



## An African Volk: The Apartheid Regime and Its Search for Survival

By Jamie Miller

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The demise of apartheid was one of the great achievements of postwar history, sought after and celebrated by a progressive global community. Looking at these events from the other side, *An African Volk* explores how the apartheid state strove to maintain power as the world of white empire gave way to a post-colonial environment that repudiated racial hierarchy.

Drawing upon archival research across Southern Africa and beyond, as well as interviews with leaders of the apartheid order, Jamie Miller shows how the white power structure attempted to turn the new political climate to its advantage. Instead of simply resisting decolonization and African nationalism in the name of white supremacy, the regime looked to co-opt and invert the norms of the new global era to promote a fresh ideological basis for its rule. It adapted discourses of nativist identity, African anti-colonialism, economic development, anti-communism, and state sovereignty to rearticulate what it meant to be African. *An African Volk* details both the global and local repercussions. At the dawn of the 1970s, the apartheid state reached out eagerly to independent Africa in an effort to reject the mantle of colonialism and redefine the white polity as a full part of the post-colonial world. This outreach both reflected and fuelled heated debates within white society, exposing a deeply divided polity in the midst of profound economic, cultural, and social change.

Situated at the nexus of African, decolonization, and Cold War history, *An African Volk* takes readers into the corridors of white power to detail the apartheid regime's campaign to break out of isolation and secure global acceptance.

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**Editorial Review**

Review

"[T]his is a valuable and important study in presenting Vorster's diplomatic efforts and his emphasis on 'multinational' 'separate development,'...as intimately linked and more than a cynical ploy, and in questioning claims in published sources through rigorous archival research. Above all, Miller refreshingly takes seriously arguments by and between Afrikaners themselves, regardless of how much he rejects such thinking."--  
Patrick Furlong, *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*

"*An African Volk* is the first in-depth study, based on primary sources, of Vorster's efforts to secure for South Africa a better image in the international community and attract allies in the independent African states in Southern Africa Miller tells this entire story with great aplomb. *An African Volk* is in my view the most outstanding debut of an historian of South Africa that has appeared in the last thirty to forty years The book is based on a very wide range of primary sources in the archives of several countries and on personal interviews with many of the main actors. Proficient in Afrikaans, the language of most white political leaders and civil servants, Miller was able to develop an acute understanding of the dynamics of Afrikaner politics and the often contradictory goals of the Department of Foreign Affairs and the military establishment."--*Politicsweb*

"Miller's book offers fascinating insights into the internal struggles of the apartheid regime as it tried to project its legitimacy and ensure its survival in the post-colonial, Cold War world. In this meticulously researched account, the author reveals the ways in which apartheid's ideologues appropriated language used against apartheid in an attempt to strengthen it, emphasizing the Africanness of the volk in an era of nationalism and decolonization, the nation-building claims of separate development, and the anti-communist consensus that bound White South Africa to the West."--Elizabeth Schmidt, Loyola University Maryland

"This book is an exceptionally lucid, bold, and incisive study of the foreign policy of John Vorster. It shows vividly how after some enterprising attempts to engage African leaders, Vorster intervened in Angola in 1975, seeking to secure Afrikaner survival in terms that made the attainment of that goal impossible, and leaving him a tragic figure."--Hermann Giliomee, author of *The Last Afrikaner Leaders: A Supreme Test of Power*

"A long overdue look at the perceptions, ideology, and foreign policy of South Africa's apartheid regime during the 1970s, Miller's account is a challenge to conventional wisdom about the Cold War in Southern Africa and a significant contribution to the history of South Africa during a critical decade."--Odd Arne Westad, Harvard University

"Miller's patient and careful reading of declassified South African documents tells us something new about apartheid and its relations to the countries north of the Limpopo. In the twenty years before 1994, the apartheid regime struggled, sometimes by encouraging considerable violence and sometimes at odds with the South African military, to locate and legitimate white-ruled South Africa in an anti-imperialist world of new nations."--Luise White, author of *Unpopular Sovereignty: Rhodesian Independence and African Decolonization*

"This finely realized study of apartheid statecraft considerably deepens our understanding of the regional dynamics of South African power in the 1970s. Miller's astute analysis of Pretoria's realpolitik shows the ambitions and limits of political reforms in the era prior to the revival of mass resistance to apartheid in the 1980s."--Saul Dubow, author of *Apartheid, 1948-1994*

#### About the Author

**Jamie Miller** is a Postdoctoral Fellow in the Department of History at the University of Pittsburgh. He received his PhD from the University of Cambridge and has held fellowships at Yale University and Cornell University.

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