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SOUTH AFRICAN ATTITUDES TOWARDS
PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR
AND THE IMMEDIATE REACTION TO THE DECISION.

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fulfilment of the requirements for the B.A. (Hons.)
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by

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These Cartoons are from collections printed weekly
during 1939 in Forum.

CHAPTER I

SOUTH AFRICAN ATTITUDES TO THE IMPENDING CRISIS IN EUROPE

The rise of Adolf Hitler in the 1930's and his militarization of Germany was noted with concern among the powers. Many onlookers felt that the Treaty of Versailles after the First World War, had contained within it the seeds of conflict. If not a justification for Hitler's aggressive encroachment, the harshness of Versailles was, at least in the eyes of some, an explanation of the new German ebullience. In some ways Hitler certainly seemed to be the saviour of the crushed and humiliated Germany. The critical economic situation had been alleviated, unemployment greatly reduced, and the German people seemed to have a new sense of purpose. When Hitler began to rearm, and with the remilitarization of the Rhineland launched Germany on a course of aggression, observers began to note that a menace to peace was fast growing. However, and the story is too well-known to elaborate, it took a very long time for the scales to fall from the eyes of statesmen the world over. Perhaps it would be more correct to say that they could see what was happening, but were powerless, in view of the enfeebled condition of the League of Nations, to do anything to halt Germany's infringements of the Treaty of Versailles. As late as 1938 Neville Chamberlain was still attempting to appease Hitler and saying that in his opinion the Fuhrer was a man to be trusted.

So, if in South Africa, there were still those to whom Hitler was a man of destiny, redressing the wrongs created by Versailles, they were not alone in their belief. Looking back, with the advantage of thirty years of hindsight, it is easy to say that the writing was on the wall, but in the thirties the thoughts of a second holocaust so relatively soon after the first must have been a thought to be pushed to the recesses of the mind. Hence the mistaken optimism of the Great Powers, or perhaps a better term would be their anxious optimism.

General J.C. Smuts, who was to be one of the major protagonists in the drama to be enacted in South Africa over the vexed question of neutrality, had not at first realised that Hitler's policy meant inevitable conflict. However by 1939 he was convinced of it, and began to prepare himself and South

Africa for participation.

South Africa, although not a populous country, was strong in terms of resources. Strategically too, she was a factor to be considered in time of war, since any closing of the Suez Canal meant that the Cape would become, as of yore, of prime importance. On the doorstep of the Union was South West Africa, a former German colony and now a mandate under the guardianship of South Africa. For this reason also, any decision regarding entry or non-entry into a war against Germany enhanced the importance of the Union.

A member of the British Commonwealth, South Africa, along with the other Dominions, had been granted full autonomy by the Statute of Westminster. Interestingly enough, it was Smuts who was one of the first to conceive of the British Empire as a Commonwealth of Nations, linked by common traditions, values and loyalty, but otherwise free and independent. In South Africa this was a sacred bond to some and an irksome halter to others. For in this country, the connection with the British had by no means been a peaceful evolution. The bitterness of the Great Trek, the Anglo-Boer War and the annexations of the Boer Republics still rankled in the hearts of Afrikaners, and made the continuing link with Britain a constant source of irritation. The suspicion and hatred of Britain extended to include English-speaking South Africans. Nostalgic republicanism was utilized by politicians in the struggle for the preservation of the Afrikaner way of life.

A further cause of disharmony between the two white groups in South Africa was the fact that while the Afrikaner was numerically stronger, the English-speaking South Africans predominated in terms of economic influence. The "English", along with the Jews, were seen as capitalists, growing fat on the resources of a land which the Afrikaner had tried, with a fierce and demanding love, to make his own. In the First World War, South Africa had gone in, if not as a matter of course, then with fewer constitutional niceties to complicate the issue. The revulsion among certain Afrikaners at the thought of fighting England's war had then culminated in a rebellion. By 1939, the Statute of Westminster had made the Union's entry into a war against Germany a matter of choice, not of course, and this meant that dissidents had a legal case.

The Afrikaner had by no means lost his animosity towards Britain, and many English-speaking people still felt the same strong pull to help the mother-country. This time however, the eventual decision was to break up a government and split a political party and a nation from top to bottom.

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The Fusion government had come into being in 1933-34. It might be described as a marriage of convenience, since without the support of Smuts's South African Party, General Hertzog could never have succeeded in passing his native legislation, and only by joining with Hertzog's Nationalists could the South African Party once again have a share in the exercise of political power. Fusion however, was more than just a move in practical politics. It represented at its highest level a genuine attempt to overcome the age-old divisions in South Africa. The healing of the breach between the two main white groups in South Africa was indeed a worthy aim with the shining prospect of a truly united South Africa as its culmination. History has recorded that up to the present day this has not been achieved. The Fusion government failed and since then there has been no other such experiment for unity.

The neutrality crisis was the immediate cause of the disintegration, but if the war precipitated by the crisis in 1939 had not arisen, it is a matter of speculation as to whether the stresses and strains within the Fusion government could have been overcome. That there was internal strife is certain, and Fusion has been described as an uneasy partnership from the outset. However, there was, if only for a brief period, a sense of national stability under the Fusion government. Prosperity continued, the native question, if not resolved was at least less of a burning issue than previously and men of different political faiths were co-operating - working imperfectly perhaps, but nevertheless together; that in itself was an advance.

General Smuts was optimistic at first, but it seems that he was never fully taken into Hertzog's confidence. In spite of playing second fiddle, Smuts nevertheless considered the effort worthwhile. There were others with a far more critical attitude. G.D. Scholtz, Afrikaner historian and biographer of Dr. Nicholaas Johannes van der Merwe, the leader of the Free State Nationalists, sees Fusion as an unnatural and artificial union,

setting Afrikaner against Afrikaner, and he avers that this was the view of his subject.¹ Both felt that all Afrikaners had the same basic material and spiritual values and that the Briton and the Jew had come between them. According to Scholtz, Hertzog had fondly imagined that he was taking a majority of Nationalists into the United Party with him, when in fact only a minority followed his lead. He also asserts that it was Smuts who was really in control. One doubts the veracity of this, however, in view of statements by Hancock and others that Hertzog kept the affairs of government in his own hands, particularly in the sphere of foreign policy. Proximity to Hertzog did not mean intimacy, and Smuts had to resort to his own considerable private contacts for the information he sought.

Bertha Solomon, who was a backbencher in Parliament at this time, had this to say of Fusion:

"Ever since I had entered parliament and had been admitted to the party caucus, I had sadly seen that the great experiment of Fusion was not all that I had hoped for. I had noted that despite the United Party's large majority in Parliament, and the general determination of both parties to make it work, there was unease. This unease, it seemed to me, sprang largely from General Hertzog's autocratic attitude. Charming and courteous in ordinary life, he regarded any differences of opinion with him in the caucus as disloyalty."²

It seems that she was not alone in criticism of the autocratic manners of General Hertzog.

"General Smuts and General Hertzog were about as happy in harness as a horse and a zebra, and, as with increasing age the Prime Minister, who had had fifteen years in office became more autocratic and touchy, the Deputy Prime Minister, much of an age with him, but far younger in mind, had much to swallow in the interests of unity."³

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1. G.D. Scholtz, Dr. Nicolaas Johannes van der Merwe, 1888 - 1940, Johannesburg, 1944, p. 293.
 2. B. Solomon, Time Remembered, Cape Town, 1968, pp. 131 - 132.
 3. The Round Table, a quarterly review of the Politics of the British Commonwealth, No. 117, December 1939, p. 202.

J.H. Hofmeyr would have concurred with the final statement. He felt that Smuts was sacrificing his principles in order to keep Fusion from crumbling. However, as Hancock points out, the concessions were rather larger in appearance than they were in reality.⁴ Hofmeyr, of course, was referring in particular to non-European questions, but in fact Smuts supported Hofmeyr's efforts in obtaining the passage of the Children's Act of 1937, which was beneficial for all children regardless of race, and in his capacity as Acting Minister of Native Affairs, he acted tolerantly and creditably in dealing with the African riot in Vereeniging during which some policemen were killed. Various anti-Indian Bills which had been in progress had been withdrawn, and Mr. Justice Feetham entrusted with the task of investigating the grounds on which these bills were based. So it seems that Smuts would not have felt too many pangs of conscience at this time over the non-European question. However it must be admitted that, in a broad survey of Smuts' political activities, a certain ambiguity shadows the non-white issue.

Another viewpoint regarding Fusion was that of Leslie Blackwell, a member of Parliament at the time. In his book Farewell to Parliament, he speaks of "the relief I felt that the farce of a Fusion government under Hertzog had ended."⁵ However he adds that he did not think that the idea of Fusion itself was impossible, but that Fusion under Hertzog was impossible. To the Purified Nationalists under Dr. D.F. Malan, Hertzog in entering Fusion, had betrayed the Afrikaner people and their interests. It was as simple as that. In many ways Hertzog is a tragic figure in the annals of South Africa. He can with some justification be seen as the archetypal man of greatness, whose fatal flaw was hubris. He had a certain integrity, and must always be commended for a genuine desire to unite the different elements in South Africa. His eclipse was a sad one, for he was rejected by all, even his own people, the Afrikaners, whose evolution as a national force he had played so large a part in shaping.

4. W.K. Hancock, Smuts, Vol. II, Cambridge, 1968, p. 292.

5. L. Blackwell, Farewell to Parliament, Pietermaritzburg, 1946, p. 66.

When Fusion had come into being there were those who felt that compromise meant going under. These were the extremists, if not the lunatic fringe, of either side. The Nationalists who had not followed Hertzog into samesmelting had formed a party of their own, the Purified Nationalist Party under Dr. Malan. The English-speaking people whose affinities to Britain were still stronger than their ties to South Africa, and who could find no comfortable niche in the United Party, formed the Dominion Party under Colonel Stallard. In opposition to the government, the Purified Nationalists berated the United Party for what was in their view, a spineless toadying to British Imperialism, while the Dominionites lamented the slackening of ties with the Commonwealth, and what was for them the Mother Country.

G.D. Scholtz asserts that as a result of Hertzog's utterances in favour of the British Commonwealth, there was a continual stream of defection of Afrikaans-speaking United Party members to the National Party between 1934 and 1939.⁶ With the advent of Fusion, a majority of Afrikaners in the Transvaal went over to the United Party, whilst in the Cape, Nationalist strength was more or less left undisturbed. The greatest turmoil arose in the Orange Free State, since Hertzog had a considerable personal following there. 1934 - 1939 saw a struggle between Hertzog and Dr. N.J. van der Merwe for Leadership of the Orange Free State Nationalists. In 1936 in the election for the Provincial Council, van der Merwe was heartened to see that most Nationalists had stood firm, even though the United Party had won.

In politics domestic problems are often examined as potential political weapons. The economic confrontation between Afrikaners and Africans in the cities, as a result of the exodus from the rural areas, was one of these problems. In the latter part of 1938, the Reddingsdaadbond was founded. Its instigator was a respected Nederduitse Gereformeerde Minister, The Reverend J.D. Kestell. At its inception the society was meant to aid underprivileged Afrikaners but the society rapidly

6. G.D. Scholtz, Dr. Nicolaas Johannes van der Merwe, p. 296.

took on a political character and in conjunction with the F.A.K. became an exclusively Nationalist enterprise. The Broederbond was another such organization. Pertaining to this question of economic rivalry was the Purified Nationalist attack on Jews of British extraction whom they accused of being ~~either~~ greedy capitalists or Communist agitators. As will be explained later, Anti-Semitism was becoming a force to be recognized in South Africa. "Here were the elements of a dynamic ideology to reinforce the time-hallowed Nationalist protests against subservience to Britain and participation in British Imperialist Wars."⁷

There was a great deal of Nationalist opposition to Jewish immigration in this period - in 1937 particularly. Some progressive and liberally minded people feel that Smuts pandered to anti-Semitic feeling. For instance Sarah Gertrude Millin, the authoress, who knew Smuts fairly intimately, always maintained that Smuts had bowed to the prejudice against Jews when her husband, Philip Millin was not appointed to fill a vacant seat on the Supreme Court Bench. Whether or not this was an oversight or a question of political expediency, is a ~~matter~~ for debate, but Smuts himself certainly harboured no anti-Jewish feelings. His attitude can be seen in his protest when Britain began restricting the flow of immigrants into Palestine, contrary to the policy laid down after the First World War: "We have given up so much of the fruits of the Great War that at least this little ewe lamb should not also be slaughtered!"⁸ One thing is certain, anti-Semitism and the Native question caused considerable tension in the Fusion government.

In 1938 there were various incidents which alienated English-speaking members of the United Party. The renaming of Roberts Heights as Voortrekkerhoogte was one of them. On Union Day 1938 a seemingly needless incident injured English-speaking sentiment. At a parade attended by Mr. Pirow, then Minister of Defence, the heads of the Defence Forces, and the Prime Minister, the Union Jack was taken down leaving only the Union Flag, while the military band played only "Die Stem van Suid Afrika" without including "God Save the King". These seem petty affairs but passions are often aroused by just such trivia.

7. W.K. Hancock, Smuts, Vol II, p. 289.

8. W.K. Hancock, Smuts, Vol. II, p. 278.

The United Party was also weakened at this time by the resignations from the cabinet of Mr. Hofmeyr and Mr. Sturrock over Hertzog's appointment of Mr. A.P.J. Fourie as a Native representative in the Senate. Mr. Fourie had been an M.P. but in the General Election of 1938 he had been defeated. Hertzog, whose devotion to his followers was legendary, was determined to return him to Parliament. He therefore prevailed upon Senator "Matabele" Thompson to resign in favour of Mr. Fourie. In terms of the constitution, in order to be a native representative, the aspirant must be eligible by reason of "thorough acquaintance with the reasonable wants and wishes of the coloured races." It was Hofmeyr's and Sturrock's contention that Mr. Fourie did not fill this requirement and also that the manner of his appointment was unconstitutional and smacked of intrigue. They had a point there, but considering the gravity of current events overseas, it seems a small thing to have occasioned such precipitous action on their part.

Another event with important political implications in 1938 was the Voortrekker Centenary celebrations. This symbolic trek from the Cape to Pretoria is worthy of inclusion because of the intense wave of nationalist sentiment which accompanied it. It seemed to provide a coherent rallying point for all Afrikaners, a burning cause - the preservation of the Afrikaner spirit which had withstood hostile savages and British opposition in an attempt to establish an independent existence. The significance of this for the National Party was inestimable. Some have even gone so far as to say that without it the National Party would not have been in a position, a decade later, to offer a serious challenge to the United Party, much less to emerge as the victor. It is significant that at the dedication of the Voortrekker Monument, General Hertzog was not invited to attend, and two women descendents of the Voortrekkers laid the stone. The Voortrekker celebrations quickened the sometimes dormant but ever-present anti-British and Republican sentiments of the Afrikaner people.

This then was the domestic situation as the prospect of a second world war began to loom in the late 1930's. For South Africa, the question of participation with Britain in a war against Germany was no clear-cut decision, but a tortuous choice, complicated by the particular circumstances existing in South Africa and setting her apart from her fellow Dominions.

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At the time of the Munich crisis, it was decided that in the event of a war over Czechoslovakia, South Africa

would not intervene. This was an informal decision taken by a few of the inner circle of Cabinet Ministers - Havenga, Pirow, Smuts and Hertzog, and it pertained only to the existing crisis, not to possible future circumstances. It is important to clarify the fact that this was not a binding agreement to adopt an attitude of neutrality no matter what the circumstances. It was only on 28th September, 1938, that the entire cabinet approved Hertzogs statement, which ran as follows:

"Statement of the attitude to be adopted by the Union of South Africa in the event of war in Europe with England as one of the belligerents: The existing relations between the Union of South Africa and the various belligerent parties shall, so far as the Union is concerned, remain unchanged and continue as if no war were being waged, with the understanding however, that the existing relationships and obligations between the Union and Great Britain and any other of the members of the British Commonwealth of Nations in so far as those relationships and obligations are the result of contractual obligations concerning the naval base at Simonstown; or of its membership of the League of Nations, or in so far as the relationships etc. must be regarded IMPLICITER as flowing from the free association of the Union with the other members of the Commonwealth shall remain unaltered, and shall be maintained by the Union; and that nobody shall be permitted to make use of Union territory for any purpose calculated to infringe the said relationships, and obligations."⁹

Hertzog was not to deviate from this standpoint even when Hitlers breaches of faith increased. Smuts however, although he also did not see the international situation with absolute clarity at first, was to change his attitude, until at last, when the eruption came, he was convinced that in South Africa's interests and in the interests of the world at large, Hitler must be stopped.

The months preceding September, 1939 saw an airing of views on the international situation as if affected South Africa. The South African newspapers were full of the fulminations of politicians of different persuasions. Despite the threatening European situation one notes that in the Rand Daily Mail of June to August, 1939, a daring new dance called "swing" occupied as much space in the letters to the Editor as overseas crises and South African politics. During these months the election of a wool-queen was competing with international affairs in the Bloemfontein Volksblad

9. C.M. van den Heever, General J.B.M. Hertzog, Johannesburg, 1946, p. 275.

As it became clearer that there was to be a war, the Nationalists made haste to clarify their view of the course South Africa should choose in relation to a war against the Axis powers. In May, 1939, the Nationalists published a manifesto ratified by the parliamentary caucus of the Purified National Party, and signed by the leaders of the Party in each province - Dr. D.F. Malan (Cape), Dr. N.J. van der Merwe (Orange Free State), Mr. J.G. Strydom (Transvaal) and Mr. A.J. Nel (Natal). The basic tenets of the Nationalist attitude are to be found in this statement. It was felt that if South Africa herself was attacked, she would defend herself, but that she wanted no part in a war overseas which did not concern her. The Fusion government was accused of endeavouring to involve South Africa willy-nilly in a war in which it could have no possible interest.

"We are convinced that the overwhelming majority of the people of South Africa, and most certainly the overwhelming majority of all nationally-minded elements, notwithstanding nationality or party, desire in reality a resolute policy of neutrality and abhor and repudiate the dragging of our country into a devastating war."¹⁰

It is rather more difficult to pin down the attitude of the United Party as a whole, since its leader General Hertzog would issue no statement regarding neutrality or participation, saying merely in March, 1939, that if and when the time came, parliament would decide. It was an odd situation. Bearing in mind Hertzog's neutrality statement of the previous year, it was not unlikely that his attitude would still be the same. Not even his colleagues in the government knew quite what he was thinking. The uncertainty within the United Party can be seen in the conflicting speeches made by United Party M.P's at the time. While Senator Clarkson was assuring constituents that the government would go into a war "Boots and all!"¹¹, General Kemp, the chairman of the United Party in the Transvaal, and Minister of Lands was saying publicly and with great emphasis that South Africa would not go into a war. This must surely offer some comment on the co-ordination of the Fusion government!

10. Rand Daily Mail, 13 May, 1939, p. 12.

11. Leslie Blackwell, Farewell to Parliament, p. 56.

General Smuts by this time was firmly convinced that if Germany and England should be at war, South Africa must play an active part in helping to rid the world of the threat to democracy. He made his views known in at least twenty speeches delivered between October, 1938 and August, 1939. It is important to clarify this, since he was later accused by Oswald Pirow and General Hertzog of a perfidious cloaking of his real convictions behind a mask of agreement with the Prime Minister. Most English-speaking people felt that South Africa must play her part in a war in which the Commonwealth was involved. This was not simply a matter of sentimental attachment to Britain but a deep-seated conviction that the Nazi evil must be halted.

If the above-mentioned diametrically opposed viewpoints had no ramifications, the chronicle of South Africa's reaction to the outbreak of the Second World War would be a relatively simple matter. However there were very unpleasant undertones in this period, and as in any emotional crisis, passions were easily inflamed, and kept smouldering by the Press. To plead that South Africa should enter the war to safeguard democracy, the immediate rejoinder of neutrality supporters was that, if Britain was fighting for democracy, why were no less than five of those with whom she was seeking to co-operate, dictatorships? i.e. Russia, Poland, Rumania, Turkey and Greece. This was an awkward question. Perhaps it would have been better for those who favoured South African participation in a war to simply state a conviction that it was imperative that Hitler's plans for world domination be foiled.

From the Nationalist Afrikaner's point of view it was intolerable that the young men of the country should go off to faraway places to fight a remote war because of Britain's commitments to Poland. This on its own is a perfectly legitimate viewpoint, but there is a blind spot in it, caused by the Afrikaner's hatred of Britain. Why should Britain drag South Africa into war unless there was some very cogent reason for it? By this time Hitler's intentions were no longer even thinly disguised, and why, if he could swallow up countries in Europe, would he scruple, if it suited him, to take South Africa too? The Witwatersrand would be a rich prize, and on South Africa's doorstep was a ready made base - South West Africa.

Nevertheless, from day to day in the newspapers one reads of Nationalist indignation at the prospect of being "dragged" into England's wars. The following extract from Die Burger is typical of the sort of sentiment expressed:

"Advokaat Conradie het verklaar dat daar 'n seksie in die land is wat propaganda teen Duitsland maak sodat die publiek kant moes kies teen Duitsland sodat wanneer daar oorlog tussen Engeland en Duitsland uitbreek, die Unie ook ingesleep word."¹² This was the purport of Advocate J.N. Conradie's speech at a protest meeting in Upington on July 10th, 1939.

The English-speaking section were also very free with their accusations. Spokesmen berated the Nationalists for what in their view was a defeatist outlook. They were accused of waving the white flag and there were constant and injudicious assertions that Afrikaners were pro-Nazi. While it could possibly have been true that in the mind of some Afrikaners any country was more deserving of sympathy and aid than Britain, the categorizing of all neutrality-supporters as traitors was quite as blind and unfair as the unreasoning hatred directed against those who were sincerely convinced that to enter the war was a matter of principle.

It was evident that party politics prevailed over any question of a broad national view. In the words of General Smuts: "In this country there is always a temptation to try to derive political advantage from such a situation or any calamity, and I would ask the people to hold aloof from such attempts."¹³

In keeping with the tenor of this statement was a call to moral rearmament signed by such men as J.H. Hofmeyr, E.G. Jansen (Speaker of the House of Assembly), Senator F.S. Malan and General Smuts. "We make bold to sound to the people of South Africa, a call to a new patriotism, a new hope and a new purpose in their individual lives as the sure means of enabling the nation to play a worthy part in the regeneration of the world."¹⁴ This statement, with its plea for a higher aspiration, was refreshing after the hurly burly of party politics. One notes among its signatories men whose personal conviction was, that South Africa

12. Die Burger, 10 July, 1939, p. 7.

13. Rand Daily Mail, 24 August, 1939, p. 7.

14. Rand Daily Mail, 9 June, 1939, p. 8.



Dr MALAN (to Japan): "And which piece do you want as a gift?"

IVANOFF IN DIE VADERLAND

should participate on Britain's side in a war. Another man, with a totally different viewpoint, proved that he also could rise above the petty bickerings of party politics. Convinced that the interests of South Africa demanded a policy of neutrality, Dr. Karl Bremer (the leader of the Cape Nationalists) did not indulge in the fiercely antagonistic abuse which had marred the exchanges between the opposing groups in relation to the neutrality issue. He simply stated that to him, the interests of the National Party did not come first. Of priority were the interests of South Africa and it was for that reason that he urged all elements to join in support of a policy of neutrality.¹⁵

Another point of view expressed by neutrality supporters was that since other countries such as Holland and Belgium which were also presumably threatened by Hitler, had declared themselves neutral, what was so different or peculiar about a South African policy of neutrality? Hitler's later invasion of Belgium was to provide a crushing reply to this, but that was still in the future.

There was a great deal of acrimonious debate over what Mr. J.N. Conradie, M.P. picturesquely called "die Suidwesbangmaakgogga."¹⁶ As will be explained later there was a good deal of Nazi interest in South West Africa and many people in the Union, including General Smuts, were well aware of this. Germany had often reiterated a demand for the return of her colonies. By 1939, there were a great many Union Citizens living in South West Africa, and for strategic reasons, any idea of returning it to Germany was considered impossible by the Union Government. The National Party however, in what appeared very like a "peace at any price" attitude, indicated that it was prepared to surrender South West Africa rather than be involved in a suicidal war with Germany. A deputation representing the South West Africa League visited South Africa in June to discuss the future of the territory with Union M.P.'s. Dr. D.F. Malan and the Nationalist Party caucus refused to see them, so a private discussion was held with Mr. Paul Sauer, the Party's chief whip. Mr. Sauer issued an even stricter

15. Die Volksblad, 14 August, 1939, p. 7.

16. Die Burger, 10 July, 1939, p. 7.

interpretation of the Nationalist neutrality policy than had hitherto been given. It ran as follows:

- "1. South Africa must under all circumstances remain neutral and simply protect her borders.
2. The National Party's desire is that South West Africa should be incorporated in the Union, but this must be done through friendly negotiation with Germany.
3. If no amicable solution can be found and Germany demands South West Africa and even attacks it, South Africa must still remain neutral and give up South West Africa to avoid the possibility of the territory's involving the Union in a war.
4. For the Union to take a hostile stand against Germany would be suicide.
5. Should the Union, Britain, and France decide not to grant a possible German demand and a war with Germany result, South Africa must then still remain neutral."¹⁷

Even more startling than this, was Mr. Sauer's reply to a delegate's question regarding protection for Afrikaners in South West Africa. "We have every sympathy with the Afrikaners in South West Africa. We feel sorry for them and understand their position, but in the cause of South African neutrality and to protect the million Afrikaners in the Union, the 20,000 Afrikaners must be sacrificed."¹⁸

This speech was criticized by the English-language Press, and political capital was made out of the situation by the United Party, which received the South West Delegation with many protestations of friendship and assurances of protection. Senator A.P.J. Fourie, the Minister of Railways and Harbours, at a public meeting in the Graaff-Reinet Town Hall asserted that not only were the Nationalists prepared to abandon the South West African Afrikaners to Hitler, but were also prepared to surrender the country's gold mines.¹⁹ The last statement as far as can be ascertained has not been substantiated, but it is indicative of the emotional hypersensitivity of these pre-war months.

17. Rand Daily Mail, 16 June, 1939, p. 12.

18. Rand Daily Mail, 16 June, 1939, p. 12.

19. Rand Daily Mail, 28 June, 1939, p. 12.

Eventually, stung by the vituperation levelled at him over this affair, Dr. Malan, at a party meeting in Volksrust on Thursday, 14 August, offered an explanation of his refusal to see the delegation. He informed his audience that he had received reliable information to the effect that the delegates, who in his view, did not truly represent the Afrikaners in South West Africa, had come to Cape Town directly from a visit to Bulawayo with the express purpose of discrediting the National Party's neutrality policy.²⁰ The South West Africa League was concerned about the Nazi threat in South West, and, representing as it did the South African residents in the territory, (most of whom were afrikaners) it had not anticipated a repudiation by fellow-Afrikaners in the Union when its deputies had gone there to seek reassurance that South West Africa would not be abandoned to the Nazis.

While all this was in progress, the Minister of Defence, Mr. Oswald Pirow, added another facet to the controversy by stating that in his view, although neither Tanganyika nor South West Africa should be returned to their former owner, Germany should receive monetary compensation. Pirow was saying this as a private person, not in his capacity of Cabinet Minister, but nevertheless it seems to have been unwise. The incident sparked off a good deal of speculation and comment. A spokesman at the Wilhelmstrasse issued a statement saying that there could be no question of Germany taking compensation for colonies. Sir Abe Bailey wrote a strongly worded letter to the Press condemning any such proposal. Mr. J.H. Hofmeyr, in a speech at a Grahamstown public meeting on Wednesday July 5, expressed the feeling of most South Africans as well as the United Party when he said: "We are not prepared to agree to the surrender of any mandated territories in Africa to the German Government as it is today."²¹

Dr. Malan and the Purified Nationalists did not budge an inch from their standpoint and at one point suggested "peaceful discussions" with Germany over the possibility of incorporating South West Africa into the Union.²² Dr. Malan

20. Die Volksblad, 25 August, 1939, p. 7.

21. Rand Daily Mail, 5 July, 1939, p. 12.

22. Rand Daily Mail, 23 August, 1939, p. 12.

also said on this occasion that as far as he could see Germany did not harbour any aggressive designs on South West Africa, and that he was sure that Germany would view South Africa's claims sympathetically. This was late in August 1939, and to date there had been very little evidence to anticipate any such reasonable behaviour from Hitler. The latter fact was pointed out with some emphasis in the English-language Press.

As can be seen there was a great deal of feverish political activity in South Africa during these pre-war months. In their efforts to prove to the government and South Africa at large that there was an overwhelming proportion of public opinion strongly opposed to South African participation in a war against Germany, the Nationalists organized a survey. Die Burger reported in early August 1939 that the co-ordinator of the survey, Dr. Theo Wassenaar, was receiving thousands of petitions for neutrality every day.²³

An easily discernible trend in Nationalist thinking was the anti-Imperialist sentiment with its corollary, the desire for a Republic. Repeatedly such leaders as Dr. Malan, Mr. J.G. Strydom (leader of the Transvaal Nationalists) and Mr. Eric Louw, M.P., had deplored the connection with Britain. The Irish Republican movement which had in 1937 under Eamon de Valera at last achieved the long-desired independence from Britain, was often used as a parallel in expressing the desire for freedom from the British connection. Advocate Eric Louw said at Stellenbosch "Die eeue-oud stryd van die Ierse volk teen vreemde oorheersing, hul strewe na self-bestuur en later na volle onafhanklikheid, vorm 'n geskiedenis wat noodwendig 'n snaar moet roer in die hart van elke vryheid-liewende Afrikaner."²⁴

Republicanism had persisted in the Afrikaner ideology ever since the days of the Great Trek, and to many it was the ultimate in government. The main obstacle was these stubborn "Englishmen" who persisted in their affection for the British constitutional form. It was not only the politicians who nurtured the Republican ideal. The Afrikaans-nasionale studentebond voiced its desire for a Republic, free of "die lamsakkerige Britse Statebond."²⁵

23. Die Burger, 1 August, 1939, p, 1.

24. Die Burger, 1 August, 1939, p. 3.

25. Die Burger, 12 July, 1939, p. 5.

To Nationalist accusations that South Africa danced when Britain played the tune, some Commonwealth supporters replied that South Africa was perfectly free to do as she chose. Admittedly there were some who saw the link between Britain and South Africa as an indivisible one, legally necessitating joint action, no matter what the circumstance. Such an opinion was expressed by Mr. C.W.A. Coulter, M.P. when addressing the International Study Circle of the University of Cape Town on Thursday 17th August, 1939. He said that a South African refusal to join Britain in the event of a war against Germany would be a repudiation of the crown, and an act of secession from the British Empire.²⁶ This accorded with the Dominion Party's view of the situation, but was very tactless taking into consideration the large body of opinion in the country which feared Imperialist bondage. Most Commonwealth supporters however, felt that although by virtue of the Statute of Westminster South Africa was free to do as she chose, she should, for the good of the country, support Britain. Weight was lent to this view by the visit of the Duke of Devonshire, Under-Secretary for Dominion Affairs, in June 1939. At a civic banquet in the Carlton Hotel on Thursday 22 June, 1939, he said bluntly: "People who talk about government from Whitehall are talking nonsense. We have a new conception. We have tried for many years past to foster the ideal of self-government and today it is a fact that there is no such thing as Whitehall control. The Dominions are equal to England as free members of the British Commonwealth of Nations."²⁷

It is important not to forget, in the heat of these controversies, that there were many Afrikaners within the United Party who had been large-hearted enough to forget the bitterness of previous Anglo-South African association, and to give their loyalty to the Commonwealth. Such a one was the Administrator of the Transvaal, General J.J. Pienaar who stressed the value of the kinship within the Commonwealth and South Africa's right to join the other Dominions in fighting for the preservation of liberty.²⁸ What was even more remarkable was that General Pienaar had been one of the rebels in 1914!

The struggle in South Africa was not a sharp, English-speaking vs Afrikaner delineation. It was more complex than that. The very fact that there were Afrikaners who saw the

26. Rand Daily Mail, 17 August, 1939, p. 11.

27. Rand Daily Mail, 22 June, 1939, p. 6.

28. Rand Daily Mail, 7 July, 1939, p. 7.

British connection as a practical necessity and did not abhor it, was a constant vexation to the Purified Nationalists to whom the fight for Afrikaner identity was almost a holy war. The feeling that it was intolerable to have disunity amongst Afrikaners, had been present ever since the inception of Fusion, and even in 1939 there was talk of reunion.

On August 20, 1939, Dr. N.J. van der Merwe, M.P., leader of the Orange Free State Nationalists, addressing a meeting at Theunissen suggested that "toenadering" was possible under the following conditions - a public neutrality declaration; separate coloured residential areas and a segregation of the coloured vote. He also stated that the Nationalist Party "refused to throw in its weight with liberalism, Imperialism or Communism."²⁹

Immediately rumours began to flow thick and fast, and there was a good deal of speculation both in the Press and by the public as to whether this talk of reunion had any factual foundation. Dr. Malan quashed these rumours on 22nd August, saying that although both he and General Hertzog had been approached regarding a possible reunion, a stage had not yet been reached where such a step was possible. He himself had had no communication with General Hertzog and he assured his followers that were any such plan under consideration he (Malan) would keep them informed himself.³⁰

Various private individuals and branches of the Nationalist Party had for some time past been sending requests to General Hertzog to clarify his position as regards South Africa's course in the event of war. His consistent reply was that when the time came parliament would decide. This contained no shred of comfort for supporters of neutrality. Their rejoinder was that in 1914 they had been fobbed off with the same explanation that parliament would decide. Their interests had not been safe-guarded then, and they thus harboured grave doubts as to whether they would fare any better this time.

The anxiety over Hertzog's refusal to commit himself, was by no means confined to the Purified Nationalists. Bertha Solomon, in her book Time Remembered speaks of the anxiety felt by the English-speaking section as the war clouds mounted and still Hertzog remained silent. "Time and again he had side-stepped the question and refused to commit himself. Parliament

29. Rand Daily Mail, 21 August, 1939, p. 10.

30. Die Volksblad, 22 August, 1939, p. 7.

would decide, he said, when the time came. Once more, inevitably, English-speaking South Africa was suspicious."

The Dominion Party with its nucleus in Natal had always been vocal, but does not appear to have had a great deal of influence during its period of existence. At the outset of Fusion, Generals Hertzog and Smuts had issued a programme of principles for their joint effort. Included amongst these was what might be interpreted as a mild sop to the Republicanism which still lodged in the minds of many. It ran as follows:

"While the Party stands for the maintenance of the present constitutional position, no-one will be denied the right to express his individual opinion about or advocate his honest convictions in connection with any change of our form of government."³¹

Colonel Stallard and six other English-speaking M.P.'s took exception to this, and broke away from the Dominion Party. This was in July, 1934. Imperial devotees, the Dominionites' viewpoint was that if Britain entered into a war, South Africa must automatically join her. Their cardinal principle was the indivisibility of the British Crown. i.e. the King could not be at war in Great Britain and neutral in South Africa. As has been mentioned before, the Statute of Westminster rendered this interpretation invalid in a legal sense. When neutrality supporters accused the United Party government of toadying to Imperialism they were wide of the mark, but they had more justification when they designated the Dominionites thus.

At the time of the Duke of Devonshire's visit to South Africa, Colonel Stallard suggested that a Royal visit might be timely. In his view this might have been so, but the very thought of it was anathema to a large proportion of the South African public. In an article which appeared in the Transvaler on June 24, any suggestion of a Royal visit was fiercely repudiated, and contempt expressed for what was seen as the propagandist motive behind it. Similar statements appeared in other Afrikaans-language newspapers.

The point of view of the Dominion Party must be expressed, since it forms part of the body of public opinion concerned with the question of neutrality, but at no stage was the Dominion Party ever a real threat to the Nationalists or the United Party. It had a small parliamentary representation, having gained only eight seats in the election of 1938.³² This means that it had

31. Hancock, Smuts, Vol. II, p. 258.

32. Hancock, Smuts, Vol. II, p. 293.

only gained one seat since 1934. By mid-1939, the Party seemed to be on the downgrade, especially since Colonel Stallard had lost his seat in Parliament. This fact was noted in the June 1939 issue of the Commonwealth publication, the Round Table

"There are today definite signs of impending disintegration of the Dominion Party. It has virtually no hold in the country anywhere outside Durban, and it is losing ground there. The English-speaking section of the country seems to be rallying more and more to the government's support. As the news from Europe has grown in gravity, the necessity for maintaining a united front has come to be increasingly appreciated."

The only common ground between the Nationalists and the Dominion Party was their conviction that the United Party constituted a threat to South Africa. Their reasons for thinking this, however, were widely divergent. While the National Party saw the United Party M.P.'s as war-mongers, the Dominionites considered the government a threat to democracy, because it would make no definite statement about joining Britain in a possible war.

In late August 1939, Colonel Stallard was contesting a Pietermaritzburg seat against Senator Clarkson. A leading article in the Natal Witness requested him to withdraw in the interests of national unity considering the grave international situation. The Dominion Party's reply was that they felt it to be imperative that Colonel Stallard should be in parliament in order to stress the view that it would be disastrous for South Africa to remain neutral in the event of war.³³

Yet another political party in existence at this time was the Labour Party. At one time it had been of considerable importance, i.e. in its alliance with the National Party in 1924 to form the Pact government. However by 1939 it was simply a party with a small representation in parliament, standing for the interests of white labour in South Africa. Judging by the newspapers of the period, it does not seem to have featured very largely in the debate prior to the outbreak of war. It was concerned with what seemed to be a growth of Fascism in South Africa. At the first annual Labour conference of the South African Labour League of Youth in Johannesburg on 3 July, 1939,

33. Rand Daily Mail, 26 August, 1939, p. 14.

it was suggested that a campaign be initiated to awaken South African youth to the dangers of Fascism.³⁴ On another occasion, after Mr. Pirow, the Minister of Defence had stated that in his opinion, should war break out, martial law would be proclaimed, the Labour Party resolved the following -

"that this contemplated step of the Minister is a complete negation of the principles of democracy and is definitely of a Fascist character and that in view of the Democracies being called upon to fight Fascism, presents itself as a remarkable paradox."³⁵ The leaders of the Labour Party at this time were English-speaking and this fact, plus the Party's anti-Fascist attitude, meant that it favoured joining Britain in a war should the need arise.

In late August, goaded by Hertzog's continuing silence, Dr. Malan called for a general election on the neutrality issue. This was on August 24th. There were also proposals from various quarters that a referendum be held to decide the neutrality issue. Both these expedients were unwieldy in the extreme, and considering the imminence of war, the ability for decisive parliamentary action was imperative. As it happened neither proposal came to fruition.

The feverish political activity did not abate even in the last days of August. In the meantime the ordinary citizens waited, ears anxiously attuned to the crisis on the doorstep overseas. Only when war crossed the threshold, would there be an answer to the neutrality issue.

34. Rand Daily Mail, 3 July, 1939, p. 10.

35. Rand Daily Mail, 14 June, 1939, p. 13.

CHAPTER II

DISQUIETING TRENDS IN THE PRE-WAR PERIOD.

During the period of South African history under discussion, a certain trend towards authoritarianism was discernible. Apart from the definitely fascist or Nazi movements such as the Greyshirts, there also seemed to be a dictatorial current insinuating itself into the government. This was tangible enough to excite comment in liberal circles, and in various publications a warning was sounded.

Admiration of the principle of strong, individual leadership in South Africa was a deep-rooted psychological phenomenon, stretching back in history to the times of the Voortrekkers, when loyalty to a single leader was both a necessity and an intense sentimental attachment. Commendable as such loyalty might be in certain circumstances, when carried to extremes it would conflict with the democratic ideal of popular sovereignty. In the relations between General Hertzog and his followers, upon occasion just such a blind attachment seemed to point to the abdication of freedom of individual judgement. For instance, amid the furore when Mr. Hofmeyr and Mr. Sturrock resigned, the Minister of Native Affairs was heard to say, "General Hertzog has won our confidence to such an extent that we are willing to follow his guidance unconditionally, knowing that he has intuitive understanding of what should be done in any circumstances or crises."¹ This may simply have been a heartwarming evidence of trust in the Prime Minister, but many saw in it more sinister implications.

General Hertzog's autocratic manner in dealing with the caucus and his colleagues in the government has been mentioned before. Of a serious turn of mind, with fifteen years of office behind him, perhaps a tendency to want his own way was understandable in a man no longer young. However, this was not merely a matter of Hertzog's manner. Inroads into freedom were seen in the Prime Minister's threat to impose censorship of the Press in 1939. Apparently the desire to curb the Press arose from numerous newspaper insults directed at foreign leaders and representatives for which Hertzog was constrained to apologize.²

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1. The Round Table, a Quarterly Review of the Politics of the British Commonwealth, No. 114, March 1939, p. 438.
 2. Forum, Vol. II, No. 10, 3 June, 1939, p. 3.

According to G.A.L. Green, then Editor of the Cape Argus, it was at the request of the German Minister Plenipotentiary that Hertzog broached the subject of Press restrictions. At a subsequent conference between Hertzog and leading South African Editors, Hertzog defended himself against accusations of tyranny by saying that the anti-Nazi attitude of various South African newspapers alienated Germany to the point where the Union's trade could be affected.³

Whatever the origin of the move, there was an immediate outcry in newspaper circles, and from individual members of the public. In the protests levelled at the Prime Minister it was apparent that this move towards censorship was not seen as an isolated incident, but as one of a series of anti-democratic moves. This indicates that the fear of dictatorial methods was fairly wide-spread.

Another proposal which lent weight to the fear of autocracy at this time was that the rules of procedure of the House of Assembly should be altered. The alteration would have muzzled the opposition to some extent.⁴ Other moves of similar ilk under consideration were control of the political activities of teachers, and a prohibition of certain types of public meetings. The Transvaal Teachers Association took note of the situation in an article published in the Transvaal Educational News: "In a quiet unobtrusive way, dictatorial powers are being given to certain individuals in this country over the lives and well-being of the ordinary citizens without any check or safeguard being offered in exchange, either by recourse to the courts of law or to Parliament itself."

Amongst high government officials a rather totalitarian outlook was at times displayed. "How can we expect that the policy of the Government can be carried out if we do not have people who are going to follow the policy of the Government one hundred per cent?" asked the Minister of Lands on one occasion.⁵

A man who consistently stood out for the maintenance of liberal ideals was J.H. Hofmeyr. Vocal in condemning the

3. G.A.L. Green, An Editor Looks Back, Cape Town, 1947, pp. 203 - 204.

4. Round Table, No. 114, March, 1939, p. 637.

5. Round Table, No. 114, March, 1939, p. 439.

anti-Semitism prevalent among some sections in the country, he also frequently warned the public in a regular column of the Forum magazine, entitled "Notes By the Way" of anti-democratic tendencies in the government. He directed attention at the dictatorial attitude of the multitude of government-appointed control boards, and at the threats to freedom of association, thought and expression. In liberal circles there was a feeling that a Liberal Party should be founded to fight for the preservation of democratic ideals. Providing as he did a rallying point for such ideals, "It was by no means an inconsiderable body of young men who would have followed Hofmeyr into a new party in the late 1930's."⁶

There was clearly then, a feeling in the country that a leaning towards totalitarianism existed, and that it was a distinct menace. Generally-speaking it seems that such a tendency did exist, but it is doubtful whether the government really anticipated the drastic encroachments on democracy imputed to it by certain sections of public opinion at the time. Certainly it would be inaccurate and unrealistic to assume that General Hertzog contemplated anything approaching a real dictatorship. Haughty he may have been, but throughout his life he had shown himself to be committed to the principles of constitutional government, and in South Africa, as in the other Dominions, that implied democratic government.

However, exaggerated as was the public view of the government in this connection, there was good reason for apprehension in another sphere. Quite definitely there was a movement afoot in South Africa to subvert, if possible, the population to an adoption of Fascism or National Socialism. The inspiration for this came from the totalitarian countries abroad, and it found a breeding-ground in the confused political situation in South Africa where hatred of England and fear of racial extinction formed a powerful current which sometimes submerged the more generous instincts of Afrikaners. It had a very definite bearing on the attitude of some towards the outbreak of the Second World War.

In 1933, at the same time as Hitler's assumption of power in Germany, there had appeared in South Africa various organizations which displayed the same characteristics as those of Nazi Germany - a desire for a totalitarian state, a violent anti-Semitism, and a taste for uniforms, drilling and insignia.

6. A. Paton, Hofmeyr, Cape Town, 1964, p. 310.

The "Suid-Afrikaanse Nasionale Sosialistiese Bond," commonly known as the Greyshirts, was founded in the Cape by Louis T. Weichardt. In the Transvaal a similar movement started up under the leadership of a certain Manie Wessels. This was the National Democratic Party. A splinter group from this Transvaal group was "Die Volksbeweging" or "Blackshirts" under the leadership of a man called Chris Havemann. These organizations disseminated Nazi propaganda, aimed for the most part at the lower-class Afrikaners in urban and rural areas. Both the Greyshirts and the Blackshirts issued publications calculated to further their aims. The propaganda organ of the former was called Die Waarheid and that of the latter Ons Reg. Both showed marked similarity to the German anti-Semitic publication Der Stuermer. Apparently the Blackshirts and Greyshirts joined forces in 1936 under the name of the "South African National Gentile Fascist Society."⁷ Throughout the thirties, these organizations came in for public attention because of their anti-Semitic and anti-democratic activities. Various individuals were tried on charges of inciting hatred among the races, but it seems that very little decisive action was taken by the government to stamp out these movements, despite the urgings of the Jewish Board of Deputies, until the middle of 1939.

On June 24, Louis Weichardt was found guilty of contravening the Riotous Assemblies Act and was sentenced to six weeks imprisonment.⁸

A measure taken in June to deal with "underground movements and foreign-inspired associations" was the setting up of a special branch of the South African Police, modelled along the lines of Scotland Yard's special branch.⁹

In July 1939, meetings of the Blackshirt organization were banned in almost every town on the Reef, by magistrates with special authority from the Minister of Justice, under the provisions of the Riotous Assemblies and Criminal Law Amendment Act. Police were instructed to stand by to prevent such meetings taking place.¹⁰ The fact that this action was taken so relatively late in the day indicates that the South African domestic situation was growing more tense due to the political activity hinging on the neutrality issue.

7. M. Cohen, Anti-Jewish Manifestations in the Union of South Africa during the Nineteen Thirties, (Research essay, 1968) p. 68.

8. Rand Daily Mail, 24 June, 1939, p. 17.

9. Rand Daily Mail, 28 June, 1939, p. 12.

10. Rand Daily Mail, 8 July, 1939, p. 12.

The propaganda disseminated by the above-mentioned bodies was of so crude and blatant a nature that there was little chance of it influencing thinking people. However, on the lesser-educated, its effects might well have been pernicious.

Another body which added to the incipient climate of Nazi feeling in South Africa, was the Ossewa-Brandwag. Probably deriving its impetus from the great racial urge generated by the Voortrekker Centenary, the Ossewa-Brandwag had originally been organized by a certain Colonel Laas, then a member of the Defence Force. Disillusioned by the apathy among the common rank of soldiers, he conceived a plan for selecting the best men and giving them special training - making them in effect a sort of elite guard under his own personal leadership. Obviously such a plan would not find official recognition within the framework of the Defence Force organization, nor was it intended that it should. When Laas mentioned this idea to Dr. Hans van Rensburg, then still Administrator of the Orange Free State, the latter suggested the name Ossewa-Brandwag as a suitable title, carrying with it connotations of militant alertness and adherence to the ideals of the Great Trek.

Officially founded on February 4th, 1939, in Bloemfontein, this organization excited suspicion because of the secretive nature of its activities. Posing as a purely cultural, apolitical body, it was in reality a militant Republican group, composed exclusively of Afrikaners, whose ends were nothing if not political. It too displayed a predilection for uniforms, secret drilling, military organization, and all the other trade-marks unpleasantly associated with authoritarianism. There was even a group of "stormjaers".

The manifesto of the Ossewa-Brandwag was innocuous enough, if too exclusively Afrikaner-orientated for the tastes of English-speaking South Africans. eg.

"(a) die hoofdoel en strewe van die O.B. is die voortplanting, beskerming en uitlewing van die Voortrekkerbeginsels en ideale, insluitende die godsdienstige, morele, en ekonomiese opbou van ons volk."¹¹ There were many in South

11. A.J.H. van der Walt, 'n Volk op Trek - of 'n kort geskiedenis van die ontstaan en ontwikkeling van die Ossewa Brandwag, Stellenbosch, 1944, p. 126.

Africa who considered that this was not the whole tale, among them General Smuts, who was later to say:

"Alhoewel die Ossewa-Brandwag volhou dat dit niks meer as 'n kultuur-organisasie is, is dit duidelik dat dit 'n organisasie is van presies dieselfde aard as die wat Hitler aan die bewind gebring het in Duitsland. Sy metodes kom reguit Duitsland, en sy doel is niks minder as om die stelsel wat in Duitsland heer, in hierdie land in te voer nie."12

Colonel Laas was the first Commandant-General of the Ossewa-Brandwag. A tireless worker, but unpopular and tactless, he was replaced in 1940 by Mr. Hans van Rensburg, who had studied in Germany, and who made no secret of his admiration for National Socialism. He gave up his post as Administrator of the Orange Free State in order to assume leadership of the Ossewa-Brandwag. At first suspicious of the organization, it seemed as if Malan's Purified National Party might see its way clear to a rapprochement for mutual benefit, but only with the proviso that the O.B. must not meddle in politics. As it happened, the organization became progressively more embroiled in politics, and it was this intrusion on their province which made the Nationalists sever connections with the Ossewa-Brandwag.

The movement as such only really assumes significance in the early forties, but nevertheless in the period under consideration it was already in existence and must therefore be treated. In considering the acts of treason and espionage laid at the door of the O.B. it is interesting to read the following provision of its manifesto:

"Dat die O.B. as organisasie geen ondermyneude bedrywighede en geen gebruikmaking van geweld of van ondergrondse rewolusionere aktiwiteite beoog of duld nie of om bevriende politieke partye of liggame in hul bedrywighede te benadeel of op enige wyse te ondermyn nie."13

There were various bomb outrages in the early years of the war, and though it was never proven, it was always thought that the Ossewa-Brandwag had been responsible. For instance, the Benoni Post Office was blown up, as was the Alberton Post Office. The latter building had been rather a tumbledown

12. Van der Walt, 'n Volk op Trek, p. 45.

13. Van der Walt, 'n Volk op Trek, p. 27.

edifice, and after the bombing the Townspeople rejoiced in the fact that a nice new brick building had to be built! A few electric pylons were detonated and an attempt made at dislocating the railway system, but these acts of sabotage never reached unmanageable proportions.

It must be stressed that during the period covered by this essay, these events had not yet occurred, nor had the Ossewa-Brandwag yet gained the political and numerical strength which it was later to enjoy. Hans van Rensburg himself, in his book Their Paths Crossed Mine, indicates that it was the actual declaration of war and subsequent internment of Afrikaners, which accelerated the growth of the Ossewa-Brandwag. Nevertheless, with its militant opposition to any thought of entry into a war against Germany, and its Nazi sympathies, its very existence in these pre-war months helps to fill in the shades of public opinion surrounding South Africa's entry into the Second World War.

It was not only the English-speaking South Africans who looked askance at the O.B. Some Afrikaners also saw it as undesirable, while others accepted it at its face value, but thought it needless. The latter was the view of Dr. N.J. van der Merwe, leader of the Free State National Party. "I cannot refrain from saying that the institution of yet another cultural organization in the Free State has alarmed me."¹⁴

It seems likely that some of those who gravitated to the Ossewa-Brandwag were ignorant at first of the full range of its interests and activities. In late June of 1939, in the Orange Free State, a certain Mr. Piet Oosthuizen, hitherto a fairly prominent member of the Ossewa-Brandwag resigned from the organization, issuing at the same time a condemnation of its motives. Mr. Oosthuizen was known to be a staunch Afrikaner and Republican, and his resignation therefore contributed to the climate of suspicion surrounding the somewhat shadowy organization.¹⁵

A natural corollary of Nazi sentiment was anti-Semitism. The anti-Semitic activities of the Greyshirt and Blackshirt movements have already been touched upon, but it was not only these bodies on the lunatic fringe which attacked the Jews.

14. Rand Daily Mail, 18 August, 1939, p. 12.

15. Forum, 1 July, 1939, Vol. II, No. 14, p. 31.



SAVED AGAIN.

LOUW: "If I hadn't
shouted 'pas-op' that
spider would have got
you, Pal!"

—Leyden in *The Natal Daily News*.

The Purified National Party in 1939 officially adopted anti-Semitism as a party policy. This in the main was not so much a thorough-going hatred of Jews as a shrewd political capitalization on the anti-Jewish current which raged during the thirties. Dr. Malan himself was not personally anti-Semitic, as can be seen in his conciliatory attitude when he came to power in 1948, but for the moment, anything which served to harm the government politically was grist to the mill. The Communist bogey also, although not a very great threat at that time, was utilized in like manner. This latter fact was noted with cynical amusement by a journalist, Charles Frederick: "The Communist gogga seems to take on life here in measure with the progress of Anglo-Russian pact negotiations. The creature is of a domestic political kind, and just now - with a few by-elections in the offing - it may have its uses."¹⁶

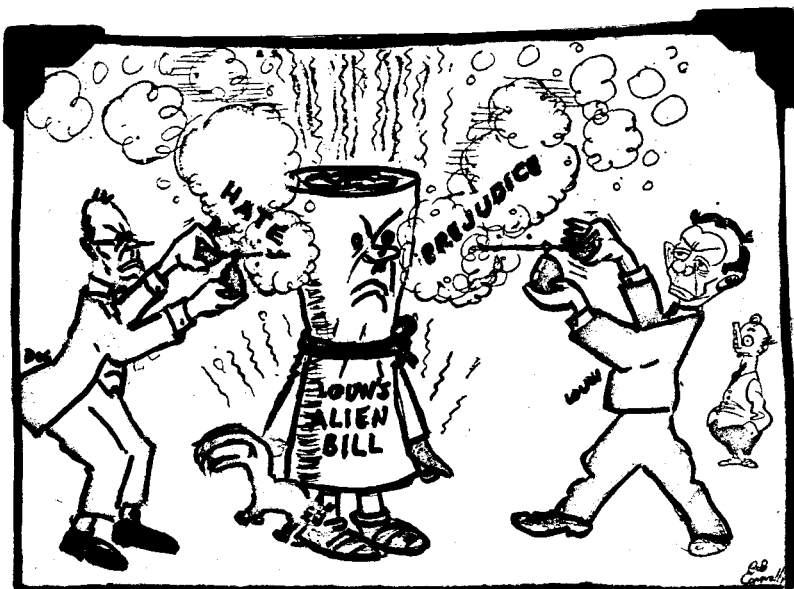
The Purified National Party's anti-Semitic programme was a three-pronged attack. Firstly, Jews of British extraction were seen as malevolent capitalists, burrowing deep into the economy of South Africa to fill their own coffers, and in the process squeezing the life-blood out of the ordinary citizen. Undoubtedly the acumen of Jewish businessmen was an established fact, but in an expanding country, there were many others of different races forging ahead. It was a gross exaggeration to depict the Jews as tyrants at the apex of South African economic life.

Mr. Eric Louw, M.P., was the chief exponent of this point of view. Throughout 1939 the pages of the newspapers abounded in reports of his speeches concerning "die jodevraag." His approach varied from tones of cool reason to outright emotional appeals such as the following: "..... die Jood het 'n verdere eienskap, naamlik om mag te wil uitoefen wat hy verkry deur sy sake-talent en oneerlike metodes. Durf ons stilsit en toesien hoe hierdie vreemdelinge die brood uit die mond van ons kinders neem?"¹⁷ In the wake of such remarks, Mr. Louw's reiterated assertion that he was a friend of the Jews and advised only what would be in their interests, rang strangely in many ears.

Another aspect of the attack was the opposition to Jewish immigration on the grounds of their inassimilability.

16. Forum, 19 August, 1939, Vol. II, No. 21, p. 4.

17. Die Volksblad, 12 August, 1939, p. 1.



MADE IN GERMANY.

—Bob Connolly in The Daily Express.

It was charged that owing to an international outlook they could never become patriotic South Africans. An added fillip was the assertion that because of this international outlook the Jews had strong leanings towards Communism. "Die Jode is internasionaal in hul uitkyk en daarom is hulle ook die hoofaanvaarders van die Kommuniste. Ook in ons land is dit die Jode wat hoofaanvaarders van die kommuniste is."¹⁸ Associated with this line of argument was a plea to halt Jewish immigration. Possibly stemming from the fear that incoming Jews would gravitate towards the United Party and swell its numbers, the agitation against Jewish immigration was translated into legislative form by an Aliens Amendment and Immigration Bill introduced by Mr. Eric Louw on February 24, 1939. Jewish immigration had already been curtailed in an Aliens Bill two years previously, but Mr. Louw's bill sought to terminate such immigration entirely, and also to apply various discriminatory measures to Jews already resident in the Union.¹⁹ It was generally condemned as a blatant anti-Semitic instrument, and was forthwith rejected in Parliament, with only seventeen members voting in favour of it. Apparently however, the Nationalists derived some benefit from it in the form of support from certain of the rural areas.²⁰

The third aspect of the attack was that the Jews wished to wreak vengeance on Germany, and in doing so were prepared to drag South Africa into a war which did not concern her. According to Mr. Eric Louw: "In her hypocritical attitude England is being supported by the Press and International Jewry, who are out for revenge against Germany at all cost."²¹

It is evident from all this that the National Party's anti-Semitic policy was a curious amalgam of anti-Imperialism and general anti-British feeling, as well as outright racialism, and it had an indirect bearing on the neutrality issue.

Certainly political considerations were in large part responsible for the National Party's anti-Semitism. But what of the wave of genuine antagonism from which this political weapon drew its potency? Besides the propagandist activities

18. Ibid.

19. M. Kentridge, I Recall, p. 270.

20. Round Table, June 1939, No. 115, P. 636.

21. Natal Mercury, 8 August, 1939, p. 14.

of the "Shirt" movements, there was also in existence an organization known as "The People's Movement," headed by H.S. Terblanche, with its headquarters in Cape Town. During the thirties, this body unleashed upon the South African population a veritable flood of anti-Semitic pamphlets.²²

A manifestation of rabid anti-Jewish sentiment by a private individual, at this time, was contained in a book written by General Manie Maritz, entitled "My Lewe en Strewe." Some excerpts were so scurrilous that General Maritz was put on trial for a deliberate attempt to incite racial animosity. According to High Court Judge, Mr. Justice Hoexter, the book was "an excellent example of vile, venomous and contemptible racial propaganda." Maritz was convicted and sentenced to a £75 fine, which he refused to pay. Committed to jail, he was released on 26 August, 1939 on payment of the fine.²³

The Jewish Board of Deputies had been making strenuous attempts throughout the thirties to combat anti-Semitic propaganda. A private organization with the same end in view, set up in 1939, was the Society of Jews and Christians, which put out a publication entitled Common Sense.²⁴

J.H. Hofmeyr also regarded the situation as sufficiently grave to warrant repeated warnings in speeches and articles throughout 1939. eg.

"There is much anti-Semitic propaganda of a secret nature taking place, which receives not only initial inspiration but also material from outside South Africa. Of that the essential significance is just this - that in other countries anti-Semitism has been used as both the precursor and the instrument of dictatorship - there are those who are ready to use it to subvert democratic institutions in our own land."²⁵

In assessing the attitude of the different sections in South Africa regarding possible participation in the war, it is difficult to determine just how much Pro-Nazi feeling did exist. Most National Party Members who were accused of Nazi leanings were highly indignant. In July of 1939, for instance, the

22. M. Cohen, Anti-Jewish Manifestations in the Union of South Africa during the Nineteen Thirties. p. 68.

23. Rand Daily Mail, 25 August, 1939, p. 7.

24. Forum, 15 July, 1939, Vol. II, No. 16, p. 4.

25. Forum, 24 June, 1939 Vol. II, No. 13, p. 14.

leading Nationalists of the Gamtoos Valley were outraged when visited by detectives and informed that it had been alleged that they were promoting a petition requesting Hitler to come and take over South Africa. The chairman of the National Party in the district, Mr. Ignatius Rautenbach, in an interview with the Press stoutly denied any such activity and asserted that the accusations had come from the United Party, which was bent on discrediting the neutrality policy of the National Party.²⁶

It was not unnatural that there should be some pro-German feeling in the country, since there were many Afrikaners of German extraction, whose attitude was far more likely to be sympathetic towards Germany than Britain. Also there had been a precedent set for goodwill towards Germany in the days of the old Transvaal Republic, when Germany had supported the efforts of Kruger and his Boers to fend off British Imperialism. However, it would be wrong to consider this historical and sentimental attachment as synonymous with a desire for actual co-operation with Hitler. It must also be remembered that the more sinister aspects of Nazidom were probably not fully grasped at this stage. It is in large part the revelations during the war and after that have led to the universal opprobrium in which Hitlerism is held. However it is also understandable that, in these anxious pre-war months, English-speaking South Africans, influenced on their side by their affiliations to England, should construe any sympathy with Germany as evidence of treason. Visits to Germany by such people as Dr. Diedericks, Professor of Philosophy at the University of the Orange Free State, and Dr. J.F. Burger, Professor of Education at Cape Town, caused suspicion when both men came back with very favourable reports on conditions in Germany. Dr. Burger particularly, was enthusiastic about the dedication of the young to their fatherland, and he advocated the introduction of some features of the German educational system, such as emphasis on physical training and open-air schools, in South Africa. Both men expressed the opinion that Germany was not anticipating or preparing for a war.²⁷

Another person who had visited Germany and Italy fairly recently was Mr. Oswald Pirow, the Minister of Defence. Of German extraction himself, he had been profoundly impressed by Hitler and the military might of Germany. In June, 1939, Pirow's daughter Elsie, went to Bavaria to work with peasant

26. Die Burger, 5 July, 1939, p. 1.

27. Die Burger, 11 July, 1939, p. 2.

girls in a labour camp, stating that she felt tremendously drawn to the country of her forefathers.²⁸

In hearty support of Hertzog's neutrality policy, Pirow is considered by many South Africans to this day to have been a traitor. It is true that in 1940, he published a book entitled Nuwe Orde vir Suid Afrika which was in essence a plea for National Socialism in South Africa, but then, perhaps the bitterness of political defeat led him to excesses which he might otherwise not have contemplated. Certainly his behaviour during his term of office as Minister of Defence was not unpatriotic, and he had often been heard to say that in the event of war, every soldier was bound to fulfil his duty to his country, regardless of his personal views regarding the issue. He is also reported to have said that one of the reasons why the 1914 rebellion attained such serious proportions, was that the government had not prohibited subversive propaganda, and that this time the same mistake would not be made - an interesting statement in view of his own subsequent activities.²⁹ A man of considerable intelligence and administrative ability, Pirow remains something of an enigma. Perhaps he believed that totalitarianism represented the inevitable march of progress in the world of politics. Whatever his motivations, the inconsistencies of his character and his pronouncements led General Smuts to call him "a foolish and impetuous young man, utterly irresponsible and inclined to be mischievous."³⁰

It is evident, by the attention given to propaganda in South Africa, that Germany considered that there were those whose loyalties to their country and to the British connection could be undermined. From 1933 onwards the German shortwave radio station, Zeesen, made regular broadcasts to South Africa and to other parts of the Empire. Germany in 1939 had at least eight high-power short-wave transmitters, while the B.B.C. had six. Complaints were sometimes made that "Zeesen is stronger than Daventry."³¹ This was also because the B.B.C. had to cover all parts of the Empire, while Germany could concentrate on those parts which she particularly desired to impress.

28. Rand Daily Mail, 15 June, 1939, p. 7.

29. G.A.L. Green, An Editor Looks Back, p. 205.

30. Ibid, p. 205.

31. Round Table, September, 1939, No. 116, p. 725.

Similar to the Lord Haw-Haw who aroused mingled derision and annoyance in Britain, "Naughty-Naughty" disseminated pro-Nazi and anti-Semitic propaganda in South Africa. A large part of the material handled in these broadcasts was entirely fictitious. eg. on Saturday July 22nd, 1939, Zeesen broadcast an account of a meeting attended by 2,000 people in Pietersburg, at which a resolution was passed favouring a policy of neutrality in South Africa in the event of a war abroad. In fact no such resolution had been passed since there had been no meeting in Pietersburg on the night specified.³²

The English broadcasts were relatively harmless, but the Afrikaans programmes were more dangerous. Full of popular appeal, they concentrated also on keeping alive the grievances of the Afrikaners against Britain.³³ South Africans with Nazi leanings were taken to Germany and used as broadcasters. Chief amongst these were a certain Kate Vos and a sometime Natal schoolteacher, Erich Holm.³⁴ Holm was later captured and imprisoned for treasonable activities.

J.S.M. Simpson, in his book South Africa Fights devotes some space to the Nazi threat in South Africa and South West Africa, alleging that from 1933 onwards a constant stream of German Nationals filtered into the country. "Professors, under the guise of academic research, doctors pretending to be investigating new cures, toured the country, writing in their notebooks, not details of Bushmen paintings or rare African diseases, but plans of harbour works, bridges and utility services."

A man called Ernest Bohle, son of a former Professor of Electrical Engineering at Cape Town University, apparently was responsible for a good deal of the Nazi activity in South Africa.³⁵ In his capacity as head of the "League of Germans Abroad" he is alleged to have sent out what Rene Kraus describes

32. Natal Mercury, 24 July, 1939, p. 16.

33. Rene Kraus, Old Master, The Life of Jan Christian Smuts, New York, 1944, p. 342. Vide also J.S.M. Simpson, South Africa Fights.

34. J.S.M. Simpson, South Africa Fights, London, 1941, p. 13.

35. Rene Kraus, Old Master, p. 331

as "droves" of Nazi agents, who proceeded to infiltrate all German schools, Churches and businesses, reporting on those whose enthusiasm for the Führer and what were sometimes called "contemporary German ideals", was not sufficiently manifest. A Gestapo agent called Diverge, visited the major cities of South Africa, gathering stray Germans into the fold by means of intimidation. He also investigated the German Legation and the Consulates to satisfy himself that Nazi ideals were being furthered in the proper manner. Dr. Leitner the German Minister Plenipotentiary was not the most influential official in the Nazi hierarchy. He was secretly subordinate to two agents, Jasper and Lierau, of whom the latter was Consul-General.³⁶

The above information may be true, but it lacks substantiation, and the tone of both Simpson and Kraus is rather suspect. Certainly the numbers of German agents alleged to have been sent out to South Africa are exaggerated. While the two books perhaps give a distorted account of the extent of Nazi penetration in South Africa, there was undoubtedly cause for concern in South West Africa.

In 1933 a flourishing Nazi Party arose in the territory. Apparently the Nazi insignia were displayed and there were meetings of the Hitlerjugend and torchlight processions of precisely the same type as those organized in Germany. Alarmed by these activities, the Union authorized a police raid on the Nazi headquarters in July 1934, as a result of which various documents were seized and the Nazi Party banned. Its territorial leader, Weigel, and the head of the Hitlerjugend, Lossnitzer, were expelled.³⁷ Nevertheless Nazi activity continued to flourish.

In 1938 a Commission had been appointed to investigate conditions in South West Africa. This Commission, consisting of Mr. Justice van der Heever, Mr. Justice van Zyl and Dr. Holloway, then Secretary for Finance, made some very interesting discoveries. Paragraph 270 of the report read as follows:

"On the 7 February, 1934, the officer in charge of the organization of the Nazi Party in Hamburg sent out circular instructions for the swearing-in of all office bearers of that party, also abroad. The formula was as follows: 'I swear that I will bear unbreakable allegiance to Adolf Hitler, and Yield unconditional obedience to leaders appointed by him over me.'³⁸

36. Rene Kraus, op. cit., p. 332-334.

37. G.L. Steer, Judgement of German Africa, London, 1939, P. 115.

38. Morris Kentridge, I. Recall, p. 275.

The report also confirmed suspicions that German residents in South Africa and South West Africa who refused to give their allegiance to the Fuhrer would "be dealt with". The implication of this sinister phrase, was that pressure would be brought to bear upon them by harming relatives still in Germany. Mr. Kentridge in his book I Recall states that it was as a direct result of this report that General Smuts, on 20th April, 1939, introduced the Police (S.W.A.) Bill to strengthen the Union's Forces in the Mandated Territory. J.S.M. Simpson indicates however that the government had heard on April 15th that there was to be an attempted putsch in South West Africa, timed to co-incide with Hitler's birthday. This was to take the form of a seizure of radio stations in Walvis Bay. Simpson asserts that this was the reason for Smuts's dispatch of policemen and armoured cars to the territory. Whatever the exact origin of Smuts move, it is certain that there was sufficient subversive activity to warrant action.

The German Press reacted immediately, denouncing the action of the Union government as a "provocative violation of mandatory rights."³⁹ Leaders of the National Party were inclined to agree. Dr. Malan, for instance, stated that the sending of police reinforcements was a calculated move to frighten the Union population into enthusiasm for war. "Tot vandag toe het ons nie gehoor wat in Suidwes gebeur het wat die stuur van die polisie daarheen regverdig nie."⁴⁰ Oswald Pirow, betraying considerable animus against General Smuts, was later to say of this affair. "How a coup d'etat would have suited General Smuts' war policy!"⁴¹

One person who was very definitely relieved by the Government's action was Dr. D.G. Conradie, the Administrator of South West Africa. In an interview with the Press he said that he did not foresee any rising in South West Africa, and that the arrival of the detachment of South African police had definitely eased matters.⁴²

39. J.S.M. Simpson, South Africa Fights, p. 26.

40. Die Volksblad, 25 August, 1939, p. 7.

41. O. Pirow, James Barry Munnik Hertzog, Cape Town, 1957, p. 243

42. Rand Daily Mail, 16 June, 1939, p. 16.

Another incident at this time which evoked considerable comment was the Union government's announcement on July 28th, 1939 that it would henceforward govern the Caprivi Zipfel, a part of the mandate, directly from the Capital. The reason given for this was the difficulty of controlling the area satisfactorily.⁴³ Although legally entitled to do this under the provisions governing the administration of Mandated territories, there was again a protest from Germany. The Nationalists while agreeing that the Government was within its rights, accused the United Party of war-mongering. "Hierdie tyd, wanneer die gemoedere so prikkelbaar is, en regerings-ondersteuners heeldag besig is om teen Duitsland op te heks, word spesiaal uitgesoek om die bestuur van die Caprivi-strook van Suidwes-Afrika weg te neem en regstreeks onder die Unie te plaas" said Dr. N.J. van der Merwe.⁴⁴

It was also discovered in July of 1939 that Germans who by the length of their residence in South West Africa had qualified for British citizenship, were being prohibited by intimidation from applying for this citizenship.⁴⁵ The Union Government had by this time made it very plain indeed that Nazi activity in South West Africa would not be tolerated - yet there was a discernible defiance and arrogance displayed by some of the more fiery Nazis. Dr. von Oelhoven, former German Consul had the temerity to say at a meeting of German Youth Athletes: "If you trust the Fuhrer and rely on him, he will keep his pledge and liberate us in South West Africa."⁴⁶ As late as August 14th 1939, meetings of the Hitler Youth and The League of German Maidens were still taking place in Swakopmund.⁴⁷

Another testimonial to Nazi sympathies amongst Germans in South West Africa was a statement in the newly-founded newspaper of the Deutsche Verlag Company. This had come into being by the amalgamation of the Windhoek Algemeine Zeitung and the Swakopmund Deutsche Boebachter. The director of the new company was Herr E. Dressel, the leader of the Deutsche Suidwes Bund, and

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43. Keesing's Contemporary Archives, 1937 - 1940, p. 3170
 44. Die Volksblad, 19 August, 1939, p. 1.
 45. Rand Daily Mail, 28 July, 1939, p. 12.
 46. J.S.M. Simpson, South Africa Fights, p. 23.
 47. Volksblad, 15 August, 1939, p. 5.

he stated that the paper would serve "to combat the lying campaign and enmity directed at the German People, the Third Reich, and our Fuhrer." The declaration ended with the words "Heil Hitler."⁴⁸

It is interesting that despite the government's knowledge of the considerable Nazi unrest in South West Africa, no mention was made of it in the Union's annual report to the League of Nations. The omission was so singular that the permanent Mandates Commission of the League of Nations registered a complaint that the political situation had hardly been sketched. Perhaps, in view of the constant cry of the German Government concerning what it referred to as "violation of mandatory rights," the South African Government thought it prudent to omit any contentious issues.⁴⁹

Simpson has alleged that Nazi infiltration also took place in the economic sphere, German Nationals insinuating themselves into positions of trust. This may have been so, but more interesting for the purposes of this essay is an examination of the attitude of South African subjects regarding trade with Germany.

A part of German economic policy in South Africa at this time, was the lowering of tenders for various commodities, so as to make them more attractive to the buyer. German tenders throughout this period were consistently lower than those of any other country. The decision to accept or reject these tenders ceased to be a matter of mere economic profit and loss, but became a burning patriotic issue. There were many who felt that loyalty demanded preference for British goods, regardless of enticing German offers, and there were also those who rebelled at the thought of preferential treatment for Britain. One of the most signal examples of loyalty above gain, was the Cape Town Municipality's decision to reject a low German tender for the supply of electrical equipment in favour of a higher British one. The German Minister Plenipotentiary immediately lodged a complaint with the government, whereupon the Secretary for External Affairs, Dr. H.D.J. Bodenstein wrote to the Town Clerk of Cape Town, requesting information as to the reasons behind the rejection of the German tender. There was an immediate

48. Rand Daily Mail, 4 July, 1939, p. 10

49. Rand Daily Mail, 18 August, 1939, p. 12.

protest at what was felt to be unwarranted governmental interference in a purely private concern. The Labour Leader, Mr. W.B. Madeley, said in parliament: "I resent the attitude of the Prime Minister and others in endeavouring to sit upon local authorities because they dare to feel that they have some right to express themselves in acts or words."⁵⁰

The Cape Town Municipality issued a curt refusal to Dr. Bodenstein on June 20th, stating that "The Council is unable to appreciate the authority in terms of which the request for information is preferred."⁵¹ In some quarters this stand taken by the Municipality was hailed as a loyal and proudly independent action. There were others whose interest in the matter was not patriotism, but a more mundane fear that the rejection of the German tender would provoke retaliation. Certain wool-farmers viewing this prospect with trepidation, decided to boycott the Cape Town wool market.⁵²

Other town councils fell in behind Cape Town in pursuance of this minor economic warfare. On 3rd July the Nigel Town Council refused to consider any German products for a project to lay steel piping in one of the mines. On August 26th the Durban City Council rejected five German tenders for electric cable and pipes manufactured in Bohemia (a German protectorate), accepting instead British tenders which were more expensive by £1,149.⁵³

The Malanites were manifestly disgusted by these patriotic demonstrations. When a proposal was mooted in the Transvaal Provincial Council for preferential treatment to Britain regarding the purchase of provincial supplies, several Malanites walked out of the Council Chamber in protest. Mr. D.C. de Wet Nel then M.P. for Wonderboom, who elected to stay, made a statement in favour of buying the cheapest goods regardless of country of origin, stating at the same time that the Union was Britain's greatest "milch cow" and if more sensible economic policies were followed in South Africa, the incidence of poor-whiteism would be correspondingly lower. He also suggested that steps should be taken to curtail the "Buy British" campaign of the municipalities.⁵⁴

50. Rand Daily Mail, 14 June, 1939, p. 13.

51. Rand Daily Mail, 29 June, 1939, p. 20.

52. Die Burger, 26 July, 1939, p. 1.

53. Rand Daily Mail, 26 August, 1939, p. 11.

54. Rand Daily Mail, 15 June, 1939, p. 7.

This may have been the origin of subsequent rumours that the Prime Minister intended to induce recalcitrant municipalities to accept German tenders. It seems that the English-speaking section was only too ready to impute autocratic designs to General Hertzog. However, as he himself pointed out, the government had no constitutional power to force the municipalities to do anything against their wishes.

While some South Africans felt that they were being forced to buy British goods, others claimed that South Africa was being forced by the Government to favour German goods. It was true that at this time, there was an existing trade agreement between South Africa and Germany. In reply to criticism levelled in this connection, United Party spokesmen said that the barter agreement had no particular political significance, but ensured an increase of Union exports without affecting German exports to the Union. When proposals were considered for another trade agreement with Germany, the fear was expressed in diplomatic and business circles in London that dangerous German penetration could result in South Africa with adverse effects on Britain's trade and South African security.⁵⁵

Another government financial arrangement which met with opposition from English-speaking South Africans was the taxing of imported cars on a weight basis. Mr. Madeley stated in parliament that this system favoured Germany. The reply of the Minister of Finance, Mr. Havenga, which was based on concrete facts and figures, did nothing to allay the fears of English-speaking advocates of discriminatory measures against Germany. "Our trade with Germany is of the greatest importance to this country," he said.⁵⁶

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One of the most fascinating aspects of the struggle over the neutrality issue is, as has been indicated, the part played by party politics. A difficult task, however, in unravelling and isolating the motivations of the various sectors, is the separation of real motives as opposed to expedient political attitudes. In some cases a part of the story is the plain stubbornness of the diametrically opposed.

Apart from the historical antagonism, and the diversity in the heritages of the two main white groups in South Africa, and the undoubted universal preoccupation with the possibility of war, there existed the realities of practical politics. The

55. Die Volksblad, 10 August, 1931, p. 1.

56. Rand Daily Mail, 15 June, 1939, p. 13.

United Party was in power, the Purified National Party wished to be. In consequence the utterances of both parties concerning anti-Semitism, Pro-Nazi feeling, autocratic practices and economic discrimination were bound to be influenced by such considerations as popular appeal to potential voters. This is not to suggest that the entire important issue of the Second World War became a mere ring for political pugilists, but nevertheless, one would have thought that with the actual outbreak of war, everything else would have been submerged in the face of a larger problem. Perhaps South Africa was the only Dominion in which the outbreak of war meant a renewal of party strife.

CHAPTER III

THE DECISION

During August, 1939 the tension in South Africa mounted as the overseas situation worsened. Amidst the feverish political activity of these days, General Smuts counselled calm. At a meeting in Clocolan on August 24 he advised his anxious listeners and South Africa as a whole, to stand together, for it was only as a united country that the right choice could be made. Every South African citizen must stand by the government whatever its decision, he added.¹ Pleas of this nature, however sagacious were virtually useless at this time in view of the hardened opinion of both the pro- and anti-neutrality factions. On August 28, Malan was still reiterating his call for a general election to decide the issue, and Senator Clarkson, ironically enough was declaring with great emphasis that reports of a proposed neutrality stand by the Prime Minister were utterly unfounded and amounted to libel. "The stand General Hertzog has taken in international affairs is the same as that taken by the Dominion of Canada, and no-one doubt's Canada's loyalty," he said.²

One would have thought that the prospect of an imminent war would have absorbed all the energies of South African citizens, but in the last week of August, the Malanites found time to mount a campaign in favour of South Africa's currency being cut adrift from sterling. They demanded that South Africa produce its own currency and quote its own foreign exchange without reference to sterling.³ This evidently was part of the movement towards independence of all things British.

The last week of August also saw a press proposal for a formation of a National government. A suggestion mooted was the inclusion of Colonel Stallard, Dr. Malan and Mr. Madeley in an "inner cabinet". The prospect of such a cabinet achieving any degree of success seems very remote but in any case the proposal came to nothing.⁴

The Union began to prepare for a state of National emergency. On August 25 leaves of men in the Permanent Force and the Police Force were cancelled, and those already on holiday were recalled. Essential services and industrial key-

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1. Rand Daily Mail, 24 August, 1939, p. 7.
 2. Rand Daily Mail, 26 August, 1939, p. 11.
 3. Rand Daily Mail, 29 August, 1939, p. 10.
 4. Forum, 2 September, 1939, Vol. II. No. 23, p. 3.

points were guarded by special constables detailed for that purpose. At Broadcast House a day and a night guard were maintained, as was the case at the Drill Hall, Johannesburg. According to the Rand Daily Mail of August 26, police were undertaking intensive investigations into subversive activities, checking their files, and keeping a close watch on suspects.

In the meantime, the military headquarters at Voortrekkerhoogte was a scene of diligent activity. Personnel were working up to sixteen hours a day, transferring ammunition from the various magazines to the Voortrekkerhoogte depot and attending to other necessary tasks. Consignments of bombs and other ammunition were being sent to the coastal cities, while members of the Permanent Force left for unknown destinations.⁵

According to Brigadier E.P. Hartshorn in his book Avenge Tobruk, the scene at the Drill Hall in Johannesburg was somewhat different. There members of the Active Citizen Force milled about, impatiently awaiting mobilization orders, and commenting darkly on what they considered the extreme nonchalance of the Defence Department in view of the impending crisis.

In Simonstown harbour, three ships of the British Africa Squadron were standing by, alert for instant departure. Another three had left for destinations unknown. In Cape Town Harbour under somewhat different circumstances another ship was also leaving. This was the German Liner "Windhuk" of the German-Africa line. Her captain, a man called Brauer, decided that in view of the tense situation it would be imprudent to tarry, and the "Windhuk" departed in such haste that it left a good many passengers behind.⁶

In South West Africa precautionary measures were also being undertaken. There was a call for 200 volunteers to act as special constables in case of emergency.

The ordinary South African citizen went about his or her daily business, ears attuned whenever possible to the news broadcasts on the wireless. There was a hiatus, a sort of anxious hovering, compounded of uncertainty, dread, and in some cases eagerness for combat. Though the scene of imminent conflict was many thousands of miles away, South Africa, as much as any other country, trembled on the brink. But General Hertzog kept silent. Parliament was not in session at the time and the Prime Minister had retired to his farm. Leslie

5. Die Volksblad, 26 August, 1939, p. 1.

6. J.S.M. Simpson, South Africa Fights, p. 26.

Blackwell M.P., suddenly realized that the Senate's term of office was due to expire on 5 September, and unless a special session of parliament was called immediately to extend the life of the Senate, there would be no legal Senate in office during this critical period. Blackwell alerted Smuts, who in turn reminded Hertzog of this odd lapse in the constitutional machinery. A special session was duly called for September 2.

It has sometimes been suggested that this calling of Parliament had been a lucky accident and that it had nothing to do with the international crisis, caused by Hitler's invasion of Poland. As Mr. Harry Lawrence has pointed out, the speech given by the Governor-General at the opening of the special session on September 2 indicates quite definitely that the summoning of parliament had a definite bearing on the situation overseas:

"In view of the grave international situation it might become necessary for Parliament to meet before such reconstitution (i.e. of the Senate) has taken place. In order to render this possible it is deemed necessary to extend the period of office of Senators"⁷

Various people, finding it strange that the expiry of the Senate should have been forgotten, suspected that Hertzog had deliberately done nothing about it, in the hope that he could then declare South Africa neutral without any hindrance from Parliament. Deneys Reitz for instance, in his book No Outspan postulates the theory that had it not been for the Senate extension, Hertzog would have succeeded in declaring South Africa neutral without recourse to Parliament. However, it seems certain that the Senate lapse was a genuine oversight, and the charitable view would be that Hertzog had not said anything on the subject of the international situation because he had thought that the present crisis was another of Hitler's bluffs.

By 1 September nearly all the recalled M.P.'s had converged upon Cape Town, and speculation was rife amongst them, now that war had actually broken out, as to what the next few days would bring. G.H. Wilson a reporter on the staff of the Cape Times had spoken to both Senator A.P.J. Fourie and Mr. Oswald Pirow about the international situation a week before Parliament had met. Mr. Wilson understood them both to be taking it for granted that should Germany invade Poland, South Africa would be at war within a few days.⁸ It is possible

7. Sunday Times, 2 August, 1964, p. 12.

8. G.H. Wilson, Gone Down the Years, London, 1947, p. 208.

that Mr. Wilson misunderstood what was said. If he did not, then there is added mystery concerning Hertzog's relations with his colleagues at this time. It seems incredible that at this late stage Hertzog had not even spoken to Pirow, who was one of the most intimate of his associates, about his policy in the event of war.

Parliament met at 10.30 a.m. the next morning, 2nd September, 1939. After the usual procedures for the opening of Parliament had been completed, Dr. Malan, Mr. Marwick (representing the Dominion Party) and Mr. Madeley (representing the Labour Party) asked the Prime Minister what the attitude of his government was towards the international crisis. Hertzog replied that he could give no answer until he had consulted his cabinet. Formal notice of the Senate extension bill was then given and approved. Smuts introduced the second reading and Parliament was then adjourned until Monday 4th September.

It must have been after the proceedings in Parliament that Malan and Hertzog conferred at Groote Schuur. The import of the meeting, it transpired, was an agreement that if Hertzog permitted a full discussion of the neutrality issue, Malan would see to it that his supporters would allow speedy passage of the Senate Bill.⁹ Some suspect that it was then that Malan made a guarantee of support for a policy of neutrality. However, it has been amply substantiated that the offer of support was not made until Sunday morning when Mr. Paul Sauer carried a letter to Hertzog.¹⁰ Just as Malan was leaving, General Smuts arrived, and according to G.A.L. Green, Smuts suspected then that there were stormy times ahead.¹¹

By 3 p.m. all of the thirteen Cabinet Ministers had assembled at Groote Schuur. They were ushered into the drawing-room where General Hertzog awaited them. When all were seated in a semi-circle, Hertzog began to speak. "I am going to remain neutral and under no circumstances allow South Africa to enter this war," he said.¹² Pacing up and down, he spoke for more than an hour, enlarging upon the theme of the injustices of Versailles, and his conviction that Hitler was not aiming at world domination. He did not visualize any alteration of South Africa's relations with the Commonwealth, and South

9. Rand Daily Mail, 2 September, 1939, p. 10.

10. Vide Roberts and Trollip, The South African Opposition, 1939 - 1945, Cape Town, 1947. Also Hansard, Union House of Assembly debates, 4 September, 1939, Vol. XXXVI, p. 45.

11. G.A.L. Green, An Editor Looks Back, Cape Town, p. 206.

12. Rand Daily Mail, 14 September, 1939, p. 10. From an article by Col. Reitz.

Africa would honour her agreement with Britain regarding the Simonstown Naval base, but more than this was impossible.

When Hertzog had stated his views, one or two of his colleagues spoke in support of what he had said. General Kemp, particularly, was emphatic that if South Africa did not remain neutral "there will be a blood-bath in South Africa."¹³ General Smuts, who had been sitting quietly on a sofa opposite Harry Lawrence, then began to speak. Saying that this was the most serious decision that he had ever had to face, he explained the reasons behind his conviction that South Africa should support Britain and declare war on Germany. He did not agree that a policy of participation would lead to a bloodbath, as had been prophesied. As Minister of Justice, he was in a position to know whether any such danger existed, he said.¹⁴ He was later to say the same thing in the neutrality debate in Parliament.

The discussion lasted for approximately four hours, during which time each of the thirteen cabinet ministers expressed his views. It became clear that there was a definite split in the cabinet over the war issue. Mr. Havenga, Mr. Pirow, General Kemp, Senator Fourie, and Mr. Fagan supported the Prime Minister. Those supporting Smuts were: Colonel Deneys Reitz, Colonel Collins, Mr. R.H. Henderson, Mr. Harry Lawrence, Mr. Stuttaford, and Senator Clarkson.¹⁵ It had been a gruelling session, and as it was growing late, General Hertzog adjourned the meeting until the next day, Sunday, 3 September. According to Deneys Reitz, everyone was "worn out".¹⁶

Oswald Pirow, writing about this cabinet meeting in later years, managed to convey a very different impression of what the meeting had been like. According to him it was General Smuts who had been long-winded, rather than Hertzog. "That afternoon he (General Hertzog) wasted no time in beating about the bush. 'Well gentlemen, war may be declared tomorrow, I take it we stand by the policy of neutrality, so clearly laid down a year ago.' There was an embarrassed silence, and then General Smuts began a long explanation."¹⁷ From other accounts,

13. H. Lawrence, "Smuts Urged South Africa's entry into the War" in Sunday Times, 2 August, 1964, p. 12.

14. Ibid

15. Ibid

16. Rand Daily Mail, 14 September, 1939, p. 10.

17. O. Pirow, James Barry Munnik Hertzog, Cape Town, 1957, p.245

it seems as if Harry Lawrence's account of this meeting is the more accurate one.

The next morning Harry Lawrence and various other United Party members breakfasted with General Smuts at his club. Smuts declined to talk about what was in progress in the cabinet-meetings, commenting instead on the beauty of the Spring flowers and his proposed visit to Kirstenbosch later that morning.¹⁸ After breakfast Smuts and Harry Lawrence went to Smuts's bedroom at the club, and discussed the situation. Smuts produced a rough draft of the motion he intended to present in Parliament.¹⁹ He must have worked on it the previous night.

Meanwhile, the Malanites had been meeting at Dr. Malan's home in Sea Point to decide on their best course of action. They sent the Party Whip, Mr. Paul Sauer to Hertzog, with a letter offering their support if he declared a policy of neutrality.²⁰

The Cabinet had arranged to meet at 4 p.m. on Sunday afternoon, but there was some change of plan, and some of the Ministers were called away from lunch to meet at Groote Schuur shortly after 1 p.m.²¹ This time the meeting was relatively short. General Hertzog made it clear that he would put his views before the House the following day, and General Smuts replied that he planned to make a counter proposal.

"It was (Harry Lawrence remembered) in many respects, a sad occasion, for we had reached the parting of the ways. After Colonel Reitz had thanked General Hertzog for the courtesy he had invariably shown those who had served under him, and expressed the hope that "the personal friendships we made would not be affected by what had happened, we all drank some sherry, shook hands, and left on our respective ways."²²

That night Dr. Malan visited General Hertzog, and learned for himself that the Prime Minister was in favour of neutrality. Hertzog seemed convinced that he would obtain a majority for his proposal. Perhaps this was why he did not

18. Harry Lawrence in Sunday Times, 2 August, 1964, p. 12.

19. Ibid

20. Roberts and Trollip, The South African Opposition, p. 18

21. Cape Argus, 3 September, 1939, Special Edition, p. 1.

22. Harry Lawrence in the Sunday Times, 2 August, 1964, p. 12.

think it necessary to take the matter to the party caucus.²³ It seems odd that on an issue of such importance as this, General Hertzog did not take steps to ascertain as far as was possible, the exact extent of his support. It seems likely that Hertzog's supporters did engage in some canvassing. B.K. Long speaks of "lavish promises" made on Hertzog's behalf to those whose votes were considered to be uncertain, but offers no additional details. Hertzog himself had no knowledge of these promises.²⁴

That same Sunday evening, General Smuts and his six cabinet supporters were discussing his draft resolution in a private room at the Civil Service Club.²⁵ Louis Esselen, the Secretary of the United Party was also present. By virtue of his position he was better attuned than most to party opinion, and he made an estimate of the support he thought Smuts was likely to receive. Colin Steyn also compiled an estimate, as did various journalists. Exactly what these estimates were cannot be ascertained. In any case, as Hancock has pointed out, it was doubtful whether anyone could have predicted the outcome of the debate with absolute accuracy.²⁶

H.J. May, in his book Red Wine of Youth (p. 262) asserts that General Smuts had asked Colin Steyn how many votes he would get. Steyn is said to have replied that there were five doubtful votes. May avers that Steyn interviewed the five during the course of the week-end, and convinced them that they should vote for Smuts. It is doubtful whether this information is to be taken at face value. The only other statement which can be found in support of it is Morris Kentridge's opinion that "Dr. Colin Steyn largely contributed to securing a majority for General Smuts' amendment."²⁷ and even then, Kentridge appears to have been referring to the lobbying which took place on the actual day of the Parliamentary debate.

On Monday morning, September 4, just before the sitting was due to commence, there was a buzz of conversation in the

23. Vide. C.M. van den Heever, General J.B.M. Hertzog, Johannesburg, 1946, p. 280 for alternative view.

24. B.K. Long, In Smuts Camp, p. 46.

25. Harry Lawrence in the Sunday Times, 2 August, 1964, p. 12.

26. Hancock, Smuts, Vol. II, p. 320.

27. M. Kentridge, I Recall, p. 285.

lobby as rumours of the cabinet split spread. After the usual formalities, General Hertzog rose to speak, and there was an expectant hush, as people leaned forward eagerly to hear what the Prime Minister's attitude in this crisis was to be. He began by informing the House of the Cabinet split which had taken place over the weekend. It was quite clear from what he said that this split was irreconcilable, and although everyone was primarily interested in the neutrality issue which had caused the split, the realization that an era had come to an end must have fallen with some impact on the silent house. There were many who had not been disillusioned by Fusion and to these the wreckage of a great experiment must have occasioned regret. But at that instant there was no time thus to reflect. In later years some were to look back on Fusion as a golden era of prosperity and tranquillity, but at that moment the decision which Parliament was to make for war or peace absorbed all attention to the exclusion of subsidiary considerations.

Without further ado Hertzog proceeded to read to the House a neutrality motion which differed very little from the statement he had read to the Cabinet in 1938 at the time of the Munich crisis.²⁸ The gist of it was that South Africa should remain neutral, but should nevertheless observe her obligations to Britain regarding the naval base at Simonstown and any other existing contracts between the two countries pertaining to South Africa's position in the Commonwealth. In the middle of this statement, the Dominionite Mr. Marwick, obviously under the stress of great emotion, cried out "Shame! It is treason!"²⁹

Hertzog elaborated on the reasons for his decision, stating that the Union with its small population of 2,000,000³⁰ could not offer more support than the fulfilment of her obligations in regard to the Simonstown naval base. There was a note of plaintiveness in the Prime Minister's speech when he maintained that until the present time he had always been led to believe that his colleagues in the government concurred fully with his own view that South Africa should not go to war unless

28. See Chapter one.

29. Hansard, Union House of Assembly Debates, 4 September, 1939, Vol. XXXVI, p. 18.

30. The Prime Minister was referring only to the white population

her interests were directly threatened. If they disagreed why had they not informed him of their opinions? "I maintain that I do not deserve this, and that my colleagues who are at one with me do not deserve to be left in the lurch at a critical time like this, as has been done."³¹ This statement, if it was a candid view, was rather puzzling since although Smuts had agreed with the Prime Minister a year previously, he had since changed his mind, and had made no secret of his opinion that South Africa should participate with Britain in the event of war. The newspapers had for months been full of the statements to this effect by Smuts and his supporters in the Cabinet. It was true, perhaps, that Smuts had not formally informed Hertzog of his change of heart, but his attitude had been so manifest as to have rendered such a formal statement needless. Nevertheless Pirow, Havenga, Kemp and Hertzog were always to maintain that they had been wilfully deceived.

Asserting that he had always honoured his trust to both sections of the nation, Hertzog enlarged upon the theme of South African independence within the British Commonwealth. Up to this point his address had been reasoned and persuasive, but suddenly his entire tone changed. Expressing his feeling that South Africans were a free, independent people, he was interrupted by the interjection of a back-bencher. "Who gave you that freedom?" said Mr. R.J. du Toit, and in saying so, wrought something of more importance than he knew. Always impatient of opposition, Hertzog grew visibly angry, and launched upon a defence of Hitler and Germany which left the House literally gasping.³² Reiterating the old Malanite cry that South Africa had nought to do with a war between Poland and Germany, Hertzog inquired of the House whether, if South Africa did not take a firm stand now, there would ever be an end to South Africa's reluctant participation in British wars. While it was true that Britain had certain obligations towards Poland, South Africa had no such obligations. "Now it is urged that we should take part in the war because the German Chancellor has demonstrated that he is out to obtain world domination. Let me say this. I have carefully followed his actions step by step, and I have asked myself where is the proof that this man is out for world domination?"³³ In his opinion, said Hertzog,

31. Hansard, Vol. XXXIV, 4 September, 1939, p. 20.

32. L. Blackwell, Farewell to Parliament, pp. 59 - 60.

33. Hansard, 4 September, 1939, Vol. XXXVI, p. 21.

there was no such proof.

Resurrecting the oft-debated issue of the injustices of Versailles, Hertzog dwelt upon the humiliations and hardships which the German people had suffered, equating them with South Africa's experiences at the hands of Britain.³⁴ This reference to Versailles in late 1939 was a case of flogging a dead horse, since Germany had long since recouped her losses and been aided in her reconstruction by relaxation and ultimate cessation of her reparation payments. She had also been granted extensive loans by the United States, and had been recognized as a power in her own right in the League of Nations. The working of Hertzog's mind at this stage was quite transparent. Filled with the resentment caused by Mr. du Toit's interjection, all of his old bitterness against Britain had risen up, and coupled with a sentimental attachment to the old Germany of his forefathers, had produced this emotion-charged language. There are those who took this speech as proof that Hertzog was pro-Nazi. Smuts himself, in the heat of the moment described the speech as worthy of the Fuhrer himself. But, in sober reflection, what could this upright and honest, if arrogant, old gentleman have had in common with Adolf Hitler? Hertzog's and many others' attachment to Germany was not generated by enthusiasm for Hitler as such, but by his associations with the old Germany, the country which had produced a Wagner, a Schiller, a Goethe; the country which had a traditional link of friendship with the Boers in South Africa. His expressions of fellow-feeling with Hitler resulted from the old wounds of the Anglo-Boer war and before, when he too had felt the need to rise up and triumph in the face of oppression.

The Prime Minister expressed his conviction that to enter a war would jar the Afrikaner section so violently that it would take many years to erase the resultant bitterness, and ended his address by formally proposing his neutrality resolution. It was seconded by Mr. Tom Naude.³⁵

Hertzog's speech naturally alienated the entire English-speaking section, and delighted the Malanites. But what of the others, the undecided members who were really in a quandary as to which course would be the right one? In the voting on this issue every vote was to be of significance in tilting the balance, and eloquent persuasiveness in this instance was a factor of

34. Ibid, p. 22.

35. Hansard, 4 September, 1939, Vol. XXXVI, p. 24.

incalculable importance. Simply by what people said, the balance of opinion could be swung so as to affect an entire nation. There were other speeches to follow, but it seems certain that Hertzog's speech had alienated many people of diverse political persuasions.

Smuts's address, which followed directly on Hertzog's, was a masterpiece of clarity and shrewd psychological insight. At the outset he asked the House to dismiss everything except this grave national crisis from their minds.

"I do not look upon this as a debating occasion. I do not look upon it as an occasion to ruffle feelings or to set emotions going in this country. I simply want to state as clearly, and as simply and as objectively as I can, the points of difference at issue."³⁶

With a careful avoidance of emotive language he stated that it was his considered opinion that South Africa should sever relations with Germany and treat her as an enemy, but he did not envisage active participation overseas. There would be enough to do on the frontiers at home. This was an extremely shrewd move since for many the thought of sending the country's young men to serve and possibly to die overseas prevented any thought of supporting Britain. Mr. F.C. Erasmus was to say later in the debate that this assurance was merely the sugar around the pill. In a sense he was right.³⁷

Another telling point was Smuts's dissection of the Prime Minister's neutrality resolution. Pointing out that modified neutrality was unknown in international law, Smuts expressed the conviction that if Hertzog's proposal was adopted South Africa would fall between two stools and that in the end the country would have to take sides anyway, in circumstances which were not likely to be favourable to her. There was logic in Smuts plea that it would be wiser simply to sever relations with Germany and treat her as an enemy in accordance with international law.

In reply to Hertzog's statement that South Africa had no interest in a war between Britain and Germany over Danzig, the deputy-Prime Minister gave a succinct analysis of the issues over which the war was being fought. Danzig he said, was

36. Hansard, 4 September, 1939, Vol. XXXVI, p. 25.

37. Hansard, 4 September, 1939, Vol. XXXVI, p. 33.

merely a *Casus belli*, an immediate cause, underlying which was Hitler's desire for world domination. While Hertzog had painted a picture of a German struggle to regain what was legitimately hers, Smuts pointed out that Hitler's forcible seizure of Czechoslovakia had been an act of aggression against a country which had no possible connection with Germany. It was quite conceivable that Hitler in the future might contemplate such a step against South Africa. "To me it is quite clear that we are not dealing with a far-away problem in Eastern Europe. We are dealing with a nation whose policy not only today, but tomorrow may touch us vitally in this country."³⁸

Smuts did mention the desirability of loyalty to the commonwealth, but he concentrated upon proving that entry into the war was in South Africa's interests, emphasizing that in view of such factors as the weakness of South Africa's defence, the temptation offered by her rich resources, and the position of South West Africa on her borders, it would be foolish for South Africa to stand aloof from the Commonwealth.

There was one more fear which Smuts felt it necessary to allay before proceeding with his amendment to Hertzog's proposal. He assured the House and the country at large that in his capacity as Minister of Justice, he knew that the alleged dangers attendant upon a declaration of war were for the most part exaggerated. Although he did not actually say so in so many words, Smuts was really telling the House that there would not be a civil war in South Africa if the country decided to vote for participation. For some time past there had been dark mutters in certain quarters about another rebellion such as had occurred in 1914. It has even been alleged that there was a plot afoot to frighten Smuts so badly with threats of a civil war that he would be forced to vote for neutrality, and that his supporters, who would be repelled by his action, would desert him. Smuts would then be crushed and Hertzog would rule without him.³⁹ This appears to be a gross exaggeration, but nevertheless it was true that there were rumours of a possible civil war.

Smuts's speech had been fairly simple in tone, but when the precision and logic of it are examined it is seen to contain a very sophisticated kind of simplicity. Smuts amendment was as follows:

38. Hansard, 4 September, 1939, Vol. XXXVI, p. 28.

39. H.J. May, Red Wine of Youth, pp. 260 - 261.

"To omit all the words after "that" and to substitute "this House declares that the policy of the Union in this crisis shall be based on the following principles and considerations, viz.

1. It is in the interest of the Union that its relations with the German Reich should be severed and that the Union should refuse to adopt an attitude of neutrality in this conflict.
2. The Union should carry out the obligations to which it has agreed, and continue its co-operation with its friends and associates in the British Commonwealth of Nations.
3. The Union should take all necessary measures for the defence of its territory and South African interests, and the government should not send forces overseas as in the last war.
4. This House is profoundly convinced that the freedom and independence of the Union are at stake in this conflict and that it is therefore in its true interest to oppose the use of force as an instrument of national policy."⁴⁰

The next speaker in the debate was the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry, Colonel Collins. It was interesting that while Hertzog had maintained that he had been kept in the dark about Smuts's and his supporters' views regarding the war issue, this very same accusation was now levelled at the Prime Minister. Colonel Collins stated that had he known what Hertzog's policy was to be, he would have given the Prime Minister his views long ago. "For my colleagues and his it was a great surprise to hear that that (i.e. neutrality) is his policy."⁴¹ While it was true that Hertzog had maintained a consistent silence since his March declaration that Parliament would decide when the time came, there must nevertheless have been many people with a shrewd suspicion that he would opt for neutrality. After all, his intimates in the Cabinet had long been making public speeches to that effect, and he had not disillusioned them. On the other hand, the Smutsite wing of the government had been saying for months past that the government would enter a war, and Hertzog had not offered any clarification on that score either. The injured astonishment of both sides and the mutual cry of "why didn't you tell us?" seems to be a little exaggerated.

Apart from Smuts's Speech, the next two speeches were to prove the most crucial in the debate. Mr. Heaton Nicholls,

40. Hansard, 4 September, 1939, Vol. XXXVI, pp. 30 - 31.

41. Hansard, 4 September, 1939, Vol. XXXVI, pp. 31

M.P. for Zululand was regarded as one of the most eloquent speakers in Parliament. An honest and intelligent man, he was generally esteemed in the House. The speech which he now rose to deliver however was to be a cause of regret to him in later years. The essence of his argument was that South Africa, by virtue of her constitutional position, was automatically at war if England was at war, and that therefore all argument about participation or neutrality was irrelevant.

"We are at war in the eyes of every British subject, and if we were not at war, we cannot be British subjects. Is it not fundamental to the whole of the constitutional position of this country that we, as British subjects owe an allegiance to the common Crown?
The Prime Minister, by his motion, is actually proposing secession from our common allegiance."⁴²

From a psychological point of view this argument was disastrous, particularly coming from an English-speaking person. The hard core of either side would not be affected by anything, but to those conscientious but undecided members with whom independence and the right to decide was a point of honour, this bald statement must have been abhorrent. It carried with it hated connotations of servitude to Britain, the very thing which Smuts in his speech had sought to avoid. The words "constitution" and "constitutional" appear twenty-two times in Mr. Nicholl's speech, without there being any direct reference to South Africa's interests at all. While General Smuts had sought to emphasize the practical reasons for South Africa's participation in war, Mr. Nicholls spoke in emotional terms of "loyalty" and "allegiance" - not calculated to endear his argument to the average Afrikaner. There was also a certain belligerence in the speech of this normally restrained man: "This Parliament and this Prime Minister must realize that the British subjects of this country are not going to take secession lying down."⁴³ All in all, this speech was definitely in the wrong place at the wrong time. Apart from its psychological and diplomatic defects, Mr. Nicholl's argument was erroneous. The Union, by virtue of the Statute of Westminster, did have the right to decide on her course in this crisis. However, it must be admitted that at that time in 1939, constitutional wrangles about South Africa's status within the Commonwealth were still very common. Even Hofmeyr with his impressive intellect, considered

42. Hansard, 4 September, 1939, Vol. XXXVI, pp. 34 - 35.

43. Ibid, p. 36.

that the Union was legally bound to stand by Britain.

As Mr. Nicholls concluded his speech, there must have been consternation in the hearts of General Smuts and his supporters. The cause was not yet lost. Mr. B.K. Long, who rose to speak in answer, has given a vivid account of his feelings at this point in the debate.⁴⁴ The House was due to adjourn for lunch in ten minutes, and Mr. Long realized that something must be done immediately, before the members could file out to brood over Mr. Nicholls speech, the digestion of which was bound to affect the decision considerably. There was a pause. Looking around him Mr. Long saw that no-one was rising to speak, so he jumped to his feet, Looking back on it, Mr. Long was to say, "I never dreamt that I should be the fifth speaker in a debate of such historic importance. My sole thought at that moment was that I must reply to Nicholls as an English-speaking South African."⁴⁵ After stating that he did not agree with the accusations of deceit levelled at the Prime Minister, Mr. Long stated simply but forcefully, that although South Africa had the right to declare neutrality if she chose, he was convinced that the country's interests demanded participation in the war. He then gave an indictment of Germany's disregard of the rights and liberties of human beings. At 12.45 p.m., business was suspended for the lunch break. Though brief, Long's words had achieved the desired effect and counterbalanced Mr. Nicholls's speech.

Bertha Solomon and Heaton Nicholls were both staying at the Mount Nelson Hotel, and they walked up the Garden's avenue together to go and have lunch. Mrs. Solomon felt herself to be in an extremely awkward position. Well aware that Nicholls' speech had nearly lost the case for the anti-neutrality group, she was at a loss as to what to say. Nicholls himself filled in the gap. "I think that speech has cost me a seat in the Cabinet. It's the second time in my life I've made the wrong speech at a crucial moment."⁴⁶ He was right. He was not included in Smuts's Cabinet, although he did later go to London as South Africa's High Commissioner there.

The afternoon sitting commenced at 2.20 p.m., and Mr. Long continued his speech.

"If we decide, whatever our decision may be in regard to the international situation, it will

44. Vide B.K. Long, In smuts' Camp, Chapter 5.

45. B.K. Long, In Smuts' Camp, p. 45.

46. Bertha Solomon, Time Remembered, p. 138.



FRED THOMAS IN THE SUNDAY TIMES .

be our own decision, and if our decision is to join with Great Britain in this war, not necessarily to be active in it, or to be passive in it, it would be our own decision, and we shall not be dragged in at the heels of Great Britain."⁴⁷

This was Long's personal view and it was also the only kind of appeal which would meet with approval in that heterogeneous House.

These then, were the most important parts of Long's speech. Another feature which added to its merit was the gracious treatment accorded to the Prime Minister. An unarmed British passenger liner, the "Athenia", had just been sunk by a German U-boat, and Mr. Long made effective use of this contemporary event to substantiate his argument that Germany was not to be trusted.

Dr. Malan's contribution to the debate was interesting, for it managed to include almost the whole spectrum of his political beliefs. At the outset he pledged his party's support to Hertzog's neutrality resolution. After expressing an opinion that he had never doubted the Prime Minister's attitude towards the present issue, he proceeded to explain that he had always known that Smuts and Hertzog would fall out, since the divergence between their views had not narrowed over the years. Thus, while speaking on neutrality, he was also pointing out that his objections to Fusion had been proved valid. He drew parallels between the situation in 1914 and the present situation, emphasizing that the constitutional position had changed considerably. He dwelt on the futility of war, saying that although the First World War had ostensibly been fought for high ideals, nothing had been solved by it, and that this second war would not solve anything either. He also mentioned the Treaty of Versailles as the source of the trouble, but gave more attention to developing the argument that Germany was simply trying to unite all German elements and bring them together in one nation. Afrikaners cherished this ideal and Englishmen had attained it, so what was so objectionable in Germany's pursuit of this same object? The cause of the present war, Dr. Malan maintained, was the failure of the League of Nations to deal adequately with Germany's grievances. He went so far as to say that had Germany won the last war, England, if it had been "worth its salt", would also have produced a Hitler.⁴⁸ Making a plausible disavowal of any racial motives, Dr. Malan stated

47. Hansard, 4 September, 1939, Vol. XXXVI, p. 38.

48. Hansard, 4 September, 1939, Vol. XXXVI, p. 51.

that his only concern was the interests of South Africa.

Mr. Marwick of the Dominion Party was more extreme in his advocacy of participation than General Smuts had been. He based his argument on various clauses of an Empire Defence programme agreed to in 1926, at the time of the Balfour Declaration, saying that both Hertzog and Smuts had been bound by it then, and were no less bound by it now. This argument of course, was robbed of its effectiveness by the existence of the Westminster Statute, a later development which naturally superseded all that had gone before. Mr. Marwick also made his speech the occasion of a bitter attack on various ministers of the government, chiefly Mr. Oswald Pirow. It was alleged that the Minister of Defence had said on the 18 October, 1937, at Klerksdorp:

"If you are ever called upon for active service or told to take up your rifles because we have a contract with England to go into war, I tell you now as Minister of Defence, that I give you permission to rebel and refuse to go into war. I tell you I shall be the first to rebel in those circumstances."⁴⁹

Pirow, who sometimes was carried away by his own eloquence, may possibly have said this, but it was not the time to raise such personal issues. In any case, Pirow, on more occasions than one, had stated that every soldier should do his duty in the event of war. Mr. Marwick felt that Smuts's resolution had been inadequate and "colourless". "I confess that I am profoundly disappointed with the terms of the amendment which he has moved in this House. I would only vote for that amendment as an alternative which was the only one open to me to rid the country of the present Prime Minister."⁵⁰ Marwick therefore proposed a further amendment, made interesting because he used Louis Botha's words, spoken so long ago in 1914 in acceptance of South Africa's role in the war. This amendment was couched in far more effusive terms than Smuts's had been, expressive of loyalty to the King and the Empire, rather than concern for the interests of South Africa. This amendment was seconded by Mr. Christopher, the member for East London North.

Mr. Madeley, Labour M.P., recorded his support for General Smuts's amendment, stating that this was no time for constitutional squabbles. "I want a clear-cut issue today, for or against neutrality," he said.⁵¹ He pointed out that if, as

49. Ibid, p. 57.

50. Hansard, 4 September, 1939, Vol. XXAVI, p. 58.

51. Ibid, p. 63.

the Prime Minister suggested, South Africa maintained her present relations with Germany unchanged, this would mean a continuance of trade with Germany, "and in trading with Germany we are supplying them with the essentials for keeping on war and in consequence in that direction and in that degree we are helping Germany against Britain by our neutrality."⁵² He went on to state what in his view were very cogent reasons why any help to Germany direct or indirect, would be detrimental to the interests of South Africa. Revealing a flair for a colourful turn of phrase, Mr. Madeley suggested that if South Africa remained neutral and Germany should attack her, the country would be reduced to a "nation of political and military mendicants."⁵³ If South Africa, with her non-existent navy was prepared to accept the protection of Britain, he felt that this in turn exacted support for Britain from South Africa. Ending with a plea for the preservation of democracy, he reiterated his support for Smuts's amendment.

Intensely interesting, in this crucial debate, was the way in which the speeches reflected the personalities and characters of their deliverers - Smuts with his incisive intellectual qualities and shrewd psychological insight; Marwick with his fervent loyalty to the British connection; Malan with his subtlety of mind and consciousness of exclusively Afrikaner interests; Madeley with his flair for the dramatic. Thus far only General Hertzog and Mr. Heaton Nicholls had been seduced by the exigencies of the situation into declarations which can not be described as entirely faithful to their convictions and characters. Mr. Hofmeyr's speech, which followed Mr. Madeley's, was also indicative of his moral and intellectual affinities, couched in the main in philosophical terms. "To me," he said, war is a hateful thing, I loathe it with every fibre of my being. It cuts down to the very roots of religious and philosophical conceptions which for me are very essential."⁵⁴ Nevertheless, Mr. Hofmeyr stated that it was his conviction that South Africa should enter the war for the preservation of democratic ideals as well as for the safety of South Africa. Recognizing the fact that South Africa's population was not a homogeneous one, he yet felt that there should be no hesitation before dangers of possible unrest. The sole criterion in deciding the issue should be the rightness of the course taken.

52. Hansard, 4th September, 1939, Vol. XXXVI, p. 65.

53. Ibid, p. 67.

54. Hansard, 4 September, 1939, Vol. XXXVI, p. 68.

Mr. Hofmeyr did go into the practical considerations mitigating against neutrality, but the larger part of his address was concerned with the more universal aspects of the issue. It was interesting that although he also felt that South Africa was legally bound to enter the war on Britain's side, his statement to this effect did not produce the antagonism which Mr. Heaton Nicholls' had done. Perhaps this was due in part to the fact that he dealt with the constitutional aspect only in passing, and that, coming from an Afrikaans-speaking member, this argument did not carry racial connotations and could therefore be construed simply as his "Individual idiosyncrasy" as Mr. B.K. Long has suggested.⁵⁵

A stage had been reached in the debate where almost all the important points had been covered, and the rest of the speeches merely served to support one or other of the two contentions. Business had been suspended at 6 p.m. and resumed at 8.05 p.m. Throughout, the debate had been characterized, except in a few instances, by a singular restraint and dignity,

Amongst the speeches, the Swan Song of Fusion had been heard. Several of the speakers had lamented its passing, and expressed sincere regret that the parting of the ways had come. But at approximately 9 p.m., the hour for decision had arrived, and there was no time for other considerations. The Speaker put Hertzog's neutrality motion before the House. There was a concerted roar of "Ayes!" and "Noes!" and the bells for a division rang.⁵⁶ To Hertzog's side came the Malanite Opposition, while to Smuts' side went the Dominionites, the Labour members, the three native representatives, and such United Party men as Colin Steyn, Louw Steytler and Gert Heyns, among others.⁵⁷

The figures were announced. Smuts' amendment had been carried by 80 votes to 67.⁵⁸ South Africa had opted for war by a majority of thirteen votes. As realization dawned upon him, Hertzog, visibly shaken, turned to Oswald Pirow in sudden anger. It seems that he had been led by Mr. Pirow to expect far more support than he actually received. Something had indeed gone very wrong with Pirow's calculations.⁵⁹ Out of a total of 153

55. B.K. Long, In Smuts's Camp, p. 45.

56. Rene Kraus, The Life of Jan Christian Smuts, p. 346.

57. H.C. Hopkins, Maar Een Soos Hy, Cape Town, 1963, p. 269.

58. Hancock, Smuts, Vol. II, p. 323.

59. G.H. Wilson, Gone Down the Years, p. 211.

members, 147 had actually voted, and Smuts' majority was composed of 66 United Party members, seven members of the Dominion Party, three Native representatives and four Labour Party members. Thirty-eight of Hertzog's followers in the United Party had stayed with him, plus the Twenty-nine Malanites. Twenty-four Afrikaners had voted for Smuts's amendment.⁶¹

It was over. The hubbub died down, the public galleries emptied. General Hertzog walked out, leaning slightly on Mr. Havenga's arm. He seemed astounded and crushed.⁶²

While this drama was being enacted within, large crowds had gathered outside the House of Assembly, during the course of the day. The gallery was packed to capacity, and no further admissions were possible, but yet the crowd outside waited, gathering in numbers as the evening progressed. As news of the decision spread, there was an outburst of cheering. Cries of "We want Smuts" were intermingled with calls for Hertzog. As Ministers and members emerged, the crowds pressed closer. As General Hertzog was escorted to his car by policemen, a mingled roar of boos and cheers went up. Mr. Pirow was lifted to the shoulders of an enthusiastic mob of supporters and taken to his car, while bystanders boomed. Apparently the cheers for Smuts were the most protracted and widespread, but he did not emerge, having left quietly by a private exit. The crowds, thwarted of this opportunity to applaud him, thinned out and eventually dispersed.⁶³ It had been a momentous day.

There have been speculations in the years since the war that had the vote gone the other way, South Africa would eventually have been forced to enter the war anyway, because of the impossibility of maintaining the qualified neutrality which Hertzog advocated. Then with an angry Germany on the doorstep, it is imagined that all dissident elements, Malan and Hertzog included, would have leapt into the fray in common with the rest of South Africa. i.e. the same result would have been attained, but with a United South Africa behind it. Possibly there is something in this, but at the time South Africa could not afford to sit and wait for such an eventuality.

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61. General J.C.G. Kemp, Die Pad van die Veroweraar, 'n vervolg op Vir Vryheid en Vir Reg, Cape Town, 1942, p. 452.

62. H.C. Hopkins, Maar Een Soos Hy, p. 269.

63. Cape Argus, 5 September, 1939, p. 13.

On September 5 the House of Assembly met at 10.30 a.m. After the customary prayers the Speaker announced that the Senate Bill had been passed by the Senate, and would be sent to the Governor-General for his signature. Then Hertzog rose and moved the suspension of business. After he had done so, he went across and whispered to Malan. What he said is unknown, but the Nationalists immediately crowded around him, shaking hands and clapping him on the shoulder. It was an unusual scene.⁶⁴

An amusing incident occurred at this same sitting. When Hertzog had completed his statement advocating neutrality the previous day, express messages were sent off to London conveying this news. Then, for some reason, telegraphic and radio communication with Britain broke down, and so, for the next twelve hours, no message could be got through to say that the Union had decided on participation. In the meantime news had flashed around Europe that South Africa was neutral. The next morning Smuts, while sitting in the House, received a telegram from a Union official in Europe saying "Hail, great General, we know we could rely on your steadfastness". This same official (probably Mr. Charles te Water, High Commissioner, in London) had been known for his pro-neutrality attitude. Smuts handed the telegram to one of his colleagues, commenting "That was very nice of the old boy." However it was soon realized that the telegram had been sent when Europe was still under the impression that South Africa was to remain neutral, so that the telegram could not have been meant for Smuts at all! He accordingly sent the telegram across to General Hertzog, writing on it, "I think this must be intended for you."⁶⁵

The House assembled that afternoon at 2.45 p.m., and the public galleries were crowded with people waiting to hear whether the Prime Minister would announce his resignation. Hertzog rose and said: "Mr. Speaker, I wish to move the adjournment of the House, on the understanding that the House will not meet tomorrow at 10.30, and that after the adjournment today, a proclamation will be issued proroguing Parliament." The motion was passed and the House dispersed.⁶⁶

64. Cape Argus, 5 September, 1939, p. 11.

65. G.H. Wilson, Gone Down the Years, p. 201.

66. Cape Argus, 5 September, 1939, p. 11.

It has been alleged by some that Hertzog had arranged in advance for Parliament to be prorogued, so that he could declare neutrality with Parliament in recess, and rule by martial law.⁶⁷ It was true that Hertzog and Pirow had drawn up a set of emergency regulations to keep the peace in South Africa, should there be opposition after a neutrality policy had been decided upon.⁶⁸ But then, Hertzog had confidently anticipated a vote in favour of neutrality. There was no question of applying martial law without the sanction of Parliament. General Hertzog had always said that when the time came, Parliament would decide, and there seems little evidence, despite the wild rumours which circulated, to disbelieve him.

The previous evening (September 4) after the debate in Parliament, General Hertzog had called on Sir Patrick Duncan, the Governor-General, and asked for a dismissal of Parliament, and the holding of a general election. Sir Patrick Duncan did not feel justified in doing this, for the reasons set down in the following letter, which he delivered to Hertzog on September 5:

"I have given careful consideration to the proposal you made to me last evening that I should dissolve Parliament with a view to a general election. There is a general feeling, which I share that a general election at the present moment would lead to great bitterness and even violence. The situation must, however, be accepted if there is no constitutional alternative.

The present Parliament was elected in May last year. The question of South Africa's participation in a war in which England was involved was at the time clearly before the people, and the policy of the Government, as proclaimed by you and your Ministers, was that the question would be decided by the chosen representatives of the people in Parliament. When war broke out the Government placed the question before Parliament for decision, but was divided on the recommendation that should be made to the House. Two opposing motions were submitted, by you and by General Smuts respectively, and the House decided by a considerable majority to adopt that of General Smuts.

In the circumstances I cannot see on what grounds I should be justified in rejecting the decision of the House and holding a general election if General Smuts, whose policy obtained the support of the House, is in

67. Vide G.H. Wilson, Gone Down the Years, pp. 210 - 211.

68. L. Blackwell, Farewell to Parliament, p. 57.

a position to form a government which will have the support of the House. I have therefore asked him, if possible today, to inform me whether he can form such a government. If he is in a position to do so, I would not feel justified in accepting your proposal to dissolve Parliament."⁶⁹

Hertzog, although disagreeing, thereupon had no choice but to resign and Duncan requested General Smuts to form a new government.

The reason that Hertzog had not made a formal announcement of his resignation in Parliament on September 5, was probably the technical point that the Governor-General had deferred acceptance of his resignation until General Smuts had indicated that he was able to form a new ministry.⁷⁰

Duncan's decision was constitutionally correct. Also it was not without precedent. A similar situation had occurred in Canada in 1926 when the then Governor-General, Lord Byng, acting on his own authority, had refused to dissolve the Canadian Parliament when advised to do so by the Prime Minister.⁷¹ However, there were those who argued that the decision was not constitutional, notably General Kemp, who said the Governor-General's action was "the most unconstitutional step ever taken by a Governor-General."⁷² Rumours were circulated to the effect that General Hertzog had threatened as a result of Duncan's decision, to do all in his power to bring about the abolition of the office of Governor-General. These rumours achieved such currency that Sir Patrick Duncan instructed his Secretary to write a letter to the Press, vindicating the former Prime Minister. It ran in part: "I am directed to inform you that no such statement was made to his Excellency by General Hertzog and that General Hertzog's attitude in relation to his Excellency upon this occasion, as upon all others, was scrupulously fair and correct."⁷³

Smuts assembled his Cabinet with the utmost haste. It was completed by September 6, people who were elsewhere in the

69. From a typed copy of the Governor-General's letter of September 5, 1939, in the collection of Duncan Papers in the Jagger Library.

70. G.A.L. Green, An Editor Looks Back, p. 207.

71. From a note attached to a copy of the Governor-General's letter to General Hertzog, 5 September, 1939, Duncan Papers.

72. Rand Daily Mail, 9 September, 1939, p. 11.

73. Rand Daily Mail, 12 September, 1939, p. 9.

country having been contacted by telephone and telegraph. Colonel Stallard, for instance, was just concluding a speech at a by-election meeting at Albert Falls near Pietermaritzburg, on September 5, when he was called to the telephone to receive, a message from General Smuts, inviting him to proceed to Cape Town with all possible haste.⁷⁴

The new cabinet consisted of Smuts as Prime Minister and Minister of Defence; J.H. Hofmeyr as Minister of Finance; Colonel Collins as Minister of Agriculture; Dr. Colin Steyn as Minister of Justice; Mr. Claude Sturrock as Minister of Railways; Senator Conroy as Minister of Lands; Mr. Clarkson as Minister of Posts and Telegraphs; Harry Lawrence as Minister of the Interior; Mr. Stuttaford as Minister of Commerce and Industries; Colonel Stallard as Minister of Mines; Mr. Madeley as Minister of Labour and Major Piet van der Byl as Minister without Portfolio.⁷⁵

Hertzog, for fifteen years Prime Minister of the Union, was out of the government. On the afternoon of September 5, Hertzog walked into his office to find some of his staff sitting about the room in attitudes of dejection. "Wat lyk jullie dan so bek-af?" he said "Ek waardeer hoe jullie voel, maar as die dag ooit moet kom dat die staatsdiens 'n deel word van die party-masjien sal dit baie jammer wees. Ek verwag dus van jullie dat jullie die nuwe regering net so getrou sal dien as wat jullie my gedien het".⁷⁶ Despite the reverses in his political fortunes, General Hertzog was never to deviate from his adherence to the principles of constitutional government.

Smuts was again at the helm. The decision for war had been taken. Now the task which lay ahead was to put that decision into effect, and to cope with a country thoroughly divided, and in some instances, violent in sentiment. As yet no-one knew exactly what the reaction was going to be.

74. Cape Argus, 5 September, 1939, p. 11.

75. Deneys Reitz, No Outspan, p. 243.

76. Wennie du Plessis in "James Barry Munnik Hertzog - die Mens", Hertzog-annale, Jaarboek IX, No. 15, December, 1962.

CHAPTER IV

THE IMMEDIATE REACTION TO PARLIAMENTS DECISION TO ENTER THE WAR

The Second World War had begun. Twenty-five years before, South Africa in common with the other nations had faced a similar situation. History seemed to be repeating itself. Once again South Africa, at Britains side, was involved in a war against Germany, and once again the decision had been made in the face of strong opposition from a large section of the population. In 1914 this opposition had crystallized in the form of armed rebellion against the government. In 1939 it did not seem inconceivable that violence would erupt again. The passage of the years had not brought with it a softening of the Afrikaner antagonism towards Britain. These years had seen the growth of Afrikaner nationalism. Afrikanerdom had become more organized and militant; more conscious of the principle of nationhood and more articulate in the expression of its ideology. Might not heightened cultural and political awareness result in a violent demonstration of independence? In fact no such demonstration took place. The forecasts of the prophets of doom were proved wrong. There was no civil war in South Africa in 1939.

The fact that the domestic situation remained peaceful can be attributed to different factors. Experience had perhaps brought with it a degree of political sophistication. True, the terminology of politicians had undergone no change. The words "stryd" and "oorwinning" were still to be found in the political vocabulary and on the lips of ordinary citizens, but their connotations were symbolic rather than physical. A war did take place, but it was a war of words, not of bullets.

Credit must be given to the Opposition leaders who consistently warned their followers to confine their protests against the government's decision to strictly constitutional channels. Such men as Kemp, Pirow, Malan and Hertzog said in public and in private that although determined opposition must be maintained, this opposition should not assume any extra-legal form. Inevitably there were hotheads ready to take matters into their own hands, but as it happened, none of their plans came to fruition..

When Hertzog prorogued Parliament on September 5, he had not made any official announcement of his resignation, because as has been explained before, his resignation would not become

effective until Smuts had given an affirmative answer to the Governor-General's request that he form a new government. However it was quite clear that this was a mere formality and that he was in fact no longer Prime Minister. Unfortunately the S.A.B.C. broadcast a bald statement that Hertzog had prorogued Parliament without resigning, the implication being that he intended to disregard Parliament's decision and rule by Martial law. Die Vaderland added to the confusion by stating definitely that Hertzog had not resigned, but had invoked certain sections of the Defence Act. This could quite easily have led to civil unrest, but this was averted by a report giving the real facts of the case which was published in a special edition of the Johannesburg Star.¹

Hans van Rensburg, in his book Their Paths Crossed Mine, has given an account of this occurrence which reveals certain inconsistencies. He states that the broadcast occurred on 4 September, not the 5, and goes on to tell of a conspiracy which he arranged with a few of his subordinates in the Defence Force. In Bloemfontein van Rensburg called together certain officers in his brigade and told them that should there be disturbances in the city that night, they should be prepared for action. "I told my officers (he said) the I required nothing from them which was not compatible with military duty; that if we got any orders from higher up we should immediately carry them out to the best of our ability."² He gave the impression that his only aim was to preserve order, but then adds: "Why be kidnapped for the duration if such enforced hospitality could be obviated with a little foresight?"³ Who would be wanting to kidnap him? The current interpretation of the gaffe on the radio was that Hertzog, in pursuance of neutrality, had instituted martial law. Van Rensburg was a staunch supporter of neutrality, so his fear of internment was illogical, unless he was under the total misapprehension that it was Smuts who was instituting martial law in order to force South Africa into the war. Whatever his motivation, van Rensburg and his associates proceeded to make elaborate arrangements, complete with code-words and illicit petrol supplies. The entire cloak-and-dagger episode was called off when van Rensburg heard that the original information had been erroneous. "For I had not been flirting with a putsch," he said. "I had been doing what I regarded as my duties as a

1. G.A.L. Green, An Editor Looks Back, pp. 207 - 208.

2. Hans van Rensburg, Their Paths Crossed Mine, p. 152.

3. Ibid, p. 153.

senior officer, in case a situation should develop locally in which no orders (or chaotic and conflicting orders) were available."⁴ This may have been so, but it was certainly a muddled account.

A plot of a different sort which also never came to fruition has been revealed by Brigadier E.P. Hartshorn in his book Avenge Tobruk. He and other senior officials of the Active Citizen Force were extremely concerned lest South Africa should declare herself neutral. Hartshorn and two other officers whom he does not mention by name evolved a plan, the details of which were as follows: If Parliament opted for neutrality, the three men would see to it that the Active Citizen Force units based on the Johannesburg Drill Hall would be assembled at a given hour in the Union Grounds, and upon receipt of certain codewords would depart in army vehicles for Natal, where they would gather - 9,000 in all - upon the historic site of the Battle of Majuba. According to Hartshorn this was not intended as an armed uprising but as a mass demonstration. In any case, since all ammunition had been locked away in the Grand Depot in Pretoria, the men were only equipped with old world war one ammunition, and very little of it at that, thus precluding any effective military action. This flamboyant and rather theatrical plan was seen by Hartshorn as a moral protest, "a spectacular demonstration on the part of the country's fighting men."⁵ Parliament's decision on the night of December 4 rendered the whole plan unnecessary. An indication of the attention given to the smallest details of the plot is the fact that as soon as the news was heard, Hartshorn and the two other officers rushed into an office in the Drill Hall, Johannesburg, and hastily burnt incriminating papers in an empty forty-four gallon drum placed for that purpose on the verandah outside the office.

While these minor dramas were being enacted in the army, similar plans had been made amongst certain sectors in the Air Force. Those pilots who were determined that South Africa should enter the war, even if Parliament decided otherwise, had crammed their aircraft with all available ammunition, and on the 4 September were ready to fly to Rhodesia where a few British fighters were standing by to escort them into the country. That this was not simply a dashing chivalrous errand can be seen by a meaningful remark which a South African Squadron Leader made to

4. Van Rensburg, Their Paths Crossed Mine, p. 153.

5. E.P. Hartshorn, Avenge Tobruk, Cape Town, 1960, p. 14.

Brigadier Hartshorn a few months later when describing the episode: "We had every Nationalist supporter in the Air Force carefully marked."⁶

It should be mentioned that Hartshorn's Book has been severely criticized, and it is unfortunate that there is no way of testing the veracity of the above-mentioned accounts, because any shred of material evidence would long since have been destroyed (always supposing that such evidence had existed in the first place), leaving only the memories of the people concerned. For that matter there may have been other plots of which nothing at all is known because their creators have decided not to divulge them. Inevitably there was a rash of wild rumours, for the most part baseless. In the second week of September reports of a plot by Pretoria University students to sack Government House gained such currency that Police instituted inquiries, only to discover that the reports had been quite unfounded.⁷ There were also rumours that "disaffected elements" (probably meaning the Ossewa-Brandwag) had planned to advance on Pretoria and Johannesburg and sabotage industrial key-points. These rumours were not convincingly substantiated.⁸ Of immediate concern is the fact though the potential for a civil conflict existed, no such conflict materialized.

In view of the bitterness with which the entire neutrality issue was fraught, it is remarkable that the country accepted the situation with relative calm. The only violent incidents worthy of note in early September 1939 were sporadic outbursts of anti-German feeling. On the night of September 3 there was a public meeting of Communists in the Trades Hall in Johannesburg, where the subject under discussion was "the European situation and our attitude in South Africa." After the meeting someone suggested that they should all march to the German club and sing "Rule Britannia", whereupon an enormous crowd marched up to the German Club on the corner of Loveday and Plein Streets. The police, who had been anticipating such an occurrence, hastily gathered reinforcements for the existing cordon around the club, and a senior official ordered the crowd to disperse. Perhaps his choice of words was unfortunate, for suddenly pandemonium broke loose. The crowd surged forward and there was a hail of bottles, stones and similar objects.⁹ In

6. Hartshorn, Avenge Tobruk, pp. 17 - 18.

7. Forum, 16 September 1939, Vol.II, No. 25, p. 3.

8. G.A.L. Green, An Editor Looks Back, p. 217.

9. Rand Daily Mail, 4 September, 1939, p. 10.

the midst of the melee, a certain James Holmes, a bricklayer by profession was to be observed on an adjoining vacant lot, plying the combatants with the tools of his trade. "Help yourselves, boys!" he shouted, as he tossed bricks into the street.¹⁰ Eventually the crowd was subdued with the aid of tear gas.

The following evening, Johannesburg was once again the scene of public disturbances when a crowd of 2,000 gathered in Loveday Street, setting alight two lorries belonging to a German firm, smashing the windows of a German shipping line office and a shop, and attempting to attack the German Club again. This time smoke-bombs as well as tear gas were used.¹¹ On September 5 in Doornfontein, Johannesburg, the police once more had to bear the brunt of anti-German feeling when a crowd of 200, thwarted in their attempts to set fire to the premises of German radio engineers, turned on the police, pelting them with stones and other objects.¹² A few days later a bomb exploded outside the Hotel Victoria in the centre of Johannesburg, killing one passer-by and seriously injuring two others. The exact motivation for this act was not discovered, but it was thought to have been an attempt to incite animosity between pro- and anti-war factions.¹³ On September 6 the Administrator of the Transvaal, General J.J. Pienaar, broadcast an appeal to the public to refrain from lawless acts. On the same day the South African Trades and Labour Council passed a resolution deploring riots, and asking workers to remain calm.¹⁴ All over the country public officials were making similar appeals, and on the whole these seem to have been efficacious, for after this instances of unrest were isolated.

Other evidences of anti-German feeling were seen in the strikes which occurred in various parts of the country. For instance, at the South African Airways headquarters in Germiston, 100 men, mostly mechanics and ground engineers, went on strike, refusing to work with German employees or to take orders from two German foreman.¹⁵ In Cape Town the Baker's Union threatened

10. Cape Argus, 12 September, 1939, p. 11.

11. Rand Daily Mail, 5 September, 1939, p. 10.

12. Rand Daily Mail, 6 September, 1939, p. 10.

13. Cape Argus, 15 September, 1939, p. 13.

14. Rand Daily Mail, 6 September, 1939, p. 11.

15. Rand Daily Mail, 5 September, 1939, p. 10.

to strike if its members were forced to carry on working side by side with Germans.¹⁶

It was a very uncomfortable time for German residents. From September 2 onwards, there was an exodus of Germans from the country, the majority of whom appeared to be making for Portuguese East Africa. An Aliens Registration Act was gazetted on September 6, requiring all aliens (approximately 35,000 in number) to register at police stations throughout the country. The response on the whole was rapid, and the entire procedure went off smoothly. The South African Central Committee of German Refugees made haste to give the government assurances of loyalty, and a start was made with the compilation of a register of Germans willing to do military service on the same terms as South African citizens.¹⁷

General Smuts in the meantime was taking steps to ensure that no subversive activity took place. On September 5 a proclamation was issued under the provisions of the Arms and Ammunition Act, whereby it was forbidden for any person to supply any other person with arms or ammunition without the express permission of the Minister of Defence or the Minister of Justice. Transportation of arms and ammunition from one place to another was also forbidden.¹⁸ This proclamation was very strictly enforced by the police. Another measure which served to prevent potential trouble was Smuts's requisitioning of all rifles held by private individuals. The ostensible reason for this step was South Africa's admittedly dire need for arms of any description, but it has been widely held in the years since the war that it was a shrewd attempt by Smuts to prevent any repetition of the 1914 rebellion. Many of the rifles garnered in this manner were rather antiquated, which lends weight to the belief that they were not requisitioned primarily for their value to the country's defences. It is interesting to note that General Kemp flatly refused to hand over his own rifle, apparently feeling that this was the last straw. He was not prosecuted (which was probably another evidence of Smuts's tact) although others who balked at parting with their guns, were.¹⁹ In South West Africa several caches of buried weapons came to light after this, probably in response to the fear that similar requisitioning would be extended to the territory. This was in fact done, but only in the last week of September.²⁰

16. Cape Argus, 18 September, 1939, p. 12.

17. Cape Argus, 7 September, 1939, p. 5.

18. Union Gazette Extraordinary, 5 September, 1939, p. iv.

19. H.J. May, Red Wine of Youth, p. 263.

20. Forum, 30 September, 1939, Vol. II, No. 27, p. 3.

It was interesting that although South Africa had to all intents and purposes been at war with Germany since the night of September 4, official notification of this was not given until the afternoon of September 6, when General Smuts and Sir Patrick Duncan signed a proclamation declaring the Union to be at war with Germany.²¹ At the same time the Union Minister in Holland, Dr. H.D. van Broekhuizen, was instructed to telegraph Dr. S.F.N. Gie, the Minister in Germany, informing him that South Africa was at war with Germany, and that he should notify the German Government of the situation. The German Ambassadorial and Consulat officials were given their papers and requested to leave, the Dutch Legation being henceforward entrusted with ordinary German affairs.²²

Meanwhile, in South West Africa the question on the lips of people throughout the territory was "Are we really at war with Germany?" No proclamation had been issued in the territory to that effect and South African residents grew alarmed as Nazis continued to display Swastika pennants on their cars and to greet one another in the streets with enthusiastic cries of "Heil Hitler!"²³ On September 8, members of the United Party in Windhoek entered their hall to find themselves confronting a large Swastika on the wall, together with photographs of Hitler and Hindenburg.²⁴ After a few days anxiety it was learnt that South West Africa was automatically at war by virtue of the Union's severance of relations with Germany, and there was a perceptible lessening of overt Nazi activity.

Smuts's government, amid the feverish activities of these days, was contriving in a methodical fashion to effect measures for the regulation of the country in war-time. On September 9, Emergency Finance Regulations were promulgated, restricting the purchase, sale, export or loan of foreign currency and gold. All available gold was to be sold to the Treasury within thirty days of the proclamation, at a price to be fixed by the Treasury. The penalty for contravention of these regulations was severe, involving the payment of a £500 fine or imprisonment for two years, or both.²⁵ There had hitherto been little evidence of

21. Union Gazette Extraordinary, No. 2676, 6 September, 1939.

22. Cape Argus, 7 September, 1939, p. 12.

23. Cape Argus, 9 September, 1939, p. 18. Vide also Forum, 16 September, 1939, Vol II, No. 25, p. 3.

24. Cape Argus, 8 September, 1939, p. 9.

25. Union Government Gazette Extraordinary, No. 2678, 9 September, 1939.

financial panic in the Union, although there had been a run on the banks in South West Africa immediately after the Parliamentary Debate on September 4.²⁶ Nevertheless, it was generally agreed that the regulations were necessary and would have ~~no~~ detrimental effect on normal trade once the situation had been stabilized.

On September 14, a series of National Emergency Regulations was declared to be in force. These covered a wide field and although they were tactfully designated "Emergency Regulations" they amounted really to martial law. Under the provisions of the proclamation the following activities were prohibited: hoarding; profiteering; gatherings or processions of a nature other than ecclesiastical, sporting, financial or for the purpose of entertainment. The sending of food or aid to enemy countries was also prohibited. A National Supplies Control Board was set up with powers to fix maximum prices; prohibit the sale, purchase or exchange of goods if deemed necessary, and to extract information concerning supplies from anyone. The Government was also empowered to requisition goods or land needed for public purposes and to order the manufacture of necessary goods from any individual or industry. Wide powers of search, arrest and detention were given to officials specifically authorized for that purpose and ordinary courts were invested with emergency powers to try offenders and to impose the maximum penalties prescribed for contravention of any of these regulations. The Minister of Defence could prohibit any person whatsoever from leaving the Union unless that person had been authorized to do so. Other minor provisions were the restriction of the sale of liquor, and the safeguarding of employees who volunteered for military service.²⁷

That these Regulations were necessary, was demonstrable even in this early stage of the war. As soon as the Union's decision was known, there had been a rush on shops to obtain foodstuffs and other essential commodities. This tendency was particularly marked in the Cape Peninsula, where shops were entirely denuded of stocks almost overnight. Mr. Walter Fowkes, the President of the Cape Town Chamber of Commerce, issued an appeal for a cessation of hoarding, stating that supplies of essential commodities in the country were quite adequate.²⁸ The

26. Cape Argus, 4 September, 1939, p. 9.

27. Union Gazette Extraordinary, No. 2679, 14 September, 1939.

28. Cape Argus, 5 September, 1939, p. 5.

newspapers took up the campaign, but despite repeated assurances that there would be no shortages, hoarding continued until the Emergency Regulations came into effect.

Smuts took care to keep the public informed on the reasons behind the measures he took, to avoid a possible harmful misrepresentation of the government's actions. On September 7 he had issued a statement explaining and giving details of his resolution in Parliament. The day after the promulgation of the National Emergency Regulations, he issued an official memorandum which explained the necessity for extraordinary measures to safeguard the security of the state.²⁹

Internment of enemy aliens commenced on 14 September, when three well-known Germans were taken in custody in Pretoria, shortly to be followed by others.³⁰ The Baviaanspoort inebriates' reformatory on the outskirts of Pretoria had been converted into an internment camp, and later on additional camps were established at Koffiefontein and Leeuwkop. The largest mass detentions during September were those of the entire German staff of seventy men employed at Iscor,³¹ and fifty men from the German ship "Hagen" which had been seized by government agents in Durban harbour on September 9.³² In South West Africa, prior to September 14, there had been considerable agitation on the part of Union residents in favour of speedy application of martial law. There was a few days delay before the provisions of the Emergency Regulations were enforced, but by September 20 the first Germans were being interned in a disused wireless station some distance outside of Windhoek. In South West Africa even more than in the Union, it was necessary to exercise considerable discretion in sorting out Nazis from non-Nazis. In view of the large number of Germans resident in the territory and the impossibility of maintaining constant surveillance over them, it was decided to exact from all Germans a declaration of good behaviour. Liberty of movement was restricted in that Germans were forbidden to pass from one district to another without a permit.³³ By September 26 fifty Germans had been interned at Windhoek. Defiant Nazi demonstrations which had hitherto been so noticeable in South West Africa, showed a marked decrease with the advent of internment. The newspapers noted with amusement that formerly ardent Nazis were to be observed

29. Vide Cape Argus, 7 September, 1939, p. 9 and 15 September, 1939, p. 14.

30. Rand Daily Mail, 15 September, 1939, p. 10.

31. Cape Argus, 19 September, 1939, p. 9.

32. Cape Argus, 9 September, 1939, p. 11.

33. Forum, 30 September, 1939, Vol. II, No. 27, p. 5.

diligently painting out Swastikas on windmills and outbuildings, and removing Swastika flags from flagstaffs. One enthusiast had even had a Swastika moulded into the facade of his house. This piece of ornamentation was rapidly chipped off and plastered over!³⁴

In the eyes of Afrikaners, internment was an indignity and a source of bitterness, for it was not only Germans who were thus confined. The Emergency Regulations had stated that "dangerous persons" were to be detained if necessary, and this included subversive elements amongst the South African population. Internment was a thorny problem because the memories of the British concentration camps of the Anglo-Boer War lingered on. Hans van Rensburg in his book Their Paths Crossed Mine, has told of the intense resentment aroused by the internment of Afrikaners, maintaining that deliberate attempts were made by the government to humiliate South African internees by placing them in buildings which had formerly housed African indentured labourers and miscreants.

"The place of internment for Daniel du Toit and others was the ~~gaol~~ reformatory at Leeuwkop near Johannesburg. It had, immediately prior to the entry of the internees, been used for natives. Their rags and tatters were still lying about when our men were marched in. Perhaps in the confusion and stress of wartime, this was inevitable, but we believed it to be deliberate."³⁵

It hardly seems likely that the government, absorbed by the exigencies of the war situation, would have descended to such pettiness, nevertheless the Opposition continued to criticize the government on these grounds. It is interesting to note that the internment question loomed so large in the minds of militant Afrikaners that van Rensburg cites it as a definite cause of the acceleration in the growth of the Ossewa-Brandwag. This organization came in for increasing attention after 1940, and 1942 saw a continual stream of prominent O.B. officials into the internment camps.³⁶

While the government was criticized by the Opposition for unnecessary severity in regard to internment, some members of the English-speaking section maintained that there was not sufficient vigilance concerning subversive activities. This was

34. Cape Argus, 26 September, 1939, p. 10.

35. van Rensburg, Their Paths Crossed Mine, p. 150.

36. van der Walt, 'n Volk op Trek, p. 97.

disproved as time passed and it became apparent that the government had the situation well in hand. It should be mentioned that although individuals could be detained without a hearing or warrant, they were able to appeal to the Chief of Police and to the Minister of the Interior, and if they could provide proof of loyalty, were thereupon released. A considerable number did secure their release in this manner.³⁷

The effect of South Africa's entry into the war on the economic life of the country was immediately apparent. There was a rise in the cost of living, as prices went up. This fact did not go unnoticed by the government, as can be seen in the economic provisions of the Emergency Regulations. The Treasury inaugurated a scheme to bring the Union's Public Service into line with war conditions. On September 14 the Secretary for Finance, Dr. J.E. Holloway announced that all government activities other than military would be reduced as far as possible, and the various departments were instructed to undertake no new schemes without express permission from the Treasury. It was also arranged that civil servants who were called up for military service would continue to receive their normal salaries.³⁸ Various organizations made a point of keeping the government's attention riveted on the economic situation. The Public Servants Association, for instance, decided in October to make frequent representations to the government concerning the rising cost of living, suggesting such measures as rent rebates and subsidies for housing schemes.³⁹ The National Executive Committee of the South African Trades and Labour Council held several discussions with General Smuts and the Minister of Labour, Mr. Madeley, during September and October. The Trades and Labour Council was concerned for the safeguarding of industrial agreements, wage determination and working conditions. Another request was for the adequate representation of Trade Unions on all committees created under the Emergency Regulations. General Smuts received these suggestions sympathetically and the Council expressed itself very satisfied with these talks.⁴⁰

37. M. Kentridge, I Recall, p. 293

38. Rand Daily Mail, 15 September, 1939, p. 11.

39. Vide Cape Argus, 3 October, 1939, p. 14.

40. Cape Argus, 4 October, 1939, p. 12.

The various Chambers of Commerce in the major cities performed a valuable service in issuing appeals for calm, together with practical suggestions for the avoidance of economic disruption. There was an agricultural boom caused by the demand for produce occasioned by the increased shipping traffic to the country's ports. The Cape Province particularly benefitted from this. However this favourable agricultural development was counterblanced by a loss of exports, especially in the case of fruit, since this was considered a luxury rather than a necessity by countries abroad. Considerable difficulty was experienced in persuading ships to take on fruit as a cargo. After negotiations between the Department of Agriculture and the Deciduous Exchange, it was decided that part of the crop would go to the South African consumer and part would be canned with the aid of a £400,000 government subsidy.⁴¹ A "Buy South African" campaign was initiated, and retail grocers reported a marked increase in sales.⁴² There was no doubt that the government was doing all in its power to preserve economic stability. Besides the prohibition of profiteering and hoarding provision was made for an excess profits tax, the government being of the opinion that such profits should be used to defray expenditure caused to the State by the war.⁴³ For instance all profits on the sale of gold over 150 shillings per fine ounce were appropriated.⁴⁴

The Emergency Regulations had prohibited any trade with enemy countries, and since South Africa had hitherto been conducting a considerable amount of trade with Germany, this naturally had an effect on the economy. In Cape Town alone, several South African firms holding German agencies were unable to obtain payment for German goods from the sale of which they had anticipated returns. German businesses throughout the country were doing badly and some firms were forced to close down altogether. However some business organizations found a way around the Emergency Regulations by conducting business through neutral countries. At the end of October, German goods were still filtering through.⁴⁵

41. Cape Argus, 4 October, 1939, p. 5.

42. Vaderland, 6 October, 1939, p. 7.

43. Cape Argus, 22 September, 1939, p. 12.

44. Cape Argus, 4 October, 1939, p. 12.

45. Vaderland, 24 October, 1939, p. 5.

It can be seen that no serious economic dislocation resulted from the Union's changed circumstances. Some employees were discharged despite the provision forbidding this in the Emergency Regulations, but this was not widespread, and such cases as there were, were investigated.

An interesting effect of war psychology even in these early months, was the marked increase in the number of marriages which took place. The newspapers commented on the fact that divorce applications decreased. Even contestants in civil suits seemed to be more conciliatory. On October 5 the Cape Argus noted that "the rolls of the civil court are shorter than they have been for a very long time." Many settlements were reached out of court. Generous instincts too were responsible for the nation-wide fund scheme launched by the Mayor of Johannesburg, Mr. J.J. Page, to buy surplus foodstuffs and send them to the Allies overseas.⁴⁶ The goal for the fund was set at £1,000,000, and in October the government decided to give the scheme its official support, whereupon it was optimistically speculated that the £1 million mark would be improved upon.⁴⁷

This Mayors' Fund attracted considerable attention throughout the country, as it was planned on such a large scale, however there were those whose opinions concerning it were far from favourable. It so happened that while the fund was featuring largely in the news there was a rash of demonstrations by the unemployed. For instance, on October 18, a procession of jobless men half a mile long marched through the streets of Johannesburg.⁴⁸ In some Nationalist circles there were complaints that the starving and unemployed of South Africa should be attended to before there was any thought of giving aid to countries abroad,

Since South Africa's decision on September 4 to participate in the war, there had been an intensification of the propaganda broadcast by Zeesen Radio. The programmes continued to exploit such inflammable material as the sufferings of the Boer War, coupled with fictitious reports of atrocities in the internment camps. In a series called "Lest We Forget", women, speaking in Afrikaans, told harrowing tales of conditions during the Boer War. After a particularly lachrymose broadcast one

46. Rand Daily Mail, 20 September, 1939, p. 9.

47. Vaderland, 17 October, 1939, p. 1.

48. Vaderland, 18 October, 1939, p. 5.

night, the Cape Argus reported acidly: "The withers were wrung last night from a performance of Schumann's 'Traumerai' to heighten the drama of the words."⁴⁹ In addition to this type of propaganda, a news service was provided which specialized in broadcasting imaginary accounts of British defeats in naval engagements. On September 23, for instance, there was an announcement that His Majesty's battle cruisers, "Hood", "Renown" and "Repulse" had been destroyed by German submarines in the Mediterranean. Such an event had not taken place.⁵⁰

In the middle of September a new German station, broadcasting from Hamburg, appeared on the air. Although no attempt was made by the South African Government to jam the German wavelengths, it was considered necessary to institute counter-propaganda on the domestic radio. This task was to fall to the South African Broadcasting Corporation, acting in conjunction with the Bureau of Information. Within the S.A.B.C. itself there was strife because of the different attitudes of employees towards South Africa's war policy. In fact there was a weeding-out of the more obstreperous anti-government elements before the institution of a nightly programme aimed at nullifying the propaganda emanating from Germany.⁵¹ On October 16, a "Union Unity Fund" was launched in Johannesburg by Sir Charles Key, former Resident Commissioner of Bechuanaland. The aim was to raise money for the printing of thousands of pamphlets, for lecture tours, and for the development of loyal Afrikaans-medium newspapers, in an all-out attempt to combat Nazi propaganda.⁵² This was done with the approval of the government. Neutrality supporters were contemptuous of these efforts as can be seen by General Kamp's words on the subject: "Nóg die politieke radiopraaitjie van die Imperialistiese Regering, nóg die Imperialiste se £ miljoen kosfonds, nóg hulle £200,000 propaganda skema sal daarin slaag om die volk van sy koers te bring."⁵³

Apart from the preservation of order, the government's most vital task was the reorganization of the Defence System.

49. Cape Argus, 19 September, 1939, p. 13.

50. Cape Argus, 24 September, 1939, p. 18.

51. Vide Forum, 16 September, 1939, Vol. II, No. 25, p. 1, and G.H. Calpin, There are no South Africans, p. 332.

52. Keesing's Contemporary Archives, 1937 - 1940, p. 3781.

53. Vaderland, 19 October, 1939, p. 5.

It was not so much a case of reorganization as of creation, for in 1939 South Africa's defences were practically non-existent. Oswald Pirow, the former Defence Minister, not unnaturally became the butt of much hostile criticism. In fairness it must be said that the blame was not Pirow's alone. He had drawn up plans involving a large-scale reorganization and increase in the country's defences, but these were never put into practice, partly because of the rather complacent attitude of the government and partly because, in a period of prosperity, South Africans were unwilling to divert any money from economic enterprises to military preparations.

Pirow had what amounted to an obsession about bushveld warfare. He had always maintained that any threat to South Africa would come overland from the North rather than via the country's coasts. This attitude was probably governed by the fear of a Black/White confrontation. It was Pirow's zeal for mobile defence which led him, in the age of the bomber and the armoured car, to the invention of that rolling anachronism, the bushcart. These vehicles, drawn by oxen, were considered by Pirow to be the ideal means of transporting ammunition and supplies across the veld, because they were relatively light and would be a difficult target to bomb from the air. With great solemnity the Chief of the General Staff, Sir Pierre van Rynevelat, had accompanied Mr. Pirow to the Letaba area on August 8 to test the bushcarts in manoeuvres. Betraying nary a trace of irony, the Rand Daily Mail hailed the expedition as "one of the most important experiments yet conducted in South African military manoeuvres". In spite of runaway oxen and broken axles, Pirow declared himself perfectly satisfied with his bushcarts. There were those who wished that he had devoted himself to more pressing defence problems.

Pirow's original defence programme had provided for a standing army of 137,000 men, which could be increased to 150,000 should the need arise. Much emphasis was placed on the proposed training of mobile bush battalions. £5,000,000 was actually appropriated for defence purposes, to be spread out over the period 1938 - 1941. Pirow, on his tour abroad, endeavoured to buy armaments, but found that British manufacturers were too busy fulfilling their own country's demands to contemplate an order for South Africa.⁵⁴ Thus it was

54. Vide G.H. Calpin, There Are No South Africans, pp. 350 - 357

that when war broke out, none of Pirow's plans had materialized, and South Africa was militarily naked. She had six modern aeroplanes, consisting of four Hurricane fighters, a Fairey Battle bomber and a Blenheim bomber and sixty-three outdated Hartbeests and Furies.⁵⁵ Smuts immediately set about procuring eighteen Junker 86 and eleven Junker 52 aircraft from the South African Airways. These were modified to carry machine-guns and bombs and were used for troop-carrying and coastal defence. Sea patrols were organized as soon as the aircraft were operational. The Cape Town air squadron was given the task of escorting warships in past the approaches to the harbour, and of investigating reports of submarine activity. The patrol flew out as far as 140 miles south of Cape Point.⁵⁶ The government also organized a pupil pilot scheme to swell the ranks of trained pilots in the Air Force. Those applicants who did not fulfil the requirements set by an examining board, were encouraged to join the Air Force as observers, bomb-aimers and gunners.⁵⁷ The South African Air Force saw action for the first time on December 2, 1939, when a squadron intercepted the Deutsche Ost-Afrika liner "Watussi." Rather than surrender, the commanding officer scuttled the ship.⁵⁸

Coastal defence at the time of the outbreak of war was rudimentary, each of the three major ports having two guns of 5 or 6 inch diameter. These were mounted on field carriages and would have been about as effective as pop-guns in a naval engagement. South Africa in 1939 did not possess a navy of her own except for two mine-sweeping trawlers, a survey ship, and a training ship, the "General Botha," stationed at Simonstown. Smuts arranged for the conversion of additional trawlers and whalers into mine-sweepers and deployed men from the Royal Navy Volunteer Reserve division stationed in South Africa, to man the coastal guns.⁵⁹ Smuts had moulded these different elements into the Seaward Defence Force by the middle of October.⁶⁰ South Africa's meagre naval resources were augmented by the arrival in September of two British ships, the "Erebus" and the "Danae."

54. Vide G.H. Calpin, There Are No South Africans, pp. 350 - 357.

55. L.C.F. Turner, H.R. Gordon-Cumming and J.E. Betzler, War in the Southern Oceans, Cape Town, 1961, p. 4.

56. Turner, op. cit., p. 15.

57. Cape Argus, 25 September, 1939, p. 10.

58. Turner, War in the Southern Oceans, p. 16.

59. Ibid, p. 15.

60. Hancock, Smuts, Vol. II, p. 332.

The former was on loan from the Royal Navy on a semi-permanent basis, while the latter had been detached from the Reserve Fleet and was armed with six eight-inch guns.⁶¹

When Smuts took matters in hand, the South African army, including both the Permanent and the Active Citizen Force, amounted to just under 20,000 men. As Smuts had indicated earlier, enlistment was on a voluntary basis, and there was an immediate rush to serve. Those who volunteered for service elsewhere in Africa (it transpired that when Smuts had said troops would not be sent overseas, he had not considered the continent of Africa as overseas) were given an orange flash on each shoulder. No-one who volunteered wanted to be considered cowardly or disloyal and shortly nearly all the men in service were wearing them. The whole idea of the "rooi lussies" was yet another of Smuts's shrewd moves.⁶²

Many women were manifestly eager to participate in the war effort. The day after war was declared, 3,000 enthusiastic women attended a meeting of the Women's National Service Legion in the City Hall in Cape Town, and by September 15, 7,000 had enrolled in the organization.⁶³ The South African Women's Aviation Association which had been founded in December 1938, was militarized, becoming the Women's Auxiliary Air Force, and its members did valuable service as mechanics and ground personnel.⁶⁴ Offers of help came from such diverse quarters as the Motor Lorry Driver's Union and the South African amateur radio system.⁶⁵ Municipalities throughout the country volunteered to help the government in its civil defence arrangements. In fact so many people volunteered for service of different kinds that Colonel Reitz, the Deputy Prime Minister issued a statement on September 14, saying: "Do not be impatient. In time every man and woman will be given an opportunity to serve."⁶⁶

One must not imagine that all political differences were buried in the rush to serve. The hard-core Afrikaners

61. Cape Argus, 14 September, 1939, p. 13.

62. Vide Hancock, Smuts, Vol. II, p. 333.

63. Rand Daily Mail, 15 September, 1939, p. 5.

64. B. Solomon, Time Remembered, p. 130.

65. Rand Daily Mail, 12 September, 1939, p. 14. Vide also Cape Argus, 28 September, 1939, p. 11.

66. Rand Daily Mail, 14 September, 1939, p. 10.

stood aloof from enlistment. There had been concern over the possible reaction of the Union's Burgher commandos. However when approached by the Commandant-in-chief Lieutenant-General A.J.E. Brink, all the commandos promised to support the government in spite of political differences.⁶⁷ Smuts also initiated a drive against politics in the Union Defence Force by a proclamation authorizing the discharge of any member who engaged in political activities.⁶⁸

On September 28, the Defence Force announced the establishment of an Essential Services Protection Corps whose duties would entail the guarding of military installations, oil supplies, magazines, power stations and reservoirs. This was an effort to supplement the Police Force which had been under considerable strain since the outbreak of war.⁶⁹

As has been mentioned before, there were German and other refugees who were anxious to serve on the same terms as South African soldiers. This desire was recognized in an official proclamation of October 29, which provided for the creation of a "Foreign Legion". Very soon applications were being received from German, Czech and Austrian refugees.⁷⁰

At the outset of war the Union's supplies of munitions were negligible. Arrangements were made for the construction of a Munitions factory in Pretoria and Denys Reitz, while attending the London Conference called by Mr. Chamberlain for discussions on common defence, set about purchasing the machinery to make the factory operational.⁷¹

Undoubtedly Smuts and the Defence Department achieved a great deal in a very short time, in providing adequate security for the country. As the war progressed South African involvement increased. In all, by the end of the war 345,000 South Africans had enlisted on a full-time basis. The Union's contribution to the war effort, while perhaps not as great as some of the Dominions', was nevertheless very creditable in view of the heterogeneous character of the country.

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67. Rand Daily Mail, 23 September, 1939, p. 9.

68. Cape Argus, 30 September, 1939, p. 15.

69. Keesings Contemporary Archives, 1937 - 1940, p. 3788.

70. Ibid, p. 3812.

71. Vaderland, 23 October, 1939, p. 3.

As has been intimated, the decision for participation in the war produced an intensification of the frenetic political activity which had pervaded the South African scene in the pre-war months. It became apparent that there was to be no resort to violence by the dissentient elements, but it was also clear that the Opposition intended to fight Parliament's decision with every constitutional means at its disposal. Supporters of Hertzog and Smuts contended in the political arena with undiminished energy, and recriminations were a feature of the war of words and ideas which raged. Parliament had been prorogued, which meant that antagonists battled in the Press rather than in personal confrontations in the House of Assembly. For the remainder of 1939 Smuts governed by proclamation. He could have summoned Parliament earlier than January, 1940, but chose not to do so. There was a calculated risk involved, for the steps which he took would sooner or later have to be sanctioned retrogressively by Parliament. However the advantages of the situation were that Smuts could, in the interim, give attention to the pressing needs of Defence and also consolidate the domestic situation before facing the antagonistic legislative proposals which the Opposition was bound to sponsor.

On September 12, Smuts issued an appeal to the nation for tolerance and constructive behaviour. His words demonstrated his grasp of the acute political realities of the grave division of opinion in the country. He made no attempt to by-pass the fact that a serious breach had taken place, but requested the country to make the best of the situation.

"However complete the wreck of the United Party, (Smuts said) I am deeply anxious that as much as possible of the spirit of Fusion should be kept alive and that we shall never go back again to the bad and bitter old days of the party fight preceding Fusion. Let us save as much as possible out of the wreck."72

Hertzog had also issued an appeal to the people of South Africa, but it was of a different kind, the only points of similarity being the recognition of the split in the United Party and a plea for strictly constitutional behaviour. In an open letter on September 6 beginning: "Dear fellow South Africans, sons and daughters of South Africa," Hertzog explained his attitude in the crisis, and his view of General Smuts's stand. That he did not consider the matter as a closed and irreversible

72. Rand Daily Mail, 12 September, 1939, p. 10.



GO - O-O-D NIGHT!
"He was a verray parfit gentil knight"—(Chaucer).
—Fred Thomas in the *Sunday Times*

chapter can be seen by the following:

"It must be clear to all that only by the most determined action on the part of all patriotic Afrikaners, English-speaking as well as Afrikaans-speaking, can freedom be maintained and can we be prevented from being dragged even deeper into the war."⁷³

Hertzog was to maintain consistent opposition to South Africa's participation in the war, even proposing a resolution in Parliament on 23 January, 1940 to the effect that "this House is of the opinion that the time has arrived when the war with Germany should be ended and that peace be restored."⁷⁴ The motion was defeated.

Amidst the storm of criticism levelled at him, Smuts made a personal reply to only one accusation. In a speech at Lydenburg on September 15, Oswald Pirow had devoted some time to allegations that Smuts had definitely accepted a policy of neutrality under all circumstances in September 1938 and that his present attitude must be attributable to a grievous lack of candour on his part. This matter had received an airing in the Parliamentary debate on September 4, but apparently Smuts felt that clarification was necessary, and on September 16 issued an official statement repudiating Pirow's charge as a misrepresentation of the facts.⁷⁵ Smuts's supporters also took up the cudgels on his behalf, Harry Lawrence being particularly emphatic in his rejection of Pirow's interpretation of the matter.

If Smuts had replied to all the criticisms directed at him, the work of the government would have come to a grinding halt. "He has trodden in blood across the pages of South African History," said Dr. Malan on September 26.⁷⁶ General Kemp concentrated his attack on Smuts's so-called "Imperialism", while others berated him for what they felt was irreparable damage to any prospect of unity in South Africa. Some were more temperate in their attitudes. For instance, H.A. Fagan, M.P. for Stellenbosch, in a speech at Van Rhynsdorp on September 30, expressed his regret that old friends had had to divide into separate camps, and said that although he personally had the greatest admiration for the members of the present cabinet, he could not agree with their policy.⁷⁷

74. Hancock, Smuts, Vol. II, p. 337.

75. Cape Argus, 16 September, 1939, p. 15.

76. Rand Daily Mail, 27 September, 1939, p. 12

77. Cape Argus, 2 October, 1939, p. 7.

Some members of the English-speaking section continued to rail indiscriminately at Hertzogites and Malanites, calling them Nazis and cowards. These accusations met with vehement denials. During the course of the Transvaal National Party Congress in Pretoria in late September, for example, there was an indignant and categoric rejection of the charges of Nazi leanings,⁷⁸ although some extreme Nationalists still attempted justifications of Hitler's policy. An entry from G.A.L. Green's war diary for November 28, states:

"I hear that among the more moderate section of the Nationalists feeling against the pro-German line taken by extremists is on the increase. One man said the other day: 'I am heart and soul for neutrality, but I strongly object to being identified with pro-Nazism.'"

All over the country there were meetings of various branches of the political parties, at which resolutions were passed either sanctioning or condemning Parliament's decision. The Afrikaans universities of Pretoria and Stellenbosch held mass meetings to protest against the government's policy.

This was a time of insult and injury, but there were pleasanter sides to it in the form of accolades for both Hertzog and Smuts from different quarters. By September 7 both had received approximately 700 telegrams expressing approval of their respective stands.⁷⁹ These and other protestations are too numerous for reproduction here, but perhaps it might be interesting to pause and consider the reaction of the Africans, since although comprising the vast majority of the country's population, they had mutely watched the evolution of a crisis which would affect their destiny too. The three Native Representatives in Parliament had cast their votes for Smuts, and judging by the messages received from African authorities themselves, this action was endorsed by the African population. The President-General of the African National Congress Mr. Z.R. Mahabane, sent the following message to Mrs. Margaret Ballinger:

"I think I am voicing the feelings and views of the African people when I say that our representatives have again correctly interpreted the feelings of their constituents in voting for General Smuts's amendment on the neutrality issue. Please tell General Smuts that we highly appreciate the manly and honourable stand he has always taken. It is providential that in a crisis like this a man of his calibre and insight into affairs should be at the head of state."⁸⁰

78. Rand Daily Mail, 29 September, 1939, p. 10.

79. Rand Daily Mail, 7 September, 1939, p. 11.

80. Rand Daily Mail, 14 September, 1939, p. 13.

Another expression of loyalty from the Africans was sent to the Minister of Native Affairs by Mr. Simpson Bhengu, President of the Association of Native Location Advisory Boards in Natal. He asked the Minister to convey to Smuts "our deep and sincere loyalty in this time of crisis, and the assurance that we natives of Natal fervently desire that the government will allow us to contribute in whatever manner we can to the national service of our country, together with our European fellow citizens."⁸¹ Similar affirmations of loyalty were received from all the tribal chiefs in the Newcastle area and from the African Ethiopian Church representing 12,000 members there.⁸²

The strife within the United Party during September and October is an interesting aspect of the reactions to the decision on September 4. On September 15 the Executive Committee of the United Party in the Cape voted by Nineteen votes to four in favour of General Smuts's policy. The following day the Orange Free State Head Committee voted in support of General Hertzog by twenty-four votes to three.⁸³ Natal of course voted solidly for Smuts, but in the Transvaal a curious situation arose. The Head Committee voted 26 to 16 in favour of General Hertzog, but this was apparently not a true reflection of United Party sentiment in the Transvaal, because in the debate of September 4, 32 out of 59 Transvaal members of the United Party had voted for General Smuts's amendment.⁸⁴ The answer to the riddle lay in the unequal proportional representation of members from various districts on the Head Committee. For administrative purposes the Transvaal was divided up into five areas, the Rand, Pretoria, and three country districts. Each of the districts had equal representation on the Head Committee, although the Rand elected nearly as many members to Parliament as the other four districts combined. So the Rand's representation on the Head Committee was much smaller than it should have been. A struggle ensued, as the Witwatersrand Executive, which was the Party's official mouthpiece, would not accept the Head Committee's decision, while the Head Committee repudiated the Witwatersrand's claim to speak for the party.⁸⁵ In the final analysis the conflict in the

81. Cape Argus, 16 September, 1939, p. 10.

82. Rand Daily Mail, 13 September, 1939, p. 14.

83. Vide Cape Argus, 15 and 16 September, 1939, pages 18 and 10 respectively.

84. Cape Argus, 13 September, 1939, p. 13.

85. Vide Cape Argus, 13 September, 1939, p. 13.

Transvaal United Party did not matter because the Smutsite wing gained hegemony, but there was much confusion as Hertzog's supporters separated themselves from Smuts's and set up independent Hertzogite branches of the United Party. For instance the Calvinia constituency passed a vote of no confidence in their representative, Dr. Steenkamp, because they disagreed with his support of Smuts in the Parliamentary debate.⁸⁶ A Hertzog supporter who found himself in trouble with his constituents was Mr. N.J. Schoeman, whose Lydenburg constituency voted in favour of General Smuts's policy in spite of the fact that Mr. Schoeman had voted for Hertzog in Parliament.⁸⁷

The right to the official title of the United Party was fiercely disputed between Smuts's and Hertzog's supporters. Eventually it was decided to hold a national United Party Conference in Bloemfontein in November to settle the points at issue. On November 2 the Central Head Committee passed a resolution approving the government's war policy by 28 votes to 18 whereupon General Hertzog relinquished his chairmanship and left the conference, followed by his supporters. Smuts was then elected chairman and by a unanimous vote the Hertzogites were removed from the United Party rolls. However Hertzog was not yet in the political wilderness, for in the interim the Malanites had been courting him, and there was a conference scheduled later that month with a possible rapprochement in view. In the meanwhile the Hertzogites styled themselves "the Hertzog group of the United Party."⁸⁸

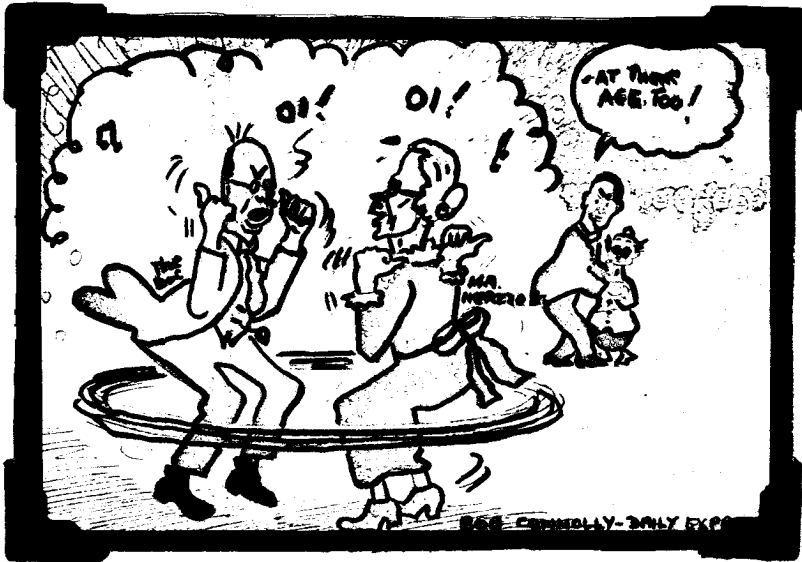
From the moment that Hertzog had proposed his neutrality amendment, a tremendous current of optimism had swept the ranks of Afrikaners throughout the country. The hour for a complete and satisfying reunion and an end to the "broedertwis" seemed to be at hand. Across the gulf which had separated them since the inception of Fusion, Afrikaner called to Afrikaner in the hope that the distance could at last be bridged. For this was not merely a matter of an expedient political arrangement - it was also an opportunity for a spiritual and emotional healing of what was felt to have been an unnatural division in the first place. Hertzog was right when he said in reference to the crisis which had occurred: "There is no doubt that few other things could so quickly or effectively have consolidated Afrikaans-speaking Afrikanerdom."⁸⁹

86. Cape Argus, 12 September, 1939, p. 12.

87. Rand Daily Mail, 22 September, 1939, p. 10.

88. Keesing's Contemporary Archives, 1937 - 1940, p. 3814.

89. C.M. van den Heever, General J.B.M. Hertzog, p. 283.



THE "TOENADERING WALK."

Suddenly Hertzog was a hero to his people. He would not have been human if the unaccustomed paeans of the Malanites had not moved him. When he left for the North on September 6, crowds of supporters assembled at Cape Town station to cheer him on his way. A Union flag was draped around his shoulders and he was borne aloft on willing shoulders to his carriage.⁹⁰ The fervent emotional tide had not abated when a vast crowd of 50,000 gathered at the Voortrekker Monument in Pretoria on September 8 for a symbolic healing ceremony. Hertzog was acclaimed in fulsome words of praise: "From the depths of the Afrikaner heart and soul we thank you, who have never been false to your nation. The nation you made and led clasps you to its bosom. We are jealous of you, General, and will not yield to any other nation," they said.⁹¹

In spite of the undoubted sincerity of this demonstration and heartfelt as the desire for unity was, it was too much to expect that hereniging could become an actuality simply by virtue of protestations of goodwill. Fundamental differences still existed between Hertzog and Malan and these would have to be reconciled before any merger took place. Hertzog had time and again emphasized the need for racial harmony between the two white groups in South Africa. Neither section must be forced into subservience by the other. Instead there should be a mutual striving towards the combined progress of the country. This did not accord with the Malanites view of the situation. To them, the English-speaking section had finally demonstrated its unwillingness to submerge its British identity in patriotic South Africanism. Henceforward the English-speaking South African would only be accepted on the Afrikaners own terms, or not at all. Afrikaners themselves in order to be accepted would have to subscribe to exclusively Nationalist principles. Even at the Voortrekker Monument meeting there were disquieting indications that all was not well. Some of those present felt that Hertzog's speech, conservative as it was in some respects, was over-solicitous of the interests of English-speaking South Africans, while Hertzog must have been disturbed by the racialistic implications of the Johannes Fourie incident. During the course of the perorations Fourie, the brother of Jopie Fourie who had been executed for his part in the 1914 rebellion,⁹² was carried to the platform on the shoulders of exultant students.

90. Cape Argus, 7 September, 1939, p. 12.

91. C.M. van den Heever, General J.B.M. Hertzog, p. 284.

92. G.A.L. Green, An Editor Looks Back, p. 210.

This did not conform at all to the spirit of moderation and constitutionality which Hertzog was endeavouring to inculcate in his people.

Another potential source of trouble between Malan and Hertzog was the Republican issue. The former, under constant pressure from his supporters, was in favour of a change to a Republican form of government as soon as was possible, regardless of the opposition of the English-speaking section. Hertzog agreed that an eventual Republic was desirable but he saw it in terms of a gradual evolution, in the process of which the English speaking South African would become mellowed enough to support a Republican government of his own volition. However these basic conflicts of opinion had not yet been brought up for simultaneous scrutiny, and the two men were still caught up in the emotional vortex of toenadering.

The honeymoon period was to be of short duration. In late September Dr. Malan's speeches were still expressive of buoyant optimism. "The new day of Afrikanerdom is dawning. If Afrikanerdom goes forward as one, I tell you there is no great problem in this country that cannot be solved," he told the Transvaal National Party Congress on September 27.⁹³ By October the bloom was beginning to rub off. The Federal Council of the Nationalist Party issued a list of provisos concerning the forthcoming Hereniging Conference in Pretoria, which showed that after the first flush of enthusiasm a more cautious note had crept back into the movement for unity. The statement made it abundantly clear that although hereniging was desirable, it could only be achieved "met die verstande ewewel dat dit as 'n noodsaaklike grondslag van die onderhandelings vir 'n politieke eenheid moet wees: dat die naam Nasionale Party behou moet word en dat by die formulering van beginsels daar geen verswakking sal wees van die omskrewe beginsels van die Nasionale Party insake die groot lewensvraagstukke nie."⁹⁴ In other words, the Malanites would brook no compromise on Republicanism or acceptance by English-speaking South Africans of Afrikaner ideals. Hertzog on the other hand continued to consider the English-speaking section in his speeches on the

93. Cape Argus, 27 September, 1939, p. 16.

94. Die Vaderland, 19 October, 1939, p. 6.

future of South Africa, and intimated that he was opposed to an abrupt severance of South Africa's ties with the Commonwealth, an attitude which was noted with anxiety and the beginnings of disillusionment by the Malanites.

The two wings of Afrikanerdom met in Pretoria on November 23, 1939. There was still considerable goodwill in evidence, but it rapidly became apparent that common hostility towards war was not an adequate coagulant. Discussions ranged over a wide field. A consideration of some significance was the fact that only a short time before, members of the two groups had been indulging in heated rhetoric at each other's expense, and it was virtually impossible to erase completely the memory of the insults exchanged. The stumbling-block upon which the conference broke down was the Republican issue.⁹⁵ An exposition of the protracted negotiations which ensued between Malanites and Hertzogites lies outside the range of this essay. Suffice it to say that although hereniging did come about in 1940, the halcyon days were of brief duration and General Hertzog retired from political life. He spent his remaining days on his farm, brooding upon the wreckage of his hopes and following the progress of the war with obsessive attention, tracing it out on the charts in his study.⁹⁶

General Smuts was concentrating all his energies on a limited objective for the moment, i.e. the war situation. He was encouraged by favourable returns in November by-elections and the fact that the Emergency Regulations had been accepted without serious disruption resulting. He continued on his course, secure in his belief that he had made the right decision for his country. Subsequent history has vindicated this belief.

95. Roberts and Trollip, The South African Opposition, 1939-1945, p. 19.

96. From information supplied by Mr. D. Spies, who was an intimate of Hertzog's for many years, having served under him in various administrative capacities.

CONCLUSION

Politics in South Africa is a peculiarly fascinating study, because of the diverse racial composition of the country. As long as South Africans continue to maintain a deliberate separation of identities in conjunction with bitter memories, the question of unity will always be a pressing problem. South Africa's decision to participate in the Second World War forms one small part of a history of conflicting political ideologies.

The neutrality issue's acid test laid bare the divisions which still existed beneath the surface. In the process the co-operative amity of the Fusion movement was cancelled and there ensued an intensification of political antagonism. Although in a general sense the decision on September 4, 1939 was a catalyst making for racial division, it was also the harbinger of an ephemeral Afrikaner unity.

Isolationism and parochialism had played a part in the story, but South Africa was not alone in these negative qualities. She shared them with a country as advanced and powerful as the United States of America.

General Smuts had not enjoyed an unblemished political career, as the Witwatersrand crisis of 1922 and the Bondelzwarts affair will testify, but in 1939 he handled a critical situation in a calm and confident manner and had the satisfaction of seeing his convictions about South African participation in the war put to the test and proven. Smuts, unlike Hertzog, was to enjoy political dominance for a further decade. For Hertzog 1939 was almost the end of the road. After the failure of hereniging he retired from the contest, broken and aged. His contribution to the evolution of the country was denied while the English-speaking prejudice generated by his neutrality stand and the disillusionment of Afrikaners over the abortive attempts at hereniging lasted. But he has since emerged from his lapse into obscurity as perspective has shed a more kindly light on his career as a whole, and both Afrikaans and English-speaking South Africans have claimed him for their own.

Dr. Malan was to carry off the victor's laurels in the General Election of 1948. Significantly, his accession to power saw a considerable softening of the anti-British and anti-Semitic overtones which had hitherto been so much a part of his public image. This seems to suggest that these were in part simply political weapons to be discarded once they were no longer necessary. In late 1939 and the early part of 1940, it was rumoured that he had plans for setting up a Republic under

Hitler's auspices. If he did flirt with Nazidom, this tendency disappeared along with the Nazis themselves.

As this essay has shown, the effects on South Africa of entry into the war were not nearly so dire as had been predicted, in that there was no civil war. The country remained relatively calm. In South Africa frenetic political activity is the norm rather than the exception, so it was not surprising that this activity continued after the decision. This is not to deprecate the importance of the wrecking of the Fusion government and the realignment of the political parties, but to suggest that repercussions could have been a great deal worse than they were. This of course does not take into consideration the long-term effects of the crisis in September 1939 which lie outside the range of this topic.

COMMENT ON SOURCES.

This topic has been a most interesting one, but it has also been at times frustrating, owing to the unavailability of much primary material, eg. the Smuts, Hertzog and Havenga papers, the Prime Minister's official records and relevant sections of the Morris Alexander papers. This has led to a heavy reliance on newspapers and periodicals in chapters one and four.

W.K. Hancock's biography of General Smuts has been invaluable for an insight into Smuts's thoughts during this period. It is regrettable that a similarly authoritative work has not yet been written about General Hertzog, the two existing biographies, although interesting, being of dubious historical value.

There is a paucity of recent, published material on the 1939 neutrality crisis, although a large number of books were written on the subject during, or just after the war. Many of the writers were still under the influence of the partisan emotions generated by the war and this has occasioned considerable concentration upon checking the validity of references and gauging the extent of exaggeration. As these books were not written by historians, inadequate footnoting presented an additional difficulty in cross-checking references.

In contrast, Hansard's Union House of Assembly Debates were very valuable, particularly for the neutrality debate of September 4, by virtue of the verbatim speeches produced in entirety and without misleading interpretation. The factual reports of South African events in Keesing's Contemporary Archives were also useful in this connection.

The 1939 issues of the Round Table provided a useful summary of the South African scene, while the Hertzog - Annale, although mainly eulogistic, yielded interesting pieces of information concerning Hertzog's behaviour immediately after his defeat in Parliament.

The South African Opposition, 1939 - 1945, by M. Roberts and A.E.G. Trollip, was valuable for the account given of the Hereniging negotiations between the Hertzogites and the Malanites and also for suggesting additional sources.

Mr. Harry Lawrence's article in the Sunday Times, 2 August, 1964, contains to date the most comprehensive account of the cabinet meetings of September 2 and 3. It was unfortunate that Mr. Lawrence was overseas at the stage of research when an interview with him would have been most profitable. It remains

to be seen whether some of the less prominent Cabinet Ministers eg. Fagan, Sturrock and Clarkson, have left their written impressions.

An official Union War History (Military and Civil) was commenced, but the project was terminated by the Nationalist Government after three volumes had been published. Research was undertaken on the civil side, but not brought to finality. The Union War History files were transferred to the custody of the Government Archives.

This essay is concluded in the knowledge that much research still remains to be done on the subject if and when the additional sources become available.

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