying to maintain and take control of land. For example, in 1875 the Boer settlement came together 'in defence' against Cetshwayo. Sixty men and twelve wagons came together on the Emagartie farm, however, the border remained quiet. In 1876 the Sekhukuni War broke out. A commando came from the area which never actually fought but stood guard with Piet Retief. The threat of attack and conquest from Cetshwayo remained a fear for the next couple of years. In 1879 a rumour of an invasion by Cetshwayo sent many packing.[135]

The South African War at the turn of the twentieth century proved to be a significant disaster for the settlers. Britain's scorched earth policy left farmers in a dire economic state, and the war destroyed most that had been built in the previous few decades. However, legislation by the Transvaal government would gradually be put into practice in the area over the next few decades. This legislation put the Boers in a advantaged position over their African countrymen as, most importantly squatter laws and legislation restricting freedom of movement, would eventually (but not initially) lead to the status of servitude for black occupants of the land in the Ermelo area. This system of forced, cheap labour on the farms created a lucrative wool, cattle and corn farming market in the area for white settlers.

Early Development of Ermelo

[134] "Die geskiedenis van Ermelo vanaf sy stigting tot 1902", J.D.R. Opperman, MA in History, Faculty of Lettere en Wysbegeerte, University of Pretoria, 1948, p.11
[135] Ibid p. 9

The construction of the town of Ermelo was initiated by the Dutch Reform Church, which purchased the eastern part of the farm Nooitgedacht on 26 May 1879.[136] The motivation for the development of the town came from the church council with the idea of building a permanent structure for religious worship, moral instruction and community cohesion. After the purchase of the 'church farm' the land surveyor Pieter McDonald was hired, on instruction of the Ermelo congregation church council, to measure out the first plots of the town in 1879.[137] Included in the initial town plans were the market and church, which became the centres around which the town developed.

The town was proclaimed on 12 February 1880 by William Owen Lanyon, the Administrator of the Transvaal. Locals decided that the town should become an administrative centre, and by virtue of a proclamation the town came under the jurisdiction of the ZAR.[138] Soon, more developments followed; in 1883 Ermelo acquired its first qualified medical doctor and in the same year the first bank was opened. The following year the first trading licenses were awarded to a baker, a butcher and number of retail stores, as well as a farming co-operative store. In the same year five liquor licenses were awarded to individuals and a hotel opened.[139] In November 1892 a national bank was established in Ermelo, to encourage industrial growth.[140] By the end of the 1800s governmental offices were opened. In December 1882 the first magistrate's office was opened. In 1895 a telegraph and post office also opened their doors. In 1895 the first policemen were appointed, one white *voetpolisieman* (foot policemen) and five black constables. In the mid 1890s a park, market, water services and public health committee were set up in the area. Prior to this water was obtained through the use of wells and fountains in the town area. A smallpox outbreak was the motivation behind the establishment of the public health committee.

Urban Segregation

[136] Ibid, p. 40
[137] *Eeufees Gedenkboek van die Ermelo Gemeente*, 1870-1970, Hoëveld Pers, Ermelo, 1970, p. 9
[138] "Die geskiedenis van Ermelo vanaf sy stigting tot 1902", J.D.R. Opperman, MA in History, Faculty of Lettere en Wysbegeerte, University of Pretoria, 1948, p. 41
[139] Ibid p. 42
[140] Ibid p. 43

Indian residents, many of whom ran small businesses, were present in the new town from early in its history. In 1889 a trading license was awarded to Alvas Dagon, who was forced to leave the town shortly afterwards. The details of his expulsion from the town are not on public record. The firm Cassiem Ismael & Kie managed to operate their business in the town by renting property through the use of an agent. They rented plot 40 from a man named as Gerrit Coetzee for three years from 1888. On 17 December 1887 a magistrate proclaimed that an Indian 'location' would be established where Indians would be forced to live and do business. The Cassim firm, it seems, defiantly stayed in their rented property in town and the firm continued to do business on that particular property until 1891.[141]

White residents protested over the presence of Indian businesses in town, which resulted in the establishment of a designated area for Indian trading in 1892.[142] This was one of the first major acts of racial segregation in the town, which set the tone for the tense relationship between the Indian community and white residents and authorities for the next century.[143]

The Indian 'location' was measured out on church property, and these new properties were handed over to the Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek in 1896. There was considerable resistance from the side of Indian businesses; Ieewa Hoosen and Kie rented plot 116, which was not in the 'location', and they were told to vacate the premises and set up within the borders of the 'location'. However, the issue was resolved when it was decided that the plot was in fact in the location and the firm could keep their business on the property.[144]

Mohammed Dendar who has lived in the area since his birth in 1933 and whose family were of the first Indians to settle in the area and who was the first mayor after

[141] Die geskiedenis van Ermelo vanaf sy stigting tot 1902, J.D.R. Opperman, MA in History, Faculty of Lettere en Wysbegeerte, University of Pretoria, 1948, p. 51
[142] Ibid p. 53
[143] " 'n Terugblik uit die verlede van Ermelo", Municipal Archives of Ermelo, 10/3 -10/5, 1973 – 1992, box 370, Ermelo Municipality
[144] "Die geskiedenis van Ermelo vanaf sy stigting tot 1902", J.D.R. Opperman, MA in History, Faculty of Lettere enWysbegeerte, University of Pretoria, 1948, p. 52

1994, comments on how his family came to live and work in the area: "In 1913, in Ermelo, Indians had to leave the Free State so many Indians came to Ermelo in 1913. My family came there in 1903. They came from India to Mauritius, from Mauritius to South Africa.

"When they came here, the Indians, they usually went to the *platteland* towns. There was usually a post office, a church there, I mean that was the main centre. For a very long time the main CBDs of the country towns the Indians were there. But with the Group Areas Act everything was taken away.

"My family was trading under the name MA Dendar, and they were very big. We had many properties and we had to buy them on other names, but eventually all those were also expropriated. After 1903 by auntie was the first Muslim marriage in Ermelo. After that, in 1906, the Cassim family came. They had settled in Bethlehem, and this was after the law came that the Indians could not trade in the Free State so they settled in Ermelo." [145]

The South African War

The South African War broke out in 1899. The battle for control of South Africa's mineral wealth was fought by the alliance of the Orange Free State and Transvaal against Britain. It is an important event in the collective historical memory of Ermelo's white residents. When asked about some of the most important events in the town and area, the immediate response by whites has been, without fail, "*Die Tweede Vryheidsoorlog*" (The South African War). The town's symbol, that of a phoenix, symbolises the post-war growth. Many of the apartheid era public sculptures and monuments commemorate the commandos and serve as a reminder of concentration camps. During the war, the entire infrastructure and built environment of the town was destroyed by British troops in their scorched earth tactics. Only the DRC '*moedergemeente*' and one other building (that was rumoured to be the local brothel)

[145] Interview with Dr Mohammed Dendar, Johannesburg, 6 September 2016.

remained. At the time there were about 100 white families residing in the town and many women and children were sent to British concentration camps.[146]

The town was burnt down in the year 1901 by invading British troops.[147] A letter from Major Gen. Smith-Dorien to the *Ermelo Post*, 21 November 1901, states that: "It is especially painful to me to burn and destroy farms of men who are fighting against us, with such gallantry and fine feeling. I much regret that I must pursue these stringent measures, until all your people have laid down their arms."[148]

By the end of the war, Britain had won, and the geographic area known as South Africa was officially recognised as four British colonies. In these years much would be done by both British and Afrikaner politicians by way of unifying the country. Botha and Smuts were in favour of a unified South Africa where Boers and Brits would work together, however, other races would not be granted the same rights as whites.

On 31 March 1905 the government of Transvaal was recognised.[149] Immediately after the war Lord Milner served as High Commissioner of South Africa and the Governor General of Transvaal and the Orange Free State and held these positions until April of 1905. Milner's policies would maintain segregation.

"Nevertheless" the record tells us, "there were aspects of confusion and compromise in the way in which the new colony was governed. For example, it tried to anglicise the Transvaal and simultaneously placate the Afrikaner community. For people living on the land in the eastern Transvaal, this meant that the power of white farmers was

[146] "'n Terugblik uit die verlede van Ermelo", Municipal Archives of Ermelo, 10/3 -10/5, 1973-1992, box 370, Ermelo Municipality.
[147] Letter from J.L. Carstens, to Ermelo Stadsklerk, 22 June 1977, Municipal Archives of Ermelo, 10/3 -10/5, 1973 – 1992, box 370, Ermelo Municipality
[148] "Ermelo Post", 21 November 1900. Article Published in: "Die geskiedenis van Ermelo vanaf sy stigting tot 1902", J.D.R. Opperman, MA in History, Faculty of Lettere enWysbegeerte, University of Pretoria, 1948, p. 218
[149] Parlementêre verkiesings in Suid-Afrika, 1910 – 1976, B.M. Schoeman, Akuele Publikasies, Pretoria, 1977, p. 2

restored and the iniquitous land divisions of the 19th century were largely re-established."[150]

Milner appointed Sir Godfrey Lagden as Commissioner of Native Affairs of the Transvaal which was divided into five divisions. In 1903 the Native Commissioner (NC) helped to resettle whites who were pushed off the land during the war. The NC reported to head office that most of the land was controlled by whites but was nonetheless densely populated by blacks who were labelled labour tenants or squatters. Africans traded labour for the right to plough land and run stock on these areas of land. The availability of labour to white farmers in Ermelo after the war was much higher, and it seems that the labour shortages of the 1800s no longer existed. However, some Africans in the Eastern Transvaal did own land and worked for themselves, the majority of this land had been purchased in the years following the South African War.[151]

Labour tenancy systems in the post-war years were responsible for locking black occupants of the land into situations of servitude to white landowners. Krikler argues that these relationships of tenancy were nuanced and differing: "The south-east of the [Transvaal] Colony, with its variety of tenant relationships, presents a complicated picture but one in which it is possible to discern that black farm workers were members of peasant households whose economy was not yet subordinate - in the very lives of the primary producers themselves - to that of the landlords."[152]

The archival evidence, according to Krikler, indicates that rent in the form of labour or cash was "the primary form of exploitation of black people living on farms in the south-eastern Transvaal".[153] The Standerton District was the one exception in the area with sharecropping being a prominent facet of its agricultural economy. A report

[150] "Land Struggles of the 20th century" by C. Mulaudzi and S. Schirmer, in Mpumalanga, History and Heritage, edited by P. Delius, University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2007, p. 352
[151] Ibid p. 352
[152] "The Agrarian class structure of the Transvaal colony." Krikler, J., In Collected Seminar Papers. Institute of Commonwealth Studies (Vol. 40, pp. 166-197). Institute of Commonwealth Studies 1990.pp 168.
[153] Ibid p 168.

dating April 1904 declared that Africans living on the land were forced into the share system[154].

“Between a vast number of landlords and tenants, of course, there existed only the flimsiest cash nexus, or none whatsoever”.[155] A native commissioner tasked with collecting taxes from black men reported that: "The Carolina and Ermelo men said they did not see how they could possibly pay, as they were working for Boers on their farms and did not get paid for their services."[156]

Krikler adds that in the devastation and insecurity of the South African War. “The years of that conflict…were also years of an acute and often violent agrarian class struggle: a struggle momentous enough to rupture the rural class order of the Transvaal and compel British imperialism to restore it in the aftermath of the war. The Boer War, thus, witnessed a deepening of black peasant society in the Transvaal in general, and on its white owned land in particular.”[157] He further argues that there is evidence from the south-eastern Transvaal “that labour tenants who, before the war, had only ever been paid wages for "special work" (presumably tasks over and above their corvees), were now being paid for their obligatory labour services as well, at the rate of £1.10 per month.”[158]

The South African War thus had a twofold effect on the rural economy, it simultaneously locked black Africans into labour on white owned land and created a context in which they could demand to be paid for it. After the war in 1905 the Transvaal region mostly supported the Boer Generals Louis Botha, Jan Smuts, Schalk Burger and Koos de la Rey.[159] In the election of 1906 Transvaalers gave overwhelming support to Botha’s Het Volk Party and who became the first Prime Minister of the Transvaal.

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[154] “The Agrarian class structure of the Transvaal colony.” Krikler, J., In Collected Seminar Papers. Institute of Commonwealth Studies (Vol. 40, pp. 166-197). Institute of Commonwealth Studies 1990.pp 168.
[155] Ibid p.168
[156] Ibid p. 170
[157] Ibid p. 170
[158] Ibid p. 170
[159] Parlementêre verkiesings in Suid-Afrika, 1910 – 1976, B.M. Schoeman, Aktuele Publikasies, Pretoria, 1977, p. 2

Post-war town council records are present from 1905 - 1906. One of the first issues for discussion in the new post-war council was the construction of a hospital (there had only been a temporary hospital), electric lighting, and the acquisition of a loan to pay for these expenses.[160] The largest expenditures of the town council in these early years of rebuilding were sanitation and roads, costing £56 64 and £53 30, respectively, for the month of April 1905.[161] Additionally, a site for a school on Uitkomst farm and the Anglican Church, both of which had been razed to the ground, was chosen.[162]

One of the biggest problems that the post-war municipality had to deal with was setting up refuse removal systems; people typically dumped trash anywhere and the town was becoming a public health concern. Furthermore, water used to supply farmland was unfortunately directed through the sanitary farm, which meant that fresh produce was contaminated with human waste.[163] The economy of the town was also in ruins as agricultural production had been destroyed during the war. To make matters worse, a railway that would connect Ermelo to Johannesburg was postponed.[164]

In the post-war year regional and national law makers made efforts to limit African land ownership and segregate communities. The post-war town council started to forcibly remove Africans from the town. "Resolved that from and after, 1 March 1905, that every native dwelling remaining within the jurisdiction of the Council, shall reside in the location, except such natives residing on the premises of their European employers."[165] The Natives Land Act (No. 27 of 1913) stipulated that 7% of arable land would be allocated to Africans. This law included territorial segregation and created reserves for black people and prohibited the sale of land to blacks in designated white areas. The Act also stipulated that black people could only live

[160] 16th May 1905, Ermelo Town Council Minutes, p. 4
[161] 13th June 1905, Ermelo Town Council Minutes, p. 5
[162] 13th June, 1905, Ermelo Town Council Minutes, p. 6
[163] 11th July 1905, Ermelo Town Council Minutes, p. 22
[164] The Chairman of the Town Council, 22 August 1905, Ermelo Town Council Minutes, p. 36
[165] 14 March 1905, Ermelo Town Council Minutes, p. 162

outside the reserves if they were employed in that area. However, African land ownership was limited in this area prior to this Act, which was merely a continuation of an already existing and expanding social order. In Ermelo, after the 1913 Land Act, Africans occupied land in a number of ways; the majority occupied land as labour tenants, others rented land from companies and absentee land owners, others farmed mission-owned farms, and some had obtained farms legally by buying them just after the South African War, prior to the 1913 Land Act.[166] In Ermelo the farms Spitzkop and Witbank were owned by Africans. The owners of Spitzkop were Ndebeles who convinced the land owners to sell to them.[167]

Post-war and the Rise of Nationalism

The Ermelo area had been in 'pioneer conditions' for 40-50 years prior to the war. The various frontier battles had put the area in a near constant state of conflict and unrest. This was followed by a period of severe poverty and destruction during the South African War.

The Transvaal area was particularly badly hit by post-war poverty. To start off with, the many battles and wars that took place before the outbreak of the South African War meant that the economic position of Transvaal farmers was insecure and farmers' difficulty in attracting labour for their farms also meant that they were in a poor economic position.[168]

The first post-war election was held on 15 September 1910. Ermelo's representative was T. Smuts, from Gen. Botha's South African Party. The main theme of Botha's speeches was that English and Afrikaner had to come together, work together, and get along.[169] In the Transvaal the South African Party's main opposition was the Unionist Party. This party's main aim was to keep the Union of South Africa together but it

[166] "Land Struggles of the 20th century" by C. Mulaudzi and S. Schirmer, in Mpumalanga, History and Heritage, edited by P. Delius, University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2007, p. 354
[167] Ibid p. 354
[168] Toe die Witmense Arm Was, Uit die Carnegie-verslag 1932: Brandpunte 2, Dian Joubert, Tafelberg 1972, p. 13
[169] Parlementêre verkiesings in Suid-Afrika, 1910-1976, B.M. Schoeman, Aktuele Publikasies, Pretoria, 1977, p. 17

also had a pro-imperialist edge. During this election Botha's support came largely from rural Afrikaners, but also from urban English speakers.[170]

The next five years after the establishment of 'white democracy', The Union of South Africa saw important developments that had ramifications in the development of the country for decades to come. It was a time when the Afrikaner nationalist movement gained popularity. The South African Party – later the United Party - and the National Party were formed during this time. Gen. Botha and Gen. Hertzog's idealistic disagreements would, however, have wider consequences for the South African political landscape.

Education was one of the main problems that the country was facing. The education issues were two-pronged. Firstly, the issue of funding available for quality education was an issue. Secondly, the language of instruction was a big issue. Previously provincial councils were responsible for providing the funding for education. However, whereas in the past individual provinces were responsible for collecting tax that would be allocated to a central education fund, after the creation of Union, it fell under the command of the central government. The result was that the provinces did not have sufficient funds to grow their educational programmes. This changed in 1913 when educational finances were restructured.[171]

The other big problem with education in those years was the educational programmes. Before Union every province had its own tailor-made educational programmes and curricula. Central to educational programmes was the question of the language of instruction. In the Transvaal old CNO (Christelike Nationale Onderwys) schools were set up by parental bodies, with funding from the Netherlands, in order to provide Dutch language education in opposition to imperial British education. These schools played an important role in Afrikaner nationalism and were converted into government schools after the end of the South African War. The language of instruction at all government schools from standard three would be English, except

[170] Parlementêre verkiesings in Suid-Afrika, *1910-1976*, B.M. Schoeman, Aktuele Publikasies, Pretoria, 1977, p. 18.
[171] Ibid p. 35

for two subjects. This meant that even in the CNO schools Afrikaans children had to have some instruction in English.[172]

During this time Afrikaner nationalism played a very important role in the political life of South Africa. The education question was an important rallying point. Jan Smuts and Louis Botha were inclined to take an approach of unity and working with the empire, and supported a dual medium education. Barry Hertzog meanwhile firmly established himself as the 'torch bearer' for Afrikaner language and culture and advocated Afrikaans language instruction.

Hertzog left the newly formed South African Party and formed the National Party. Much of his support in these years came from individuals who felt very strongly about Afrikaner language and culture, one could call them early nationalists. The South African Party represented a more unified front between English speakers and Afrikaners. Continued cooperation between Botha and the empire was seen by Afrikaner nationalists as him 'selling the Boers out' to imperialists. The Union Party was represented by white English speaking South Africans, although their policies were very similar to the South African Party. Hertzog's National Party was predominantly to represent Afrikaner interests.

In the election of 1915, the SAP party won in Ermelo with a majority of 600 votes.[173] They received nearly double the number of votes of the newly formed NP. This town had been hard hit by the war, and the post-war municipal committees practically had to rebuild the entire town. Families had to rebuild commercial farms and homes. In the Transvaal the SAP received 33% of the total vote, while the newly formed NP received 25% and became the second largest party.[174]

In the 1920s and 1930s the DRC did not have very strong sway over the Afrikaner community, which is partly why the community was not yet characterised by the hard-line nationalist outlook of later years. In the report of the Ring Synod (the area in

[172] Parlementêre verkiesings in Suid-Afrika*, 1910-1976*, B.M. Schoeman, Aktuele Publikasies, Pretoria, 1977, p. 35
[173] Ibid p. 54
[174] Ibid p. 68

which Ermelo was included) for 1922-1924, it was discussed at the conference, that although church attendance was good, there was a large section of the population was not attending church; that within the church congregation 'open indecency' was a big problem, and that members of the congregation were engaging in sexual intercourse outside of marriage. The report also states that "in every congregation there are victims to the alcohol demons".[175] The DRC was also worried about the fact that some men and women were living together out of wedlock, yet still attending church. It was also noted that there was an anti-missionary attitude among some people in the area. This suggests that the power the DRC church would later wield over the community of Ermelo was not always present.[176]

Lack of formal education was also a big problem in the area in the 1920s. Records state that due to a lack of school buildings, funding from the education department and a lack of 'decent' teachers, public education was not available to many. It was also noted that household religious instruction was not practiced because of a low rate of adult literacy.[177] "A big problem is that factually there are large numbers of people who cannot read."[178] This falls into the national trends of the time, when the 'poor white' problem became a political rallying point, as will be discussed below.

In 1924 the DRC in Ermelo made efforts to branch out into the black communities. It is noted that there were 99 members in Kilpfontien. Under Jozua Gwenda there was a congregation of 45, under Samual Zulu 4, and under Tona Zulu 45.[179] Many residents were against missionary work of the Dutch Reformed Church. The following quotes shed some light as to why: "There are just as many blacks in the town of Carolina as whites … up until now the relationship between blacks and whites was very good but in recent years the relationship is getting worse. Workers are becoming more and more scarce, not only on the farms but in the town too. If the blacks cannot find work

[175] Ring Lydenburg, Verslae aan algemene sending konferensie, te Johannesburg 10 Maart 1925, report for the years 1922-1924. Ermelo Moedergemeente Church Archives, housed in the Ermelo Moeder-gemeente church, p. 1
[176] Ibid p. 1
[177] Ibid p. 2
[178] Staat van godsdiens, Ermelo, 1924, Ooreenkomstig Artikel, 65. Ermelo Moedergemeente Church Archives, housed in the Ermelo Moedergemeente church.
[179] Verslag van die toestand van die sendelinggemeente van Ermelo, 1924, voorgelegd aan Ringsending Konferensie, Middleburg, 1924

in town they start small scale farms ... with their modernisation they are becoming uncontrollable. They are getting lazy and even defiant against whites."[180]

This quote underpins some of the rudimentary issues that underlined race relations in the area particularly regarding labour. This racial hierarchy originated from early settler days, and was perpetuated by British post-war governance. The above comment is interesting; many black migrants were working in towns and cities. They were entering the formal economy and had no reason to be undermined by white men in rural areas as they were dependant on them. The quote goes on to explain two new developments that affected race relations: "This problem, locals attribute to two reasons: firstly the reserve that the government is buying for the blacks in the Middelburg district is becoming a location. Secondly there are many new opportunities for black people to get education. This is why many people are against missionary work … They are against black education ... [but] if the Afrikaner does not educate the blacks then someone else will, like the communists."[181]

Local whites generally mistrusted missionary work as they saw this equipped black people with a Western style education. Underlying the racial tension was a racial superiority complex held by whites where they saw themselves as the masters and blacks as the servants. When this hierarchy seemed to be in contestation whites came to resent blacks. Missionary work must have been a particular bone of contention as most local whites belonging to the DRC congregation in Ermelo and surrounds were not literate themselves. The dire state of education was a concern that was repeatedly brought up in DRC yearly reports. Lack of departmental funding and a critical shortage of able teachers were some of the causes.

Indian Population and the Limiting of Business Rights

[180] "Die kultuuromstandighede in Carolina", a personal account written by J.H. Visagie, housed in the Erfenissentrum, at the Voortrekker Monument, in Pretoria South Africa, 1939, p. 33
[181] Ibid p. 33

By the time of Union the rights of land occupation and ownership of Indians had been further limited. A number of Acts[182] were passed, restricting the rights of Indians in the first 20 years after the South African War. The Immigration Act of 1913, prohibited the movement of Indians from different provinces without a permit and it also effectively prohibited further immigration of Indians to South Africa. Indians were only allowed to reside in the Transvaal if they passed an education test, after which they had to be registered by fingerprint. [183]

The years following the 1929 global economic crash resulted in widespread poverty the world over including South Africa, and to make matters worse, between 1929-1933 a devastating drought further impoverished rural South African countryside. In 1932 the "The Poor White Problem in South Africa: Report of the Carnegie Commission" was published. The report noted that following the South African War 300 000 of 1 800 000 white South Africans lived in extreme poverty.[184] Giliomee argues that the 'poor-white' problem became the most pressing political issue in Afrikaner politics in the early 20th century and remained so until the early 1940s. Giliomee goes on to explain that these conditions of poverty prompted the government to intervene on an unprecedented scale by implementing measures that would consolidate a white group. Labour, education and training policy that would benefit whites solely was implemented as well as residential segregation. Giliomee states that development aimed at uplifting whites in particular when the "proponents of white supremacy concluded that a consolidated white group was needed to dominate the black majority".[185] In 1930 the Ermelo mosque was built despite continuing hostility.

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[182] **For example:** Boroughs Ordinance No 189 of 1924, The Township Franchise Ordinance of 1924, The Township Franchise Ordinance of 1924, The Rural Dealers Ordinance of 1924 the Transvaal Dealers (Control) Ordinance No 11 of 1925: Accessed at : **http://www.sahistory.org.za/article/apartheid-legislation-1850s-1970s**.

[183] "Legislation and race relations", Muriel Horrell, South African Institute of Race Relations, Johannesburg, 1971, p. 5

[184] "The South African poor white problem in the early 20th century: Lessons for poverty today", Fourie J., in Stellenbosch Economic Working Papers: 14/06, A Working Paper of the Department of Economics and the Bureau for Economic Research at the University of Stellenbosch.

[185] The Afrikaners, H. Giliomee, Tafelberg, 2003, p. 315

Ermelo, like many other Transvaal towns was badly affected by conditions that brought about poverty. Many Indian traders supported white farmers by loaning them money. Mohammed Dendar, local doctor and resident whose family has been trading in the area since the late 1800s, sheds light on the poverty in Ermelo during these years: "The Depression years came in, there was nothing then. People used to barter/trade, they would leave bags of *mielies* on the *stoeps*. Sell it at 5 shillings. So you could get by. There was no money back then. In those days, in our family record we lost about 100 000 pounds. It was a lot of money at that time, it was money we made from the trade. But that time people lost money completely. Before that … the Indian community played a leading role in the agricultural economy of Ermelo."[186]

By lending money to impoverished farmers the Indian community was able to play a leading role in keeping the agricultural economy of Ermelo afloat. The rise of white nationalism changed that. Mohammed Dendar explains: "Before the Indian traders and the Afrikaners got on very well … in those days the main trade was Afrikaner farms and the farmers needed cash capital, and it depended when the harvest came in. Fortunately in those days people were honest you could give it to them. And pay for a year and the harvest came in and they came and paid the money."[187]

In neighbouring Hendrina Indian businesses were refused the right to rent in the area, and so had to operate business from outside the town. There was also a black-owned business, which according to archival records was, by the 1930s, "in white hands".[188] It would seem that trying to keep business in the hands of whites, and particularly Afrikaners, was a community agenda since the very early days of the proclamation of these towns, until the 1990s. It was no different in Ermelo, as can be observed above.

Ermelo elected Jan Smuts, as MP for Ermelo, for the South African Party in seven successive general elections since 1920. At the end of the South African War Gen. Louis Botha farmed in neighbouring Standerton. His presence in the area gained him much support for the South African Party (SAP) after its founding in 1910. Jan Smuts,

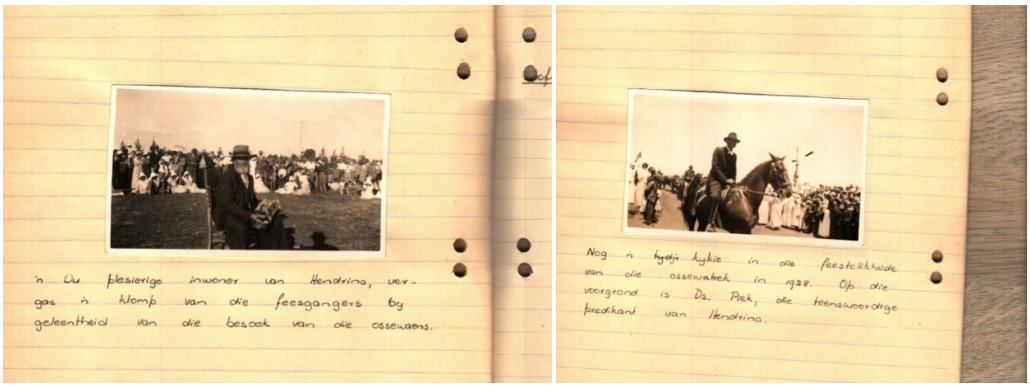
[186] Interview with Dr Mohammed Dendar, 6 September 2016, Johannesburg
[187] Ibid
[188] "Hendrina en sy omgewing" a personal account of the town by E.J. Liebertrau, 1941, Erfenissentrum Archives located at the Voortrekker Monument in Pretoria. p.10

as the political heir of Botha absorbed this support. The Herenigde Nasionale Party made inroads into the electorate, starting from the late 1930s and by 1948 political allegiances changed.

There is a dearth of information on the emergence of Afrikaner nationalism in archival sources. However accounts of the great trek centenary celebrations in Ermelo and surrounds is a strong indication that local white Afrikaners were swept up in the populist hysteria of the day. A delegation of wagons re-enacting the great trek passed through Ermelo on 19 November 1938. An article in the local newspaper *Die Hoevelder* details the affair: "The wagons came to a stop in a square formation which was formed by a 'commando' of men on horseback and a number of motorcars. The proceedings were met with a prayer by Pastor Paul Nel and bible reading by Pastor M.H. Horak. A group of 48 ladies on horses with flags then led the parade through the town."[189] The article which was published in 1987 lists the names of those (who were still alive at the time of publishing) who were on organising committee as, amongst others, J.A. Spruyt who was the headmaster of Ermelo's high school in 1938.

Other local accounts of the rise of Afrikaner Nationalism can be read in the personal accounts of E.J Liebertrau, a diary if Hendrina and surrounds: "The largest festival that Hendrina ever saw was the *Voortrekker Eeufees*. Two wagons came to the town and all the people that possibly could joined the festivities. Early in the morning the horse commando's of about 200 led the wagons from outside the town and the voortrekker women led the wagons once they arrived. Various events took place in the town such as speeches, streets were blessed, there was singing and folk dances were demonstrated. Later in the evening there was a massive *braaivlies* evening and there were various gifts given to heads of the wagons. After that the wagons were led out of the town."[190]

[189] "Waens van 1938: Die Johanna van der Merwe", Jac Uys, Die Hoevelder, 16 October 1987.
[190] "Hendrina en sy omgewing" a personal account of the town by E.J. Liebertrau, 1941, Erfenissentrum Archives located at the Voortrekker Monument in Pretoria. p.22



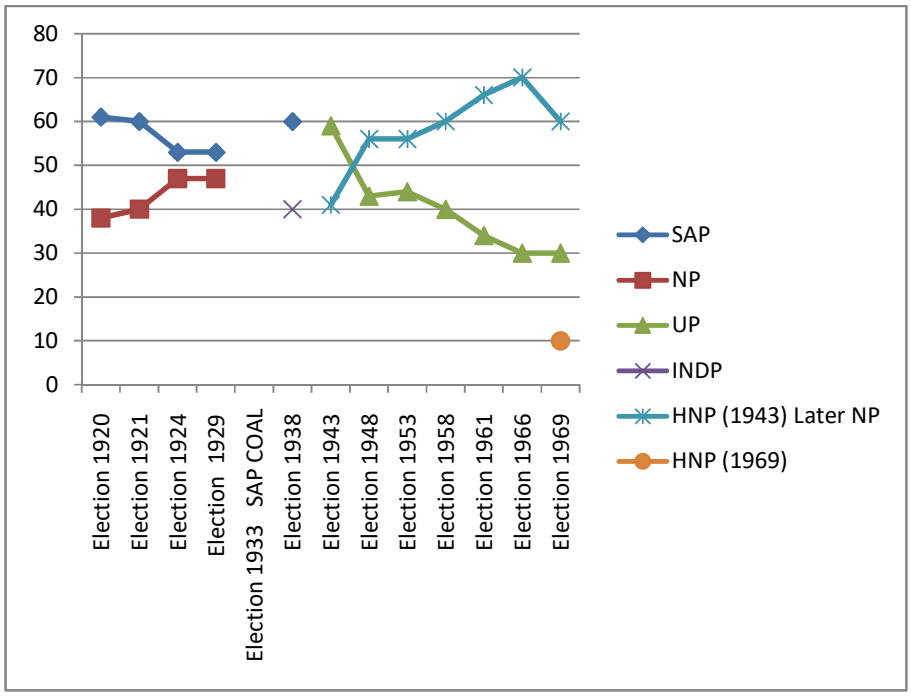
Images of the great trek centenary celebrations in Hendrina.[191]

Nationalist propaganda found appeal in the town and by 1948 the NP absorbed most of the support that the UP received in the previous election (See graph below). Botha had been dead for 30 years and Smuts was already 78 years old. N.M. Stultz attributes this shift in voting patterns to the trend that the old loyalist generation who supported Botha was starting to die and this was a major factor in the switching of political allegiances in the Transvaal: "With the passing of the Botha generation, it was not surprising that the so-called 'Botha-constituencies' responded politically in a manner more similar to that of other rural Transvaal constituencies."[192] Ermelo's electorate switched allegiances and supported the newly formed nationalist Herenigde Nasionale Party (Reunited National Party).

[191] "Hendrina en sy omgewing" a personal account of the town by E.J. Liebertrau, 1941, Erfenissentrum Archives located at the Voortrekker Monument in Pretoria. p.10
[192] *Afrikaner Politics in South Africa*, N.M. Stultz, University of California Press, 1974, p. 149

	SAP	NP	UP	INDEPENDENT	HNP (1943) Later NP	HNP (1969)
Election 1920	61.1%	38.1%				
Election 1921	60.4%	39.9%				
Election 1924	52.9%	46.7%				
Election 1929	53.1%	46.5%				
Election 1933 uncontested SAP Coalition						
Election 1938	59.2%			40.4%		
Election 1943			58.5%		40.7%	
Election 1948			43.1%		56.3%	
Election 1953			43.6%		56.3%	
Election 1958			39.3%		60.0%	
Election 1961			33.5%		65.7%	
Election 1966			30.0%		69.6%	
Election 1969			29.7%		59.7%	10.1%

[193]



[194]

The social and racial hierarchy that characterised the town in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s had been established in the initial years of conquering of the land. At various

[193] *Parlementêre verkiesings in Suid-Afrika*, *1910-1976*, B.M. Schoeman, Aktuele Publikasies, Pretoria, 1977, p. 54
[194] Ibid p. 54

points people of other races did try to participate in the new economic structure that came to dominate the landscape. However, when it seemed that the advancement of other races was a challenge to white business interests, race relations soured. Indian and black businesses were suppressed and black farming enterprises were limited. In the late 1960s and 1970s the country's economic boom created a class divide in the white community. As the number of skilled and middle-class Afrikaner whites increased they began to slowly reform from the harsh racial ideologies of Malan and Verwoerd's apartheid of the 1950s and 1960s, which will be explained in detail in the following chapter. Other whites, however, became all the more conservative in comparison and clung on to the racial hierarchy that had privileged them in the past.

Chapter 2

Emergence of new political conservatives: the *Verkramptes* in Ermelo 1960-1980

Ermelo of the 1970s was a community in flux. A new kind of Afrikaner entered the social landscape in unprecedented numbers; white workers. Industrial development would also change some into wealthy industrialists. Ermelo changed from a quiet farming town into a regional industrial and commercial centre and this affected the political, social and economic arena. This chapter identifies and argues that the established conservative support base that had been normalised in previous decades and entrenched by the Herstigte Nasionale Party (HNP) in Ermelo in the 1970s. It grew into a majority which started voting for the newly formed Conservative Party (CP) in the 1980s. It further discusses some of the main national trends within the white Afrikaner populations in the period under consideration and also examines how Ermelo corresponded to and differed from these national processes. In Ermelo, and nationally, a new wealthy, upper middle-class Afrikaner was emerging, represented and supported by the NP and Broederbond structures. Economic and social changes in Ermelo occurred as a result of major new economic developments, which transformed the town from a farming town into an industrial town. Industrial developments drew in more working-class Afrikaners that became a support base for ultraconservative political parties. The term *ultra*conservative is used as the National Party of 1948, that had maintained power, was a conservative nationalist party. The HNP and later the CP were parties that were even more averse to reform and even further to the right on the political spectrum. There was already a strong network of HNP men when Albert Hertzog, MP for Ermelo, established the party in 1969 and this contributed to how the ultraconservatives managed to gain a foothold in the community in the 1970s. Lastly, another contributing factor to the growth of ultraconservatives in the town was the internal conflict within local NP structures, which led some to lose faith in the ruling party and vote for the ultraconservative parties instead. The politics in the town mirrored national processes in some ways, but particular local dynamics resulted in Ermelo being a stronghold of ultraconservative politics.

The 1960s saw a rapid growth of upper and middle-class Afrikaners in South Africa. This class of Afrikaner came into being because the strategies of the NP, to enrich and privilege Afrikaners particularly, were in effect by the 1960s. By this period many Afrikaners had moved from the rural to urban areas, occupying middle-class positions in society. The rapid growth of the Afrikaner middle and upper classes led, in turn, to consumerism which created a shift in Afrikaner identity. Grundlingh (2008) argues that: "Economic growth during the 1960s induced corrosive change in what was up till then considered impenetrable Afrikaner culture, and that an increasingly materialistic outlook also had significant … political ramifications."[195] O'Meara, however, points out that Afrikaners have always been divided. Differing agricultural interests, the growing working class, the petty bourgeoisie and wealthy commercial and industrial capitalists all play into a complex matrix.

However, Hyslop argues that the NP of the 1970s and 1980s came to represent a new wealthy consumerist class, which was distinct and new, differing from historical class divisions. NP policies and outlooks changed from ones that benefited working-class and farming Afrikaners to policies that further enriched and protected middle-class and upper-class whites. The NP of the 1970s was furthering a consumer class of whites, rather than creating policy aimed at uplifting working-class and farming Afrikaners.[196] By the late 1970s the Afrikaner middle class had expanded. This new and large portion of Afrikaners, with a disposable income, meant that a consumer culture emerged. However, in the wake of massive industrialisation, that fuelled this expanding middle class, another group was still present, a white working class. Industrial expansion thus deepened the class divisions within white society. The NP's main support base was middle class by the 1970s and so catered to the needs and aspirations of this class. This process was also present in Ermelo. The expansion of the coal mining industry, transport and supporting industries deepened these chasms. However, there was a fundamental difference; whereas nationally the white working class was diminishing, in Ermelo the white working class was expanding.

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[195] "Are we Afrikaners getting too rich? Cornucopia and change in Afrikanerdom in the 1960s", Grundlingh, A., Journal of Historical Sociology , Vol.21, No. 2/3 June/September, 2008, ISSN0952 - 1909

[196] "Problems of Explanation in the Study of Afrikaner Nationalism: A Case Study of the West Rand", Hyslop, J., Journal of Southern African Studies, Volume 22, no. 3, September 1996

The ramifications, which Grundlingh mentions, meant that many Afrikaners were now making decisions based on their material gain over their cultural dominance. Middle-class aspirations similar to Western middle-class aspirations were becoming more dominant than the ethnic nationalism of the 1940s. In Ermelo, as in South Africa generally, this was reflected in the emergence of a new upper middle class, arising from industrial projects in the area. However, working-class whites became a notable presence in the Ermelo community as industrial projects attracted new workers. These developments deepened the existing class divisions.

Furthermore, the lifestyles, aspirations and values of the new wealthier Afrikaners changed to suit their new middle-class status. In Ermelo this was visible in the changing layout and devolvement of the town. Chain stores, a golf club, large homes with massive lawns and swimming pools were all new introductions to the social life of Ermelo in the 1970s. This was very different from the staunch Calvinist and agrarian culture that was dominant in the town prior to the 1970s.

During this time a small, yet significant group of whites started to support emerging ultraconservative Christian nationalist political groups, rather than the ruling party. The swing to ultraconservatives largely emerged from a rural farming and working-class support base.[197] However, in order to fully understand the swing to ultraconservatism it is important to take into consideration that the support base came from a variety of groups. Another, significant motivation for supporting the HNP, which was not bound by class or ideology per se, was that in Ermelo the HNP served as an alternative to voters who were fed up with local NP corruption and patronage.

The HNP emerged during the end of the 1960s and was led by Albert Hertzog, MP for Ermelo. Hertzog, son of the Afrikaner symbol of a nationalist hero, Barry Hertzog was seen as a trusted representative of Afrikaner interests by ardent nationalists. His accolades in terms of Afrikaner nationalism included serving as a Boer General in the South African War, a leading politician instrumental in implementing Afrikaans

[197] "Vir volk en vaderland: A Guide to the White Right", Grobbelaar J., Bekker S., and R.Evans, Indicator South Africa, August 1989, p. 24

language public schooling in the Orange Free State, and outspoken advocate of Afrikaner dominance over public affairs during the early 1900s. During Barry Hertzog's time as Prime Minister of South Africa in the early 1930s he did much to improve the position of the Afrikaner working class.

O'Meara (1983), in his study of Afrikaner nationalism, *Volkskapitalisme*, argues that in order to fully understand Afrikaner nationalism one must analyse the interactions of class, ethnicity and ideology. According to O'Meara class disrupted the unity of the '*volk*' and Afrikaner nationalism cannot be viewed as a monolith. Ideology was not able to smooth over the tensions that existed between agricultural interests, the growing working class, the petty bourgeoisie and wealthy commercial and industrial capitalists. Although O'Meara's study focuses on the period 1934-1948 the internal divisions amongst Afrikaners, who were loosely united under an umbrella of nationalism and Calvinism, are pertinent to the Ermelo area during the 1970s. During this period the HNP became an alternative to a changing NP. In Ermelo one can locate support for ultraconservatives in two groups: farmers and working-class whites.

This created a context in which ultraconservative groups and political parties would garner support in Ermelo, this support grew and took hold of many facets of the community by the late 1980s.[198]

It seems ironic that during the late 1960s and 1970s ultraconservatives gained a foothold in the community when existing central government and municipal planning created new economic opportunities for the white population. The reasons why ultraconservatives emerged in Ermelo and gained considerable support here are complex and cannot be ascribed to a single reason. During the 1970s a portion of support for the ultraconservatives came from the Afrikaner working class who feared that the relaxation of the job colour bar would threaten their livelihoods. Farmers saw industrial development as destabilising a community over which they had had much sway since the inception of the town. A more important cause of the mounting

[198] This is evident from almost all interviews conducted.
"Right-wing fragmented and demilitarised", The Mail and Guardian, 2 March 2012.
http://www.ngopulse.org/article/ermelo-high-school-court-ruling-double-edged-sword

dissatisfaction with the local National Party was the prevalence of corruption, in terms of favourable treatment of members of the Broederbond investing in the town, and manipulating the municipal as well as the NP local election process in an undemocratic manner.[199] Other supporters were fundamentalist white supremacists, who aggressively supported anything claiming to be for the 'Afrikaner cause'.

Urbanisation and the emerging wealth gap in Ermelo

Hyslop stipulates that the split in Afrikaner politics, between the NP and the ultraconservative groups such as the Conservative Party (CP) and the Herstigte Nasionale Party (HNP), can be characterised by those who fought to uphold the ideals of 1948, which was dominated by farmers, the petty bourgeoisie and the white working class, and those who sought to adopt the policies of Afrikaner nationalism to the changing composition of the '*volk*'.[200] Grundling argues that by the late 1960s "there was a trend among Afrikaners away from unskilled or semiskilled, relatively poorly paid labour to skilled and better remunerated positions with stable career prospects. This process was accelerated by the National Party government's policy of 1948 aimed at promoting Afrikaner education in a variety of ways, including establishing technical schools and, at tertiary level, medical and engineering faculties."[201]

J.S. Gericke, Moderator of the Dutch Reformed Church, commented on this trend:
"The city [urbanisation of Afrikaners] has seriously deepened the chasm between prosperous Afrikaners and their less well-off countrymen, between those with status and those of more humble station, between the learned and the uneducated. Contact between the upper echelons and the lower classes have disappeared almost completely. Even in the church we no longer engage with one another, because we have good neighbourhoods and poor neighbourhoods, and the boundaries between our

[199] Interview with Hein Mentz, Ermelo, 21 October, 2014
[200] "Problems of Explanation in the Study of Afrikaner Nationalism: A Case Study of the West Rand", Hyslop, J., Journal of Southern African Studies, Volume 22, no. 3, September 1996), p. 374
[201] "Are we Afrikaners getting too rich? Cornucopia and change in Afrikanerdom in the 1960s", Grundlingh, A., Journal of Historical Sociology , Vol.21, No. 2/3 June/September, 2008, ISSN0952 – 1909, p. 145

congregations are determined by these residential areas. The city has in fact created class divisions among us and even a considerable degree of snobbishness."[202]

This chasm that Gericke speaks of occurring in the 'city', developed in Ermelo too. The class divide that developed, played a part in reshaping the political landscape in Ermelo in the 1970s. Until the early 1970s, the town's white population was dominated by the farming community. The white residents of Ermelo and surrounds during the early 1970s comprised mostly of Afrikaans farmers and individuals working in farming related industries (such as agricultural supply stores, a dairy, insurance) as well as civil servants. By the late 1970s, however, there were significant numbers of railway workers, miners and individuals working in industries supporting mining industries. More and more whites were also moving from farming areas to more industrialised town centres. In 1951 5028 whites were based in rural areas around Ermelo, by 1970 this number decreased to 3859. As can be read in the PTA National Archive the urban white population increased from 4221 in 1951 to 7320 in 1970 and 10 336 in 1976. In 1951 60% of whites in the Ermelo district lived in urban areas and in 1970 this proportion increased to 73%.[203] By 1970 32% of the economically active whites living in the region were employed in production and transport, 23% were employed in the farming and factory sectors and 21% were clerical workers.[204]

[202]J.S. Gericke, Moderator of the Dutch Reformed Church quoted in: "Are we Afrikaners getting too rich? Cornucopia and change in Africanerdom in the 1960s", Grundlingh, A., Journal of Historical Sociology , Vol.21, No. 2/3 June/September, 2008, ISSN0952 – 1909, pp. 148-9
[203] PTA National Archives, Local Government Department, Community Forming, PB 4-21-3-2-7, Ermelo
[204]PTA National Archives, Local Government Department, Community Forming, PB 4-21-3-2-7, Ermelo

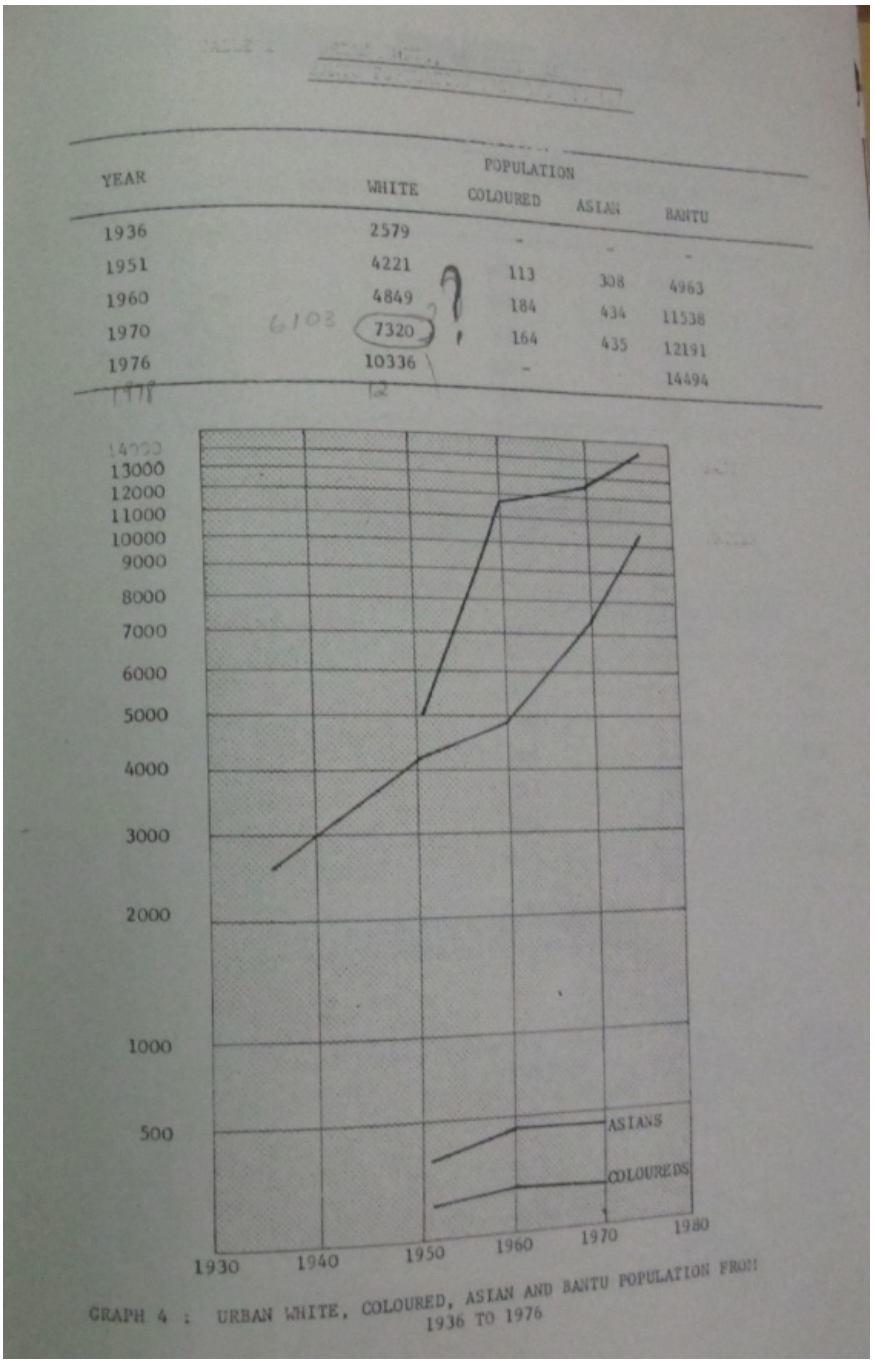
TABLE 3 : PROPORTION OF ERMELO DISTRICT POPULATION LIVING IN URBAN AREAS FROM 1951 TO 1970

POPULATION GROUP	PERCENTAGE LIVING IN URBAN AREAS		
	1951	1960	1970
White	60%	66%	73%
Coloured	53%	72%	92%
Asian	70%	77%	92%
Bantu	20%	25%	34%
All Races	27%	31%	40%

TABLE 4 : PROPORTION OF URBAN POPULATION LIVING IN ERMELO FROM 1951 TO 1970

POPULATION GROUP	PERCENTAGE LIVING IN ERMELO		
	1951	1960	1970
White	56%	60%	69%
Coloured	50%	90%	87%
Asian	79%	89%	85%
Bantu	39%	65%	41%
All Races	46%	64%	49%

PTA National Archives, Local Government Department, Community Forming, PB 4-21-3-2-7, Ermelo



YEAR	POPULATION			
	WHITE	COLOURED	ASIAN	BANTU
1936	2579	-	-	-
1951	4221	113	308	4963
1960	4849	184	434	11538
1970	7320	164	435	12191
1976	10336	-		14494

GRAPH 4 : URBAN WHITE, COLOURED, ASIAN AND BANTU POPULATION FROM 1936 TO 1976

PTA National Archives, Local Government Department,
Community Forming, PB 4-21-3-2-7, Ermelo

People living in the Ermelo area were steadily moving from the farms to the town centre. Working class Afrikaners and civil servants by the 1970s comprised approximately a third of the working population of whites. This meant that many

residents were dependent on policies formulated in the spirit of the apartheid of 1948 designed to specifically benefit Afrikaners from state sanctioned employment, and where industrial development would also, principally benefit Afrikaners. The continued support from the government to whites in sheltered employment meant that there was a very large support base for the party awarding these individuals an elevated lifestyle on account of their race and allegiance to the party. Residents employed in the upper echelons of the rapidly expanding industrial sector would see their lifestyles flourish. Increases in the town's urban population and more work opportunities put more money into circulation. This created a wealthier town where businessmen and entrepreneurs could generate wealth.

Industrialisation

Industrialisation in Ermelo initially came in the form of a power plant and would steadily increase in decades to come. The Camden coal power plant increased the demand for coal, which would further spark coal mining activity in the area (rich in coal reserves). After the opening of the Camden Power Station and the Usutu Colliery in 1964, the white population of the town almost doubled in six years.[205] The Sasol 2 plant also attracted a large number of newcomers into the town. Further growth was as a result of a national development plan of 1975 that defined Ermelo as one of the main industrial and commercial towns in the Eastern Transvaal.[206] A new railway line that opened in 1980 linked Ermelo to the harbour of Richards Bay and attracted many new railway workers to the area.[207]

Various industrial developments created new skilled labour opportunities and attracted white and black workers[208]. These industrial developments also led to the rapid expansion of the town's infrastructure and business community. It also opened new markets for capitalist enterprise that greatly affected and changed the economic

[205] "Phenomenal Extension Predicted", The Highvelder, 07/07/1963
[206] "Ermelo spog met sy snelle groei" (Ermelo boasts speedy growth), Beeld ,7 March, 1980
[207] Ibid
[208] According to interviews most new workers came from mining towns on the east rand and some from Britain.

structure of the area. New populations migrating to and from the area contributed to the decline of existing community structures and the creation of new ones.

Throughout the 1970s the economy, infrastructure and job market of Ermelo and its surrounds expanded rapidly. Prior to this Ermelo was a small farming town. In the 1960s most farmers relied primarily on wool for their income, although maize and cattle farming were also large contributors to agriculture in the area.[209] Gerhard Woithe, one of the founding members of the HNP in Ermelo, comments:

"It put more money in circulation. The businessmen, well, the farmers saw very little of that money. But the business community, insurance, things that could be sold, those people, it helped that part of the community. And of course the schools too. The schools prospered because those kids all went to those schools. Everyone took the bus from Camden to the school. There were more people in the town, but most lived at the power plant, but they didn't spend their money in Camden. So that expanded Ermelo's economy. Breyten was a railway town. It didn't flourish the way Ermelo did. People in Breyten came to do their shopping in Ermelo. And Carolina; all those kids went to school in Ermelo."[210]

The above quote is revealing, Mr Woithe expressed a sentiment of resentment that the farmers saw very little of the money that new developments brought into the town. Farmers were becoming less relevant in the economy, as well as the social life of the town.

Koos Grey, a local lawyer comments on how the rising middle class contributed to urban growth, which changed the town: "In town where the school is now, was nothing, open veld. Now it's a complex, shopping centres you name it. We would ride around in bakkies there and shoot rabbits … It (Camden) really changed the town for the best, the power station was mostly white workers, and it was a good quality of person. Your miners were also white, your underground person ... Maybe they

[209] "Transvaalse wolboere, 'n historiese oorsig van die ontwikkeling van die wolskaapbedryf in Transvaal" Len Joubert, NMB Publishers, Port Elizabeth, 1990
[210] Interview with Gerhard Woithe, Bronkhorstspruit, September 2014

(miners) came from Witbank or Orkney; I assume those kinds of places. But it was a big injection for Ermelo, the power station … Then your mining communities came in. That kind of changes things, they have a different culture. A miner would go to the shops bare feet with his vest on. A farmer would wear a hat and a jacket. I don't look down on the miners, they just have another culture. It really changed the schools ... they are more rough those kids, that type of thing."[211]

This somewhat snobbish attitude is prevalent within the farming community in Ermelo. Ermelo of the 1970s was a changing community. The comments above represent the emerging wealth gap, and the dissolving of '*volkseenheid*'. Being Afrikaans was no longer solely what united Afrikaners. Wealth and class was becoming more important than cultural and language ties. Working-class whites coming into the area, employed at Camden, where mostly not from Ermelo and considered 'newcomers' by farming families. These 'newcomers' were detached from the conservative and 'stuffy' habits of staunch Calvinists.

Decline of the DRC and Changing Character of the Town

The Dutch Reform Church (DRC) played a central role in commercial and leisure activities in the town historically. Although the DRC did have a varying influence on the town at different points in time, the church managed to gain a very powerful hold on the values and ideology of the residents during the 1950s. After the economic injections of the 1970s the sway that the DRC had over the town as a centre of social cohesion, education and moral guidance started to decline.

The DRC's influence on the community was informed by local pastors as well as the church council, which was made up of community 'elders'. These were people who had attended Sunday services regularly for a long period of time, were approved by the pastor, and were traditionally drawn from 'old' farming families. Pioneering commercial development in Ermelo in the early 1900s was concentrated on a town square in front of the '*Moedergemeente*'. Commercial development from this period

[211] Interview with Koos Grey, Pretoria, September 2014

was always in the shadow of the large sandstone church. In this way the image of the church served as a constant reminder of the values of Calvinism. Socials, camps, bazaars, town festivals (such as the annual 'Wool Festival'), even Ermelo's public schools were historically organised by the Dutch Reformed Church.[212] The Calvinist perspective and pro-apartheid propaganda were strong features in most facets of community life.

The changing, more modern character of the town, had consequences for town planning and ways in which the community was organised. By 1973 the town council set aside 100ha for heavy industrial development as all previously zoned land had been sold out. The town council re-proclaimed 880 houses for these developments. At this point all development was administered by the NP town council.[213]

The wife of a prominent NP campaigner, wealthy farmer and industrialist owner of local dairy Gretchen Celliers comments: "They (town council, during the 1970s) built a lot. The town council was very good, "good people", they spent a lot to make the town better, to change and improve. They built the civic centre that was really beautiful … That time they also built De Bruin Park (suburb in Ermelo) … It was a golf course. They then took the golf course away and used it for plots for houses. It let Ermelo grow a lot, those houses are very beautiful … They worked as managers from Camden that lived there. The workers lived in Camden."

The inclusion of blue and white-collar workers also created a consumer market, one that is still present and flourishing in Ermelo. Koos Grey comments on how the character of Ermelo changed: "There, where the Nedbank building is now, that was our movie house but it closed. We didn't have a movie house to go to anymore. Then all those chain stores started, because we had a supermarket things became cheaper ... After the 1970s all your big supermarkets started opening – your big stuff; Game, Checkers, Pick n Pay. In those years these things didn't exist. The more conservative your political situation, the less investments were in your town … We were very

[212] *Eeufeesgedenkboek van die Gemeente Ermelo, 1870-1970*, Commissioned by the Church Council of the Ermelo Congregation, Highveld Press, Ermelo, 1970
[213] PTA National Archives, Local Government Department, PB 4-421-3-2-7, vol 1, Gidsplanne, Ermelo.

happy when there were bigger shops because we had more options and things became much cheaper."[214]

The expansion of industrial development in and around Ermelo benefited the economy of Ermelo. New businesses selling products to a growing population would create wealth and work opportunities other than agriculture for the town's people.

Afrikaner Working Class and the Conservatives

The social and economic changes in this town mirrored national changes. However, because Ermelo was an industrial centre, there was a high concentration of working class whites in the town. The working class whites later proved to be pivotal in drumming up support for the HNP when it was established by Albert Hertzog in 1969. Hertzog was perfectly placed in terms of location (as MP for Ermelo) and experienced as a leader who could gain popular support from working-class whites. In fact, he was previously instrumental in mobilising support among white miners in the Mine Workers' Union for the NP during the 1948 election.[215]

During the 1920s and 1930s the MWU came under strong criticism from bodies such as the National Council of Trustees and the Afrikaner League of Mine Workers for failing to represent the interest of Afrikaner workers. It was accused of alienating Afrikaner workers, even though they represented the majority of the union's membership, the main evidence for this being that the union's leadership did not have any Afrikaner representation. However, this began to change when Afrikaner nationalist politicians campaigned to change the character of the union. Chief among these was Albert Hertzog, under whose influence the MWU by the late 1940s predominantly represented Afrikaner working-class interests. Hertzog, who operated under the umbrella of the National Council of Trustees, the Afrikaner Broederbond and the Afrikaner League of Mineworkers, not only transformed the character of the

[214] Interview with Koos Grey, Pretoria, September 2014
[215] "Analysing Afrikaner Nationalism: The 'Christian-National' Assault on White Trade Unionism in South Africa, 1934-1948", O'Meara, D., African Affairs, Vol. 77, No. 306 (Jan., 1978), Oxford University Press on behalf of The Royal African Society

union, but also mobilised it for political purposes. The union was manipulated by Afrikaner elite nationalists to represent and promote Afrikaner workers primarily and secondly, to propagate a pro-NP sentiment to workers.[216]

South African labour and trade union membership has been racialised since the 1880s when the first gold mines on the Rand became operational. Due to a skilled labour shortage at the time, skilled labourers had to be imported from Europe, America and Australia. In order to attract labour from afar, these workers were offered high wages and privileges. These privileges were also awarded to semiskilled white South African workers. In order to be profitable the mines needed a large pool of cheap unskilled labour. For this purpose African labourers were hired. This saw the start of a workforce divided on racial grounds, where whites were offered higher pay and more privileges than blacks. From these conditions grew the traditional white unions such as the MWU and the White Builders Union (WBU) which aimed to cater for the needs of white workers solely.

The Industrial Conciliation Act of 1924 further cemented the privileged position of the unionised white workers over their black counterparts.[217] It gave unionised white workers protection from wage undercutting, while excluding African workers from the definition of employees. In this way the white workers kept black labour at a low cost and ensured the privileged status of the white worker. Through continued sheltered employment policies such as this [218] the NP supported Afrikaner workers, who, in turn, demonstrated loyalty to the NP in a sort of symbiotic relationship.

Many white unions supported by the NP, most notably, the Iron and Steel Trade Association (ISTA) formed in 1936, and the White Building Workers' Union which was formed in 1949. Albert Hertzog actively supported both these unions in the 1960s

[216] W.P. Visser, "Urbanisation and Afrikaner Class Formation: The Mine Workers' Union and the Search for Cultural Identity", p. 9, University of Stellenbosch, South Africa http://sun025.sun.ac.za/portal/page/portal/Arts/Departemente1/geskiedenis/docs/urbanization_afrikaner_class.pdf, 03/22/2014
[217] Ibid
[218] Others include the Native Building Workers Act 1951 limiting areas in which blacks could work, and the Native Labour Act 1953 segregating trade unions.

and they were particularly dependent on state legislation to protect the privileges of white workers over black workers.[219]

During the 1970s there was a marked decrease in skilled blue-collar white workers nationally (figures to follow below). The resulting labour shortage opened opportunities for black workers in job categories previously closed to them. Visser argues that this "began a process of the steady erosion of undiluted white supremacy and white prosperity in the workplace which would widen the political cleavages in white society and strengthen the right-wing of the white labour movement".[220]

By August 1978 Botha agreed that job reservation could be scrapped, as recommended b the Wiehan commission. In October he had to set up a conciliation board to resolve a wage dispute at the O'OKiep-coppermine in Namakwaland. The dispute was over the appointment of a coloured person on the liaison committee by the O'OKiep-coppercompnay. The MWU protested that there were no negotiations on concessions and that the Union would recommend maintaining the colour bar in the mining industry. Following a public meeting held by Botha in Carletonville in November 1978 nearly 500 miners walked out after the regional MWU organiser tabled a motion of no confidence regarding Botha's decisions on the five work day question, the implementation of the Wiehahan commission and his approval of the scrapping of job reservation. This lay the foundation for collision between the MWU and the PW Botha government over labour regulation and this event was a sign of things to come[221].

Following the Carltonville walk out the O'OKiep-coppermine made additional appointments of coloured people in positions that were previously reserved for whites. The MWU's Paulus had previously warned that if the recommendations of the

[219] W.P. Visser, "Labour and Right-wing Extremism in the South African Context – A Historical Review", University of Stellenbosch, accessed at: http://sun025.sun.ac.za/portal/page/portal/Arts/Departemente1/geskiedenis/docs/wvisserlabour.pdf, on 03/11/2014, p. 11
[220] Ibid p. 12
[221] Ibid pp. 238 - 240

Wiehahn commission were implemented the MWU would organise a strike reminiscent of 1922.[222]

Following the dispute at the O'OKiep-coppermine 83.7% of the 223 MWU members went on strike in February 1979. The mining company fired all striking miners on grounds of irregularities regarding the miners and the union following proper procedure for a legal strike. The MWU then reacted by initiating a country wide strike in March of 1979. Workers from copper, gold, platinum as well as coal mines took part and strikers totalled 9000 miners from 70 mines nationwide.

Visser argues that nationwide strike against the recommendations of the Wiehahn commission was a catalyst for mobilisation for protests among white mine workers to warn the government of the possible consequences of scrapping the colour bar. These developments on South African mines alienated and isolated the white worker from the greater political shifts that were starting to happen in South Africa more generally. White miners and the MWU were thus mistrustful and firmly against reform processes of the National Party as early as 1979.[223]

Lipton argues that the varying pace of the informal inclusion of black workers into skilled positions can be attributed to the varying mechanisms that white unions used to keep their members privileged.[224] After the Durban strikes of 1973 there was a need from government to review apartheid labour policies. The result of this was the establishment of the Wiehan Commission in 1973, which was concluded in 1979. The recommendations of the Wiehan Commission were in part, that the job colour bar should be lifted and black trade unions should be recognised. This spelled the beginning of the end of for sheltered employment for whites.

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[222] During the 1922 miners strike unhappy white miners nearly initiated a civil war in opposition to the South African government's recommendations that Africans be employed in the same positions as Europeans on the mines

[223] W.P. Visser, "VAN MWU TOT SOLIDARITEIT – GESKIEDENIS VAN DIE MYNWERKERSUNIE, 1902–2002" PHD completed Stellenbosch Univeristy, 2007, Acsessed on 31/08/2017 at http://www.afrikanergeskiedenis.co.za/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/VAN-MWU-TOT-SOLIDARITEIT-1.pdf, pp 238 - 240

[224] Lipton M., *Capitalism and Apartheid: South Africa, 1910-1986*, David Phillip Publisher, 1985, Cape Town p. 206

The reality was that from the early 1970s the industrial need for more workers was so strong that many blacks were already being employed in jobs reserved for whites. In the mining sector the MWU managed, although not without significant internal turmoil, to successfully keep their white workers in an advantaged position. Efforts in negotiating the continued advantaged position of their workers were supported by repeating the narrative of Afrikaner nationalism. In a sense support for the HNP was support for the continued privilege of the white worker. Nationally the white worker was becoming more and more irrelevant, but in Ermelo, as mentioned above, the white worker was becoming a significant group in the area.

In the building sector Gert Beetge's WBU did not equal the successes of the MWU. "Despite Beetge's protests, large-scale exemptions from job reservations were granted from 1971 onwards. By 1977 only 19% of building jobs were still legally reserved and many of these were being done illegally by blacks."[225] This was partly due to the fact that it was very difficult to monitor job reservation in the building industry. In 1975 Labour Minister Marais Viljoen announced that the colour bar would be relaxed, particularly in the building industry.[226]

By 1975, of necessity, many blacks were employed in positions legally reserved for whites. Industrial and economic advancement was impossible without hiring black workers. By 1975, in the construction industry, 337 000 of 400 000 workers were black. In manufacturing of the 1.3 million workers nationally, 1 020 000 were black. Statements from the South African Railways also indicated that there was a dire need for skilled labour on the railways and that from 1975 onwards the strategy was to employ more black workers in jobs reserved for whites.[227]

Beetge was one of the loudest voices against the lifting of the colour bar. He was a high-ranking active member of the HNP. Unions whose members benefited most from job reservation, and unions that themselves were dependant on job reservation for their own members and survival, opposed it in the strongest manner. The narrative

[225] Lipton, Merle, *Capitalism and Apartheid*, Gower Publishing, 1985, p. 209
[226] "Clash looming over job laws", The Rand Daily Mail, 02/10/1975
[227] "Economy is taking on more blacks faster", The Rand Daily Mail, 01/02/1975

and promises of the HNP at the time, and the CP later, were supported by the white unions as an attempt at survival.

The emergence of the HNP and Ermelo's central role in this can be explained as an event of political opportunism. Hertzog as MP for Ermelo would have a political platform and an audience. His constituency was one with a large portion of recent white migrants to the town. These migrants had come in search of jobs on mines and other working-class positions. These were positions in society that were dependant on the economic oppression of black workers. This portion of the population was one that he would have had experience in drumming up populist support for. His connections to white union leaders would also come into play in creating support for his ultraconservative political group, the HNP. Gert Beetge of the Building Workers Union, as well as Arrie Paulus of the MWU, were both leading members of the HNP. Beetge was present at key political events in Ermelo and surrounds in 1969 when the HNP was formed.[228]

In the 1970s unions like the WBU's survival was dependent on the continued subjugation of blacks. As a political minority and one that benefited from state sanctioned privilege, based on racial categorisation, the nationalist symbolism used by Hertzog appealed to these workers and their union leaders. The victimhood of the Afrikaner, the villainisation of Britain, and justification of the marginalisation of Africans was a narrative that had in the past been part and parcel of the continued state-funded privilege of the Afrikaans worker. During the 1970s the white worker saw many powerful *verligte* Afrikaners no longer attached to this particular nationalist narrative. Working-class Afrikaners also saw their state-funded and protected privilege being eroded by the *verligte* politicians, in favour of reforms that would slowly allow black workers in positions formally reserved for whites.

[228] Lipton M., *Capitalism and Apartheid: South Africa, 1910-1986*, David Phillip, 1989, Cape Town

***Broedertwis* – Brotherly Feud**

The HNP were actively campaigning and pandering to the white working class. However, during the 1960s and 1970s an ideological split was occurring within the NP nationally, as well as locally in Ermelo. From the middle of the 1960s this ideological split was increasingly evident in newspaper reports and public political debates. This ideological battle consisted of two sides: that of the '*verkramptes*' (more conservative) and '*verligtes*' (more open to change). These ideological battles played out in Ermelo both on a political platform as well as in the changing development of the social structure of the town.

At first this ideological split took place within the NP's national structures, but these ideological splits also proliferated in local political groupings. By the late 1960s the NP was a political party continuing to support the political thinking behind petty apartheid. Segregation, sheltered employment, the bolstering of Christian nationalist ideals were policies with unreserved support from within the ranks of NP leadership. However, by the late 1960s the thinking behind Verwoerdian Apartheid – a government that was trying to create an Afrikaans South Africa rather than a 'white' South Africa – would be represented by a minority of political leaders in the NP, who eventually were purged from the party, some of whom then formed the Herstigte Nasionale Party (Reconstituted National Party, HNP) as a party with the core ideals of Verwoerdian Apartheid. The *verligte* camp was most vocally dominated by Pres. Vorster and Transport Minister, Ben Schoeman. The *verkrampte* camp, was led by Albert Hertzog, who became a founder and leader of the HNP.

The HNP managed to gain a foothold in the community when the NP repeatedly marginalised local *verkrampte* politician Werner Weber. Gerhard Woithe, one of the founding members of the HNP in Ermelo comments: "Werner Weber was also a right-winger but he didn't want to join the HNP because he wanted to stay in the NP. And then with the election he opposed. There were always better people for the jobs but Werner Weber was not a Broederbonder and that made the people very angry.

That turned many voters against the NP."[229] Woithe's comment is revealing, suggesting that white politics in the area was generally conservative, but this did not result in significant support for the HNP in the election of 1970.

Werner Weber, former NP MP for Piet Retief, and later candidate for the HNP in Ermelo, explains how he came to join the HNP and how his followers were disillusioned by the NP:

"In 1974 they split the constituency, and then the constituency of Wakkerstroom disappeared. It was cut in half and one half was part of Ermelo and the other was part of Standerton. I lived in Ermelo so I decided I had to make myself available in the Ermelo constituency. But there was another man, George Botha. He was the standing parliamentarian for the Ermelo constituency that suddenly got half of Wakkerstroom added. We really wanted to have a nomination debate. We would have won, but the party did not like the idea of that, The NP said I had to stand for Standerton, but I didn't live there. Then the NP said that they were having George Botha as the candidate and they eliminated me. That made people very unhappy. So I said I wanted to be the candidate for the next election, I wanted to at least take part in an election to become candidate… 1977 was the next election and I made myself available to be candidate. Then the party said that I may not stand, and they got Hendrik Tempel to be candidate. My supporters said that they could not do that, it was the second time." [230]

In the following election Hendrik Tempel was the NP's preferred candidate again. Weber then decided to stand as an independent. Tempel explains that postal votes gave Tempel the majority whereas area votes were mostly for Weber. Eventually Weber decided to join the HNP as he felt that many votes in the area cast for the HNP were from residents who were unhappy with the NP's nepotistic actions: "In 1981 there was another election … we stood for the HNP. There was a large group of people who were conservative in their thinking, but the people were … for Gerhard Woithe, because look, he was truly HNP, I was also a member, but the people who

[229] Interview with Gerhard Woithe, 10 September 2014, Bronkhorstspruit.
[230] Interview with Werner Weber, Piet Retief, September 2014

voted HNP were not truly HNP [in other words they did not believe in the policies of the HNP but rather were casting a vote against the NP]. It was people who were unhappy with what happened with Hendrik Tempel and George Botha. That's what it was about. Look they were all reasonably conservative. Moolman Mentz eventually won the seat for the CP. That is an indication that they were conservative, the rural people, but I think the people who voted HNP were looking for an outlet to vote against the NP because they felt what the NP was doing wasn't right, that's what it was about."[231]

Hertzog's Role in the Establishment of the HNP

Prior to the establishment of the HNP Hertzog attempted to mobilise support in the NP by appealing to Afrikaners from within the NP. These efforts eventually led to his expulsion from the party after which he formed the HNP. During the course of 1967-1969 Hertzog went on a publicity spree, making speeches from town to town in the former Eastern Transvaal, especially in the Ermelo region. He roundly criticised the NP leadership for no longer defending the interests of the white working class and abandoning the cultural advancement of the Afrikaans language and nationalist culture.

Speaking at a 'report back' meeting to his constituents in Ermelo in November 1967, in reacting to allegations that he was part of a group in the NP opposed to Vorster's policies, Hertzog went on the offensive by vilifying the liberal English media. He also said that the American Field Service sought to subvert the young people of South Africa, who were taken into American homes and subjected to American liberalism. He said that "Tragedy can follow from this brainwashing and the object is to destroy the policy which they inherited from their fathers and mothers."[232] This proved to be a foretaste of his political campaign in the ruling party. In early 1969 Hertzog went on a speaking tour in his Ermelo constituency in the towns of Badplaas, Carolina and Ermelo where he said 'Calvinism upheld the only righteous world view'. More controversially, he launched a scathing critique on English-speaking whites, referred

[231] Interview with Werner Weber, Piet Retief, September 2014
[232] "Hertzog Again Hits at the Sunday Times", The Sunday Times, 12 November, 1967, p. 3

to Portuguese and Italian immigrants as "white people with black hearts" and warned that liberalism was a dangerous trajectory for the white man.[233]

In May of the same year Hertzog again spoke in Ermelo and repeated the core elements of his brand of ultraconservative politics: he hailed Calvinistic Afrikaners and contrasted them to the English who he defined as "liberals who were easy prey for communists". Prominent supporters of Prime Minister John Vorster, Min. Piet Koornhof and Mr George Botha the MPC for Ermelo, were present at the meeting. In response to Hertzog's provocation, Koornhof said that "Dr Hertzog now asks you to choose, knowing that the party leadership has a different view on the matter. He says in so many words that you should choose between him and party leadership."[234] Importantly, he warned that if Dr Hertzog's views were to be accepted it would do irreparable damage to the NP. In a clear sign of the political allegiance of many Ermelo NP supporters, Dr Hertzog reportedly received an "overwhelming motion of confidence", which can be read as a repudiation of Vorster's policies.[235]

In these speeches Hertzog found support for his cause by playing on Christian nationalist white supremacist sentiments, which had been propagated widely by Verwoerd's government. During Verwoerd's tenure black resistance to apartheid was brutally oppressed and there was no indication that the ruling party would reform on policies oppressing black workers. The NP of the late 1960s was, however, starting to appeal to a more cosmopolitan white population, particularly to English South Africans.

Perhaps the most controversial speech would be Hertzog's Krugersdorp speech in 1969. Hertzog came into the media spotlight and caused one of the biggest political battles in the NP since 1948, for his Calvinist speech in 1969, when he was still a member of the NP. Hertzog would consequently be kicked out of the NP for his offensive remarks about English-speaking whites in this speech. At the time, the NP was building its support base within the white English-speaking population. The

[233] "Dr Hertzog shatters Nat's peace settlement" The Sunday Times, 8 June, 1969, p. 97, J.H.P. Serfontein
[234] "Koornhof Clashes with Unrepentant Hertzog", The Sunday Times, 4 May 1969, p. 2
[235] "To the Point", The Sunday Times, 11/05/1969, p.16

future outlook for South Africa from the NP viewpoint was a white South Africa, rather than an Afrikaans South Africa. This speech was in favour of the exclusion of the English population and, therefore, contrary to the national development plans of the NP under John Vorster.

In his speech, Hertzog stated: "The only reliable South Africans are Calvinist Afrikaners. The English-speaking section, on the other hand, have liberalism so deeply ingrained in them that they are unable to stand up to the onslaughts of communism and the new leftist movements which use their freedom to destroy freedom."[236] Hertzog was publicly criticised for his comments and attacks on English South Africans by both Prime Minister Vorster and Minister of Transport Ben Schoeman. Speaking in Parliament on 22 April 1969, Min. Schoeman stated: "I want to make it perfectly clear, so that there can be no misunderstanding, that the Prime Minister and I, as the leader of the Nationalist Party in Transvaal, of which the hon. member of Ermelo is a member, unconditionally reject the allegations made against English-speaking South Africans."[237]

On 11 May 1969 Dr Hertzog won overwhelming support from the majority of his constituents in Ermelo, who voted for a motion of full confidence in the party leadership and himself. With a majority of ten to one the audience rejected the motion of censure deploring Dr Hertzog's actions. He was repeatedly cheered when he explained his Calvinist speech for which he was publicly repudiated in Parliament. He then passed through a guard of local school children on his way to score a major victory against the *verligtes* in Ermelo.[238]

Hertzog gained further ground and support in the course of the year of 1969. The *Sunday Times* reported that, "At six meetings in his constituency (Ermelo) in the last six weeks Dr Hertzog has boldly defied Mr Vorster by repeating the sentiments expressed in his Calvinistic speech. Party leadership tactics were to confront Dr Hertzog with repudiation by Mr Schoeman and Mr Vorster, but at Badplaas and

[236] "To the Point", The Sunday Times, 11/05/1969, p.16
[237] Ibid
[238] "Nationalist Leaders on the Defensive as Hertzog Wins Massive Vote" The Sunday Times, 11 May 1969, p. 2

Carolina Dr Piet Koornhof failed in doing this. At Carolina Dr Hertzog won the audience's sympathy with an explanation of his original speech. At the Ermelo meeting, addressed by Dr Diederichs, Minister of Finance, Dr Hertzog went on the attack."[239]

In June of 1969 Hertzog appeared in public in Amsterdam in his Ermelo constituency and repeated his earlier comments made in his 'Calvinist' speech earlier that year, directly challenging Vorster and the '*verligte*' camp within the NP.[240] At this point Hertzog was still publicly denying plans to form a new party, instead his tactics were to muster up support for the *verkrampte* camp and try to destroy the dominant position of the *verligtes*. Dr Hertzog said: "Nobody is infallible … if there are mistakes in the National Party or its policy, we should endeavour ourselves to rectify these mistakes within the party."[241] Populist tactics, telling a marginalised portion of the so-called 'Afrikaner Nation' what they wanted to hear was his plan of action.

The NP leadership moved decisively to counter Hertzog's politics and prepared the ground for his removal from the party. On 5 October the party's council at Breyten in his constituency of Ermelo voted to expel Dr Hertzog from the National Party. *The Sunday Times* reported that "There were dramatic scenes when Dr Hertzog left the hall a few minutes after 5pm. Outside he was welcomed by an enthusiastic crowd … they sang the hymn "Laat U seën op hom daal". The supporters shouted "welcome among your people Doctor". Hertzog stated that "It is a sorry day to find myself outside of the National Party… I was expelled not because I deviated from party principles but because I wanted to maintain party principles in the purest form." Amid wild cheering he announced "The struggle continues from Breyten this afternoon the struggle continues."[242]

Following these events Dr Hertzog established the HNP in 1969. Support for ultraconservatives would arise in Ermelo for a number of reasons, which were

[239] "Verkrampte victory as Nat leader backs down in Hertzog dispute" The Sunday Times, H. Serfontein, 15 June 1969, p. 2.
[240] "Dr Hertzog shatters Nats' peace settlement" The Sunday Times, 8 June 1969 p. 97
[241] "Verkramptes will fight from within" The Sunday Times, 8 June 1969 p. 97
[242] "Dr Hertzog Expelled", The Sunday Times, J.H.P. Serfontein, 5 October 1969, p. 1

complex and at times contradictory. Although the HNP did not initially receive majority support in Ermelo during the national election of 1970, the majority of its support nationally did come from this town. It was from this point onwards that there would be a growing support base for the ultraconservatives in Ermelo. Most support for the HNP came from farmers, white Afrikaner mine workers and others in the manual labour sector. 'Elite' and 'educated' Afrikaners generally avoided association with the HNP.[243] The HNP's support base grew and by 1981, the HNP won 14% of the Afrikaner vote nationally.

Roderick de Jonge, resident of Ermelo from the 1970s-1990s comments: "Politics played a great role in your likes and dislikes and your belief and what goes on ... you know, and I can only say that that was always a bone of contention for the general public there. Everybody was very happy with each other until voting time comes. Voting times, then you know ... Nationalists stand there, the HNP stands there, the Bloedsappe over there ... there was never a happy situation … the Bible plays a big role, religion plays a big role in that town because it's all these facets that come into play ... I mean, you can imagine if just before the voting, and the government now hits you with a hell of an amount of tax, and you feel that is wrong, they made a mistake, you are not going to vote for them, you will vote for the next party, try and get that one out ... it's human ..."[244]

White Workers Support for the HNP

The support base for the ultraconservatives largely came from a class of whites who would have the most to lose, economically as well as culturally, from the demise of Verwoerdian Apartheid. A large portion of Afrikaners became very wealthy due to the material benefits of apartheid while another portion would, however, in a sense be left behind. The labourers would have the most to lose if a system that favoured them on grounds of their race was to slowly disappear. However, it would be incorrect to state that the conservative base consisted only of lower class white Afrikaans

[243] "The Far Right in Current South African Politics", B. M. du Toit, Journal of Modern African Studies, (1991), Cambridge University Press, p. 639
[244] Interview with Roderick de Jonge, Pretoria, 2012

speakers. Many of the conservative leaders were former prominent NP members. Much of the conservative youth protest came from university students. In Ermelo farmers made up a large group of conservative supporters too. Some support for conservative splinter groups would also come from white English-speaking South Africans. It is my opinion that the politics of hate and racism practised by conservatives would appeal to people who held such opinions across class divides. However, certain groups can be pinpointed, and it is in these particular groups that one can try and discover as to why so many Afrikaners were so adverse to change.

White workers were a class that had, due to the politics of apartheid, enjoyed an elevated relatively secure and comfortable lifestyle. M. Steyn argues that the construction of whiteness in apartheid South Africa provided a mechanism by which working-class whites could be rewarded for their loyalty to white elites. The historic symbolism of the great trek and its monument (the Voortrekker Monument) came to be understood as freedom to exercise racial hegemony, 'the right to be white' (and all the benefits of whiteness) and was yoked to the lack of rights of 'non-whites'.[245] The use of emotive language and nationalist symbols would thus appeal to white workers. By the late 1970s the Afrikaner elite desired international respect and reform and were no longer primarily concerned with nationalist ideology. Lower class whites, on the other hand, were looking to apartheid logic to solve their problems and were clearly open to mobilisation by the ultraconservative splinter groups.

The HNP accused the NP of forsaking Afrikaner ideals and Verwoerd's Calvinistic vision for South Africa.[246] Moolman Mentz, CP councillor for Ermelo from 1988-1993 and ardent supporter of Albert Hertzog, comments on the ultraconservative support base of the 1970s:

"The path of the Afrikaner and the path that they (the NP) were opening was different. Understand? When they started, well how can I be specific?" His wife interrupts: "Mentz, was that not when they started with the mixed marriages? and the Afrikaner

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245 Steyn, M., Whiteness Just Isn't What it Used to Be, Sunypress, 2001

246 "The Far-right in Current South African Politics", B. M. du Toit, Journal of Modern African Studies, (1991), Cambridge University Press, p. 639

did not want that, he did not want you to marry a black!" Mentz interrupts: "Look. In the 60s the NP supported us with everything, but when they started with that stuff we stood up and said: "No, that is wrong". From our perspective we thought it was wrong because we saw that they started going left."[247]

Despite massive publicity campaigns and an on the ground show of support the HNP did very badly in the general election of 1970. The party got a total of 53 000 votes, just about 10% of the Afrikaner vote.[248] Although, as mentioned above, support for the ultraconservatives was concentrated in the Ermelo constituency during this time, as the majority of their support came from this area. However, by all accounts support for the HNP in this area was more of a vote against existing NP political structures.

"A further factor limiting potential HNP support was the economic advance of the Afrikaners in the 1970s. During this decade Afrikaners were reaping the fruits of rapid economic development and upward mobility into the ranks of the middle classes. This, moreover, was clearly perceived as the reward for continued loyalty and allegiance to the ruling party."[249] This upward mobility would change the aspirations and values of Afrikaner people quite significantly. The HNP was using symbols and mechanisms from a time when Afrikaners were not in power were downtrodden and poor to try and mobilise them against the party that had uplifted them. HNP support in these years was limited to small numbers. White trade unions did on occasion show open support for the HNP. The Mine Workers Union as well as the White Building Workers Union would on a number of occasions support the party.[250]

Woithe comments: "The HNP was against the black unions, and they supported the white unions. For example, Gert Beetge was a rep for the White Builders Union. I can't remember the name. And it did happen that the economy was booming (in Ermelo) and there was more building that was being done and there weren't enough white builders, so they started hiring black builders. The NP started construction

[247] Interview with Moolman Mentz, May 2012, in Ermelo, Mpumalanga.
[248] Grobler J., *Uitdaging & Antwoord*, Grourie, 2007, p. 171
[249] "Vir volk en vaderland: A Guide to the White Right", Grobbelaar J., Bekker S., and R.Evans, Indicator South Africa, August 1989, p. 24
[250] Ibid p. 24

schools for blacks. The whites thought they were losing their jobs, and the blacks were cheaper labour, and because of that the HNP got the support of the unions. But they weren't so many, a small minority."[251]

The WBU and the MWU were also instrumental in bussing crowds into political meetings of the late 1960s[252]. When fights broke out the youths who were throwing chairs around and fighting local NP members were usually from the unions. Gert Beetge was also present at most of the early political spectacles orchestrated by the HNP.

NP Policies Limiting Business Rights of Indians

Local NP policies in the 1970s were orientated around benefiting businesses owned by whites. The Indian trading area was removed and the land was then sold to private developers, the Chatman Brothers. It was developed into a shopping centre. The town council forcibly removed existing businesses and allowed their favoured developers to construct the new mall. This new development was marred with controversies and there were many accusations of corruption.[253]

When Indian traders were seen to be a threat to white-owned businesses local organisations organised boycotts, and later forcibly removed Indian-owned shops. In October 1961 the Transvaal Indian Congress issued a statement criticising the mayor of Ermelo, Mr B.S. Roberts, for calling on the public to support white shopkeepers and boycott Indian ones. Speaking at the Ermelo Liaison Committee and published in the *Highvelder*, the mayor called on all whites to boycott Indian traders. The Transvaal Indian Congress described the mayor's remarks as deplorable and mentioned that the Indian community pays a substantial amount of taxes.[254] Hundreds of leaflets threatening to 'unmask' whites who patronised Indian-owned shops were posted to whites in Ermelo. The leaflet warned that a blacklist of children of whites

[251] Interview with Gerhard Woithe, Bronkhorstspruit, 10 September 2014.
[252] Interviews and newspaper articles indicate that both the WBU and the MWU had a considerable presence in the town, however there is not much information on exact numbers.
[253] Interview with Hein Mentz, 21 October, 2014 Ermelo
[254] "Tvl. Indians attack Mayor of Ermelo", Political Correspondent, The Sunday Times, 8 October 1961, p. 3

who traded with Indians would be circulated among prospective employers to prevent the children from getting jobs.[255]

Gretchen Celliers, local farmer and long time resident of Ermelo, comments: "It was also about the Indians who were forcibly removed. I don't remember what year it was, but they took all the Indians, there in the late 70s my kids were in primary school. They then built Cassim Park, an Indian shopping centre and a place for them, and that also created many problems. The Indians were good businessmen in the town, still today a strong group. They made them move there and that made more problems, big problems in Ermelo; because the well-off people didn't allow you to support an Indian. You couldn't be seen there, to buy things like material. For example, my husband was an NP man, my friend and I weren't allowed to be seen there to buy material at the Indian shop, they also broke down all those houses."[256]

Although the HNP made limited impact on the social and political arena of Ermelo in the 1970s their influence in years to come was significant. The HNP managed to gain a foothold in the community, they played the part of 'the Afrikaners' last hope' and that would later play a large role in the way that this society would function in years to come. The changes that took place in Ermelo during the 1970s would greatly influence the way in which the town developed in the 1980s and later influence the way in which the transition from apartheid to democracy happened there. By the middle of the 1980s the CP gained overwhelming support in a very large portion of community structures, this was only possible when reform of the NP was perceived to threaten a large portion of the whites' livelihood. Large businesses that were created in the 1970s would change from the very same people that advocated forcible removals in the 1970s to be a voice of opposition against local conservative race-based policy in the 1980s and 1990s.

[255] "Post Vote Shock for Cape Nats", Political Correspondent, The Sunday Times, 1 October, 1961, p. 17

[256] Interview with Gretchen Celliers, in Ermelo, 1 October 2014

Chapter 3

The Conservative Party Years: 1980-1990

Dominance of the Conservative Party and Decline of White Power

A number of changes occurred nationally that played a role in the local political and social developments in Ermelo. The introduction of the Tricameral Parliamentary system triggered the formation of the Conservative Party (CP) in 1982. The CP grew considerably nationally and became the official opposition to the NP, it also gained control of Ermelo's town council, and their policy and ideology was enforced in the town from the late 1980s. The local economic boom that started in the 1970s continued into the early 1980s but development in the town started to slow down by the mid 1980s, and by the late 1980s many industrial concerns closed their doors causing a period of de-industrialisation in the 1990s.

Support for ultraconservatives grew for a number of reasons. Significantly, the findings of the Wiehan Commission, which resulted in the eventual lifting of the colour bar for some industrial employment, would invoke a fear, and radicalism in white workers particularly, that motivated them to show outright support for conservative groups. The CP's connections to white unions boosted their support base. The slow and general decline of rail freight and transport resulted in a collapse in property prices in the neighbouring town of Breyten; it also meant that many rail workers in Ermelo would lose their income. The 1980s also marked the era when Afrikaner state and culture separated. The apartheid government started to drift away from a state supported approach to Afrikaans culture, and rather focused on facilitating the economic survival of all whites in the future. One of the most significant events that facilitated this shift was the 1986 paper, "Kerk en samelewing", in which the Dutch Reform Church announced it would distance the church from politics and re-define its stance on segregation and apartheid more generally. This created a situation in Ermelo where congregations were pliable and swayed away from *verligte* rhetoric and towards conservatives. President P.W. Botha's Rubicon

speech in 1985, marked the 'day apartheid started dying'[257] and invoked fear in many whites which was exploited by conservative groups. The confluence of these events, coupled with the established conservative voice in the area that had predominantly served as a voice of dissonance during the 1970s, led to residents unhappy with their perceived deteriorating surroundings, and increasing fear of an unknown future, finding a political home in ultraconservative groups. Furthermore, the farming community also experienced the effects of the economic downturn. Farming costs soared during this time and state support for farmers decreased. In Ermelo, the 1980s marked the period when some apartheid bylaws were lifted, the job bar was partially lifted, and the first signs of racial integration were seen in public hotels and restaurants since the inception of the town in the late 1800s. The economic downturn and the closure of many blue-collar employment facilities happened at a time when state support for blue-collar workers was diminishing.

By the 1980s Ermelo had changed dramatically from the picturesque farming town of the 1900s. The decade would see a number of significant developments and changes occur.

Farmers and Conservatives

Hein Mentz, a local farmer and founder of the CP in Ermelo comments on the support for ultraconservatives from the farming community: "The strong community in the Ermelo constituency and then also at municipal level, was the farmers, it was a big element of conservatism, together with the element of the blue-collar worker. Lots came from the Transvaal Administration, as well as Camden, that was a power plant, that was your blue-collar worker. That element, the farmer, the Germans in Piet Retief, the blue-collar worker in Camden was a constant support base. They were the majority in the municipality, because this municipality was a conservative one."[258]

Economic growth profoundly changed the composition of Afrikaners in terms of their working lives. There was a steady decline of Afrikaner farmers leading to the 1980s

[257] "The Day Apartheid Started Dying", H. Giliomee, The Mail and Guardian, 26/10/2012
[258] Interview with Hein Mentz, 21 October, 2014 Ermelo

with a mere 7% of Afrikaners working as farmers in 1980. In 1990 it was only 5%.[259] In Ermelo these changes were also in effect. The by now established urbanisation of Afrikaners created a situation where white farmers were no longer a strong support group the NP had to appease. White farmers became more and more of a minority, and the numbers of African women and children living on the farmlands around Ermelo were growing. Furthermore, farm labour in the form of black men was growing scarcer. There was a growing trend of urbanisation by potential black workers. Mining jobs were more attractive to potential farm workers as payment and working conditions were better. Since the late1970s farmers had been complaining that they could not get adequate labour for their farms.[260]

This shortage of labour meant that white farmers could no longer treat and pay their farm labourers as they wished. Farmers questioned in Hugo's "Second Carnegie Inquiry into Poverty and Development in South Africa"1982 report on the relationship between farmers in the northern Transvaal and right-wing political organisations stated: "We farmers are dependent on them and the blacks know it only too well. It requires a fine sense of diplomacy in order to recruit labourers, to keep them and then to get a day's work out of them."[261] This represented a shift in the social order in the rural areas. Furthermore, black farm workers in the 1980s were becoming increasingly politicised as the struggle against apartheid gained momentum. This challenged white farmers' dependence on a master servant hierarchy. In many ways the South African countryside was, and still is, a feudal system.

Kirk Helliker argues that state assistance to white farmers declined in the 1980s due to the re-organisation of commercial farming along neo-liberal lines which left farmers vulnerable to changes in the market as well as natural disasters such as droughts. White farming was built through large scale state assistance where farmers received credit, land as well as input and output markets which involved subsidies and

[259] The Afrikaners, Giliomee, H., Tafelberg, 2003, p. 606
[260] Hugo, P., Second Carnegie Inquiry into Poverty and Development in South Africa, "Afrikaans Farmers in the Transvaal: a Quality of Life Profile, Carnegie Conference Paper no. 287, 13-19 April 1984, Cape Town, p. 11
[261] Second Carnegie Inquiry into Poverty and Development in South Africa, Hugo, P, "Afrikaans Farmers in the Transvaal: a Quality of Life Profile", Carnegie Conference Paper no. 287, 13-19 April 1984, Cape Town, p. 25

financial assistance. Access to credit was administered through parastatals and this scheme enabled white farmers to gain access to financing from the government at significantly lower interest rates. Primarily, The Land Bank, Agricultural Credit Board and sub-sectoral cooperatives awarded this financing. These schemes insured agricultural profit margins. The state controlled the marketing of agricultural products and set the annual prices which protected farmers from a potentially volatile national and international market. However, from the 1980's the collapsing apartheid state pushed the government to re-regulated agricultural intervention alone neo-liberalising lines.[262]

This meant that the government was no longer sheltering farmers from financially trying circumstances, leaving profitability of farming very largely dependent on the market. There would be considerable support for ultraconservatives from farmers who were in opposition to the government's cuts of farming subsidies.[263] Over the period of 1960-1970 prices of farming necessities increased by 17%. Over the next ten years until 1979 these prices increased a shocking further 182%. In addition to this the prices of farming products decreased considerably in the 1970s and 1980s, making farming an even less prosperous career choice.[264]

Farmers had a variety of reasons to support conservatives. Firstly, some would have supported the conservative support base from the 1970s, when many would have voted for an alternative in opposition to corrupt and nepotistic NP councillors in the Ermelo area. There was thus an already entrenched tradition of voting ultraconservative if one was dissatisfied with the NP. By the 1980s the social structure on the farms was changing from one where whites were on the top of what seemed to be an unshakeable hierarchy to one which was starting to look like it might fall apart. Farming was no longer as profitable as it once was, labour was difficult to acquire and so became more expensive and more competitive this at the same time as political

[262] "Reproducing White Commercial Agriculture in South Africa", Kirk Helliker, (Sociology Department, Rhodes University) Seminar Paper Presented at Critical Studies Seminar Series, Rhodes University, Grahamstown, February 22 2013
[263] The Afrikaners, Giliomee, H., Tafelberg, 2003, p. 606
[264] P. Hugo, Second Carnegie Inquiry into Poverty and Development in South Africa, "Afrikaans Farmers in the Transvaal: a Quality of Life Profile", Carnegie Conference Paper no. 287, 13-19 April 1984, Cape Town, p. 6

ideals were influencing the black labour force to demand better working conditions. These conditions motivated more Afrikaner farmers to support the CP in the 1980s. All of these conditions were aggravated by a severe drought that also negatively affected farming profitability in 1983 and 1984.

The White Working Class

The Ermelo Mines Project reached full production in 1979. Ermelo Mines was set up as a coal exporting mine. This mine created thousands of jobs and provided further boosts for the economy. The black and white personnel of this mine were housed in Ermelo. The South African Railways personnel for this project as well as the personnel working in the marshalling yard were also housed in Ermelo as an effort by the council to arrest the decline in economic growth.[265]

By the start of the decade the decline of the South African Railways for freight and transport uses would start to have its effect on the area in and around Ermelo. Hein Mentz of the CP in Ermelo explains how the economic collapse of Breyten affected Ermelo: "Breyten was a railway town. A big part of Breyten's economical social spending was here [Ermelo]. People lived there but they shopped here and they came to school here. With the Transnet downsizing, and what have you, the degrading of Breyten also had a negative impact in Ermelo in that time. In my time there was an active council in Breyten. It was an active community with an income in Spoornet or SAPS or what have you. And then with the changes in Transnet and also with road transport becoming more important Breyten fell, to an almost stop. It made its mark on a place like Ermelo. It's not too far from each other, for work or school or shopping. It's what a place like Ermelo flourishes on. That was also a voting sector. The blue-collar workers. The railways people. Those were the guys who supported the right wing or the conservative wing … Ja, it was in the early 80s. When the whole structure went to pot. Because people no longer lived there you could buy a house for next to nothing … General mining carried the burden of the potential property crisis in Ermelo."[266]

[265] "Ermelo 100", 1980, Brochure published by Ermelo Town Council for centenary celebrations.
[266] Interview with Hein Mentz, 21 October, 2014 Ermelo

By the early 1980s the white working class started to see opportunities diminishing in Ermelo due to industrial projects no longer expanding and slowing down. Conservative voices had been scaremongering throughout the 1970s in this area, telling whites that they would lose their jobs due to *verligte* NP policies. By the end of the 1980s and start of the 1990s the three largest employers of the white working class in Ermelo would either shut down or decline dramatically. The slowing down of industrial growth in the early 1980s was a sign of things to come.

By 1980 some of the recommendations of the Wiehan Commission were being translated into policy. The recommendations of the Commission were heavily criticised by both left and right-wing. It was said that the outcome of the Commission would only benefit large businesses as it would subdue existing black labour organisations.[267] It was criticised from the left, as the white working class was said to be replaced with a 'buffer class' of black workers, which would also serve to subdue labour unrest from black workers.[268] In effect the colour bar was lifted. Part 6 of the Wiehan Commission dealt specifically with labour on the mines. Legislation only allowing white people a blasting certificate (this certificate was needed to be employed in a management position underground, and the racialised nature of this qualification effectively limited management positions underground to whites only) was changed in December 1988, and now there would be no state sanctioned guarantee that the whites would be privileged over blacks underground.[269] The slowing down of economic growth in Ermelo happened at the same time as a global economic downturn. Inflation rose as did unemployment. Resistance against apartheid grew. It seemed like a number of factors would create a sense of fear and despair amongst whites in Ermelo, and South Africa generally.

Hein Mentz comments on how the retrenchments of white workers at Usutu, Camden and Ermelo mines had a very big influence on the political choices that many made:

[267] "Wiehan Commission", part of speech by Auret van Heerden, NUSAS president.
[268] "From Durban to Wiehahn: Black Workers, Employers, and the State in South Africa During the 1970s", Alex Lichtenstein, Paper Presented at Wits Institute for Social and Economic Research (WISER), University of the Witwatersrand, February 25, 2013
[269] "Right-wing Politics and Resistance: The Mine Workers' Union and Transformation in South Africa, 1964-1997". Wessel Visser, Department of History, University of Stellenbosch, p. 16

"It was the wrong time. It was during that time. There were lots of white people in the town who suddenly didn't have a job. It was on the turn of these new changes in South Africa. It had a big influence."[270]

The legalisation of 'black' trade unions meant that white trade unions would become far less important in comparison to the massive number of black workers in South Africa who would join non-racial trade unions. White trade unions were thus in danger of becoming completely irrelevant. For this reason the MWU tried to grow its membership beyond its traditional base in the mining industry. Steelworkers from Iscor as well as electricity workers from Eskom power stations and coal mines were recruited. In Ermelo the Camden Power Station was one of the single largest sources of employment for white workers in the area, furthermore coal mines also served as large sources of employment. In its recruitment propaganda the MWU was portrayed as "a sanctuary for the white worker".[271]

Wessel Visser states that: "In the light of the HNP's failure to attract substantial right-wing electoral support in order to win seats in the elections of 1979 and 1981, it came as no surprise when the CP began to draw considerable white labour support after its inception in 1982. Where the CP promised, should it come to power, to restore and maintain statutory job reservation for white workers at a time of growing economic insecurity and increasing white unemployment, the attitude of white unions such as the MWU towards the NP chilled even further and turned to hostility as the right-wing accused the government of betraying white labour. And in the general election of 1987 Arrie Paulus, the former MWU general secretary, successfully contested the Carletonville seat for the CP."[272]

In Ermelo during the 1970s the HNP served as an outlet for voters who were dissatisfied with the management of their town. The *verkramptes* were a home not only for 'true conservatives' but also for people who were frustrated with the

[270] Interview with Hein Mentz, Ermelo, 21 October, 2014
[271] "From MWU to Solidarity-A trade union reinventing itself." Visser, W., South African Journal of Labour Relations, 2006,30(2), p. 7
[272] Labour and Right-wing Extremism in the South African Context – a Historical Overview, W.Visser, p. 16

direction in which their town was going in terms of town management. Portions of ultraconservative support in the 1970s also came from individuals unhappy about NP patronage and corrupt business practice. This tradition of voting ultraconservative in protest came mainly from individuals who were frustrated with nepotism and Broederbond favouritism. When the CP was formed, this section of ultraconservative support would also vote CP instead of NP.

Gretchen Celliers, wife of a prominent NP politician and farmer, Japie Celliers comments on why some voted ultraconservative: "This is my own opinion, but I would say (support came from) those who feared they would lose their jobs if someone of another race would take his job and so on. But here in Ermelo there were many well-off people. It's the same with the CP in those years, that's also why politics came to the schools, but those years are over, politics and schools."[273]

The CP and Local Politics

The CP's focus on local municipalities and their intimate connections to these communities made their campaigns very successful in towns in and around the Eastern Transvaal, particularly Ermelo, where their presence was, by the late 1980s, felt in virtually all facets of town life.

The CP was formed in 1982 by Dr Andries Treurnicht in reaction to the formation of the Tricameral Parliament. Throughout the 1980s support for the CP would grow steadily. In the 1987 election the CP won 27% of the national vote. By the end of the 1980s the CP would be the official opposition to the NP in Parliament with 31% of the national votes.[274] The CP succeeded where the HNP did not, for a number of reasons. The CP's focus on campaigning on a local municipal level, combined with a waning credibility in the NP, economic downturns of the time, the rising power of African political freedom movements within South Africa, as well as the liberation of Africans in surrounding countries would all contribute to a growing sense of fear and

[273] Interview with Gretchen Celliers, in Ermelo, 1 October 2014
[274] "The Rise and Fall of Afrikaner Ethnic Political Mobilisation, 1943-1999", A. Lemon, South African Geographic Journal, (2003) 85 (2) 144 – 151, p. 146

discomfort in the Afrikaner community, which would influence them to vote for conservatives.

The ultraconservative support base took a sharp turn and grew from 3.2% for the HNP in 1977 nationally to 14.1% for the HNP nationally in 1981. This was a reality that the Mine Workers Unions (MWU), the largest white union at the time, was unprepared for.[275] Following the release of the Wiehan Commission the MWU tried to display to its members in the mining sector by organising a nation-wide strike. This strike was supported by 9000 workers on 70 mines, however, the strike collapsed when the Chamber of Mines threatened miners that they would lose all benefits. After this the MWU changed tactics and fought the lifting of the colour bar in the election of 1981 by giving the HNP its moral and electoral support.[276]

Regional support for the CP was mainly concentrated in the northern regions of South Africa, in the Transvaal province where by 1987 "all 22 elected CP Parliamentary seats are located in the Transvaal, as are six of the eight seats in which the combined CP/HNP vote exceeded that of the NP in May 1987."[277] Most of the CP seats were rural although there were some from the Witwatersrand, Pretoria and Vereeniging where there were high numbers of white workers.

The success of the CP hinged on their focus on local politics. Their national campaign was somewhat lacking in solid workable policy and consisted mainly of criticising the NP government. The criticism the CP levelled at the NP, was that it had mismanaged the economy and sold the 'white voter out to the black majority'. The CP would attempt to win the support of white civil servants by highlighting the falling living standards of white civil servants particularly.

The CP's strategy of blaming the NP for the slow impoverishment of working-class whites and civil servants is made clear in the following extract from their 1989

[275] "Caught in a Stranglehold Between Resistance and Reform: The Mine Workers Unions and Right-wing Politics in South African 1979-1997", W. Visser, Journal for Contemporary History, vol. 39, Issue 2, 100 – 118, 2014, p. 104
[276] Ibid p. 104
[277] "Vir volk en vaderland, a Guide to the White Right", J. Grobbelaar, S. Bekker, and R.Evans, Indicator South Africa, August 1989, p. 11

electoral campaign: "South Africa faces increasingly difficult economic standards and therefore greater white poverty in the future; the economic downturn is largely due to reckless government spending; a substantial part of the expenditure is found in irresponsibly large allocations to black groups in the country with the result that; it is the ordinary white man who is at the receiving end, for he must pay for this state expenditure."[278]

The NP's election manifesto of 1981 was based on the '12 point plan'. This plan included the following themes which NP policy supported: The recognition and acceptance of muti-nationalism and of minorities in South Africa, the acceptance of vertical differentiation with the built-in principle of self-determination, the creation of constitutional structures which provide for development of self-administration of homelands, the development of the Tricameral Parliament, segregation in schools and residential areas, the means for continued negotiation which would facilitate current policy trajectories, strong defence and police forces which answer to state decisions, free enterprise as central to the South African economy, economic inter-dependence between different races in South Africa, continued trade between South Africa and its neighbours, neutrality on diplomatic international issues, South Africa's firm will to 'protect' itself from international interference.[279]

The CP's election manifesto was based on a 14 point set of ideals as follows: That survival can only be meaningful if whites can maintain their language, character, identity, traditions and country. The party believed that skin colour was not the only differences between the races but that all aspects of culture were different too, that segregation should be emphasised in: the schooling system, residential areas, public space, sports and sport clubs, in labour, job reservation, and trade unions. The party was outright against the Tricameral Parliament and wanted the South African Parliament to be strictly white; they suggested a homeland system for other minority groups; that 'Asian' political rights be determined by local government; a continued effort to maintain the homeland system that existed; an economic policy focused on

[278] "Vir volk en vaderland, a Guide to the White Right", J. Grobbelaar, S. Bekker, and R.Evans, Indicator South Africa, August 1989, p. 12
[279] SA General Election Manifestos, 1910-1981, W.A. Kleynhans, UNISA press, 1987, pp. 489-490.

the mechanisation of previously labour intensive industry; a free economy as long as it is in the interest of the country; natural resources to be used to strengthen the economy to protect the country from foreign threats; investment in education and the police force particularly; the suppression of 'terrorism'; specific investment on arms for the defence force; diplomatic relations to remain peaceful; and finally efforts to root out election corruption in the current government.[280]

The CP's campaigning strategy to focus on grassroots local policy was tested in the run-up to the 1987 election in the Transvaal and proved to be hugely successful. This approach was borrowed from the NP strategy in the 1940s. It comprised involvement in local civic organisations and voluntary bodies such as school boards, local councils, farming co-ops, and local business organisations. This was coupled with close contacts with prospective voters, by visiting voters in their homes. Because of workers' backgrounds and party branch locations, it was an approach that was particularly effective in Afrikaans communities.[281]

The CP's campaign also focused on exposing NP corruption and Boederbond nepotism. It is important to note, however, that most of the top CP leadership had at one stage played a leading role in the Broederbond themselves. Many of these people had been ejected from the Broederbond by the *verligte* camp. These issues had won the HNP most of its support and would continue to win the CP support from disgruntled businessmen and citizens.

"In Ermelo specifically, if you look at local election, the first time in the *tussenverkiesing* (by-election), in the town council, before the election for town council, before we took control of the town council it was the *tussenverkiesing* (by-election), don't ask dates you will have to look. It was a man called Johan Brits that stood as our CP candidate … He stood against the 'crown prince' from the NP, who was imported, Adv. Willem van Drimmelen, he was a lawyer in Ermelo, he practiced here. He was the crown prince, he came specifically to Ermelo, started the practice

[280] SA General Election Manifestos, 1910-1981, W.A. Kleynhans, , UNISA press, 1987, p. 484
[281] "Vir volk en vaderland: a Guide to the White Right", J. Grobbelaar, S. Bekker, and R.Evans, Indicator South Africa, August 1989, p. 12

with the help of the Broederbond. And this opportunity in the election they then decided he must stand. Johan Brits was a very low profile guy; he was on the town council, worked for them. He also had his business. The CP got him to stand, it was the first victory for the CP, in this constituency on the town council."[282]

The CP strategy was using a local character, whom residents could relate to, and whom residents trusted. The NP had a top down approach, and one that was of a particular benefit to the aspiring white middle-class city dweller. The 'little guy' or 'common man' who constituted the majority of the residents of white Ermelo had little to gain from the NP's promises. By using a local character who was relatable to most of the Ermelo residents the CP promised voters that they would not 'betray' them as the NP had done. Whether the CP could live up to these promises would be tested in the 1990s.

CP policy included total racial segregation. The CP advocated that all government amenities should be reserved for whites alone. They had a similar approach to education policy – that it should remain racially exclusive; their influence on school governing bodies made this a reality long after racial segregation was outlawed. Hein Mentz, local CP representative and town council member from the 1980s comments: "Let me say, the strategy was one aimed to keep what was ours, and not too, at that stage the *verligte* element, the Chris Heunis, he was the minister of *verligte sake* (C. Heunis was the NP's Minister of Constitutional Reform), he was the totally new changed policy of the NP, he represented that … the opening of integrated amenities, and the lifting of segregation. That's where we came from, so we could say to hell with what's happening out there; what we have is good enough and we have to look after it. We shouldn't be part of the new era of the thought process that was part of the NP then, and that came from the higher levels of the NP being forced down on us. That was our strategy, a bird in the hand is better than two in the bush."[283]

Ironically, policy differences between the CP and NP were not that substantial. NP attempts to segregate communities was somewhat unsuccessful due to confusing and

[282] Interview with Hein Mentz, 21 October, 2014 Ermelo
[283] Ibid

ambiguous structures in place to enforce segregation. The NP government structures and bodies to enforce segregation were usually higher authorities which were not in touch with local communities. CP structures were more in touch with communities as the individuals enforcing segregation were actually part of communities.[284] The CP encouraged the community to police itself, and make it uncomfortable and dangerous for black South Africans to use public facilities. There were a number of illegal and violent intimidation campaigns in Ermelo which are rumoured to have been initiated by the CP and put into practice by the AWB. There is compelling evidence for this to be true in PR statements by the town council where the CP denied involvement in such incidents, while at the same time showing public verbal support. These intimidation incidents would increase in number as the decade wore on.

Mentz's comments on Brits and Van Drimmelen illustrate the CP's tendencies to campaign locally with community members: "You couldn't say to the individual, on the one side you have the crown prince and on the other side was the low profile guy. It was enough to keep things the way they were. The other strategy was to have a campaign, the candidate had to work hard, he had to go to every house, we had to have the feedback. The organisational element was a very big element of our success. He had to say: here I am, I am Johan Brits (CP representative of the time) I am the candidate and this is what I stand for. He had to win the election on his feet. You have to come to the person to tell him I don't want to change. We did it, against the new policy that was muddled up, used big words, on the stage the NP had an advisor, an American, I can't remember his surname, and he had the strategy you have to use big words, be intelligent, use a high level of education, but it alienated your normal person."[285]

During the late 1980s and early 1990s many right-wing parties formed a loose alliance under the premise that they were united in their fight to uphold apartheid and oppose the NP in elections. During the late 1980s and early 1990s the CP would operate within the institutional framework of the government. The AWB however,

[284] "Vir volk en vaderland: a Guide to the White Right", J. Grobbelaar, S. Bekker, and R. Evans, an Indicator South Africa, August 1989, p. 16
[285] Interview with Hein Mentz, Ermelo, 21 October, 2014

would gain their political leverage through the threat of civil war. The CP's alliance with the AWB would ultimately cost them much support and would result in their demise. The AWB was behind a number of illegal acts in which CP policy was enforced in Ermelo. A reader's letter in the *Beeld* illustrates how the unsavoury activities of the AWB cost the CP its reputation: "Die rede is die karikatuur van die KP wat onder meer geskep is deur uitsprake ... van die AWB." (The reason is that the caricature of the CP was mostly created by statements of the AWB)[286]

A Vote for the CP is a Vote Against the NP

Many locals would complain that the NP had 'lost touch' with their communities. NP representatives were almost always Broederbond nepotistic candidates. They were often individuals who had business connections that could benefit from decisions made in the local council. This was a big reason for conservative support in the 1970s, as well as the 1980s.

By the early 1980s NP control of the town council was undergoing troubled times. A number of incidents indicated that internal structures were fraught with in-fighting and disagreements. In the general election of 1981, one year prior to the formation of the CP the ultraconservative party of the HNP achieved its highest voter numbers in Ermelo nationally, again, after the previous election. The HNP came "within 90 votes of taking the provincial seat and within 470 votes of winning the parliamentary seat."[287] Dissatisfaction with the NP was widespread in the area. Since 1970 Ermelo and its neighbours had four MP's, three of whom had defected from the NP.[288] Dissatisfaction with the NP reached a peak. NP candidates during local elections would stand as independents while secretly attending NP planning meetings.

Hein Mentz comments: "No, the fight was so dirty that after that election came the municipal election, in 1980-1983. Then the NP decided that they were going to not let their candidates stand as NP candidates during the election. If we let our people stand

[286] Beeld, 18/10/1991
[287] "HNP rubs hands over NAT troubles in Ermelo", The Sunday Times, 14/02/1982, p. 39
[288] Ibid p. 39

as NP, then no one will vote for them, so they let them stand as independent candidates. So it's this Broederbond nationalist, but he was not standing as NP, everyone knows it. We called their bluff. We got the minutes, and we told the people that they were lying to them. This was a huge *broedertwis* that really separated people from one another. People would vandalise each other's homes and businesses and what have you. The fights were on all levels and we gave each other nothing, it was a dirty fight. The fight was before my time; in the 70s the fight was no different than anywhere else. But the fight from the 1980s, it was bloody. In Ermelo it definitely cooked out, more than anywhere else. Because here there was a division of votes. The Germans vote for their candidate, the NP voted for theirs, and the conservatives voted for my father. He won a majority and then this became a conservative town. A CP town. The ruling party did not want to accept that, and the Boederbond was even more reluctant to accept it. We didn't even greet each other; we would have killed each other. It was particularly bad in the late 80s and the early 90s. It was very unpleasant. It was an unpleasant fight. Particularly when the CP came to power in the town council."[289]

Town Council Becomes Conservative

In Ermelo there were public intimidation campaigns targeting racial integration since the early 1980s. In 1982 a group of 30 whites broke up a dinner and dance party in the Ermelo Hotel, which was attended by blacks. Armed with batons and pick-axe handles the group of whites beat black attendees at the event.[290] This kind of intimidation and violence reflects the trend that started to develop in Ermelo with the rise of CP control. CP segregation policy would be implemented by means of illegal violence and force, yet the individuals perpetrating these actions would not claim to have done so on behalf of the CP.

[289] Interview with Hein Mentz, Ermelo, 21 October, 2014
[290] "Totsiens South Africa", The Sunday Times, 17/10/1982, p. 32

In the 1987 election the CP won just over 380 000 votes and the NP over 520 000 votes in the Transvaal province. The CP won 22 seats in parliament and the NP had 47, also in the Transvaal.[291]

During the 1987 municipal elections in Ermelo, the CP's strategy and ideology was to promise white voters that they would keep the town white. Their campaign was successful and the Ermelo Town Council became a CP-controlled one. Throughout the late 1980s and early 1990s, the CP-controlled council would be implicated in a number of anti-integration campaigns.

"And we had the majority. Then we changed everything. The lawyers who were the same lawyers in the council for years. NP Broederbond employees, we kicked them in the jack, got rid of them. That was hell. Can you think this guy has been working in the council for 40 years, then we said sorry you are out. Town planners we took out, we got new town planners. For all our services we got new employees. Even the employment of the administrators, we asked him outright, where lies your political allegiances? That is how far it went in this town. We said to the town clerk, either you support us or you lose your job in this town.

"Those three NP guys, who were elected as independents under the guise of a ratepayers association, we made it hell for them. Hell. It was really. We kept asking them, are you talking as a nationalist, as a Broederbonder, as what? It cost me as an individual. It was bad for us too."[292]

Some of the apartheid bylaws were being repealed at this time. On 22 July 1987 the Repeal of the Sprouted Grain Ordinance, prohibiting black people from fermenting beer, as well as the Repeal of the Asiatic Bazaar Regulations came into effect.[293] The CP's strategy to keep apartheid in effect in Ermelo for as long as possible was reliant on coercing the community as a whole to police themselves. Any kind of integration was unacceptable, and one would face violent consequences by one's very own

[291] "Vir volk en vaderland: a Guide to the White Right", J. Grobbelaar, S. Bekker, and R. Evans, Indicator South Africa, August 1989, p. 8
[292] Interview with Hein Mentz, Ermelo, 21 October, 2014
[293] PB 2-4-2-1-14, TALG 5-1-14, File name: Ermelo Bylaws, National Archives, Pretoria

neighbours if found to be non-compliant. This violence became particularly bad in the early 1990s as the formal and informal laws of apartheid fell away completely, and the national identity of South Africa became what was known as the 'new South Africa'. Ermelo was a community that fought these changes till the very end. In order to coerce this community to fight these changes a set of values was subtly and at times not so subtly communicated to the whites of Ermelo in a variety of ways.

Informal Councils and Strategy to Keep Segregation

The strategy that the CP used to establish themselves as the main political group in the town was to try and target every facet of life in Ermelo, and propagate their political ideology in these settings. This was important to create a community that would police itself and be resistant to democratic change. Mentz explains the strategy: "It was completely on purpose, each of those bodies we targeted, I named a few now. We controlled the school councils; we got it on a planned, clever way. We controlled every school in this town, we had the *sakekamer* (chamber of commerce), we had the golf club, there was nothing that we didn't control, where we didn't go in with planning and had the control of it. Nothing … I think the most important councils that we had control of were the schools, the sport councils, golf club, the *sakekamer*, I'm thinking of others … All where we couldn't get in was the hospital *raad* (board). Where we could. Here is a FET college we controlled that. We also had churches. In a way. In the church *rade*, we made sure that the fight was happening there too." [294]

By controlling church councils the CP made sure that their values and agenda could be pushed by a moral voice. The churches controlled and organised many social events in the town. These events such as the '*Geloftefees*', were also very important in affirming a town identity. Mentz explains how by taking control of church councils the CP was able to dictate the tone of church events:

"The three NG *kerke* of which two we definitely had control … It was the *Moedergemeente* and De Bruin Park. The *Ermelo-Oos*, was the odd one out. And then

[294] Interview with Hein Mentz, Ermelo, 21 October, 2014

too what happened; a grouping happened and people would move around to suit their political ends. But the churches were not the most important. Things like for example the *Geloftefees* committee, it's a very important festival in Ermelo, the terrain and whatever. Subtly we controlled that one ... For example we would tell our people who were on the committee: 'listen boys, just make sure that you get this speaker or this pastor, don't send a Johan Heunis' ... Like that we, although we might not have a total control, we would influence it so that we would be comfortable with what happened on the ground."[295]

Controlling informal bodies affected the social landscape of the town. In 1988, Ermelo High School made newspaper headlines when a R100 donation to a raffle organised to raise funds for the school was returned to a local Indian businessman. The school's management committee instructed the headmaster to return the money as it was not school policy to accept 'black money'.[296] The management committee was run by Conservative Party members. CP MP for Ermelo Maurtiz Moolman stated that: "Although I was not consulted, I accept the decision taken by the school's management committee. It is not in conflict with the CP's policy."[297]

Gretchen Celliers long-time resident and wife of prominent farmer and local NP politician remarks: "It's more, the schools, the unpleasantness at the schools governing body also had a very big influence on the kids. For example my daughter was in matric in 1989 and the Celliers next door, my husband's brother that was a well-to-do man here, his son was also in matric and they were not on the governing body as a result of the fight between NP and CP, it was hurtful at that time."[298]

Deindustrialisation of the Late 1980s

By the end of the 1980s Ermelo suffered massive economic losses as many of the industrial developments which contributed to the economic boom of the 1960s and 1970s closed down.

[295] Interview with Hein Mentz, Ermelo, 21 October, 2014
[296] "Uproar over return of donation", The Sunday Times, 14/08/1988
[297] Ibid
[298] Interview with Gretchen Celliers, in Ermelo, 1 October 2014

Local CP politician and farmer Hein Mentz observes: "Camden closing really hurt this town. Camden was in the late 1980s. They closed it. Remember that Camden was so big, it had a rugby club, a primary school, a church. It was a community on its own, even though they did their business here. And then the government of the day said that there was too much electricity, Camden is one of the oldest stations, and they closed it. The whole infrastructure went down with it. The mines supplying coal to Camden, Usutu, also closed. To come back to Ermelo Mines. They also closed that time. The Burton brothers built those prefab homes I was telling you about. They closed due to bad planning. One or another underground. Then Ermelo Mines, which was an exporting coal mine, closed before its time. Ermelo Mines had an enormous impact on the economy of Ermelo. I think it was the biggest factor. The planning that the problem made that Ermelo Mines closed. If I understand the *skag* was at the wrong place, if they put it at another place it would still be working. The closure of that mine was very bad for this town, and then just after that Camden closed. It made an enormous impact. The government tried to put an army group here but it made no difference. Ermelo Mines' housing was put in town on the golf course. The housing was in town, but facilities were outside."[299]

In addition, by the middle of the 1980s black resistance to apartheid was on the rise in Wesselton and surrounding townships. Wesselton township was established in 1957 in response to the Group Areas Act of 1950. Residents who were forcibly removed and relocated to Wesselton came from surrounding farm areas which were classified as 'black spots', but mostly came from the New Ermelo township.

In 1905, New Ermelo was established as a freehold township on portion 100 of the farm, Witbank 262 IT. In 1956, New Ermelo had 589 stands. Black people already had title deeds to 421 *erven* but the rest of the *erven* were still in white hands. Some 55 of the 168 properties that were owned by whites were, at the time, in the process of being transferred to black buyers. Section 20 of Group Areas Act 77 of 1957 then summarily declared New Ermelo a white group Area. In preparation for the execution

[299] Interview with Hein Mentz, Ermelo, 21 October, 2014

of the mass removal of Blacks from New Ermelo, municipal officials painted huge bright numbers on each house. Most of the residents of New Ermelo were moved to Pumula, later re-named Wesselton, a location for blacks about two kilometres outside Ermelo. Some moved to other homelands, while a few relocated to the surrounding Black townships of Johannesburg, including Soweto, of their own accord. Others left South Africa to settle in Swaziland.[300]

From 1984 many youths in Wesselton began to affiliate with the United Democratic Front (UDF) and through this affiliation became aware of wider political goals of liberation movements in South Africa. From 1984 the political mobilisation of youths in the region exploded, partly due to the development of the taxi industry, which resulted in greater mobility and the opportunity for youths to exchange ideas with people from other regions.[301]

Prior to 1986 there was very little youth protest coming from Wesselton, however, in 1986 students attacked the school in protest to changes at the school, in the context of a newly politicised youth, other students joined in and then non-school-going youths also joined in. Beer halls, buses, a local hostel, and a delivery truck were set alight. At the time local police were preoccupied with policing another protest in the nearby township of Breyten. Police took five hours to respond and when they arrived on the scene in Wesselton the protest consisted of angry youths, barricades and stones. Rubber bullets were used to disperse the crowds and policemen arrested female protestors in an effort to interrogate them later. A student was shot and killed by a teacher-turned-policeman and this angered the crowd even more. Protest action continued for the week that followed.[302]

From this point onwards the UDF used students to distribute pamphlets, badges and other paraphernalia to make itself a political presence in the township. Mathabatha and Holden note that the outbursts of 1986 were never repeated and that low-level

[300] "Land Claims Booklet", accessed at: http://scnc.ukzn.ac.za/doc/GEOG/Land_Claims/booklet.pdf, on 19/10/2010, pp 8
[301] "The Politics of Resistance", Paul Holden and Sello Mathabatha, Mpumalanga: History and Heritage, edited by Peter Delius, University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2007, p. 434
[302] Ibid p. 434

protest continued to flare up in Ermelo in the early 1990s. This was partly due to the security police's efforts to destroy liberation movements from within. The 1986 protests served as a reality check for local apartheid policing and governing structures. They would not be able to control protests like these in the future. The year 1989 was a watershed moment in terms of black protest in Ermelo. Prior to 1989 there was not a single application for a strike or politically motivated protest made to the council. From 1989 there was at least one a month until the mid 1990s.[303]

By the end of the 1980s, voters in Ermelo had developed mistrust in the NP due to their nepotism and unfair business practices. This resulted in a general mistrust of NP policies, which was communicated to many in an alienating way. This was coupled with white workers' perception that they had been 'stabbed in the back' by the party that rose to power initially as a result of votes for policy designed to support white workers over black workers. The CP was in control of the town council and informal social, educational and business councils. They were using their position of control to silence and eradicate voices in favour of NP policy and an integrated South Africa. They were also using these councils to propagate CP ideology. The economies of surrounding towns were crashing, the main employment providers had shut down, and whites felt unsure and afraid of the future. Violence in Wesselton was particularly bad, as elsewhere in the country. This was the context in which Ermelo was to enter a new era of democracy.

[303] This can be seen in applications made for permission to demonstrate to the Town Council in the Ermelo Municipal Archives.

Chapter 4

1990s: The Suicide Option

By 1990-1991 the NP under the leadership of FW de Klerk had initiated a process to end apartheid, part of which was the unbanning of political movements such as the African National Congress (ANC) and the South African Communist Party (SACP). By 1991 many of the racial laws of apartheid no longer existed, yet the NP led by FW De Klerk would still run the government. During this period the ultraconservatives such as the CP posed one of the NP's largest obstacles to reform from within white society. The CP under the leadership of Andries Treurnicht aligned themselves with organisations such as the AWB and increasingly began to support anti-governmental activities. History would reveal that the majority of Afrikaners were in favour of political reform, yet at the time it seemed like a very large portion of the white population were in favour of living racially segregated lives. In this period much of the Afrikaner right-wing's activities were aimed against the National Party and their supporters as well as third force violence which was carried out by armed gangs and the IFP. The splits in Afrikaans communities invoked, in some, a fear of the possibility of a civil war within the Afrikaans community. It seemed that an Afrikaner group within the greater Afrikaner 'nation' was on the rise, and a violent and reactionary one at that. In Ermelo there was a split between those who supported reforms and those who opposed them. White residents began to re-impose repealed segregationist bylaws informally and the ultraconservative town council implemented a number of measures to discourage black residents from using amenities in areas that were previously designated for whites only. However, there was a section of white society who actively and openly advocated for the process of reform. These people were largely, however not exclusively, capitalists and business owners who materially had much to gain from social reforms.

This chapter argues that it was capitalist interests that were the main drivers for integration and reform in Ermelo in the early 1990s and that whites who actively supported the CP were largely, however not exclusively, benefactors of state supported sheltered employment (as well as the farming community for other

reasons), who would have the most to lose materially from political reforms. This chapter also argues that the splits in the Afrikaner community that originated in the 1970s were intensified in the 1990s, and culminated into what was dubbed 'the suicide option' by *Sunday Times* journalist C. Perkins, when it became apparent that the community could no longer enforce apartheid bylaws. The white community had and set itself on a course that was destructive to the looming democracy. Its inability to adapt to the new order brought the town to a boiling point in the 1990s. The unfortunate confluence of an economic downturn in Ermelo (and the area in general) and the dawn of democracy made some profoundly distrustful of democracy and led others to aggressively support organisations promising that life would continue as usual. These individuals saw themselves as being ignored by the NP at large, and found an alternative in the CP, who promised to keep Ermelo segregated. However, after the unbanning of liberation movements it became clear that in the event of mass action police forces no longer had control. This led to security police fighting liberation movements from within by supplying gangs linked to the Inkatha Freedom Party with weapons to wage a war internally in Wesselton, as will be discussed in detail later.

National Context: Reform

The NP entered into negotiations with the ANC in December 1991 under the banner of the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA). The outcomes of the negotiation process would see the formation of a multi-racial government and a constitution extending political rights to all groups. The NP saw the early 1990s as an opportune moment to engage in negotiation with liberation movements. Globally the end of the Cold War created a situation where De Klerk could promise his supporters that unbanning the SACP and its affiliates, including the ANC, would no longer be a major threat to the economic and military stability of South Africa.[304]

De Klerk and the Minister of Constitutional Reform, Gerrit Viljoen, shared the responsibility of convincing the white voters that the peaceful reform of apartheid was

[304] Gilomee H., *The Afrikaners Biography of a People*, Tafelberg, Cape Town 2003, p. 629

the best choice for the country going forward. There was however, some disagreement from within the ranks of the NP on whether it was the right time for constitutional changes to end apartheid. De Klerk and Viljoen motivated that the 1990s was the right moment because whites were a shrinking proportion of the population and that a peaceful transition should be made while the NP had significant bargaining power. According to Giliomee, the NP could have hypothetically continued with apartheid for another 20 years given the economic and military strengths of the South African Defence Force (SADF) of the time. De Klerk stated that "We have not waited until the preponderance of power turned against us before we decided to negotiate a peaceful settlement. We have the means to ensure that the process develops peacefully and in an orderly way."[305]

From the beginning of the negotiation process the NP and the ANC engineered a situation where they would be the main players in the negotiations that would result in the country's constitution. In the case of the NP, where the majority of their supporters were relatively wealthy, urban and on the receiving end of capitalism, this class of people would have the preservation of their lifestyle and accumulated private wealth legitimised by the constitution. Giliomee states that most of the white elite were in favour of the process and wanted to be a part of it.[306] De Klerk wanted business leaders to act as intermediaries with Western leaders.[307] Business leaders had in fact, engaged with the ANC in exile in the 1980s and, it can be argued, these meetings paved the way for negotiation. Business interests and the upper middle classes thus not only had their interests protected but were actually part of the wider negotiations for peaceful reform. "Big business, more in touch with the structural problems of an economy, run on apartheid principles, was at the forefront of moves to dismantle job reservation and all the laws in support of what they saw as an economically short-sighted ideology."[308] J.P. de Lange, the leader of the Afrikaner Broederbond and the Rector of Rand Afrikaans University (RAU) met ANC delegates

[305] The Afrikaners: Biography of a People, Gilomee H., Tafelberg, Cape Town 2003, p. 631
[306] Ibid p.631
[307] Ibid p.636
[308] "Delegations and dialogue between the ANC and internal non-governmental groups", the article was produced for South African History Online on 01-Mar-2012, accessed at: http://www.sahistory.org.za/topic/delegations-and-dialogue-between-anc-and-internal-non-government-groups, on 10/06/2016

in New York in May 1986, where he communicated his concern that Afrikaners were "more anxious about losing their cultural identity than their economic or political power in a democratic South Africa".[309] However, some understood their cultural identity, as it had been communicated to them by the state, as profoundly linked to their economic or political power in South Africa. This proved to be the case for a minority of Afrikaners, who would continue to support apartheid policies for specific economic and political reasons in the early 1990s.

The 1990s were however, a time when Afrikaners, largely, could be convinced that peaceful transition of power should take place as the original impetus that underpinned apartheid had disappeared. Afrikaners nationally (on average) were just as wealthy as their English-speaking counterparts, and adding to this, trade embargos and sanctions imposed by the West were threatening the new-found economic prosperity of these Afrikaners. However, some whites who occupied positions of lower social status, understood apartheid policies to be pivotal in their privileged lifestyles, and thus supported the continuation of these policies. Against the backdrop of this national context, in Ermelo, the CP had already gained a foothold in the town which had suffered harsh economic times after a period of extraordinary growth in the 1970s. This coincided with the first real signs of political and racial reform, and the dangerous mix of economic downturn, coupled with regime change, would come to a boiling point in the early to mid-1990s, at the dawn of South African democracy. When viewing the situation nationally it might be difficult to understand why there was significant support from Afrikaners for the ultraconservatives. However, when a localised a, very different economic patterns and situations are illuminated which explain political and ideological decisions. In Ermelo in the 1990s support for the CP came roughly from three camps, the white working class, state employed bureaucrats who occupied sheltered employment and farmers.

[309]Gevisser, M., quoted in "Delegations and dialogue between the ANC and internal non-governmental groups", article was produced for South African History Online on 01-Mar-2012, accessed at: http://www.sahistory.org.za/topic/delegations-and-dialogue-between-anc-and-internal-non-government-groups, on 10/06/2016, p. 506

The Local: Ermelo and the 'Suicide Option'

In view of local concerns, it is far easier to understand how and why the ultraconservative groups grew and gained control. Support for the CP in Ermelo grew for particular political and economic reasons. The white (mainly Afrikaner) community in this town reacted to acute political and financial pressure. In the rapidly changing political climate of the 1980s and 1990s, where the economic, social and political pressures of transition in Ermelo were particularly harsh, these conditions coupled with racial scapegoat propaganda by trusted community leaders, created huge mistrust and resentment leading up to democracy. This led to residents making extreme and racially-charged political decisions.

Support for ultraconservative policies was at the time, dubbed a 'suicide option' by journalists and writers in urban centres because ultra-conservative groups were becoming increasingly militarised with connections in the SADF and the police force. This situation created high levels of political insecurity which would be detrimental to economic growth in the long run, however, for ultraconservatives the idea of cultural hegemony was more important than economic survival. This was the case for the Ermelo Town Council.

There were two loosely defined political camps within white society in the town in the early to mid 1990s. The first was NP supporters who were in favour of change. The most vocal of this group were business owners, industrialists and entrepreneurs. The other group were ultraconservative supporters. This group was represented in the town council and by the 1990s was largely employed in the civil service in the town. Large portions of this group also came from the farming community, skilled labourers and blue-collar workers.

The population census from 1991 reveals that 13% of economically active whites in Ermelo were employed in the professional and technical category, 8% in managerial and administration, 31% in clerical and sales, 6.5% in transport, 7.7% in services, 10% in farming and related industries, 12.8% in artisanal and apprentice positions and 5.4% were employed as production supervisors for mines, quarries or related workers.

In 1991 45% of whites in Ermelo over the age of 20 had not finished formal schooling.[310] The high number of clerical and administrative workers, the majority of economically active white adults in Ermelo in 1991, can be ascribed to the municipality being a very large source of employment. Further, it should be noted that a high proportion of whites worked in low-skilled positions, in addition to a high level of whites who had not finished formal schooling. In the local government elections of 1988, the CP's candidate Johan Brits was a builder by trade, he stood against the NP candidate Willem van Drimmelen who was an advocate. The CP's strategy was intentional, to select a candidate who would appeal to the average voter.

Ultraconservative Governing of Ermelo and White Society's Reactions

Seeing as ultraconservatives were the dominant group at local government level, town governance in the 1990s was characterised by ultraconservative ideology and policies. The ideology of the CP in the 1990s was contradictory to the changes happening at national level. The town council made a number of decisions that were destructive to the image and economy of the town as well as to the process of integration. In the municipal elections of 1988 the CP promised to 'keep the town white'. This translated into a number of anti-integration campaigns where the CP either informally supported acts of sabotage or anti-integration acts, or implemented policies which were aimed at keeping whites conservative (such as book banning at the local library), or channelled funds into the 'white' side of town instead of developing and preparing Wesselton for integration.

One such instance was in December 1991, when the Ermelo Town Hall was rented out to Ermelo Mines for a multi-racial mining function. The evening was marred with controversy and acts of sabotage when tear gas was poured into the air conditioning vents of the town hall on the evening of the event. Although the CP town council

[310] Population Census 1991, Occupation by Development Region, Statistical Region and District, No. 03-01-08 (1991), A CSS Report, Published by the Central Statistical Service, accessed at the Johannesburg Public Library.

denied responsibility for the attack when questioned, they claimed that they were "willing to fight the battle against a non-racial South Africa until the bitter end".[311]

Piet de Beer, an independent councillor, businessman and agricultural supply store manager, criticised the CP in a council meeting for the way in which the incident was handled. During the meeting, De Beer said that the council had intentionally inflated the price of the deposit and payment for the use of the town hall to deter the company from using the space. For his accusations he was expelled from the meeting and later the maximum deposit for use of the town hall was increased to R100 000. "That way no multi-racial group will be able to afford the facility," said a top city employee.[312] De Beer's views echoed the views of business interests in the town, which were that the violence and intolerance to change would scare off investment and ultimately be detrimental to the lives of the residents of Ermelo. A few days later, De Beer's agricultural supply store was vandalised and the words 'traitor of the people'[313] were painted on the windows of his shop showroom. De Beer was not the only individual to be intimidated. Mine personnel preparing the hall the night before the event had their tyres slashed and on the night of the multi-racial function, about 100 right-wingers gathered in the street in protest.

It should be noted however, that De Beer actively supported the upholding of the Separate Amenities Act as well as other conservative CP policies (like book banning at the local library, discussed below) on a few occasions.[314] His support for reform was vocal at times when it served the local NP politically.

Ermelo Mines was the largest investor in the town of Ermelo[315] and owned over 340 residential properties.[316] The mining company had also done much to cushion and prevent economic collapse – like neighbouring Breyten in the late 1980s. When Camden and Usutu mines closed, and some secondary businesses had to close their

[311] "It's the Suicide Option", Perkins, C, The Sunday Times, 1/12/1991
[312] Ibid
[313] "It's the Suicide Option", Perkins, C, The Sunday Times, 1/12/1991
[314] Persverklaring by P.A.C. van Wyk, Lêer No:11/1/4/, Vol 4, 27.2.90, 19.1.93, Pers- en radioberigte, Ermelo Municipal Archives.
[315] Ibid
[316] "Woede oor beslissings!", The Highveld Herald, 15 January 1993, p. 1

doors as a result, many people left the town and sold their properties. To prevent a crash of the property market Ermelo Mines purchased some properties. "The property values in Ermelo made a (downward) curve but I can't say the market fell apart … General mining carried the burden of the potential property crisis in Ermelo … The biggest single factor was the closure of Camden."[317]

Dr Dendar comments on the sudden retrenchments and unemployment in Ermelo of the early 1990s: "Then Ermelo Mines came [and closed[318]], then the power station closed and that affected the town, then umm, eventually Ermelo Mines had to close, and overnight 3000 people lost their jobs, even in De Bruin Park, you could buy houses for next to nothing, there were no buyers, now the same houses today you can't buy it, because you know the mines have a lot of houses there."[319]

Lipton argues that during the apartheid years the South African economy grew rapidly and shifted from dependence on mining and agriculture, which needed cheap unskilled labour, to a greater dependence on manufacturing and the service sector, which needed more skilled workers. In addition, mining and agriculture became more skill and capital intensive and the capital equipment became more sophisticated. This resulted in the growth in importance of skilled workers and the decline in importance of unskilled workers. Lipton contends that the increasing need for skilled labour was the most compelling reason for capitalists to support changes in labour policy. They wanted a free and competitive labour market with large numbers of skilled black labourers entering skilled and semiskilled positions. Furthermore, South Africa's status as a pariah state was greatly damaging the potential to export to foreign markets, supplies to foreign capital and technology and was contributing to political

[317] Interview with Hein Mentz, Ermelo, 21 October, Ermelo
[318] Ermelo mines was set up as a coal exporting mine and reached full potential in 1979. This mine created thousands of jobs and provided further boosts for the economy. The black and white personnel of this mine were housed in Ermelo. The South African Rail Ways personnel for this project as well as the personnel working in the marshalling yard were also housed in Ermelo as an effort by the council to further stimulate economic growth. 1970's and suddenly closed its doors in 1993 due to structural problems underground. ("Ermelo 100", 1980, Broucher published by Ermelo Town Council for centenary celebrations.)
[319] Interview with Dr Mohammed Dendar, Johannesburg, 6 September 2016.

instability, which would have disastrous effects on mines and factories' abilities to keep functioning and remain profitable.[320]

Business owners in the town were however, not only dissatisfied with the CP run council for their anti-integration efforts. There was a growing resentment aimed at decisions made by the council which were seen as ill-informed or as bad management. A decision to grant licenses to four new petrol stations outside the town in 1993 highlights that there was a growing resentment and belief that the CP were making decisions to purposefully undercut existing businesses. Many business owners desperately wanted the council to attract investment after the slow deindustrialisation of the town, following the boom and bust effects of the Camden Power Station and the coal industries.

The decision generated a fair amount of controversy amongst residents expressed in the local paper in a series of articles and readers' letters. A quote from a certain Mr Loubser (a petrol station owner in the town) over the town council's decision to allow the construction of the new petrol stations, illustrates the harsh economic effects that the deindustrialisation of Ermelo had in the mid 1980s as well as frustrations that the business community had with the council in failing to support existing businesses. "Ermelo has declined rapidly over the past few years with the closure of Camden Power Station and Usutu Colliery, which had the result of hundreds of people leaving this town. What was even more serious was the businesses that had to close as a result of this, that had to move to other towns and for example regional offices that used to be in Ermelo that moved to other towns … the latest report that is very serious, 75% downsizing of staff at Ermelo Mines and the businesses that will have to shut down as a result of this. It is then so, that our town and our businesses that work towards delivering services and goods to Ermelo's residents are experiencing an unheard of attack on its very existence like never before in the existence of this town. Is the right and ethical reaction of the town council then not to protect the livelihoods of existing and loyal businesses? ... how many more will lose their jobs as a result of this council's decisions?"[321] Hardie Rothman, owner of Harlen Motors, who would be

[320] Lipton M., *Capitalism and Apartheid*, Gower Publishing, 1985, pp. 7-8
[321] "Woede oor beslissings!", The Highveld Herald, 15 January 1993, p. 1

very seriously affected by the decision of the council states: "I am in total shock about these council decisions. The council's motivation is that they do not have jurisdiction over which businesses operate in town and that competition is better for everyone. That is rubbish."[322]

Dr Dendar, founding member of the integrated Chamber of Commerce and first democratic mayor of Ermelo, comments on how business connections between the races led to negotiation: "Before the 1994 elections there was a lot of talk about blacks boycotting white shops, so Jimmy Loubser, he had a Toyota franchise, and he was a more liberal person and he and some of us got together, and we formed the Ermelo Business Association. And we had a long talk, to avoid a boycott we decided what to do, and then we formed this [the integrated Chamber of Commerce]. At that stage the first constitution was to have a representative from each community, and that then brought about a lot of reconciliation between the blacks, whites and Indians. We were friends with the blacks and we had some friends with the whites as well, through business connections it [the integrated Chamber of Commerce] became very successful, every business in Ermelo became a member, we used to have meetings, interesting speakers, Kadar Asmal came, and we had a meeting for policy, and we had … you know this CEO of Toyota. It was very successful, eventually it died down, but in the meantime it created better relationships."[323]

The business community had made attempts to make connections with the black community at times when it would benefit them materially. In May of 1988 a report was released by the town clerk where members of the black and white business communities met for negotiations.[324] One of the issues was of increasing the membership size and including black businessmen. However, the town council had control over this and prohibited it. The Chamber of Commerce was however, ever since the 1990s a non-racial organisation.[325]

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[322] Ibid p. 1
[323] Interview with Dr Mohammed Dendar, 6 September 2016, Johannesburg
[324] Bestuurskomiteeverslag, 11/1/4/, 1984 – 1993, Vol 2-5, Pers- en Radioberigte, Ermelo Municipal Archives.
[325] "Onder die Burgermeester se Hamer" 11/1/4/, 1984 – 1993, Vol 2-5, Pers- en Radioberigte, Ermelo Municipal Archives

Resistance from Civics

In the early 1990s many white town councils were stung by the NP's efforts to open amenities to all races, and they were also aware of the ANC's then perceived deteriorating position in national negotiations. (This was the case until 1993, when after the assassination of Chris Hani, the ANC again, had the upper hand.) This led to white councils believing that they could resist the process of democratising public space.[326]

The granting of equal political and social rights on a local level was profoundly linked to African liberation in the 1990s. When resistance to apartheid intensified in the 1980s activists increasingly targeted local government. These acts of resistance were often organised by local civic organisations. This activism created pressure on local authorities and was a catalyst for negotiations to occur before the constitutional process of 1993. These negotiations often started around service issues but would typically shift to political and fiscal agendas with demands of 'one city one tax base'.[327] Organisations were demanding that local governments be unified across the racial divide and that local revenue be used to benefit all residents.[328] In 1989 local civics began organising power and water payment boycotts in an effort to force local authorities into negotiations. The entire local government system prior to 1994 was defined in racial terms. The system was in line with the denial of permanent residential rights to black Africans outside the homelands and this was linked to the denial of political rights of black people.[329] "Residents of the black segregated areas pointed out that they mostly worked in white local government jurisdictions and, by inference, contributed to the revenue of those areas – yet they received no benefits, because the funds were not spent where they lived."[330]

[326] Gills Barry K. And Kevin Gray *People Power in an Era of Global Crisis: Rebellion, Resistance and Liberation* , Routledge, 2013, pp. 43
[327] "Local Governance in Developing Countries", A. Shah, Local Government Organisation and Finance: South Africa, C. Heymans, Published by The World Bank, 2006, p. 48
[328] Ibid
[329] Ibid
[330] Ibid

In the early 1980s black residential areas were controlled and governed by Black Local Authorities (BLA). In Ermelo and surrounding towns local civics wanted to be engaged as officials and wanted the Wesselton councillors to be removed, as they saw them as illegitimate authorities of the apartheid regime. The BLAs had replaced Community Councils in 1982, and were unpopular due to the legacy of the Community Councils, who were in charge of housing and land administrations, which usually went hand in hand with forced removals.[331] By the late 1980s the BLAs had collapsed, and despite the government's attempt to restore them through a mixture of repression and negotiations, the system remained ungovernable until the negotiations to end apartheid in 1994.[332]

The 1994 constitution included a chapter on local government, and it paved the way for reforms in three phases. The pre-interim phase started with negotiations in 1993 and continued until 1995. This included the establishment of local government negotiating forums. Under the 1993 Local Government Transitions Act (LGTA), new interim municipal structures combined all white elected local government structures, in the case of Ermelo, the CP run council, with community structures. These new structures provided for the sharing of resources across racial boundaries. They had the responsibility of managing core services, preparing the first post-apartheid municipal elections and negotiating transitional arrangements until the first local elections in 1995.[333]

Local organiser J. Mndebele, involved with the boycotts of 1990, comments on the BLA local authority elections which sparked the water and electricity boycotts in the area: "Actually in 1989 we had the so-called election of the local council and us as democratic forces, I was already there in Piet Retief; we actually opposed the elections of the council. It was a policy that as mass democratic movement we actually opposed the question of the re-election of councillors … Then in 1990, I think it was around March, the community, obviously because they were demanding

[331] "Local Governance in Developing Countries", A. Shah, Local Government Organisation and Finance: South Africa, C. Heymans, Published by The World Bank, 2006, p. 48
[332] Ibid
[333] Ibid

that the councillors must resign, water was cut in the township. And that's when things got worse in 1990, when the water was cut."[334]

The boycotts were being implemented throughout the Transvaal: "According to the Transvaal Administration more than five townships are in arrears and could face power cuts. A number of meetings were held yesterday between residents' associations and councils, with residents' meetings planned ... in most of the townships facing or experiencing electricity cuts … On Friday the Pretoria Supreme Court granted the Atteridgeville-Saulsville Residents' Organisation an interim ruling which ordered that no electricity cuts can be made to homes until Wednesday… In Mhluzi township near Middleburg in the Eastern Transvaal, the town council resigned on Friday and asked the TPA to appoint a new administrator … The ANC has condemned the suspension of electricity and water services as 'inhumane', hitting out at Conservative Party councils, and an ANC spokesman said: 'The exercise is aimed at intimidating people to pave the way for clashes between residents and police'… At least 55 townships in the Transvaal were not paying rent and we warned them that unless payment started, there would be problems by the end of August." CP spokesman for local government Pikkie Coetzee denied the decision to cut off electricity and water supplies was political. "The municipalities have a responsibility to pay and if there is not money they cannot pay."[335]

By April 1990 the Wesselton Civic Organisation had successfully convinced black residents to partake in a boycott and stop paying arrears. On 11 July 1990 the Wesselton Civic Association, sent a request to the Ermelo Water Board Management for a joint meeting to talk about 'water'. The idea was to create the water payment boycotts in an effort to enter into negotiations with officials, and to delegitimize the Wesselton councillors.

In a confidential circular officials on the Ermelo side were told that "It is for the council to decide if this meeting will take place seeing as this issue has a distinctive

[334] Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Amnesty Hearing, Date: 20 and 21 July 1998, Name: John Mndebele, Day : 1, accessed at:
http://www.justice.gov.za/trc/amntrans%5C1998/98072030_erm_blacat1.htm
[335] "Urgent Bid to End Electricity Crisis", The Sunday Times, 21 October 1990, pp 33

political undercurrent. This organisation functions to the best of this department's knowledge as an 'alterative' to the local authority in Wesselton Municipality. From a legal perspective the council has no obligation to the organisation or for the supply of water to Wesselton Municipality however, an underlying agreement between the town councils of Ermelo and Wesselton does exists for the supply of water. If the council would take part in negotiations with the organisations, it would come down to a recognising of the organisation as legitimate representatives which legally and for practical reasons is not encouraged … it is suggested that they be dealt with alongside Wesselton's officials, perhaps we could encourage them to break the boycott … they are by the way, the same group who regularly organise the protests."[336]

On 16 July the decision was taken to meet representatives from Wesselton Civic Organisation under the condition that officials from the Wesselton Municipality act as their representatives.[337] However, after the meeting on 26 July 1990, a request was made "that urgent representation be made to the association of East and South East Transvaal local authorities, through the Transvaal Municipal Association, to petition the authorities to make provisions allowing local authorities, in terms of the Transvaal Local Government Ordinance no. 17 of 1939, to announce regulations banning, organising and controlling gatherings and demonstrations."[338] The Ermelo council's reaction was to suppress and ban political organisation rather than move forward with negotiations.

In October 1990, the Transvaal Provincial Administration cut electricity and water services to Wesselton. Residents had to go to the white and Indian side of town in order to get water. "Since water has been cut off on Thursday, the whole township is a mess. The situation has been complicated by youths who stoned army vehicles bringing in water they thought might be poisoned."[339] Water service was eventually restored after Ermelo Mines agreed to pay the R130 000 in arrears for water services owed by township residents. Wesselton had been without water or sewerage for eight

[336] Ermelo Municipal Archives, 22.2.79, 31.1.91, Box no. 11/1/6; Volume 2, Publicity and Protests, Aanvrae van vergadering, 16/07/1990
[337] Ermelo Municipal Archives, 22.2.79, 31.1.91, Box no. 11/1/6; Volume 2, Publicity and Protests.
[338] Ibid
[339] "Urgent Bid to End Electricity Crisis", The Sunday Times, 21 October 1990, p. 33

days, the Conservative town council was criticised by church groups who said that the water should not have been cut off in the first place.[340]

Dr Mohammed Dendar, former mayor and member of the transitional town council remarks: "The NP of the time, they had to divide and rule, so they appointed a small committee in Cassim Park, they were appointed by the government and recommended by the Indian community, they had an election and it became a statutory organisation, the Cassim Park Association.

"Because look, you see as a matter of interest there was a big outstanding bill at the time, when the HNP was in power in Ermelo, with Hein Mentz and those, so there was a big water bill outstanding in Wesselton, so they couldn't pay the money so they closed the water in Wesselton completely, so Wesselton couldn't get water for a couple of months, so at the time Cassim Park, we supplied them, and they appreciated us. So for a whole month Cassim Park supplied them, at first individuals, and then the mosque supplied water and the people who had wells you see.

"Because of that contact we used to play soccer, we had group soccer games and they used to come and play for us, so we had a good association with them. We used to have functions, school functions and that, the other thing because of the shops; they came for donations for the school. We would give donations and jerseys for the football club; we got on very well together."[341]

Amidst rising tensions and rumours that town councils were pushing the situation to a standoff where clashes between the military and the township could occur, it was Ermelo Mines – acting in the interests of political stability and continued profits, who ended up paying the outstanding accounts to end the water and electricity crises. The council was accused of using the boycott as a ruse to have the military enter Wesselton in order to suppress political organisations. Similarly, in other areas large industries and employers ended up paying the outstanding arrears. In Middleburg, the

[340] "Relief as Township Water is Restored", The Sunday Times, 28 October 1990, p. 38
[341] Interview with Dr Mohammed Dendar, Johannesburg, 6 September 2016

largest employer, Middleburg Steel and Alloys agreed to pay the R370 000 in outstanding arrears.[342]

Conservative Reactions to Protest and Democracy

Following negotiations, the CP in Ermelo, however, adopted an unofficial policy of spending all the money in the coffers before the municipality would have to merge with Wesselton. CP Councillor H. Mentz comments: "I can't tell you about that era about the ANC and CP were together. I was part of the negotiations about how it had to come together. It was a genuine circus. Really, a total circus. Us as council, well me, specifically, I saw where it was going. This was a really wealthy council. Really wealthy. We went on a spree."[343]

In 1993, one year before the first democratic elections, the CP town council went on a R4 million spending spree. Ermelo and Wesselton would merge the following year and the council's motivation for spending the money was to prevent Wesselton from getting any 'white' money. In 1992, the council spent R600 000 on a recreation centre for the aged, granted a R60 000 interest-free loan, donated R1.5 million to an education fund and attempted to spend R3 million on re-surfacing the town's roads. A group of concerned businessmen and ratepayers stated: "The message is clear, spend all the available money in Ermelo so that there is nothing left for the blacks."[344] After an article criticising the spending spree was published in the *Highvelder*, the word 'traitors' was spray-painted on the offices of the publication and the council threatened to withdraw all advertising from the newspaper.

A source in the council said that the money should have been used to pave roads in Wesselton. The management committee denied that its goal was to deplete the funds and that it was done under 'sound financial management'. "The actions of the council

[342] "Urgent Bid to End Electricity Crisis", The Sunday Times, 21 October 1990, p. 33
[343] Interview with Hein Mentz, Ermelo, 21 October, 2014
[344] "Council accused of R4 million spending spree" The Sunday Times, 17/01/1993, p. 26

are aimed at using the funds in Ermelo, where necessary, because the funds were obtained from the ratepayers of the town as it is presently constituted."[345]

However, 10 years later in an interview, Hein Mentz, CP MP in the National Council of Provinces declared:

"It was that time, in 1994 was the election. I was elected in provincial. For two years before the laws changed, I was in the town council. I was never a part of that mixed town council. I had to make the choice if I had to stay in the council or to go to provincial government. I can't really tell you first-hand. That was when the black and white town had equal rights. I can tell you how the ANC's methodology too used the Indians to use as major [ally] … that affronted us. And the Indians then also fell for this make-shift operation. Just to be marginalised later. … I don't want to call it a spending spree; I want to call it an investment spree, we spent this town's money to invest. We built a sporting track, we built a centre for the aged; we invested tax money. For seven years we never put the tariffs of this town up, except for what was dictated by Eskom. We never put the tax or water or waste tariffs up. We needed to get a way to get the cash back to the taxpayers before it went back to the big pots afterwards. If I had another two years I would have spent all the money. But I had to make the choice, but I left. Two more years I would have returned the money to the community. That was our goal and we tried. By the time we had to transform we had given a lot of money back to the community. It was the goal. We started a teaching trust, two trust funds. It was all right wing driven initiatives. We had to walk 'cat foot' with this money in the correct way, within the law. We had a special audit, and we walked away, clean audit, we were above board. We did it the right way, we did not steal the money; we put the money in other places in other ways."[346]

By the early 1990s local organisations across the country had started mobilising and effectively finding ways to force white councils into negotiations. Civic associations in the 1990s were successful in forcing white councils into negotiations to merge authority structures in towns under the rallying cry of 'one city one tax base', as well

[345]Kurt Swart "Council accused of R4m spree", The Sunday Times, January 1993, p. 25
[346] Interview with Hein Mentz, Ermelo, 21 October.

as accepting locally backed leaders in the community as officials. This led to a flood of protest requests from various trade union and political organisations operating branches in Wesselton.

Third Force Violence

In the mid-1980s urban revolts against apartheid in South Africa generally were suppressed by repeated states of emergency. However, as sanctions and other economic constraints began to take a toll on the South African economy, business representatives began to secretly negotiate with the ANC in exile, this would push Pretoria to begin the 'elite transition' into a neoliberal democracy.[347] In almost all spheres of the country the tides were starting to turn. On a local level the democratic revolution was starting and third force violence, local civic and trade union organisation and municipal negotiations would take shape and in turn influence the current state of affairs.

In October of 1989 town clerk P. van Oudtshoorn released a confidential circular to the Steering Committee of the Ermelo Town Council. The circular was intended to inform the council of the security situation in the town in light of the supposed risk of protest actions. The circular stated that the Security Police had information that certain groups in Wesselton were planning large scale protest action. Information on security was provided by a certain Captain Botha of the Security Police, (who was later named as a major player in third force violence in Ermelo in 1990-1992 in TRC proceedings) and stated that "Like Captain Botha very clearly explained, the possibility exists that elements can insist that protest action takes place regardless of whether the council forbids it. He explained that police do not have the numbers to restrain arrest or incarcerate thousands of blacks, and that in such an instance the ban on protests would be made a mockery and would contribute to violence. It would result in a total confrontations of which the result would be difficult to predict."[348] The circular also noted that it would be nearly impossible to call in the Defence Force

[347] Gills Barry K. and Kevin Gray, People Power in an Era of Global Crisis: Rebellion, Resistance and Liberation, Routledge, 2013, p. 43

[348] Ermelo Municipal Archives, 22.2.79, 31.1.91, Box no. 11/1/6; Volume 2, Publicity and Protests, "Voorgenome protesoptogte deur swartes in Wesselton: Strate van Ermelo dorp

should such an event occur. In short, by 1989, the police and the Ermelo Town Council were aware that in the event of a mass gathering, they would not have control over Ermelo.

Local police and councils knew that they would not be able to contain political uprisings, and in 1989 the Wesselton Anticrime Committee (ACC) was formed on the initiative of the South Africa Police force. It comprised of youngsters from the community and was led by Chris Ngwena and Jwi Zwane. "The ACC itself, however, within one month turned to crime and to terrorising the Wesselton community. In addition, it was apparent that the ACC were being supported by the South African Police, the IFP, as well as the municipal authorities. It further transpired that members of the ACC, [later called] the Black Cats were trained operatives of the IFP."[349]

John Mndebele comments: "On twenty two (22) July 1990 and at a public meeting called by the South African National Civic Association, SANCO, which enjoyed the support of the majority of the community, a decision was taken to dissolve the Black Cats … The Black Cats, however, refused to dissolve and instead a spate of attacks on people and property ensued. In the main, the attacks were directed at ANC members and structures … During July 1990 the executive members of SANCO or the ANC, namely John Fanyana Mndebele, Nicholas Mthundisi Zwane, Jabi Aaron Mkhwanazi and Sipho Silos Nkonyane (councillor after 1995) met with the late Chris Hani with a view to obtaining directions as to what was to be done … They were advised to return to Wesselton and set up self-defence units to arm themselves and members of the organisation so as to protect ANC members and structures as well as the community at large. In addition, they were advised to do what was necessary to quell the violence … The same advice was received by the committee from Jacob Israel Mabena, the secretary general of COSATU, Eastern Transvaal and the ANC chairperson for Secunda."[350]

[349] Truth and Reconciliation Commission Amnesty Hearing, Date: 20 and 21 July 1998 Name: John Mndebele, http://www.justice.gov.za/trc/amntrans%5C1998/98072030_erm_blacat1.htm
[350] Ibid

Black Cat violence and counter violence by the ANC was successful in destabilising the Wesselton community. TRC accounts mention the involvement of Wesselton community councillors. Further, the involvement of local police is mentioned repeatedly.[351] "… the 'Black Cats' engaged in violent attacks on members of the newly unbanned ANC from 1990 to 1992. Over twenty people were killed and some of its own members were killed in counterattacks. At least one Black Cat member was killed by another Black Cat member after testifying to the Goldstone Commission … The Black Cats, supported by certain community councillors, received military training from Inkatha at the Mkuze camp in KwaZulu-Natal in the early 1990s. IFP hit squad member, Mr Israel Nyoni Hlongwane, was sent to Ermelo for a while to assist in the direction of Black Cats operations. During this time, he was involved in the murder of numerous perceived ANC sympathisers. Hlongwane told the Commission that SAP members met with him and arranged suitable conditions as well as cover-ups of the Black Cats crimes. Hlongwane said that he stayed at the home of the local IFP chairperson Mr Nowa Mqhobokazi in Ermelo, who provided him with guns and ammunition and instructed him to kill various prominent ANC members, ANC youths and suspected ANC sympathisers. Hlongwane was also approached by the IFP-supporting mayor of Davula township who requested his (Hlongwane's) assistance in eliminating the ANC in his township. Hlongwane gave examples of how the local police assisted in covering up the operations of the Black Cats. During his stay in Ermelo, Hlongwane was supported by the mayors of Davula and Ermelo who each paid him R800 and provided him with groceries."[352]

Captain Botha is mentioned various times, although there is no confirmation that the Botha mentioned in TRC reports was the same Botha that was reporting to the Ermelo Town Council. Local police were accused of purposefully losing dockets so that the violence and instability could continue; this in turn meant that the organising power of Wesselton Civic Association, as well as the local ANC branch, was diminished.

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[351] However, it should be noted that the Goldstone Commission found that there was not enough evidence to implicate local policeman.

[352] Post-Transition (1994 -1999) - Truth and Reconciliation Commission - TRC Reports - The Report of the Truth And Reconciliation Commission - Volume 2, Chapter 7, Political Violence in the Era of Negotiations and Transition, 1990-1994, accessed at: https://www.nelsonmandela.org/omalley/index.php/site/q/03lv02167/04lv02264/05lv02335/06lv02357/07lv02372/08lv02379.htm

"The reign of terror conducted by the Black Cats gang in Wesselton township near Ermelo was recounted on Thursday by witnesses who testified before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Sixty-six-year-old Mamane Mabuza said her daughter Queen was killed by the Black Cats. 'After killing her, Queen was dumped in a shallow grave at the cemetery. Her uterus, eyes and several body parts were taken out.' After three years of court proceedings she received a letter from a 'Mr Botha' saying 'no-one will be held responsible for Queen's death.' "[353]

Local police were said to have provided gangs with ammunition and guns:
"Khaba, 24, is serving 32 years in jail for murdering a Black Cats leader after switching sides and joining the ANC, *African Eye News Service* reported. Confessing that he had personally received firearms from security branch policemen, Khaba told the Amnesty Committee the weapons were issued to vigilantes from municipal authority offices. Four policemen identified only as Sergeant Botha, Captain Botha, Captain Marias and Warrant Officer van Zyl issued the rifles and pistols, he said."[354]

Police in Ermelo were said to torture political activists at a structure in town which locals referred to as the Ermelo Vlakplaas[355]. "The police did not help much during these turbulent times. Thulani takes us to a place that the citizens referred to as the Vlakplaas of Ermelo; this is where many comrades were tortured and probably killed. Even now as the grass grows wildly around the structure, there is something ominous about the building; the air around it and the nature around. One's body squirms as one thinks of the possibilities of many comrades' lives ending there. The pain felt as they were helpless under the torture of sadistic police. Thulani remembers very well a somewhat bizarre building at the centre of town which has been nicknamed 'Vlakplaas'. The place was nicknamed 'Vlakplaas' because of the atrocities that took place there. Although the place is presently disused and is vandalised with high grass growing around it, Thulani could well remember that before then it was a place where

[353] "Ermelo Residents Recall 'Black Cats' Era", SAPA,
http://www.justice.gov.za/trc/media%5C1997%5C9705/s970522a.htm
[354] "Police Armed Vigilantes as Late as 1992: TRC hears", SAPA, July 23 1998
http://www.justice.gov.za/trc/media%5C1998%5C9807/s980723d.htm
[355] Vlakplaas was a notorious apartheid era torture location.

black people were tortured and sometimes killed. He recalls that these atrocities were perpetrated by 'white secret' agents and the police, sometimes accompanied by "some unscrupulous blacks in the traditions of the real notorious Vlakplaas killings".[356]

Joseph Madonsela local organiser and leading member of the post democratic town council comments: "After I finished my training as a teacher in Amanzimtoti I started teaching at Lindile High School, where everything started happening, with the teachers at Lindi, it was quite a progressive school in terms of politics … The [protest] leaders were there, they were teachers there, John Ndebele was a teacher there, Zwane was a teacher there, Thusi Kubeka was a teacher somewhere else but mostly the concentration was in this particular high school. That was where most of these things started happening, just before 1994, I think five years before that ... that school was very active in politics. Ermelo was en route to Swaziland isn't it? so a lot of our comrades came through, so Ermelo was actually targeted."[357]

In Ermelo local organisations had to contend with trying circumstances. Third force violence by the 'Black Cats', supported by local police and Kwazulu-Natal Police Force was rife in Wesselton. Furthermore, the township had to deal with often vindictive and destructive actions of the local council, which was also a trend nationally.[358]

Community Reactions from the 'White Side of Town'

The community at large continued enforcing the Separate Amenities Act after it was abolished. This was informed by the CP's local policy. This was a strong indication that the community was averse to the reforms that the NP was instituting and indeed, for a period, supporting the CP on its 'suicide mission'. In August of 1990 a public meeting was called for 18 September 1990 to discuss with members of the public the "consequences of the repeal of the Separate Amenities Act of 1953, steps that can be

[356] Oral account by Thulani Thusi quoted in: Stories of the Liberation Struggles in South Africa: Mpumalanga Province, Prof. Thabo Israel Pudi, Xlibris Corporation, 12 Dec 2014, Chapter 3, Story 5, (No page numbers)
[357] Joseph Madonsela, Nelspruit, 29 August 2016
[358] Gills Barry K. and Kevin Gray, *People Power in an Era of Global Crisis: Rebellion, Resistance and Liberation*, Routledge, 2013, p. 43

taken".[359] After the public consultation, the CP council noted in a press release on January of 1991, that the council had decided to continue enforcing the Separate Amenities Act. "And any attempt to scrap the law will be withstood in a democratic and orderly fashion. The results of this policy and in the spirit of it, the council will make sure that the white swimming pool and other amenities reserved for whites will remain reserved for use by whites."[360]

In October of 1990 two journalists from the *Morning Herald*, Phillip van Niekerk and Phil Molefe, went to Ermelo as tourists to test the waters after the scrapping of the Separate Amenities Act. The first place the two went to was the town council offices to find some information for tourists. "He (Mr Molefe) was first sent upstairs to the wrong office but when he returned everyone had calmed down."[361]

Then Mr Molefe went to the Ermelo public pool. When they got there a small white boy tried to get the two to leave by telling them that there was no swimming on that day. They went ahead and entered to pool anyway. When Mr Molefe put his feet in the pool a white man shouted at him: "De Klerk said you can swim, so swim!" and then told him he would give him some soap to wash with.[362] As the two left the lifeguard said to them: "Thanks for leaving."[363] By the time the two got to their car they saw a car parked with a white man holding and talking into a 'walkie-talkie' writing down the registration number of the car.

Mr Molefe then went to Pronk Estate Agents. There he stated that he represented a consortium of Soweto businessmen and was looking to buy farm land and a residential property when the laws preventing blacks from owning property in 'white South Africa' was scrapped. He was told that the 'season' for buying farm land was over and that he would have to get permission and some documents from the town council before he could make a purchase.

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[359] "Raadsbesluite, Augustus 1990", /1/4/, 1984 – 1993, Vol 2-5, Pers- en Radioberigte, Ermelo Municipal Archives.
[360] Persverklaring by P.A.C. van Wyk, Lêer No:11/1/4/, Vol 4, 27.2.90, 19.1.93, Pers- en radioberigte, Ermelo Municipal Archives.
[361] P. van Niekerk and P. Molefe, "De Klerk says you can swim - so swim!", The Morning Herald, Wednesday 4 October, 24, 1990, p. 15
[362] Ibid
[363] Ibid

When enquiring amongst black residents of Wesselton about the gym the two journalists were told that some Indian people had tried to join, but they were refused. The local butchery had a separate queue from blacks and whites. When the journalists went to buy some meat a woman at the counter told them "You mustn't listen to the Mandela's," and then walked outside to take down their registration number. The next day the managing director of the *Weekly Mail*, the newspaper the journalists worked for, received death threats on the phone.[364]

The two also went to the Palm Court Inn that evening where they were told by the waiters that black people stay away from the bar as there had been incidents of assault. The next morning Mr Molefe investigated whether he could secure a plot in the cemetery that had previously been reserved for whites exclusively. He was told by P. van Oudtshoorn the town clerk that he would have to make an application. He was also told that there was no assurance that his application would be successful as the decision was up to the town council. Mr Van Oudtshoorn added: "It doesn't make sense for people in the black township to bury their relatives in town, it's as much sense as people in town wanting to bury their people in Wesselton."[365]

The article also reported on a local group in Wesselton who wanted to join the library in Ermelo who were handed the same yellow forms as Mr Molefe when he applied for a grave site. This form would then be forwarded to the town council who would probably have refused them.

Thulani Thusi, who was the Congress of South African Students President and a student activist in Wesselton in the 1990s tells of the hardships of receiving an education during this time. The high school in Wesselton was built with dilapidated corrugated iron and had very few resources. Teachers had to bring their own writing boards to class and learners had to bring old paint or paraffin containers to sit on. For this reason it was most important for local organisers to gain access to the public

[364] P. van Niekerk and P. Molefe, "De Klerk says you can swim - so swim!", The Morning Herald, Wednesday 4 October, 24, 1990, p. 15
[365] Ibid

library. Legally, black South Africans were now allowed to use the amenities that were previously withheld from them, however, socially and at local municipal level the CP and their loyalists were enforcing the Separate Amenities Act. Thusi comments: "The (white) people there did not want us in that library. When black people entered, they would want to assist you quickly so that you can leave almost immediately. They would spray the room, deodorize it after a black person had gone out. It was bad … I was instrumental in seeing to it that the library was open to all. I opened the doors and called all people of Ermelo to use it. Yes, today as citizens of Ermelo, I can safely say we all use the facility as we would like to."[366]

The account of the first black people of Wesselton who used the public pool is interesting and telling of the attitudes of the white town. "Next we went back to the swimming pool. Three taxi-loads of kids started off-loading, excited to be there. The lifesaver, who we saw the previous day, saw them coming. He locked the swimming pool gates and walked off. "Where are you going?" we asked. "You can't do this." "I'm off to lunch," he replied. We checked our watches it was 2:07pm. "When will you be back?" "Three, four …" he waved his arm in the air and walked on. "I can take my lunch break when I like." We went back to Van Oudtshoorn to complain that the pool was not open. He ordered it open and the exuberant masses took their first swim in the municipal swimming pool. A few surly whites looked on but others smiled, giving the thumbs up, taking snaps of the historic moment. Back is Wesselton, an hour later, the children sang and danced the toyi-toyi – the dance of uMkhonto weSizwe, the military wing of the African National Congress. It was a victory toyi-toyi because they had breached a barrier of white privilege. Suddenly there was a round of gun fire and we scattered looking for the customary police vehicle and the teargas, seeing only laughing children. It was their own gun. On the way out we saw all the usual graffiti in the township. "Kill the councillors" and "Join uMkhonto weSizwe". But there's a new one too: "Viva Nelson de Klerk."[367]

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[366] Oral account by Thulani Thusi quoted in: Stories of the Liberation Struggles in South Africa: Mpumalanga Province, Prof. Thabo Israel Pudi, Xlibris Corporation, 12 Dec 2014, Chapter 3, Story 5, (No page numbers)

[367] P. van Niekerk and P. Molefe, "De Klerk says you can swim - so swim!", The Morning Herald, Wednesday 4 October, 24, 1990, p. 15

The CP town council also continued with apartheid style censorship laws. The CP town council decided to ban a number of '*verligte* books' from the local library in March of 1990. Of them was Koos Kombuis's *Paradise Lost*, as well as all publications by André Brink.[368] The literature of Brink and Kombuis reflected the sentiments of liberal Afrikaners. Kombuis, a popular rock musician and part of the anti-establishment group of musicians called 'Voëlvry', and Brink, renowned anti-apartheid writer, would be in direct opposition to the ideology of conservatives. Town clerk Piet van Oudtshoorn stated that the books were 'blasphemous' and 'anti-South Africa'.[369] Van Oudtshoorn stated that the town council's 'moral guardians' would be on the look-out for other books that they deemed undesirable reading material for the people of Ermelo. Councillor Piet de Beer suggested that the copies of *Paradise Lost* be burnt as a statement. The actions of the CP were condemned by the Afrikaanse Taal en Kultuurbond as well as the South African Institute for Librarianship and Information Science.

Although the CP's 1988 election manifesto was to keep amenities segregated it was clear by the 1990s that the council and the community were not able to do so. The fact that white society was at this point, divided on the issues of maintaining apartheid, played a large role in the community's ability to 'police' these spaces. Another issue was the strength and organisation of residents of Wesselton.

The first democratic elections in South Africa saw the ANC win nationally with overwhelming support. The worst fears of conservative whites did not materialise, and in actuality many whites prospered even more in a democratic South Africa than during apartheid. Democracy brought about some changes in Ermelo however, some things remain the same.

[368] Box 11/1/4, 1984 1993, Ermelo Municipal Archives, Municipal News, p. 7, 24 March 1990, Ermelo Municipality
[369] "Now CP town's moral guardians ban books", The Sunday Times, 27/09/1992

A Reluctant Democracy

Zelda Breytenbach, DA councillor in Ermelo, remembers the early 1990s: "I remember as a young child in the early 1990s after Camden closed, the town emptied out as a result. People left to find other jobs; that is primarily what I remember of that time ... many who didn't find other work had two jobs that paid less."[370]

Following multiple calls for a one city one tax base and a democratic election for local government, negotiations that led to the Transitional Town Council ensued. The town would be run by a coalition of ANC and civic members, NP member and Conservative Party (Later Freedom Front Plus) members. Mr Jospeh Madonsela was the chair of the negotiation process. Madonsela was a teacher who worked at Lindile High in Wesselton. This school was the epicentre for protest action emanating from Wesselton in the late 1980s and 1990s. Many of the political leaders were teachers and students from this school, who then went on to become leaders in local government. Interestingly, Madonsela notes that the Transitional Council was a success despite the staunch segregationist ideology of the Conservative Party:

Madonsela tell of the negotiations and the Transitional Town Council: "We were with the Freedom Front, was the National Party still there? Ja. The Freedom Front and us, we ended up agreeing that we will develop the township, we agreed in principle, so somehow we were able to negotiate. With us, we were quite mixed; we were radicals and people who knew what we actually wanted. The Transitional Council actually did very well. I chaired that one. We would argue, but in the end they realised that yes we wanted to develop and we needed it that side … that Transitional Council did very well, it brought a lot of development. There were skirmishes in the council but ultimately we did quite well. The discussions were flowing, remember we were lacking experience. So they were there in terms of that; that was actually our approach at that particular time. Let's not push these people away, let's get whatever we can get from them. That is why we were stable at that particular time. Remember we had the *verkramptes* at that time but we were able to work with them. The

[370] Interview with Zelda Breytenbach, Ermelo, August 2012

National Party was not that bad and as a result we could work as a team at that particular time. We agreed that we should tar the roads and we started doing that. We did a lot of projects, where they actually agreed we can see, *boetie,* we haven't done very well, so we agreed on that. Unfortunately the ones that followed it changed, and ultimately it was messed up, like it is now. They spent most of the money but not all of the money, because when we were there we had a large reserve. It was spent after we left. The town was doing well, even with the boycott. I wouldn't put my head on the block and say they spent all the money.

"I met with Hein Mentz and we were able to work with him, even the person who he handed over to. We had quite a wonderful relationship somehow. We would ultimately agree, somehow they were reasonable. They had strong opinions but they realised working with us that we were actually in the majority and they worked with us.

"They wouldn't accept the changes we were trying to bring, but ultimately they did. I think what actually assisted was the National Party that was actually advocating for the improvement of the black section, or whatever. So they had their very conservative ideas but they weren't pushing them so much; they were more protecting the interests of the Afrikaners. They didn't want the lowering of the standards and all of that, so they were really fighting for the *volk* and all of that.

"They had the experience and we didn't have experience so somehow we also needed them. The negotiations were held by myself and Steve Ngwena. Steve was a lawyer, they were with Phosa when he was here in Nelspruit. They were with Mathews Phosa. But he belonged to Ermelo and he stayed in Ermelo he was leading the negotiations. The lawyers' offices that were hand-grenaded and my house was also hand-grenaded."[371]

The first issues that the new town council dealt with were water rights, paving of roads and housing.[372]

[371] Interview with Joseph Madonsela, Nelspruit, 29 August 2016
[372] Interview with Dr Mohammed Dendar, Johannesburg, 6 September 2016

The mid-late 1990s was the era when symbols that represented Afrikaner nationalism were removed. One story that almost all interviews include was of the South African War white horse memorial statue. The statue was initially erected outside the Dutch Reformed Church. When the town council of the 1970s finished the new *Burgersentrum* they decided to move this statue to the new civic centre. Gretchen Celliers remembers when some of the symbols of apartheid were removed: "When they finished the civic centre they moved the statue there. It was all very nice … then with the new government and new people in the municipality they pulled the statue down, but it was high, maybe 2 or 3 meters. I went to the town council, I wanted to know what would happen to this statue. So they said fine they would show me, it was down there in the archives, the dungeon of the civic centre. There this statue was put. The *Moedergemeente* church said they would take the statue back. Now it's there again."[373]

Reverend Bob Timms of the Ermelo Methodist Church comments on Ermelo at present: "There is a tremendous amount of poverty amongst the white population here, especially the elderly … OK a lot of them worked on the mines and a number of the mines have closed down. OK and also in the old days, umm labour, you know during the apartheid regime, if you were white you got a job. Right now the table has turned."[374]

The pace of integration is slow. Resident and retired local newspaper editor Corrie Kleinhaus comments on the historic splits between *verligtes* and *verkramptes* and illuminates attitudes to integration: "It's not like the old days anymore; us whites have to stick together."[375] An influential member of the Chamber of Commerce of Ermelo mentioned that whites have privatised as much as what they could in order to stay relevant in the town. There are a number of cluster developments with private security firms patrolling the properties. New shopping complexes have replaced the town centre for whites as their shopping destination of choice. Fragments of the

[373] Interview with Gretchen Celliers, in Ermelo, 1 October 2014
[374] Interview with Reverend Bob Timms, Ermelo, April 2012
[375] Interview with Corrie Kleinhaus, Ermelo, May 2012

conservative support base have survived into current times. Recently, an article in the *Mail and Guardian* featured a small militarised group of white supremacists in Carolina, a town neighbouring Ermelo, and their *Kommando Korps* camps. At these camps, young Afrikaans boys are taught racist ideology and apartheid rhetoric. The article expressed the view that although the right-wing is fragmented and demilitarised, these politics of the extreme could have originated in the 1970s in response to dissatisfaction with the NP.[376] There is a general feeling that residents fear an all-out race war is on the brink of occurring in the town. Some wealthy whites have even invested money into an 'evacuation plan' where a local pilot has been given money so that he could fly families to a place of safety if genocide was to occur.

By the end of the 1990s the political splits in the white community had just about disappeared. Many started accepting constitutional changes, they had no other option. Furthermore, there were more pressing issues that united them. Race relations in the town remain tense. Many white people told me that there was a rising black middle class in Ermelo, but that these people generally do not mix with the white inhabitants of the town even though some black people have moved into the formerly white areas.

Madonsela comments that in the 1990s the atmosphere was tense, but in the end the 'suicide option' was not taken by either side of the negotiating table: "When I look at people such as Ndebele they were the saviours of Ermelo, because like I said, Ermelo was burning. Three people dead, three people dead the following day, and no one was arrested, even myself, I survived."[377]

When viewing support for ultraconservatives from the 1970s until the 1990s there is a common thread of people who were dependant on state funded and supported cushioning of white and Afrikaans lifestyles and culture. These people found the Afrikaner nationalist rhetoric of ultraconservatives appealing, as it had its roots in the nationalism of the 1950s, when Afrikaner nationalism and white privilege was at its peak. However, as the decades wore on and the NP's project of uplifting whites in South Africa proved to be a success, most whites had risen above the point where they

[376] "Right-wing fragmented and demilitarised", The Mail and Guardian, 2 March 2012.
[377] Joseph Madonsela, Nelspruit, 29 August 2016

needed support from the state, based on their ethnicity, many had become wealthy and had, over time and generations, acquired skills. Others, for a variety of reasons, remained dependant on state-sanctioned Afrikaner nationalism. South African democracy was the result of negotiation between two opposing urban groups, the ANC and the NP, who negotiated terms that fostered integration and prosperity in the cities. In areas such as Ermelo, there was strong opposition to 'buy into' the new South Africa. Historical trends of growth and decline over three decades positioned a majority of whites in Ermelo as downwardly mobile and insecure at the dawn of democracy.

In trying to perpetuate the apartheid system the CP, by aligning themselves to the AWB, opted for what C. Perkins in the Sunday Times, described as the 'suicide option'. By informally and illegally participating in violent acts they tried to discourage and disrupt the early signs of integration, and also by covertly supporting third force violence in an attempt to destabilise liberation movements organising in Wesselton. In the end however, it was capitalist interests, driven by the integrated Ermelo Chamber of Commerce that was the catalyst for a negotiated interim town council going into a democratic future.

Conclusion

Attitude and ideologies that underpin Ultraconservatism in Ermelo can be traced from the time when Trekboers attempted to establish commercial farming enterprises in the area. The lack of a pool of farm labour meant that early farmers could not coerce potential farm workers into cheap labour. This resulted in a number of legislative measures which established a racialised social hierarchy. This hierarchy was fundamental to the ways and means to profit from the land. It was further entrenched by British rule after the South African War. Thus, for whites in Ermelo, profits and a good lifestyle was in many ways linked to the degradation and exploitation of another race group.

However, this dissertation has shown that one cannot explain the underlying reason for ultraconservatism of a region over 100 years by one explanation solely. Ethnic, economic as well as cultural reasons need to be considered. In the early, 'pioneering' years racism and ultraconservatism was linked to capitalist growth. This was not to be the case in the 1970s when the HNP and later in 1980s the CP were established.

In the pioneering years bad economic conditions and a need to make a profit was a main motivator for racist and conservative ideology and beliefs. However, the HNP emerged in Ermelo in the 1970s during a time of great economic growth and prosperity among the white population. Industrial expansion of the 1970s, which was driven by coal power infrastructure, attracted new working-class whites into the town and created many new opportunities for entrepreneurs who became very wealthy as a result of a population explosion and new business opportunities. While most residents supported the *verligte* policies of Vorster and the NP, a minority came to form and support the ultraconservative splinter group, the HNP. Support for the HNP was limited because, in all fairness, being white and Afrikaans in Ermelo during the 1970s meant that there were many opportunities to have a prosperous life. Being successful was easy; there was no reason for conservative whites to be unhappy with the ruling party.

However, the ultraconservative splinter group did manage to gain some support during these years. This was mostly because Albert Hertzog, founder of the HNP was a locally supported politician and because there was some political infighting within the ranks of the NP locally. Although support was in the minority it was however, significant. Support for the ultraconservatives was sufficiently strong for this ideology to gain a foothold in the area. Voting ultraconservative thus became a way to voice frustration with the NP in harsher economic times.

By the end of the 1980s the prosperity of the 1970s had declined dramatically. Usutu Colliery, Camden Power Station and eventually Ermelo Mines closed down. The three largest industrial projects that brought about the prosperity of the 1970s either closed down or downsized their staff dramatically. This left thousands of white workers jobless virtually overnight. To make matters worse, the decline of the railways left the neighbouring town of Breyton in a state of economic collapse. Further, the farming community suffered trying economic times just as state support for farmers was re-organised along neo-liberal lines and state subsidies for farmers were being phased out.

During the 1980s the state was moving away from policies designed to support the Afrikaner working class and farmers. At this time the very first signs of racial integration since the inception of the town in the 1800s were starting to be seen. During this time the CP rose to prominence nationally as they rallied in reaction to the Tricameral Parliament and absorbed most of the HNPs support base.

The deteriorating economic context and the decrease in support for certain Afrikaners were used by ultraconservatives – who had established themselves in the area in the 1970s – to muster up support. The black population of Wesselton were used as a scapegoat; the looming liberation of black South Africans was said to destabilise and even destroy the way of life of whites. During the late 1980s and early 1990s the early signs of the collapse of the apartheid system could be seen in everyday life. Working-class whites and farmers were no longer a priority for the NP. Black liberation movements were unbanned and urban segregation came to an end. Residents who feared an uncertain future and who perceived their surroundings as deteriorating came

to support ultraconservatives and by 1990 the town council was controlled by the conservative CP.

In the 1990s the main catalyst for peaceful transition was capitalist interests. Unlike in the 1800s, when the ability to generate wealth hinged on the racial oppression of blacks, in the 1990s the ability to generate wealth hinged on the acceptance of a peaceful transition into a democratic society where blacks and whites were awarded equal rights under the law.

In short, the underlying reasons for a population or group of people to support ultraconservative or extreme political movements are complex and should not be understood as something that follows a neat economic pattern. Whereas capitalist enterprise was the motivator for racist practices in the 1800s, it was also the motivator for the abolition of racist practice in the 1990s. There are no neat correlations as to why a community or group of people gravitate towards a politics of the extreme. Reasons are always complex and location-specific. To fully understand the origins and motivators of ultraconservatism one has to take into account the varying and complex forces behind political extremism.

The boiling point that occurred in Ermelo in the 1990s was partly due to the ruling NP's failure to address locally specific situations. The NP government implemented industrial expansion policies in Ermelo in the 1970s which was a massive injection of capital for the area. However, when these industrial projects came to a halt, it left the area (ultimately) worse off.

This research has an important place in understanding contemporary South Africa. Zooming in on a local history to understand all the factors and complexities that underlie extreme political choices creates a framework from which to extrapolate and explore other similar scenarios. This study fills a gap in research done within a local context which aims to understand the white ultraconservatives and their motives.

This study is also important because in order to tackle racism and inequality it is not enough to simply list the ways in which a community is exclusionary or racist. The

first step for racism to be eradicated is to have an in-depth understanding of how these attitudes come to exist and how these attitudes become entrenched in the psyche of a group of people. When the issues which drive racism are resolved, then perhaps racism itself will decline.

Further research on the topic would benefit from an in-depth look into the inner workings of white unions. It was not possible to accesses these archives for this research but it could shed some light on a more focused and specific study. In addition, this study does not ignore that segregation existed and ultraconservatism is mostly understood from the perspective of those classified as white under Apartheid legislation. Resistance movements in Wesselton from the 1970s-1980s are somewhat elusive and not present in official records. This is because these movements were almost completely repressed by apartheid forces. However, when these movements were unbanned there was a sudden surge of protest action which indicates that these movements had well organised underground networks. This research intimated that these resistance networks were rooted in high schools in Wesselton. The inner workings of these networks and an investigation of the main players would also be a point of departure for future research.

Adding to that, another interesting and important direction in which further research on the town could take is the extent to which the transitional town council was able to operate after conservative hardliners decided to abandon the town council. By all accounts the early years of transition under Mayor Mohammed Dendar saw much progress in the development of infrastructure in Wesselton. The years after 1996, however, dealings of the local council are wrought with allegations of corruption and mismanagement. One reason for this, which informant Joseph Madonsela spoke of, was that individuals in the local council steadily rose to higher position in the provincial government after 1996, draining the area of moral and competent local leaders.

The main motivators for ultraconservatives are complex and often contradictory. This ideology pushed Ermelo to the brink of disaster. The town did not, however, topple over the edge. Evidence in this study has shown that in Ermelo an astute pragmatic

attitude was adopted by the transitional town council. By the 1990s the balance of power in the national context, as well as the local, had shifted dramatically towards those in favour of reform. The national political context played a major role in enabling new political discourse to take shape on a local level. The Mandela inspired political stance of reconciliation and the Truth and Reconciliation Committee inspired the spirit of pragmatic cooperation that characterised the running of the town in the post 1994 period. Ermelo, like South Africa, owes its peaceful transition to people who forgave unconditionally.

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