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Tracing Hitler, the Rise of Nazism and the Final Solution: Observations From  
the *Cape Times*, 1933-1945

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## Introduction

This study intends to look at the *Cape Times*' coverage and editorial response to the Nazi regime's treatment of Jews from its rise to power in early 1933 to its demise in 1945 at the end of World War II. As such, this paper follows a path broken by Andrew Sharf and his study of British press reaction to Nazi atrocities committed against Jews, Deborah Lipstadt and her book analyzing American press coverage of the same, and Sharon Friedman's thesis on the Afrikaner press' treatment of Nazi Germany and the Jews.<sup>1</sup> In acknowledging these predecessors, it is essential to explain why this study of the English South African press, in the form of the *Cape Times*, is necessary.

The issue underlying this study is 1930's and 1940's South African anti-Semitism and its impact on South African politics. How, in other words, did South African opinion of Jews effect the coverage of the persecution and eventual genocide of European Jewry? What did this coverage say about Jews' role in South African society, and English South Africa's view of Jews in South Africa? Friedman's thesis gives us a clear picture of Afrikaner anti-Semitism during this period, as Nationalist newspapers either ignored the atrocities, or, at least early on, justified Nazi persecution of Jews as legitimate state crackdowns on an internal enemy. English South African opinion of Jews ranged from philosemitism to a more subtle anti-Semitism in which the "right kind" of Jews were accepted as loyal citizens of the crown, but east European Jews were regarded with suspicion.

White South Africa in the 1930's, if not obsessed with Jews, paid an enormous amount of attention to its "Jewish Question." Anti-Semitism amongst Afrikaners, especially "poor whites," was rife. For the ruined farmers driven to the cities to find low-wage jobs, and for those struggling with drought, depression and economic competition with a burgeoning black working class, Jews provided a perfect scapegoat.<sup>2</sup> Such anti-Jewish sentiment was premised on Jewish over-representation in the professions, leading to popular support for job quotas on new Jewish immigration and professional restrictions against Jews. The Quota Act of 1930, though it did not specifically mention Jews, set strict limits on immigration into South African from countries not prescribed, targeting largely immigrants from southern and eastern Europe. Eastern European Jews had been immigrating to South Africa for years, and

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<sup>1</sup> See Andrew Sharf, *The British Press and Jews Under Nazi Rule* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964); Deborah Lipstadt, *Beyond Belief: The American Press and the Coming of the Holocaust, 1933-1945* (New York: Free Press, 1986); and Sharon Friedman, "Jews, Germans and Afrikaners: Nationalist Press Reaction to the Final Solution" (Honours diss., University of Cape Town, 1982), respectively.

<sup>2</sup> Richard Mendelsohn and Milton Shain, *The Jews in South Africa: An Illustrated History* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2008), 106.

much of white South Africa found these groups unable to assimilate and unwanted. The *Cape Times* had argued throughout the 1920's for such a bill, and supported its passing in 1930 despite strident opposition from Jan Smuts, whom the paper normally supported wholeheartedly. Even J.H. Hofmeyr, a politician who was as liberal as one could be and still hold office in South Africa, argued that denying entry to east European Jews would be beneficial for South Africa's Jews, as such Lithuanian Jews would only create more anti-Semitic sentiment in South Africa.<sup>3</sup> The Quota Act was not strong enough for those determined to keep Jews from immigrating to South Africa, as the aggressive anti-Semitism of the Nazi regime forced thousands of German Jews to various countries abroad, including South Africa. Germany was on the list of approved countries under that Quota Act, and thousands made South Africa their new home. The 1937 Aliens Act was passed in an overt attempt to stop more Jews from entering the Union.

The *Cape Times* was the voice of English South African liberalism. It favoured a close relationship with Britain internationally, and unity amongst the white population domestically. The editors of the paper during the timeframe of this study were B.K. Long, who served until 1935, George Wilson, who served until 1944, and Victor Norton. Long was born and trained in England, working at the *Times* of London before taking up the editorship of the *Cape Times*. His successor Wilson, also of British birth, started with the paper in 1898, holding such positions as parliamentary reporter and assistant editor before rising to editor in 1935. Of note, Wilson, at the turn of the century, edited *The Owl* on the side, taking great pride of this in his autobiography, seeing it as an outlet for his irreverent side.<sup>4</sup> In the early 1900's, *The Owl* printed notoriously anti-Semitic cartoons, depicting Jews as either the cause of and beneficiary of gambling and vice, or, in the case of east European Jewish immigrants, as "scum."<sup>5</sup>

In the 1930's and 1940's the *Cape Times* was a strident supporter of Jan Smuts and his South African Party and then, upon its formation, the United Party. To the daily, Smuts was not only an admirable statesman but an ideal symbol of Brit and Boer unity under the auspices of the British commonwealth. Wilson was a close friend of Smuts, their families often visiting each other, with Wilson even convalescing on Smuts' estate during a period of illness.<sup>6</sup> During the negotiations that would eventually lead to Fusion between General

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<sup>3</sup> Milton Shain, *The Roots of Anti-Semitism in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1994), 141.

<sup>4</sup> George Wilson, *Gone Down the Years* (London: Timmins, 1947), 42.

<sup>5</sup> Shain, 46 and figs.2 and 3.

<sup>6</sup> Gerald Shaw, *The Cape Times: An Informal History* (Cape Town: David Philip Publishers, 1999), 109.

Hertzog's Nationalist Party and Smuts' South African Party, Wilson acted as a go-between for Smuts and Hertzog, as he was a trusted friend to both. The paper strongly supported Fusion, even if its preferred leader would only be deputy prime minister to Hertzog. Fusion to the daily was a way to heal the still festering scars between Brit and Boer while at the same time marginalizing Daniel Malan and the radical Nationalists who yearned for an Afrikaner republic.

This paper moves chronologically from the emergence of Nazi Germany in 1933, through its increasing belligerence of the Nuremberg Laws and nationwide pogroms of Kristallnacht, to the advent of war and the Final Solution, to the discovery of the death camps and the Nuremberg Trials. In chapter one, the *Cape Times* is immediately alarmed by the rise of Hitler to power, and quickly takes the stories of the regime's persecution of Jews seriously. After a flurry of coverage as well as a debate on the role of Jewry in South African society, the paper only gives minor coverage of the Nazi regime's Nuremberg Laws and the political aspects of the 1936 Berlin Olympics. The second chapter focuses on the daily's Janus-faced coverage of Kristallnacht. The paper was horrified by the pogroms, lashing out at a German government it no longer considered civilised, but did not mention the destruction in its coverage of Oswald Pirow's trip to Europe. The then Minister of Defence of the Union visited with Hitler a week after Kristallnacht. The third chapter covers the war period and the paper's sporadic coverage of what was by late 1941 a genocide-in-progress. The *Cape Times* consistently trusted official government sources over organizations such as the Polish underground, a point further explored in the fourth chapter, which covers the discovery of the death camps. The daily expressed horror at the camps, making the discovery a top story for two months, and used the camps as ammunition against its anti-war political enemies. The last chapter examines the paper's coverage of the Nuremberg Trials, as well as the simmering debate on Palestine. The domestic political situation in South Africa, I argue, shaped the *Cape Times'* coverage of the Nazi regime's treatment and eventual genocide of European Jewry.

## I. The Emergence of Nazi Germany

Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party's rise to power in Germany in January 1933 were met with suspicion, but not immediate outright hostility, by the *Cape Times*. Regarding itself as representing English South African opinion as well as taking a keen interest in British opinion and affairs, the paper was fearful that the Nazi regime would renege on its obligations under the Treaty of Versailles, and thus threaten Britain's- and Europe's- well-being. In a pattern that would be repeated until the outbreak of war in 1939, the daily hoped from the beginning that the Nazis would moderate their radical rhetoric and behaviour for the sake of European peace.

The emergence of the Nazis in Germany aggravated South African anti-Semitism. Whereas before anti-Jewish tendencies were subtle- if at times, such as the Quota Act, virulent- and no party yet ran on an overtly anti-Semitic platform, Nazi Germany gave inspiration and a framework for organized political anti-Semitism in South Africa. The shirt movements, notably Louis Weichardt's Greyshirts, came into being in 1933, centring their platform on anti-Semitism, not the anti-black sentiment common in South African politics of the time.<sup>7</sup> Yet in a political climate paying increasing attention to its Jews, the *Cape Times* was largely philosemitic, surprising perhaps, considering its support for the Quota Act. It gave substantial coverage to Nazi actions towards Jews, as well as local and worldwide Jewish outrage at the persecution. Its editorial pages provided room for debate not only on the situation in Germany, but also on the role of Jews in South Africa as well.

Once Hitler gained power in late January 1933, the *Cape Times* was suspicious of the man and his party since it did not expect such a radical movement to actually rise to the top of the German state. In a February editorial, the daily noted that Hitler had to show Germany that "behind his undoubted pre-eminence as a tub-thumper there lurk some statesmen-like qualities" and apprehensive audiences abroad that "Hitler in office is a different man from Hitler out of office."<sup>8</sup> At the same time, the paper saw some hope in Germany. Economically,

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<sup>7</sup> Patrick J. Furlong, *Between Crown and Swastika: The Impact of the Radical Right on the Afrikaner Nationalist Movement in the Fascist Era* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1991), 20. Herman Giliomee contests Furlong's argument that Afrikaner anti-Semitism was encouraged by Nazi Germany, claiming that it was for domestic political purposes, and originated from local anti-Jewish stereotypes. See Herman Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: Biography of a People* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2003), 418. For the shirt movements in particular, it is safe to say that Nazi Germany provided an inspiration, but the shirt movements did not encompass all of Afrikanerdom or represent all Afrikaner anti-Semitism.

<sup>8</sup> *Cape Times* (henceforth abbreviated as "CT") 2.2.33

“Germany is on the upgrade,” with the Reparation Settlement providing Germany a “fresh start” from a “psychological point of view.”<sup>9</sup> In Germany, the *Cape Times* continued, there is a feeling that its industry can weather the Depression better than other European countries.

Before the end of the month, the *Cape Times* was reporting “fresh evidence of the new Chancellor’s iron rule”<sup>10</sup> and “rampant” anti-Semitism in Germany. Anti-Semitism, wrote the daily’s London Correspondent, is the “only clear and definite item in (the Nazis’) nebulous program,” and that given the Nazis’ persecution of prominent Jews and Poles, wholesale measures were sure to follow.<sup>11</sup> Another report told of uniformed storm troopers breaking into the house of a well-known socialist and creating havoc, an example of the Nazis “getting out of hand.”<sup>12</sup>

If February produced uneasiness, March would provide a crisis and eventual recognition from the *Cape Times* that Nazi anti-Semitism was real and had serious consequences. From the first of the month, the paper printed breathless headlines such as “Dictatorship in Germany”<sup>13</sup> and “Drastic Decree in Germany,”<sup>14</sup> detailing the Nazis’ continued consolidation of power and move toward authoritarianism. A 4 March article reporting the Nazi threat to German Jews warned of the Nazis’ “relapse into barbarism,” but cautioned that the “wild stories” of Nazi persecution of Jews appearing in the British press were “probably exaggerated.”<sup>15</sup> Like the American press, the daily was hesitant to believe that the German government could possibly orchestrate pogroms against its Jews, and felt compelled to offer a caveat.<sup>16</sup> An editorial three days later struck a hopeful note, writing that there were signs that Germany was going to moderate its belligerence. Hitler’s recent election victory may, wrote the *Cape Times*, “induce a more generous and politic attitude toward his opponents.” There was progress on the Jewish front as well, as the “assurance given officially by Goering to the leaders of German Jewry that no repressive measures are contemplated against them will no doubt do something toward restoring calm in Germany and confidence abroad.”<sup>17</sup>

Unlike the American press, however, the *Cape Times* quickly set aside the notion that persecution of Jews at the hands of the Nazis was exaggerated. The assurances from Nazi

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid

<sup>10</sup> CT 7.2.33

<sup>11</sup> CT 20.2.33

<sup>12</sup> CT 24.2.33

<sup>13</sup> CT 1.3.33

<sup>14</sup> CT 2.3.33

<sup>15</sup> CT 4.3.33

<sup>16</sup> Lipstadt, 16.

<sup>17</sup> CT 7.3.33

leadership that the paper had pinned its hopes on were proven to be by the middle of March virtually worthless. Though the Nazis tried to placate foreign opinion, “these assurances will be largely nullified by irresponsible action of the Nazi rank and file and connivance by their superiors.”<sup>18</sup> “Republicans, Jews, Socialists, Communists all who do not think Nazi,” continued the editorial, “are being harassed out of business and bludgeoned into silence.” The paper, though, was hesitant to place direct blame for the anti-Semitic attacks on Hitler himself. In describing Germany as being in a “state of terrorism,” the *Cape Times* London correspondent noted that there are “signs that Herr Hitler is becoming alarmed at the excesses of his followers,” and that Goering was the primary culprit behind the latest actions.<sup>19</sup> Concerning conversations about the European crisis held between Britain, Italy and France, the daily’s principle concern is whether or not “Hitler can control his wild men,” adding that the man himself is “reasonable enough.”<sup>20</sup> A lull in anti-Semitic measures led the same correspondent to conclude two days later that the “pressure of foreign opinion, particularly British and American, has done something to compel the authorities to put some check on the outrages” and that “many Hitlerites do not approve of these acts and that Captain Goering is mainly responsible for them.”<sup>21</sup>

Yet, just as the *Cape Times* quickly disposed of the notion that Nazi outrages were exaggerations, the paper also stopped regarding Hitler as a reasonable bystander while his undisciplined subordinates ran amok. The Nazi boycott of German Jews announced in late March was reported as “further evidence of Hitler’s personal hatred of the Jews” and can be seen as years in the making, since the “campaign can be traced directly to Hitler’s book, ‘My Fight.’”<sup>22</sup> Hitler took responsibility for the campaign, demanding that the “atrocious propaganda” as reported in the world press be stopped lest the Nazi Party ruin tens of thousands of Jews with its boycott.

The *Cape Times* coverage of the first months of Nazi rule in Germany, then, underwent a rapid transformation. Though initially suspicious of a belligerent movement coming to power in Germany, the paper held out hope that the realities of governing would have a moderating effect. Anti-Semitic attacks, though worrying, were probably exaggerated. By the end of March, though, the stories of Nazi persecution were reported without question, and Nazi leaders no longer reasonable. Hitler was no longer a statesman unable to control his

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<sup>18</sup> CT 14.3.33

<sup>19</sup> Ibid

<sup>20</sup> CT 21.3.33

<sup>21</sup> CT 23.3.33

<sup>22</sup> CT 30.3.33

eager subordinates, but a willing participant in anti-Semitic campaigns. For the remainder of 1933, the daily would consistently report on Nazi outrages and regard the Nazi government as a disruptive force.

Throughout the rest of 1933 the *Cape Times* printed reports from Germany daily, often concerning the Nazis' treatment of Jews, Communists and other so-called enemies of the state, as well as Germany's ambitions for rearmament. The paper's discussion of Nazi Germany outside of the News section, however, was noteworthy. Editorials and book reviews examined Nazi race ideology, often referring to Hitler's *Mein Kampf* to explain the regime's anti-Semitism and belligerent tendencies.

The *Cape Times* printed a thorough denunciation of Nazi race ideology. An April editorial, correctly, identified the root of Nazi anti-Semitism in a biological racism based on Count Gobineau and Houston Chamberlain.<sup>23</sup> In Germany, these doctrines were "quoted by the ignorant with solemn approval and mischievously disseminated by the better informed." The same editorial continues on what in South Africa at the time would be considered a radical strain. "Worth depends on the qualities selected not the purity" with race a "concept applicable to human beings only in the most flimsy and superficial fashion."<sup>24</sup>

A July article revealing Nazi plans to sterilize those it deemed undesirable and unsociable, epileptics, the blind, deaf and deformed, also elicited editorial response. This time the *Cape Times* was not uniformly opposed to the idea of eugenics and the accompanying recommendation to sterilize certain people- as it was with the Nazis' racial ideology- but was dismayed with the Nazis' irresponsible use of eugenics. While eugenics in not a science but an ideal, the paper wrote that its "objects may be praiseworthy."<sup>25</sup> As opposed to England, where eugenical procedure was "based upon genetical information" and "sufficiently recognized by such a responsible body as the Committee on Mental Deficiency," Germany's methods are warped by "social prejudice." It is not, then that sterilizing certain people with mental deficiencies is an unreasonable ideal, it just has to be done properly. Thus at this point the *Cape Times* had some Social Darwinist tendencies.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> CT 14.4.33

<sup>24</sup> This is an odd, if fascinating, argument from the *Cape Times*, as in domestic matters the paper was quite comfortable in dealing in racial terms. Of course, the "native question" was a constant "problem," as the paper entertained numerous ways to deal with it but consciously avoided considering political and social equality. Even among whites, the daily regularly referred to Brits and Afrikaners as different "races."

<sup>25</sup> CT 5.8.33

<sup>26</sup> This manifested itself in scientific racism, which in Britain took on a positive connotation meaning that humankind could be perfected. Eugenics as a school of thought declined after World War II, mostly due to the consequences of Nazi race ideology. Though South Africa was a race-based society (which would only be solidified during apartheid), scientific racism did not hold the same ideological power as it did in Europe and the

The daily covered Nazi Germany's impact on its Jews outside of the News and Editorial pages, venturing into sports and culture. In the "Notes and Gossip" section, which often covered the sporting world, "The Pilgrim" reported that Dr Prenn, a "mainstay" in German Davis Cup competition, was dropped from the 1933 German team because he was Jewish.<sup>27</sup> The decision not only created disquiet among tennis enthusiasts, but with Germany slated to host the 1936 Olympic Games, the International Olympic Committee wanted assurances that such anti-Semitic measures would be taken on Jewish Olympic athletes. In June "Notes and Gossip" reported that Germany "toed the line," stating that Jews would be allowed to compete in the Berlin Olympics without obstacle. The Pilgrim advocated the Davis Cup Committee take similar measures, not allowing Germany to field a team unless Jews were allowed to participate.<sup>28</sup>

The theatre columnist also wrote of the Nazis' effects on the German film industry. Writing that it was "no part of my job to dabble in politics," the crippling effects that Nazism had on German film merited comment in a theatre column.<sup>29</sup> German theatre was to be "coordinated" with National Socialist dogma, and the Nazis demanded "the industry be purged of all Jewish elements." In a later column, he reported the "crude and elementary" films produced as Nazi propaganda, and that such films only lasted five days in Berlin theatres. The primary reason for the steep decline in German filmmaking was the "expulsion of Jews from the industry," who in turn fled to France. The column closed by expressing excitement for films coming out of France in the next year.<sup>30</sup>

At the same time, the daily allowed a debate on Nazi Germany, its treatment of Jews and South African Jews' reaction to the Third Reich. German-born University of Cape Town professor Herman Bohle<sup>31</sup> founded the South African Nazi Party in 1932, and was to become the country's Nazi spokesman. Several times in 1933 The *Cape Times* gave Professor Bohle space outside of the Letters to the Editor section to defend his party's cause and answer allegations. One of these was a full-length response to an assertion printed in the paper that

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United States. See Saul Dubow, *Illicit Union: Scientific Racism in Modern South Africa* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press), 14-15.

<sup>27</sup> CT 13.4.33

<sup>28</sup> Although the Pilgrim nor the editorial staff did not revisit this matter, the *Cape Times* printed a report in November of a protest from the American Athletic Union warning of a boycott unless Jews were able to use training facilities in Berlin as well. German authorities has pledged not to "place any obstacles" on Jews playing the games, but this was apparently a semantic trick, as training was not necessarily "playing the games." CT 22.11.33

<sup>29</sup> CT 12.5.33

<sup>30</sup> 5.10.33

<sup>31</sup> Professor Bohle was appointed to a position at the South African College (the forerunner to the University of Cape Town) in 1906 at age 30, beginning what was to be a 30-year career. See Howard Phillips, *The University of Cape Town, 1918-1948: The Formative Years* (Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press, 1993), 73.

Hitler had Jewish ancestry, with the Professor providing Hitler's lineage and proof of Hitler's "Bavarian Peasant Stock."<sup>32</sup> Most prominent, though, is Bohle's defence of Nazi Germany in October 1933 and the *Times* immediate editorial response to Bohle's claims.

Bohle's article adopted an aggrieved and defensive tone while justifying Nazi anti-Semitism. Bohle, perhaps self-aggrandizing, took "sole and complete responsibility" for all Nazi activity in South Africa, denying that any anti-Semitic Nazi propaganda had entered the country since no such material had been personally delivered to him.<sup>33</sup> Despite this supposed lack of anti-Semitic propaganda, Bohle nevertheless took the opportunity to point an accusing finger at Jews. If there was anti-Semitism in Germany or in South Africa, claimed Bohle, the Jews themselves were responsible. Jews, according to Bohle, had held violent protest meetings and "insulted every proud German with leaflets depicting Chancellor Hitler as an orang-utang." Any anti-Semitic propaganda was mild compared to the Anti-German "J'accuse" and the orang-utang leaflet. Concluding, Bohle warned Jews to "drop all vilification of Germany and the boycott" and allow the Nazi regime to return Germany to "normal."

If the *Cape Times* was generous in giving Bohle considerable space in its News section, it was very quick to respond to his argument, publishing an editorial entitled "Hitler's Local Voice" a day after Bohle's article. The paper refuted Bohle's notion that there were no anti-Semitic leaflets in South Africa and that it would be "folly to ignore the potential danger to peace and good order in this country which it may involve."<sup>34</sup> The editorial was incredulous that Bohle expected the press to stop their criticism of Nazi Germany in light of the "gross persecution of the Semitic minority" in the country, and that Hitler was quite clear of his attitude toward Jews in *Mein Kampf*.

Letters to the Editor provided a similar debate. The letter writer "Veritas" wrote a number of letters providing support for Professor Bohle's views. In arguing that "the atrocity stories had better be dropped," Veritas wrote that Germany is only guilty of refusing "to be a harlot and a slave any longer and to be sucked dry by people who in 1914 could mostly neither read nor write German."<sup>35</sup> One "GA," also a frequent letter writer, castigated the "mean-spirited and senseless insults" toward German and South African Jews.<sup>36</sup> GA had

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<sup>32</sup> CT 17.7.33. The paper's article speculating on Hitler's possible Jewish ancestry was printed on 14 July 1933.

<sup>33</sup> CT 31.10.33

<sup>34</sup> CT 1.11.33

<sup>35</sup> CT 6.9.33

<sup>36</sup> CT 7.9.33

earlier written a letter arguing that “the ‘Jewish Problem’ in Germany is an internal affair for them but an external one for all Jews outside of Germany.”<sup>37</sup>

One letter writer questioned the loyalty of South African Jews to the Union. A South African Jewish boycott of German imports, in reaction to the anti-Semitic actions of the Nazi regime, triggered a German proposal to import less South African wool in retaliation. A letter writer under the name “Neither Jew Nor German” lamented that the German proposals would have a “very serious effect on all wool growers and, indirectly, on all sections of the Union.” The writer called for the South African government to intervene to settle the dispute, and that “our Jews are our citizens, and if they are told the country as a whole is suffering from their quarrelling, I am quite sure they would be loyal enough to South Africa to stop.”<sup>38</sup> Though seemingly innocuous, the writer also claimed that a deputation of Johannesburg Jews “literally held a pistol” to the head of a gentile importer thought to have too many German goods.

While the paper’s coverage of the Nazi regime in its first year was comprehensive, the next two years saw significantly less attention. An example of this is found in the daily’s reporting of the 1935 Nuremberg Laws. The paper regarded the Laws as another in a series of moves against German Jews. The laws, passed at the annual convening of the Reichstag (that year held in Nuremberg), were composed of three parts and defined German Jewry’s role in German society. The first law declared the German national flag and colours as the swastika; the second, the Citizenship Law distinguished between “citizens” who had civil rights and “subjects” who no longer held such rights; and the third, the Law for the Defense of German Blood and Honor forbade marriages between Germans and Jews.<sup>39</sup> The laws were a manifestation of Nazi race ideology which deemed Jews biologically different and inferior to “Aryan” Germans. Under these laws, Jews would have the same legal distinction as foreigners. Ostensibly, the laws were to be beneficial for Jews, as it created legal distinctions and would therefore curb the extra-legal anti-Semitic violence that had swept Germany in 1935.

The *Cape Times* carried the Nazis’ claim that the laws were of “benefit to the Jews” as “it is argued that the new laws restore to the Jewish minority in Germany their own cultural and national life, and generally draw a distinct line.”<sup>40</sup> The same article noted the

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<sup>37</sup> CT 17.7.33

<sup>38</sup> CT 13.2.34

<sup>39</sup> Saul Friedlander, *The Years of Persecution: Nazi Germany and the Jews 1933-1939* (London: Phoenix, 1997), 142.

<sup>40</sup> CT 17.9.35

shock the laws created in Germany, especially the change of the national flag. It did not take long, however, for the daily to report the devastating effects the laws had on German Jewry. The German Jew, reported an article in late September, “now finds himself by law an outlaw and a pariah,” is economically “reduced from the level of the middle class to a proletariat,” making it “little wonder that many Jews are to-day faced with mental breakdown.”<sup>41</sup> More than three months later the paper reported that the condition of Jews was deteriorating even more. Jews who had hoped that the Nuremberg Laws would enable them to “live in comparable peace under these restricted conditions” were now disillusioned and actively planning to emigrate.<sup>42</sup> New regulations governing the marriage of half-Jews prompted this disillusionment leading to a “growing conviction among leading Jews here that the younger generation must get out of Germany speedily.”<sup>43</sup>

During these months the *Cape Times*' international coverage was preoccupied with the Italian invasion of Abyssinia. As a direct threat to world peace, the invasion garnered headlines and stern editorial comment lashing out not only at Mussolini but at a League of Nations unwilling to stop Italian aggression. In the wake of a controversial war in Africa, it is not unexpected that the daily had only sporadic coverage of the Nuremberg Laws. The paper, of course, had no knowledge of what was to come, and after almost three years in power anti-Semitic laws coming from Nazi Germany were not unprecedented, but a symptom of a chronic illness, so to speak.

The *Cape Times* largely treated the 1936 Berlin Olympics as a gala event, appropriate for the Sports pages rather than the News or Editorial sections.<sup>44</sup> Missing was any debate on whether or not South Africa should participate in the Olympics because of Nazi Germany's persecution of its Jews. There was a fair amount of excitement for the Olympiad, glowing coverage of the opening and closing ceremonies as well as daily reports of the medal winners and hopes for the performance of South Africa's athletes.

In early July, in the run-up to the Summer Olympics, the *Cape Times* printed the German government's instructions for its security personnel and Nazi Party members on how they should treat foreign tourists. Good Nazis “must give up their seats in buses and trams to any woman they see standing, even though she is a Jewess,” and never “discuss anti-Semitism from June 30 to September, nor to inquire of any ‘exotic-looking stranger’ who

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<sup>41</sup> CT 21.9.35

<sup>42</sup> CT 13.1.36

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> The vast majority of the *Cape Times*' coverage was of the Summer, rather than Winter Olympics. The Winter Olympics was a much smaller event in the 1930's than it is now. Friedlander, 181.

may catch their eye.”<sup>45</sup> The article concluded that it was the German government’s intention to show foreigners that reports of German anti-Semitism were exaggerated. Less than a week later the paper printed a report to suggest that the Nazis had reason for this public relations effort. The article, “Victims of Nazi Rule,” reported on international condemnation of Nazi treatment of political prisoners. The conference reported on “sickening revelation of Nazi treatment of political enemies outrivaling the foulest features of the Spanish Inquisition,” including the torturing and starving of prisoners.<sup>46</sup>

Such unpleasanties, though, did not damper the enthusiasm the paper had for the Olympic Games. The daily covered the opening with excitement and hope, noting that “Berlin is ablaze with bunting by day, and dazzling with illuminations at night. Thousands of people are in the streets, and competitors are tingling with excitement and suspense.”<sup>47</sup> The paper’s mindset was not on politics but sport, as evidenced by an article stating that “the one thought in the minds of South Africans, and indeed of everybody else in Berlin today was: What about the weather?”<sup>48</sup> Reporting the South African athletes’ disappointments and Jesse Owens’ triumphs, the daily wrote that “the only sign of disharmony is German heartburning at the negro successes, which is not altogether unnatural, seeing that the Nazi sportsmen probably trained harder than any other nation. They are at present second on the International points list, and would be first except for the American negroes.”<sup>49</sup> The same article quoted Goebbels’ anger at “America’s black auxiliaries.”

The closing of the Olympic Games garnered largely positive coverage from the paper. The closing ceremony itself was “most impressive- the playing of the Mollerdorfer March, lowering the flags, tolling of bells, slow extinguishing of the Olympic Fire, one minute’s silence, and then the summoning of the athletes to the next meeting at Tokio in 1940.”<sup>50</sup> Overall, Germany put on a terrific event without any of the ugliness that the Nazi regime had become notorious for. Regardless of what journalists assumed was the constant presence of secret police, Berlin was an excellent host with superb arrangements and stadia. “Politeness, helpfulness and smiles were the order of the day,” and formalities at the border were easy. The Germans, continued the article, were keen to have its visitors leave with a good

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<sup>45</sup> CT 1.7.36

<sup>46</sup> CT 7.7.36

<sup>47</sup> CT 1.8.36

<sup>48</sup> CT 3.8.36

<sup>49</sup> CT 11.8.36

<sup>50</sup> CT 17.8.36

impression of Germany, frequently asking “Do you think better of Germany now than you did before you came here?”<sup>51</sup>

The paper’s only editorial on the Olympics in August was a reflection of South Africa’s performance and the nature of athletics in general. “The 1936 Olympiad,” noted the editorial, “has shown that men are running faster, jumping further and throwing things greater distances than man has ever done in the recorded history of sport.”<sup>52</sup> The daily dismissed any natural advantages of black Americans, instead attributing the faster pace of sport to the “specialization which is the feature of modern existence.” In sum, the Berlin Olympics were an entertaining, well-run affair with political worries and Jewish persecution set aside for the event.

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<sup>51</sup> CT 24.8.36

<sup>52</sup> CT 22.8.36

## II. Kristallnacht: The *Cape Times* and the Two Germanys

The increasing belligerence of Nazi Germany, including Germany's restrictions on its Jewish population and Britain's attempts to stem Nazi aggression, were major stories in the *Cape Times* in 1938. The paper was a strong supporter of British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain and his appeasement policy, believing it in line with British ideals. While its rival the *Argus* was sceptical of appeasement, arguing that Germany would never be satisfied and continued to make unreasonable demands, the daily held out hope that Chamberlain's policy would succeed despite its suspicions of Germany.<sup>53</sup> To editor George Wilson, as well as former editor BK Long, Munich was not worth going to war over, and both believed that Britain's dominions would have remained neutral in the event of war.

If the *Cape Times* favoured peace with Germany at a certain cost, it also widely reported its increasing aggression toward its Jews. Germany's annexation of Austria created alarm and the plight of Austria's Jews became a running story in June of 1938. Anti-Semitic actions and persecution of Jews occurred at a more frenzied pace in the months after the Anschluss in Austria than in Germany in what would become a "model" for increased Nazi measures against Jews.<sup>54</sup> The paper reported Nazi measures to throw all Jews out of work by the end of the month<sup>55</sup> as well as specific laws targeting Jewish lawyers and Austrian firms owned by Jews.<sup>56</sup> A report on the 27<sup>th</sup> quotes the *New Statesman's* take on the increasing violence, as "in Austria to-day every Nazi official is terrified by his neighbour and must seek to outdo him by even more desperate ruthlessness."<sup>57</sup> In general, there was a "state of panic" among Jews in Austria.<sup>58</sup>

The *Times* found the Evian Conference, a meeting among world powers held in the eponymous French town to find a solution to the German Jewish refugee crisis, necessary but was pessimistic that anything would be accomplished in light of the difficulties involved. The paper's anger was directed not only at German anti-Semitism, but the Nazi government's aggravation of the refugee problem. "If Germany wishes her Jewish inhabitants to leave,"

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<sup>53</sup> Shaw, 117.

<sup>54</sup> See Friedlander, 241-68

<sup>55</sup> CT 28.6.38

<sup>56</sup> CT 30.6.38

<sup>57</sup> CT 27.6.38

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.* The one article that deviated from this pattern was printed on 8 June concerning Sigmund Freud's departure from his home country, reporting that he was "not ill-treated by Nazis." Of course, the paper had no way of knowing that the Nazis forced Freud to sign a declaration stating that he had not been maltreated. See Friedlander, 241.

argued an editorial, “she should at least help them to leave with what means they have.”<sup>59</sup> In November, however, anti-Semitism in Germany took a drastic turn and the plight of German Jews became urgent.

Herschel Grynszpan, a young Polish Jew living in Paris, was outraged at the expulsion of Polish Jews (including his family) from Germany, and shot Ernst vom Rath, First Secretary of the German Embassy in Paris on 7 November 1938 as revenge. The Nazis used this as a pretext to conduct a nationwide pogrom against German Jewry, demanding they be punished collectively for vom Rath’s assassination. Ostensibly, the pogroms, occurring on 9 and 10 November, were supposed to be a spontaneous public action, and Hitler’s involvement in the process was hidden. Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels coordinated the pogroms from his media outlets, but the operation was conducted with Hitler’s full knowledge and approval.<sup>60</sup>

The *Cape Times* treated the pogroms of Kristallnacht and the aftermath as its top story in November and December 1938. Daily headlines detailed the latest German outrages against its Jewry, depicting such actions as “terror,” with effort made to convey the seriousness of the events. The paper presented a sense of foreboding in the week leading up to Kristallnacht, especially after the assassination of Herr vom Rath, the German diplomat in Paris. In a 2 November article entitled “Driven Out Like Cattle,” the *Cape Times*’ London Correspondent writes of the mass expulsion of Polish Jews from Germany, who are “penniless, homeless and destitute.”<sup>61</sup> Reporting on vom Rath’s shooting on the seventh, an article entitled “Jews Expected to Suffer More” hinted that top Nazis are plotting revenge on German Jews for the shooting,<sup>62</sup> and two days later an article speculated that the latest measures are a prelude to a ghetto system in Germany.<sup>63</sup> Editorial comment on these developments did not begin until the twelfth, after the pogroms had taken place.<sup>64</sup>

From the start of the pogroms, daily articles detailed the damage done to Jewish property as well as the overall destitution of German Jewry. One lead article reported that “it is estimated that 35,000 Jews have been arrested throughout Germany” and that “the damage

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<sup>59</sup> CT 11.7.33

<sup>60</sup> Friedlander, 271-2.

<sup>61</sup> CT 2.11.38

<sup>62</sup> CT 8.11.38

<sup>63</sup> CT 10.11.38

<sup>64</sup> On the tenth, the *Times* printed an editorial responding to Hitler’s latest demands for South-West Africa and Tanganyika. The editorial argues that Germany has no claim to the colonies having lost them in the last war and that the white settlers in the colonies do not wish for a handover to Germany. The *Times* also indulges in a nightmarish vision of an aggressive Nazi state training “millions of natives in the art of war.” The colonial question would remain crucial to the *Times* in this period, as will be explored below.

done by the rioters is estimated at tens of millions of marks.”<sup>65</sup> Detailing the “terrible effects of Nazi Pogrom,” the paper reported that “all Jewish property is expected to be confiscated shortly” and that nearly all Jewish doctors and lawyers had been arrested.<sup>66</sup> The combination of the pogroms, arrests and new anti-Semitic laws passed in the wake had served to create “incredible distress” among German Jews.

Another theme in the *Cape Times* reporting is German disapproval of the pogroms. A 12 November article telling of “great indignation among the Bavarians at the savage treatment of the Jews,” quoted a Bavarian who pleaded with the reporter to tell the world that Bavarians aren’t all monsters, and that he was “ashamed of being a German.”<sup>67</sup> Berliners were described as “shocked” by the mob actions and latest anti-Semitic laws.<sup>68</sup> Among those in the capital, “only a very few people express complete agreement with the measures,” with even Nazi Party members finding the actions appealing. Those in the countryside, however, found the anti-Semitic measures more amenable.<sup>69</sup>

While the *Cape Times* coverage in its News pages expressed horror at the events in Germany, its editorial stance had a different focus. These were indeed terrible atrocities, asserted the daily, but the paper looked beyond the sufferings of the Jews in Germany to consider the impact the pogroms had on the international scene; in particular how it would affect Chamberlain’s attempts to secure peace through appeasement, which the paper was strongly in favour of. In its editorials, the *Cape Times* was just as angry with Germany’s sabotaging international peace and its accusations toward Britain as it was with Germany’s treatment of its Jewry.

The *Cape Times* made it clear that high officials in the German government were responsible for the pogroms, and that it was not a case of a random popular groundswell. Particular scorn was directed at Goebbels, German Minister of Propaganda, and the newspapers under his control that used the assassination of Herr vom Rath to “inflame the Germans’ dangerous hatred of everything Jewish.”<sup>70</sup> Hitler, although not directly involved or associated with the pogroms, argued an editorial, could not escape responsibility, either.

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<sup>65</sup> CT 12.11.38

<sup>66</sup> CT 15.11.38.

<sup>67</sup> CT 12.11.38

<sup>68</sup> CT 14.11.38

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> CT 12.11.38

Hitler “has the power to stay the hand of the destroyers,” and could only disassociate himself from the pogroms by stepping down as head of Germany.<sup>71</sup>

Yet the *Cape Times* was careful not to indict all of the German people for the crimes of Kristallnacht. It insisted that its, and the world’s newspapers’, condemnation of the pogroms were not motivated by anti-German sentiment but by “the most ordinary dictates of humanity,” and that real responsibility, indeed a “stigma of barbarism,” belonged to the high officials that stoked the flames and passed the anti-Jewish ordinances.<sup>72</sup> The daily lamented that the otherwise respectable German people had become associated with such atrocities. There is “no doubt at all,” read an editorial entitled “Pogrom Victims,” that the pogroms gave a “hideous shock” to the mass of Germany “whose traditional piety and kindness have survived the virulent race propaganda purveyed by Dr. Goebbels.”<sup>73</sup> In the end, “the Jews were not the only victims; the German people was another.”<sup>74</sup>

Germany’s second great sin originating from Kristallnacht was its complication of world, and specifically British, affairs. That is, while Germany had “abandoned the right to be regarded as a civilised government,” it was not only its mistreatment of Jews that earned that judgement.<sup>75</sup> The *Cape Times* was distraught that the pogroms were putting the appeasement policy, and thus any chance at world peace, in jeopardy. Writing days before a summit between Britain and France, the paper cautioned Chamberlain to “recognize the immense difficulties which now beset his path along the route which he had so nobly planned at Munich,” that Germany’s belligerence toward its Jews was now a Europe-wide problem.<sup>76</sup> The immediate problem for Europe was now the refugee problem, intensified in the aftermath of the pogroms. The daily’s British-centred mindset is betrayed when ruing that “it is almost as if forces within Germany itself had deliberately set to work to design some method by which the policy of appeasement could be brought to nil.”<sup>77</sup>

Since the time Hitler ascended to power in Germany and the Nazis’ first actions directed against Jews, German Jews wanted to leave their country and its intolerable situation. As detailed above, there had been many international discussions about this matter, eventually leading to the inconclusive Evian Conference. With Kristallnacht, there remained

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<sup>71</sup> CT 23.11.38. Of course, the paper would have no way of knowing Hitler’s actual involvement in Kristallnacht.

<sup>72</sup> CT 14.11.38

<sup>73</sup> CT 12.11.38

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> CT 23.11.38

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

no doubt of the Nazis' intentions and that matters could only get worse for Jews in Germany. With this realization, the Jewish desire to emigrate dramatically increased, in turn creating what was for the rest of Europe, North America, and South Africa an uncomfortable "problem." In late November and December 1938, the refugee crisis became a top running story in *The Cape Times*, garnering daily headlines and less frequent, yet still significant, editorial opinion. As well as sympathy for the German Jews, the dominant tone of the coverage was anger toward Germany for creating such a difficult refugee problem for the "civilised" world to solve.

The *Cape Times* editorial stance was to argue for a revival of the Evian Conference to provide a permanent solution for European Jewish refugees. With the refugees becoming a "permanent problem for the civilised countries" of the world due to the actions of Germany, a "comprehensive settlement" was sorely needed.<sup>78</sup> Chamberlain was to meet in Paris the next day in a meeting scheduled before the pogroms occurred, and the paper was confident he and his French counterpart would "review the situation in the light of facts which have emerged since Munich,"<sup>79</sup> a roundabout way of saying he will discuss the urgent refugee crisis.

If Germany had, in the words of the same editorial, "abandoned the right to be regarded as a civilised government," its victims constituted a great annoyance for those nations suitably civilised. Kristallnacht had "thrust upon a world already embarrassed by the difficult problem of Jewry an immensely increased burden of responsibility for the refugees she has driven out."<sup>80</sup> The refugee crisis became a game of hot potato; although sympathetic to the plight of German Jews, accepting the pogrom victims as immigrants posed enormous problems. In South Africa in particular, "an extensive settlement of refugees would present difficulties that would be found almost insuperable."<sup>81</sup> This can be seen as a recognition of the broad anti-Semitic political atmosphere in late 1930's South Africa, where the Nationalist Party had just conducted its 1938 election campaign on an overtly anti-Semitic platform, and where the shirt movements were prominent.<sup>82</sup> That the *Cape Times* advocated that South Africa "give her assistance by financial means to the utmost of her ability"<sup>83</sup> to the cause of resettling German Jews constituted the height of philosemitism in 1930's white South Africa.

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<sup>78</sup> CT 23.11.38

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid

<sup>82</sup> Gideon Shimoni, *Jews and Zionism: The South African Experience 1910-1967* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1980). 125.

<sup>83</sup> CT 23.11.38

At the same time, the *Cape Times* tempered Zionist hopes for Palestine as a potential destination for the millions of Central European Jews who wished to flee anti-Semitic regimes. The Balfour Declaration, noted the daily, was not made with an urgent need to resettle millions of Jews fleeing from pogroms in Europe.<sup>84</sup> Although Jews in Palestine had admirably made a barren land productive, there was not enough room for all of Europe's Jews. Taking on the tone of a parent dealing with quarrelling children, the paper condemned both Jews and Arabs for the "too strong tendency... to demand the fulfilment of what they consider to be their rights."<sup>85</sup> The Arabs should recognize the good the Jews have brought to Palestine, and Jews should recognize the limits imposed by Palestine's size and barren soil. Both parties should recognize the "extreme difficulty of Britain's task as Mandatory Power" in Palestine, and cooperate with that in mind.<sup>86</sup>

At the same time that the *Cape Times* and the world were reacting to the horrors of Kristallnacht, South African Minister of Defence Oswald Pirow was on a much-publicized tour of Europe.<sup>87</sup> Indeed, merely a week after the massive pogroms swept Germany, Pirow was in that country meeting with German dignitaries, including a private reception with Adolf Hitler. The daily covered Pirow's trip extensively, publishing articles on Pirow's exploits almost daily in November and December 1938, yet the coverage was divorced from the other major story of the time. The Germany that Oswald Pirow was visiting and the Germany that had experienced nationwide anti-Jewish pogroms, it would seem to a *Cape Times* reader, existed in parallel universes.

The purpose of Pirow's trip was, officially, to further South African trade interests in Europe, as well as, to quote Pirow in a November *Cape Times* article, "to discuss certain technical matters in connection with airways and railways."<sup>88</sup> To Pirow, "the most important of these is the plan for converting our existing fleet of JU 86 Junkers into heavy bombers," an issue requiring technical assistance from Germany where the planes were bought.<sup>89</sup> The trip's purpose, then, was related to legitimate and pressing matters pertaining to South Africa's defence (as was Pirow's charge) and economy.

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<sup>84</sup> CT 26.11.38

<sup>85</sup> Ibid

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> This was not the first time that Pirow had visited the Third Reich. In August 1933 Pirow, in his capacity as Minister of Railways and Defence, toured Germany to study that country's railway system. The *Cape Times* coverage of Pirow's 1933 trip consisted of only minor articles, but conveyed no uneasiness about a Union minister in a country already, even at that time, viewed with suspicion. For coverage of the 1933 trip, see CT 2.8.33 and CT 9.8.33.

<sup>88</sup> CT 7.11.38

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

The *Cape Times* occasionally referenced British response to Pirow's European trip, but mostly in order to refute their insinuations. In an article sub-titled "Insinuations Denied by Minister," the paper's London correspondent reports that "sensational articles about (Pirow's) career" have been published in some British newspapers, one even referring to Pirow as the "South African Hitler."<sup>90</sup> The same article does not delve deeper into the British criticisms, but allows Pirow to make his own refutations. The correspondent adds that "Pirow's energy surprises everyone" and that he "spares no effort to meet and discuss with influential individuals the various phases of his many duties, especially in relation to defence."<sup>91</sup> In an editorial a week later the daily continued its defence of Pirow in response to British opinion. In the editorial "Mr. Pirow in London," the *Cape Times* dismissed the "great deal of nonsense" that "some of the less responsible papers in England" have printed against Pirow.<sup>92</sup> Pirow, continues the editorial, "has been represented as hatching some profound colonial design for the satisfaction of Germany." To his credit, Pirow ignored these accusations "like a wise man, and instead continued in his "very useful work in preparing the ground for trade treaties and agreements."<sup>93</sup>

The *Cape Times* provided extensive coverage of the enthusiastic welcome that the German press gave to Pirow without any statement of editorial discomfort. An article entitled "German Press Welcome to Pirow" extensively quotes from the Nazi organ *Angriff*, amounting essentially to two columns worth of a Nazi press release. "We salute (Pirow) as a representative of his Fatherland," read the article, lauding Pirow for his "understanding of young Nazi Germany."<sup>94</sup> Making this laudatory article awkward, especially considering the coverage of Nazi outrages against Jews on the same page, is *Angriff's* screed against "those Freemason and Jewish-related quarters" who they claim are in control of South-West Africa and discriminate against Germans there. A German press who the *Cape Times* only four days before this article accused of "inflame(ing) the Germans' dangerous hatred of all things Jewish" and thus responsible for the pogroms was given unopposed column space in the paper when welcoming Pirow.

The daily reported a similar welcome to Pirow from the German Government, again without comment. A Sapa report told of a crowd of "gathered in the dazzling lights" of the Berlin railway station waiting for Pirow's arrival, which included such dignitaries as Walter

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> CT 15.11.38

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> CT 16.11.38

Frank and General Keitel.<sup>95</sup> Likewise, reports of Pirow's itinerary while in Germany referenced high German officials, treating them with the same deference as officials in any other country despite the harsh words the daily had for them in its editorials.

Almost a month after Kristallnacht, Pirow made a statement on the crisis of European Jews. According to a news article, the Jewish refugee crisis was "the world's most urgent problem" and "is already poisoning relations between the powers."<sup>96</sup> Not only was this a matter between Germany and its Jews, but finding an amicable solution to the refugee problem would be an important step toward creating an international political sphere less prone to conflict, a "more friendly spirit which would make war impossible." Pirow's controversial statement that "Europe is drifting into war," and that this drift was "caused purely by psychological factors," framed his, as well as the *Cape Times*' reaction to the crisis. Solving this crisis was worth the effort, as Pirow argued that if successful Hitler "might be able to co-operate in other problems and thus help to dispel this atmosphere of fatalism" that Pirow referred to.<sup>97</sup> An editorial published the same day gave a cursory mention to the refugee problem, noting that if Pirow had done good work to further a solution "he has deserved well of the world."<sup>98</sup>

Pirow's recommended solutions, though, were neither ground-breaking or practical. His proposal was to halt Jewish immigration to Palestine in order to quell disturbances there while finding a new Jewish home elsewhere. Since 1933, the *Cape Times* printed articles offering places such as Madagascar, Guyana and Tanganyika as solutions for the Jewish Question, and Pirow again brought these up as possible places for Jewish immigration.<sup>99</sup> What mattered to the Pirow and the *Cape Times* was not the practical realities or chances of success of such plans, but that such a solution would work toward preventing war. If Europe's Jews could somehow be settled in a distant malarial zone, that would ensure not only peace in Palestine- and since Britain was the Mandatory Power, relieve it of a headache- but soothe European relations as well.

The most controversial aspect of Pirow's European trip, as reported by the paper, was whether the Minister was conducting secret negotiations with Germany to give that country back its colonies that were lost after World War I. Britain, which still had favoured white settlement throughout East Africa, would not consider giving Tanganyika back to Germany,

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<sup>95</sup> CT 18.11.38

<sup>96</sup> CT 7.12.38

<sup>97</sup> Ibid

<sup>98</sup> Ibid

<sup>99</sup> The same article notes that the possibility of North-East Rhodesia becoming a new Jewish home was dismissed "because it is necessary that this new Jewish home should have access to the sea."

and white settlers were nervous about any handover. In South Africa, the colonial issue loomed large since Germany argued for the return of neighbouring South-West Africa to its realm. English white South Africa was obviously against German presence at South Africa's doorstep, and even Afrikaners had an ambivalent view. The extremist Transvaal Nationalist Party considered Germany the "rightful owner" of South-West Africa, while moderate branches were more hesitant to recognize Germany's claim.<sup>100</sup> Although colonies could be useful as a token for appeasement, in a war German occupation of Walvis Bay would be a devastating asset for the Nazis.

The *Cape Times* not only defended Pirow against his critics in Britain, but gave a mostly laudatory assessment of his performance on his trip. The paper denounced the "journalistic quidnucs" in Britain who "delight in discovering mysteries where none exist," writing that there was "no scintilla of evidence" to prove Pirow's had secret talks in Germany about the colonies.<sup>101</sup> The daily instead trusted Pirow's "common sense" that he did not go beyond the instructions given to him by his superiors. In an editorial a week later, the paper went on to "dismiss as sheer nonsense" the idea that Pirow had engaged in private negotiations about the colonies.<sup>102</sup> The paper further credited Pirow for being "perfectly clear" that he is in accord with Neville Chamberlain's appeasement policy.<sup>103</sup>

What, then, explains the curious coverage of Pirow's trip in the *Cape Times*? At no point did the paper call for Pirow to confront German officials about the pogroms that had just swept the nation, nor in the aftermath did the paper call for Pirow to avoid Germany altogether. When the paper reported British disquiet of Pirow, the issue of contention was South-West Africa and not Germany's treatment of its Jews. Although placing coverage of Pirow's trip on the same page as reports of atrocities against Jews can be seen as a subtle kind of criticism- the daily was not hiding what was happening in Germany for Pirow's benefit- such subtlety was not the *Cape Times*' milieu, especially if it disapproved of someone. Indeed, its editorials at the time were praiseworthy of both Pirow himself and his goals for

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<sup>100</sup> Furlong, 102.

<sup>101</sup> CT 1.12.28

<sup>102</sup> CT 7.12.38

<sup>103</sup> CT 23.12.38

the trip.<sup>104</sup> A possible explanation for the coverage is that in 1938, Pirow and the *Cape Times* were political allies.<sup>105</sup>

South African in 1938 was headed by the United Party, which was formed in 1934 with the fusion of Smuts' South African Party and Hertzog's National Party. The goal of Fusion was to foster Brit and Boer unity while keeping South Africa in the British Commonwealth, sending Daniel Malan and his republican followers into the political wilderness. With Hertzog becoming prime minister and Smuts his deputy, the United Party enjoyed a significant majority in Parliament. Malan in response formed the Purified National Party, a much smaller party that no longer had to listen to moderating voices. This new National Party no longer took an ambivalent attitude toward South African Jewry, but was overtly anti-Semitic.<sup>106</sup>

The *Cape Times* as an institution, as well as both BK Long and George Wilson, were not only in favour of Fusion but personally involved and invested in its formation. Long saw Fusion as a way to get beyond Brit-Boer tensions stemming from the Jameson Raid that were meant to be healed with Union but never completely dissolved.<sup>107</sup> Wilson was a confidant of Smuts, but also had a close relationship with Hertzog, acting as a liaison between the two during Fusion negotiations.<sup>108</sup>

Even before the split of the United Party over entry into World War II and his subsequent foray into fascism, Pirow was a controversial figure in South African politics. As Minister of Justice in 1930, Pirow had surprised South African Jewry by backing down from an election promise and instating the Quota Act, severely limiting Jewish immigration into South Africa.<sup>109</sup> The same year, his Riotous Assemblies Bill gave the government near-dictatorial powers to quell gatherings it deemed dangerous, a law mostly applied to blacks, coloured and Indians, but also for communist or otherwise troublesome whites. Although Pirow was disappointed that he was not given carte blanche to effect the bill to his satisfaction, BK Long noted that he was "determined to use to the full" his powers.<sup>110</sup> Long, in the same 1930 letter, disparaged Pirow as an "autocrat of German parentage" whose

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<sup>104</sup> Shain notes that the United Party remained on cordial terms with Nazi Germany during the thirties despite its close ties to Britain, even awarding state contracts to the German transport industry. See Milton Shain, "South Africa," in *The World Reacts to the Holocaust*, ed by David Wyman (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 675.

<sup>105</sup> The *Cape Times* would turn on Pirow after his vote for neutrality in September 1939, and continue its attacks on him as he turned to fascism during World War II.

<sup>106</sup> Furlong, 53.

<sup>107</sup> Shaw, 98.

<sup>108</sup> Shaw, 96.

<sup>109</sup> Shimoni, 105.

<sup>110</sup> Shaw, 87.

solution to the “Native Problem” was to “show the native and coloured people the lash.”<sup>111</sup> Even as minister in a Fusion government, Pirow did not hide his anti-Semitism. In December 1936, while Smuts was in his Standerton constituency denouncing anti-Semitism in South Africa, Pirow joined Minister of the Interior Richard Stuttaford at a rally in Worcester where Stuttaford gave a speech defending South Africa’s right to exclude certain immigrants, namely German Jews.<sup>112</sup>

By 1938 Long’s opinion of Pirow had changed. Long, upon leaving the *Cape Times* in 1935 was elected to Parliament in 1938 as a United Party member and a loyal Smuts man. Writing in his 1945 memoirs, Long described Pirow as “very popular among us English-speaking backbenchers in the United Party,” and an able minister.<sup>113</sup> Even more, with both Smuts and Hertzog of advanced age, the young Pirow was regarded by Long and his colleagues as a viable successor to lead the United Party. In addition to his ability, Pirow’s bilingualism made him the perfect candidate to continue the Fusion ideal.

The *Cape Times’* coverage of Pirow’s European trip, coupled with its coverage and editorial views of Kristallnacht, clearly demonstrate the paper’s priorities. German Jews, deprived of their livelihoods and subject to nationwide pogroms, were sympathetic victims of a no longer “civilised” government. Their plight merited attention and response, but not to the extent that it would complicate South African or British interests. The refugee problem was largely a nuisance and threat to a Chamberlain-inspired peace, and South African could not offer place for refugees lest its volatile domestic political situation be aggravated. Although Pirow had met with Hitler a week after the pogroms, the paper made no mention of the pogroms in relation to his visit, nor made any demands that he either bring up the topic or cancel his trip altogether. For the sake of South African defence and trade, and to cover for a minister in its favoured government, the *Cape Times* avoided asking inconvenient questions of a presumed heir to Smuts and Hertzog.

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid

<sup>112</sup> Shaw, 116.

<sup>113</sup> BK Long, *In Smuts Camp* (London: Oxford University Press, 1945), 66.

### III. Wartime Coverage of the Final Solution

In 1939, Europe, already in a crisis centring on an increasingly belligerent Nazi Germany, was only getting tenser. To the chagrin of European leaders, not to mention the *Cape Times* editorial staff, the peace of Munich that Chamberlain thought to have achieved unravelled; appeasement did not satisfy Germany's expansionist aims. The Nazi invasion of Germany not only plunged Europe into war a mere two decades after its last devastating conflict, but opened up fissures between pro and anti-war factions in South Africa. The country's entry into the first World War on Britain's side had provoked an armed rebellion among Afrikaners who did not want to fight an overseas war for an imperial power who had defeated them less than fifteen years before.<sup>114</sup> Union, premised on Brit and Boer unity, had almost fallen apart four years into its formation. Memories of this were still raw in 1939, and a significant minority of the white population was against involvement in another British war. The vote to go to war was passed, but resulted in the fall of the Fusion government. Jan Smuts became the new Prime Minister of South Africa and head of the United Party. Though there was not another armed rebellion, in part because South Africa did not institute a draft in World War II, there remained significant anti-war sentiment, largely among Afrikaners.<sup>115</sup>

While the *Cape Times* supported Fusion and its ideal of political unity between Brit and Boer, the collapse of that unity drove the paper behind Smuts and his United Party. Although the daily was a staunch ally of Chamberlain and his appeasement policy, the paper also considered it South Africa's duty to support Great Britain in its war effort against what it considered a country that posed an existential threat to the world. During the war, the paper became a pro-war, pro-British, and pro-Smuts organ. Smuts was regularly referred to as a larger-than-life figure, the war effort a righteous, patriotic cause, and anti-war proponents such as Daniel Malan and Oswald Pirow as suspicious scoundrels. It is in this light that the *Cape Times'* coverage of Nazi atrocities against European Jewry must be understood. Crimes against Jews were one aspect of a dangerous regime, while the primary focus was on the events in the battlefield (where German losses were always emphasized and victory was always around the corner). Though the paper reported instances of German atrocities, it would only provide editorial comment when the genocide-in-progress was officially

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<sup>114</sup> See Bill Nasson, *Springboks on the Somme: South Africa in the Great War, 1914-1918* (Johannesburg: Penguin Books, 2007), 35-59.

<sup>115</sup> See Furlong, 119-37 for more discussion on Afrikaner anti-war sentiment during World War II. It should also be noted that the Jewish Board of Deputies strongly supported the declaration of war against Germany, and that ten percent of the South African Jewish population served in the war effort. See Mendelsohn and Shain, 120.

recognized in December 1942 in a speech to Parliament by British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden.

Stories in the *Cape Times* about Nazi atrocities against Jews were often short, isolated articles mostly picked up from Reuters, and found mostly in the “News” section of the paper. Seemingly large events effecting millions of people as well as massive decrees from the German government were often treated as asides. An example of this tendency is a January 1940 article entitled “Slavery for Jews,” which, in its entirety reported:

A new decree issued in Berlin states that every Polish Jew will be compelled to do two years of labour service. He will not be paid but must live with and be supported by his family.<sup>116</sup>

Poland, the scene of the Nazis’ enormous population schemes in the early 1940’s, included “about 4,000,000 Polish Jews and another 1,000,000 Jews from Germany” segregated in Lublin, a place where “fever dysentery and all kinds of contagious diseases rage.”<sup>117</sup>

European Jews were only one set of victims of Nazi atrocities, and the *Cape Times* reported and commented on crimes against Poles, Russians, Czechs and those in Jugoslavia. As early as 1940, the paper printed reports of the Nazi intention to “exterminate” Poles, a theme that would continue in its coverage of Poland.<sup>118</sup> The fate of the Poles was dire, the Nazis intending for them to be “degraded to the status of menials,”<sup>119</sup> and Poles deported to Germany have to wear badges so that they do not mix with Germans.<sup>120</sup> The Poles, under the rule of the Germans, were “slaves and outcasts in their own country.”<sup>121</sup>

The plight of the Poles did not escape editorial attention. In a December 1941 editorial “Horror and Heroism in Poland,” the *Cape Times* praised the Polish resistance to Nazi rule in the face of grave risks. Polish reality was one of “savage suppression, buttressed by mass murder,” deportations, and an economy “destroyed- systematically, according to pre-arranged plans.”<sup>122</sup> The Nazis’ plan was the “transformation of masses of Poles into German slaves,” but those in the Polish Underground have remained “free-souled” if “enslaved-bodied.” The Underground, then, was a heroic, hopeful force for a people “undaunted in their determination to be free.”<sup>123</sup> A later editorial, “The Mark of the Beast,”<sup>124</sup> layered more scorn

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<sup>116</sup> CT 12.1.40

<sup>117</sup> CT 12.2.40

<sup>118</sup> CT 22.1.40

<sup>119</sup> CT 12.2.40

<sup>120</sup> CT 4.4.40

<sup>121</sup> CT 2.12.40

<sup>122</sup> CT 22.12.41

<sup>123</sup> Ibid

on Nazi treatment of Poland; had the term “genocide” been in use in 1942, the paper may have used it to describe the situation in Poland. The Germans “have massacred, they have murdered, they have raped, they have destroyed. No mercy has been shown by them. They have led out hundreds of men and women to be shot to pieces against the wall; they have hanged men and women at their very doorposts; they have condemned hundreds of the women folk of Poland to a fate which was worse than death; they have burnt and destroyed wherever they have gone.”<sup>125</sup> In short, “Poland has been suffering from an orgy of persecution and barbarity which has no parallel in the history of civilisation, and which far exceeds the worst horrors inflicted by Attila or the Vandals.”<sup>126</sup> It’s noteworthy that the paper referred broadly to Polish, rather than specifically Jewish casualties.

The Russians, who faced Nazi aggression beginning in the summer of 1941, were also sympathetic victims. The *Cape Times* printed what was essentially a press release from Soviet Foreign Minister VM Molotov, and quoted the Minister that “the civilian population has been subjugated to forced labour and herded into concentration camps, regardless of age and sex. They are exploited unmercifully, often being forced to work 20 hours daily without food or water.”<sup>127</sup> An editorial the following day concluded that Molotov’s statement proved that “all of the crimes committed by the Nazis in Czechoslovakia, Poland, Yugoslavia, Greece, Holland, Belgium and other occupied countries have been duplicated, and perhaps even surpassed, in Russia.”<sup>128</sup> The editorial goes on to praise the tenacity of the Russian army and people, and that the Nazis’ brutality “helps to explain the fanatic courage, with which the Russian troops are pressing on after the retreating Nazis.”<sup>129</sup> Similar coverage was given to a May 1942 note from Molotov detailing more German crimes in Russia.<sup>130</sup>

Reporting on the plight of Poles, Russians, and other European peoples under German occupation was in the *Cape Times*’ interests, as the paper was keen to justify South Africa’s involvement in the war. The atrocities committed against these occupied people were proof that Nazi Germany was a vicious, barbaric regime that needed to be stopped, and not a government to be supported or emulated in any way. The daily argued this point early on in the war in an editorial entitled “The Nazi Creed” that was directed toward Afrikaners. Noting

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<sup>124</sup> This title would be used again in *Cape Times* editorials on Anthony Eden’s announcement to Parliament as well as the discoveries of the death camps.

<sup>125</sup> CT 16.6.42

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> CT 8.1.42

<sup>128</sup> CT 9.1.42

<sup>129</sup> Ibid

<sup>130</sup> CT 4.5.42

that the Germans had established a clear-cut racial hierarchy in their occupied territories, such racial policies, argued the *Cape Times*, would not necessarily bode well for Afrikaners if Germany were to regain control of South-West Africa. If the Germans were to return to the colony, “what on earth is to stop them declaring that the Afrikaners are an ‘inferior race’ and therefore, by Nazi reasoning, to be disposed of as the Czechs, Poles, Baltic Germans and hundreds of thousands of other human beings have been disposed of to further the policy of Nazi domination?”<sup>131</sup> It would be unwise of Afrikaners, then to claim any racial solidarity with Nazi Germany or expect a Nazi victory to deliver long-held political wishes.

The *Cape Times*’ emphasis on Polish and Russian heroism in the face of Nazi oppression also served the paper’s pro-war sentiment. In the early 1940’s, the war had by no means a set or predictable conclusion. Indeed, before Nazi setbacks in the winter of 1941-42, Germany looked like the likely winner of the war and leader of a future European order. In South Africa at this time, some Afrikaners considered Nazi Germany to be the best vehicle to achieve their long held goal of establishing a republic.<sup>132</sup> Domestic pro-war supporters did not have high morale considering the seemingly hopeless situation for Britain, and this added to domestic responsibilities resulting in unenthusiastic recruiting for war. Polish and Russian heroism, then, were examples that South Africans should find hope in, as well as templates to emulate. After all, went the logic, if the oppressed Poles could persevere, what was to stop South Africa, as removed as it was from the theatre of war?

The plight of European Jews was not ignored by the paper, but was not reported as a unique aspect of Nazi brutality. The Jews were a group of victims added to the vast array of Nazi targets such as Poles, Czechs, Russians and so on. Thus while the *Cape Times* reported instances of measures and atrocities perpetrated against Jews, it was not regarded as a policy to exterminate European Jewry until December 1942. Striking, though, is the daily’s reference to Nazi aggression in Poland as an “extermination” policy meant to wipe away Polish culture in an effort to convert Poles into slaves for Germany. It is difficult to claim, then, that a similar policy to exterminate Jewry, crystallized in late 1941, would be “beyond belief” (to use Lipstadt’s phrase) to a paper that was raising concern over the very existence of Poland.

The *Cape Times*’ coverage underwent a change beginning in late June 1942. On 30 June, the paper printed the first estimate of the number of Jews killed in Europe to that date.

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<sup>131</sup> CT 15.3.40

<sup>132</sup> The Ossewabrandwag, an outspoken Fascist organization, was the most fervent advocate of an Afrikaner “republic.” Furlong, 138-160.

In a major article entitled “Half Jewish Race in Bondage,” the paper quotes British MP S.S. Silverman at the World Jewish Press Conference that “Jewish casualties in Axis-controlled countries far exceed those of any other race in any other war,” and I. Schwartzbout that about a million Jews had died already.<sup>133</sup> Not only was this an enormous disaster in its own right, but was continuing apace. A thousand Jews were being shot daily in central Poland, and “1,500,000 Jews were imprisoned and living in the most appalling conditions of poverty, disease and hunger.”<sup>134</sup> Noteworthy, however, the *Cape Times* did not have an editorial response to this shocking story. Indeed, what was happening to Jews closely mirrored what the paper had described two weeks earlier what was happening to the Poles. In the months to follow, though, the daily devoted more news space to the horrors faced by Jews throughout the entire continent. Laval’s August 1942 agreement to surrender “foreign” Jews in Vichy to the Germans was derided as “Laval’s Basest Deed” in a *Cape Times* editorial.<sup>135</sup> The editorial took an outraged, emotional tone, asking its readership to “think of any of our country towns and imagine every man, woman and child in it sold into slavery; collected with all the brutality of ruthless slave-ownership; and sent, without the slightest reference to family affiliations or health, to labour where the owner thinks its necessary.”<sup>136</sup> In expressing its horror toward Laval and solidarity with French Jews, the paper also took the opportunity to fire a missive at a domestic political opponent. “Democracy,” continued the editorial, “would never consent to outrages against humanity like this. If this is the new order, let the Laval and Pirows have it.”<sup>137</sup> After the declaration of war in 1939, Pirow had taken a sharp turn to the right, founding the New Order, modelled on the German Nazi Party. Pirow’s support for Nazism and goal of establishing a fascist state in South Africa not only attracted the *Cape Times*’ ire but also resulted in a split from the Nationalist party, who saw him as a rival who wanted to impose a “foreign model” on South Africa.<sup>138</sup>

In late 1942, the *Cape Times*’ coverage of the Nazi atrocities against European Jews took on a more urgent form. Isolated incidents of German brutality were still reported, but were now accompanied by a wider frame of the devastation, that Nazi policies in occupied Europe were systematically targeting Jews. Editorial comment, along with lead headlines, however, did not appear until British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden read a joint United Nations statement acknowledging and condemning Nazi Germany’s systematic murders of

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<sup>133</sup> CT 30.6.42

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> CT 7.8.42

<sup>136</sup> Ibid

<sup>137</sup> Ibid

<sup>138</sup> Furlong, 163, 192.

European Jewry. If the daily had treated earlier reports of annihilation as rumour without solid foundation, the acknowledgement of the genocide in progress from official Britain gave the paper permission to speak out on Nazi atrocities.<sup>139</sup>

In late November, the newspaper ran a small story reporting Palestinian Jewry's reaction to the mass killings in Europe. "Jerusalem," noted the story, "has been stirred by the substantiated reports of the methodical German extermination of Polish Jewry and other Jews deported from Germany and occupied lands in Poland."<sup>140</sup> Though explicitly "substantiated," the next article on the matter only came a week later, in a 98-word piece from Reuters reporting on a statement from the United States Department of State. Under the blunt headline "Death-Roll of Jews Now 2,000,000," the article printed the State Department's report of Jewish casualties in several European countries. "To sum up this horrible story," ends the article, "it is believed that 2,000,000 European Jews have perished and that 5,000,000 are in danger of extermination."<sup>141</sup> No editorial accompanied this seemingly enormous story, nor were there any other immediate reports further investigating this disaster. A story a week later detailing further restrictions upon Jews in occupied France- the goal of which, according to the article, was the "complete purification of French public life"- did not connect what was happening in France to the rest of Europe.<sup>142</sup> The same day, a statement from the British Catholic Church declared Poland a "Jewish Cemetery," and was the scene of "such savage race-hatred that it appears to be a fiendish plan to turn it into a vast cemetery for the Jewish population of Europe."<sup>143</sup> The cardinal's words, however, stood alone.

The *Cape Times*, staunch supporter of the British government in peace and Churchillian organ in war, began to recognize Germany's murder of Jews as an attempt to systematically annihilate them once British Foreign Secretary Eden announced Germany's genocide-in-progress to the British Parliament on 17 December 1942. "Of the Jews transported in conditions of horror and brutality to Eastern Europe," opened the paper's lead article of Eden's pronouncement, "none are ever heard of again. The able bodied are slowly walked to death. The infirm are left to die or deliberately massacred."<sup>144</sup> The Germans, said

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<sup>139</sup> A part of the paper's hesitation to lead with "atrocities" stories stems from anti-German propaganda in World War I that proved to be false, and the English-speaking media's caution lest it be fooled again. See Walter Laqueur, *The Terrible Secret: An Investigation Into the Suppression of Information About Hitler's 'Final Solution'*, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1980), 9.

<sup>140</sup> CT 27.11.42

<sup>141</sup> CT 3.12.42

<sup>142</sup> CT 9.12.42

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> CT 18.12.42

Eden, are now “carrying out Hitler’s oft-repeated intent to exterminate the Jewish people of Europe.”

With the British government officially recognizing Nazi Germany’s systematic murder of European Jewry, the *Cape Times* provided immediate editorial comment. If the Nazi atrocities were before in the realm of rumour, or a sideshow in relation to the greater devastation of the war, they were now considered by the paper as “crimes exceeding anything perpetrated by Attila or the Vandals.”<sup>145</sup> There had been, until Eden’s announcement, “few incidents in the war more significant than that of the House of Commons on Thursday when the members stood in silence for a few minutes in a gesture of protest against the ‘disgusting barbarity’ of the Germans in their treatment of Jews.” The paper had treated the war as an all-important battle to preserve world peace and British freedom, and the official recognition of the Nazi genocide had added a new moral dimension to the war. The declaration was “evidence that the free people of the world will not rest until such retribution as is within the power of man is visited upon Hitler and all of the other bestial scoundrels” responsible for the murders. Tellingly, though, the editorial’s wrath was directed at the scale of the crimes, not as much as the anti-Semitism inherent in them. “Persecution of the Jews is no new thing,” noted the editorial, as “it is normal for the human-being in the mass to turn on the minority in his midst,” and “it has been the misfortune of Jews so often to form this minority.” It was, then, not extraordinary that Nazi Germany was anti-Semitic, but that it took anti-Semitism to a “pathological extreme.”

Smuts, a long and ardent ally of South African Jews, did not hesitate to associate the Union Government with the United Nations’ declaration condemning German atrocities. The paper reported his sympathies for the Jewish Day of Mourning, quoting his condemnation of the “wholesale destruction of peoples” by the Germans.<sup>146</sup> As well, the daily had its own comment on worldwide Jewry’s reaction to Eden’s announcement, once again taking the opportunity to condemn Nazi atrocities. Though it had been known that the Nazis were virulently anti-Semitic, it was only with Eden’s announcement that the world became aware that “this policy of persecution had turned into a policy of extermination,” and that the Nazis have “instituted mass slaughter by means of machine guns, electrocution, and poison gas.”<sup>147</sup> The Day of Mourning, held throughout the world including Cape Town, was not only an expression of deep sorrow for the catastrophe in Europe but a reinforcement of the moral

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<sup>145</sup> CT 19.12.42

<sup>146</sup> CT 29.12.45

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

cause of the war. Those respecting the Day of Mourning, noted the paper, “will do well to remember that the tragic events they mourn provide a stern reminder of the necessity of resolutely pursuing this war until the last remnant of Nazi ideology has been scourged from the earth.”<sup>148</sup>

From the beginning of 1942 until 1945, the genocide-in-progress of European Jewry was not frequently reported on, often meriting only two or three stories a month. There are several reasons for this development, starting with the size of the paper itself. Newsprint rationing during the war had eroded the number of pages in each issue of the daily until 1943, when a cut forced the *Cape Times* to limit each issue to six pages.<sup>149</sup> Even though the paper started to run news stories on its front page, thus giving up significant advertising revenue in the process, the format remained four pages of news, one for classified ads, one editorial. Such scant space was taken up by the latest war news, mostly with the appropriate pro-British slant along with tales of South African heroism and calls for volunteers. In these years, editorial comment on the Nazis’ ongoing murder of European Jewry was rare, and came as a rallying cry for a determined effort to defeat a hated regime.

In 1943 the Holocaust was at its most intense, and the stories the *Cape Times* ran were a limited reflection of this reality. The paper would follow the treatment of Jews in a certain country, provide some comment, and then move on. Examples of this pattern include an October 1943 series on the plight of Danish Jews and Sweden’s efforts to rescue them. Throughout this period, brief focus was also put on the plight of Romanian, Hungarian, and Ukrainian Jews.

The paper reported the Nazis’ use of gassing and crematoria in its annihilationist campaign beginning in 1944. On 24 March, under the headline “Germans’ Latest Death Factories,” an article explained that “the Germans have turned the concentration camp at Oświęcim in Poland into their latest and largest so-called death factory, according to information received in Polish circles in London.” “Three crematoria,” continued the article, “capable of dealing with 10,000 bodies a day have been built in the camp.”<sup>150</sup> In what would continue an established trend, the daily would report stories from Polish or Jewish sources, but subtly treated them as rumour using placing, the size of the article, and lack of editorial comment.

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<sup>148</sup> Ibid. The Day of Mourning did not change the minds of those against the war as it did galvanize those who supported the war effort. See Shain, “South Africa,” in Wyman, 676.

<sup>149</sup> Shaw, 126.

<sup>150</sup> CT 24.3.44

July brought more reports of the horror camps used to systematically murder Jews. Again getting its information from the Polish underground, an article headline “400,000 Hungarian Jews Gassed” told of the fate of Hungarian Jews sent to Poland. They are packed into trains, then go “onto Ocwiecim, where most of the Jews have been killed in gas chambers.”<sup>151</sup> A report two days later from an “authoritative non-Jewish source in a neutral country” estimated that “from April 1942 to April 1944, between 1,500,000 and 1,750,000 Jews were killed by gas or other methods in the German concentration camps Ocwiecim and Birkenau, in Poland.”<sup>152</sup> A statement from the Czechoslovak Foreign Minister, Hubert Ripka, not only confirmed these stories, but gave more details of the inner workings of the camps.<sup>153</sup>

These reports of Nazi death camps coincided with ongoing coverage of the plight of Hungarian Jews. A March article quoted a German News Agency report that “competent Slovakian quarters show satisfaction that more than 1,000,000 Jews living in Hungary will be eliminated from the political and economic scene,” an obvious reference to German extermination plans.<sup>154</sup> Less than a week later the *Cape Times* printed news from “normally authentic sources” of “systematic round-ups in the Jewish district of Rombach” resulting in hundreds of suicides.<sup>155</sup> In July came a statement from Foreign Secretary Eden that German and Hungarian authorities were deporting Hungarian Jews to Poland to be murdered.

The daily, again prompted by official recognition of Nazi crimes from the British government, responded to this news of “More Nazi Savagery.” Reports of the systematic murder of Jews, to the paper, told of an exceptional form of German atrocity that “even minds accustomed to reports of Nazi brutalities must be sickened anew.”<sup>156</sup> The editorial argued that “the notorious anti-Semitic attitude of the Hungarians had in recent months been hardened by the German occupation of their country,” creating a vicious scene where the occupied made common cause with their Nazi occupiers. The editorial concludes by quoting Brendan Bracken that “[t]he Germans are setting up abattoirs into which are shepherded thousands of Jews... this is the biggest scandal in the history of human crime and the responsibility rests on the German people.”<sup>157</sup>

The *Cape Times*’ sporadic coverage of the Final Solution during the war years was largely a result of the war itself. That is, the paper’s highest priority was to act as a pro-war

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<sup>151</sup> CT 8.7.44

<sup>152</sup> CT 10.7.44

<sup>153</sup> CT 17.7.44

<sup>154</sup> CT 24.3.44

<sup>155</sup> CT 29.3.44

<sup>156</sup> CT 10.7.44

<sup>157</sup> Ibid

organ, supporting an Allied effort it deemed essential for world peace. The privations and shortages of wartime led to a physically smaller edition, leaving less space for world news. An additional factor, though, is the paper's subtle suspicion of atrocity stories and their sources. The paper trusted without question proclamations from British Government officials, but was wary of others. The explanation and reasoning for this is revealed when the concentration camps were discovered in 1945, and all doubt was put to rest.

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#### IV. Irrefutable Proof: The Discovery of the Camps

Early 1945 brought battlefield success and eventually the end of the war that the *Cape Times* had been hoping for and predicting for years. The Wehrmacht, forced into retreat by Russia in the east and American and British forces in the west, abandoned their death camps to be discovered by the advancing armies. Although their existence was known since 1942, and the Polish underground and world Jewish organizations had been telling the world what was occurring in these camps, their discovery and the subsequent reporting and photographs removed any doubt that accusations of Nazi plans to annihilate European Jewry were exaggerations. The daily printed photographs of the camps, as well as front-page stories giving accounts of the camps. The paper's coverage as well as its editorial comment was not solely shaped by its horror, but also its domestic political stance. That is, the camps were another reason why Nationalist calls for neutrality in the war were so misguided.

For the *Cape Times* the camps were yet another example of not only Nazi, but German bestiality. Reacting to the discovery and details of Buchenwald, the paper wrote that "it must be a long time before the Germans are given a free hand over even their own minorities again and a longer time before they are deemed fit to bear arms as a nation again. Buchenwald and other torture camps are a warning about the possibilities of perversion in German nature which our peacemakers must not be allowed to forget."<sup>158</sup> The camps, added to the horrors of the larger war, were proof that "never again must the German beast be allowed to run loose" and "the world now has a people whose minds have been warped and debauched beyond hope."<sup>159</sup> As Germany collapsed, its new foreign minister renounced Nazism and plead for mercy, prompting an incredulous reply from an editorial. "Germany," wrote the daily, "has been thrashed, and so her spokesman on foreign relations can talk about the rights and dignities of the people. We know just what these words mean; we have read reports and seen pictures of the camps of Buchenwald, Dachau and elsewhere. It is there that the German ideas of 'liberty and dignity of the individual' have been demonstrated with the minutest accuracy these many years past."<sup>160</sup> The camps, to the paper, were the products of beasts, of latter-day Huns and Vandals.

It is not unexpected or controversial for the *Cape Times* to have written about Germany in this way. Horror is the only natural reaction to the pictures of the death camps, as

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<sup>158</sup> CT 18.4.45

<sup>159</sup> CT 23.4.45

<sup>160</sup> CT 4.5.45

is a desire to avenge and punish those responsible. South Africa had been at war with Germany for almost six years, and such ill-feeling, desire to punish as well as prevent a German revival is consistent with the paper's wartime coverage. In addition, though, the daily used the camps as ammunition against its Nationalist political opponents, continuing a trend that had begun since the declaration of war. Those who favoured neutrality had, to the paper, irresponsible and suspicious motives. The end of the war coupled with the monstrosity of the death camps only increased this sentiment.

The *Cape Times* lashed out at its Nationalist counterpart, *Die Burger*, for its failure to report the discovery of the camps.<sup>161</sup> *Die Burger* had "made up its mind that all atrocity stories are ipso facto untrue and it systematically ignores the most objective and detailed first-hand reports."<sup>162</sup> The reasons for ignoring the camps, charged the same editorial, were political. Pretending that the camps do not exist "is an easy and comfortable attitude, particularly in a country such as this where for years the dear Germans have been regarded with respect and admirations by a section who looked to the Hun for help in the the local political struggle."<sup>163</sup> That is, since the Nationalists had held sympathies during the war, mostly as a vehicle to establish a republic in South Africa, the camps were an irrefutable proof of the debauchery of the Nazi regime and sign of the Nationalists' questionable political orientation and goals.

One Nationalist tactic to deflect attention from the concentration camps and the embarrassment of having supported such a brutal regime was to point out Russian atrocities. Of course, there was truth to such claims: Russia had its own gulag system, had orchestrated a massive famine in Ukraine, and had "disappeared" millions more in its series of purges. The end of World War II saw the Russian Army rampage across eastern Germany, committing countless horrors on the civilian population there. For the Nationalists, the Russians posed a larger threat to the world than the Nazis, as Communism was bent on world domination. Domestically, Communism was a threat to white-ruled South Africa, as it brought with it the spectre of black power. So while true, Nationalist denunciations of Russian atrocities were a clumsy, politically-motivated diversionary tactic prompting a relentless attack from the *Cape Times*.

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<sup>161</sup> Sharon Friedman notes that *Die Burger* regularly delayed stories on the camps by four or five days, its information "less frequent, more scattered and its placing less prominent than that given in the English press." See Friedman, 31.

<sup>162</sup> CT 21.4.45

<sup>163</sup> Ibid

In a May editorial the *Cape Times* denigrated the anti-war, anti-Smuts politicians as “little men.” “When the civilised world suffered heavy blows- at Dunkirk, the Blitz on Britain, the fall of Singapore,” wrote the paper, “these “little people snarled and cheered and jeered.”<sup>164</sup> Likewise, “when the world is horrified at revelations about the German horror camps, these people just don’t want to know and salve their not very active consciences with lying about the South African War and sophistries about Russia.”<sup>165</sup> The South African War remark was a counter to Nationalist complaints about internment camps set up during the war to imprison those actively plotting against the war effort. In an attempt to gain political points, the Nationalists denounced the “Nazism” of these internment camps, prompting another harsh response from the *Cape Times*. Such “dislike of ‘Nazism’ as shown in South African internment policy,” noted an editorial, “would not ring quite so false if it were accompanied with equally vocal dislike of Nazism as revealed in the torture and slaughter camps of Buchenwald and Belsen.”<sup>166</sup> Such pleas for human rights and against tyranny, to the paper, rang hollow, as Malan and company “would be better pleaders for the code of chivalry if they had shown the slightest concern for the millions and millions of Russians, Poles, Czechs, Dutch, and French herded into the Reich for slave labour.”<sup>167</sup>

Nationalist reluctance to recognize the concentration camps was not, as Friedman points out, caused by overt anti-Semitism.<sup>168</sup> Although anti-Semitic sentiment was part of their political orientation, there is no evidence that Malan or other Nationalists considered Nazi Germany’s annihilationist campaign in a positive light. Rather, this was a case of cognitive dissonance. To fully appreciate the horror of the concentration camps would be to concede, if even in a small way, that the Allied cause- and following that, South Africa’s involvement on the Allied side- was justified. After six years of railing against the war and the rupture of the South African political scene it caused, this may have been too much for the Nationalists to immediately concede. Hence the embarrassing scene, even in its own time, of ignoring and diverting attention from the camps.

Eric Louw, Nationalist MP for Beaufort West, was especially keen to avoid confronting the camps. Even amongst Nationalists Louw had a harsh anti-Semitic streak to him.<sup>169</sup> In 1944, even with the strict Aliens Act halting Jewish immigration to a trickle, Louw

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<sup>164</sup> CT 11.5.45

<sup>165</sup> Ibid

<sup>166</sup> CT 17.5.45

<sup>167</sup> Ibid

<sup>168</sup> Friedman, 34.

<sup>169</sup> Shimoni, 164. Louw would maintain his staunch anti-Semitism even after the Nationalist Party toned down its anti-Jewish sentiment in the late 1940’s.

insisted that even harsher measures be taken. Again, though, Louw's reaction to the revelation of the camps should not be seen as support for the Nazi annihilationist policy since there is no evidence to make that kind of bold and horrifying claim, but as a deeper form of cognitive dissonance. In late April, a Mr. Louis Karofsky challenged Louw to lead a delegation to Europe to see German and Russian concentration camps, offering even to raise the funds necessary for such a trip. Louw replied that the money would be better spent on reprinting and distributing "the Brunt of the War" by Emily Hobhouse, which detailed the concentration camp system set up by the British during the South African War.<sup>170</sup> Louw also suggested that instead of a tour, those interested in the matter should read a pamphlet written in 1938 by Winston Churchill on the conditions in the Soviet Union. Digging up bitterness from the Boer War, Louw used the camps to stick a finger in the eye of English-speaking South Africa.

Louw was a recurring figure in the 'Letters to the Editor' section of the *Cape Times* as well. Louw demanded an apology from the paper for calling his denunciations of Russian atrocities libelous, without mentioning the Nazi death camps.<sup>171</sup> The daily responded to Louw's letter that "we see to reason for an apology" and "we reprovved Mr. Louw for saying that worse atrocities than [those in the Nazi camps] had been committed in Russian-occupied Europe." Louw countered by using the paper's logic against it, that the daily's refusal to acknowledge Russian crimes which had been reported in the *London Times* was proof that "the mentality of the *Cape Times* is even more deplorable than I thought."<sup>172</sup> Subsequent letters from citizens concluded that "there is no question that Eric Louw was and is a sympathizer with the Nazis and is therefore morally just as guilty as the Nazis for the atrocities they have committed,"<sup>173</sup> and

"Fanning up old hatreds and drawing comparisons instead of stressing the terrible lesson to be learnt from this demonstration of wanton intolerance (with its barbarous consequences) practiced by an emancipated people are unworthy of one sincerely desiring to serve the best interests either of his country or mankind in general."<sup>174</sup>

This exchange shows how both sides used atrocities for their own political purposes, ignoring some while highlighting others. Louw, of course, was guilty of his own tunnel vision and cognitive dissonance in not acknowledging the horrors of the Nazi death camps.

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<sup>170</sup> CT 1.5.45

<sup>171</sup> CT 28.5.45

<sup>172</sup> CT 29.5.45

<sup>173</sup> CT 30.5.45

<sup>174</sup> CT 31.5.45

The *Cape Times*, however, was unable to criticize Russia, an ally in its war against Germany, which had its own terror system and committed its own atrocities in marching across eastern Germany. Just as the daily was justifiably horrified with Buchenwald, Louw spoke with a measure of truth in denouncing Russian atrocities. Both used the horrors as political ammunition, proving, depending on one's side, the treachery of anti-war republicans or communist-enabling English.

The *Cape Times* coverage of the Nazi regime after the discovery of the camps revealed some of the paper's machinations of its coverage during the war. That is, in April and May 1945, the paper overtly told its readers who it trusted as sources. A consistent theme in its reporting and editorials in these months is the daily's strong emphasis of the sources who discovered and reported on the concentration camps. The initial stories were to be trusted, wrote a *Cape Times* editorial, because they came from Osmar White, a "war correspondent for three and a half years" who has "seen the things that war correspondents, like frontline troops, see day to day and become hardened to."<sup>175</sup> That such a grizzled reporter became physically ill at the sight of the camps only further testified to the magnitude of the horror. Three days later, with the camps still leading the headlines, the paper again vouched for the veracity of the reports, even though it admitted that "in sensible people there is an almost instinctive tendency to disbelieve horror stories, and in the past there has been some justification for this scepticism when the evidence came at third or fourth hand from witnesses whose claim to impartiality was not always clear."<sup>176</sup> These stories, reassured the paper, "are the direct evidence of high-ranking soldiers and war correspondents and have been confirmed by military and political leaders of unchallengeable integrity."

The paper in accepting these stories went further to prove their veracity to its horrified readership and recalcitrant political opposition. The daily justified publishing a gruesome picture of the Belsen camp on its front page despite normal protocol that newspapers "avoid placing before their readers direct evidence of the bestiality into which in some circumstances the human being can descend."<sup>177</sup> The camps provided an extraordinary case in which "the general public can no longer be shielded from knowledge which is soul-searing but which is necessary to spread widely if justice is to be done and humanity to be saved from a reputation of horror."<sup>178</sup> The paper strongly supported sending South African members of Parliament to join a delegation of British MP's to visit the camps so that they could get a first-hand view. A

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<sup>175</sup> CT 18.4.45

<sup>176</sup> CT 21.4.45

<sup>177</sup> CT 23.4.45

<sup>178</sup> Ibid

report from South African MP's would be needed to convince disbelieving Nationalists, since these "pathologically prejudiced people who discredit General Eisenhower and Mr. Churchill, who ignore the statements of qualified eye-witnesses, who disbelieve the evidence of high-ranking soldiers, are not likely to have much trouble in salving their consciences on being presented with a report from a publicity official."<sup>179</sup> Subsequent stories in the "News" section of the paper would serve a similar purpose. "Buchenwald Horrors Confirmed" reported the reaction of the delegation of British MP's to the camps,<sup>180</sup> followed by a story from a Cape Town man who had experienced Buchenwald in 1943,<sup>181</sup> and then a large photo of the Nordhausen concentration camp with hundreds of bodies strewn on the ground.<sup>182</sup>

The *Cape Times* repeatedly listed its list of trustworthy sources: war correspondents, high-ranking Allied military figures, and members of Allied governments. One can infer, then that those sources and organizations spreading word about the genocide-in-progress during the war were peddling evidence, to use the paper's words, "at third or fourth hand from witnesses whose claim to impartiality was not always clear." The daily had printed reports of systematic murders of Jews since 1942. These reports were based on leaders of the Palestinian Jewish community (from a report on 27 November 1942), the World Jewish Congress (from 30 June 1942) and even the United States Department of State (from 3 December 1942). Just as the paper saw the atrocities as worthy of editorial comment in December 1942 after Anthony Eden made his announcement to Parliament, the daily covered the camps when the right people discovered and reported on them. Curiously, though, if the paper considered reports of the systematic murder of European Jewry to be at least partially based on rumour, why did it publish those reports during the war years? Indeed, if the editorial staff read its own paper during the war, it would conclude that some sort of annihilationist campaign was in progress. The paper, then was playing a balancing act in its wartime coverage: it wanted to print stories that reflected Nazi horrors, and in so doing justify the war effort, but gave such stories modest space with no editorial comment in case they were exaggerations.

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<sup>179</sup> CT 25.4.45

<sup>180</sup> CT 28.4.45

<sup>181</sup> CT 5.5.45

<sup>182</sup> CT 9.5.45

## V. Justice for Victors and Survivors

The end of the European phase of World War II resulted in an Allied victory, but left the continent in disarray and European Jewry devastated. For the victors of the war, there remained the problems of what to do with Germany, and how to resettle the remaining Jews in Europe. In South Africa, the end of the war was a relief, not to mention a vindication for Smuts, the United Party and indirectly, the *Cape Times*. A victory in Europe, though, was not a politically unifying occasion in South Africa. Privations, shortages, blackouts, as well as enormous war taxation had taken a toll, and voters had an opportunity to vent their anger in a post-war by-election defeat for the United Party in Kimberley.<sup>183</sup> In South Africa and in the rest of the world, the horrors of the Final Solution had given a new urgency to settlement in Palestine, as Zionist arguments of an inability to live among hostile gentiles gained enormous currency. In the second half of 1945, the *Cape Times* provided substantial coverage of the Allied efforts to bring the architects of Nazi aggression to justice, as well as renewed calls for a Jewish state in Palestine. In both cases, the paper supported British efforts, lauding the establishment of an international court to try Nazi leaders, while taking an ambiguous position toward Europe's Jews.<sup>184</sup> Thus, there were two questions of justice: victor's justice in the form of the Nuremberg Trials, and survivor's justice for Europe's remaining Jews.

Since the beginning of the Nazi regime in Germany, the question of Jewish emigration had lingered. South Africa, like the rest of the world, made efforts to limit Jewish immigration with various quotas and acts in response to Germany's encouragement of Jewish emigration. The *Cape Times* during these years was uncommitted to Zionism as a solution, unwilling to favour a policy that would provoke Arab opposition. The paper acknowledged the dire situation of Jews in Europe, but argued that South Africa was not a possible

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<sup>183</sup> Alan Paton, *Hofmeyr* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1965), 406

<sup>184</sup> The *Cape Times*' ambivalent view of Zionism can be contrasted with Jan Smuts' more supportive take. Smuts, though not an "infatuated" philosemite, strongly considered Zionism to be a way of rectifying a historic injustice to world Jewry. In his international capacity, Smuts lent Zionism, and South African Zionists, legitimacy among gentiles. Domestically, Smuts was able to reconcile Zionism with loyalty to South Africa without a "dual loyalty" charge often made by South African anti-Semites. See Gideon Shimoni, "Jan Christiaan Smuts and Zionism," *Jewish Social Studies* vol 39 no 4 (Autumn, 1977). Daniel Malan's views on Zionism changed with political expediency: in the 1920's when the Nationalists were still courting the Jewish vote, Malan was able to draw parallels between Zionism and the Afrikaner desire for a homeland in South Africa. With the anti-Semitic turn of his party in the 1930's, Malan charged Zionists with dual loyalty, that were looking toward Palestine rather than being good South African citizens. In the 1940's, as the Nationalists moderated their anti-Semitism, Malan again warmed toward Zionism, but as a way to argue against Jewish immigration into South Africa. See Furlong, 52.

destination for Jewish immigration.<sup>185</sup> With the end of the war, this issue became crucial, and with the reality of the death camps, had a new moral dimension. Zionist demands were louder, and Arab protests toward potential Jewish immigration were equally strident. The daily, in line with its pro-British stance, sympathized with the British government, who held the mandate over Palestine.

To the *Cape Times*, the conflict in Palestine had three components: the Jews who wanted more immigration permits immediately, the Arabs afraid of becoming a minority in their land, and the British caught in a hopeless situation in between. As before, the paper chided both sides for making Britain's life difficult. The Muslim world had "undertaken the defence of Arabs in Palestine" and the Jews "assisted by individuals, associations and governments who believe that the Jews are right in their claim to Palestine as a national home" had "embarrassed" Britain with their "hasty tempers."<sup>186</sup> Although the paper erroneously claimed that 100,000 immigrants would give Jews a slight majority over the Arabs, it did not take a position in the matter. The daily's main concern was that this was an unfair situation for Britain to have to solve what had become a world problem. The solution was a collective United Nations effort to mediate between the two groups.

President Harry Truman's calls for Britain to allow German Jews into Palestine, combined with New York governor Thomas Dewey's contention that barring Jews from Palestine would only aggravate the crimes against Jews, and international Zionist demands for immigration, only, to the daily, made matters worse. Regardless of the merits of each case in the matter- and the paper acknowledged that the Final Solution in Europe gave Jews a persuasive argument and that Arabs had justifiable goals as well- the important issue was that "any substantial modification of the White Paper Policy threatens to plunge the Near East into discord and bloodshed on a terrible scale."<sup>187</sup> Again, these demands put Britain in an impossible position, an unjust burden that "the other victors in the World War refrained from shouldering."<sup>188</sup> This was a world problem, not one to be left for Britain alone to solve at the convenience of the rest of the world.

Immediately following the war the British had changed governments, installing Attlee's Labour government to succeed Churchill's Conservatives. This change in ruling parties, however, did not result in a change of loyalty from the *Cape Times*. Ernest Bevin, the

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<sup>185</sup> This position was also held by the Smuts government even after the war. Smuts considered Palestine to be the preferred option for Jewish immigration, and only 1512 Jews were allowed into South Africa from 1946 to 1948. See Milton Shain, "South Africa," in Wyman.

<sup>186</sup> CT 26.9.45

<sup>187</sup> CT 2.10.45

<sup>188</sup> Ibid

new Labour Foreign Secretary, was not considered a departure from Churchill's government, but an example of "a most remarkable demonstration of British temper" that is "clearly determined to face a future full of the most difficult tasks in a spirit of unity with regard to the fundamental objectives."<sup>189</sup> As such, the paper regarded the Labour government as trustworthy in its approach to Palestine. The daily lauded a joint British-American committee set up in November 1945 to reconcile the problems of Jewish immigration and Palestine.<sup>190</sup> Although the *Cape Times* praised the Americans for their partnership, it managed to chide American for its previous loud advice on Palestine, even though the U.S. was "forgetting that her country refused the mandate in 1919." Again, the paper showed confidence and support for the British government while hoping that the two hot-headed sides in Palestine would not sabotage this committee. Bevin's commitment "suggests the British Government at least is ready to review the whole problem as it ought to be reviewed: as a great and tragic problem of human values and human aspirations and human fears, which cries out for a human solution. The fear, though, was that "zealots" from both sides might "embarrass the war committee in its work" with renewed fighting.<sup>191</sup>

In addition to its regular coverage and comment on Palestine and international reaction to what was occurring there, the *Cape Times* allowed a spirited debate on the subject in its Letters to the Editors section. For part of September and most of October 1945, the paper ran letters on Palestine almost daily. Jacob Gitlin, chairman of the Western Province Zionist Council wrote to correct the daily's claim that the Mandatory Power was not taking sides in the matter, but was supporting the Arabs by opposing Jewish immigration.<sup>192</sup> Other letter writers took a number of various positions on the issue: one TO Duigan argued that Zionism was only "aggravating Britain's mandatory difficulties" and that the sufferings of European Jews would best be ameliorated by immigration to the United States.<sup>193</sup> This argument was countered by letter writer "J Bobrov" that such a solution would only "transplant" the problem, with Palestine the only real, permanent solution for Europe's Jews.<sup>194</sup> The variety and number of opinions not only is proof that the *Cape Times* allowed debate on Palestine, and that there was an enormous debate in Cape civil society, but also of the paper's ambivalent stance toward Palestine and Zionism.

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<sup>189</sup> CT 21.8.45

<sup>190</sup> CT 14.11.45

<sup>191</sup> Ibid.

<sup>192</sup> CT 27.9.45

<sup>193</sup> CT 28.9.45

<sup>194</sup> CT 4.10.45

If the question of survivor's justice- that is, what to do with the Jews who survived the Final Solution- was an awkward one for the *Cape Times*, victor's justice- punishing Nazi war criminals- was much easier. Indeed, the Nuremberg Trials as well as the Belsen Trials were not only a satisfying conclusion, but a just one. By bringing the war criminals to account, the paper argued, the Allies were not only punishing monsters but setting a civilised precedent for future wars. The paper was unambiguous in its support for the proceedings and provided ample coverage and comment throughout. This was not vengeance, claimed the daily, but a legal, fair way to bring Nazi leaders to justice who did not deserve such civilised treatment.

The first high profile trial of Nazi war criminals was the British court martial of the commandants of the Belsen concentration camp that began in September 1945. The daily gave consistent coverage of this courtroom drama, not sparing the gruesome details of the operation of the Belsen camp. An article on the opening of the trial labelled the horror beyond words, a carnal house of starvation, systematic beatings and eventual "scientific murder."<sup>195</sup> Subsequent stories noted Belsen commandant Josef Kramer's "unashamed" attitude toward the camps,<sup>196</sup> the horrified reaction of British troops upon discovering the camps,<sup>197</sup> and Irma Grese's, one of the camp guards, confessions of mistreating and murdering prisoners.<sup>198</sup> The *Cape Times* welcomed this court martial, writing that "no time whatsoever is being lost in bringing suspected war criminals to the justice which was promised them many long months ago."<sup>199</sup> The trial would go a long way toward dispelling notions that accusations against the Nazis were exaggerations. Though, the paper warned, "it will be extremely distressing for people of normal temperament to read the evidence against the brutes" that the daily was going to report, such details were necessary in order to expose and bring to justice Nazi criminals.

The verdicts of the Belsen Trials, coming in November on the eve of the opening of the Nuremberg Trials, were lauded by the paper. Justice, claimed an editorial, was accomplished in a fair manner. The trial offered the defendants every opportunity "for establishing innocence or for praying mitigation" and "expert defence advocates were at hand and they were afforded complete liberty of argument."<sup>200</sup> That of the forty-four defendants, fourteen were acquitted and only eleven sentenced to death was proof of an impartial British court not intent on bloody revenge. It was also a triumph since witnesses were allowed to

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<sup>195</sup> CT 18.9.45

<sup>196</sup> CT 19.9.45

<sup>197</sup> CT 20.9.45

<sup>198</sup> CT 6.10.45

<sup>199</sup> CT 18.9.45

<sup>200</sup> CT 19.11.45

provide evidence of the camps and the accused given the opportunity to deny such “propaganda,” which given the amount of evidence offered was impossible. The trial set the precedent that mass murder could not go unpunished.<sup>201</sup>

For the paper, the Allied treatment of Germany in the aftermath of victory was to be “one of the most remarkable experiments in modern history.”<sup>202</sup> The process involved the “return of a criminally wayward people to a peaceful way of life” and the bringing of justice of the leaders who created and directed the Nazi war machine. Though, in light of the destruction caused by Hitler, dismantling and dividing Germany between the victors would seem “more outstandingly just than ever before, “ the Allied efforts to resuscitate a peaceful Germany “marks the progress which attends human affairs.”<sup>203</sup> The International Military Tribunal was another aspect of this effort for justice without revenge. The paper was satisfied that, for the top Nazi war criminals, “the essentials of a fair trial have been assured,” with the full indictment as well as all court documents given to the defendants.<sup>204</sup> Following this, the paper spared no sympathy for indicted Nazi leaders because of rank, warning of the “danger of sentimentalism towards criminals in high places” and that the world “now regards the highest criminals as the worst.”<sup>205</sup>

The ensuing coverage of the trials was not only a serial courtroom drama, but a parade of opportunities for the *Cape Times* to claim vindication for its support of the war. Each day brought a revelation or confirmation of Nazi atrocities, as well as details of the accused themselves. The reporting had two key themes: the Tribunals’ enormous evidence of the Nazi regime’s planning of an aggressive war as well as the gruesome details of the Final Solution. The coverage of the trial’s accusations of aggressive war began with Justice Robert Jackson’s opening speech,<sup>206</sup> continuing with a presentation that included a “shock” discovery of the Reich’s Cabinet minutes.<sup>207</sup> More revelations included documents proving that Germany had begun planning for war as early as 1936,<sup>208</sup> and the attacks on Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Russia were premeditated.<sup>209</sup> Nazi atrocities in Poland, such as the massacre in the Warsaw Ghetto and the terrible conditions of Buchenwald were detailed by the prosecution in mid-

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<sup>201</sup> Ibid

<sup>202</sup> CT 7.6.45

<sup>203</sup> Ibid.

<sup>204</sup> CT 17.9.45

<sup>205</sup> CT 19.10.45

<sup>206</sup> CT 22.11.45

<sup>207</sup> CT 23.11.45 The same article made mention of “a mass of documents illustrating Nazi efforts to get control inside Germany,” documentation so enormous that “the judges could hardly see over the piles of documents handed in.”

<sup>208</sup> CT 24.11.45

<sup>209</sup> CT 27.11.45

December.<sup>210</sup> Later, under the headline “6,000,000 Jews Murdered,” came reams of evidence from various camps proving not only the vast numbers murdered but that Himmler was not satisfied with six million killed.<sup>211</sup> Here was more evidence of the systematic murder of European Jews, the documentation of which was noteworthy to the *Cape Times*. Not only was the SS the “most amazing and complex police system in the world, its organization and document trail made it “susceptible to study.”<sup>212</sup>

*Cape Times* readers not only learned of the inner workings and ambitions of the Nazi regime, but the courtroom drama also provided details of quirks of the accused. Dispatches from the trials included reports of the defendants looking “startled” when the prosecution supplied secret documents,<sup>213</sup> of Goering shaking his head to deny a specific claim from a prosecutor,<sup>214</sup> and of Rudolf Hess’ bizarre behaviour at trial.<sup>215</sup> Also reported was the strange spectacle of the defendants’ reaction to a film presented by the prosecution: “they reacted like schoolchildren seeing the pictures themselves for the first time,” stated the article of the defendants’ comments and Hess’ tapping of his feet to the marching rhythm.<sup>216</sup> The paper was careful, though, of pinning all of the blame for the destruction Germany caused on these brutal yet bizarre defendants. Referring to Hitler, an editorial argued that “the folly of holding him, or the other war criminals, as solely responsible would lead to nothing more certain than a repetition. The whole of Germany must be treated in ways calculated to eradicate the rogue strain which was the root of the world disasters of 1914 and 1939.”<sup>217</sup>

The twin issues of Palestine and Nuremberg again clarify the *Cape Times*’ coverage of European Jewry, with the consistent theme a strident support for British Government policy. Nazi leaders who had orchestrated the genocide of Europe’s Jews deserved severe punishment, and the Allied solution of an International Military Tribunal was in line with human progress and British ideals. Palestine posed a complicated problem for the British Mandate, and the paper was unwilling to support any measure that would inconvenience the British government. Once again, the paper’s sympathies for European Jewry only lasted as long as it did not interfere with British interests. If Nazi leaders were being charged with murdering Jews in the same trial they were facing charges for launching an aggressive war,

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<sup>210</sup> CT 14.12.45

<sup>211</sup> CT 15.12.45

<sup>212</sup> CT 27.12.45

<sup>213</sup> CT 23.11.45

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<sup>215</sup> CT 1.12.45

<sup>216</sup> CT 12.12.45

<sup>217</sup> CT 31.12.45

that was lauded. The reality of settling the survivors of the Final Solution remained difficult (and granted, Britain was in a difficult position as the Mandate Power), and the *Cape Times*, though wanting just measures taken, wanted those that did not create difficulties for Britain.

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## Conclusion

The rise of Nazi Germany and its persecutions, as well as eventual genocide, of European Jewry was an enormous story for the world press. The entire chain of events was unprecedented and shocking; though the major English-speaking powers had been at war with Germany earlier in the century, it was jarring to witness how far Germany, an erstwhile cultural centre, would fall. It was of course impossible to foresee the death camps when reporting in the 1930's, and is therefore understandable when, for instance, the *Cape Times* treated the Nuremburg Laws as a relatively mundane Nazi measure rather than a key step on the road to Auschwitz.

The 1930's and 1940's, while encompassing the rise and fall of Nazi Germany, were also a politically volatile time in South African history. While Europe moved from political instability to total war, creases in white South African politics widened as well. The experiment of Fusion, meant to isolate Malan and the radical Nationalists, lasted for only five years before collapsing with the advent of World War II. Fissures between English and Afrikaner thought to have been healed since Union still remained on the South African political scene. In this regard, the *Cape Times* considered itself representative of English-speaking South Africa, and its editors during this time had close ties and sentiments to England. The paper was unabashedly pro-Commonwealth and pro-Smuts.

The 1930's also saw a change in the paper's views toward South African Jews. If during the 1920's the daily argued in favour of limiting Jewish immigration into South Africa, the 1930's saw a softening of such anti-Semitism. It is important to note that the *Cape Times* recognized the nature of the Nazi regime early on. While the daily was cautious to lend credibility to atrocity stories in the first months of 1933, by the end of March of that year the paper left no doubt that the Nazis were responsible for attacks against German Jewry. Not that the regime's anti-Semitic nature was the only cause for concern to the paper, as Nazi Germany's belligerent tone and rapid rearmament became a serious threat to European peace.

While the *Cape Times* understood the threat Nazi Germany posed to its Jewry and was sympathetic toward the regime's victims, it placed a higher priority on European peace and its political allies. Though not necessarily opposing interests, the paper's desire for peace in Europe and political stability at home resulted in its Janus-faced coverage of Kristallnacht. Reports of the pogroms were splashed on its News pages for two months, prompting harsh condemnation from several editorials. At the same time Oswald Pirow, South Africa's Minister of Defence, was in Europe en route to Germany to hold meetings with high officials

there. A week after the pogroms, Pirow met with Hitler, among other top Nazi leaders. The paper covered Pirow's trip extensively, yet did not mention Nazi atrocities against Jews in relation to Pirow's activities in Germany. There was no demand that he confront Germany or cancel his trip altogether. Indeed, when German officials were meeting with Pirow, the paper treated them with the same deference accorded to leaders of other countries.

During the war the paper had become an organ for the Allied cause. Already sympathetic to Smuts and his United Party, the *Cape Times* lauded him as a larger-than-life figure in its war coverage. Reports from the battlefield were consistently optimistic, even if the reality was much bleaker. The daily was on one hand eager to report Nazi atrocities against the people the regime occupied in order to emphasize the righteousness of the war, but also was reluctant to run stories about the death camps until confirmed by official sources. Only when Eden made his announcement in December of 1942 did the paper recognize the horror of the camps.

The war's aftermath provided the paper with ammunition to use against its domestic political opponents as well as vindication for its support of the war effort. The discovery of the Nazi death camps in April 1945 provided irrefutable proof of the Nazis' genocide of European Jewry and with it powerful justification of the Allied cause. The *Cape Times* would use the camps to question the judgement of the anti-war Nationalists, especially Eric Louw who continued to deny their existence despite the overwhelming evidence. The Nuremberg Trials provided an extended opportunity for the paper to claim vindication once details of the Nazi regime came to light.

Overall, the *Cape Times* stood for English liberalism in South Africa and allied itself with Great Britain in international affairs. Though liberalism lent itself to a philosemitic attitude, when Jewish interests conflicted with British interests or domestic political tranquillity, the paper ultimately sided with the latter two. The daily recognized the plight of European Jews under the Nazis, but concluded that South Africa could not accept more Jewish immigration, and that increased immigration to Palestine would only create a larger headache for Britain, the Mandatory Power. When Pirow was in Germany in the aftermath of Kristallnacht, the daily did not pose any uncomfortable questions toward its Minister of Defence, but defended and lauded his intentions and accomplishments. The *Cape Times'* coverage of Nazi Germany and the Final Solution stood in contrast to the crass anti-Semitism and denialism of the Afrikaans press, but it is dangerous to treat the paper as a perfect foil to the Nationalist papers. The *Cape Times* expressed horror at the Nazis' treatment of Jews, but had its own priorities as well.

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