



Chapter 4

The Afrikaner Broederbond: From 'Devil of Apartheid' to an Actor of Change in the Transformation Process of South Africa?

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Introduction

The Afrikaner Broederbond Executive Committee is convinced that the democratic transitional process in South Africa would have been much more difficult had it not been for the constructive roles played by the Afrikaner Broederbond and its members in their personal capacities (Afrikaner Broederbond, 1997: 39).

With these words, the Afrikaner Broederbond, which was founded in Johannesburg in 1918 and operated as a secret organisation between 1921 and 1993, claims to have been an influential actor in the transformation process in South Africa.

For most South Africans and South Africa experts, this seems to imply a contradiction. Firstly, a secret organisation cannot play a publicly active role, undermining in principle its claim to have been an influential actor in a negotiated political process. Secondly, a secret society brings with it an ominous, conservative, destructive image that is in ideological terms diametrically opposed to a liberal transformation. Instead, secret societies provide a wealth of material for conspiracy theories, which are not tenable in this case. However, the Afrikaner Broederbond's activities until the 1970s provided a great deal of support for the generally negative perception of its political influence.

The membership of the Afrikaner Broederbond grew from 14 people at its inception to almost twenty thousand in the 1990s, most of them in leading positions in the state and society. Its main aim from the beginning was the development of Afrikaner tradition and culture in order to resist British dominance in the fields of the economy and politics. Despite its obvious political agenda, it always



viewed itself as an exclusively cultural organisation. However, from the 1930s onwards the Afrikaner Broederbond increased its party political influence and paved the way for the National Party victory in the election of 1948. The strong ties between the members of the National Party and the Afrikaner Broederbond in their personal capacities ensured this secret organisation a substantial influence on political decisions during the apartheid era.

There is no doubt that the Afrikaner Broederbond supported the apartheid ideology in principle and tried to promote the conceptualisation and implementation of separate development with intensity and perseverance. However, depending on the personalities of the prime ministers or presidents in office at any one time, the intensity of the political influence of the Afrikaner Broederbond differed. In South Africa and all over the world, the Afrikaner Broederbond with some justification is regarded as the ‘devil of apartheid’.

To this day, that perception has not permitted the question as to whether there had been any positive contribution from the Afrikaner Broederbond towards the transformation process in the 1980s and 1990s. Based on numerous still unpublished documents in the Afrikaner Broederbond archive and interviews with leading Afrikanerbond members, South African politicians and scholars, this chapter attempts to give a provocative answer to this question.

The chapter will first provide a brief overview of how the Afrikaner Broederbond developed from a cultural organisation with a political agenda to a party political actor operating behind the scenes as early as the 1930s. It then presents the secret society’s ideological propositions and aims, starting with early ideological disputes between the ‘*verligte*’ and the ‘*verkrampte*’ at the end of the 1960s, which resulted in a ‘*broedertuis*’ (fraternal strife) within the Afrikaner Broederbond, before moving on to its developmental and transformational role. At the same time, the strategy and instruments of the Afrikaner Broederbond’s influence on politics and society will be analysed. In this context, the question of which motivating factors and interests led the Afrikaner Broederbond to realise that changes were necessary is of central importance.¹ The structure of the presentation is oriented by the terms in office of the prime ministers and presidents of South Africa, since their relationship with the Afrikaner Broederbond was a determining factor affecting the political influence of the ‘brothers’. Research results for the transformation phases are summarised on the basis of actor-centred transition theory. Finally, the question of which role the Afrikaner Broederbond, which by then had become

¹ This study is part of a larger research project on the history of the Afrikaner Broederbond. This chapter provides an overview of the research approach and results with respect to the transformation process (Knecht, 2007).



the Afrikanerbond, can and should still play in the new democratic South Africa is raised.

From a cultural organisation to a political actor

In the 1920s and 1930s, the Afrikaner Broederbond focused on cultural and economic support for Afrikaners and achieved significant, appreciable success in this field with the help of its publicly operative front organisations—especially the FAK (Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuurvereniging or Federation of Afrikaans Cultural Associations). Its contribution towards the development of the Afrikaans language as a recognised written and cultural language should not be underestimated. This allowed the mainly agrarian Afrikaners to establish themselves in an increasingly modern, urbanised and ultimately globalised world without losing their identity as Afrikaners.

A wide range of activities within the Afrikaans economic movement allowed the Afrikaner Broederbond to solve the increasing problem of poverty among many Afrikaners as a result of the industrialisation and capitalisation of the economic system. However, even after the founding of the Republic in 1961, the Afrikaners never managed to break the economic dominance of English-speaking whites in South Africa. The Afrikaner Broederbond also supported the development of Afrikaner nationalism as a mass movement and the conceptualisation and success of the ‘Great Trek’ as part of the centenary celebration can be ascribed to the Afrikaner Broederbond. At the same time, the Afrikaner Broederbond lost its ‘innocent’ perception as a purely cultural organisation by beginning to break its own constitutionally ascribed independence from political parties by actively supporting the policies of Malan’s ‘Gesuiwerde Nasionale Party’ (Purified National Party, NP hereafter), which was founded in 1934.

This process reached a climax in the active role of the Afrikaner Broederbond in supporting the NP in the 1948 general election campaign, which considerably contributed to the party’s election victory. The main contributions the Afrikaner Broederbond made to the election victory are as follows. Firstly, it was the mediator between the NP and the Afrikaner Party alliance, without which the NP could not have won the election. Secondly, the Afrikaner Broederbond propagated the apartheid ideology within Afrikaner circles, which was the main election issue. Thirdly, the Afrikaner Broederbond initiated the mother-tongue and Christian-nationalist education (‘cultural nationalism’), which was in opposition to the government’s bilingual education policy. Above all, both the NP and the Afrikaner Broederbond propagated the fear of the ‘*swart gevaar*’ (‘black danger’), especially in the economic sphere, as an election slogan.



It must also be critically noted that in the 1940s, the Afrikaner Broederbond was very open to National Socialist political thought and that a number of ‘brothers’ proved to be especially committed Nazis. The draft constitution for the South African Republic in 1941, which was produced with the active participation of the ‘brothers’, shows evidence of this fact. But the Afrikaner Broederbond did distinguish itself from the Fascist Ossewabrandwag, to which a large number of ‘brothers’ also belonged. Following the NP’s lead, it quickly distanced itself from National Socialist thought when the tide began to turn against the ideology in Europe, however, and critically, without rejecting its conspicuously racist ideas. This is early evidence of how the Afrikaner Broederbond, whose selective membership process rapidly developed into a broad group of the social and intellectual elite, made prudent pragmatism the maxim of its actions.

As a pioneer of Afrikaner Nationalism, the Afrikaner Broederbond developed into a pillar of support for the apartheid state, whereby individual ‘brothers’ actively participated in formulating apartheid ideology. The leading motive of ‘survival’ became an argument to justify a kind of perfect racism that was comprehensively anchored in law and swiftly implemented once the Afrikaner Nationalists had come to power after the 1948 election victory of D F Malan’s NP.

Only a few Afrikaners questioned the morality of the policy at the time. There is no doubt that the Afrikaner Broederbond was an unequivocal supporter of the inhumane apartheid governments of Malan, Strijdom, Verwoerd, Vorster and—in its early years—even Botha. During this time, the Afrikaner Broederbond also used extreme anti-communist, anti-liberal language, while also ensuring that Afrikaners were not anglicised, instead ‘Afrikanerising’ English-speaking whites to form the basis of collaboration.

Since the apartheid era is a sinister chapter in the history of the Afrikaner Broederbond, even some former Afrikaner Broederbond members are convinced that the organisation should have disbanded in 1948, or by 1961 at the latest, after the Republic was founded. The widespread opinion that the Afrikaner Broederbond not only shares responsibility for apartheid, but was also so politically influential that it actually represented the government behind the NP government, making it the main ‘culprit’, is still present today, even in academic literature. This must be relativised, however. Neither Prime Minister Malan nor Strijdom permitted direct input from the Afrikaner Broederbond on governmental policy. Only when Verwoerd came to office did the Afrikaner Broederbond become a partner in implementing the policy of separate development. Vorster instrumentalised the movement for his own purposes in order to drive the ‘*verkramp*te’ onto the defensive.



'Verligte' or 'verkramp't? Ideological disputes within the Afrikaner Broederbond

The following section defines the group known as the '*verligte*' as those willing to accept modifications to the ruling status quo of Verwoerd's apartheid system, however marginal such changes may have been. The '*verkramp'te*' uncompromisingly clung to the status quo. An underlying '*verligte*' stance combined with harsh repressive policy (as best exemplified by Prime Minister Vorster) were not mutually exclusive, since most '*verligte*' in the 1960s and 1970s also wanted to maintain the apartheid system. Modifications were merely aimed at minimising the negative effects of the system on the state, the economy and white South African society.

It is difficult to classify the various social groups in South African society during the apartheid period as '*verligte*' or '*verkramp'te*'. In an oversimplified distinction, it is possible to say that '*verligte*' representatives were found in more prosperous classes, especially in business and the technocratic middle class, who urged reforms in the 1970s mainly for economic reasons. '*Verkramp'te*' opinion was especially prevalent in rural populations and the white working class and middle class, including civil servants, who above all feared the negative consequences for themselves of reform of the labour market (Maull, 1990: 110).

Since the Afrikaner Broederbond represented the Afrikaner elite, one can assume that a majority of its members can be classified as South Africa's wealthier class. Job-specific statistics on Afrikaner Broederbond members show that as early as 1968, more than 10 per cent were businessmen, a professional group that was not even listed in the statistics for 1952, since their proportion in the early 1950s was so marginal. Entirely new influences are apparent here, clearly belonging to the '*verligte*' camp. Among the educated classes (in 1968, 20.6 per cent of Afrikaner Broederbond members worked in education, including many in elevated positions), a forward-looking, reform-oriented stance can be assumed. But the statistics also show that in 1968 the largest proportion of members, namely 22.1 per cent, came from rural areas and can generally be regarded as conservative. More than five per cent of Afrikaner Broederbond members also worked in the public service (Knecht, 2007: 96). That explains why the ideological split among Afrikaners from the mid-1960s onwards also led to policy conflicts in the Afrikaner Broederbond. The uniting force of unequivocal support for Verwoerd's apartheid ideology also lost weight in discussions concerning to what extent the politics of Vorster should be pursued in the light of many different considerations.

The main protagonist in the so-called '*broedertwis*', which was regarded as a dramatic event by the Afrikaners at the end of the 1960s and led to the division



of both the NP and the Afrikaner Broederbond, was Dr Albert Hertzog, son of former Prime Minister General J B M Hertzog. He was one of the most prominent Afrikaner Broederbond members of the time, and prior to his appointment as minister in Verwoerd's cabinet had already spent 20 years in the Executive Council (EC) of the Afrikaner Broederbond, having played a leading role in its development. Hertzog's followers had already criticised Verwoerd for his too liberal immigration policy and his homeland policy, which would lead to independent black national states. They feared that these states could easily be infiltrated by Communism.

Vorster provided ultra-conservatives with even more cause for criticism. His policy of conciliation between Afrikaners and English-speaking whites; the development of diplomatic relations with many African nations, which led to the acceptance of black ambassadors in South Africa; and the softening of strict apartheid laws in the field of sport in order to break through international isolation at least in this area met strong resistance from Hertzogists. Serious conflicts ensued between the '*verkramp*' faction and Vorster both within the NP and in the cabinet, and continued within the Afrikaner Broederbond. The situation came to a head in September 1969, when Albert Hertzog led a split from the NP to form the Herstigte Nasionale Party van Suid Afrika (Renewed National Party of South Africa, or HNP).

Pieter Meyer, himself a '*verkramp*' and the then chairman of the Afrikaner Broederbond, warned Albert Hertzog on several occasions to refrain from founding the party, since it would accelerate the split of the Afrikaner people. The final escalation came when HNP members no longer felt bound by their oath of 'brotherhood' and provided both the English and Afrikaans press with insider information on the 'fraternal split'. As a result, the Afrikaner Broederbond excluded all leading HNP members from its society in September of 1972. 'Brothers' wishing to remain members of the Afrikaner Broederbond had to renew their oath in writing, which led to strong criticism from some quarters. Among such critics was Carel Boshoff, who became a key figure in the second '*broedertwis*' in the early 1980s, which was a much more damaging conflict mainly fought within the Afrikaner Broederbond. He confirmed² that '*verkramp*'-thinking 'brothers' were not happy with the Afrikaner Broederbond's actions in its conflict with the HNP.

But since they did not intend to join the HNP, they initially preferred to remain in the Afrikaner Broederbond. Only the most radical racists left the Afrikaner Broederbond at this point. The organisation maintained its long-held conservative alignments and had both '*verkramp*' and '*verligte*' among its ranks. As a result,

2 Interview with Carel Boshoff in Orania, 9 November 2005.

another well-known and politically influential representative of the *'verkrampte'*, Andries Treurnicht, managed to be elected as the new Afrikaner Broederbond chairman in 1972. Although the chairman's narrow election victory in April 1972 was, in the opinion of the Afrikaner Broederbond-critical journalist, Hennie Serfontein, a mistake caused by poor election preparations, it does show that in the 1970s there were enough conservative 'brothers' to be able to play a leading role in the activities of the Afrikaner Broederbond (Serfontein, 1979: 117f).

As early as October 1974, Gerrit Viljoen, who had been a respected principal of the newly founded Rand Afrikaans University in Johannesburg since 1967, stood as a candidate against Treurnicht, became the preferred candidate of the pro-Vorster group within the Afrikaner Broederbond and managed to win the election. The motivation behind Viljoen's conversion from a *'verkramp'* to a *'verlig'* stance, and his condemnation of apartheid politics was based on the realisation that the majority of blacks rejected the policy of separate development. He regarded the underlying failure of apartheid policy to lie in the fact that it was formulated without any consultation with the blacks and was imposed by force. He therefore valued better communication between the individual race groups and called for a reappraisal of apartheid policy in terms of moral values and the principle of human rights. However, at the time, Viljoen did not question the fundamental structure of the policy of separate development. In 1979 he published the essay 'An Afrikaner looks ahead', reminding Afrikaners that they had to come to terms with significant changes in the near future, but that it was also essential to manage such changes themselves, thereby maintaining the ability to move them in the right direction (Viljoen, 1979). The Afrikaner Broederbond made this its underlying principle.

In 1980 Viljoen was forced to resign as chairman of the Afrikaner Broederbond after becoming education minister in Prime Minister Botha's cabinet. Carel Boshoff was elected chairman, thereby bringing another *'verkrampte'* into office. His election was justified by members of the EC at the time by arguing that it would bind the conservative 'brothers' more strongly within the Afrikaner Broederbond and thereby prevent another impending split.

The reason for such fears was differing opinion on the draft proposal of a tri-chamber system drawn up by Botha's government, which was enacted in 1983 and granted Coloureds and Indians limited political influence. The Afrikaner Broederbond approved the introduction of the new constitution, since the majority of leading members regarded it as a correct step in the reform process initiated by Botha. The diplomatic attempt to balance this out by appointing Boshoff as chairman failed. Since the majority of 'brothers' did not share Boshoff's opinions, the EC accepted his application to leave the Afrikaner Broederbond on 6 March 1984. A little later, on 6 June, the EC also confirmed Andries Treurnicht's



departure. It meant that in a second *'broedertwis'*, the Afrikaner Broederbond had distanced itself from the most prominent representative of the remaining *'verkrampste'* faction and had finally moved towards the *'verligte'* policy of the Botha government. In the vocabulary of transition studies, one can say that at that point the moderates in the Afrikaner Broederbond had finally prevailed against the hardliners.

The Afrikaner Broederbond during the Botha era: Reformed status quo or courageous transformation?

In the early 1980s both the Botha government and the majority of leading figures in the Afrikaner Broederbond were led by practical thoughts of their own well-being, which resulted in an active willingness to reform. The motivation behind such action continued to be the opinion of the majority of Afrikaners that white political dominance was the only way of maintaining the cultural identity of Afrikaners and their economic interests. The Afrikaner Broederbond welcomed and supported in principle the apartheid law reforms, which were mainly implemented in 'petty apartheid', and agreed with the Botha government that the new constitution should provide additional legitimacy to the existing political system through 'power-sharing', without seriously endangering the power base of the white minority. During his early years in office, the Afrikaner Broederbond discussed Botha's politics with him face to face. They were a mixture of reforms and repression by which the underlying structure of apartheid policy remained untouched and were largely supported by the Afrikaner Broederbond through a broad base of consensus.

But within the NP, the cabinet and the Afrikaner Broederbond there were waverers who seriously began to consider how not just to reform apartheid, which was increasingly regarded as an immoral system, but to abandon it completely without sacrificing the identity of the Afrikaner people and their economic acquisitions. After the 'Rubicon speech' made by Botha on 15 August 1985, which was widely regarded as a great disappointment at home and abroad and had considerable negative political and economic repercussions for South Africa, these waverers strengthened their stance against Botha. From the mid-1980s onwards Botha increasingly based his power on the security services and the military, thereby reducing the influence of his ministers and especially the co-operative influence of the Afrikaner Broederbond. While Botha's encouraging reform politics transformed into a radical policy of repression that took South Africa to the brink of civil war, the Afrikaner Broederbond experienced a new ideological orientation.

The right wing's separation under Boshoff and Treurnicht marked a clear break for the Afrikaner Broederbond, which also became apparent in the election of

Boshoff's successor, the professor of Educational Science and then principal of Rand Afrikaans University, Pieter de Lange. De Lange, who joined the Afrikaner Broederbond in 1961, was elected to the EC in 1981, judging himself to be somewhere 'left of the middle' in the spectrum that ranged from '*verligte*' to '*verkramp*'. He had already demonstrated his willingness to change the status quo, leading the committee that worked towards improving the educational system. Its final report (the *De Lange Report*) was published in October 1981. Apart from criticism from the ultra-right-wing Afrikaner movement, the work brought him great popularity and respect. What distinguished him from true liberal, progressive Afrikaners was his rejection of a model of democracy that no longer gave the Afrikaners a portion of political power as a minority in South Africa. The motivation behind Afrikaner Broederbond actions remained the so-called 'survival' of the Afrikaner people (both culturally and economically) in South Africa, so he could not imagine non-participation in political power by the Afrikaners. Following his main dictum: 'What are the minimum requirements for the survival of the Afrikaner?', he began to order the development of constructive solution approaches within the Afrikaner Broederbond (Afrikaner Broederbond, 1997: 22). With his well-known approach that, 'it is a greater risk to take no risk at all', he warned his 'brothers' that it was a spiritual rather than a physical trek they were embarking upon.³

In 1985 there were 35 different teams in the Afrikaner Broederbond, usually consisting of four to ten 'brothers', producing policy papers on any theme remotely touching upon Afrikaner Broederbond interests (see Afrikaner Broederbond, 1985b). The teams' work included the question of to what extent and in which fields apartheid law should be repealed. With respect to 'petty apartheid', the result was a 14-page recommendation paper entitled 'Kwetsende wetgewing' (Afrikaner Broederbond, 1985a). It recommended the repeal or softening of a number of particularly harsh apartheid laws that had come under strong moral criticism. The document 'Die grondslag en oogmerke van ons strewing' ('The principles and intentions of our striving'; Afrikaner Broederbond, 1985) indicates the extent to which the—still very limited—rethinking process regarding the plausibility of homeland policy had an influence on the underlying positions defined by the Afrikaner Broederbond. The original version of the document from the 1950s contained the organisation's unreserved approval of the homeland policy. In the revised version, the Afrikaner Broederbond came to the conclusion that a hundred per cent separation of races by relocating the black population to homelands had not succeeded and advocated granting black people who had illegally settled in white areas structures of self-determination. The organisation

3 Interview with Pieter de Lange in Pretoria, 1 November 2004.



thereby implicitly relinquished the underlying structure of 'Grand Apartheid'. The gradual admission within the Afrikaner Broederbond that the revolutionary conditions in South Africa could only be peacefully resolved through the political participation of the black population at all levels was revolutionary in itself. It is the reason why in 1984–85 members had already begun to discuss in groups within individual cells how a new constitution could be developed. They envisaged one that foresaw a fundamental change of systems in the sense of a political transformation, but which also took the interests of the Afrikaners into account as much as possible within this process.

As a result of these meetings, the keynote paper 'Basiese staatkundige voorwaardes vir die voortbestaan van die Afrikaner' ('Basic political values for the survival of the Afrikaners'; Afrikaner Broederbond, 1986a) was published in 1986. In addition to the statement of equal human rights and civil rights for all citizens of South Africa (including citizens of the homelands), the revolutionary aspect of this strategy paper was the completely new argument that the 'survival' of the Afrikaner people in South Africa could only be secured through 'power-sharing' rather than the exclusion of blacks from power, as had hitherto been advocated. In a further step, the Afrikaner Broederbond was prepared to draw the logical conclusion from this statement that a future government could no longer consist exclusively of white people and that the Afrikaners would have to get used to the idea of living with a black state president in the near future. In doing so, the 'brothers' did not yet define the entire constitutional structure that became a reality in South Africa in 1996. It called for protective functions through vetoes, minority rights and/or the absolute requirement of consensus decisions to ensure that the political power of the whites would not be replaced by the unlimited political power of the blacks along the lines of a 'winner-takes-all' principle.

The proposals envisaged a new constitutional system that was designed in a way that allowed no group to dominate another. An internal survey showed that 86 per cent of Afrikaner Broederbond members were satisfied with the basic positions of the organisation as outlined in this document. It shows that the overwhelming majority of 'brothers' were prepared to see a controlled opening of the existing system, ie the delegitimisation of the apartheid system, which, by transition studies definition, introduced the liberalisation phase of transformation.

The Afrikaner Broederbond as an actor of change in the transformation process

Transition studies require the development of democracy to be non-monocausal, with preconditions such as economic growth and the existence of a middle class. With some exceptions, it points to the significance of individual and collective



actors for the creation of democratic systems that are achieved by negotiation processes without bloodshed (Bos, 1994: 87). An analysis of the social structure of the Afrikaner Broederbond shows that the organisation developed into an elite coalition during the first decades of its existence, uniting representatives of the functional elite and especially representatives of the highest power elite (government leaders, cabinet members and members of parliament). At the same time, its membership had increased to 16 000 by the year 1985 and was still growing. This means that the Afrikaner Broederbond simultaneously represented a very large group within the Afrikaans civilian population.⁴ It was therefore able to act as a protagonist of political transformation in the role of a mediator between the ruling power elite and the Afrikaner people. Since Afrikaner Broederbond members communicated the ideological ideas of the Afrikaner Broederbond in their direct personal environment (family, friends, work), they also acted as multipliers.

In addition to the focus on actors, O'Donnell, Schmitter & Whitehead (1986) see the transition as consisting of three phases—liberalisation, democratisation and consolidation—in their study. Liberalisation denotes the opening of an authoritarian society by the rulers themselves. From the perspective of the authoritarian system's elite, liberalisation was in no way intended to change the existing power relationship. Instead, the controlled opening of the system was intended to increase its legitimacy, especially in times of crisis. O'Donnell et al (1986) refer to a large number of empirical cases where the liberalisation measures that were conceived as limited steps often created their own dynamism and could hardly be kept under control. As soon as the moderates won out against conservative hardliners and prevented the use of force, the phase of democratisation could begin. During a democratisation phase, democratic institutions appear and the rules of politics change. The goal of a democratisation phase, which often consists of round-table negotiations, is democratic elections. If powers critical of a government win such elections, the consolidation phase begins. This final phase is defined in different ways, but there is agreement that generally a new constitution is required for the establishment of democratic institutions, as well as a system of representative parties and interest groups. This phase can take up to several decades until a democratic culture among citizens has emerged.

South Africa is an almost ideal example of such a phase model. After the Afrikaner Broederbond had transformed from a hardline to a moderate force in the 1980s, it was able to become an actor of change. The organisation paved the way for the liberalisation phase from the mid-1980s onwards, at a time when the Botha government showed traits of an authoritarian system, and it worked towards the

⁴ From the mid-1980s onwards the Afrikaner Broederbond can be regarded as a civil society organisation, since by turning away from apartheid ideology it fulfilled the criterion of 'civility'.



opening of the system through continuative reforms. It allowed moderate representatives in the NP and the government, who encouraged Botha's exit from the political stage, to rely on broad support for continuative liberalisation measures from Afrikaner Broederbond members. Representatives of the Afrikaner Broederbond and NP agreed that the liberalisation process could only be a controlled opening of the system, but that it could on no account lead to a total loss of political power. As stated above, this reflects the theoretical assumptions regarding the role of the elite in the liberalisation process. Another clear sign of liberalisation was given by President F W De Klerk in his speech on 2 February 1990 and by the subsequent release of Nelson Mandela. The Afrikaner Broederbond did not have a direct influence on that move, but had a significant indirect effect, since it gave De Klerk a broad base of approval for his actions. Interaction between the Afrikaner Broederbond and De Klerk was apparent, as De Klerk was invited to participate in the meetings of the Afrikaner Broederbond's EC both before and during his presidency, as well as to a number of its regional conferences. In an interview with the author, he described this dialogue as an exchange of ideas, but never in the form of confrontation that would have given him, De Klerk, a chance to request support for his policies. De Klerk regards the positive role the Afrikaner Broederbond played in the transformation process in the 1990s to lie in its support, rather than direct influence in terms of directives given by the organisation.

The democratisation phase began with the CODESA negotiations in December 1991 and ended with the first free elections on 27 April 1994. The Afrikaner Broederbond was not permitted to participate in round-table negotiations, since it was still a semi-secret organisation at the time. Nor did it provide official input to the negotiating parties or give directives to Afrikaner Broederbond members sitting at the negotiating table. That was not Afrikaner Broederbond strategy and would have been counterproductive to the strong negotiating position of the delegates at the table who were both Afrikaner Broederbond and NP members, since a defamation campaign against the Afrikaner Broederbond was already under way. However, none of the delegates asked by the author (F W de Klerk, R Meyer, F Venter) denied that he had at least been 'stimulated' by the Afrikaner Broederbond's vision of a new political system. Since the ideas of the Afrikaner Broederbond and the NP did not oppose each other, there was no cause for dilemmas of identity or conscience. The positive contribution by the Afrikaner Broederbond in the democratisation process can be seen in the referendum in March 1992, since it actively contributed to the changed ideological consciousness among a broad base of Afrikaners and kept discussions on the constitution alive within the organisation. In that sense, it was also an indirect actor during this



phase. But the Afrikaner Broederbond correctly recognised that it had to direct its democratising force more towards the transformation of its own organisation.

The consolidation phase of the transformation process in South Africa began with the successfully implemented elections in 1994. The final handover of political power to the African National Congress, with whom the Afrikaner Broederbond had had no official contact until that point, also led to the Afrikaner Broederbond's ultimate loss of political influence. In political terms, it could no longer have the role of an actor. Its positive contribution during this phase lay in its acceptance of actual facts, its politically loyal behaviour towards the government and its deliberate return to focussing on its roots as a cultural organisation. After it abandoned its doctrine of secrecy, it could finally appear as a publicly active organisation and maintain co-operation with the government in the form of a constant exchange of opinion.

Towards the future with the burden of the past?

In South African public perceptions there is not only a great lack of trust, but also the impression that the Afrikaner Broederbond has not been able to release itself from its apartheid ideology. It is not regarded as an actor of political transformation by a large proportion of South Africans. Attention remains focused on the role of the Afrikaner Broederbond during the apartheid period and neglects the periods before and afterwards. This has moved many members to turn their backs on the successor organisation known as the Afrikanerbond, which was founded in 1993 as part of the internal transformation process, especially since the allure of the elite had disappeared. Most of those who remain or have joined since are not only willing to accept liberal democracy in South Africa, but are also idealistic enough to make a positive contribution towards the consolidation phase through their work in the Afrikanerbond. Willingness to be integrated into a multicultural society is apparent in the Afrikanerbond's new constitution, which in principle allows any South African to join, provided they identify themselves with the aims of the Afrikanerbond and speak Afrikaans. The relinquishment of strict secrecy is another sign that the Afrikanerbond is adapting to modern times and trying to gain trust. Today, all the opportunities of modern media are currently being used to create a positive image.⁵

Nevertheless, many South Africans, including former Afrikaner Broederbond members, are convinced that the Afrikaner Broederbond at the latest should have been disbanded by the end of the democratisation phase. Their primary argument is that there are enough other Afrikaner cultural organisations with a significantly

5 For example, see the organisation's homepage, <http://www.afrikanerbond.co.za>.



smaller historical burden that can more plausibly represent the interests of Afrikaners in the new South Africa.

In the mind of the author, the role of the Afrikaner Broederbond in the South African transformation process can be regarded as positive on the whole. However, there remains the serious criticism that its members made survival rather than moral grounds with respect to apartheid the primary motivation behind their actions. To be accepted in South African society, especially among the young generation of Afrikaners, the Afrikanerbond must be willing to carry out an unequivocal reappraisal of its role in the apartheid state. The release of documents from its archives to the author was an important first step.

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