

An Ageing Anachronism: D.F. Malan as Prime Minister, 1948–1954

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This article tells the behind-the-scenes tale of the first apartheid Cabinet under Dr D.F. Malan. Based on the utilisation of prominent Nationalists' private documents, it traces an ageing Malan's response to a changing international context, the challenge to his leadership by a younger generation of Afrikaner nationalists and the early, haphazard implementation of the apartheid policy.

In order to safeguard South Africa against sanctions by an increasingly hostile United Nations, Malan sought America's friendship by participating in the Korean War and British protection in the Security Council by maintaining South Africa's Commonwealth membership. In the face of decolonisation, Malan sought to uphold the Commonwealth as the preserve of white-ruled states. This not only caused an outcry in Britain, but it also brought about a backlash within his own party. The National Party's republican wing, led by J.G. Strijdom, was adamant that South Africa should be a republic outside the Commonwealth. This led to numerous clashes in the Cabinet and parliamentary caucus. Malan and his Cabinet's energies were consumed by these internecine battles. The systematisation of the apartheid policy and the coordination of its implementation received little attention.

Malan's disengaged leadership style implies that he knew little of the inner workings of the various government departments for which he, as Prime Minister, was ultimately responsible. The Cabinet's internal disputes about South Africa's constitutional status and the removal of the Coloured franchise ultimately served as lightning conductors for a larger issue: the battle for the party's leadership, which came to a head in 1954. Malan sought to secure the succession for his favourite, N.C. Havenga. However, he was outmanoeuvred by J.G. Strijdom and his allies. Malan's retirement marked the end of an era, while Strijdom's victory heralded a regional and generational shift in power.

The men who took power in 1948 seemed a grim lot. Their leader's unsmiling façade and thick black-rimmed glasses created an aura of austerity – or gravity – depending on which side of the ideological spectrum one stood.¹ Judging from their photographs – and the harshness of apartheid legislation – the Afrikaner nationalist leaders created the impression of men who were united in their determination to implement the policy of apartheid in order to protect Afrikaner nationalist interests. Rob Morrell succeeded in capturing this stereotype: 'The South African government was made up of men – Afrikaans-speaking white men. They

¹ For an account of Malan's private life, which belies the stern facade, see L. Korf, 'Behind Every Man: D.F. Malan and the Women in his Life, 1874-1959', *South African Historical Journal*, 60(3), Sept. 2008.



Figure 1: D.F. Malan as he has been cemented in the public mind.

espoused an establishment masculinity which was authoritarian, unforgiving and unapologetic.² This article seeks to chisel away at this stereotype by providing a warts-and-all account of D.F. Malan's leadership of the first apartheid cabinet.

Apart from H.B. Thom's biography of D.F. Malan,³ there is no scholarly account of the inner workings of the Malan cabinet. While Thom did not deny the collisions behind the scenes, he did not allow them to detract from his heroic image of Malan, which he had set out to establish in the opening chapters of his book. An entire chapter was devoted to proving that Malan was a true Afrikaner – by virtue of factors such as his ancestry, his religiosity and his love of the Afrikaans language, history and culture.⁴ Thom also went to special lengths to portray Malan as a committed republican – and remained mum on Malan's spats with the hard-line republicans of the North, who saw through his lip service to the republic, which he regarded as a mere form of governance.⁵ Thom can be credited with an even-handed treatment of Malan's opponents, as he sought to elevate Nationalist quarrels to high-minded differences of ideological opinion, which never descended to the level of personal animosity.⁶

With regards to the use of archival sources, Thom's research was limited to the D.F. Malan collection in Stellenbosch, the A.L. Geyer collection in the Cape Archives and a few notes which the former editor of *Die Burger*, P.A. (Phil) Weber, chose to place at his disposal.⁷ The passing of time and the Orange River has enabled this study to utilise the P.A. Weber collection in its entirety, as well as the J.G. Strijdom and N.C. Havenga collections in the State Archives in Pretoria and the H.F. Verwoerd collection in the Institute of Contemporary History Archive (INCH) at the University of the Free State. The excavation of these collections places D.F. Malan and his cabinet in a completely different, albeit more prosaic, light.

Thom's treatment of Malan and the Afrikaner nationalists formed part of a broader trend in Afrikaner nationalist historiography, which focused on Nationalist cohesion and provided a rather uncomplicated account of the party and its leaders. The erstwhile Institute of Contemporary History's voluminous publications on the National Party (which do not reach beyond 1948) also acknowledged Nationalist infighting, but tried to smooth it over as far as was possible – and, like Thom, clouded its descriptions with flowery prose.⁸

2 R. Morrell, *Changing Men in South Africa* (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 2001), 17.

3 H.B. Thom, *D.F. Malan*, (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 1980).

4 See the chapter entitled 'Afrikanermens' in Thom, *D.F. Malan*, 41-57.

5 Thom, *D.F. Malan*, 18-22; L. Korf, 'D.F. Malan: A Political Biography' (D.Phil thesis, University of Stellenbosch, 2010), 197-203, 350-355.

6 Thom, *D.F. Malan*, 155-187.

7 See the references in *Ibid.*, 206-225, 288-307.

8 See the five volumes O. Geyser and A.H. Marais, eds., *Die Nasionale Party Deel I: Agtergrond, Stigting en Konsolidasie* (Pretoria: Academica, 1975); J.H. le Roux and P.W. Coetzer, *Die Nasionale Party, Deel 2: Die Eerste Bewindsjare, 1924-1934-I* (Bloemfontein: Instituut vir Eietydse Geskiedenis, 1980); le Roux and Coetzer, *Die Nasionale Party, Deel 2: Die Eerste Bewindsjare, 1924-1934-II* (Bloemfontein: Instituut vir Eietydse Geskiedenis, 1980); Coetzer and le Roux, *Die Nasionale Party Deel 4: Die 'Gesuiwerde' Nasionale Party, 1934-1940* (Bloemfontein: Instituut vir Eietydse Geskiedenis, 1986); Coetzer, *Die Nasionale Party, Deel 5: Van Oorlog tot Oorwinning, 1940-1948* (Bloemfontein: Instituut vir Eietydse Geskiedenis, 1986). The same trend was followed by the Institute's two-volume biography of JBM Hertzog, le Roux, Coetzer and Marais, eds., *Generaal J.B.M. Hertzog: Sy Strewe en Stryd* (Johannesburg: Perskor, 1987) which overlaps with the volumes that trace the history of the National Party. The C.R. Swart Collection, which is an indispensable source in studying the history of the National Party, is utilised by these authors. However, once the documents in the Collection begins to trace Hertzog's descent into senility, and its role in his and Malan's failed attempts to reunite their parties in 1939-1940, the Collection and its contents are, tellingly, ignored completely. For an account that does make use of these documents, see L. Korf, 'D.F. Malan: A Political Biography', 387-400.

Other accounts of Nationalist infighting after 1948 belong to the realm of popular literature and memoirs. Ben Schoeman's *My Lewe in die Politiek*⁹ is the only published account by a member of the Malan cabinet itself. Publications by journalists such as Piet Meiring, *Ons Eerste Ses Premiers*,¹⁰ Schalk Pienaar's *Getuie van Groot Tye*¹¹ and Alf Ries and Ebbe Dommissie's *Broedertwis*¹² lend colour to the years that followed, but do not contain the balance, detail or context that a dedicated exhumation of archival documents would provide. Such a history has yet to be written.

Since the 1970s there has been a movement to demythologise twentieth-century Afrikaner nationalism, both by Afrikaner and non-Afrikaner historians. Dunbar Moodie's *The Rise of Afrikanerdom*¹³ attempted to identify various schools of thought within the broad nationalist movement in the era 1934–1948, while historians such as Herman Giliomee,¹⁴ André du Toit,¹⁵ Albert Grundlingh¹⁶ and Sandra Swart¹⁷ have been producing a steady stream of studies of Afrikaners which dismantle the nationalist narrative of yesteryear, and works such as those produced by Saul Dubow also challenge perceptions of white homogeneity.¹⁸ This article seeks to join this tradition through its unromanticised portrayal of the Afrikaner nationalists.

It adds its voice to Deborah Posel's groundbreaking study that revealed early apartheid to have been anything but a systematic policy. Posel substantiated her assertion by examining debates about apartheid, contradictions in the Sauer Report and the implementation of the policy at an organisational level.¹⁹ Based on my examination of the Afrikaner nationalists' private collections, I concur with Posel's argument that the implementation of apartheid by Malan's regime was haphazard and not, as many believe, based on a blueprint in the form of the Sauer Report. It is clear that the nature and contents of the apartheid policy were related to the balance of power within the National Party. When, after Malan's retirement, the leadership shifted from the south to the north, the northern Nationalists possessed more power than before to shape the policy according to their ideals. However, even more tellingly, my survey of the above-mentioned document collections revealed that, as career politicians, the Nationalist leaders were far more preoccupied by the party's internal power struggles than by the implementation of the policy of apartheid.

9 B. Schoeman, *My Lewe in die Politiek* (Johannesburg: Perskor-Uitgewery, 1978).

10 P. Meiring, *Ons Eerste Ses Premiers: 'n Persoonlike Terugblik* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 1972).

11 S. Pienaar, *Getuie van Groot Tye* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 1979).

12 A. Ries and E. Dommissie, *Broedertwis: Die Verhaal van die 1982-Skeuring van die Nasionale Party* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 1982).

13 T.D. Moodie, *The Rise of Afrikanerdom: Power, Apartheid, and the Afrikaner Civil Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975).

14 See for example H. Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: Biography of a People* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2003), which also incorporates Giliomee's earlier research on Afrikaner nationalism.

15 See for example the seminal article A. du Toit, 'No Chosen People: The Myth of the Calvinist Origins of Afrikaner Nationalism and Racial Ideology', *American Historical Review*, 88(4), Oct. 1983.

16 A.M. Grundlingh, *The Dynamics of Treason: Boer Collaboration in the South African War, 1899-1902* (Pretoria: Protea Boekhuis, 2006).

17 A.M. Grundlingh and S. Swart, *Radelose Rebelle? Dinamika van die 1914-1915 Afrikanerrebellie* (Pretoria: Protea Boekhuis, 2009).

18 S. Dubow, *A Commonwealth of Knowledge: Science, Sensibility and White South Africa, 1820-2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

19 See D. Posel, *The Making of Apartheid, 1948-1961: Conflict and Compromise* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991); D. Posel, 'The Meaning of Apartheid Before 1948: Conflicting Interests and Forces within the Afrikaner Nationalist Alliance', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 14(1), Oct. 1987.

It is thus, building on this finding, that this article examines the world behind the scenes in order to provide a portrayal of Malan's leadership of his cabinet in the years 1948–1954. It is drawn from a recently completed biography of Malan and uses the biographical method to highlight the Malan cabinet's dynamics, its ideological disputes, responses to political crises such as the removal of the Coloured franchise, its uncertainties about the policy of apartheid and its ultimate power struggle for the leadership upon Malan's resignation. A seamless narrative is used as a vehicle to weave all of these complexities together – in this article the historian fulfils the age-old role of storyteller.

When D.F. Malan became Prime Minister of South Africa at the advanced age of 74, he picked up the reins in a post-War world, where the rules of international and domestic politics had changed. It was no longer what he had been accustomed to during a political career which spanned more than three decades. At the United Nations Organisation (UNO) his predecessor, Jan Smuts, discovered that he had been transformed from hero to villain, since the newly established state of India – backed by a growing number of emancipated colonies – attacked the treatment of Indians in South Africa, while the United Nations itself demanded stricter oversight of South Africa's management of South West Africa.²⁰

To Malan, the international community's talk of equality between different peoples of different colours was nothing more than a *Zeitgeist* – a man-made passing fancy. Malan believed that it was the spirit of such an idea that had once moved people to build the Tower of Babel in order to preserve humanity as a single nation with a single language – in defiance of the eternal God-given order of diversity. It was God's wish that there be difference and diversity, and for this reason he scattered the nations at Babel.²¹ All people were equal in God's eyes, Malan agreed, but equality before God did not imply equality before the voting booth. Apartheid acknowledged God's creation of the various nations; wiping out distinctions between them could only spell disaster.²² Thus, as he took power, Malan issued a warning to the wider world not to interfere in South Africa's domestic affairs.²³

However, closer to home, while the wider world around him was shifting, Malan's party had not. The National Party, which had been established 14 years earlier in the aftermath of Malan's split from Hertzog, was a body plagued by internal divisions. Its federal structure facilitated the entrenchment of provincial power bases, which often came into play when difficult decisions had to be made. The republican north was at odds with the more constitutionally complacent south about the importance of republicanism. It was only after a tug-of-war that lasted for more than a year that Malan and his Cape base gave way to the north and acquiesced in having republicanism adopted as a party principle. This happened in spite of the fact that the Cape was the largest of the four parties – in the NP's federal council, where provinces were given equal standing, the northern minority could dominate.²⁴

20 See W.K. Hancock, *Smuts II, The Fields of Force, 1919-1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1942), 443-91.

21 University of Stellenbosch, J.S. Gericke Library, Document centre, D.F. Malan Collection (hereafter DFM), 1/1/2967, D.F. Malan, 'Gradedag Stellenbosch', 11 December 1953.

22 DFM, 1/1/2885, D.F. Malan, 'Toespraak, Stellenbosch', 5 March 1953.

23 DFM, 1/1/2409, D.F. Malan, 'Radio Toespraak', 4 June 1948.

24 See Coetzer and le Roux, *Die 'Gesuiwerde' Nasionale Party, 1934-1940*, 9-23.

The republicans were led by a group of Young Turks – most notably J.G. Strijdom, C.R. Swart and their Cape ally, Eric Louw. They achieved leadership positions at a relatively young age by virtue of being nearly the only fish in a small nationalist pond, and when these were threatened, they defended their fortress tooth and nail. Thus, to Malan's horror, they were able to force Hertzog from politics in 1940 by provoking him on the republican issue,²⁵ and staged a palace revolt in 1947 when Malan decided to form an alliance with Hertzog's successor, N.C. (Klasie) Havenga. Malan was able to quash their rebellion,²⁶ but by the time the National Party took power in 1948, it was deeply polarised, its rifts running along regional lines, which coincided with simmering generational tensions.

Malan's first task as Prime Minister was to appoint a Cabinet. It was traditional that the Cabinet reflect the contributions made by the various provinces, and it was with this in mind that J.G. Strijdom and his allies hastened to compile a list of recommendations. The Transvaal had made the largest contribution to the election victory, and Strijdom assumed that it therefore ought to receive the most Cabinet seats – five at least – H.F. Verwoerd and M.D.C. de Wet Nel among them. He was severely disappointed. Malan insisted that he would be appointing the Cabinet on the basis of merit, and not on provincial representation. The principle of merit unearthed a disproportionately large number of Malan's Cape confidants, however, and included Malan's favourites, Paul Sauer, Eben Dönges and Frans Erasmus. Only Strijdom and Ben Schoeman represented the Transvaal.²⁷ Strijdom's fellow Young Turks, C.R. Swart and Eric Louw, were also given Cabinet seats. The provincial leader of Natal, E.G. Jansen, was appointed to the portfolio of Native Affairs, while Klasie Havenga took his place at the Prime Minister's side as the Minister of Finance. Havenga would serve Malan with the same loyalty that he had once devoted to Hertzog. A personal friendship developed between the two men and their partnership in Cabinet evoked scenes that reminded one of Hertzog's Cabinet, in which they had both served.²⁸

Strijdom's portfolio set the tongues wagging. Behind closed doors he insisted on being given the minor position of Lands and Irrigation, arguing that, since the party's majority was so slim, he needed time for his political work – and it was the portfolio that interested him most. In the press, however, it was regarded as a slight to give the Transvaal's provincial leader such a minor position – and Strijdom did nothing to correct the impression of his ministerial martyrdom.²⁹

Malan, Havenga and Jansen were the only members of the Cabinet who possessed any previous ministerial experience, and they had to initiate the younger members into its protocols. Malan explained to them that Cabinet meetings were secret and that it never voted on a matter, as the final decision always rested with

25 See Korf, 'D.F. Malan: A Political Biography', 387-400.

26 See *Ibid.*, 427-428.

27 Malan argued that E.G. Jansen, the leader of the National Party in Natal, had to be considered a Transvaal appointment, since his constituency was in the Transvaal. See Thom, *D.F. Malan*, 211.

28 Schoeman, *My Lewe in die Politiek*, 147-8, 168-9; Thom, *D.F. Malan* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 1980), 222; Meiring, *Ons Eerste Ses Premiers*, 97. It is interesting to compare Ben Schoeman's description of Malan and Havenga's partnership to Tommy Boydell's description of the partnership between Hertzog and Havenga: both accounts describe Havenga as the most powerful voice in cabinet, after the Prime Minister, and both accounts state that the Prime Minister would turn to him for an answer when requests for funding were made. See T. Boydell, *My Luck was in* (Cape Town: Stewart Publishers, 1947), 212-213.

29 Schoeman, *My Lewe in die Politiek*, 156.

the Prime Minister. Furthermore, the entire Cabinet was deemed responsible for individual ministers' decisions, which made it vital that ministers kept each other informed of their doings – and to guard against any public statements that could embarrass each other or the government as a whole.³⁰ During Malan's tenure, however, these protocols existed in name only. The battles that had once raged within the party were now transferred to the Cabinet. The Young Turks – with Strijdom as their ring-leader – would not flinch from repudiating the Cabinet's decisions in Parliament and in the caucus. As a result, ministers often told caucus members what their stance had been in Cabinet, while the caucus members soon took the liberty of criticising government decisions.³¹

Malan, for his part, appeared to remain aloof from the chaos raging beneath him. He had always been a reserved individual and he maintained his ever-expressionless façade when Cabinet members told him of their work. He never became involved in his ministers' duties and seldom knew of the doings of the various departments.³² It was a management style that he had maintained throughout his political career, and his tenure as Prime Minister would be no different. Malan would propagate the ideal of apartheid, while those below him were left to implement it.³³ In the years that followed, his lack of control over the doings of his government would increase along with his age.

His government did not waste any time in formulating the laws that the party had agitated for throughout the 1930s, even before their first attempt to formulate apartheid as a coherent policy. In 1939 the NP had submitted a petition to Parliament which called for an end to miscegenation, mixed marriages and mixed residential areas, and for economic and political segregation between white and non-white.³⁴ Building on existing measures, both interracial marriage and inter-course were banned through the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act of 1949 and the Immorality Act of 1950. Malan did not participate in the debates on either of these bills, but they carried his blessing. When the Group Areas Bill served before Parliament, Malan regarded it as the fulfilment of the mission that he had once undertaken as a clergyman in Graaff-Reinet: it would be the end of residential interaction – and thereby, the dangers which the Mixed Marriages and Immorality Acts sought to address would be eliminated.³⁵ All that remained to complete the list was to institute political segregation by removing the Coloured vote from the common voters' roll. This would prove to be one of the greatest challenges to

30 *Ibid.*, 156.

31 *Ibid.*, 180-1.

32 *Ibid.*, 181-2; Schoeman's assertion – that Malan was mostly unaware of the workings of the various government departments – is borne out by a survey of the D.F. Malan Collection. Cabinet ministers had to circulate memoranda among one another, and while Malan kept many of these, one is struck more by what is absent than by what is present. A survey of *Hansard* during the six years of Malan's premiership reveals that he participated in only two parliamentary debates that were related to apartheid legislation: the Group Areas Bill and the Separate Representation of Voters Bill. He confined himself to debates that were related to his twin portfolios as Prime Minister and Minister of External Affairs.

33 Malan established this leadership style during his early years as a politician: he seldom became involved in the administrative minutiae of any organisation. Instead, he would provide the impetus and inspiration for a project and then leave it to those below him to thrash out the details. Prominent examples are his disinterested editorship of *De Burger* and his role in the establishment of the Helpmekeer organisation, but his lack of involvement thereafter. See DFM, 1/1/32689, Danie Malan, *Herinneringe aan my Vader*, 84 and L. Korf, 'D.F. Malan: a political biography', 186-188, 193.

34 Coetzer and le Roux, *Die Nasionale Party Deel 4: Die 'Gesuiwerde' Nasionale Party, 1934-1940*, 71-3.

35 *Hansard*, 31 May 1950, Cols. 7938-7946.

Malan's government. Apart from these measures, however, the implementation of apartheid was hardly systematic. The Population Registration Act, which would classify all South Africans according to race, was passed in 1950, in accordance with the first Sauer Report's recommendation.³⁶ It would provide the basis for the implementation of all apartheid legislation to follow – but the age of methodical social engineering would only arrive by the next decade.³⁷

Malan, for his part, directed his attention to foreign matters. He held the portfolio of External Affairs, which had been held by his predecessors, Hertzog and Smuts. The administrative head of this department, D.D. Forsyth, generally had a free hand with regards to its administration and appointments, however. Malan seemed to show no interest in these matters.³⁸ His most significant appointment was to name his confidant Dr Albert Geyer as High Commissioner in London.³⁹ Geyer would be succeeded as editor of *Die Burger* by P.A. Weber, who kept him informed of political developments in South Africa.

Instead of attending foreign summits himself, Malan dispatched his ministers, Havenga, Dönges, Sauer and Louw – the last of whom had acquired extensive diplomatic experience before his entry into politics – to represent him at international conferences and at the UNO.⁴⁰ Since Louis Botha's first visits to London, and Hertzog's return from the Imperial Conferences of 1926 and 1931, the Nationalists harboured a fear that their Prime Ministers would be hypnotised by English charm and would return to their country as agents of the Empire. During the 1930s, a congress decision was even taken to prohibit Nationalist Prime Ministers from travelling abroad, and extensive travelling would therefore have made Malan very unpopular.⁴¹ In the light of this general aversion, it is understandable why Malan travelled abroad only twice during his tenure.

In 1949, the British Prime Minister, Clement Attlee, arranged a Prime Ministers' conference to discuss India's request to retain her membership of the Commonwealth despite her new status as a republic.⁴² Malan attended this occasion where, as the British Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir Stafford Cripps, later remarked to F.H. Theron, a South African diplomat in Rome, he made 'a really substantial contribution to its success ... he came there a practically unknown quantity, but his practical and broad approach to problems which confronted us immediately established his pre-eminence.' His wife, Maria Malan, also succeeded in charming those who met her – 'they were absolutely the success of the gathering.'⁴³

36 The infamous Sauer Report, which attempted to formulate the NP's racial policy, followed on an earlier commission of enquiry, led by Paul Sauer in 1944 and 1945, which investigated the position of the Coloured population in the Western Cape. This report acknowledged that there were so-called 'borderline' cases which made it difficult to determine whether or not a person was Coloured, and recommended that a standard for classification be created. See DFM, 1/1/2211, 'Verslag van die Kommissie aangestel deur die HNP van Kaapland insake beleid van die Nasionale Party teenoor die Kleurlinge', [1945], 2-3.

37 See Posel, *The Making of Apartheid, 1948-1961: Conflict and Compromise*, 1-22.

38 University of Stellenbosch, J.S. Gericke Library, Document centre (hereafter US Library), P.A. Weber Collection, 296.K.Ge.172, A.L. Geyer – P.A. Weber, 24 October 1953.

39 Cape Archives Depot (hereafter CAD), A.L. Geyer Collection, A1890, Volume 5, Diary: 12 January 1950.

40 K.J. de Beer, 'Dr. D.F. Malan as Minister van Buitelandse Sake' (M.A. Thesis, University of the Free State, 1977), 160-7.

41 US Library, P.A. Weber Collection, 296.K.Ge.125, P.A. Weber – A.L. Geyer, 8 March 1953.

42 DFM, 1/1/2462, C. Attlee – D.F. Malan, 2 March 1949.

43 DFM, 1/1/2480, F.H. Theron – D.D. Forsyth, 23 May 1949.



Figure 2: A humorous moment with Ernest Bevin, the British Foreign Secretary (D.F. Malan Collection).

The conference had an even greater impact on Malan, as India was given permission to remain within the Commonwealth. This presented new possibilities to Malan, whose republicanism had always been fluid. In a Cold War context he believed safety was not to be found in isolation, but in close association with anti-Communist countries. With an increasingly hostile UNO, the protection of Britain – who had a veto right on the Security Council – was a trump card that was not to be shunned. Thus, as the conference drew to its conclusion, Malan released a press statement that South Africa would remain within the Commonwealth as long as her sovereign rights – including her right to become a republic – were respected.⁴⁴ This was a departure from his wartime assertions that South Africa had to break the British connection in order to avoid involvement in foreign wars.⁴⁵

In an even greater departure from this stance, South Africa committed an air squadron to assist Western forces in the Korean War.⁴⁶ Malan was motivated by the considerations of *realpolitik*. He justified his decision to Parliament by pointing to the position of the US in relation to the Soviet Union. Malan regarded South Africa as a member of the Western European community, and asserted that Western Europe would be helpless without the US. Thus, if the US declared that China was an aggressor, then South Africa had to support it. To observers, it was a surreal moment. Suppose it was ten years ago, and suppose it was England instead of the US, and Smuts instead of Malan – Phil Weber wrote to Geyer – the Nationalists would certainly have howled that England was holding South Africa on a leash.⁴⁷ Malan, on the other hand, believed that participation in the Korean War increased South Africa's moral standing in the UNO.

44 DFM, 1/1/2476, 'Statement by the South African Prime Minister', 29 April 1949.

45 DFM, 1/1/1573, 'Dr. D.F. Malan se Toespraak te Pretoria', 26 September 1939.

46 de Beer, 'Dr. D.F. Malan as Minister van Buitelandse Sake', 542-7.

47 US Library, P.A. Weber Collection, 296.K.Ge.38, P.A. Weber – A.L. Geyer, 28 January 1951.

The UNO's attacks on South Africa, concerning its Indian population and the administration of South West Africa, continued unabated during Malan's premiership. He was angered by what he considered to be ill-informed criticism, and illegal meddling in South Africa's domestic affairs, by an organisation that he was convinced only cared about people of colour and was therefore intent on ramming racial equality down the throats of Africa's whites.⁴⁸ He dismissed the UNO as an impotent body on numerous occasions,⁴⁹ and snubbed its efforts to bring South Africa to book. As far as Malan was concerned, it could hardly impose sanctions on South Africa after her contribution to the Korean War. Only the Security Council could make such a decision, which would force Britain to choose between the UNO and the Commonwealth.⁵⁰ Thus, to Malan, association with Britain not only spelt a valuable economic partnership, but also protection from economic sanctions by the UNO.

There were causes for concern, however. Malan feared that the process of decolonisation could grant Commonwealth membership to more Asian countries – and even to African countries such as the Gold Coast, where full democratic elections were held early in 1951. Not only would this threaten his sanctuary from international condemnation, according to which member states assiduously refrained from commenting on one another's domestic affairs, but African independence would also spell the end of 'Western civilisation' in Africa. Malan did not doubt for a moment that democracy in West Africa would fail – as far as he was concerned, the democratic principle was virtuous in itself, but was being erroneously applied to populations of which the vast majority were still illiterate. The process was also irreversible, Malan declared. It was easier to grant rights than it was to retract them.⁵¹

When Britain declared that it would welcome its former colonies as members of the Commonwealth, Malan lashed out by pointing to the fact that the Commonwealth was a free association of equal members: Britain could not simply admit new states without consulting the other members. Malan argued that the association was based on its members' common interests, but these would be diminished by the admittance of diverse members with divergent interests, especially at a time when the organisation was already under strain due to India's exploitation of the UNO to attack its fellow Commonwealth state, South Africa. As far as Malan was concerned, the Commonwealth's salvation – and that of South Africa – lay in the consolidation of its white ranks.⁵²

Malan's remarks about the Commonwealth caused a stir in Britain – to which he paid little heed.⁵³ However, his concerns about the preservation of South Africa's Commonwealth membership brought about a backlash from within his own ranks.

48 CAD, A.L. Geyer Collection, A1890, Volume 1, D.F. Malan – A.L. Geyer, 22 September 1950.

49 DFM, 1/1/2529, D.F. Malan, 'Nuwejaarsboodskap', 31 December 1949; DFM, 1/1/2863, D.F. Malan, 'Nuwejaarsboodskap', 31 December 1952.

50 CAD, A.L. Geyer collection, A1890, Volume 1, D.F. Malan – A.L. Geyer, 22 September 1950.

51 DFM, 1/1/2614, 'Onderhoud met *Die Burger*', [n.d.] February 1951; DFM, 1/1/2617, D.F. Malan, 'Dinner to Gordon-Walker, Min. of Commonwealth Relations, Kelvin Grove, Feb. 9 1951.'

52 DFM, 1/1/2614, 'Onderhoud met *Die Burger*', [n.d.] February 1951; DFM, 1/1/2617, D.F. Malan, 'Dinner to Gordon-Walker, Min. of Commonwealth Relations, Kelvin Grove, Feb. 9 1951.'

53 CAD, A.L. Geyer Collection, A1890, Volume 1, D.F. Malan – A.L. Geyer, 26 March 1951.

When Malan reported to Parliament that the 1949 Prime Ministers' Conference had, with his support, made it possible for a republic to remain a member of the organisation, he declared that both sides of the House, whether or not they felt loyalty to the Crown, could agree that they wanted to remain members of the Commonwealth as long as there was no infringement of South Africa's sovereignty. In a move that shattered Cabinet's protocol, Strijdom rose to deliver a speech in which he repudiated Malan by citing the party's programme of principles, which stated that it would endeavour to establish a republic outside the British Empire. The Empire, according to Strijdom, necessarily implied the Commonwealth. Once the debate had ended, Strijdom began telling his friends that he would resign if the party accepted Malan's new position – but he had made similar threats in the past and by this time his threats of resignation were not taken seriously. The tension was defused in the caucus, but the antipathy between Malan and Strijdom was growing.⁵⁴

By January 1950 communication between the two men had deteriorated to the point where Strijdom wrote to Malan complaining that he had to learn of Cabinet decisions in the newspapers. All of his complaints were related to Malan, Erasmus and Sauer's departments. Moreover, he was upset that Malan, in spite of their altercation in Parliament, continued to propagate membership of the Commonwealth. In a veiled threat, Strijdom asked Malan to stop his propaganda – or else it might lead to more clashes and have 'serious consequences'.⁵⁵ Malan was extremely upset that Strijdom chose to write to him while their ministerial residences were situated only a few hundred paces from each other.⁵⁶ His reply conveyed this disappointment. Instead of trying to defend himself, or inviting Strijdom to an interview, Malan informed Strijdom that he could present his grievances to the Cabinet or the caucus. It only ignited Strijdom's easily inflamed temper. On the back of the letter, he scribbled:

He is definitely looking for trouble from his side ... From my side, while I am not willing to abandon our Party's Republican ideal, but with a view to Dr Malan's advanced age – I would not like to have a row or a clash with him, unless he forces the position, I will let the matter rest, unless he makes a similar statement which obligates me to repudiate him.⁵⁷

Malan, for his part, was also growing agitated. It is a common affliction among Prime Ministers that they suspect their Cabinet colleagues of plotting against them, and Malan was no exception. By 1951 there were rumours that a secret republican organisation had been established within the party's ranks with the express aim of undermining him. It was called the Republikeinse Stewersbond (RSB) and was organised from the Transvaal. Its alleged leader was Hendrik Verwoerd, whom

⁵⁴ Schoeman, *My Lewe in die Politiek*, 163-6. Schoeman's account of the events conflates two separate clashes between Malan and Strijdom about the matter of the Commonwealth – the first clash took place in 1949, the second in 1951.

⁵⁵ DFM, 1/1/2543, J.G. Strijdom – D.F. Malan, 10 January 1950.

⁵⁶ US Library, P.A. Weber Collection, 296.K.Ge.53, P.A. Weber – A.L. Geyer, 8 April 1951.

⁵⁷ Central archives repository (hereafter SAB), J.G. Strijdom Collection, A2, Volume 53, D.F. Malan – J.G. Strijdom, 11 January 1951 [translated from the original Afrikaans: my translation].



Figure 3: Maria Malan became her husband's caregiver as he advanced in years (D.F. Malan Collection).

Malan had finally appointed to Cabinet at the end of 1950. Malan called Verwoerd into his office to interrogate him about the organisation, but Verwoerd denied all knowledge of such a body. Malan's suspicions were not quelled, and his thoughts began to focus on defeating his unseen enemies.⁵⁸

At a fruit festival in Stellenbosch, Malan delivered a speech in which, pointing to the experience of 1941 when the HNP had been assailed by the New Order and the Ossewa Brandwag, he warned against the formation of interest groups within the party's ranks. Strijdom responded with a speech in which he labelled the abandonment of the republican ideal as 'soulless'.⁵⁹ It reopened the republican row and prompted Malan to insist that the caucus hammer out the republican issue in order that it could be laid to rest.⁶⁰ This paved the way for open clashes in the caucus, in which Malan argued for adaptation in the light of changing circumstances while Strijdom held fast to a fundamentalist interpretation of the party's constitution.⁶¹

To observers, it was clear that the clash between the two men was, in reality, a clash about the future leadership in the party.⁶² By this time, Strijdom's stature in the caucus had reached the point where even some of the prominent Cape Nationalists had resigned themselves to the fact that he would succeed Malan. Malan, however, did not feel that he could entrust the party's future to Strijdom⁶³

58 US Library, P.A. Weber Collection, 296.K.Ge.53, P.A. Weber – A.L. Geyer, 8 April 1951; US Library, P.A. Weber collection, 296.K.Ge.56, P.A. Weber – A.L. Geyer, 1 May 1951.

59 US Library, P.A. Weber Collection, 296.K.Ge.43, P.A. Weber – A.L. Geyer, 1 March 1951.

60 US Library, P.A. Weber Collection, 296.K.Ge.49/1, P.A. Weber – A.L. Geyer, 20 March 1951.

61 SAB, J.G. Strijdom Collection, A2, Volume 53, Notes by J.G. Strijdom, 'Koukusvergadering', 13 March 1951; US Library, P.A. Weber Collection, 296.K.Ge.48/2, Notes by P.A. Weber, 13 March 1951; US Library, P.A. Weber Collection, 296.K.Ge.49/2, Notes by P.A. Weber, 20 March 1951.

62 US Library, P.A. Weber Collection, 296.K.Ge.51, P.A. Weber – A.L. Geyer, 2 April 1951.

63 US Library, P.A. Weber Collection, 296.K.Ge.49/1, P.A. Weber – A.L. Geyer, 23 March 1951.

– Strijdom lacked vision, he complained to confidants.⁶⁴ Malan's lack of trust in the party's crown prince was coupled with the realisation that his time to retire was growing nearer. His mind was still clear, and he became upset when his followers tried to scrutinise his health, but the reality was that he was nearing his eightieth year. His body was becoming frail, his immune system was fortified by regular injections, and a countless number of pills treated a range of ailments.⁶⁵

Jan Smuts had once been preoccupied with Hertzog's humiliating demise, and the necessity of making a graceful exit now became Malan's concern as well. He mulled over an exchange between himself and Smuts in one of Parliament's lobbies shortly after Hertzog's death. It is a pity that Hertzog did not retire five years earlier, Smuts had remarked to Malan – it would have spared him the humiliation. In response, Malan recounted the tale of old Mr Joubert, who was once the minister of Paarl's Dutch Reformed Church. He was adored by his congregants and, when he announced his retirement, they begged him to stay. He refused, as he might reach an age where he could not and would not retire, and his congregation would then be saddled with him. 'And this, *oom Jannie*,' Malan said to Smuts, 'is a lesson to you and to me.'⁶⁶ Smuts himself did not retire in the aftermath of his defeat to Malan, because his followers begged him to stay longer,⁶⁷ and Malan was convinced that it was a mistake on Smuts's part. Now he found himself surrounded by a group of younger men who insisted that he stay with them.⁶⁸ His inner circle knew that their fortunes were tied to his and that, under Strijdom, they would not continue to occupy the position in the party they once did.⁶⁹

Yet, it was not only his fears of leaving his party to a man whom he resented that caused Malan distress. He was also angry at the way that he was being prodded and forced to adopt a particular stance by the same men who had caused Hertzog's humiliation ten years before. He believed that they had now decided to do the same to him by organising an underground movement against him – but he would not allow them to force him down the same path as Hertzog.⁷⁰ Malan persisted in forcing the republican issue through the caucus, and refused to be deterred: it was Strijdom who had to give way.⁷¹ The caucus finally issued a statement that the party would continue to adhere to the republican ideal, but that the watershed of 1949 made the republic and Commonwealth membership two separate issues which could be dealt with at the appointed time – and the decision would be determined by future circumstances.⁷² Peace was restored, but the party remained polarised.

64 US Library, P.A. Weber Collection, 296.K.Ge.43, P.A. Weber – A.L. Geyer, 1 March 1951.

65 US Library, P.A. Weber Collection, 296.K.Ge.35, P.A. Weber – A.L. Geyer, 14 January 1951; US Library, P.A. Weber Collection, 296.K.Ge.58/2, P.A. Weber – A.L. Geyer, 27 May 1951; US Library, P.A. Weber Collection, 296.K.Ge.125, P.A. Weber – A.L. Geyer, 8 March 1953.

66 US Library, P.A. Weber Collection, 296.K.Ge.56, P.A. Weber – A.L. Geyer, 1 May 1951 [Translated from the original Afrikaans: my translation]. Despite the fact that they had known each other since boyhood, and that there was merely a four year age difference between them, Malan addressed Smuts as 'Oom Jannie', a familiar yet respectful form of address which means 'Uncle'. Smuts, in turn, called Malan 'Danie'. See G. Pretorius, *Die Malans van Môrewag* (Cape Town: Malherbe, 1965), 33.

67 W.K. Hancock, *Smuts II, The Fields of Force, 1919-1950*, 507.

68 US Library, P.A. Weber Collection, 296.K.Ge.56, P.A. Weber – A.L. Geyer, 1 May 1951; US Library, P.A. Weber Collection, 296.K.Ge.57/2, A.L. Geyer – P.A. Weber, 21 May 1951.

69 US Library, P.A. Weber Collection, 296.K.Ge.202, P.A. Weber – A.L. Geyer, 17 October 1954.

70 US Library, P.A. Weber Collection, 296.K.Ge.56, P.A. Weber – A.L. Geyer, 1 May 1951.

71 US Library, P.A. Weber collection, 296.K.Ge.57/2, P.A. Weber – A.L. Geyer, 15 May 1951.

72 DFM, 1/1/2651, 'Koukus-besluit', 8 May 1951.

The ceasefire in the party was not reflected in the general mood in the country. The Defiance Campaign was launched in April 1952 and continued throughout the months that followed. Black political organisations orchestrated a campaign of civil disobedience, whereby they invited the arrest of their members.⁷³ At times it became violent, and the murder and torching of a nun in East London – which the Nationalists deemed an act of barbarism – sent chills down the spines of some of Malan's confidants. They refused to believe that the disturbances were caused by apartheid policy – it had to be the result of a new anti-white *Zeitgeist* that was being fed from the outside by the UNO, the Gold Coast, Kenya, the Communists and India. Inside the country, the Torch Commando carried the blame for stirring such hatred.⁷⁴ Malan – who held firmly to his conviction that Africans were still primitive beings⁷⁵ – announced that order had to be restored and the guilty punished before the need for an investigation could be assessed.⁷⁶ He was convinced that any form of unrest was due to orchestrated Communist subversion, which was directed from Moscow. In a Cold War world, where the West was terrified of Soviet power and infiltration, such a notion did not seem far-fetched and it gave credence to the Suppression of Communism Act, which C.R. Swart had introduced in 1950, at a time when Senator Joseph McCarthy was sowing the seeds of suspicion in the United States and when British politicians were being scrutinised for possible Communist sympathies.⁷⁷ Malan's resolve had a calming effect on his followers, but in private Phil Weber was also disturbed by the violent methods used by the police to suppress the uprising, and was concerned that the problem was far greater than any of them realised.⁷⁸

As editor of *Die Burger*, Weber enjoyed the same privileges as his predecessor, Albert Geyer. He was also allowed to attend caucus meetings, and became a member of Malan's inner circle. Like Geyer before him, Weber was in a position to speak his mind more freely than were members of the party organisation. He witnessed an accelerated process of industrialisation under the Nationalist government, which created a glaring contradiction in respect of its apartheid policy: African urbanisation was on the increase, not the reverse.⁷⁹ There seemed to be little clarity about the policy – he and outside observers knew it. After an informal meeting with two diplomats – the Canadian Terry MacDermott and the American Joe Sweeney – who cross-examined him about the apartheid policy, and forced him to admit that the government was torpedoing apartheid through its industrial expansion – Weber was rather glum. 'We are, after all, busy with an experiment, and we do not know ourselves what the end is going to be,' he lamented to Geyer.⁸⁰

73 T.R.H. Davenport and C. Saunders, *South Africa: A Modern History* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), 386-7.

74 US Library, P.A. Weber Collection, 296.K.Ge.111/2a, P.A. Weber – A.L. Geyer, 16 November 1952; US Library, P.A. Weber Collection, 296.K.Ge.112/2a, P.A. Weber – A.L. Geyer, 26 November 1952.

75 DFM, 1/1/2824, 'Radio Talk by the Prime Minister of the Union of South Africa, Dr. The Honourable D.F. Malan', [n.d.] September 1952.

76 US Library, P.A. Weber collection, 296.K.Ge.111/2, P.A. Weber – A.L. Geyer, 16 November 1952.

77 *Hansard*, 26 May 1952, Cols. 6974-6983.

78 US Library, P.A. Weber Collection, 296.K.Ge.111/2, P.A. Weber – A.L. Geyer, 16 November 1952. Documents relating to the Defiance Campaign are glaringly absent from the D.F. Malan Collection, which casts doubt about the impact of the campaign at Prime Ministerial level. The Minister responsible for dealing with the uprising was the Minister of Justice, C.R. Swart.

79 US Library, P.A. Weber Collection, 296.K.Ge.111/2, P.A. Weber – A.L. Geyer, 16 November 1952.

80 US Library, P.A. Weber Collection, 296.K.Ge.40, P.A. Weber – A.L. Geyer, 3 February 1951 [Translated from the original Afrikaans: my translation].

In the aftermath of the Defiance Campaign, Weber was convinced that he had to speak to Malan about his doubts and wrote to Geyer about his plans:

I want to tell him things that he might not hear from others, the first being that a natives' policy can only succeed if a large portion of the natives accept and support it. You cannot govern nine million people against the will of the greater part. We have not reached such a point yet, but if we do not seek and obtain the natives' cooperation and good will, we are headed for trouble. Furthermore, we need to obtain some clarity about what is possible with apartheid. We say that economic integration is fatal, but under this administration, economic integration is assuming even larger proportions. If it continues like this, we will have to face the fact that you cannot make a distinction on the basis of a man's colour forever. You cannot give the natives education, good employment and a high standard of living, and then say that they cannot become citizens of this country due to the colour of their skin. If apartheid is our policy, we will have to do more than just trying to halt the stream to the cities.⁸¹

Geyer agreed. He would not dare to say it in public, but he was concerned that 'our people regard Apartheid far too much as a question of protecting their interests, without being willing to pay anything for that protection'.⁸² Geyer was convinced that apartheid had to lead to separate development; otherwise it would be a sham. He doubted whether the Nationalists truly accepted this aspect of the policy.⁸³

Weber visited Pretoria at the end of November 1952, hoping to share his concerns with Malan. His interview with Malan lasted for half an hour, as Malan had other appointments waiting. True to his reticent nature, Malan did not react to Weber's words, and instead gazed at him with an expressionless face while he listened. Weber felt disconcerted by Malan's stare, and found himself jumping from one argument to the next. He left the interview without knowing what Malan thought of the matter.⁸⁴ Geyer sympathised with his friend's ordeal:

I know precisely how it would have been – and then the old man sits there, staring at you, without you knowing whether he heard what you said or whether he is thinking about other things. But my experience has been that he does indeed go away, thinking about what you said – but you are not a person, you are merely a piece of his own brain which produces thoughts. That is why he can start talking to you a few days

81 US Library, P.A. Weber Collection, 296.K.Ge.111/2, P.A. Weber – A.L. Geyer, 16 November 1952 [Translated from the original Afrikaans: my translation].

82 US Library, P.A. Weber Collection, 296.K.Ge.112/1, A.L. Geyer – P.A. Weber, 21 November 1952 [Translated from the original Afrikaans: my translation].

83 US Library, P.A. Weber Collection, 296.K.Ge.177, A.L. Geyer – P.A. Weber, 15 November 1953.

84 US Library, P.A. Weber Collection, 296.K.Ge.112/2a, P.A. Weber – A.L. Geyer, 26 November 1952; US Library, P.A. Weber Collection, 296.K.Ge.113, P.A. Weber – A.L. Geyer, 4 December 1952.

later, and then tell you precisely what you told him a few days earlier, as if the thought was entirely his own.⁸⁵

Weber's conversations with some of the other Cabinet ministers did not assuage his concern that the government had no coherent stance on apartheid. Ben Schoeman was, in his opinion, the most sober thinker on the matter. Verwoerd had an excellent policy on paper, which the Cabinet was not implementing, while Strijdom wanted to cut government spending on services to Africans.⁸⁶

Malan, for his part, never shed his vagueness. None of his speeches contained any references to the practical application of the apartheid policy. When questioned by the international community, he cited his government's expenditure on Africans, which satisfied him that it was applied well and with benevolence. In a 1952 radio broadcast, Malan informed the American public that the South African government had spent £23 million on services to Africans during the previous year – of which £21 million had been supplied by white taxpayers.⁸⁷ Eighteen months later, Malan approved a reply to an American cleric's letter,⁸⁸ which stated that:

Since 1947/48 the Government has increased its expenditure on non-White education from £3,665,600 to an estimated £8,190,000 for the financial year 1953/4. Today nearly 800,000 Bantu children are given their schooling free of charge ... It is computed that every European taxpayer 'carries' more than four non-Whites in order to provide the latter with the essential services involving education, hospitalization, housing, etc.⁸⁹

Citing figures seemed to be the standard response to criticism: £3.5 million had been set aside during the previous year to improve farming conditions in the Reserves; another £2 million went into old-age pensions. Extensive loans were granted for housing, while medical treatment was also provided to Africans, mostly free of charge.⁹⁰ Yet, Malan never investigated the infrastructure that provided these services.

Even though Malan did not show a visible reaction when Weber raised his concerns, he agreed that the inevitable process of economic integration made the idea of Total Apartheid impractical. When G.B.A. Gerdener, who had served on the Sauer Commission, organised a clerical conference in 1950 which called on the government to set up fully independent African homelands and to remove Africans from 'white industrial life', Malan rejected the notion as unworkable.⁹¹ As far as Malan was concerned, the idea of independent homelands was an unrealistic

85 P.A. Weber Collection, 296.K.GE(113), A.L. Geyer – P.A. Weber, 4 December 1952 [Translated from the original Afrikaans: my translation].

86 US Library, P.A. Weber Collection, 296.K.Ge.112/2a, P.A. Weber – A.L. Geyer, 26 November 1952.

87 DFM, 1/1/2824, 'Radio Talk by the Prime Minister of the Union of South Africa, Dr. The Honourable D.F. Malan', [n.d.] September 1952.

88 Meiring, *Ons Eerste Ses Premiers*, 87. While the letter was issued, and later published, under Malan's name, Piet Meiring claimed that he, as Director of Information, drafted the text, to which Malan gave his approval.

89 DFM, 1/1/3000, D.F. Malan – J. Piersma, 12 February 1954.

90 *Ibid.*

91 Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, 484.

theory hatched by two Stellenbosch academics, A.C. Cilliers and Piet Schoeman, in the comfort of their studies.⁹² He did, however, consider the Reserves to be the Africans' natural home, and when the Reserves in South West Africa were taken into consideration, it meant that Africans occupied an area larger than Central Europe. Without considering the fact that large Reserves in the sparsely populated South West Africa could not be used to justify the conditions of overcrowded areas such as the Transkei, Malan assured the white electorate that Africans had ample land, and that there were no grounds for considering the distribution of land in South Africa to be unjust. He also insisted that the Voortrekkers had occupied an empty land, and that the rest of their land had been obtained through negotiated treaties. Since Malan believed that whites had arrived in South Africa at the same time as Africans, he was convinced that they had as much claim to South Africa's land as did the African population.⁹³

While Malan thought of Africans as the residents of the Reserves, he also regarded them as permanent inhabitants of the country – and even contemplated the idea that they could be regarded as members of a broad South African nation, as he stated in his first election speech of the 1953 campaign:

Despite some discouraging phenomena, I believe that national unity, as it should be understood – which includes the great majority of the two white language groups and a sizeable part of the non-white population – is coming soon, and that one of the greatest contributions would be made by the implementation of a courageous and fair policy of apartheid.⁹⁴

Phil Weber pointed out to him that it would earn him Strijdom's chagrin, as Strijdom believed that the South African nation consisted only of whites. It could give the Opposition a golden opportunity to exploit the differences between them, 'but Doctor brushed the objection aside – or should I say that Mrs Malan did?'⁹⁵

In all the talk of apartheid, the position of Coloured people remained an unresolved issue. 'You know, Coloured-apartheid perplexes me,' Geyer wrote to Weber. 'In theory, at least, Apartheid between white and black is logical, but the Coloureds will always be among the whites. How should it ultimately be?'⁹⁶ Malan and his government did not seem able to provide an answer. Instead, they were set on carrying out an undertaking they had made in the 1930s: to remove Coloured voters from the Cape's voting roll. The matter would not be tackled before 1951. Havenga objected to the removal of the Coloured franchise and Malan, who regarded the political unity of Afrikanerdom as a more important priority, did not

92 Institute for Contemporary History archives (hereafter INCH), Sound Archive, PV 193, tape 122, 'Interview: Danie Malan, Cape Town', 8 June 1977.

93 DFM, 1/1/2885, D.F. Malan, 'Toespraak, Stellenbosch', 5 March 1953.

94 *Ibid.* [Translated from the original Afrikaans: my translation].

95 US Library, P.A. Weber Collection, 296.K.Ge.125, P.A. Weber – A.L. Geyer, 8 March 1953: [Translated from the original Afrikaans: my translation]. Maria Malan was resented in Nationalist circles on account of the active interest which she took in politics and was deemed to be a person with undue influence over her husband. Weber, in particular, was the author of many a snide remark in this regard. For more on Maria Malan, see L. Korf, 'Behind Every Man: D.F. Malan and the Women in his Life, 1874-1959', *South African Historical Journal*, 60(3), Sept. 2008.

96 US Library, P.A. Weber Collection, 296.K.Ge.113, A.L. Geyer – P.A. Weber, 4 December 1952 [Translated from the original Afrikaans: my translation].

force the matter until they were able to reach an agreement in late 1950.⁹⁷ This agreement facilitated the amalgamation of the National Party and the Afrikaner Party, which took place during the second half of 1951.⁹⁸ To Malan's elation and relief, the Young Turks did nothing to disrupt the process. Havenga was elected as Natal's provincial leader, granting him a senior position within the party.⁹⁹

The mission of implementing Malan and Havenga's agreement – which stipulated that Coloureds would be placed on a separate voters' roll and be given four white representatives in Parliament, one in the Senate and two in the Cape Provincial Council¹⁰⁰ – was given to the Minister of the Interior, Eben Dönges. Dönges was one of Malan's confidants, but he was not well liked by the other members of the Cape inner circle, who believed that he was egotistical and 'too clever' – a man who was happiest when he had an argument to present, regardless of whether it was flawed, and who could not be counted on to be straightforward. Dönges always gave the impression that he was keeping some of his thoughts to himself, which led others to distrust him.¹⁰¹ By assigning Dönges to the task of circumventing the entrenched clause in the South Africa Act that guaranteed Coloureds' voting rights, Malan unwittingly signed both the endeavour and Dönges' political death warrant. Dönges's position in the party was severely damaged by the constitutional disaster that followed.¹⁰²

According to a decision by the South African Appeal Court in 1937, the Statute of Westminster had made the Union Parliament a sovereign body. The government therefore accepted its legal advisers' arguments that the entrenched clauses in the constitution no longer required a two-thirds majority in order to be amended. The Separate Representation of Voters Bill was passed by Parliament during its 1951 session, but its validity was contested by a group of Coloured voters.¹⁰³ Upon discussing the sympathies of the various Appeal Court judges, some of the Nationalists concluded that the law would be declared invalid.¹⁰⁴ When, indeed, a verdict was handed down against the government, chaos ensued within the Nationalists' ranks. It was no longer only the matter of the Coloured franchise that concerned them: they were convinced that the sovereignty of Parliament, which had been an article of faith for two decades, had been destroyed. Malan issued a statement that the matter could not be left there – Parliament's sovereignty had to be restored beyond any doubts.¹⁰⁵

When Dönges, who had practised law for many years and who was regarded as a legal expert, presented Cabinet with his scheme of creating a High Court of Parliament – which would function like the British Privy Council – some of the ministers expressed their doubts. A few of them had been warned by a prominent

97 DFM, 1/1/2526, D.F. Malan and N.C. Havenga, 'Verklaring', 12 December 1949; DFM, 1/1/2581, D.F. Malan and N.C. Havenga, 'Verklaring', 13 October 1950.

98 DFM, 1/1/2674, D.F. Malan and N.C. Havenga, 'Verklaring', 1 August 1951.

99 CAD, A.L. Geyer Collection, A1890, Volume 1, D.F. Malan – A.L. Geyer, 8 November 1951.

100 DFM, 1/1/2581, D.F. Malan and N.C. Havenga, 'Verklaring', 13 October 1950.

101 US Library, P.A. Weber Collection, 296.K.Ge.48/1, A.L. Geyer – P.A. Weber, 20 March 1951; US Library, P.A. Weber Collection, 296.K.Ge.51, P.A. Weber – A.L. Geyer, 2 April 1951; US Library, P.A. Weber Collection, 296.K.Ge.54, P.A. Weber – A.L. Geyer, 15 April 1951.

102 US Library, P.A. Weber Collection, 296.K.Ge.152, P.A. Weber – A.L. Geyer, 19 July 1953.

103 Davenport and Saunders, *South Africa: A Modern History*, 379–80.

104 US Library, P.A. Weber Collection, 296.K.Ge.61, P.A. Weber – A.L. Geyer, 26 October 1951.

105 DFM, 1/1/2764, D.F. Malan, 'Verklaring', 20 March 1952.

judge that the Appeal Court would invalidate the High Court of Parliament as well – the only way to pass the bill was by enlarging the Senate. Such a step was considered too drastic and audacious, however, and Cabinet gave in to Dönges's arguments. The High Court of Parliament was duly constituted, and overturned the Appeal Court's decision. As expected, the Appeal Court declared the High Court of Parliament invalid.¹⁰⁶

From London, Geyer wrote to Malan that the constitutional wrangling in South Africa had severely damaged the country's image. He implored Malan to accept the court's decision and to present the matter to the electorate instead.¹⁰⁷ Malan heeded his advice. When the 1953 election arrived, Malan fought it on three planks: apartheid, the Communist menace and the Appeal Court decision. He assured the electorate that Coloured people were not being deprived of their voting rights – the manner in which these rights were exercised was merely being amended. To this he added the usual, effective dose of fear. He argued that the Appeal Court's decision had not only endangered Parliament's sovereignty, but that it had also cast a shadow on other laws affecting the Coloured franchise. Parliament's decision to grant voting rights to white women and eliminate franchise qualifications for white men was passed by a simple majority and could also be declared invalid, as it had diluted the Coloured vote. Even the Group Areas Act, which confined Coloured voters to certain constituencies, could be declared unconstitutional. In the light of the threat to Parliament, as well as the Communist and liberal perils that had led to bloodshed in Kenya and South Africa, Malan implored the electorate to provide his government with a two-thirds majority, which would enable them to amend the entrenched clause in the South Africa Act that safeguarded the Coloureds' voting rights and, in so doing, to execute the mandate that had been entrusted to it. He reassured them that apartheid was morally justifiable, and that there was no difference between apartheid and segregation. According to Malan, apartheid was nothing new; it was merely a word which attempted to eliminate the negative connotations that had become associated with 'segregation'.¹⁰⁸ Finally, Malan asked the nation to trust him and his government, and to affirm the mandate they had been given in 1948.¹⁰⁹

The electorate's response was overwhelming. This time, there could be no ambiguity about the Nationalists' position. Malan achieved a majority, and held thirty seats over his opposition, which fought the election as the United Front.¹¹⁰ His journey from Cape Town to Pretoria became a triumphal procession, with crowds gathered at stations along the route to sing to him as his train passed by, and culminated in an enormous gathering in Pretoria's Church Square.¹¹¹ Malan was thirteen seats short of a two-thirds majority, but he was confident that he could

106 Schoeman, *My Lewes in die Politiek*, 188-90.

107 DFM, 1/1/2779, A.L. Geyer – D.F. Malan, 6 April 1952; DFM, 1/1/2823, A.L. Geyer – D.F. Malan, 29 August 1952.

108 As Posel pointed out, the Nationalists held divergent opinions about apartheid and what it entailed. According to his 1953 election speech, Malan, for his part, did not see any difference between apartheid and Hertzog's policy of segregation in the 1920s – he had merely adopted a new name in order to rid the policy of the negative connotation attached to the word 'segregation'. This explains why Malan did not attempt to address the inconsistencies contained in the apartheid policy or to develop it into a coherent ideology.

109 DFM, 1/1/2885, D.F. Malan, 'Toespraak, Stellenbosch', 5 March 1953.

110 Schoeman, *My Lewes in die Politiek*, 194.

111 J.J. van Rooyen, 'Segereis van Dr. Malan' in J.P. Scannel, *Keeromstraat 30: Gedenkbundel vir die Vyftigste Verjaardag van Die Burger* (Cape Town: Nasionale Boekhandel Beperk, 1965), 221-30.



Figure 4: J.G. Strijdom, D.F. Malan and Paul Sauer upon Malan's arrival in Pretoria after the NP's 1953 election victory (D.F. Malan Collection).

appeal to individual members of the deeply divided Opposition to support the government in restoring Parliament's sovereignty and removing the Coloureds from the voters' roll.¹¹²

When Parliament reconvened in July 1953, the Separate Representation of Voters Bill was served again, but the government failed to receive a two-thirds majority. In response, C.R. Swart introduced an Appellate Division Quorum Bill, which would divide the Appeal Court into constitutional, civil and criminal compartments.¹¹³ The intention was to pack the constitutional section with judges who were sympathetic to the government and who would therefore give a favourable ruling.¹¹⁴ Geyer, who saw yet another blow to South Africa's international reputation approaching, wrote to Weber to express his dismay at such a law.¹¹⁵ It was intensely unpopular in the caucus, and when C.R. Swart was told by his doctor to rest for a month on account of his 'nerves', none of the other ministers was willing to present the bill in his stead. Malan must have felt the same, for when a group of dissidents from the Opposition approached him with an offer of support, in return for the withdrawal of the Appellate Bill, there was little difficulty in persuading him to drop the scheme and to pursue a conventional two-thirds majority instead.¹¹⁶

Malan informed his Cabinet that he had decided to drop the Appellate bill and to send the Separate Representation Bill to committee, while he negotiated a two-thirds majority in the House. It created an eruption. Strijdom had locked his jaws onto a new principle in the manner of a bull-terrier, and refused to abandon

112 DFM, 1/1/2903, D.F. Malan, 'Na-eleksie verklaring', 17 April 1953.

113 Davenport and Saunders, *South Africa: A Modern History*, 382.

114 CAD, A.L. Geyer Collection, A1890, Volume 5, Diary: 25 September 1953.

115 US Library, P.A. Weber Collection, 296.K.Ge.168, A.L. Geyer – P.A. Weber, 26 September 1953.

116 US Library, P.A. Weber Collection, 296.K.Ge.169/2, P.A. Weber – A.L. Geyer, 11 October 1953.

the Appellate Bill, which would have restored Parliament's sovereignty. Though the final decision rested with Malan as the Prime Minister, the Young Turks would not abide by this. Once in the caucus, Strijdom, Eric Louw and Verwoerd attacked his decision to cooperate with the Opposition – there were even accusations that Malan would be willing to fuse with their enemies. Malan was furious at such accusations. As far as he was concerned, it was hardly a matter of principle: those who had criticised the Appellate Bill during the previous meeting were now clinging to it with all their might. He reminded the caucus of the efforts of a 'certain group' to undermine him when he had tried to achieve political unity by working with Havenga and that, if they had had their way, the party would not be occupying the government benches. If the caucus did not approve of his decision, he would resign. The caucus sided with Malan and left the matter in his hands, but the damage was done. Malan, who had begun to contemplate his retirement, felt that he could not resign when his party was in such a state. He summoned the Young Turks to his office to castigate them for their behaviour, but it did little to improve the situation.¹¹⁷ By June 1954, when Parliament finally voted on the Separate Representation Bill, the leader of the Opposition, J.G.N. Strauss, succeeded in holding his party together and deprived Malan of the two-thirds majority by nine votes. Malan would not remain in office long enough to explore the final avenue that remained open to the government: the enlargement of the Senate.¹¹⁸

By 1953, Malan was ageing rapidly. His decision to attend the coronation of Elizabeth II was not very popular among the Nationalists, who resented the rumours that Maria Malan was looking forward to the occasion. The British, for their part, appreciated Malan's respect for protocol despite his party's republicanism. It was arranged that a Prime Ministers' conference would be held at the same time, which created fears that Malan might return from the event with more shocking statements, as had been the case in 1949.¹¹⁹

Yet, when Geyer arrived at Southampton to welcome Malan, he was taken aback when he saw how frail Malan had become. To his diary he confided:

I am shocked to observe how old Doctor has become. Now, for the first time, I see him as an old man. He is also living in his own little world again. The P[rime] M[inisters'] conference begins on Wednesday, he is not prepared for it at all, and no matter how much I tried to focus the conversation on world conditions, his attention is concentrated only on SA.¹²⁰

Geyer observed Malan closely during the days that followed. Malan livened up considerably when in the company of his fellow septuagenarian, Winston

117 *Ibid.*; US Library, P.A. Weber Collection, 296.K.Ge.177, A.L. Geyer – P.A. Weber, 25 October 1953.

118 Davenport and Saunders, *South Africa: A Modern History*, 383.

119 US Library, P.A. Weber Collection, 296.K.Ge.125, P.A. Weber – A.L. Geyer, 8 March 1953; US Library, P.A. Weber Collection, 296.K.Ge.126, A.L. Geyer – P.A. Weber, 16 March 1953; DFM, 1/1/2923, A.L. Geyer – D.F. Malan, 28 June 1953.

120 CAD, A.L. Geyer Collection, A1890, Volume 5, Diary: 31 May 1953 [Translated from the original Afrikaans: my translation].



Figure 5: D.F. Malan and Winston Churchill (D.F. Malan Collection).

Churchill, and the elderly Lord Swinton, with whom he could chat about conditions in Africa. When he spoke about his chief interests and concerns, Malan's mind was clear and his words concise. Churchill was showing the same signs of ageing as Malan, and Geyer now found himself harbouring the same sentiments about Malan as a number of British politicians did about Churchill: the time had come for these aged prime ministers to retire.¹²¹

Malan, for his part, enjoyed his meeting with Churchill. When Churchill offered him some whisky before the ceremony, he could not refuse – and discovered that it made the long proceedings ever more bearable.¹²² When the proceedings were at an end, Geyer recorded his impressions:

I don't believe that he made the same impression as in 1949 – except in the conference hall and in a few private conversations. The old man is old and maybe, because he is more deaf than he wishes to appear, he creates the impression of a man so old that he does not realise what goes on around him, even when he is being addressed ... I am becoming worried. Old Dr should not remain P[rime] M[inister] for much longer. Our nation cannot do without him, and his wife will keep him there as long as he still has some breath left, but it could end in a tragedy, the kind of tragedy that he so dearly wished to avoid.¹²³

Malan was not ignorant of the fact that his time to leave the stage was drawing nearer,¹²⁴ and he began to prepare the way for his exit. If he had to leave, he

121 CAD, A.L. Geyer Collection, A1890, Volume 5, Diary: 1 June 1953, 8 June 1953, 14 June 1953.

122 Schoeman, *My Lewes in die Politiek*, 181.

123 CAD, A.L. Geyer Collection, A1890, Volume 5, Diary: 14 June 1953 [Translated from the original Afrikaans: my translation].

124 CAD, A.L. Geyer Collection, A1890, Volume 5, Diary: 14 June 1953.

wanted to determine both the manner in which he departed and the man to whom he would hand over the reins. His altercations with Strijdom had made his premiership a burden, and it convinced him of the need to keep the party from Strijdom's hands. He now believed that he finally had proof of the Republiekeinse Stewersbond's existence, and that it was indeed aimed at promoting Strijdom into the leadership. Others doubted whether such an organisation existed. There was little need for a secret organisation to secure Strijdom's leadership, as representatives from the Transvaal formed the largest bloc in the party caucus, ensuring Strijdom of a victory. Malan did not view the question of his succession in such strategic terms – he was convinced that leadership had to be determined by merit,¹²⁵ and he considered a man like Havenga far more meritorious than Strijdom.

When the Cape National Party met for its annual congress in November 1953, Malan resigned as its provincial leader and determined that his successor had to be elected by secret ballot. The two candidates represented the Malan and Strijdom camps – and the former won. Dönges defeated Eric Louw by 195 to 45 votes.¹²⁶ It was a sign that the Cape Province remained loyal to Malan's direction.

In the year that followed, Malan's reasons to leave the stage increased. In February 1954, 48-year-old Maria Malan suffered a heart attack. Her recovery was slow and she remained ill throughout that year.¹²⁷ By July, the new editor of *Die Burger*, P.J. (Piet) Cillié, received an anguished letter, written by the concerned husband of one of Maria's nurses. Maria seemed to have recovered from the heart attack, but the nervous condition from which she now suffered was literally keeping Malan awake at night – a state of affairs which the man believed could have national repercussions.¹²⁸ It certainly meant that Malan's most pressing concerns were about his wife's health, rather than the country at large. It was during the course of this year that Malan decided to resign as Prime Minister, but he confided this only to Maria.¹²⁹

When Malan unveiled a statue of Paul Kruger on 11 October 1954, he gave one of his most notable Nationalist addresses.¹³⁰ The Cabinet was invited for coffee at Libertas later that afternoon. They were all assembled, apart from Eric Louw, who was overseas at the time. Strijdom, whose health had been giving him some trouble, was due to leave for a tour of Europe the following day. After they had been served with beverages, Malan announced, matter-of-factly, that he would resign as Prime Minister on 30 November. He explained that he was old, his wife's health was fragile, and he wanted to spend the remaining years of his life at his

125 US Library, P.A. Weber Collection, 296.K.Ge.180, P.A. Weber – A.L. Geyer, 22 November 1953.

126 *Ibid.*

127 There are no medical records or a comprehensive description of Maria Malan's illness, but from the various fragments that can be found in the D.F. Malan and the H.B. Thom Collections, it emerges that Maria suffered from heart attacks in 1954 and 1955, which were possibly triggered by severe stress. It is clear that this was accompanied by bouts of depression. Maria was highly strung and easily excitable. Although she never received any formal treatment or a diagnosis, a psychologist who was acquainted with the Malan family stated that she displayed 'heightened emotionalism'; US Library, H.B. Thom collection, 191.M.1(5), 'Interview notes: J.N. Smit, 1 June 1978'; US Library, H.B. Thom Collection, 191.M.1.(9/5a), Danie Malan – J.S. Gericke, 8 March 1974; US Library, H.B. Thom Collection, 191.M.1.(9/10a), Danie Malan – H.B. Thom, 1 January 1980.

128 US Library, P.J. Cillié Collection, 220.K54(65), L.A. Fouche – P.J. Cillié, 18 July 1954.

129 Pretorius, *Die Malans van Môrewag*, 102.

130 Schoeman, *My Lewes in die Politiek*, 174-5, 202.

home in Stellenbosch. As far as he was concerned, his work was complete. He had entered politics nearly forty years previously, with the aim of uniting the Afrikaner nation and he had succeeded in doing so. He was convinced that this achievement would not have been possible without Klasie Havenga, and therefore he decided that he would recommend to the Governor-General that Havenga be asked to form a government.¹³¹

Malan scrutinised the reactions of his ministers closely. Havenga and Dönges sat in their seats as if defeated. Erasmus began to cry. Strijdom jumped up to protest against the procedure which Malan wanted to follow – it was the caucus that had to determine the party's leader, not the Governor-General. Strijdom was correct, in terms of the party's constitution, but his reaction did nothing to endear him to Malan. It was C.R. Swart who rose to thank Malan for the work that he had done, and to express his regrets that the country had to lose his services.¹³²

Malan could see nothing wrong with asking the Governor-General to appoint the next Prime Minister – the same had been done in England. Some of the ministers supported Strijdom; the others remained quiet. It was clear to Malan that he could not hope to win this argument and he conceded that the caucus had to choose the new leader.¹³³

When the Cabinet dispersed, Strijdom and his confidants met at his house where they planned their strategy.¹³⁴ Verwoerd would act as the army's commander in his absence and keep him informed of developments in South Africa. The country was soon awash with rumours about Malan's possible successor. The English press was overwhelmingly in favour of Havenga, whom they believed to be a moderate, in contrast to Strijdom's extremism.¹³⁵

Malan, for his part, assumed that the caucus would take the prudent decision to elect Havenga as its leader. Weber went to visit him at Libertas and wrote to Geyer to tell him of their exchange:

I asked him why he is resigning now. He named the reasons that have already appeared in the newspapers. But I think that there is another reason. No, it is not Mrs Malan. Doctor is tired – maybe not physically, but tired of certain things within his own party. Strange, how the RSB ... disturbed him. He got hold of its constitution and wanted to read it to me, but I stopped him. The style and the contents, so I have been told by someone, reminds one of Verwoerd. I think Doctor allowed himself to be upset by the RSB unnecessarily. Obviously, I have no information that it was actively undermining. There are no doubts about who Doctor wants in his place. His thoughts range in the direction that the Cabinet unanimously recommend to the caucus that Havenga succeeds him. I told him that he would never achieve unanimity. Eric [Louw] and Black [C.R. Swart] will never support it. The matter is going to the

131 *Ibid.*, 202-3.

132 US Library, P.A. Weber Collection, 296.K.Ge.202, P.A. Weber – A.L. Geyer, 17 October 1954.

133 Schoeman, *My Lewes in die Politiek*, 203.

134 US Library, P.A. Weber Collection, 296.K.Ge.202, P.A. Weber – A.L. Geyer, 17 October 1954.

135 SAB, J.G. Strijdom Collection, A2, Volume 60, H.F. Verwoerd – J.G. Strijdom, 8 November 1954.

caucus, and Strijdom has a large majority in the caucus. ‘But don’t the people have any common sense?’ he wanted to know.¹³⁶

Malan must have felt a growing sense of disaster as he realised that Weber was right. Strijdom and Verwoerd remained in close contact – and together they decided that Strijdom would not withdraw his candidature in favour of Havenga.¹³⁷ Havenga, for his part, wanted to become Prime Minister, if only for a short period of time, as he too was reaching an advanced age.¹³⁸ He did not, however, want to contemplate the prospect of an open confrontation in the caucus, as he knew that he would lose to Strijdom. He let it be known that he would only accept the position of party leader if his candidature was uncontested. Thus, if Strijdom announced his candidature, he would resign from the Cabinet and from politics.¹³⁹ Verwoerd conveyed the message to Havenga that Strijdom would stand for election if the caucus nominated him – which was a foregone conclusion.¹⁴⁰ Strijdom and Verwoerd began to discuss the composition of the future Cabinet while they waited for Havenga to announce his resignation – and when it did not come, they grew restless.¹⁴¹

Consternation descended upon their ranks when it became known that Malan had decided to take a hand in the matter.¹⁴² Malan had heard that Havenga did not want to enter into a contest with Strijdom and he wrote to him, suggesting a strategy. If Havenga announced publicly that he would not take part in a contest and that the caucus could only consider one candidate, it would appear undemocratic, as the caucus would be faced with a *fait accompli*, which would add more fuel to the Strijdom camp’s fire. Instead, Havenga had to wait until the caucus meeting and if, true to their habit, Strijdom’s supporters proved to be resistant, Havenga would have to announce that he would only accept the leadership if it was uncontested. Malan decided that he would speak to the Cabinet to convince them that Havenga had to be the next leader – and he would issue a press release to the caucus that would have the effect of ensuring Havenga’s succession.¹⁴³

Paul Sauer and Eben Dönges also spoke to Havenga to convince him that he had to remain in the running. Havenga had hoped that Malan would be spared the need to intervene directly in the succession battle, but he accepted Malan’s offer to speak to the Cabinet on his behalf.¹⁴⁴ Malan, who had already returned to the Western Cape, made his way back to Pretoria in order to head a final Cabinet meeting on 18 November, where he would press Havenga’s claim. C.R. Swart was absent,

136 US Library, P.A. Weber Collection, 296.K.Ge.202, P.A. Weber – A.L. Geyer, 17 October 1954 [Translated from the original Afrikaans: my translation].

137 INCH, H.F. Verwoerd Collection, PV 93, file 1/11/1, J.G. Strijdom – H.F. Verwoerd, 17 October 1954; INCH, H.F. Verwoerd Collection, PV 93, file 1/11/1, J.G. Strijdom – H.F. Verwoerd, 6 November 1954.

138 Schoeman, *My Lewe in die Politiek*, 170.

139 SAB, J.G. Strijdom Collection, A2, Volume 60, H.F. Verwoerd – J.G. Strijdom, 13 October 1954; US Library, P.A. Weber Collection, 296.K.Ge.202, P.A. Weber – A.L. Geyer, 17 October 1954.

140 SAB, J.G. Strijdom Collection, A2, Volume 60, H.F. Verwoerd – J.G. Strijdom, 27 October 1954.

141 INCH, H.F. Verwoerd Collection, PV 93, file 1/11/1, J.G. Strijdom – H.F. Verwoerd, 29 October 1954; INCH, H.F. Verwoerd Collection, PV 93, file 1/11/1, J.G. Strijdom – H.F. Verwoerd, 9 November 1954.

142 SAB, J.G. Strijdom Collection, A2, Volume 60, H.F. Verwoerd – J.G. Strijdom, 11 November 1954.

143 SAB, N.C. Havenga Collection, A38, File 26, D.F. Malan – N.C. Havenga, 4 November 1954.

144 DFM, 1/1/3095, N.C. Havenga – D.F. Malan, 6 November 1954.

while Eric Louw and Strijdom were still abroad. As had been agreed prior to the gathering, Havenga also stayed away.¹⁴⁵

When Malan addressed his Cabinet, he revealed a side of his character that they had never seen before. In spite of his placid demeanour, Malan had the ability to hate, even if he did so quietly. On this day his anger at Strijdom – which he had bottled up for years – came pouring out, and resulted in a furious exchange between himself and Verwoerd, which Verwoerd later labelled a ‘catfight’. Malan made it clear that Strijdom, who had fought his attempts to achieve Afrikaner unity at every turn, could not be his heir. In contrast, Havenga had helped him to achieve the ideal – and a man of Havenga’s stature could not be expected to serve under Strijdom, who was his junior in the Cabinet. For every argument that Malan presented against Strijdom, Verwoerd had an equally powerful counter-argument.¹⁴⁶

When Malan accused Strijdom of being at the centre of a secret body with the express aim of undermining him – and produced the Republiekeinse Stewersbond’s constitution as a trump card – Verwoerd and Ben Schoeman tore his allegations to shreds. The document was not signed by anyone, and named Malan as the President of a future republic and Strijdom as its Prime Minister. Malan had taken this point as proof of his suspicions, but as Verwoerd pointed out, Malan’s name also appeared on the document. As far as Schoeman was concerned, there was much that could be said against Strijdom, but a penchant for secret organisations was not one of his traits – Strijdom was generally known to be hostile to the Afrikaner Broederbond. Verwoerd, whom Malan had suspected of heading the clandestine movement, had never seen the document before, and was convinced that it was planted in Malan’s hands as a form of sabotage.¹⁴⁷

Malan found himself waging the battle alone. Dönges made a weak attempt to support him, but the other Cape ministers remained quiet. What Malan did not realise was that they had all accepted the inevitability of Strijdom’s leadership long before.¹⁴⁸ They now had their futures under Strijdom’s regime to consider. The meeting ended in disarray, and a number of the ministers left this final gathering without taking leave of Malan. Ben Schoeman, for one, never saw him again.¹⁴⁹

Malan now decided to make a final attempt at securing his party’s future. Even though he had undertaken to refrain from politics once he had left the stage, he announced that he would address a final political meeting in Paarl on 26 November. It was four days before his formal resignation and the election of a new leader – and the same day that Strijdom returned to South Africa.¹⁵⁰ Malan intended to use his

145 *Ibid.*; Schoeman, *My Lewé in die Politiek*, 203-4.

146 SAB, J.G. Strijdom Collection, A2, Volume 60, H.F. Verwoerd – J.G. Strijdom, 18 November 1954; Schoeman, *My Lewé in die Politiek*, 203-4.

147 *Ibid.*; Schoeman, *My Lewé in die Politiek*, 203-5. It appears that accounts of the RSB’s activities were indeed nothing more than rumours that found fertile soil in Malan’s intense dislike of Strijdom. No evidence of the organisation’s existence was uncovered during the course of this research. Phil Weber, who was no supporter of Maria Malan’s, blamed her for being obsessed with political intrigues, which served to exacerbate the situation. Such a scenario is not implausible. It is a reality that the organisation – whether it existed or not – preyed on Malan’s mind during his final years, although it cannot be regarded as a determining factor in the course of events. See US Library, P.A. Weber Collection, 296.K.Ge.53, P.A. Weber – A.L. Geyer, 8 April 1951; US Library, P.A. Weber Collection, 296.K.Ge.56, P.A. Weber – A.L. Geyer, 1 May 1951; US Library, P.A. Weber Collection, 296.K.Ge.180, P.A. Weber – A.L. Geyer, 22 November 1953; US Library, P.A. Weber Collection, 296.K.Ge.202, P.A. Weber – A.L. Geyer, 17 October 1954.

148 US Library, P.A. Weber Collection, 296.K.Ge.180, P.A. Weber – A.L. Geyer, 22 November 1953.

149 Schoeman, *My Lewé in die Politiek*, 205.

150 SAB, J.G. Strijdom Collection, A2, Volume 60, H.F. Verwoerd – J.G. Strijdom, 20 November 1954.

speech to anoint Havenga as his successor in public, but Eben Dönges heard of it in time. He implored Malan not to force the situation any further, as it would create a crisis within the party. He succeeded in persuading Malan to dilute the section of his speech that would have sung Havenga's praises.¹⁵¹ Eventually it was whittled down to a single paragraph.¹⁵²

As Malan spoke to the members of his party, the tension was palpable. There was a general feeling that he was trying to foist a leader onto his followers who was not of their choosing. Malan looked old and frail.¹⁵³ He recounted his political journey to achieve Afrikaner unity since his departure from the Church more than 39 years before. He had fought many battles and weathered many crises. There was only one episode that he did not wish to dwell on – Hertzog's departure from politics, which still haunted him. Yet, Malan had finally reached the point where he knew that he had to entrust the party's mantle to the next generation and all he could do was to warn against the pitfalls of power.¹⁵⁴

When the party caucus met in Pretoria on 30 November 1954 to elect its new leader, J.G. Strijdom was the only candidate. Malan's Cape followers decided to persuade Havenga to withdraw his candidature. Havenga was disappointed, but he heeded their advice and retired from politics as well. The leadership crisis was at an end, but the rifts in the party would remain.¹⁵⁵ The Governor-General, E.G. Jansen, wrote to Malan the following day to thank him for his services and remarked:

It seems to me that a phase in our history has ended. You and Mr Havenga were the last of the old guard and you have now both retired. A new generation is now taking over and we can only hope that they will continue with the good work of the past.¹⁵⁶

Malan sent the customary telegram of congratulations to his successor. It read: 'The nation expects much from its prime ministers. May joy and prosperity be your share.'¹⁵⁷

Malan returned to his home in Stellenbosch where he spent his final years gardening, receiving visitors, reading the newspapers and compiling his memoirs.¹⁵⁸ He did not make any political statements again and even kept to himself his dismay at the Strijdom government's interference in the Church through its decision to control the church attendance of Africans in white areas.¹⁵⁹ In October 1958 Malan suffered a stroke. He had recovered from it by the start of the New Year, but after suffering a second stroke on 6 February 1959, he died peacefully on the morning of 7 February.¹⁶⁰

151 INCH, P.W. Botha Collection, PV 203, file MV 24/1/7, P.W. Botha – H.B. Thom, 23 June 1971.

152 DFM, 1/1/3105, D.F. Malan, 'My Laaste Politieke Vergadering', 26 November 1954.

153 INCH, Sound Archive, PV 193, tape 122, 'Interview: Danie Malan, Cape Town, 8 June 1977'.

154 DFM, 1/1/3105, D.F. Malan, 'My Laaste Politieke Vergadering', 26 November 1954.

155 INCH, P.W. Botha Collection, PV 203, file MV 24/1/7, P.W. Botha – H.B. Thom, 23 June 1971.

156 DFM, 1/1/3110, E.G. Jansen – D.F. Malan, 1 December 1954 [Translated from the original Afrikaans: my translation].

157 DFM, 1/1/3109, D.F. Malan – J.G. Strijdom, 30 November 1954 [Translated from the original Afrikaans: my translation].

158 See J.N. Smit, *Aandskemering op Môrewag* (Johannesburg: South African Broadcasting Corporation, 1961).

159 DFM, 1/1/32689, Danie Malan, *Herinneringe aan my Vader*, 83.

160 Smit, *Aandskemering op Môrewag*, 1-6.



Figure 6: D.F. Malan in retirement (D.F. Malan collection).

D.F. Malan was an aged politician when he took power in 1948. The wider world was changing and, to him, had become a hostile place. As Prime Minister he maintained the disengaged management style he had practised while in opposition. Thus, he exercised little control over a polarised Cabinet and spent most of his energy staving off the onslaught of a younger generation, to whom he was reluctant to pass the baton. There was little coherence when it came to matters of policy and politics in the first Nationalist Cabinet. Hence, there were disputes about South Africa's Commonwealth membership and the methods to be followed to remove the Coloureds from the voters' roll, while the policy of apartheid remained open to various interpretations. Yet these issues served as a lightning conductor for an even larger issue: the National Party's first succession battle. The Afrikaner nationalists were career politicians and, true to their trade, matters of power were always their primary concern.