

RSA (Pre-1994): Prime Minister Dr. H.F. Verwoerd / Republic Day Commemoration

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Form: Circular

By: Bickles of Johannesburg (?)

Date: 1961

Ref: Laidlaw: 1274;

Variations:

| Size | Metal | Mass | Value |
|---------|--------|---------|-------|
| 34.4 mm | Silver | 28.8 gm | \$120 |

Edge: Plain.

Obverse: Bareheaded bust of Verwoerd in jacket and tie, front. Indistinct Maker's mark to right of lapel. Legend on a raised band "EERSTE MINISTER" and below between stops: "DR. H.F. VERWOERD"

Reverse: In the middle, across: "TER AANDENKING (in an arc) / AAN / (space for engraving) / SE AANDEEL / 31 MEI 1961 (in a arc)". This medal engraved: "JOHN VORSTER". Stamped: "SILVER" below. Legend on a raised band: "REPUBLIEK VAN SUID-AFRIKA". Ornament at the foot.

Notes: Hendrik Frensch Verwoerd (1901-1966) was a member of the National Party of South Africa and Prime Minister from 1966 to his assassination in 1966. Under his premiership South Africa broke away from Great Britain and became a republic in 1961. He is remembered as the man behind the conception and implementation of apartheid.

This medal commemorates the day on which South Africa became a republic, 31 May 1961.

The reverse inscription loosely translates: "A commemoration to (engraved recipient's name) for the part he played". The assumption is that that the medal was a limited edition commissioned by Verwoerd or the National Party and given to the politicians who had played a leading role during South Africa's transition to a republic.

The recipient of the medal was John Vorster. He became prime minister after Verwoerd's assassination in 1966 and remained in office until 1978. In 1961 Vorster was minister of justice. Given the Vorster's status, this particular medal will have added value.

This medal was probably made by Bickles of Johannesburg. The National Party was punctilious at the time for preferring Bickles, as a private company, rather than the South African Mint to make medals that were of a party political nature.