

‘Undesirable Inhabitant of the Union ... Supplying Liquor to Natives’: D. F. Malan and the Deportation of South Africa’s British and Irish Lumpen Proletarians 1924–1933

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Between 1924 and 1933 scores of British and Irish immigrants were deported from South Africa for crimes that were mainly of a petty character. Prominent in their records was the offence of supplying alcohol to black people, which had been criminalised under the country’s racial forms of prohibition. These deportations took place under the direction of the minister of the Interior, D. F. Malan, later notorious as the initiator of the apartheid policy. The article contends that the process of deportation is revealing of both the social trajectory of some metropolitan migrants to the Empire and of the character of the South African state. While turn-of-the-century British immigrants to southern Africa are generally thought of as upwardly socially mobile, a minority took a downward path. As ‘poor whites’ they constituted a threat to racial boundaries. Malan, concerned to police these boundaries, sought to remove them from society. But he was constrained by his political alliance with the British immigrant labour movement and in the end was selective in his strategy, deporting the most marginalised or lumpen proletarian, while allowing those who could claim some shreds of respectability to remain. The organisational and bureaucratic processes of deportation are traced in detail. The article endorses Robert Bickers’ view that imperial history has given too little attention to poor and working class British immigrants in the Empire.

On 10 September 1926 the royal mail ship *Grantully Castle* steamed out of Cape Town, bound for Southampton. Among the passengers were 16 deportees originating from Britain and Ireland who were being returned to their countries of birth on the order of the Union of South Africa’s minister of the Interior, Daniel Francois Malan. There were 15 men and one woman in the group. They were among scores of individuals born in the United Kingdom who were deported, or considered for deportation, from South Africa during Malan’s ministerial tenure from 1924 to 1933. Malan was in later life to become globally notorious as the first prime minister to implement apartheid policy, after he led the extremist wing of Afrikaner nationalism to power in 1948.¹ These deportations in the 1920s and 1930s were a minor episode in

¹ L. Koorts, *D. F. Malan and the Rise of Afrikaner Nationalism* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2014).

his career. But, I will argue in this article, they do tell us a great deal about the British experience of empire, and about the social and political dynamics of the emergent South African state.

Generally, the tale of United Kingdom emigration to the colonial world is told as one of a rise to dominance and wealth. Yet the deportees on the *Grantully Castle* all had come out of an immigrant experience in which their imperial adventure had not been a path to riches and power, but rather a move into a nightmare of poverty, petty crime, incarceration and illness. This article sets itself the task of understanding who these deportees were, what their story tells us about how imperial subjects were policed and documented, and the nature of the political worlds they inhabited.

It also investigates the discursive mobility between 'British', 'Irish' and 'South African' identities in this era. In a period when the Afrikaner nationalist Hertzog government was in an uneasy alliance with the largely British immigrant South African Labour Party, and when Jan Smuts was, from opposition, putting forward a vision of a unified white South African identity under the aegis of the British Empire, there was considerable scope for manipulation of claims of belonging. The situation was made even more complex by the recent establishment of a southern Irish state as a separate political entity. And there were tensions between Britain and the dominions over legal autonomy from London. The Statute of Westminster of 1931, effectively recognising the Empire's white-ruled polities as full nation states, was largely the outcome of the pressures exerted on Britain by Hertzog and the Irish leader W. T. Cosgrave.

The group analysed here did not of course represent the majority of the deportees of this period. Thousands of Indians and African migrants from Mozambique, as well as hundreds of Syrians, East European Jews, Greeks, Portuguese and others, were forcibly removed from the country. But these fairly small numbers of deportees with their origins in the pre-First World War United Kingdom – and their contemporaries who were slated for deportation but escaped for one reason or another – are worthy of our attention. In his brilliant biography of the sociopathic 1920s British Shanghai policeman Maurice Tinkler, Robert Bickers has made a powerful case for the need to pay attention to those who occupied lowly positions within the imperial power structure. Between the focus of the old imperial historiography on proconsuls and strongmen, of first generation nationalist scholars on redemptive leaders, and that of post-colonial studies on the colonised subaltern, minimal attention has been given to the Empire's 'other ranks' and 'poor whites'. As Bickers says: 'There's little on the men of the armies of empire, of the navy, the merchant navy, railwaymen, labour supervisors. Nothing on the gas engineers of empire, the road builders, all those who weren't quite *pukka*, and precious little anywhere on policemen.'² This is largely true for South African historiography as well, with outstanding exceptions in the work of Charles van Onselen³ and Tim Couzens.⁴ Bickers argues persuasively that such a

2 R. Bickers, *Empire Made Me: An Englishman Adrift in Shanghai* (London: Allen Lane, 2003), 11.

3 C. van Onselen, *Masked Raiders: Irish Banditry in South Africa 1880–1899* (Cape Town: Zebra, 2010).

4 T. Couzens, *Tramp Royal: The True Story of Trader Horn* (Johannesburg: Ravan and Wits University Press, 1992).

focus is vital to our understanding of the politics of the imperial world as a whole: 'only a closer examination of non-elite life – colonialist and colonised – can bring out more fully the complexity of those in all parts of the web of world empire which had caught and joined them all'.⁵

As we will see, the deportations provide us with some important indicators of the political character of South Africa as a British dominion in the 1920s and 1930s, and also of some of the social processes leading to the future emergence of apartheid. There was an underlying racial politics to the deportation of the poor whites. This little wave of deportees had been found guilty of a range of offences. But the signature conviction among them was one that, in its particular form, was unique to South Africa – 'Supplying Liquor' to 'Natives' or 'Coloureds'. In the industrial world of the Rand mines, a system had been created in which black men and women were forbidden to drink 'European' forms of booze. This was a policy aimed at keeping down levels of drunkenness and consequent absenteeism among the workforce. Then, as a later outgrowth, the measure came to protect the profitable monopolies that white municipal authorities developed in producing relatively low-alcohol 'traditional' African sorghum beer, which could be sold to migrant workers. But this racialised form of prohibition generated an illegal market as marginal entrepreneurs traded in the illegal types of drink, and poorer whites became used to buying a few bottles of alcohol from shops and reselling them to black people as a source of quick income.⁶ The liquor trade constituted a zone of inter-racial exchange: it is no accident that South Africa's illegal black drinking clubs came to be known by an Irish word – *shebeen*.

These racial dynamics are crucial to understanding what the deportations were about. Though the state in South Africa upheld a consistently segregationist vision, it still reflected an aspiration rather than a reality. In the 1920s and 1930s, the proximity of black and white residents in the slum yards of Johannesburg, the often secret family connections between 'Coloureds' and 'Whites' in Cape Town and the frequency of inter-racial sex all threatened the mythology of racial separation. And it was hard to maintain the illusion of inevitable white superiority when poor whites were juxtaposed on the streets of Durban with prospering Indian merchants, and on the streets of Johannesburg with a newly politically assertive black intelligentsia. As a number of South African historians who have considered the poor white question have argued, the racial politics of preserving social boundaries was crucial both in constructing segregation and later in building white support for the project of apartheid.⁷ Racial hierarchy was not a simple product of colonial conquest, but required constant work by politicians and bureaucrats to protect and expand it.

This was also the case in other contexts: the ways in which colonial authorities managed the dangers to racial hierarchy posed by boundary-crossing behaviour

5 Bickers, *Empire Made Me*, 12.

6 P. la Hausse, *Brewers, Beerhalls and Boycotts: A History of Liquor in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Ravan, 1988).

7 R. Morrell (ed.), *White but Poor: Essays on the History of Poor Whites in South Africa 1880–1940* (Pretoria: UNISA Press, 1992).

among poor whites has been examined by Anne Stoler⁸ for the case of the Dutch East Indies and Harald Fischer-Tine⁹ for India. The symbolic importance of the poor whites of colonial society took on a significance far beyond what their limited numbers would suggest. The existence of poor whites was a standing threat to political projects of racial organisation. If this threat was to be neutralised, the white poor had to be motivated to police racial boundaries for themselves and be provided with the educational tools for upward mobility and legislative protections that would entrench their position against the competition of people of colour. In some cases, such as the ones this article examines, a more dramatic solution was possible: poor whites could simply be removed from society. For Malan, these concerns were particularly intense. One of the central fears in his political work was that Afrikaner men and women, then moving into the cities from the countryside in great numbers, would fraternise across the colour line, absorb foreign cultural influences, or become influenced by 'alien' secularist, trade unionist or socialist ideologies. They would thus be 'lost' to the *volk*. Malan was at the forefront of leading the Dutch Reformed Church and other Afrikaner organisations to 'rescue' this newly urbanised population and stamp them with an intensified form of Afrikaner identity. In this context, the disreputable marginal Britons of the cities were among the baleful influences on newly urbanised Boers that needed to be curbed.

It is perhaps useful to designate the group of people we are looking at in this article as 'lumpen proletarian'. The term is of course problematically normative in its origins. In the *Communist Manifesto* Marx and Engels spoke of the 'the social scum, that passively rotting mass thrown off by the lowest layers of the old society', in other words those members of the working class whose fall into the social abyss had left them unequipped for participation in the struggle for an imagined socialist future.¹⁰ This view charts an unconvincingly straight line between class position and political action.¹¹ But one does not have to accept classical Marxist political teleology in order to find the term analytically helpful. One can identify groups of the poor whose standard of living falls way below the average of the working class, and who thus become marginal to the mainstream of working class institutions and culture. This is the sense in which I am using the term here. The concept also connects with distinctions that British workers themselves made. The division between 'respectable' and 'rough' social layers was a well-established one in British working class culture in the early twentieth century, and reflected real stratifications in the working class.

Marx and Engels were probably right to be sceptical of the political role of lumpen proletarians, insofar as long-term unemployment, homelessness and their concomitant social problems are unlikely to make any group of people into effective political

8 A. L. Stoler, 'Rethinking Colonial Categories: European Communities and the Boundaries of Rule', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 31, 1, 1989, 134–61.

9 H. Fischer-Tine, *Low and Licentious Europeans: Race, Class and White Subalternity in Colonial India* (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 2009).

10 K. Marx and F. Engels, 'Manifesto of the Communist Party' in E. Kamenka (ed.), *The Portable Karl Marx* (New York: Penguin, 1983), 215.

11 There is remarkably little scholarly literature explicitly addressing the lumpen proletariat's relation to politics. For a complex, but to my mind ultimately unhelpful, attempt to untangle the question see P. Stallybrass, 'Marx and Heterogeneity: Thinking the Lumpenproletariat', *Representations*, 31, 1990, 69–95.

actors. Certainly the later claims of Cabral, Fanon and the Italian autonomists that the lumpen proletariat is a truly revolutionary class have been, to say the least, empirically questionable.

The distinction between lumpen proletarians and 'mainstream' workers helps explain the minister's handling of the deportations. While Malan was happy to deport a significant number of those legally liable to it, many others were allowed to stay in South Africa. This relates to the political context in which Malan made his decisions. The pro-British ministries of Botha and Smuts, between 1910 and 1924, had shown little interest in deporting problematic Britons, with the exception of a celebrated incident when Smuts had a group of trade union leaders deported in 1914. Coming to power with an Afrikaner nationalist outlook, Hertzog and Malan had a less sympathetic view of the wayward citizens of the imperial metropolis. But in the 1924–1933 government they were in alliance with the South African Labour Party (SALP), led by Colonel F. H. P. Creswell.¹² The SALP was largely supported by British immigrant workers, many of whom still had a strong sense of British identity and loyalty. Malan could not act in a way that would alienate this constituency. In selecting cases for deportation, therefore, he chose primarily those who had become entirely marginal to respectable white working class life. Those, on the other hand, who could still claim some vestiges of integration into the social order were more likely to be given the benefit of the doubt and allowed to remain.

This is not to suggest that Malan's decision making was wholly driven by political pragmatism. As a devout Calvinist and ordained Dutch Reformed Church minister, he also had a strong sense of fairness. (This may sound odd in the case of one whose racial policies were to become so universally reviled. But Malan was to make himself undergo considerable ideological and theological contortions in rationalising apartheid policy as a form of equality through separation.) The process of deportation needs to be understood as bounded by political constraints imposed by the contingency of Malan's alliance with a largely British party. The respectable emigrant working class could be expected to tolerate the deportation of those who had fallen into lives of trampdom, crime or prostitution, but not of those who had made one or two 'mistakes' in regard to the offence of selling liquor, which was clearly widespread and probably regarded more seriously by the law than by public opinion.

In this article I am attempting neither to demonise Malan's actions nor to romanticise the deportees. The minister, within his limited view of the world, attempted to make good decisions; and certainly there were sociopaths among those he sent on their way. But in a broader sense Malan was simply the agent of the social order and most of the deportees its victims. The deportees had been used as labour power by the rapacious mineral revolution capitalism of turn-of-the-century South Africa, and as cannon fodder by the imperial war machine. Misfortune in the form of injury, industrial disease, war wounds, unemployment or psychological problems derailed

12 Both Hertzog and Creswell deserve critical biographies. However, at present there is little more than hagiography on offer; see C. M. van den Heever, *General J. B. M. Hertzog* (Johannesburg: APB, 1943) and M. Creswell, *An Epoch in the Political History of South Africa in the Life of Frederic Hugh Page Creswell* (Cape Town: Balkema, 1956).

their lives. They were chewed up and spat out by the economic and military powers of their world. Their usefulness over, they were cast into the social abyss.

Files and Life Courses

What do the South African bureaucracy's files tell us about the lives of white lumpen proletarians? A consistent pattern seems to be an initial period of relatively stable work, followed by a life disrupted by imprisonment. The spectacularly 'boom and bust' character of the settler colonial economies identified by James Belich¹³ does seem to have been a major factor in shaping the direction of their lives. Many came to South Africa between the early 1890s and 1906. This was the period of the greatest influx of United Kingdom immigrants to southern Africa. This flow was initiated by the industrialisation of the Rand goldfields at the start of the 1890s which created a great demand for skilled miners, artisans, engineers, clerical and professional workers and retailers. Interrupted during the first phase of the Boer War in 1899–1900, the wave of mining-driven immigration quickly resumed, supplemented by numbers of British soldiers who stayed on or returned after hostilities. It was the severe local recession of 1906 that permanently brought the rate of immigration sharply down, and at the same time led to mass unemployment among the white working class.¹⁴

A number of major trajectories can be seen among the immigrants of this period. Some returned home: a significant group perennially forgotten in emigration history. Others married into and were assimilated by Afrikaner lineages, and shared their social fate. However, many British immigrants did find rapid upward social mobility in South Africa. Benefiting from the combined advantages of being white in a racist social order and of being British in a society where people from the United Kingdom largely dominated industry, commerce and the professions, these immigrants prospered. The well-off generally became more wealthy, while the South African-born children of the British working class immigrants were moving into the middle class by the 1930s, a generation before the children of Afrikaner workers were to do so.

The deportees and near-deportees, however, came from a small but notable stratum of United Kingdom immigrants whose trajectories were downwards. Those who held scraps of authority or economic opportunity in the colonies often enjoyed it on a very tenuous basis. An artisan in Durban might have a servant – something undreamed of in England – but if he lost his job he might find himself destitute and adrift in a country where he had little or no social support. A miner might earn a much better wage on the East Rand than in Cornwall, but if he was sacked in a recession he might find himself tramping across the veld without his fare home. South African 'poor whites' are usually thought of as Afrikaners, and the majority certainly have been, but there was an Anglophone component to the story as well.

13 J. Belich, *Replenishing the Earth: The Settler Revolutions and the Rise of the Anglo-World 1783–1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

14 For an excellent account of the links between Britain and South Africa in this period see G. B. McGee and A. S. Thompson, *Empire and Globalisation: Networks of People, Goods and Capital in the British World, c 1850–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

Four themes are striking in the deportation files: loss of capacity to work, alcoholism, military service, and mobility across the Empire. Illness and industrial injuries were widely prevalent among the deportees, in large part a product of the harsh material environments in which most of them had worked. A deterioration in physical health and fitness often marked a watershed in their career. Alcohol was a theme not only in their offences but in their personal lives. It was a persistent issue in British working class politics at the turn of the century. The devastating social impact of cheap drink and alcoholism was an enormous concern for both bourgeois reformers and working class organisations. It was no accident that British labour's greatest leader of the era, James Keir Hardie, gained his first political experience in the temperance movement and was a lifelong teetotaller.¹⁵ And across the Empire, alcoholism was both a symptom and a cause of the social dislocation amongst casualties of the imperial world. The records of those deported and considered for deportation are full of arrests for drunkenness and instances where the men were sent by a magistrate to dry out in an 'Inebriates' Home.

As to military experience: the possible connection between wartime trauma and subsequent behaviour can only be speculated on, but it is as unavoidable from the vantage point of the present as it was near-invisible to contemporaries. More than a few of the deportees had borne arms in colonial warfare, the Boer War, or the Great War. Their war experiences and their drinking were surely connected. And it is worth remembering that Rand mines, on which some deportees worked, had their own share of trauma. The mines' safety records in the early twentieth century were abysmal, with accident casualty rates comparable to a small war, and mass mortality of miners from lung disease. In addition miners had experienced combat and mass killings by government forces during the strikes of 1913 and 1922. Many miners had experienced more than enough to send them off the rails.

Striking in the deportees' trajectories is how often they moved, and the directions of their mobility. Historians have recently come to recognise that among British migrants, and European migrants more generally at the turn of the century, a very large proportion returned to their home countries.¹⁶ But Bickers also points out how much movement across the Empire took place among British immigrants and how many lived for extended periods in more than one part of the colonial world. He observes that between the wars the number of settlers leaving Rhodesia, for instance, was two-thirds of those arriving: 'They moved back to, or on to South Africa, or they moved elsewhere in Africa or beyond.'¹⁷ As he says, the literature on 'settlement and settler colonies' misses 'the central fact of unsettlement, and of the unsettled, and the churning, turning world of the empire life'.¹⁸ For those British settlers who found material success elusive, there was often a tendency to chase it across the Empire. In Bickers'

15 K. O. Morgan, *Keir Hardie: Radical and Socialist* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1975).

16 This point is well made in M. Wyman, *Round Trip to America: The Immigrants Return to Europe, 1880–1930* (Ithaca: Cornell, 1993).

17 Bickers, *Empire Made Me*, 242.

18 *Ibid.*

words: 'if not Shanghai, then perhaps New Zealand: I failed here, perhaps I won't there.'¹⁹

These themes are illustrated in the life of a characteristic figure amongst those on the *Grantully Castle* in 1926, a Welshman, William Hughes.²⁰ Hughes had come to Africa in 1896. He had initially travelled on to Rhodesia and it is possible that he participated in the war of that year by the forces of Rhodes's British South Africa Company against indigenous uprisings. He had worked in the building trade in the Rhodesian town of Umtali. At the start of the Boer War he came to Durban to join the imperial cause. Hughes was a member of a colonial unit called Kitchener's Fighting Scouts and had a war wound in his left shoulder. He seems to have made a good impression on his officers, for in the hour of his deportation he still tried to call on them to vouch for him. In the aftermath of the war, though, his fortunes had been disastrous. In December 1903, in Johannesburg, he was sentenced to six months' hard labour for supplying liquor. He was hardly out before, in July of the next year, he was found guilty of the same offence and this time given 14 months' hard labour. On release he apparently took to petty crime, for he served two theft and housebreaking sentences in 1906–7. After 1908, Hughes went to prison on three separate occasions for lengthy sentences for supplying liquor. After this he seems to have moved to Natal. He got away with a suspended sentence for theft in Durban in 1919, but served three months for the same offence the next year. Hughes had become an alcoholic. In October 1920 a court in the town of Dundee sent him to an Inebriates' Home for two years. After getting out, he drifted up to the Transvaal, where, after he was found drunk in Pretoria, a court sent him to an Inebriates' Home again. Finally in Johannesburg in 1925 he was convicted once again of supplying liquor and this landed him in Pretoria Central Prison. In February 1926, the national commissioner of police asked Minister Malan to make a decision on whether Hughes was to be deported and received agreement. In a letter to Malan, Hughes asked for clemency on the grounds that he was ill with a hernia and urinary problems and that all his relatives in North Wales were now dead. But the deportation went ahead.

The world that such men and women inhabited is memorably captured in Tim Couzens' account of the squalid lodgings of the white poor in Johannesburg in the 1920s:

... there was no direct civic control over the doss houses. There were no municipal regulations for the cleaning and airing of rooms, for the changing of linen either fortnightly or yearly, for the limiting of the number of lodgers in house or room, or for the separation of the sexes, such as were provided for in English by-laws ... The inmates were at the mercy of esurient landlords ... The cheapest bed ticket cost five to seven shillings a week compared with one shilling and threepence for a tot of whisky. Furnishings were sparse or non-existent: lice were the only things generously provided.

19 *Ibid*, 243.

20 National Archives of South Africa, Pretoria (NASA), BNS 1/2/82, A3102, File on William Hughes.

Cold in winter was endemic but the lodging-houses were, in the infelicitous phrase of a contemporary journalist, 'hotbeds of crime'. Criminals ranged from illicit diamond and gold dealers to housebreakers, cycle thieves, shoplifters, gamblers, sneak-thieves and opium dealers.²¹

In a few cases the extent to which the authorities saw the world of the illegal liquor trade as a dangerous arena of racial boundary crossing becomes clearly visible. John Broomhead, born in Sheffield in 1867, had arrived in southern Africa early in the twentieth century. The police had first proposed his deportation in 1923, after his third conviction for supplying liquor, but had been unable to get ministerial agreement.²² There was a clear animus toward Broomhead at that time, arising from the fact that he lived in a way that completely breached racial conventions. The Office of the Commissioner of Police noted with disapproval that Broomhead 'was married to a Cape Coloured woman, now deceased. He has one surviving daughter aged eighteen years, who is a nursemaid and supporting himself ... he is a heavy drinker and associates only with the Coloured fraternity'.²³ When Broomhead received another 'supplying' conviction in 1925, Malan signed off on the deportation right away and Broomhead was on the *Grantully Castle* along with Hughes, the next year. The fact that Malan was to exempt from deportation some convicts with records similar to Broomhead's suggests that Broomhead's transgressions of racial decorum weighed in his decision.

How the System Worked

In order to understand how the deportation system worked, it is worth analysing the 'paper trail' of documentation. As Max Weber famously pointed out, this takes us to the heart of how the modernist state worked: 'The management of the modern office is based upon written documents ('the files') which are preserved in their original or draft forms ... The body of officials actively engaged in a 'public' office, along with the respective apparatus of magisterial implements and the files make up a bureau'.²⁴

One might almost say, then, that the modern bureaucracy *is* the files, and there is a palpable sense of this when one traces how the documentation wended its way through the various arms of the state as the fate of the deportees was decided. The standard procedure for deportation cases began with the national Commissioner of Police receiving a monthly list of prisoners who were to be released in the near future, and who had committed deportable offences. The commissioner or the secretary for Justice would write to the secretary for the Interior, usually sending an individual letter on each of these prisoners, accompanied by information about their records. The letters asked for the minister of the Interior's decision on the case, sometimes hinting

21 Couzens, *Tramp Royal*, 437.

22 NASA, BNS 1/2/80, A3062, File on John Broomhead.

23 *Ibid.*

24 M. Weber, 'Bureaucracy' in H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (eds), *From Max Weber* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958), 197.

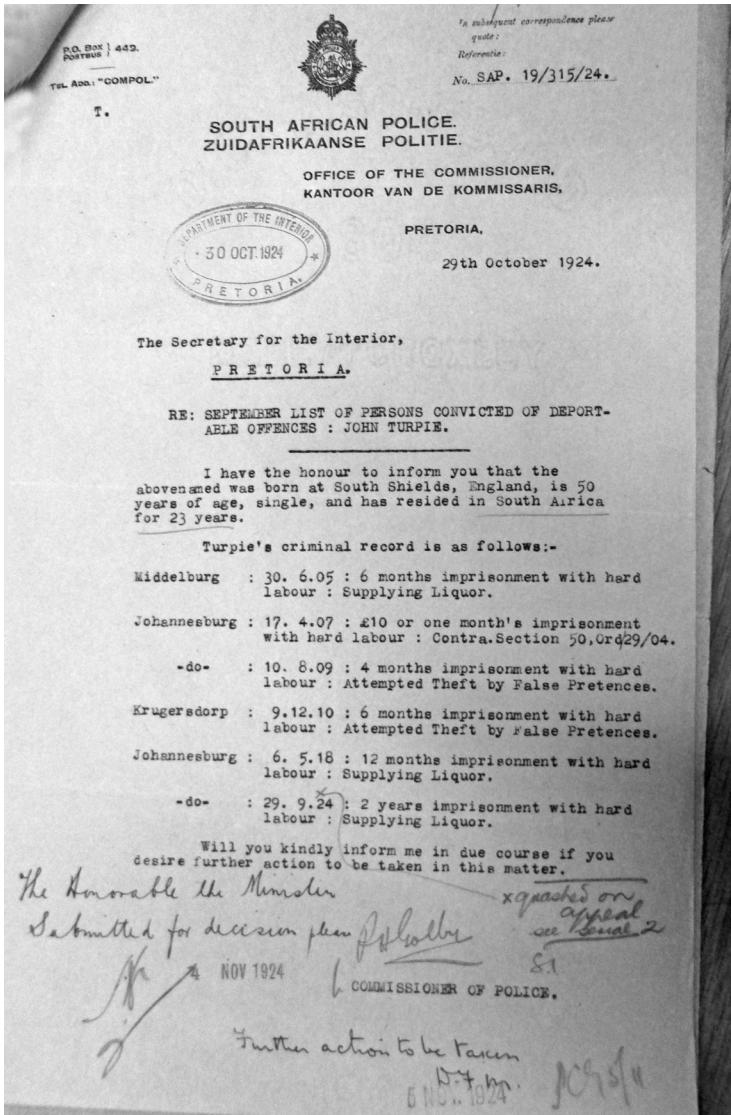


Figure 1: Letter from commissioner of police to the secretary of the Interior, concerning the deportation of John Turpie, 29 October 1924. National Archives of South Africa, Pretoria (NASA), BNS 1/2/75, A2883

at the police or Justice Department view on whether the prisoner should be allowed to remain in the country or not. The minister would also, generally, receive the criminal record of the individual concerned; this was a one-page document that included mug shots, personal details and a list of convictions (see Figures 2 and 3). Senior civil servants would often note the considerations bearing on the particular case on the deportation letter itself. Malan would receive the letter and write his ruling on the case upon it. His comments were seldom in much detail – typically they were limited to phrases such as 'further steps to be taken' or 'cancellation approved'. If the minister gave the go-ahead, he issued a letter declaring the convict an 'undesirable inhabitant

SOUTH AFRICAN CRIMINAL BUREAU,
 SOUTH AFRICAN POLICE. P.O. Box 445, Pretoria. 30th November 1924.

DOCKET (2/712)

Pn. No. 13621 F.P. No. 36356/24

Photo taken..... 1924.....

Place of Birth..... Date..... 1892.....
 Nationality..... English.....
 Married, Single, Widower, or Widow..... Married.....
 Trade or Occupation..... Baker.....
 Last Address..... 200 Main St. Johannesburg.....
 Build..... Medium..... Head Oval.....
 Hair..... Gray..... Teeth Bad.....
 Mouth..... Ordinary..... Beard.....
 Complexion..... Yellow..... Eyes..... Arched.....
 Nose..... Straight..... Face..... Oval.....
 Eyes..... Brown..... Forehead..... High.....
 Ears..... Large..... Chin..... Square.....
 Height (in feet)..... 5 ft. 3 in..... Moustache.....

Other distinguishing marks and characteristics..... Scar back of right hand.....

THUM.	FORE FINGER.	MIDDLE FINGER.	RING FINGER.	LITTLE FINGER.
RIGHT HAND				
JOSEPH DUNSTAN (E.M.) S. 2/712. Neg. No. 2,459.				
1. RIGHT THUM.	2. RIGHT FORE.	3. RIGHT MIDDLE.	4. RIGHT RING.	5. RIGHT LITTLE.
6. LEFT THUM.	7. LEFT FORE.	8. LEFT MIDDLE.	9. LEFT RING.	10. LEFT LITTLE.
LEFT HAND				

CONVICTIONS.

Court and Place of Trial.	Date of Sentence.	Sentence.	Offence.	Name convicted under.
Johannesburg.	4-12-06.	6 months H.M.	Supplying Liquor.	J. Dunstan.
"	17-10-10.	2 months H.M.	Vagrancy.	J. Johnson.
Johannesburg.	10-9-11.	10 days H.M.	"	J. Johnson.
"	13-12-12.	24 or 7 days H.M.	"	J. Johnson.
Johannesburg.	10-9-14.	1 year H.M.	Supplying Liquor.	J. Dunstan.
Johannesburg.	15-6-18.	2 years H.M.	"	J. Johnson.
"	16-6-24.	2½ years H.M.	"	J. Dunstan.

Certified true copy of records filed at the South African Criminal Bureau,
 S.A. Police, Pretoria.

Figure 2: Criminal record of
 Joseph Dunstan. NASA, BNS
 1/2/75, A2888

2018-2018-1-000. SOUTH AFRICAN CRIMINAL BUREAU,
 SOUTH AFRICAN POLICE. P.O. Box 445, Pretoria. 30th November 1925.

Reference No. 2/9897.

Pn. No. 13329 F.P. No. 14100

Photo taken..... 1925.....

Place of Birth..... Wales..... Date..... 1869.....
 Nationality..... Welsh.....
 Married, Single, Widower, or Widow..... Married.....
 Trade or Occupation..... Miner.....
 Last Address..... Johannesburg.....
 Build..... Proportionate..... Head Oval.....
 Hair..... Gray..... Teeth Bad.....
 Mouth..... Medium..... Beard.....
 Complexion..... Red..... Eyes..... Arched.....
 Nose..... Flat..... Face..... Round.....
 Eyes..... Blue..... Forehead..... High.....
 Ears..... Large..... Chin..... Square.....
 Height (in feet)..... 5 ft 4 ½ in..... Moustache..... Gray.....

Other distinguishing marks and characteristics..... Scar Lecheeks, tattooed A.M. left forearm.....

THUM.	FORE FINGER.	MIDDLE FINGER.	RING FINGER.	LITTLE FINGER.
RIGHT HAND				
ARTHUR THOMAS (E.M.) S.A.C.B. 2/9897. Neg. No. F. 1054.				
1. RIGHT THUM.	2. RIGHT FORE.	3. RIGHT MIDDLE.	4. RIGHT RING.	5. RIGHT LITTLE.
6. LEFT THUM.	7. LEFT FOREINGER.	8. LEFT MIDDLEINGER.	9. LEFT RINGER.	10. LEFT LITTLEINGER.
LEFT HAND				

CONVICTIONS.

Court and Place of Trial.	Date of Sentence.	Sentence.	Offence.	Name convicted under.
Johannesburg.	14-12-09.	21 or 7 days H.M.	T.e.R. Laws.	A. Thomas.
"	"	"	Assault.	"
Krugesdorp.	20-6-10.	6 mos. H.M.	"	"
Johannesburg.	23-3-11.	12 "	Supplying Liquor.	"
"	30-11-14.	2 yrs. "	"	R. Thompson.
"	17-4-17.	2½ "	"	A. Thomas.
"	24-9-20.	3 "	"	"

Certified true copy of records filed at the South African Criminal Bureau,
 S.A. Police, Pretoria.

W. G. H. (Signature) Inspector,
 in charge South African Criminal Bureau, South African Police, Pretoria.

Figure 3: Criminal record of
 Arthur Thomas. NASA, BNS
 1/2/80, A3063

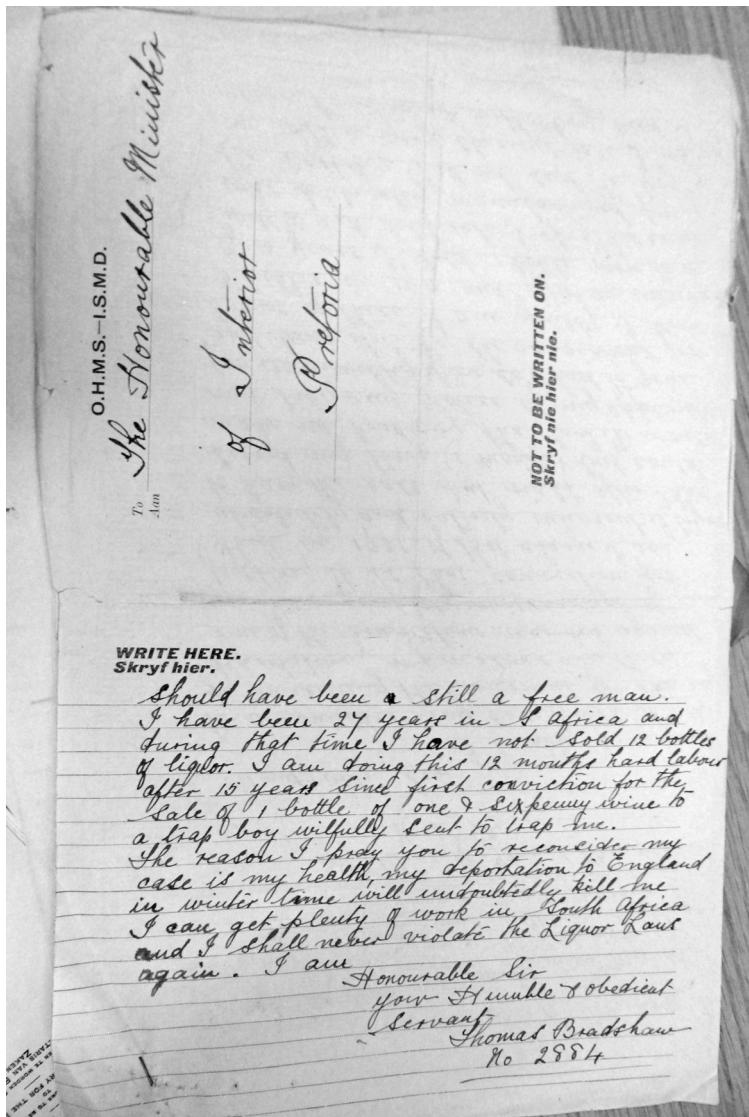


Figure 4: Letter of appeal of Thomas Bradshaw. NASA, BNS 1/2/82, A3110

of the Union'. The commissioner and then the prisoner would be notified of the decision for deportation to take place. At this point, the convict was allowed to write a letter of appeal to the minister, normally on a prison service letter form of one and half pages. After that, Malan could either confirm the deportation or overturn his earlier decision.

Usually these letters were penned from Pretoria Central Prison, the way station for most of those awaiting deportation. The grim routines of this jail were to be brilliantly recorded by its best-known inmate, the writer (and reprieved murderer) Herman Charles Bosman, in his memoir *Cold Stone Jug*. Bosman strikingly conveys the tragic world of the prison, with its hopeless 'blue-coats' – those deemed 'habitual

criminals' and given 'indeterminate' sentences – and its regular executions, when prisoners, locked in their cells, could hear the bang of the gallows trap door.

The convicts' letters of appeal are perhaps the most interesting part of the bureaucratic process in the deportation case (see Figure 4 for an example). They provide a great deal of information about the life courses of these men and women. Of course they were written with the purpose of convincing the minister that the supplicant was not a career criminal. But what they said was checked out by police officials, and often confirmed. The letters also tell us something about how these lumpen proletarian immigrants read the politics of the Afrikaner nationalist government and the still largely Anglophone senior bureaucrats whom they were trying to convince.

One theme of the convict's letters to the minister was a stress on length of residence in, and identification with, the country. John Turpie, an Irish convict, decided to appeal to Malan on the basis of his adopted South African identity.²⁵ He got a fellow convict, R. Swanepoel, to write a letter for him in Afrikaans, a shrewd move as Malan was well known for his nationalist language activism. In the letter Turpie declared that 'since I first came to South Africa, that I feel myself one of the sons of the country, and feel, that all my duties are to this land and not to Ireland where I was born.'²⁶

Turpie's political stratagem was unsuccessful. But he was a great deal more astute than John Hawkins, who probably did nothing for his case with Malan, Afrikaner nationalism's foremost political intellectual, by stressing his excellent military record in the Royal Irish Fusiliers during the Boer War, and the 2nd South African Infantry during the Great War.²⁷ (One might note here that an added complexity for the southern Irish deportees was that they were being deported to a country other than the one they had left. Having emigrated before the First World War from a country integrated as part of the United Kingdom, they were now being sent back to the newly created post-partition state.)

Donald Matheson, who lived in the Johannesburg area, had a string of convictions, most for supplying liquor but also for theft and housebreaking, stretching back to 1908.²⁸ He wrote in his unsuccessful appeal letter in 1929 that he had

been in this country 25 years and I have made this country practically my home. I have residing in this Country 3 Nephews and 1 Niece all married and Householders in Durban. I have been promised by these relatives that on expiration of this sentence that they are prepared to take care of me and get me regular employment in Durban.²⁹

A hope that Malan would be sympathetic with their probable future economic hardship and social isolation in the old country was also a theme in the letters of

25 NASA, BNS 1/2/75, A2883, File on John Turpie.

26 *Ibid.*

27 NASA, BNS 1/2/80, A3065, File on John Hawkins.

28 NASA, BNS 1/2/89, A3364, File on Donald Matheson.

29 *Ibid.*

appeal. In the letter written for John Turpie by Convict Swanepoel, the applicant pointed out that

if I am sent back to Ireland, in the bad financial position in which I find myself ... my chances would be very small ... in the society there compared with that in South Africa ... I am sixty-five years old, and, at such an age, in comparison with the thousands of young chaps [*kêrels*] with whom I must compete, I am sure you will agree with me I stand no chance.³⁰

Similarly, John Hawkins touchingly but ineffectively pointed to the social isolation and poverty which faced him. By his account, his father had died at sea, and he did not remember his mother. He had been taken by an aunt to America at a young age. Later, he had returned to Ireland and thereafter joined the army.³¹ After having served in Egypt and fought through the Boer War, he had taken his discharge in South Africa; 'I have no friends whatsoever in the old country'. He feared he would 'soon become a burden on the state'.³² With eight convictions against Hawkins, though, Malan was unrelenting, and Hawkins too was deported.

An appeal to racism was another strategy. Convicted confidence man Cecil Temple Lofts resorted to the lowest common denominator of racial solidarity, assuring Malan that 'I have always assisted the government in any Native troubles'.³³ But this did not wash, even with the future apartheid prime minister, and Lofts was sent on his way.

Sometimes the convicts complained to Malan about the perceived unfairness of their arrests. Thomas Bradshaw pointed to the provisions of the liquor laws which required the seller to be caught in the act of transferring liquor to a black person.³⁴ This made for a system of 'trapping', in which a white policeman would send a black agent into the premises where the transaction took place in order to obtain his evidence. The resulting convictions were certainly questionable. Bradshaw complained:

Re the convictions for Liquor: of these I am guilty I sold three bottles in 1911 and after an interval of 15 years I sold one to a willful and deliberate trap. This crime was deliberately manufactured for if the Detective had not sent the boy to me with a specious tale I should never have went to the boy ... I have been 27 years in South Africa and in that time I have not sold twelve bottles of liquor.³⁵

For good measure, Bradshaw also contended that his 1921 conviction for theft was a miscarriage of justice. But Malan accepted his officials' recommendation to

30 NASA, BNS 1/2/75, A2883, File on John Turpie.

31 NASA, BNS 1/2/80, A3065, File on John Hawkins.

32 *Ibid.*

33 NASA, BNS 1/2/82, A3216, File on Cecil Temple Lofts.

34 NASA, BNS 1/2/82, A3110, File on Thomas Bradshaw.

35 *Ibid.*

deport Bradshaw because, as the departmental secretary pointed out to the minister, Bradshaw had started his criminal activities immediately after arriving in the country in around 1903. Bradshaw had spent much of his time in South Africa serving sentences for supplying liquor, theft and housebreaking.

Some deportees came up with ingenious technical reasons as to why they should not be deported. Philip Edye, who had a string of convictions between 1918 and 1923 for theft and running gambling games, had, variously, told the police that he was born in Tralee, Ireland and in Norfolk. But once under threat of deportation, he wrote an appeal to Malan in January 1925, claiming to have been born in India, and asserting that therefore that it was not legally possible to deport him to the United Kingdom.³⁶ However after Edye had then been 'interviewed' – one imagines somewhat forcefully – by police officers, he changed his story yet again, now admitting to have been born in Deptford. On this basis he was sent on his way. Harry King, facing deportation after a long string of theft, forgery and false pretences charges, came up with an even better legal conundrum for the authorities, claiming to have been born on the high seas between India and England.³⁷ However, after enquiries showed he had earlier given authorities a rather more prosaic birthplace – the London suburb of Croydon – he was duly deported.

Relatively few women featured amongst the deportees. One who did was a Welsh woman, Elizabeth Ada Jenkins.³⁸ She appears to have come to South Africa shortly after the Boer War. By her account her husband, who lived in Germiston, had deserted her for another woman and left her destitute. Her story would seem to be borne out by the fact that she had had no police record before 1922, when she was convicted for supplying liquor. She appears to have turned to prostitution and in 1923 and 1924 had convictions for soliciting. When she had another liquor conviction in 1925, Malan agreed to her deportation, and she was another of the *Grantully Castle* contingent in 1926. Pathetically, when she heard that she was about to be escorted to Cape Town to join the ship, she asked the authorities for some clothes, writing that she had nothing but what she stood up in.

Another woman deportee was Cardiff-born Sarah 'Sally' Penn. She had come to South Africa as a child and while still in her mid-teens married an Englishman, William Penn.³⁹ They had three children, of whom one died in infancy. Around 1920 they were in Cape Town and, by Sally's account, William was 'carrying on' with a 'Mrs. Van Vrede'. According to Sally, she took at a job as a waitress at the Central Hotel in the Royal Navy base port of Simonstown and gave her two small daughters Florence and Maude into the care of a Mrs Horner in Cape Town. Horner was then reported to the authorities for neglecting the children, and on the order of the chief magistrate of Cape Town they were placed in the All Saints Home. Sally showed up in Durban in 1922, where she later got two suspended sentences for housebreaking before going to jail for the same offence in 1924. In 1925 she was in Pietermaritzburg, where she

36 NASA, BNS 1/2/75, A2882, File on Philip Edye.

37 NASA, BNS 1/2/73, A2878, File on Harry King.

38 NASA, BNS 1/2/80, A3038 and BNS 1/2/84, A3165, Files on Ada Elizabeth Jenkins.

39 NASA, BNS 1/2/75, A2979, File on William Penn and Sarah Leni alias Sarah Penn.

appears to have been involved in prostitution and further petty thefts. By this time William was in jail, and in 1926 Malan decided on his deportation. However, William demanded that his 'family' be deported with him. Despite the understandable objections of the sister superior at All Saints, who felt that the girls were doing well in the home, and despite the advice of his officials against William's proposal, Malan agreed. One can only speculate that his actions were based on a patriarchal Calvinist faith in the sanctity of the family. A search was instituted for Sally, who was found in the Transvaal town of Middelburg. She was taken to Pretoria to accompany William and the girls on the ship. But there she told her landlady that she did not want to go to Britain and disappeared. Malan continued to insist that the daughters should join their father but, probably fortunately for them, this did not happen. Around the time of her disappearance Sally apparently had been taken up by an Italian pimp called Leni. In 1928 a Cape Town detective reported that the pair 'keep company with other local crooks and loafers. They move around from town to town and when not in gaol are begging in the street. She is now a very low type of woman'.⁴⁰ After a further conviction, she was deported on the *Edinburgh Castle* in 1930.

Some of the decisions that Malan faced must have seemed straightforward. Certainly it is unlikely that many people in Johannesburg would have regretted the absence from their lives caused by the deportation of Cornish-born William James Ellis, a violent, hard-core, pimp, thief and probable rapist.⁴¹ But there were more marginal cases which Malan treated just as harshly. A. E. Taylor seems to have been more in the nature of a likeable rogue. He had made a career in petty stock theft in the Orange Free State.⁴² His impending deportation elicited a desperate letter from his New Zealand-born wife Lillie, attesting that he had been a good husband and father. Malan remained implacable.

The fact that the appeals were individually considered by the minister – Malan's writing appears on virtually all the United Kingdom born deportee appeals – suggests the overriding importance of political relations between South Africa and Britain. When in 1914 the Botha-Smuts government had deported nine trade union leaders to London, there had been a major political outcry in Britain, in the course of which it had frequently been claimed that settler colonies did not have the right to deport Britons. While in practice the United Kingdom did accept such deportations prior to the passing of the 1931 Statute of Westminster granting full legal autonomy to the dominions, there was still room for political trouble on the question. The 'colonials' – as Westminster regarded white South Africans – were thus still cautious about how to handle such matters. The problem of avoiding offence to the British authorities kept coming back. In the case of Phillip Edye, the secretary to the South African High Commission in Trafalgar Square wrote to the Department of the Interior in March 1925 warning that Edye had been deported without a check being made with the British government that he had in fact been born in Britain and would be

40 *Ibid.*

41 NASA, BNS 1/2/89, A3372, File on William James Ellis.

42 NASA, BNS 1/2/80, A3066, File on A. E. Taylor.

accepted at a port. The secretary pointed out that it was normal for him to enquire on this question with the Home Office before a deportee was sent the United Kingdom, and recommended that this procedure be followed in future.⁴³

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Yet, in many cases, those apparently headed for deportation were in the end allowed to stay. Malan could sometimes extend a remarkable degree of clemency and fairness to potential deportees. This was to do both with Calvinist conscientiousness and political constraints. He could not afford to offend his SALP cabinet colleague Colonel Creswell and his British immigrant followers by enforcing his deportation powers too rigorously.

The case of William Campbell illustrates how playing the connection to the Labour Party might be a winning hand for a potential deportee. Born in Coupar, Scotland in the 1870s, Campbell had been orphaned at the age of nine. He was then taken to Australia by an uncle. In the early 1890s he came to South Africa aboard the SS *Cloncurry* and gone to the Rand, where he had worked on the Jupiter mine, building cyanide tanks. He had subsequently laboured in railway construction in the Transvaal and Natal. He had worked on a farm in Natal for a time. Campbell had served with the South African forces in World War I, probably in South-West Africa and Tanganyika. He had no criminal record until 1925, when he had the first of a number of convictions for supplying liquor.⁴⁴ William Campbell threw in everything he could think of to bolster a claim of national identification: links to Kruger's Republic, military service, railway building, agriculture, and, perhaps crucially, his connection to Creswell:

I volunteered for the Malaboch Rebellion under the old Dutch Transvaal Government. I have participated in the construction of the following Railway Lines Pretoria-Delagoa Bay Charleston to Johannesburg Sikingo [sic] to Port Shepstone. I farmed for several years at Ixobo [sic] in Natal. I served in the Great War for 3 years and Nine months under Colonel Creswell with the 8th [South African Infantry].⁴⁵

It was astute of Campbell to attempt to give Malan the impression that he might upset a key political ally, Creswell, if the deportation went through. There was certainly some exaggeration in what Campbell wrote: British immigrants had in fact been forcibly conscripted for the minor punitive expedition against Chief Malaboch and most of them had gone very unwillingly. Campbell explained in his appeal letter that he had turned to the booze trade as a last resort, because his health ('rheumatism')

43 NASA, BNS 1/2/75, A2882, File on Philip Edye.

44 NASA, BNS 1/2/89, A1827, File on William Campbell.

45 *Ibid.*

– probably meaning rheumatic heart disease) prevented him from taking normal work. His strategy did work, and his deportation order was suspended for 10 years.

Long residence, demonstrating integration into white South African society, might save a deportee. The English carpenter Richard Dyer came to the subcontinent as a young man in 1888 and had worked for many years on the Kimberley and Rand mines. His record suggests that things began to go wrong for him in 1904–1907, when he served two long sentences for supplying liquor. Released by 1909, he experienced somewhat better times and in 1912 he had regular work on a Roodepoort mine as a timber man. After this, however, because of health problems including an injury to his hand, he could not get a job. In 1913 a Johannesburg magistrate gave him two and a half years' hard labour for supplying liquor. On release he was destitute, receiving convictions for begging in 1916 and vagrancy in 1918–1919. For some years he then managed to scrape a living sharpening saws, but in 1927 he got two and a half years for supplying liquor.⁴⁶ Dyer wrote that he had 'spent 39 years of the best part of my life in the country'. Malan responded positively, and Dyer was saved from deportation.

The same consideration seemed to apply in the case of Joseph Dunstan.⁴⁷ Dunstan, born in Truro, Cornwall, and a baker by trade, was permitted to stay in South Africa when he came up for possible deportation in 1924, during his fourth sentence for supplying liquor. Dunstan wrote that he was 'one of the old Transvaal Pioneers, and look on this country as my home land, while all my people are here'.⁴⁸

When again under the shadow of deportation in 1926 Dunstan wrote to Malan: 'In England I would starve for I am far too old to obtain employment when there are millions of younger men unemployed, whereas in South Africa I can always earn a livelihood at doing odd jobs'.⁴⁹ Police interviews of his brother and of a friend did confirm that he had been in the country for almost 50 years. He was allowed to remain on condition of good behaviour.

Malan might also give some leeway to those who have stayed on the straight and narrow for a long period of time before falling into the underworld. John McPherson, a Scottish carpenter, narrowly escaped being deported in 1927. Born in Falkirk in 1867, he had arrived in Durban in 1901. In 1915, McPherson had served in the military in the campaign against the German forces in South-West Africa, where he had been wounded. Up to 1922 he had a clean record, but in that year he was convicted for housebreaking and theft in Rustenburg and was sent to an Inebriates' Home for two years. In 1925 and 1927 he received sentences for supplying liquor.⁵⁰ McPherson was scheduled for deportation in 1927 while serving his second 'supplying liquor' sentence. However, after enquiries showed that officials had confused him with another Scot who had exactly the same name but a much worse record, Malan cancelled the deportation.

46 NASA, BNS 1/2/87, A3291, File on Richard Dyer.

47 NASA, BNS 1/2/75, A2888, File on Joseph Dunstan.

48 *Ibid.*

49 *Ibid.*

50 NASA, BNS 1/2/94, A3290, File on John McPherson.

Health was also a reason for clemency. Arthur Thomas, a Welsh miner who had first worked on the Rand in the 1890s, was exempted from deportation on the grounds that he was suffering from the scourge of the gold mines, silicosis.⁵¹

Irritatingly for Malan, though, there were odd cases where convicts actually wanted to be deported to the UK. Alfred Rawlings had come to South Africa in about 1913.⁵² He was divorced with three children and had served several prison terms. When he came up for deportation in 1926, the commissioner of police's office reported that 'his family do not wish to have anything more to do with him, but ... he is quite satisfied with this and is only anxious to return to England'.⁵³ Malan was not, however, prepared to oblige with a deportation order. Convicted conman Jack Kaufman nearly got himself a free passage to England on the basis that it was his home country, but unfortunately for him his father revealed to police that the wayward son's actual birthplace was Russia.⁵⁴

Conclusion

Evidence that some of the deportees may have continued in journeys through the marginal worlds of Empire is provided by an item in the archives about the return of the deportee John Turpie. The merchant navy was an employer of last resort for the economically desperate, and Turpie – despite now being in his sixties – found work there. He was on the SS *Limpopo* when it was wrecked on the west coast of Africa around the beginning of 1929. Brought to Cape Town as a 'distressed British seaman' by the SS *Wangoni*, he was again declared a prohibited immigrant and deported to Southampton once more, on the *Arundel Castle*.⁵⁵

The paper trail of the deportations gives us some insight into the workings of the South African state in the time of the Pact government. The police were able to provide a relatively efficient set of criminal records of white lumpen proletarians. The centralisation of the court records seems to have worked quite smoothly, and mug shots and fingerprinting were by now established techniques of surveillance. The circulation of documents between government and departments and up the chain of bureaucratic hierarchy reflected the Whitehall model of bureaucracy that Milner's administration had bequeathed to the post-1910 state. Malan worked in this framework, and there is little sign in this paper record of the replacement of Anglophone officials with Afrikaners. Malan's personal involvement with so many of the cases, shown by the frequency of ministerial notations on the files, reflects both the importance of relations with Britain and also the relatively small scale of the South African state. It is difficult to imagine a minister of a great power taking such interest in the deportation of small numbers of men and women who could easily be dismissed as drunks and petty crooks.

51 NASA, BNS 1/2/80, A3063, File on Arthur Thomas.

52 NASA, BNS 1/2/82, A3111, File on Alfred Nestor Rawlings.

53 *Ibid.*

54 NASA, BNS 1/2/94, A3534, File on 'Jack Mariane' (Jack Kaufman).

55 NASA, BNS 1/2/75, A2883, File on John Turpie.

The episode of the deportations provides detailed evidence of how the existence of a British- and Irish-born underclass posed real social and political problems for the Afrikaner nationalist leadership under the Hertzog government. Crossing racial boundaries and behaving in ways that lowered white ‘prestige’, they needed to be removed from the social landscape in the interest of a stable segregationist order. But some of them had enough linkages into the mainstream social base of Hertzog’s white labour allies to make too sweeping a policy of deportation impossible.

The story also reveals the mobility of national categories. Those appealing against deportation were often anxious to stress their South Africanness. This clearly was politic as they tried to persuade Malan to let them stay. Yet many of them had grown to adulthood in Britain and Ireland, some had lived in other parts of the Empire, and a number of them had served in the British army. How far had a South African identity replaced a British one in their sense of self? To what extent did the Irish-born identify with the new Irish state? The sources do not enable one to decide. But perhaps the answer is that of complexity: that they had formed multiple identities – British, imperial, Irish or South African – which were engaged as circumstances demanded.

For many of those actually deported, the return to Britain or Eire cannot but have been a trajectory toward poverty and unemployment. Even for those allowed by Malan to remain in South Africa, the prospects must have been bleak. Scholars of colonialism have tended to portray colonisers, at least before the Second World War, as universally triumphantly powerful. But while for many the colonial enterprise did lead to upward mobility, riches and positions of authority, for some – perhaps more than we recognise, as Robert Bickers points out – ‘Colonialism ... was often about failure, about moving on, trying something else, and about loneliness, longing, debt, disease, disaster and death.’⁵⁶

56 Bickers, *Empire Made Me*, 242.